Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission regarding proposed ward boundary for Whalley Range, Manchester

I have had some difficulty in making a submission through the website so am attaching our submission and related maps.

I am writing from Whalley Range Community Forum, raising objections to the proposed changes particularly in the south, Manley Park area of the ward.

I hope that this is appropriate to send to you.

Please contact me if there are any difficulties of you require further information as this is very important to us,

Many thanks for your assistance,

Yours faithfully

Carol Packham
(for Whalley Range Forum)

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To the Boundary Commission.

Ward Boundary Changes : Whalley Range Ward

Whalley Range Community Forum submission.

As agreed at the Forum meeting on 8th September, we are writing on behalf of groups and community members in Whalley Range (W/R) to raise objections to the proposed changes to our ward boundaries that will

- Adversely divide a distinct community/neighbourhood
- Remove the only community centres and their facilities from our ward
- Make it impossible for Whalley Range representative community groups to continue their role as they will no longer be based in the ward
- Remove major amenities i.e local shops, park, and half of the primary school.

This objection is in relation to the placing of the Manchester City Council (MCC) proposed ward boundary, which removes approximately 1/3 of the existing ward. This is particularly problematic in the south west corner where the area of Manley Park is proposed to be divided in two. In the existing ward boundary the Manley Park neighbourhood and its amenities, particularly the JNR8 youth and community centre, have been at the heart/centre of the ward and been the focus for most of our activities. The City Council proposal divides this area in half removing most of the community facilities (e.g. our only community centre) and amenities (local shops and park) to the Chorlton ward in the south.

As stated by a local resident, Forum volunteer and committee member ‘To re-allocate Manley Park etc, into Chorlton ward, would remove most of the public facilities available in Whalley Range. The shops on Clarendon Rd are always busy and vibrant. The bars/cafes on Upper Chorlton Rd are some of the only places local residents can meet and socialise. Manley Park is a popular place for exercise, And JNR8 community centre (Located in Manley Park Methodist church) is our HQ/office and base for classes’.

This submission will refer to the three criteria that have to be met in relation to ward boundary changes

To deliver electoral equality where each city councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the city

We support the alternative plan supplied to the Commission by Community on Solid Ground, an organisation based in the area that will be affected by the proposed ward boundary changes. Their proposal as shown in the appendix outlines what is an
agreed community alternative plan which reverses the division of the Manley Park Neighbourhood and gives details as to how this can be done.

**That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities**

The MCC submission states ‘The St Werburgh’s Road and Manley Park neighbourhoods have seen significant social and demographic change since the last review linked to the rapid growth of nearby Chorlton and intense demand within the local housing market and the profile of these communities are now closer to that of Chorlton’.

We disagree with this statement, as although the St. Werburgh’s area in the South has always associated with Chorlton (e.g. the Vicar of St Werburgh’s church declined to be involved in the Forum, saying W/R was not in his area, although it clearly was in W/R ward). The other area, Manley Park neighbourhood, shares no characteristics with Chorlton, either in relation to demographics (Chorlton is predominantly white and the second most affluent area in Manchester), property type and price, and community identity. Manley Park is a distinct and coherent community. This is for several reasons

1. **Historically** these streets have been a community since the building of Manley Hall, and park in 1850s and the building of ‘The Dukeries’ in 1905.
The map clearly shows the streets in the Manley Park neighbourhood along York, Cromwell, and Bury Avenues and those off Clarendon Road as being the only streets in the area, and all built at the same time, in the same, terraced style.

Manley Park Methodist Church on Cromwell Avenue, was built at the same time, 1905, as a tin tabernacle to serve the local population. The current building was opened in 1910 and has been a centre for the Manley Park neighbourhood ever since, particularly since the opening of the JNR8 youth and community centre housed at the rear.

2. Sense of community and distinct identity.

The Manley Park neighbourhood has a distinct identity and neighbourhood contributed to by:

- The streets in the Manley Park area are all named after dukes, and have been known as ‘The Dukeries’, this was evident in the working together of the residents to form the Dukeries Residents Association (2008), who worked to improve their community, e.g. to campaign for the installation of alley gates. This was then followed by the granting of one of only three national awards for a greening programme to ‘Celebrate your alley gates’ (2009-11).

- The JNR8 Youth and Community Centre (est.1999) on Cromwell Avenue, through an initial three year Lottery grant, which allowed renovations to the rear or Manley Park Methodist Church and a new entrance and postal address to face the North part of the ward and the Manley Park Neighbourhood of terraced houses it primarily served. JNR8 houses the registered charity office and youth activities of Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association (reg. Charity no. 512666, est.1982) and the Whalley Range Community Forum (reg. office est.1995).

JNR8 is an important community hub and provides a range of activities such as ESOL, keep fit, Valuing Older People and Health and Wellbeing groups for adults (118 last year, all from the area north of the centre, 50% Asian origin, 20% African Caribbean origin, and 80% women). The play schemes and youth provision for children and young people attract a similar composition although predominantly male.

