

Solihull

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Comment text:

Related subject: Boundary Commission Consultation Olton Ward

We recently received a letter through our door from Councillor James Bradley, informing us of the update on the Boundary Commission consultation affecting the Ward of Olton – namely Scott Rd, Fernhill Road and Richmond Road.

We understand that there was a recommendation by one resident to move the area beyond the Grand Union canal to the Lyndon ward as there is a ‘topographical disconnect’.

My husband and I live at [REDACTED], in a house that was built in 1872, just 3 years after Olton Railway Station was built. It was built by James Kent, a wealthy business man, on land that was leased from the Josiah Mason Trust and in 1885 St Margarets School was built, also on Richmond Road. We have found evidence of our house and the surrounding properties appearing on historic maps of Olton (not Lyndon) dating back to this time. All the terrace houses on Richmond Road are over 150 years old and have a deep-rooted history of being in Olton, indeed compared to many of the other houses in Olton, our houses have been part of the Olton community far longer than many of the newer builds that sprung up in the following years. They were designed for workers to live in Olton and use the newly built Olton Railway way station to commute to work in Birmingham city centre.

When we purchased this house, it was on the understanding that the house was in the ward of Olton, not Lyndon ward. So, we are really struggling to understand where the ‘topographical disconnect’ is here? Anyone who drives down our road will make the connection that these were terrace houses built in the 1800’s, around the time of Olton Railway station – to us that is a ‘topographical connection’, more of a connection than say the houses on Braemar Road. These houses are as much a part of the geographical landscape connected to Olton as is the Mere, the Friary, the houses on St Bernards and the station. It seems preposterous that one resident can put forward a recommendation, that our road and the surrounding area be moved to the Lyndon ward because quite frankly they don’t like the look of these roads.

The fact that the commission who visited the area, agree with this is incredibly disheartening too and indicates that a lack of research and understanding of the local history of the area. If this area is so offensive to them why don't they annex the area entire area beyond the Warwick Road? Oh, but that would mean Olton Station would have to be re-named Lyndon Station wouldn't it? If Olton Railway station had been built the other side of the canal would the commission still be using the canal as the boundary line? No they wouldn't.

If you examine the social economic status of Olton North of which Richmond Road falls under, it scores consistently higher than the other LSOA's in the ward. For example, on the IMD Deprivation index it scored considerably higher than Olton South and Langley Hall and again on the IDACI index it ranked higher than these two other LSOA's. So it does very much feel that this decision is being based on our roads not looking quite right, as opposed to any other reason.

Comments about the area such as "it was like entering a different country, let alone a different part of Solihull" reek of condescension and downright snobbery and are highly offensive to the hard-working residents who live in the area. It shows a lack of disdain and is completely out of touch with the real world, it's very disheartening to hear that just because we can't all afford to live in million-pound properties such as those on St Bernards Road, that our section of Olton should be cast aside and joined with Lyndon. Can the commission demonstrate how our house has links to the Lyndon community because we couldn't find any? We would also be interested to understand further why it's the Conservative councillors that are supporting this move? If the Conservative party wants to move forward they need to realise that ostracising their potential constituents due to outdated misconceptions of 'areas' will not help their cause.

Its hard to believe that in this day and age, the commission can propose this recommendation, and the council support it, despite a documented rich history of the houses and community spaces that are intrinsically linked to the Olton Ward. We will be very disappointed and disillusioned of this change goes ahead, as we believe that this will be contrary to the what the majority of residents who would be affected want and will demonstrate unfair bias on the part of the commission and the council if they support this.

██████████, Residents of OLTON

Attached Documents:

None attached