

## Malvern Hills District Council

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### Comment text:

Please find attached below the response from Hallow Parish Council regarding the proposed changes

### Uploaded Documents:

**Download ([https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1659437613\\_HALLOW+ELEC+BOUND+COMMENT+0822.docx](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1659437613_HALLOW+ELEC+BOUND+COMMENT+0822.docx))**

## **HALLOW PARISH COUNCIL COMMENT ON ELECTORAL BOUNDARY CHANGES FOR HALLOW WARD, MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL.**

### Context

We note the original intention to extend and enhance the size of Hallow Ward by incorporating part of Baldwin Ward, and principally Holt, and we are broadly in agreement with that proposal. The extension of the Ward along the A443 makes reasonable sense, and the Ward would retain a degree of cohesion. Geographically there is linkage along the A443, and to some extent Hallow does function as a larger village hub for this wider area. Many residents of Holt and surrounding area pass through Hallow enroute to Worcester City, and some Holt residents do use Hallow facilities and clubs. We recognise that villages currently in a different ward will have concerns and anxieties about movement into a new Ward, and may feel that their concerns will be overlooked in a Ward where a large village is at its centre. However, our experience is that District matters are well covered in Grimley (our smaller sister village) in the current arrangement and there is little, if any evidence that this would not apply for any smaller villages coming into an extended Hallow Ward.

### Option 2: Proposal to go into a “super ward” of Broadheath

The rationale for this second proposal seems to stem almost entirely from concerns expressed with option 1, particularly from Holt parish. We are unable to find a detailed and compelling rationale for the creation of a large Ward centred on Broadheath elsewhere. Our concerns are as follows:

- The sheer workload for two councillors, based on the fact that the Ward would consist almost entirely of what MHDC has defined as larger, Category 1 villages where most housing development is targeted. These planning matters themselves create a large workload for councillors, with considerations of site layouts, design, and residents’ concerns.
  - The estimated proposed allocations within the South Worcestershire Development Plan Revised (still ongoing) for the villages in the proposed “super ward” would be:
    - Hallow: 50 houses
    - Lower Broadheath: 12 houses
    - Broadwas, Cotheridge, Kenswick, Grimley and Wichenford: 0It is clear that the majority of the housing within the proposed Broadheath ward is to be built within the Hallow village.
- Outside of the larger developments, the general level of planning permission applications within each parish generates work for District Councillors. We are aware that the decision to go to planning committee rests with the District Councillor, and in 95% of applications in Malvern Hills the District councillor decides that this is not necessary. We have reviewed the Malvern planning portal and found the number of applications recorded for each parish for the period 01/01/2019 - 25/07/2022. Based on these figures, we have found an imbalance between the levels of planning applications in the three proposed Wards in north western Malvern Hills. We believe

that the creation of a superward for Broadheath will make it more difficult for a councillor to provide an expert local view. In particular, maintaining relationships with 7 parish councils will be challenging.

<b>Proposed Ward</b>	<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>Councillors Proposed</b>
Baldwin	421	2
Broadheath	500	2
Martley	190	1

We have also reviewed the planning application numbers at parish level. It is clear that Hallow and Grimley parishes generate significant planning application numbers.

Broadwas	43
Cotheridge	29
Grimley	77
Hallow	115
Kenswick	12
Lower Broadheath	158

- Based on Malvern Hills forecasts for the electorate, the additional voters for the Broadheath superhub would be 788 by 2027; adding to the issues that can be raised by residents on an ongoing basis with Ward Councillors. Most of this growth is forecast to be in the Lower Broadheath parish. This will make it increasingly difficult for a ward councillor to be elected by the electorate of Hallow and Grimley; the larger electorate in Lower Broadheath outweighs the voting power of the smaller parishes. By 2027, the electorate in Lower Broadheath will be 2123, versus a total of 1772 for Hallow and Grimley (1223 and 549 respectively). As demonstrated above, the issues faced by these parishes are as significant as those faced by Lower Broadheath.
- The geographical spread of the proposed Broadheath ward is large, and whilst large wards may be manageable in an urban context, their size and spread in rural areas requires careful consideration. Whilst there is increased use of electronic access to councillors, it should be noted that the population of west Worcestershire is one of the oldest in the County (census data), and we know from parish council experience that electronic contact and indeed access to computers and the internet is not available to all in the 70+ age range (Community Survey 2018). Public transport here is also limited, and increased distances to attend councillor surgeries would be problematic-the main bus route for Hallow is along the A443. The creation of an over-large Ward potentially erodes representation and can undermine public confidence in local democracy.

- We are concerned that the division of Hallow and Grimley from Holt parishes feels unnatural given the strong educational and church links between the three villages. Historically and currently, all three parishes are served by the same vicar. The school and preschool at Grimley serves both Grimley and Holt children; consequently the relationships between parents from the two parishes are strong.

#### An alternative proposal for consideration

Hallow Parish Council accepts that rationalisation of Wards is necessary and would generally support the effective use of resources. An extension of Hallow Ward is still preferred, and indeed consideration could be given to including Wichenford and other smaller villages/hamlets between Hallow and the A443. Again, Hallow does function as something of a hub for these smaller locales, and there is linkage geographically and by road network.

Whilst we recognise that this may create more variance in electorate numbers from the average than the proposal in the latest document, creating wards based on the dynamics of the local communities is preferable to it being a purely numbers driven exercise.

Ultimately, no parish will be keen on moving or joining a larger Ward, identity and tradition are viewed as very precious commodities locally. We would therefore urge the Electoral Commission to visit the area and to consider all options.

Cllr Hazel Kemshall

Cllr Lorna Marson

For Hallow Parish Council

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022.