

Sub 16 | 149

BY EMAIL: constituency.commission@housing.gov.ie
The Secretary
Constituency Commission
Room 1.65, Custom House
Dublin 1
D01 W6X0

**Re: Dublin Central & Dublin West
Ashtown A and B Electoral Divisions**

Dear Sirs,

I submit that for the reasons set out below the Electoral Divisions of Ashtown A and B be transferred from the Dáil constituency of Dublin West ("DWest") into an expanded Dáil constituency of Dublin Central ("DCentral"), with a corresponding increase in representation of DCentral to four Dáil seats.

- A. The population of DCentral is under-represented in Dáil Éireann. As shown in the table on page 5 of your Statement¹ the variance from the constitutional ratio of TDs per 1,000 of population is +6.32%. I note that DCentral is fourth worst in terms of under-representation of all the current Dáil constituencies. Moving Ashtown A and B into DCentral (estimated population 14,000) would go towards correcting the variance.

On account of the continuing and projected population increases in the existing three-seat DCentral constituency (e.g. in the Docklands area) and in Ashtown A (additional of circa 2,000 new homes in Pelletstown), the addition of further population areas over and above my proposed changes should not be required to facilitate and maintain a four seat constituency configuration into the future.

- B. Section 6 of the Electoral Act, 1997 (as amended) provides that in undertaking its functions when considering the configuration of Dáil constituencies, the Constituency Commission shall have regard to factors including the following-

- ***Integrity of county boundaries***

Dáil constituencies should where practicable avoid breaching county boundaries. The current DWest constituency crosses the boundary between Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council. Ashtown is on the north western edge of the Dublin City Council administrative area.

I submit that Ashtown, Pelletstown and the Navan Road are more closely tied and aligned in matters economic, political and social with Dublin city centre and therefore the constituency of DCentral, than with west Dublin, Blanchardstown, Lucan, etc.

In practical terms it is public officials and elected Councillors of Dublin City Council that take decisions about planning, infrastructure, community amenities, etc. in Ashtown. These influencers' ties are to Dublin city centre and DCentral, rather than to DWest, the majority of which is the Fingal County Council area. Therefore aligning Ashtown electorally with the city centre by locating it in the DCentral constituency is complementary to the cohesiveness of the administrative and political decision-making processes and personnel affecting Ashtown.

¹ http://www.constituency-commission.ie/docs/Constituency_Commission_Statement_2016.pdf

It should also be noted that the Dublin City Council Local Electoral Area of Cabra-Finglas² is currently split across three Dáil constituencies (DCentral, DWest and Dublin North West). Reinstating Ashtown A and B to an expanded DCentral would more closely align the local election and Dáil boundaries, mitigating the practical confusion caused by this unfamiliar and unreasonable split.

- ***Continuity over time***

Until the 2016 General Election, Ashtown A and B were over the last 30-40 years located in a variation on the previous four-seat DCentral constituency. The 2016 change (arising under the Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2013) represented a breach of this familiar and long-standing continuity, and it should be reversed. The division of the Cabra-Finglas Local Electoral Area across three Dáil constituencies is also relevant in this regard- adherence to the continuity over time of the well-known Local Election Area and Dáil constituency boundaries should be respected.

- ***Geographic considerations including significant physical features***

I submit that Ashtown A and B have geographical continuity with DCentral through the Cabra and Navan Road areas. There are natural and man-made boundaries (e.g. Phoenix Park and the N3) that separate Ashtown from the nearest DWest urban centres of Castleknock and beyond.

- ***Extent of and population density of each constituency***

Under the Ashtown/Pelletstown Local Area Plan³ adopted by Dublin City Council in 2014 Ashtown/Pelletstown is high density and urban in character. In particular, the character of the residential estates in Pelletstown (within Ashtown A) is urban (apartments, townhouses, etc.) and is therefore aligned with the character of areas in Dublin city centre, i.e. DCentral, rather than DWest, the latter being suburban and in some parts rural.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I submit that moving Ashtown A and B to DCentral will be in keeping with the provisions of the Electoral Act 1997 (as amended) as articulated above. The reinstatement of these Electoral Divisions to DCentral, combined with the rising population of DCentral, will satisfy the constitutional requirements as to Dáil representation under Article 16 of Bunreacht na hÉireann.

While not a matter for the Constituency Commission, the responsible authorities should provide a polling station for the Pelletstown area (currently 2,000 homes rising to 4,000 when built out). The current arrangement of voting in a polling station on the Navan Road (approximately an hour's walk away from eastern Pelletstown) is not satisfactory because it is a practical barrier to voter participation.

About the submitter

I am the chairman of the board of directors of Kingfisher Management Company Limited, Owners' Management Company for Royal Canal Park, Dublin 15. I serve as chairman of Royal Canal Park Community Association. I was a Fine Gael candidate for Cabra-Finglas in the 2014 Local Elections. This submission is made in an entirely personal capacity.

I trust my views will be given due consideration. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully,

[By email and not signed]

David Rouse 8 January 2017

² <http://www.boundarycommittee.ie/reports/Dublin-City-Council-Map.pdf>

³ <http://www.dublincity.ie/ashtown-pelletstown-local-area-plan>