

Solihull

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Comment text:

Hi There,

I am writing to express my deep concern at the proposals which have been accepted by the Boundary Commission in relation to the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council boundary reviews 2026. My concern specifically relates to the proposal by Solihull Green Party to move the area known as "The CARS Area" of Smith's Wood into neighbouring Castle Bromwich, while taking in large parts of Kingshurst to compensate. the key areas of concern are:

-The CARS area is a very distinct part of Smith's Wood. residents of that area are fiercely proud of it and will never accept being part of Castle Bromwich. Boundary Commission guidelines state that a sense of community perception is a material factor.

-The CARS Area bears no resemblance to any part of Castle Bromwich, either in property style or social demographic. The proposal as written would create an "us and them" dynamic when residents in that area already perceive that they are not "the posh bit" of the borough. There is substantial evidence of this on social media.

-There are a significant number of properties far better suited by way of demographic and property type which could be taken into Castle Bromwich, specifically laid out in the original submission below (Buckingham Road, Windsor Road, Mey Coppice etc). Residents of those roads do not consider themselves part of Smith's Wood. When asked, they will answer that they live in Castle Bromwich.

-Proposals as written will be only a tiny fraction of Kingshurst left in the Kingshurst ward. Large parts of North Kingshurst have already been taken

into Kingshurst and residents have never been happy about this. Indeed, millions of pounds are being spent on Kinghurst village Centre, only for it to end up being deep inside Smith's Wood post-2026.

We are currently carrying out a sizeable consultation exercise on this and are encouraging residents to contact you with their thoughts. However, initial reactions are that of extreme upset.

Sadly, knowing the electorate of this area as I do, I can confirm that the Green Party are unfortunately trying to gerrymander the boundaries to improve their electoral chances in Kingshurst & Fordbridge. This as we know is strongly discouraged by the Boundary Commission. I would urge the Boundary Commission to reject their proposal and instead move the roads outlined below (Buckingham, Windsor, Balmoral Mey etc) into Castle Bromwich, while leaving Kingshurst as it is.

Such is my level of concern at this proposal, I would like to invite Boundary Commission representatives on a tour of the affected areas to see for themselves just how different the suggested areas are. I appreciate that there may already have been visits and I have no issue with Castle Bromwich taking on more residents, but I cannot overstate the damage that these proposals pose to local communities. I do hope that you would be willing to send someone.

I have included below my full original submission and map proposal for reference.

Many thanks!

Kind Regards,
Cllr Alan Feeney
Castle Bromwich Ward
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

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ORIGINAL SUBMISSION:

"Castle Bromwich ward forms part of the historic village of Castle Bromwich. It has a central conservation area, traditional village green area, as well as later developments dating back to the mid-1950's onwards. Many original occupants of these homes still live here. It stands on over 1000 years of history and much evidence of Roman settlements has been found here. It is a parished area with a strong sense of community. As a ward, it has very distinct boundaries that would be difficult to move. For example, the southern boundary of Bradford Road and Chester Road

abuts Birmingham City Council's outer boundary. The Collector Road also abuts Birmingham City and North Warwickshire councils, making them impossible to move as part of this exercise. Lanchester Way represents a distinct, recognisable boundary between Castle Bromwich and the neighbouring Smith's Wood.

Interesting 'quirks' to note include the Castle Bromwich motte-and-bailey castle site, known locally as "Pimple Hill". That has now been isolated by the construction of the Collector Road and M6 motorway and is virtually inaccessible. Lanchester Park is part of the Castle Bromwich ward, though sits on the border of Smith's Wood. However, Castle Bromwich residents and the 'Friends of Castle Bromwich Parks' group have done a great deal of work improving the park and would be keen to retain it in any review.

Subject to the proposed number of electors per ward to be agreed, I would propose that Castle Bromwich ward remain unchanged at this time. However, should the ward find itself 'underpopulated' in upcoming proposals, there remains the scope to take in the streets of Buckingham Road, Windsor Road, Balmoral Road and the matching section of Chester Road. This would gain c300 electors who would consider themselves Castle Bromwich residents. These properties are of the same style and occupancy as the Castle Bromwich 1950's-era dwellings, yet unlike the homes characteristic to Smith's Wood ward where they are currently situated. The new ward boundary (if required) would then become the perimeter of Smith's Wood playing fields and Smith's Wood Academy. This utilises distinct features IE main roads as a new boundary.

Should further absorption become necessary, the roads of Silver Birch, Laburnum and Ash could be included, adding c600 further electors. It should be noted that residents of those roads would more consider themselves to be residents of Kingshurst and this would be purely an exercise in balancing numbers.

Further consideration of shops, schools, community groups etc opens up wider implications. Of the possible roads to take in, most will shop at the are known as "The Timberley" where the main supermarkets are located. However, it is unlikely that children on those roads would attend Castle Bromwich schools, favouring Smith's Wood Academy instead.

In terms of community groups, both areas have distinct parish councils. There are various litter picking groups and community organisations who work within existing ward boundaries and may not consider themselves Castle Bromwich residents.

Other points to note are that Castle Bromwich and Smith's Wood now sit in a new parliamentary constituency, that of Birmingham Hodge Hill and Solihull North. It is almost certain that any attempt to balance elector numbers will result in anomalies at elections. Boundary Commission guidelines seek to avoid this, however it may not be possible in this case without a significant skew in elector numbers.

ENDS

Attached Documents:

None attached