

**Public Consultation on Proposed New Electoral Arrangements for Shropshire Council**  
**by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, May 2023**

Comments by [REDACTED] member of the public who has lived in Bridgnorth Town for over 54 years. These comments are primarily about Bridgnorth Town with some references to neighbouring parishes.

1. Section 161 of the LGBCE's May Report states that their aims are to propose a pattern for Shropshire Council which delivers:

- \*Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- \*Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- \*Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

These aims are further expanded and clarified in the following three sections, 162 to 164.

2. The aims are reasonable and acceptable, though not easy to apply in the large geographical local authority area of Shropshire Council
3. Like numerous other towns, the town of Bridgnorth has continued to expand at a steady pace over many decades. The current situation is that almost all the urban development of the Town - housing, offices, shops and other business activities – is in the northern area of the town, bounded by the west, north and eastern town boundaries and the A458 By-Pass. Furthermore, this part of the town is full; there is no land available for any significant development.
4. The situation in three above was exacerbated by the Principal Councils responsible for planning matters in and around Bridgnorth, initially Bridgnorth District Council and since April 2009, Shropshire Council. Although there is land within the parish council of Bridgnorth on both sides of the river Severn and south of the A458 By-Pass, these Principal Councils decided that any further expansion of the town would not happen within the town boundaries, but in the adjoining rural parish of Tasley.
5. Almost all the land within Bridgnorth that is on the east side of the River Severn is in the Green Belt that surrounds the West Midlands urban area. This green belt was created in 1975 and incorporated a large part of Southeast Shropshire that existed at that time bounded by the A5 and River Severn. This Green Belt creates serious restrictions on any development. By contrast, there is not a single square millimetre of land or a single blade of grass between the west bank of the Severn in Bridgnorth and the Welsh coast that is in a green belt.
6. The result from sections 3, 4 and 5 above is that the population of Bridgnorth Town is almost static, and very unlikely to increase significantly. Based on electorate numbers published in the LGBCE's May Report on draft proposals, Shropshire Council's numbers for the total electorate residing within the town is 9751 in 2022 and 9778 in 2028, a difference (increase) of fifty-one.
7. The LGBCE's draft proposals suggest that there should be four single member Shropshire Council wards representing various parts of Bridgnorth. One would be Bridgnorth West and Tasley, i.e. mainly the current West Ward of Bridgnorth Town Council and all of Tasley Parish Council. When Tasley Parish Council was originally created in 1974, it was a rural parish with an extremely small population located on the north-east boundary of Bridgnorth. But over

the years housing developments in Bridgnorth moved right up to the boundary with Tasley, and then beyond that boundary. It is extremely clear that any future expansion of Bridgnorth will happen in Tasley; Shropshire Council gave approval in 2015 for five hundred dwellings to be built by 2025 and later a garden village of over 1,000 dwellings. Interestingly, no planning application of any type has yet been submitted for the five hundred dwellings. It should be noted that there is no natural feature to identify the boundary between Bridgnorth and Tasley; housing in both parishes is very close and adjacent to each other. In principle, there are no problems with LGBCE's draft proposals for Bridgnorth West and Tasley.

8. The LGBCE's draft proposals include two wards, Bridgnorth Castle and Bridgnorth East, which basically have been formed from the current Bridgnorth Town Council wards of Castle, East and Morfe. As all the dwellings involved in these two proposed Shropshire Council wards are within the town, it is surprising that the LGBCE could not create two equal electorate sized wards, and that each ward would merit having the same number of Bridgnorth Town Councillors.
9. It is the proposed Bridgnorth Rural Ward which raises several concerns.
  - 9.1 This proposed Bridgnorth Rural Ward would cover a large area from almost the centre of Bridgnorth Town for several miles down-stream of the River Severn to Alveley and beyond to the Shropshire County border with Worcestershire.
  - 9.2 Although Alveley is in Shropshire, many people in this large village will have closer connections to Kidderminster and other nearby towns than Bridgnorth.
  - 9.3 The Bridgnorth electorate included in this ward would total around eight hundred, out of around 3,000 electors in total – 2,850 in 2022 and 3,148 in 2028.
  - 9.4 Even in 2028, the estimated total electorate for this ward would be well short of the desired average number of electors per ward at 3594, a difference of -12.4%
  - 9.5 Virtually all of this proposed ward lies within the Green Belt, so future housing development is likely to remain constrained. This would indicate that in future years beyond 2028, the negative difference between the average number of councillors per ward in Shropshire will increase.
  - 9.6 Part of Bridgnorth Town included in this proposed ward, include Goodwood Ave., College Court, King's Court and part of Stourbridge Road which are north of the A458, and Hillside Avenue with Kidderminster Road just south of the A458. This area has around four hundred electors, all of whom would have easy access to their current designated and nearby polling station on Lodge Lane. All electors living in this area can easily walk to this polling station within a few minutes, some within less than 5 minutes. There is no obvious alternative location for a separate polling station, and the total number of electorates would suggest that the current polling station in Quatford would be adequate for Bridgnorth Town Council residents. Unfortunately, the location would entail a journey of several miles down the A442, and the polling station itself is located on a very narrow twisting road, no passing places and only two parking places. Not conducive to encourage people to vote.
  - 9.7 The proposal for a new Bridgnorth Town Ward, to be named Morfe Ward, and to have two town councillors looks odd. It would have a low number of electors per town councillor, compared with other town councillors.
  - 9.8 Overall, the proposal for a Bridgnorth Rural Ward does not meet any of the three LGBCE's basic aims for a ward, as listed in section 1 above.
10. The total of Bridgnorth Town and Tasley Parish electorates gives a very good match to support three Shropshire Councillors in three separate single councillor wards, which meets all the LBCE's aims listed in section 1 above. Clearly this would require the LGBCE to revisit

their proposals for various parishes in the surrounding area - in particular, their reasoning. Does the Commission have any evidence of the electorate in the surrounding areas demanding a change?

11. There are currently existing plans by Shropshire Council to locate all future expansion of Bridgnorth Town in Tasley, one plan for five hundred homes and another for over 1,000. As there is no physical boundary between urban developments in Bridgnorth and Tasley, it is sensible to consider these parishes together.
12. My suggestion is that the current Bridgnorth Town Council area and Tasley Parish Council should be looked at together to create three separate Shropshire Council Wards as follows:
  - 12.1 One ward to consist of Tasley and part of Bridgnorth – mainly BTC West Ward.
  - 12.2 One ward to consist of BTC Castle Ward and part of BTC East Ward.
  - 12.3 One ward to consist of BTC Morfe Ward and part of BTC East Ward.
13. This leaves the problem of how many BTC councillors should be allocated to each Shropshire Council Ward. One relatively easy option would be to allocate:
  - 13.1 Four BTC councillors to the West Ward in Tasley and West Ward Shropshire Council.
  - 13.2 Four BTC councillors to BTC Castle Ward part of Shropshire Council's Castle Ward
  - 13.3 Four BTC councillors to BTC Morfe Ward part of Shropshire Council's Morfe Ward
  - 13.4 Two BTC councillors to a new BTC Ward formed by the part of BTC's East Ward allocated to Shropshire Council's Castle Ward.
  - 13.5 Two BTC councillors to a new BTC Ward formed by the part of BTC's East ward allocated to Shropshire Council's Morfe Ward.
14. There is confusion caused by using the same names for proposed Shropshire Council Wards and existing BTC wards which cover different areas. This would need to be changed.

