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From: Amee Plimmer <Amee.Plimmer@bridgnorthtowncouncil.gov.uk>
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Importance: High

Categories: Submissions, [REDACTED]

Good afternoon

Please find attached the submission for the Shropshire Boundary review from Bridgnorth Town Council. I understand the deadline was yesterday and you should have received our submission in the post.

However, in the current climate I wanted to also send an electronic copy to make sure this has been received. Thank you for your understanding

Kind Regards

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Local Government Boundary Commission for
England Electoral Review of Shropshire
Unitary Authority

Submission by Bridgnorth Town Council to
the Initial Consultation 22 November 2022 to
30 January 2023

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of
Shropshire Unitary Authority

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Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of Shropshire Unitary Authority

Submission by Bridgnorth Town Council to the Initial Consultation 22 November 2022 to 30 January 2023

General

1. This submission considers the Shropshire Council divisions which include the Town of Bridgnorth. We do not comment on the detail of arrangements elsewhere in the County.
2. Our proposals are based on the electorate data published by the Commission as a spreadsheet in November 2022. We understand the information was provided by Shropshire Council. This shows the current electorate for the Unitary Authority area of 249,308 and a forecast of 265,997 for 2028 (5 years post review). The Commission is seeking to define areas to be represented by 74 councillors and we understand that there is a preference for single member electoral divisions; the average electorate per councillor would be 3,369 as at November 2022 and would be 3,595 in 2028 based on the forecast supplied.
3. In making our proposals we have mainly used existing polling districts.

Area Character

4. Bridgnorth is a historic market town and forms the core of the 3rd largest settlement in Shropshire. The town was an early industrial centre based on the banks of the River Severn, but since the end of the Second World War the areas adjacent to the river have become mainly residential in character and employment areas have developed on the edge of the town (notably in the South East) and at Stanmore Industrial Estate (which occupies the site of the former RAF Bridgnorth, but is in Worfield parish). Manufacturing industry remains an important employment sector for the town, alongside retail, tourism and leisure.
5. Bridgnorth acts as a service centre for the surrounding rural area and has a range of facilities including:
 - 2 secondary schools and 4 primary schools
 - A local hospital and an adjacent large medical centre
 - A library and a museum
 - A cinema and a theatre
 - Pubs and restaurants
 - Supermarkets, a recognisable High Street, and local shops
 - Sports and Leisure facilities
 - Tourism facilities including a heritage railway.

Pattern of expected electorate growth

6. It is expected that electorate growth over the next 5 years will mainly be driven by residential development and people moving into the area.
7. Shropshire has an urban focussed growth strategy, directing development towards existing population centres which have the facilities and infrastructure to support growth. Rural areas are expected to see very little future residential or employment development.
8. Bridgnorth's development options are limited by the topography of the area, the flood plain of the River Severn, and the presence of the West Midlands Green Belt, which includes the area of Shropshire to the east of the Severn.
9. Bridgnorth has a development boundary, defined in the adopted Shropshire Local Plan. Currently, this encompasses the existing built area of Bridgnorth and an area to the North West within Tasley parish. The existing development boundary is shown on maps available at <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/7613/s3-bridgnorth.pdf>
10. Most residential development in the Bridgnorth area over the next 5 years is expected to take place within Tasley parish. The main focus of this development is expected to be on the sites identified as BRID001, BRID020a, and BRID020b. An outline planning application to build up to 550 homes in this area (and employment development at sites ELR011a and ELR011b) is currently under consideration.
11. A revised draft Local Plan for Shropshire is currently undergoing examination. It is proposed that an area to the South West of the A458 (mainly in Tasley parish) be allocated for (initially) a 1,050 home Garden Village. Although this area may see some residential development within the next 5 years, it is unlikely that the plan will be adopted prior to publication of the Commission's final recommendations in September 2023.

