

Solihull

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Comment text:

Poor old Castle Bromwich. What has it done to upset the Boundary Commission?

Last year voters were informed that Castle Bromwich would be taken out of the constituency of Meriden and become part of the constituency of Hodge Hill. This was despite an avalanche of objections from Castle Bromwich residents and the fact that Castle Bromwich had never had any ties geographically, historically or economically with Hodge Hill. In the residents eyes the Boundary Commission seemed to ignore the criteria that they were supposed to take into account when making their decision.

Now it is proposed that the cars area of Smiths Wood becomes part of the ward of Castle Bromwich. Why is this? It is not for the benefit of Castle Bromwich or Smiths Wood residents it is for electoral purposes but it won't encourage a greater turnout at local elections. Castle Bromwich has never had anything in common with Smiths Wood and never will have due to many factors. They are chalk and cheese.

1. Castle Bromwich is a large well established suburb of private 19th and 20th century housing many with medium to large/ substantial gardens. Originally an agricultural area Castle Bromwich first developed around Castle Bromwich Hall and St Mary and St Margarets Church. It has some fine buildings in its conservation area which are grade 2 listed. The 1950s onwards saw an expansion of private house building in Castle Bromwich. All houses have their own drives and garages which lead onto residential roads. There are some areas of social housing built in the early 1980s on the Parkfields Estate without drives and gardens although the flats and maisonettes are set in green communal areas. In contrast the Smiths Wood cars area was built as council housing on farm land and woodland in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The housing is densely built in a small area hemmed in by the A452 and the M6 with tiny or no gardens. Many dwellings can only be reached by alley ways and not all

the houses/maisonettes have vehicle access to roads, the garages being in a block. Some of these houses are now privately owned

2. Castle Bromwich has public green spaces as well as open parkland and two village greens also playing fields, a cricket pitch, a sports pavilion and tennis courts. There is also a newly renovated childrens playground. Smiths Wood area has access to a park built along side the M6 but little if any other open spaces or sports facilities.

3. The parish precept for Castle Bromwich is higher than the precept for Smiths Wood. This would mean the cars area of Smiths Wood having to pay this higher rate.

4. Castle Bromwich has nothing in common with the cars area of Smiths Wood historically, geographically or economically. Their identities and interests as communities are poles apart. Having worked in the cars area of Smiths Wood in the past I know that there is a lot of deprivation, social problems and crime related incidents in comparison to Castle Bromwich. The cars area is not part of the other area of Smiths Wood that has now been regenerated.

I can not understand why the Green Party seem to be deciding where the new ward boundaries should be. It poses the question as to why the Green Party want to pass on the cars area to Castle Bromwich. Are they a drain financially? Have they too many social problems? The Green Party councillors who are promoting the new boundaries know that the two areas are unsuitable to be combined because of their differences. They have nothing in common. The Green Party campaigned very effectively in Castle Bromwich several years ago and two Green Party candidates were elected to SMBC. Within 2 years both councillors resigned leaving one Conservative Councillor to cover the area. The Greens' reputation is somewhat sullied.

I would urge the Boundary Commission to rethink whether the cars area of Smiths Wood is a suitable match with Castle Bromwich. Last year the Commission dealt a severe blow to Castle Bromwich when they moved it into the constituency of Hodge Hill. Hodge Hill has many social and financial problems and it is the most deprived constituency in the country. I feel that through their actions the Boundary Commission may damage Castle Bromwich once again so that the area loses more of its identity and deteriorates further. I hope the Commission will reject the idea of combining the cars area of Smiths Wood with Castle Bromwich.

Attached Documents:

None attached