

THE ISLINGTON SOCIETY

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Boundary Commission Draft Recommendation for Ward Boundaries within Islington

Islington Society response to consultation

October 2019

A. Principles

1. Numbers, communities, growth and occupancy

We consider that the rationale for this round of boundary revisions is flawed.

The increase in the number of councillors to 51 was fixed on the basis of previous data; if the new data prediction of a significant increase in electorate is correct, 51 will be inadequate. The previous data was based on actual numbers: the new data reflects projections which may not be borne out in practice. In particular it is unclear what account if any has been taken of buy-to-lease or purchase by corporate organisations needing to provide temporary housing to a stream of workers from overseas who would be ineligible to vote.

Under these rules, it has proved impossible to avoid the introduction of a new ward, splitting communities.

2. Principals of Boundary Proposals

i.. Response to Warding Arrangements, June 2019.

The Islington Society's response to the consultation on warding arrangements remain pertinent, June 2019. A copy is appended at Appendix A for reference.

ii. The following recommendations are based on the principles of :

- *rational, simple ward boundaries for easy identification*
- *use natural and historic boundaries,*
- *restoring the principle of reflecting the communities within wards*
- *recognising the importance of strategic centres in boundary changes*

iii.. These principles are also set out in the Local Government Boundary Commission's Summary Report, July 2019

"A good pattern of wards should:

- *Reflect community interests and identities and includ[ing] community links.*
- *Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries."*

B. Detailed comments

Islington Society Recommendations

Under the following recommendations, the boundaries will be substantially rationalised and simplified for easy identification by voters, while the voter numbers will be adjusted slightly, but not significantly enough to change the councillor numbers. They will be strong and easily identifiable

1. Hillrise/Tollington Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is simplified to follow the route of the clear, natural line of the Barking / Dagenham railway line for clarity and simplicity.

The area transferred from Hillrise to Tollington Ward will balance the area transferred from Junction to Hillrise Ward.

2. Hillrise/Junction Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is simplified to avoid irrational boundaries along residential streets that split the local community and instead to follow the line of the natural and significant boundaries of Archway and Holloway Roads (the N1) for clarity and simplicity.

The area transferred from Junction to Hillrise Ward will balance the area transferred from St George's to Junction Ward,

This adjustment has the additional benefit of providing the Archway Strategic Centre with councillors from two wards (see Recommendation 4, Islington Society June 2019 response to consultation, Appendix A)

3. Junction/St.George's

It is recommended that the boundary is simplified to avoid arbitrary boundaries along residential streets that split the local community and instead to follow the line of the natural boundary of Tufnell Park Road for clarity and simplicity.

The area transferred from St Georges to Junction Ward will balance the area transferred from Holloway to St Georges Ward.

4. St George's/Holloway Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is moved from Parkhurst Road to Camden Road along its length.

The area transferred from Holloway to St George's Ward will balance the area transferred from St George's to Junction Ward.

This adjustment has the benefit of reducing the number of Wards colliding at the Heart of the Nag's Head Strategic Centre to three (see Recommendation 4, Islington Society June 2019 response to consultation, Appendix A)

5. Notes on St. George's Ward

The loss of a small number of voters in the area arising from the transfers in 3. and 4. above Allow for the future projected increase in the ward resulting from the development of the Holloway Prison site (see Recommendation 1.i, Islington Society June 2019 response to consultation, Appendix A)

See also 10.i, Names, below

6. Holloway/ Caledonian Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is moved from Market Road to Brewery Road. This transfer brings the related recreational facilities of Caledonian Park, Islington tennis Centre and the football pitches into the responsibilities of the councillors of a single ward.

The area contains very few residential sites and there are no electoral implications to this transfer.

7. Tollington/Finsbury Park Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is simplified to avoid irrational boundaries along rear property boundaries. Main Roads are the natural Ward Boundary lines.

The recommended boundary lines are Seven Sister Road, Hornsey Road and Tollington Park.

The minor area transfers balance each other.

8. Highbury/Mildmay Wards

It is recommended that the boundary is simplified to avoid irrational boundaries along rear property boundaries. Main Roads are the natural Ward Boundary lines.

The recommended main boundary lines on this showing are Corsica Street, Baalbec Road, and Highbury New Park to the Borough Boundary (with local minor connection adjustments).

The minor area transfers balance each other.