Electorate numbers and basis for proposals

12. The current and forecast electorates for the existing Shropshire Council divisions encompassing Bridgnorth are:

<u>Electorate numbers for existing Shropshire Council divisions for the Bridgnorth area.</u>	<u>Electorate 2022</u>	<u>Forecast 2028</u>	<u>Variance 2022%</u>	<u>Variance 2028%</u>
<u>Bridgnorth West & Tasley</u>				
Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward LDA-LDC	2245	2256		
Bridgnorth Town West Ward LDD	2389	2298		
Tasley Parish - polling district LDE	837	1563		
Total electorate (2 councillors)	5471	6117		
Electorate per councillor	2736	3059	-18.8	-14.9
<u>Bridgnorth East & Astley Abbots</u>				
Bridgnorth Town East Ward LCB to LCD	2544	2612		
Bridgnorth Town Morfe Ward LCE & LCF	2573	2602		
Astley Abbots Parish LCA	397	390		
Total electorate (2 councillors)	5514	5604		
Electorate per councillor	2757	2802	-18.2	-22.1
<u>Adjoining areas:</u>				
Much Wenlock	3517	3811	4.4	6.0
Brown Clee	3188	3420	-5.4	-4.9
Alveley & Claverley	3505	3851	4.0	7.1
Worfield	2976	3004	-11.7	-16.4
County average per councillor	3369	3595		

13. Both of the existing 2 member divisions which include parts of Bridgnorth Town are below the normal tolerance range (within 10% of the average) at present and this is expected to continue over the next 5 years. If the area were to retain 4 Shropshire councillors at least 12,942 electors (90% of the average electorate for 4 divisions) and preferably 14,380 electors would ideally be needed in 2028, compared with 11,721 forecast for the existing combinations of parishes.
14. We feel it is more realistic for boundaries to be defined which result in 3 Shropshire councillors representing parts of Bridgnorth Town and adjacent areas which have a good commonality of interests with the Town. Ideally, 3 divisions would have a total electorate between 9707 and 11,683 in 2028.

15. We propose not to include the Astley Abbots parish area within the arrangement of 3 divisions local to Bridgnorth. The parish comprises a large rural area and although Bridgnorth acts as a focal point for its residents for some services we feel that the issues pertinent to Shropshire councillor representation for this area are more likely to be of a kind experienced in a nearby rural area such as Brown Clee. There is a clear boundary between Bridgnorth Town and Astley Abbots parish at Canern Brook.
16. We do, however, propose that an area based on the Hobbins Ward of Worfield parish be included within the 3 proposed divisions, in view of the commonality of interests which this area has with the Bridgnorth settlement. This area has a similar electorate to Astley Abbots parish (but concentrated in a much smaller area) so it would remain appropriate for the area to have overall representation by 3 Shropshire councillors.
17. We feel it would be appropriate for the River Severn to act as a boundary. Whilst this a significant physical feature which very much defines the character of the town, we also feel that the historical area of Low Town in Bridgnorth has a strong community identity. This would mean that Bridgnorth Town Council's governance arrangements would have to be modified, splitting the current East Ward. The area of Bridgnorth Town Council East Ward to the East of the Severn is of an appropriate size to return 1 Bridgnorth Town councillor, either as a separate single member ward or by becoming joined with Bridgnorth Town Morfe Ward. The area of Bridgnorth Town Council East Ward to the West of the Severn is of an appropriate size to return 3 Bridgnorth Town councillors.
18. Our proposals for 3 divisions are described below, and maps of our proposals are attached.

