

Worcestershire

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]
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Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Related subject: Bell Heath, from Clent Hills to Woodvale

We are writing in relation to the proposed boundary change which would affect Bell Heath / Bell End / Madeley Heath, Worcestershire (and referred to collectively in this letter as 'Bell Heath').

This submission is written on behalf of myself ([REDACTED]) and my wife, [REDACTED], and our two adult children living at our property ([REDACTED]) and should accordingly be treated as constituting 4 objections. I confirm that we live in the area effected ([REDACTED]), a single track country road about 600 yards from The Bell public house and with access on foot to the Clent Hills).

Our understanding is that it is proposed to move Bell Heath from Clent Hills (incorporating Belbroughton) into the area called 'Woodvale' (incorporating Catshill and beyond), a name (Woodvale) of which we have never even previously heard or been aware.

May we record at the outset our dismay that this issue has not been raised directly with local residents in Bell Heath, individually or collectively (or even directly with the Parish Council), whether by way of leaflet, letter, email, posters or erection of prominent notices, given that a 'public consultation' process was (according to your website) supposed to have been in gear 'initially' since 16th May 2023 and this stage since 9th January 2024. We in fact learnt of the proposed change through pure inadvertence / happenchance via our local neighbourhood watch network. A failure to consult with, or canvass the views of, those likely to be affected by a proposed change of this kind is unfair and unacceptable in a democratic society (and I suspect potentially unlawful).

My wife and I have lived on Chapel Lane in Madeley Heath for nearly 30 years and have brought up a family here, who are now young adults. It is a rural community, with a significant equestrian element, with country lanes and footpaths giving immediate access to the Clent Hills and open countryside. We regard ourselves as an extension of Belbroughton parish (and which name we include in our postal address), joining in with Belbroughton Scarecrow Weekend when our children were younger. Bell Heath has been an integral part of Belbroughton for centuries, as the commonality of their names would suggest (dating back as far as 817AD).

Having consulted the Commission's boundary map, we can see that under the proposals we would move from being part of a rural area (Clent Hills and Belbroughton) to a semi-urban area predominated by Catshill. The two areas are of entirely different character, and with entirely different needs and priorities (for our part those of a rural / equestrian community). There is little if any commonality between them in terms of their "community interests and identities" and no "links" of which we are aware.

The very different, indeed conflicting, needs and priorities of the two areas (rural and semi-urban) is not conducive to "effective and convenient local government" and as it is likely that the greater urban needs would be prioritised, our rural needs would be either poorly addressed or not met at all, rather than "more efficiently discharged" by the proposed change. I suspect that the change is more likely motivated by personal party-politics, or potential planning implications, rather than the needs of our community and is a questionable use of public resources in a time of growing debt and austerity.

In terms of "facilities" all of our key needs are serviced by being part of Belbroughton: it is where our GP is situated (Glebeland Surgery), where our children were schooled (as part of the 'Haybridge Pyramid'), where we have always cast our votes on polling day, and where our recreational facilities are located ('the rec'). Any change in schooling resulting from these changes would be highly detrimental to present and future families in Bell Heath: our three children, as with neighbouring homes around us, have all had the incalculable benefit of an education in a small rural school and secondary schooling at a prestigious local academy (Haybridge High School in Hagley), facilitated by travel provided as being part of this area. I have no idea where children from our area would be educated or how they would get there were changes to be implemented. Understandably, we would be most anxious at any changes that would result in a change of GP service.

For all these reasons, please note our interest and objections when considering your recommendations and please keep us apprised (via this email, message or otherwise) of any relevant developments in relation to the proposal. [REDACTED] contact details are set out below.

Attached Documents:

None attached