

Worcestershire

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Related subject: Clent Hills

To whom it may concern,

I live in Bell heath and have done for 10 years with my husband and 2 children that both attend local schools. We moved to the area, purely for its rural setting and we are both employed and home owners contributing an enormous amount to the local villages and communities not to mention the extortionate council tax we both pay. We have invested a lot of time and money into where we live and plan to be here until we cannot be any longer.

I was disappointed to read on our local Whats app group- 'Bellheath look outs', that there are proposed boundary changes to where our local community sits, and this has not been communicated to us until now, never mind consulted. From reading the website providing all of the information, it is clear that there has been a number of proposals put forward and it is now in final consultation phases.

A number of us in the local community are trying to get answers and understand fully what is required and the impact it will have, but I don't feel we are getting very far. I understand the need to change in order to sustain growth and population increases, I really do, however I would appreciate a more balanced view in regard to this matter and the needs and wants of the home and landowners in this area. I also fundamentally believe the proposals will not achieve what they intend to, my reasons are set out below.

My concerns for this proposal are:

Representation: The proposal is to put move our local community into an area that is represented mainly by 'urban seats', that typically has a population that is poorer, more reliant on government support and with more complex social problems than those in a rural area .. The proposed areas of Bell heath and Bell end etc are more affluent, with higher rates of employment and business ownership, higher rate of home ownership and higher rates of owning land with its own needs. How can it be guaranteed that the rural needs are decided as been as important as the urban ones, when circa 95% of the population will be classed as urban communities?

It is listed that the review will have 3 main considerations, of the 3 points, 2 of the points are not achievable under the current proposal:

- o Ensuring recommendation reflect community identity
- o Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

Regarding the first point, the Woodvale area will have 2 clear distinct identities, not a community one as the proposal aims to achieve. What is required for urban and rural communities are quite different. This is not a case of Class ism, but a practical view of the needs and wants of all involved. Septic tanks, overhanging trees, constant power cuts from the overhanging trees, maintaining field verges and country walk accesses, will not be the topics of conversation discussed as high priority at council meetings and if they were, they would not be of benefit to those in urban areas who would need more focus on poor parking, air and noise pollution, lighting, litter, speeding etc. These issues are as important just different based on where people live.

The second point, also would not be achievable given the very different communities with the Woodvale area. There is not going to be a solution that 'fits all' which would eventually result in increased time and cost, and difficulty for the Woodvale councillors to maintain, happy and settled residents. I would be increasingly concerned that the decisions made for the woodvale area would change the bell heath and bell end communities, making them more 'urban'. This would ultimately lead to a decrease in house prices, not what new people coking to the area looking for a rural lifestyle would want, which leads onto my next point.

House price changes: Average house prices for 2023 for Belbroughton and the rural areas surrounding it was £600k. Taking the same population sample size and again the 2023 statistics, conurbations within the Woodvale constituency was £280-£320k.

Lastly, I would be concerned about the School intake areas and also the GP surgery changes, if the proposal was to go ahead.

I look forward to a response.

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Attached Documents:

None attached