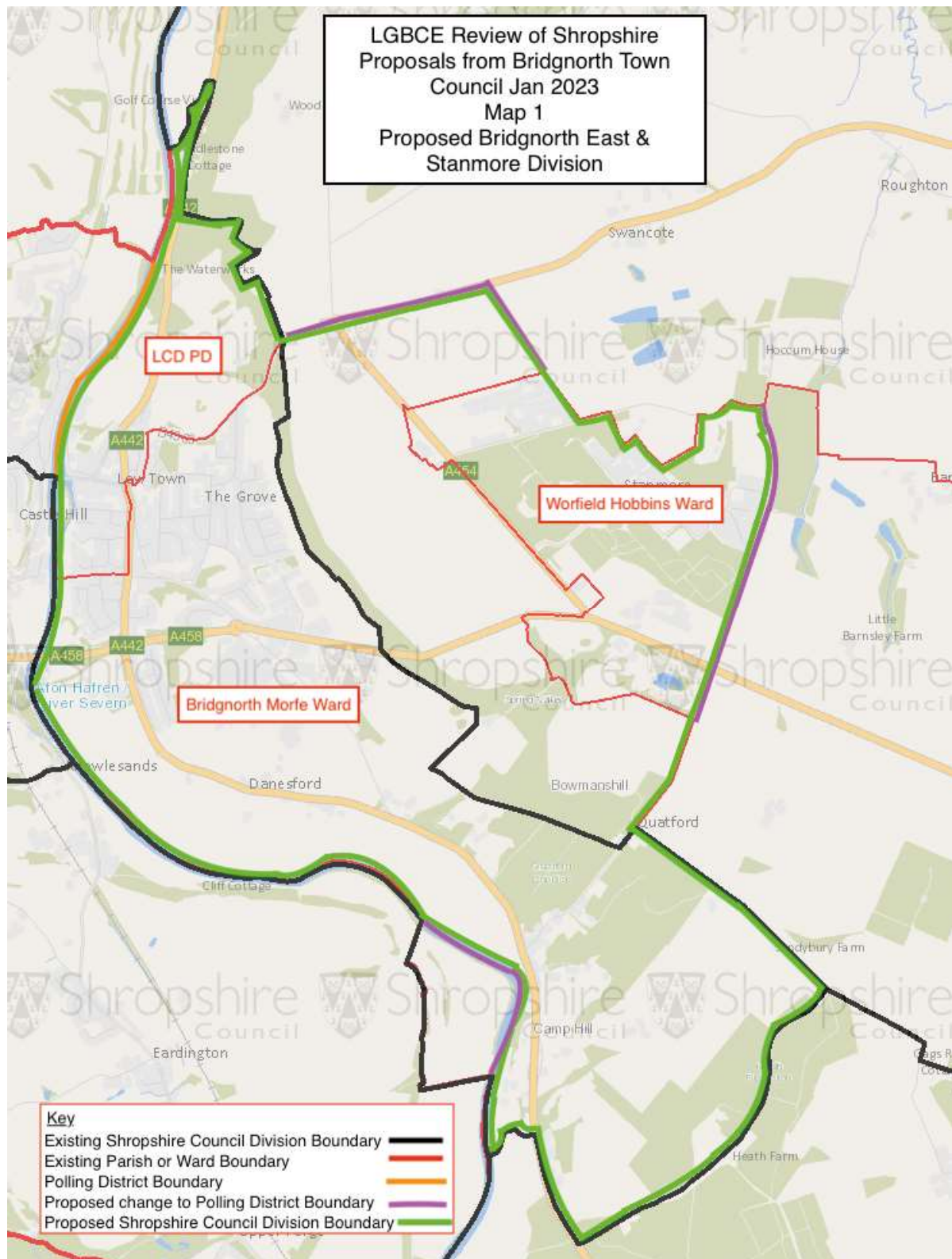
Proposal – Bridgnorth East and Stanmore Division

19. We propose that a single member division be created comprising all of the area of Bridgnorth Town to the East of the Severn, and that additionally this include the area of The Hobbins, Stanmore Industrial Estate and Russell Close in Worfield parish, plus the intervening land. Broadly this area comprises the Hobbins Ward of Worfield and Rudge parish council, though it may be appropriate to make minor adjustments to the boundary of that ward.
20. As noted earlier, Stanmore Industrial Estate occupies part of the site of the former RAF Bridgnorth, and there are homes adjoining it which are based around former service quarters. Although the surrounding land is Green Belt, the Industrial Estate is not subject to Green Belt restrictions on development and has grown to be the largest employment site in the Bridgnorth area. Although the terrain between this area and the Bridgnorth Town boundary does have prominent physical features (woodland and steeply sloping ground) which represents convenient boundaries, the area is well connected with Bridgnorth Town by road and currently benefits from a bus service into the town.
21. The current and projected number of electors for this division are:

