

## **Nash Parish Council**

### **Response to draft recommendations for electoral arrangements - Shropshire Council**

#### **SUMMARY**

Following a review of the draft recommendations and extensive public consultations with local residents Nash Parish Council has voted unanimously to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal that the civil parish of Nash is moved from Clee Hill division into Cleobury Mortimer division.

#### **BACKGROUND**

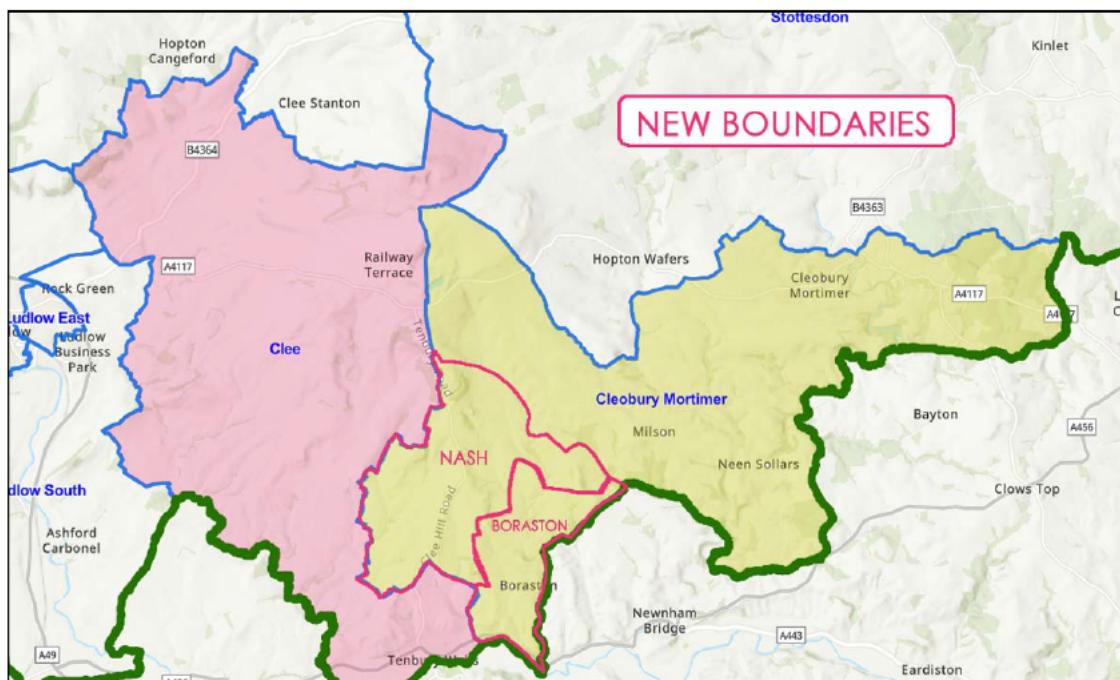
As part of regular reviews of electoral arrangements and consequently electoral division boundaries there was, apparently, a consultation in November 2022 regarding Shropshire-wide electoral division boundaries. Neither this consultation, nor the proposal to move Nash civil parish (along with the neighbouring Boraston civil parish) from Clee division into Cleobury Mortimer division, was ever communicated to Nash Parish Council either directly from Shropshire Council, through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) or by our Clee division Shropshire Councillor (Richard Huffer). Consequently there has been no input, comment or submission from Nash Parish Council in the formulation of proposals.

In January this year Shropshire Council gave a 76 page proposal on new electoral divisions to the Boundary Commission mentioning moving Nash into a Cleobury Mortimer division only twice in passing and with no explanation, substantiation, reasoning or discussion of the implications for such a move.

In May this year the Boundary Commission issued a 70 page draft set of recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Shropshire Council without a single mention of the proposal to move Nash and Boraston civil parishes from Clee division into Cleobury Mortimer division - although the changes are included in the proposals.

The Boundary Commission web page giving detailed information regarding draft proposals and inviting views from interested parties ([www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/shropshire](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/shropshire)) gives no detail about proposals in respect of Nash and it is only by forensic comparison of interactive map options that the exact detail can be found.

1. Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
2. Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
3. Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.



