

We are responding to the draft recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for 'New electoral arrangements for Brighton & Hove City Council' dated February 2022.

This is a combined response from the **Friends of Brunswick Square & Terrace (FBST)**, the **Lansdowne Area Residents Association (LARA)** and the **Friends of Palmeira & Adelaide (FOPA)**. We are the Residents' Associations for the vast majority of residents and separate communities within the Brunswick & Adelaide ward of Brighton & Hove City Council. As such, we are responding, in the main, to the proposal, within the draft recommendations, to join the Brunswick & Adelaide ward with a reconfigured (from current size) Regency ward under the name of 'Regency'.

In the first instance, we are dismayed that these proposals are based on a 'virtual tour' of Brighton & Hove and that no physical visit has been made to the City to ascertain and assess the issues that will affect, and be affected by, the proposed boundary changes. We cannot accept that a virtual tour, no matter how detailed, could relay the nature of the various communities within the City and the differing nature of the needs and interests of those communities within the current electoral wards.

For background purposes, the Brunswick area of Hove is, historically, the original buildings built outside of Brighton to the west, which eventually became Hove. As such the area of Brunswick & Adelaide has a significant part in the history of the Hove part of the City – both in its origin and its architecture.

As part of the proposal to incorporate Brunswick & Adelaide into a 'Regency' ward, the historic boundary that separates Hove from Brighton is completely ignored. This boundary is marked by the Peace statue on the seafront is acknowledged by all residents as where you move from Brighton to Hove or vice versa. No virtual tour can relay the depth of feeling amongst residents about whether they are resident within Brighton or Hove. Any ward that encompasses such a large and historic part of central Hove with such a large and central part of 'tourist' Brighton **is not meeting one of your three statutory criteria - 'reflecting community interests and identities'**.

The main thrust of your reasoning behind opting for the Conservative Group's proposals with regard to the Brunswick & Adelaide ward is seemingly condensed into one paragraph in the Commission's proposals – paragraph 109. It states that the Conservative Group's proposals 'provided for the best balance of our three statutory criteria' and that on your virtual tour of the area you 'observed strong similarities between properties on Western Road and have been persuaded by arguments related to their shared use of local amenities and the area's centrality to local tourism'.

Even if one accepts the statement that there is a strong similarity of properties along Western Road – which we do not – then to suggest we have anything in common with the current part of the Regency ward, that you intend to merge us with, is completely at odds with the facts and your statutory criteria. The major part of the current Regency ward is a tourist area consisting of the conference centre, the biggest cinema, the main shopping centre, most of the nightclubs, seafront restaurants and bars frequented by the majority of day-trippers. It is an area with the highest concentration of police activity and is for the most part the commercial centre of Brighton.

By contrast, the Brunswick & Adelaide ward is a quiet, residential area where families and children live. It is an area consisting of residential squares, terraces, streets and crescents of Grade 1 & 2 listed Regency and early Victorian properties and incorporates a large conservation area. The only real commercial activity is along Western Road where the businesses are far more independent and community focused than the large brand names and chains that occupy Western Road in the current Regency ward. The Brunswick & Adelaide ward therefore has little or no 'shared use of local amenities' with Regency ward and is in no way 'central to local tourism'. It is a concern that your virtual tour did not seemingly take you off Western Road into the area south of it. If it had, then you

would have clearly seen the marked change between the areas south of Western Road in the two wards as they currently exist.

Additionally, the strength and depth of community within the existing Brunswick & Adelaide ward clearly did not come across in your virtual tour. The fact that we have three large and thriving residential associations, within our ward, with high levels of activity and engagement from residents, is a demonstration of community interest and identity. This is something that is clearly lacking in that part of the Regency ward you intend to maintain. Primarily because, as stated, this is mostly a commercial area where many of the property owners are not resident. Their businesses (large and small) operate from there but they do not live there.

In short, the Brunswick & Adelaide area has absolutely nothing in common with that part of the Regency ward you propose to merge it with. In fact, it could barely have less in common. Your proposals in respect of the Brunswick & Adelaide ward have been massaged to meet your equality of representation criteria and have completely failed to reflect community interest or identity. In that respect, they also do not provide for 'effective and convenient local government'.

In our view, the Commission has paid far too much heed to one particular political group's proposals and the consequent political motivations that may lie behind them. It is difficult to understand why the Conservative Group would make such a ridiculous proposal otherwise.

Our counter proposal is as follows. In order not to have a domino effect on all your other proposed changes, we suggest that the Brunswick & Adelaide ward remains unchanged (except for the addition of Kingsway Court) and keeps its current number of councillors. The Regency ward, in its reduced capacity, is a unique part of the City containing the largest commercial activity and buildings. As such, it has special interests, needs and problems – none of which coincide with Brunswick & Adelaide – and as such could easily justify two councillors on its own or, with its reduced residential numbers, maybe only one councillor.

In conclusion, the combined Residents' Associations strongly reject these proposed boundary changes to the Brunswick & Adelaide ward. In particular, we are completely opposed to the removal of the Hove/Brighton boundary and are convinced your proposal, in respect of our ward, will be of great detriment to the communities and residents who live here, whilst failing to meet two of your own statutory criteria.

We respectfully request that the proposed changes to the Brunswick & Adelaide ward are rejected.

§ See review of the Brunswick Town Conservation Area Character Statement. Commissioned by Brighton and Hove Council, Tim Jefferies IHBC | Planning Team Leader – Heritage & Projects | Policy, Projects & Heritage Team 2022 This document gives an excellent summary of the area and is open for consultation now. It indicates the importance of the Brunswick area. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/Brunswick%20Town%20Conservation%20Area%20Character%20Statement%20Rev%2002%20Low%20Res.pdf>

Further reading:

Brighton and Hove, Nicholas Antram and Richard Morrice, Pevsner Architectural Guide, Yale University Press 2008

A History of Hove, Judy Middleton, Phillimore Press, Chichester