

Malvern Hills District Council

Personal Details:

Name: Michael Davies

E-mail:

Postcode:

Organisation Name:

Comment text:

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW - Malvern Hills District

Comments from Mick Davies – Malvern Hills District Council Member for Morton Ward

SUBMITTED 2022 07 27

1. I am a member of Malvern Hills District Council and of Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council and am making this representation for myself, not expressing the views of either body.
2. In addition to my position as an Independent member of the District Council and as Chair of the Council's policy group on Governance I am also Chair of Trustees of the Malvern Hills Trust (the Trust) who will be making representations on the Draft Recommendations.
3. As a member of the Councils, I naturally support the views expressed by those councils in their responses to the current consultation and I am conscious of the matters raised by the Trust in response to the current consultation on the draft recommendations published on 28 June 2022. Nevertheless my comments are not intended to express or endorse the views of any of the bodies mentioned; they are my own input.
4. I comment hereby only on the recommendations bearing on the wards and parishes in the current Morton and Longdon Wards and the proposed Longdon and Welland Ward.
5. **I object to the proposal to create the large two member ward of Longdon and Welland.**
6. I object because the proposal moves away from the principle of single member wards which is the strong preference of most of the local residents with whom I have spoken. I believe that the preference, which is soundly based on residents' experience of both single and multi-member wards should be respected provided it does not compromise electoral equality. In my previous representation, dated 2022 03 20 I expressed support for the proposed Welland and Longdon Wards with the words:-
"The recommendations have favoured single member wards, an arrangement understood by many of my present constituents who have not experienced anything else for many decades. Some of those constituents have expressed a strong single member preference based on that understanding."
7. In that representation I also commented: -

“It is likely that the residents of Castlemorton and Birtsmorton will feel more kinship with Longdon Parishes than they have with Welland (which has grown 40% in those seven years) or that they would with the residents of Malvern Wells.”

8. Which comment may have given rise to the words in para 11 of the Further Draft Recommendations: “which expressed support for linking Longdon and Castlemorton parishes”.
9. Indeed, there was support for linking Longdon and Castlemorton Parishes but only in the context of maintaining or creating a single member ward arrangement. In the current context I believe there is far, far greater support for single member wards than there is for the linking or separating Castlemorton and Welland. I will be publishing this representation to the Parish Councils and they will no doubt express their views on that assertion.
10. The creation of single member wards while maintaining electoral equality is eminently possible in this area and should be pursued.
11. Subdividing the proposed two member Longdon and Welland Ward on established parish boundaries would produce two single member wards with 2027 voter numbers within +7.8% and – 7.1% of the district average.

12. Table 1.

Possible split of Longdon & Welland Ward – 2027 elector numbers.

		% variance
Upper Welland and Little Malvern	648	
Welland	1239	
Castlemorton	545	
Total	2432	7.8
Birtsmorton	241	
Berrow	297	
Bushley	252	
Eldersfield	492	
Holdfast	43	
Longdon	428	
Pendock	292	
Queenhill	51	
Total	2096	-7.1

13. While sitting well within the +/- 10% benchmark the variation from equality is not trivial. However, population density is rather greater in the Welland ward (2600ha) than in the much more extensive Longdon Ward (6600ha) so the

imbalance is offset to some extent by the area within which the residents live and work.

14. The inclusion of Little Malvern in the recommended Welland ward would seem to be an entirely sensible proposal given the current Parish Council arrangements and the northern amalgamation with Upper Welland is expedient, rational and not disruptive too.
15. All of Upper Welland is within the AONB as is a large part of Welland's housing development and each has a similar housing density within their settlement. Much of the housing stock in both settlements was completed after the middle of the 20th century with the consequential similarities of typologies and demographics that follows that co-incidence.
16. One of the unexpected consequences of the recent rapid growth in housing stock in Welland is that new affordable housing in the village is also serving the needs of neighbouring parishes in accordance with the Rural Lettings Policy. Significant numbers of families originating in Castlemorton and Upper Welland have housing opportunities in Welland, thereby strengthening the family and community connections within the proposed Welland ward.
17. Given that the two, single member wards arrangement is numerically feasible and is not offensive to established or future community, family and cultural connections and identities it also delivers two geographically more compact wards with a sensible distribution of the nine parish councils with whom the members would have to work.
18. The numbers say we can do it, I don't perceive any community or cultural pitfalls, Parish Councils and residents have expressed their support and the current members who know the patch are in favour too.
- 19. I propose subdividing the proposed Longdon and Morton Ward into a Longdon Ward and a Welland Ward in the manner set out in Table 1.**

Mick Davies

2020 07 27