- Celebrate community festival (est.1998) the annual W/R community festival is based at JNR8 and aims to “celebrate the talent, diversity and resources of Whalley Range; promote a positive image of the area and improve the quality of life and encourage participation of the different communities within the area”. The Celebrate Festival day brings together local groups for music, workshops and information. It has been held at the JNR8 centre in 2012 and 2014 and this year has a new home in Manley Park.
3. Amenity.

The proposed City Council boundary removes most of the amenities within the ward, which are based in the Manley Park Neighbourhood and adjoining.

The Council submission states that

‘Shopping facilities, food and beverage outlets and other amenities are located on Withington Road or along Upper Chorlton Road’. This does not recognise the importance of the shops in the Manley Park neighbourhood on Clarendon Road as an integral part of the community, or that the shops mentioned on Upper Chorlton Road (junction College Road) will no longer be part of the ward.

Local shops on the junctions of York Avenue and Clarendon Road serve the Manley Park neighbourhood. These are vibrant busy shops, and primarily serve the local Muslim community with Halal meat and groceries, with most customers walking to the shops from their local homes.

Similarly the area uses a primary school, Manley Park which is also located on York Avenue, and a park with play areas and a park building which houses a local youth project (Community on Solid Ground) which arranged activities for local young people and adults (e.g. football, craft classes).

The Manley Park neighbourhood also has the only functioning community centre in the current ward, that of JNR8 (at the rear of Manley Park Methodist Church). The W/R Map produced in 2013 and again in 2015 and the Community Council consultation has always seen JNR8 as being at the heart of Whalley Range and serving the needs and developing the strengths of the community.

4) Demographically, the neighbourhood is home to a large number of long standing Asian residents, mainly Pakistani whose children attend Manley Park Primary school, and use the local park and play and youth facilities (Whiz project at JNR8, Youth on Solid Ground in Manley Park) and the local shops. The proposal would divide this community in two.

That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government

We disagree with council proposal to split the Manley Park neighbourhood and remove the JNR8 youth and community centre from the ward, and so the base for the Whalley Range Community Forum and Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association activities and offices, as this would seriously affect the areas ability to engage in democratic processes.

The Forum and other groups have spent the last 30 years building up relations within the local community to enable community development, cohesion, and increased representation in decision making.
The residents of Whalley Range have since the 1990s seen the need for a community level method of participation to liaise with local elected representatives, and service providers in the Whalley Range ward.

Initially this was through the Whalley Range Amenities Group (est. 1993), that came together to campaign to keep a City Council owned children’s home as a community centre and to work with the Planning Department to write and publicise the recently recognised Conservation area management plan.

As the remit of the group expanded we established the Whalley Range Forum (1995) made up of representatives of local groups. The now named Whalley Range Community Forum, is in the process of registering as a charity and is the only surviving community forum in the city. The committee has representatives of 10 Whalley Range based groups and the mailings and meetings/events engage with a total of 35 Whalley Range based groups, including local churches and schools.

The Forum carried out a local consultation across the area they saw as being Whalley Range (see attached map) with a view to setting up a Community Council (2007-9), to enable more local decision making over locally raised funds. However City Wide plans thwarted this initiative. The community identified Council area had the Manley Park Neighbourhood as its centre.

Whalley Range was identified as being one of the 19 most deprived wards in Manchester, making us eligible for the Governments Community First programme (2011-15). The community panel carried out a consultation and set priorities to enable them to distribute grants for local initiatives. Residents priorities identified the need for a dedicated community centre/hub; Learning, skills and training for employability including ICT; Increased provision of diversionary activities to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour and offending/reoffending; Increased community safety initiatives, and Inter-generational work.

The resulting plan set out to: Increase physical/sporting activities, events and equipment, Workshops/classes: e.g. ESOL, and health and wellbeing. All of these activities are being delivered at the JNR8 centre.

We feel the Councils proposals would deprive the community of important public facilities and as a result would seriously undermine the viability of WR as a ward. With fewer residents identifying with 'WR' as their area, the work of the WRCF would be undermined.

JNR8 Centre would not be viable and the Forum could not sensibly operate from outside the ward. It has been impossible to find, and fund, a new Forum HQ/ premises in WR. In effect many of our present activities and campaigns, would need to be totally re-thought. So much of the funding the Forum receives, would be lost if the area around Manley Park was not in Whalley Range, and the Forum would not be able to continue to act as a representative platform for the ward.
Appendices

1) Proposed Community Council area, showing the Manley Park Neighbourhood in the Centre of the area.

Attachments:

1) Manchester City Council proposed Whalley Range boundary showing the removal of Manley Park and JNR8 from the ward.
2) Proposed alternative boundary to Whalley Range including Manley Park and JNR8.
Proposed alternative boundary