It is noted that the natural southern east-west Boundary is Highbury Grove, the principal road, and this is the preferred boundary. It is recognised, however, that there may be some difficulty in reconciling elector numbers in this case. We have not made a recommendation in this respect.

9. Notes on Wards South of the North London Line and including 'Central' Ward.

- i. In the absence of detailed site specific elector numbers, we are unable to comment in the proposed extensive re-setting of ward boundaries except to note that:
- ii. We are not convinced that the population numbers based on predicted population figures beyond the 2019 predictions to 2024 are sound (refer to Section B.1, Islington Society June 2019 response to consultation, *Appendix A*),
- iii. We are not convinced that the ward boundaries proposed adequately reflect the existing local communities and
- iv. Ward boundaries should be rational and simple and use natural and historic boundaries easy identification.
- v. In this respect, boundaries along minor residential road do not make sense.
- vi. We support the comments and recommendations of other community groups in this area.

10. Notes on Names

- i. The Islington Society recommends against changing the long established historic name of 'St George's' ward to 'Tufnell Park'. The current name is well-known and familiar to residents in the area. There are two identifiable St George's churches in the ward.
- ii. 'Canalside & St. Peters' and 'St Mary & St James' are too long and too much of a mouth-full.
- iii. 'Central' is vague and implies that it is more significant than other Wards. The Islington Society recommends 'Laycock' as a better name.

Appendix A

Boundary commission review of Ward boundaries within Islington Islington Society response to consultation

June 2019

A. General

Background to boundaries, population numbers and projections

1. The current Parliamentary Constituencies.

If the distinction between the two constituencies is maintained, the 17th ward would now be in the South. The average size of wards in the North would then be 10,176. This is above the cross Borough average of 9,900.

2. Three members per ward.

There are real, significant advantages in keeping to the principle of three members in every ward. It provides cover if one member falls ill or has to work away from London. There are occasions when it is necessary for two councillors to represent competing interests within their ward.

B. Recommendations in Principle

Islington Society Recommendations

1. Numbers, growth and occupancy

i. The population numbers should be based on predicted population figures beyond the 2019 predictions for 2024, to take account of future, anticipated growth otherwise it will soon be necessary to re-assess ward boundaries afresh.

Example : The Holloway Prison site cannot be ignored. We recommend that St. George's should be kept at a minimum in order to accommodate the anticipated growth when the Holloway Prison site is developed.

ii. If the phenomenon of 'Buy to Leave' persists, this will produce an imbalance in the workload of councillors, and some account of this should be taken in setting ward boundaries.

2. Wards should reflect the underlying communities

Wards are supposed to reflect communities. The guidelines are that there should be at least one primary school in each ward.

Example : Canonbury Ward has currently has no primary schools. Rotherfield School could be restored to Canonbury.

3. Rational Boundaries

Boundaries should be rational and should, wherever possible, follow natural, clearly defined and readily described boundaries. The rational boundaries are railway lines (North London, Gospel Oak to Barking and East Coast Lines) and main arterial roads that present natural boundaries.

This is not just neatness; it is necessary for the sake of the ordinary people of Islington who generally haven't a clue where irrational ward boundaries are, especially when they dodge about along obscure streets.

Example : re-aligning the Canonbury Ward boundary along New North Road (an arterial road and natural boundary) would restore Canonbury and / or Rotherfield Schools to Canonbury Ward.

4. Strategic centres.

Ward boundaries should take account of the borough's strategic centres*, providing rational ward councillor ownership and scrutiny to them.

At present, Nag's Head (where four wards come together) and Angel (which has three) are split up into pie-pieces while Archway is in just one ward.

We recommend that the main strategic centres* should be included always in two, and only two, Wards This would provide three councillors in each of two adjacent wards straddling a strategic centre* so that both sets of three councillors had an clear interest in and provided cross-check scrutiny/accountability

* Strategic Centres are : Archway, Nag's Head, Highbury Corner, Angel.

The two on the borough boundary, Finsbury Park and Old Street (Bunhill), each in just one ward, have cross-borough ownership, scrutiny and accountability.

C. Summary

The Islington Society recommends :

- a. maintaining the principle of three member wards,
- b. restoring natural and some historic boundaries,
- c. recognising and incorporating in boundary changes the importance of strategic centres in the borough and
- d. restoring the principle of reflecting the communities within wards, including a primary school in every ward.

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