

Submission in response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's Draft Proposals for Kings Heath Ward from Kings Heath Residents Forum

Kings Heath Residents Forum wishes to make the following points about which we had a full consensus in our meetings :-

- We very strongly welcome the identification of Kings Heath as an electoral ward. Kings Heath is a very distinct area, with its own unique characteristics and history. However, the area which is popularly identified as Kings Heath is currently split between 3 local government wards and 2 parliamentary constituencies and therefore has not received the focus which it requires.
- The Residents Forum carried out a public consultation about which boundary should be recognised for Kings Heath when it was first established in the early 1990s and again when there was a major renewal of the Forum in 2011. This consultation was conducted through a number of well attended public meetings, comments through social media and a final public meeting facilitated by officers from Birmingham City Council at which a number of options were considered. The option which won overwhelming support is the area which the Forum currently serves (attached below as Appendix) and is roughly the area continuously served by the Forum since the 1990s. Birmingham City Council also recognised this area when it subsequently approved the constitution of the Forum (necessary for the Forum to be recognised as a legitimate neighbourhood forum).
- Notably this area draws people together around the A435, Kings Heath High Street and shopping centre. In comparison with the draft Boundary Commission proposals it goes further south to include Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre and Golf Course, and south east along Hollybank Road to include Kings Heath Boys School and does not include some of the streets to the north east. It does include some streets clustered around the A435 which are parts of the current Brandwood and Billesley wards where it appeared people very strongly identified themselves as belonging to Kings Heath and appeared to see the current local government wards as artificial administrative creations.
- We would recommend that this area (or as much of it as fits the numbers required for an electoral ward) is considered the basis for the new Kings Heath ward.
- Kings Heath is the largest shopping centre in South Birmingham. It is also the third biggest shopping centre in the City and has a vibrant Business Improvement District.
- It is very well served by a network of bus services including a very frequent service into the city centre and outwards, and also by the outer circle bus route comes through Kings Heath centre comprising a comprehensive transport hub with Kings Heath at the centre.
- Kings Heath is also a real centre for community with local cafes, pubs, restaurants and music venues bringing people together. Other organisations and centres include the Baptist Church, St Duncan's Catholic Church, Station Rd Mosque, Kings Heath Library, Kings Heath Residents Forum, Kings Heath Transition, Kings Heath Business Association, All Saints Centre and Church including the relatively recently created Kings Heath Village Square at the junction of the High Street and Vicarage Road. There are also many schools in Kings Heath, which are very significant as part of the local community.
- Recently a major public consultation was undertaken to gain ideas about how Kings Heath High St could be improved. This was carried out by Sustrans (DIY streets) and had wide

local support to improve the roads, pavements and related features with a proposed gateway for north and south sides of the High Street.

- Highbury Park is a major feature of Kings Heath and we would strongly uphold the case for it be part of Kings Heath ward. Local residents, businesses and the City Council created Kings Heath Centre Partnership to improve Kings Heath. One of its first initiatives was to establish the 10,000 step Kings Heath Floral Trail linking Highbury Park with Kings Heath Park and the shopping centre. Highbury Park was part of Kings Heath's The Floral Trail which came third in the national Britain In Bloom awards in 2013. Kings Heath Centre Partnership and Kings Heath Business Improvement District have also paid for a community noticeboard in the park and helped create a Hay Meadow within Highbury Park as well as providing a number of other planting schemes The park is supported in a number of ways by volunteers from Kings Heath (eg Community Orchard project, planting, litter-picking etc). Residents of Kings Heath recognise it as one of their parks intrinsically linked to Kings Heath High Street and shopping centre. Clearly it is also a wider resource for the area but is very much serviced in practical ways by activities of volunteers from Kings Heath, which is a key relationship.
- We agree that Yew Tree Lane is an effective boundary around Highbury Park but notice that there is a small clutch of buildings on Yew Tree Lane which is not included in the Kings Heath boundary. We would recommend for simplicity and ease of understanding that these buildings are included in Kings Heath Ward. We would also suggest that it would be very practical to include these buildings with the park as they are edging on to it and any issues concerning the development of these sites would be crucial to the integrity of the park area.
- Regarding our suggestion that Kings Heath extends further south than the draft proposals of the Boundary Commission, we are aware that when Kings Heath Business Improvement District erected a sign on the Howard Road junction with Alcester Rd there were complaints from people living further south that Kings Heath really starts a lot further south. There is indeed a Highways signpost currently present near Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre saying "Kings Heath".

The Forum also discussed whether one councillor to one ward was likely to be a better system. It's fair to say that opinion was somewhat divided on this but we were agreed that the above points were important if the Commission is minded to pursue that principle.

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APPENDIX – area served by Kings Heath Residents Forum

