



BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Volland



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An open letter to the Rt Honourable Robert Jenrick MP
By email

7 October 2025

Dear Robert,

I write to express my dismay and disappointment in your comments about Handsworth which are being reported on the BBC today. As the Bishop of Birmingham, I work closely with people in communities across the West Midlands, and I am regularly in Handsworth. Your comments about a perceived failure of integration, which appear to have been made after a brief visit to the area, are entirely wrong and I reject them.

I recently visited St. Michael's CofE Primary Academy to congratulate them on their 'Outstanding' Ofsted result, achieved partly because of their energetic approach to ensuring full integration of children and families in this wonderfully diverse community with many shared values, supporting young people studying, playing and growing together. Across the road from St. Michael's Primary is the Sikh Nishkam Centre who are a major contributor to social cohesion in Handsworth, working hard towards the wellbeing of the wider community. Last week I visited the Shree Geeta Bhawan Hindu Temple where I was warmly welcomed by British Hindus proudly serving their community and working hard to contribute to the wellbeing of wider local society. Our many local Church of England churches are full of people committed to working together to ensure that Handsworth is a safe, inspiring and hopeful place to live and work.



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Comments like those you have made have the potential to generate anxiety and stir up division. They can feed into a harmful narrative that provides fuel for a fire of toxic nationalism. It is deeply unhelpful for politicians to make such comments and I encourage you to think about how your rhetoric might contribute towards unity rather than stoking division. I warmly invite you to return to Handsworth where I would be delighted to introduce you to a wide range of local residents who are entirely committed to the flourishing of their community and the wellbeing of its people.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Volland
Bishop of Birmingham

Co-signed by:

Mr Philip Hynan
Headteacher, St. Michael's Church of England Primary Academy, Handsworth

Ajit Singh
Managing Director, Nishkam Civic Association (NCA), Handsworth

Acharya Dharm Dutt Vasistha
Head Priest, Shree Geeta Bhawan, Handsworth



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