## **OBJECTIONS**

Nash Parish Council object to moving from Clee division into Cleobury Mortimer division for the following reasons:

1. The main population and commercial centres neighbouring our parish and with whom our area mainly identify are Clee Hill and Burford. Both of these areas are currently in Clee division and will remain so if Nash moves away as proposed.
2. Any developments or decisions affecting either Clee Hill and/or Burford have a direct bearing on the interests of Nash Parish and in order to keep abreast of such matters and to enable us to easily reflect any concerns or input we may wish to put forward regarding such decisions requires continuity of representation across these areas. Moving away from Clee division, therefore, would not enable effective or efficient local government.
3. The 5 mile route between Clee Hill, Nash and Burford forms a natural corridor of villages, hamlets and individual dwellings (all in the current Clee division) and they should all have the same representation at local government level.
4. Our health, education and transport needs are, in the main, linked to Clee Hill and Burford/Tenbury and our County Council representation should also represent these areas where possible for effective local government.
5. Our major employment area locally is in Burford which is in Clee division.
6. Schools, doctors, dentists, shops, pubs and food outlets serving Nash are mainly in Clee Hill and Burford/Tenbury just 2.5 miles from Nash whereas Cleobury Mortimer is some 8 miles distant with no easy transport links and is as far away as the largest South Shropshire town of Ludlow.
7. Our community, sports and recreational facilities are located in Clee Hill, Nash and Burford/Tenbury. (Clee Hill, Nash and Burford being in the current Clee division structure)
8. It seems unlikely that we would get as much first hand contact with our Shropshire Councillor as we have enjoyed in the past in view of our distant location from Cleobury Mortimer.

## **CONSULTATION**

While Nash Parish Council holds the unanimous view that the move away from Clee division would be detrimental to the future of Nash civil parish, we researched the views of our residents in the following ways before finalising our submission:

1. We held a public meeting for discussion of the proposals with Shropshire councillors in attendance.
2. We set up an online poll of residents to gather their views.

The results were as follows

1. Thirty six local residents attended the public meeting along with the Clee Division councillor (Richard Huffer) and the Shropshire Council Liberal Democrat group leader (Roger Evans). The Cleobury Division councillor didn't attend. After lengthy discussions, of the thirty two residents entitled to vote, 100% voted to oppose the proposed move from Clee division into Cleobury Mortimer division
2. The results of the online poll were as follows: There were 90 votes online from 72 households (52% of parish households) with 100 % voting against the proposed move from Clee division

## **COMMUNITY**

The 5 mile corridor formed by the Clee Hill to Burford road is made up of a collection of rural villages, hamlets and individual dwellings. These lend themselves to being a community and they share many facilities and common ties such as:

1. Joint social media presence where we keep our residents apprised of local matters.
2. Joint community facilities at Nash Village Hall and Knowle sports and rugby clubs.
3. Joint Parochial Church Council with a common warden for the twin churches of Nash and Boraston
4. Common neighbourhood crime reporting forum via a community WhatsApp group

To pull this apart by splitting Nash away and putting it into the Cleobury Mortimer division would be hugely detrimental to all.

## **ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION**

**Nash parish remains within Clee division.** The consequences in respect of the number of forecast 2028 division electors would be:

Target 3594 electors per councillor +/- 10%

Proposed Clee + Nash = 3608 = +0.4% above target

Proposed Cleobury Mortimer - Nash = 3257 = -9.4% below target

**NOTE:** the 10% variance target is viewed as having "good electoral equality".

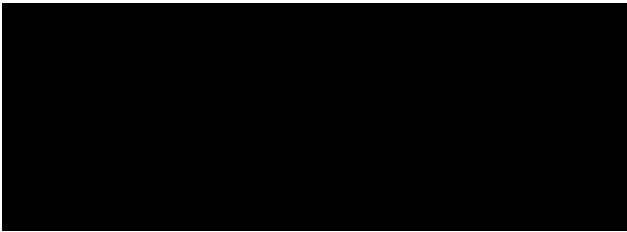
## **CONCLUSIONS**

We are now faced with a situation where:

1. There has been a failure in the communication and consultation process by Shropshire Council and our elected representative councillor.
2. We have had no opportunity to put forward our views in the development of Shropshire Council's proposals.
3. Our representatives at County Council level have not consulted or commented on proposals.
4. Recommendations have been published by both Shropshire Council or the Boundary Commission giving no reasoning or justification for moving Nash into Cleobury Mortimer division.
5. Recommendations have been published by the Boundary Commission with no mention of changes involving Nash at all.
6. The only reason we have been given for the proposed move by our Shropshire Councillor is that we are being moved "to make the numbers fit" what seems to be an arbitrary rule.
7. Recommendations are contrary to two of the three fundamental principles of the Boundary Commission's main considerations i.e. "ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity" and "providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government".
8. Our residents have voted 100% against the recommended move away from Clee division.
9. The Parish Council have formally voted unanimously to reject the proposition on two occasions.

**We must, therefore, reaffirm formally, directly and in the strongest possible terms, that Nash Parish Council, which represents and is the voice of the residents of the civil parish of Nash, objects to and rejects, the proposed recommendation of the Boundary Commission to move Nash civil parish from Clee division to Cleobury Mortimer division for electoral arrangements for Shropshire Council. It is our wish to stay in Clee division.**

Peter Stubbs



For and on behalf of - Nash Parish Council

Dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023