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From: Elaine Drage [REDACTED]
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Attachments: LD RESPONSE TO LATEST BOUNDARY COMMISISON PROPOSALS v 2.docx

Categories: [REDACTED]

Attached

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RESPONSE TO THE LATEST BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS

From WEST WORCESTERSHIRE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

In making these comments we have had at the forefront of our minds the Commission's stress on coherent communities and convenience for local people.

Great Malvern and Pickersleigh

We note that you have amended your original proposals in respect of the Priory (2 member) and Pickersleigh (1 member) wards to put them together into a proposed 3 member ward.

We oppose this suggestion as the two communities are extremely different from each other. Our opposition is based on the following reasons

- Pickersleigh is by a considerable margin the most socially deprived ward in Malvern Hills District with a significant percentage of social housing (much in poor condition) meaning a councillor's knowledge and work needs to be focussed to a large degree on issues of social deprivation and housing. In contrast Priory is one of the most affluent wards in MHDC with a highly educated, older than average and comfortable population concerned about a range of different issues, many of them national. They are two very different communities with no synergy between them and relatively little interaction.
- In community terms the two wards face differently. Pickersleigh's main retail area is the shops at Barnards Green and, close by, the main retail park for Malvern, while Priory ward has the Malvern town centre shopping area so there is little need for retail crossing between the two
- .Geographically the two current wards are both visibly and psychologically divided by the railway line with only a single road crossing (and one pedestrian underpass) linking the two parts of your proposed ward. Pickersleigh is flat and on the flat, while Priory sits on the side of the Malvern Hills and indeed reaches to the top of the hill line a considerable distance away. People in one area have little incentive or need to visit the other area.

For local people such a proposed ward would make little sense – it neither reflects the local communities nor does it not meet your criterion of convenience for local people.

We acknowledge that, in order to keep Greater Malvern ward to a suitable size for a 2 member ward as in your original proposals, it is necessary to put part of the current Pickersleigh ward to the east of the railway line into Priory ward (including one of the two primary schools). However we think this is much less of a problem that the spatchcocking together of two such different communities into a single ward.

Returning to your original proposals would meet the ward size criteria and also fit better with the local communities own perceptions.

Dyson Perrins and West Malvern and Link

We agree as before with the proposal to add Newlands and parts of Link Top to the current Link ward which reflects both the community facilities they use and educational links. We

also agree that to remove the name of the famous sauce manufacturer (a significant local benefactor a century ago) from the ward is sensible.

However, you are now proposing to merge the previously proposed single member Upper Howsell ward (largely the current Dyson Perrins ward) in with the 2 member West Malvern ward as a 3 member ward.

We disagree with this proposal since the educational links, argued as the main support for this proposed change, are more complex than has been represented to you. Children from Link ward attend Somers Park School (literally across the road from the current Link ward boundary) in the proposed Upper Howsell ward and conversely many from that ward attend St Matthias School, only a few hundred metres from the boundary of the proposed Upper Howsell ward. This in fact demonstrates a more integrated community across this area of Malvern Link- also reflected in the postal address as Malvern Link for those in the current Dyson Perrins ward.

For those in Dyson Perrins ward the nearest significant retail facilities are in the Link area – there are minimal ones in West Malvern and no public transport links between Dyson Perrins and West Malvern which wraps around the steep north end of the Malvern hills at several levels. Those on the flat land in Dyson Perrins have no need to visit West Malvern or have any community links with it.- they face to Malvern Link.

But to ensure wards are in line with your criteria, we would propose keeping the draft Link ward as it is, but renaming it Link South and Newland, while restoring the separate Upper Howsell ward and renaming it Link North to better reflect its community ties.

Alfrick, Leigh and Rushwick

We would support the Commission's returning to its previous finely balanced proposal of a single member ward for essentially rural Alfrick (but including Lulsley again) and a new single member ward comprising the ever expanding village of Rushwick (increasingly a part of the Worcester semi urban fringe) and the settlement of Bransford which also faces towards Worcester with a regular bus service thence. We believe this better reflects the differing nature of the communities involved.

The map of the proposed new 2 member ward demonstrates clearly the artificiality of the proposed 2 member ward. Rushwick as part of the Worcester fringe - and on the basis of current development plans by 2027 likely to be absorbed into the Worcester urban area - has little in common with the bulk of the Alfrick and Leigh ward which consists of small rural villages.

We acknowledge that moving Bransford into a single member Rushwick ward (in part to ensure your size criterion is met) would split the area currently represented by Leigh and Bransford Parish council between 2 wards. We do not see how that would in practical terms impact on the effective operation of the parish council since their responsibilities remain the same and they will still be linked to the same District council and its services.

The area represented by Leigh and Bransford Parish council is already diverse since the major settlement in the parish - the large and expanding village of Leigh Sinton - already faces towards Malvern in its essential retail and recreational links rather than towards Worcester, as Rushwick and also Bransford do.

We acknowledge that some Bransford primary age children go to the Leigh Sinton School, but believe that which District ward Bransford is in would make no real difference to the lives of the Bransford community.

As in so many areas there is no perfect solution, but we believe the damage to a sense of community would be greater if the significant settlement of Rushwick (as their parish council also believe) were forced into the same ward with essentially rural Alfrick and Leigh.

We would urge you to return to your previous proposal of two separate single member wards.

Broadheath

The latest proposals propose putting (largely) the current single member Hallow ward in with the Broadheath ward to make a 2 member ward. There is nothing inherently unviable about a single member ward as the proposals retain a number of these.

Your latest proposals (pp.12-14) include no reasoning for your decision to amend your earlier proposal for two single member wards.

The position of Holt Parish was a point of difference, but their parish council's argument they have more in common with Abberley than Hallow is not strong. Most of the proposed Hallow ward is equally rural and Hallow itself cannot accurately be described as semi urban. It is over 4 miles from Worcester with open land between it and the Worcester outskirts. Holt fits as well with Hallow as it does with Abberley and is significantly nearer to Hallow (4 miles) than Abberley (7 miles). Holt, like Hallow is a small old settlement with an increasing amount of small new build estates added over the last 20 years. The two communities have much in common with each other. Indeed the Holt children go largely to Grimley primary school in Hallow ward already. We would urge you to place Holt parish in with the Hallow ward as the school attendance pattern demonstrates.

Given the difference between the Broadheath and Hallow communities it is difficult to see how a single ward would really reflect local communities. Hallow (and the even more rural villages of Grimley/Sinton green etc. further north of it) is a contained community with surprisingly poor public transport links to Worcester and a strong sense of village community with a range of facilities strung up the main north/south road that locals use. It is on a different feeder route into Worcester than Broadheath.

Broadheath meanwhile has no real core, fewer local retail and other facilities so residents very much face into Worcester for their needs, facilitated by better public transport links to Worcester than Hallow enjoys.

We note also there are no transport links between Hallow and Broadheath and both areas have their own separate educational facilities – a factor you normally rely upon heavily in arguing for shared community facilities. Broadheath is already heavily impacted by Worcester's westwards urban extensions which are planned to grow very significantly by 2027. This will result in the nature of the two communities diverging even further in the years to come.

Returning to your earlier proposals would still enable each single member ward to be within your variance window in terms of Councillor representation. We are aware that Hallow

Parish council also feels strongly that its community has little in common with that of Broadheath and would urge you to return to your earlier proposal of two single member wards.

06.08.22