

Newcastle upon Tyne

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Comment text:

Related subject: Jesmond Ward

See attached

Attached Documents:

- jesmond-ward.docx

I object to the proposed Jesmond Ward boundary as it does not include all of Jesmond. My reasons are set out below.

The area formerly known as the Minories and now most commonly referred to as Jesmond Vale has been part of the community of Jesmond since the development of Jesmond in the late 19th century. The houses were built on part of Jesmond Park and consequently the area was originally called the Jesmond Park Estate. This area is bounded by the roads Churchill Gardens, Lansdowne Gardens, Northumberland Gardens, Selborne Gardens, Roseberry Place, Roseberry Crescent, the A1058 and Jesmond Dene Road.

Reading the boundary commission submission it seems to rely on a virtual tour of the area and submissions made by local councillors. Firstly it should be noted none of the local councillors live in this part of Jesmond and a virtual tour of this area would not represent a very reliable picture of this community. This area should remain part of the Jesmond ward for the following reasons:

- All of our services that we can easily walk and cycle to are within the wider Jesmond ward - doctors, dentists, opticians, supermarkets and local shops;
- A meaningful 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 up and down a very steep bank is 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.

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 basically proposed 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 and a smaller part in South Jesmond. South Jesmond ward is largely Sandyford and parts of Shieldfield. The majority of this community were not concerned about the impact of the EJLTN as it had no direct effect on their community.

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 the majority 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 Jesmond would reflect the community as it is rather than creating an artificial boundary along major roads that simply serve to continue 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 the representation that serve 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.