

Newcastle upon Tyne

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Comment text:

Related subject: Jesmond

I am a resident of Jesmond Vale which, as the name suggests, forms an integral part of Jesmond. I object to the proposed Jesmond Ward boundary as it excludes Jesmond Vale.

The houses and flats in Jesmond Vale were built on part of the Jesmond Park estate. It is bounded by the roads Churchill Gardens, Lansdowne Gardens, Northumberland Gardens, Selborne Gardens, Rosebery Place, Rosebery Crescent, the A1058 and Jesmond Dene Road.

The Boundary Commission proposal seems to rely on a virtual tour of the area and submissions made by local councillors. However, none of these councillors live in this part of Jesmond and a virtual tour of the area would not represent a very reliable picture of our community. A proper analysis of the topography of the area would show that in terms of walking and cycling there are very limited accessible routes connecting us to Ouseburn and Shieldfield. The only direct step access is up and down a very steep bank on poorly maintained routes. In the 1980s when the A1058 Cradlewell bypass was constructed the new road was specifically built in a tunnel to reduce the severance of Jesmond. All the services that we can easily walk and cycle to are within the wider Jesmond ward, including doctors, dentists, supermarkets and local shops, and leisure facilities.

Probably the most pertinent reason why this area should be included in the wider Jesmond ward came to light in the recent experiences of the East Jesmond Low Traffic Neighbourhood (EJLTN) experiment. This created a vehicle barrier across the lower part of Jesmond. It had a direct and negative effect on numerous residents in Jesmond including those of us who live in Jesmond Vale.

The access to services by sustainable modes is a luxury allowed to some but elderly and infirm who can't cycle or walk very far quickly felt isolated. This isolation was made acute by severing the connection to our Jesmond services and exacerbated by the poor choice of alternative routes for residents. The scheme was eventually removed because of the negative effect on residents.

This failed experiment that led to widespread community concern and severance highlighted the importance of ward boundaries reflecting community boundaries. The current ward boundaries mean that only part of wider Jesmond is in North Jesmond ward and a smaller part in South Jesmond ward. South Jesmond ward largely comprises Sandyford and parts of Shieldfield. Much of this community were not concerned about the impact of the EJLTN as it had no direct effect on them.

All of this meant the North Jesmond ward councillors were fully engaged in the EJLTN debate and fully represented the residents' concerns. In contrast because most of the South Jesmond ward community are not in Jesmond and were not directly affected by the EJLTN our ward councillors did little to represent the views of the Jesmond Vale residents because their seats do not depend on voters in Jesmond Vale.

My conclusion is that if ward boundaries reflect communities our local representation would be more responsive to the communities they serve. So including Jesmond Vale in the new Jesmond ward would reflect the community as it is on the ground, rather than creating an artificial boundary along major roads that would exacerbate the severance of our community.

It is also of concern that your consultation cites the views of both the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. I am not clear of the relevance of party-political views as to ward boundaries. If wards reflect communities, we will get representation that serves the whole community and not artificial boundaries you propose supported by the views of politicians who, it seems, don't understand the nature of the community they serve.

Attached Documents:

None attached