

Received 29/9/06



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

SAMUEL GARDINER MLA



Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
Mr. R. H. McKenzie CB
Forest View
Purdy's Lane,
BELFAST BT8 7AR

28 Sept 2006

Dear Sir,

I am writing to ask you to reconsider extending the boundary of the Banbridge Urban wards to include some of the adjacent country wards which under your current proposals have been expanded to include some former urban ward districts. There are, I believe, two key factors which indicate this is the right course of action. First, there is a significant difference in character between the Banbridge Urban and Banbridge rural and semi-rural wards. Second, there is a level of expansion of Banbridge Town which needs to be reflected in adequate "breathing space" for the urban district.

Banbridge town has seen a massive expansion in private new-build, owner-occupied housing and there is a high level of owner occupation on a par with the South East of England and 6% above the national UK average. With an average house price only £11,000 below the highest in Northern Ireland, Banbridge has significantly more households owing two cars than the Northern Ireland average.

Yours faithfully,
Samuel Gardiner
Samuel Gardiner MLA
Assembly Office
Assembly Buildings
Stormont, Belfast BT6 3AH

It also has the lowest level of unemployment in Northern Ireland, one of the lowest social deprivation rates in Northern Ireland and one of the lowest crime rates in Northern Ireland. The town also has over 1800 active businesses with 100 new business start-ups since 2002 - the third best business start-up rate in Northern Ireland.

As you are aware, Banbridge is the fastest growing area in Northern Ireland with a population increase of 24% in the past decade, which is four times the Northern Ireland average. This population expansion seems set to continue with Banbridge town having above average levels of population in the 15-34 age group.

All of these factors indicate that the town is an economic and social success story, has a distinctive character and that this success needs to have room for expansion. The extension of urban ward boundaries would help support and sustain this expansion and would, I believe, reflect the likely expansion of the town, with the number of households set to increase under the terms of the newly released Newry and Banbridge District Plan.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Gardiner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Samuel Gardiner MLA for Upper Bann