

Weston on Trent Parish Council's response to proposed boundary review

As a resident of Aston on Trent, you may have seen, in recent days, a leaflet from Aston on Trent Parish Council seeking your views on whether a review of existing parish boundaries is justified. In order to inform a fair and balanced response, the additional points below have been compiled and distributed by the Weston on Trent Parish Councillors for your consideration.

- The idea of this potential review was first raised by AoT PC in 2018, at which time Weston on Trent PC met with South Derbyshire District Council's Chief Executive, Frank McCardle to understand the potential outcomes. Mr McCardle provided us with a clearer understanding of the boundary review process and what it entails. It was made quite clear during this discussion that once initiated, the process is entirely outside of both Parish Councils influence. The point was also made clear that the merging of both Parishes is a very realistic outcome of launching this process. This outcome is fundamentally against the wishes of Weston on Trent Parish. In our view, this could mean any future development proposals (such as those from Gladman and Richborough) would be viewed in a different light and serious consideration should be given to increased possibility of residential infill on the land between Aston and Weston if we are viewed as one Parish. Furthermore, the review could result in a 'bigger picture' review of boundaries outside of Aston and Weston. With recent changes proposed to parliamentary boundaries, there is serious concern that wider implications could result, one possibility being a merged Parish being considered for inclusion in the Derby City boundary.
- It was also clear from the SDDC meeting that executing the boundary review requires a considerable investment of time for the district council. As an organisation funded by us, the South Derbyshire residents, Weston on Trent PC consider this an avoidable diversion of funds and attention that could otherwise be deployed on something more positive for the wider community.
- Over recent years, both villages have formed an excellent collaboration through the SAVE organisation, that has successfully defended two major developments and their resultant impact on traffic volumes. The definition of the Parish areas had no bearing on this success as it was largely the separation of the two settlements that was considered important.
- If this proposed boundary change were to go ahead, the result would be a reduction in size of the Weston on Trent Parish by roughly one third. At best, this is likely to result in a significant impact on the Parish funding (with potential rate increases for Weston on Trent residents). At worst, the resulting Parish may be considered unviable to operate as an independent Parish.
- Weston on Trent PC fully accept that many residents of the estates occupying the old hospital grounds will identify with Aston on Trent as their home village. However this has no bearing on the level of investment in this area of the Parish (both financially and time). Weston have forged relationships with Richmond Villages as well as sharing costs for the bowling green. Other examples include funding and provision of the notice board and dog waste bins, regular grass cutting and support for local planning issues.
- The current boundary is historically significant, dating back at least as far as 1009 and is even mentioned in the Domesday Book. The area in question is one that Weston on Trent Parish Council have actively been involved in the regeneration of over the past twenty years or so. In reality, the PC border is an administrative border that is not consciously considered by many residents and has no bearing on their feeling of belonging to a community.

In summary, this proposal is one that Weston on Trent Parish Council is fundamentally opposed to. Not only does it invoke a costly and time-consuming process that would lead to little tangible benefit but it would also introduce significant risks to the sustained identity of both Parish Councils and the two separate communities we serve. Our point is not primarily one of history or financial implications, but we must preserve the identity of the communities we serve. Should this boundary review be invoked, there is no telling what direction it will take and the outcome will be totally outside of the control of both Parish Councils.

If you would like to comment directly to Weston on Trent Parish Council, please respond via email to clerk@westonontrent.com