Proposed Bridgnorth East & Stanmore Division	Electorate 2022	Forecast 2028	Variance 2022%	Variance 2028%
Part of Bridgnorth Town East Ward LCD	685	677		
Part of Bridgnorth Town Morfe Ward LCE	2200	2214		
Part of Bridgnorth Town Morfe Ward - Quatford LCF	373	388		
Worfield Parish Council Hobbins Ward LRH	386	401		
Total electorate	3644	3680	8.2	2.4

22. This area is not expected to see significant population change as a result of its location next to and within the Green Belt and fits within normal tolerance of the average electorate both now and 5 years post review.
23. Whilst we appreciate that Worfield division is currently smaller than average we feel there may be opportunities to adjust its boundaries in other areas to enable it to be brought nearer the average.

24. Note that there is a small part of Morfe Ward to the East of the River Sever, adjoining Eardington parish, at present. Historically this area was part of the ecclesiastical parish of Quatford and was connected to it by a ferry, but this is no longer so. It contains a sewage treatment works but no homes. It might more conveniently be included in the same Shropshire Council division as Eardington parish.



Proposal – Bridgnorth Central Division

25. We propose that part of Bridgnorth Town East Ward (polling District LCC) which is to the West of the River Severn be combined with the Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward, to create a Bridgnorth Central Shropshire Council division. This would require that polling district LCC (which is of a sufficient size to return 2 Bridgnorth Town councillors) would have to become a separate ward of Bridgnorth Town Council or merge with Castle Ward.
26. Within this proposal, we suggest that an anomalous area around Portmans Way, which is the only part of Bridgnorth Town West Ward S of Wenlock Road, is included in the new division. We also suggest that properties on the N side of Westgate and Salop Street, currently within LCB polling district of Bridgnorth Town East Ward, be included (alongside the properties on the S side of these streets, which are already in Bridgnorth Castle Ward).
27. This is the most densely developed part of Bridgnorth Town, and consists primarily of residential and commercial property. It is widely accepted that the centre of Bridgnorth is in and around the High Street, where most of the major facilities are located, and this centre is in the middle of this proposed division.
28. The current and projected number of electors for this division are:

Proposed Bridgnorth Central Division	Electorate 2022	Forecast 2028	Variance 2022%	Variance 2028%
Part of Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward LDA	298	308		
Part of Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward LDB	662	660		
Part of Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward LDC	1285	1288		
Part Bridgnorth Town West Ward - Portman's Way and side roads	156	156		
Part Bridgnorth Town East Ward –N side of Salop Street and Westgate	60	60		
Part Bridgnorth Town East Ward LCC	1197	1272		
Total electorate	3658	3744	8.6	4.1

29. The lack of any further suitable sites becoming available strongly suggests that the current number of electors will remain broadly static. There has been a modest increase in residential property in recent years caused by the conversion of large houses into smaller accommodation units, conversion of commercial property to residential units including space above existing shops and development of retirement apartments on windfall sites.

