

Malvern Hills District Council

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Comment text:

Response to LGBCE V2 draft proposals by Malvern Hills Independents group of MHDC councillors.

Uploaded Documents:

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The Malvern Hills Independents group of councillors welcomes many of the revised June 2022 proposals from LGBCE. They are a far better representation of community needs and electoral balance than the first set of proposals, noticeably this time round following LGBCE's own principles regarding natural barriers and maintaining local parishes intact.

We note and agree the revised arrangements for the northern and central sections of MHDC's area, albeit those include a deviation from LGBCE principles of electorate size for the proposed Baldwin ward. We support strongly the revised Alfrick, Leigh and Rushwick ward, which clearly represents the strong preferences of all the local parish councils, with the sole exception of Rushwick. However, we note that a previous submission by Cllr Walton attests strongly to links between Bransford and Rushwick. Taking his statements into account and the lack of any public desire to split Bransford from Leigh, LGBCE's conclusion to link Rushwick with Suckley, Alfrick and Leigh appears entirely logical and correct.

In the southern part of MHDC's area, we feel several aspects are poor solutions. The proposed Longdon ward appears far too large both geographically and in terms of the number of parish councils concerned (9 total: 8 rural, plus the remaining part of Malvern Wells). We strongly recommend that this ward is split into two. Using LGBCE's proposed division of Malvern Wells, single-person wards of (i) Welland, Castlemorton and Malvern Wells (part) and (ii) Birtsmorton with today's Longdon ward would fit within all LGBCE parameters.

The creation of 3-person wards throughout the Malvern urban area is a poor choice. All evidence is that such wards contain too many electors (on average 6,750) for any one councillor to really know local feelings and issues. We also note the mismatch between Great Malvern (Priory) and Pickersleigh, two areas with no obvious community links whatsoever.

It is also clear from MHDC attendance records that in 3-person wards one councillor is usually a "passenger", with low attendance at council meetings and low community involvement, if any at all. We recommend that the proposed arrangements for Malvern's urban area are revisited in their entirety and six, 2-person wards created.

The remaining southern ward proposals we note and agree without further comment.

Peter Whatley
MHDC Group Leader
Malvern Hills Independents