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**From:** John Ellis [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 07 May 2022 18:43  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** F.A.O. The Review Officer for Telford & The Wrekin  
**Attachments:** Response to LGBCE Proposals.docx

**Categories:** Submissions, [REDACTED]

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please find attached a response to the Local Government Boundary Review for The Borough of The Wrekin (trading as Telford & Wrekin).

This response is on behalf of the Independent Councillors (John Ellis, Alan Maddy, Dave Poole & Steve Reece) for the Town of Oakengates, the second largest constituent town of Telford. Our response contends that the review does not meet the Statutory Criteria derived from the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The arguments that come from the review, as they affect Oakengates are also fundamentally flawed and we object accordingly to the findings of the review.

I look forward to receiving confirmation of receipt of this response and, in due time, your findings.

Yours faithfully,

John Ellis,

Oakengates Town Councillor

# **RESPONSE TO L.G.B.C.E. PROPOSALS for TELFORD & THE WREKIN**

## **Introduction**

The Draft Recommendations document states on Page 7 that, under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory criteria of:

- Equality of representation;
- Reflecting community interests and identities; and
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

It is our contention that the Draft Recommendations, in so far as they affect the town of Oakengates and the surrounding area of North-East Telford, fail to meet these criteria.

## **Community Interests & Identity**

Prior to the creation of Telford New Town, Oakengates was one of the largest towns in the area, being the second largest in Telford, after Wellington. The formation of Oakengates Urban District Council in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century created one municipality covering most of North-East Telford until 1974. This encompassed Ketley Bank, Wombridge, Trench, Trench Lock, Wrockwardine Wood, Saint George's, Snedshill and Priorslee. The U.D.C. created its own Town Hall (theatre and meeting venue), Oakengates Leisure Centre, Sewage & Water Treatment works and many hundred council houses across this area.

Oakengates Town Centre remains the main district shopping centre for all these areas. It is the market town for Ketley Bank, Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Lock, as well as for Oakengates itself. With retail, leisure and hospitality sectors all based within the town centre, it is the hub for all of North-East Telford. With its own bus station, routes radiate to all these areas. Oakengates Postal Delivery Office also covers the whole of North-East Telford, under the TF2 postcode.

The Draft Recommendations have incongruously lumped Oakengates and Ketley Bank together with Ketley, Hadley and the more distant Leegomery & Apley Castle areas as "North Central Telford" (see Page 17). These latter areas have never had any strong links with Oakengates. They all lean more towards Wellington than Oakengates. Their transport links are generally stronger towards Wellington, from where comes their postal service under the TF1 postcode and which is the District Centre, Market Town and leisure hotspot for these areas.

The Secondary School catchment areas for Ketley Bank, Saint George's and Wrockwardine Wood all lead children and families to Telford Priory School (previously Wrockwardine Wood School in Oakengates), now relocated adjoining Oakengates Leisure Centre. Half of Ketley Bank falls under the catchment of Wombridge Primary

School in Oakengates. However, children from Ketley and Hadley attend Hadley Learning Centre and, therefore, have little in common with the children from Ketley Bank.

Ketley Bank shares little with Ketley, apart from the six letters in their names. They are linked only by a poorly-lit footbridge linking two culs-de-sacs over a dual-carriageway. Indeed, it is not possible to drive directly between the two without going out of the proposed ward! Consequently, there is no public transport between the two areas.

All services for Ketley Bank are focussed on Oakengates. The two doctors' surgeries that cover Ketley Bank are both in Oakengates Town Centre. Its bus services run to Oakengates Town Centre. Its Town Council is Oakengates Town Council, which runs childrens' and elderly persons' activities for all of Oakengates Town, including Ketley Bank, Wrockwardine Wood and Trench Lock. The wards of Oakengates (including Ketley Bank) and Ketley were briefly merged in a previous boundary review but quickly separated as they were unpopular and irrelevant.

### **Effective and Convenient Local Government**

Again, this criterion is not met by this proposal. The proposal plans to split and dilute the representation of the town of Oakengates between new wards of Oakengates (most of Polling District TOO), Ketley (TOE), Wrockwardine Wood & Trench (TOH & TOW) and Hadley (part of TOO in Trench Lock). That part of Oakengates covering Station Hill, Willows Road and Cockshutt Road remain in Saint George's ward.

By splitting Oakengates into five different wards with only one councillor remaining to cover the centre of Oakengates, this is neither effective nor convenient. This would also lead to Oakengates Town being represented by :-

Ketley (2 Borough councillors)

Hadley & Trench Lock (3 Borough councillors)

Wrockwardine Wood & Trench (2 Borough councillors) and

Oakengates (1 Borough Councillor).

Of these 8 councillors, 7 of them would have primary responsibility for areas outside Oakengates. The confusion this would create between Borough and Town council areas would fail to meet the test of Effective and Convenient Local Government.

That part of the proposals which moves Polling District TOW (Wrockwardine Wood) into Oakengates ward is welcome and has long been sought, as the residents there all lean on Oakengates for their services. However, the creation of numerous small wards for Oakengates Town Council is undesirable as it creates unnecessary complication.

We note that the alterations are at the behest of one political party and make statements about, for example, the importance of the A442 as a boundary. Those of us who live

and work in Oakengates realise that the A442 cuts across the local community but does not divide it. We are not affiliated to ANY political organisation and feel that it is for locals to determine where they feel that their community lies, rather than being represented by those from outside the area who have little knowledge of it and who may have party-political advantages to secure.

### **Equality of Representation**

The timing of these proposals caused the consultation to go out to the public during the Covid pandemic, for much of the time the country being under lockdown and the dissemination of information being very limited. It is hardly surprising that so few representations were made. Since the lifting of restrictions, things have been moving apace, including the starting of new developments in the area. Two new housing estates are being created in the area. In Polling District WOL, a replacement Hadley Road has been created to open up the former brickworks site for housing. The proposed increase of only 19 electors from 1188 in 2020 to 1207 in 2026 is woefully inadequate. While this will help decrease the proposed deficit of 9% per councillor in Hadley & Trench Lock ward, another new development will create major problems in representation.

In Polling District WOB, a major new development in Beveley will create many new houses. The proposed Ketley ward would already have a surplus of 10% per councillor and the rise in electors from 632 in 2020 to 663 in 2026 is likely to be a gross under-representation. The Local Government Commissioners are urgently recommended to contact the Borough Council's Planning Department to question these numbers, which may already be significantly out of date. While this may be inconvenient for the existing proposals, this may avoid wards so significantly out of balance that this whole exercise has to be repeated in only five years. If this out-of-date information is typical of that provided, the number of councillors is likely to be inadequate if it remains at 54. Not only would the use of out-dated information be expensive and inefficient, requiring another review, it would also create further and ongoing confusion between different bodies and representatives in the eyes of the public.

**Cllr. John Ellis, (Independent)**

**Cllr. Alan Maddy, (Independent)**

**Cllr. Dave Poole, (Independent)**

**Cllr. Steve Reece, (Independent)**

**Oakengates Town Councillors**