Proposal – Bridgnorth West and Tasley Division

31. Although Tasley is a separate parish, it is currently included in a Shropshire Council division with parts of Bridgnorth town in a 2 member Shropshire Council division. With the requirement to form single member divisions, the existing Shropshire Council division requires subdivision, and our proposed Bridgnorth West & Tasley division represents the parts of the existing Shropshire Council division which are not proposed to be included within the proposed Bridgnorth Central division. Polling District LCB of Bridgnorth Town East Ward, which adjoins West Ward, would also be included in this area with consequential amendments to the boundaries of Bridgnorth Town Council wards- this area has sufficient electors to support the election of 1 Bridgnorth Town councillor.
32. Bridgnorth Town West Ward and the adjoining area currently within Bridgnorth Town Council East Ward makes up 78% of the initial electorate of this proposed division. This area is fully developed and almost entirely residential in character, though it does have local shops at Queensway Drive and Sydney Cottage Drive.
33. Historically Tasley parish was largely rural, but in recent decades areas adjacent to the boundary with Bridgnorth Town have seen substantial housing development and those areas have similar urban characteristics to the adjoining parts of Bridgnorth. It adjoins Bridgnorth Town West Ward at Hook Farm Road, Racecourse Drive and Portmans Way; parish boundaries in these areas are indistinct.
34. Tasley parish also includes Bridgnorth Livestock Market, which is an important resource for the agricultural sector over a wide area. As part of land allocations in Shropshire's adopted local plan, the livestock market is proposed to be relocated within Tasley parish to a site SW of the A458 and co-located with a proposed employment development. The current livestock market site, adjacent land between Wenlock Road and Church Lane, and land N of Church Lane adjoining existing residential areas are proposed to be developed for housing, retail and community facilities. An outline planning application for this development is currently under consideration; the housing element would comprise up to 550 homes. Should this application be granted, it is likely that some of the development would take place within 5 years of the conclusion of the review and lead to significant growth in the electorate.

35. The current and projected number of electors for this division are:

Proposed Bridgnorth West and Tasley Division	Electorate 2022	Forecast 2028	Variance 2022%	Variance 2028%
Bridgnorth Town West Ward LDD	2389	2298		
Less: Part Bridgnorth Town West Ward -Portman's Way and side roads	-156	-156		
Part of Bridgnorth Town East Ward LCB	662	663		
Less: Part Bridgnorth Town East Ward – N side of Westgate and Salop Street	-60	-60		
Tasley Parish LDE	837	1563		
Total electorate	3672	4308	9.0	19.8

36. This division is projected to have more electors than the normal tolerance around the average, within 5 years of the completion of the review. However, that results from projected growth of 726 electors within Tasley parish (representing 20.2% of the 2028 projected average electorate for a Shropshire Council division). This forecast growth in electorate is contingent on development, which does not as yet have outline planning permission, proceeding within the next 5 years. Whilst we acknowledge that some development is likely we feel that there is significant uncertainty about the extent of it within 5 years of completion of the Commission's review. Accordingly we have not sought to define the proposed boundaries in a way which results in a smaller initial electorate.
37. Brooks (including Mor Brook and Tiddle Brook to the South and West, and Canern Brook to the North), their banks, and related woodlands form readily identifiable and convenient boundary features. Wenlock Road, Westgate, Salop Street and the B4373 N of Innage Lane form effective boundaries within Bridgnorth. As noted earlier, there is a lack of boundary features S of Wenlock Rise between Tasley parish and Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward.

Consequential amendments to Bridgnorth Town Council Wards

38. Since we are proposing to introduce principal council divisional boundaries between the LCB, LCC and LCD polling districts of the current Bridgnorth Town East Ward, the electorate in the LCB, LCC and LCD polling districts will be required to be reallocated to different Bridgnorth Town wards. This also applies to the small area of the current West Ward around Portmans Way where we are proposing to rectify an anomalous boundary.
39. We anticipate that Shropshire Council will carry out a Community Governance Review of the county's Town and Parish councils following the Commission's review of Shropshire Council. However, we understand that the Commission is required to amend parish wards where a reorganisation of principal council boundaries results in parish wards straddling the boundary of a principal council division.
40. Bridgnorth Town Council currently has 4 wards, each returning 4 councillors. At this stage, we would prefer not to create single member wards, so we request that:
- a. Polling District LCB be reallocated to Bridgnorth Town West Ward and that this return 5 councillors.
 - b. The area around Portmans Way where we propose a boundary revision be included in Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward.
 - c. Polling District LCC be reallocated to Bridgnorth Town Castle Ward and that this return 6 councillors.
 - d. Polling District LCD be reallocated to Bridgnorth Town Morfe Ward and that this return 5 councillors.

END OF SUBMISSION