

Sunderland

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Organisation Name: Plains Farm, Humbledon and High Barnes Forum (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. Learn why this is important

We write as Plains Farm, Humbledon and High Barnes Forum - an online community forum which is a constituted group of over 1,500 members, operating under the auspices of Plains Farm, Humbledon and High Barnes News: https://www.facebook.com/barnesnews/?locale=en_GB

We usually keep out of politics and only share community notices - we did not submit to the Commission under the first consultation for this reason, but our Committee is now unanimous in feeling moved to write in response to the proposed new wards.

We write in total opposition to the proposed new St Chad's Ward which is antithetical to good sense, reflects no notion of community that we can identify, and appears to do so in the name of appeasing some residents of Silksworth. This proposed St Chad's ward merges together communities in Sunderland which have no relationship what ever.

First, we point out that the majority of the geography in this proposed ward is not actually St Chad's parish at all, but belongs variously to other parishes - so this name must be rejected for a start. But then because this community is a Frankenstein's Creature of three previous wards, it would be impossible to give a coherent name. The Commission should take that as a hint that the reason this cannot be appropriately named in one or two words is because it is nowhere near being a natural community.

Second, the visual appearance of this ward - as the Commission seems to understand - is ridiculous. It is a 'leftovers' ward and that is not good

enough. The claim that it is somehow unified by the A690 as its 'spine' is absurd - an A road does not give definition to a community and that road changes quite dramatically from one end to the other.

Third, Premier Road and North Moor Road are natural but major boundaries that separate distinct areas. The Commission has ignored its own advice to use such main roads to draw boundaries. This is another indicator of the extent that this is an amalgam of leftover parts and not a coherent community.

We take offence at the Commission report's emphasis of the significance of Silksworth's history whilst treating the history of Humbledon (which is duly cut in half) with such contempt. This subjective assessment of one community's historic identity without consideration for another's claim to equally important heritage cannot be the basis for decision making.

Humbledon must remain united in a single ward. To carve out some but not all of the Humbledon Avenues and to give them to Grindon Ward is absurd - they are not Grindon, they are Humbledon. But in doing so the Commission has separated them from the other Humbledon Avenue (namely, Scruton Avenue which is also Humbledon): it looks to us that the Commission knows so little of this area that it has treated this latter part of Humbledon as if it is Plains Farm, as only Humbledon Hill is referred to as being in the new St Chad's Ward. This is not the case; ignorance of the area is evident to those who know it. Residents in the Avenues are active in our group, they use the Humbledon and Plains Farm Community Centre, they use the local amenities from which they are now apparently unconnected and their children attend schools in the new St Chad's Ward or the new Barnes and Thornhill Ward. Connects to Farringdon and East Herringdon are non-existent. All of the Humbledon Avenues are also part of the Gentoo (housing provider) estate and this proposal makes for bad community governance as it means Gentoo will now have to consult two sets of councillors about its affairs in Humbledon, whereas presently Gentoo only has to consult one set of councillors.

We believe that the representations placed online from Silksworth residents are actually asking for a ward that is exclusively Silksworth. We note in the social media posts from those who campaigned against the Farringdon and Silksworth Ward that they were suggesting Silksworth (i.e. the place) would be renamed as Farringdon rather than the ward naming change. This is reflected in the bitterness of the comments submitted and we urge the Commission to see these comments in the context of a misleading campaign which suggested the Farringdon and Silksworth Ward - which was perfectly sensible - was actually an effort to change the name of the former pit village.

In that vein, we reject the new Silksworth Ward on the basis it is no such thing: it is 50% Silksworth and then Tunstall with a fragment of Ashbrooke (for some reason). They are separated by a huge amount of green space (Tunstall Hills included) which means they have nothing in common. Tunstall does, however, have strong links to Humbledon and many of our members are from there - not least that Tunstall youth football club trains on the Humbledon and Plains Farm Community Centre site at Plains Farm Academy.

We strongly endorse the previously proposed Barnes and Thornhill Ward and Tunstall and Humbledon Ward. Our Forum exists to represent these two areas and we have a very strong sense of local issues, local amenities (which we do a lot of advertising on behalf of) and of things like

public transport links. It is for this reason that we must so strongly object to the notion that Plains Farm and Humbledon residents have anything at all in common with, or consider part of their community, the areas of Farringdon and East Herrington. We know from our role as a digital community notice board that there are never any connections, mutual events, shared services, etc in these areas. Humbledon residents cannot even take a bus to the other end of the new St Chad's Ward as a result of recent Nexus/Stagecoach route changes. The local schools used by Humbledon residents are Plains Farm Academy, St Mary's, Hill View Juniors and Southmoor/St Aidan's/St Anthony's. All of this points to a community which is closer to the aforementioned Tunstall and Humbledon Ward. Much in the same way that Silksworth residents' teenage children will go to Farringdon Academy rather than travel to the previously mentioned schools.

The Commission identifies its own uncertainty about these wards. We see it is not confident that it has arrived at the right answer. It is right to have those doubts - these wards are anathema to logic. This proposal carves up more communities than it protects. The Commission will never appease those who want Silksworth Village to be a standalone ward: its links to Farringdon are more logical than circumnavigating Silksworth to merge Farringdon with Humbledon. We urge the Commission to revert to the previous proposal and make small and sensible changes from there.

Please do not persist with this Frankenstein's Creature of a ward.

Attached Documents:

None attached