

Malvern Hills District Council

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Comment text:

Please see response attached from Martley Parish Council (Malvern Hills - Martley & Teme Valley proposal)

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1645026396_LGBC_Martley+PC+response_MHDC.pdf)

Martley Parish Council opposes the draft recommendations of the Commission for the following reasons:

1. *They do not meet the statutory criterion of maintaining effective local government.* The proposed two-member ward of Martley and Teme Valley would cover the areas of nine parish councils (Abberley, Alfrick and Lulsley, Broadwas and Cotheridge, Clifton-upon-Teme, Knightwick and Doddenham, Lower Sapey, Martley, The Shelsleys, and Wichenford and Kenswick. One of these (Alfrick and Lulsley) would be divided between two of the proposed wards. At present, Martley and Wichenford are represented by a single district councillor, who is able to attend all the council meetings for both parishes. These meetings include members of the public who in the first half-hour of the meeting are able to raise questions with parish councillors and the district councillor. This forms a vital democratic link between the district council, the parish council, and the electorate. Councillors covering nine parish councils would find it very difficult to attend so many meetings each month, and so this democratic link would be weakened. It is notable that the submissions to the draft report from the rural parishes and their councillors generally express a preference for single-member wards for similar reasons.
2. *There is no public transport across the proposed ward.* There are no rail routes across the proposed ward and only a limited bus service. All the bus routes run East-West rather than North-South. Thus, there are buses from Abberley to Worcester, from Clifton-upon-Teme to Worcester via Martley (and in a few cases via Wichenford), and from Knightwick to Worcester via Broadwas and Cotheridge. There are only two A-roads in the proposed ward: the A44 which runs East from Knightwick through Broadwas and Cotheridge to Worcester; and the A443 which runs East from Abberley to Worcester. Most of the North-South roads connecting the many parishes in the proposed ward are narrow and winding lanes.
3. *There is no single community identity which would bind the ward together.* The proposed ward would be the largest in the District, reaching from its Northern extremity to the Worcester City boundary. There is no shared identity over such a large area, other than to the County of Worcestershire itself. However, Martley has a joint neighbourhood plan with Knightwick and Doddenham, and Knightwick and Doddenham (essentially a single village) are linked by the A44 and public transport to Broadwas and Cotheridge.

The proposal for an extensive two-member ward for Martley and Teme Valley does meet the criterion of 'Equality of representation', but at the expense of failing to meet the other two statutory criteria of 'Reflecting community interests and identities', and 'Providing for effective and convenient local government'. We therefore propose instead that Lulsley Parish being reunited with Alfrick in the proposed Alfrick and Leigh Ward, and the remainder divided into two new wards:

- *Martley and Broadwas.* This would include the areas of the parish councils of Martley, Wichenford and Kenswick, Knightwick and Doddenham, and Broadwas and Cotheridge. A single district councillor would thus be responsible for working

with only four parish councils. As noted above, Martley has a shared neighbourhood plan with Knightwick and Doddenham Parish Council, while the latter parishes (which essentially form a single community) are linked by public transport on the A44. The electorate would be 2387 on the 2021 register and an estimated 2522 on the 2027 register. The latter figure is 12% above the recommended 2256, but this is a minor issue compared to the substantial gains offered by having a single councillor representing a widespread rural area.

- ▶ *Clifton-upon-Teme and Abberley*. This would include the areas of the parishes of Clifton-upon-Teme, Abberley, Upper Sapey, and The Shelsleys. Once again, this would have the advantage of having a single councillor working with only four parish councils, covering a more manageable rural area. The electorate would be 1855 for the 2021 register and an estimated 2106 for the 2027 register. The latter figure would be 93% of the recommended quotient/councillor and therefore within the recommended range of 10%.