

## Malvern Hills District Council

### Personal Details:

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### Comment text:

The Boundary Commission review proposed new boundaries for voting wards earlier this year to bring the number of councillors down from 38 to 31. I don't disagree with minimising the number of councillors as we - like most councils- have a number of councillors who contribute nothing but the new number has to work for residents and it should be them that remain the focus - ensuring that there is no democratic deficit created by the review, that both rural and town wards get the same level of focus and that the connect between our District council and residents is not lost. We've just established a connected communities strategy and so proposing to remove community leaders and community champions to become remote figures doesn't make sense. Based purely on number of residents per councillors - and further not putting in development beyond 2027 - means that residents in rural areas are facing the brunt of this change. Unfortunately, if ever there was proof that we have to start this process again, post the next election, then this is it. We've now seen two attempts to create a new map, and both have been completely different. Rather than being an amendment as we expected this second iteration has been back to the drawing board. If ever there was a sign that something is not right, then that is it. We should have seen some fiddling with wards - not a complete and utter change. After the first attempt there were comments around the Martley super ward, the number of 3 member wards being too many, the splitting of parish councils - which many didn't see as an issue, and the fact that the commission hadn't visited Malvern. Have these all been resolved? Have any of them been resolved? As it got worse? After this final recommendation we now have swapped a Martley super ward for a Broadheath super ward which makes no sense whatsoever with the communities it's been linked with. It's joined parishes in the South of the district which make no sense as well. We've seen the number of 3 member wards increased, not decreased and the commission still hasn't visited us. Nothing has been resolved. This is by far worse than the previous outline. The lack of visit may explain why some very different communities have been linked together. We now have the growing village and suburb-of-Worcester Rushwick twinned with Suckly and Alfrick - border villages of Herefordshire with two councillors to over see all. Prior we had Rushwick and Bransford together - two neighbouring villages who look north towards Worcester - as a single member ward which makes absolute sense and then Leigh and Alfrick etc looked after by another Councillor. Why they should be pushed together and two councillors look after them makes no sense and the Parish Councils were fine from the Rushwick side with this new layout - but now it's all been lumped together into another strangely large ward. Two single member wards makes sense for two disparate communities. When it comes to Lower Broadheath being put with Hallow, Grimley, Broadwas, Cotheridge, Sinton Green and Wichenford - wow - who ever thought of that knows nothing of the area, hasn't visited and good luck to whoever wants to take it on with it's 6 Parish Council meetings a month! We won't have 31 councillors - we'll have a lot less as no one will want to represent such large wards. Why as there been no focus on creating smaller councillor wards?? But in the town it's okay as over a couple of square miles they will have 3 councillors! So, while Rural councillors will be visiting 6 Parish Council meetings a month and covering many, many miles those in the town have only the town council and have two other colleagues to share the work from a smaller field with. This is creating a huge democratic void for those in rural communities who will be under represented and have less involvement with their District Council. If you take a great Councillor like Dean Clarke in Hallow. He currently represents Hallow and Grimley. He's known very well in these villages and who ever follows him will likely be the same. It's key to have an understanding and synergy with your local ward - but how can you if you cover such a large, large area. These are getting closer to county wards in rural areas. This recommendation is just an abomination. It is utterly flawed. Oddly I don't think it was far off before and just needed a few tweaks. No one expected this wholesale change which gives us more of what we don't need. It doesn't support residents; it doesn't encourage new councillors and it really just doesn't work for

anyone. I'd like to see a real effort made to create 31 smaller wards with 31 Councillors representing their communities. I expect, however, this will be it and we'll see no change. If that happens then the exodus from the Council will be immense and I can't see a rush of new councillors to take on so much work and time - unless of, course, it's be councillor #2 or #3 in the town wards. Rural communities are going to be hit badly - with an increased Democratic deficit and their councillors serving over sized wards - and what haven't I mentioned? That all of these rural wards are the ones that are growing. That Broadheath Super ward is getting another 2,500 houses for the 2 district councillors to oversee. Rushwick - 1000 more houses - making that area even different. These super wards are not only oversized to start with but will get even worse. I ask that the commission stop the current review and look again after the next elections otherwise we're going to really suffer as a council. We need to look at numbers further away than 2027, allow for more Councillors and absolutely focus on single member wards. If that's not possible then the Lower Broadheath wards needs to be split into two - I would keep Lower Broadheath as a single member ward - as proposed before and put Hallow with Wichenford - splitting this new proposal into two single member seats. I would then put Rushwick back with Bransford or leave it on it's own - but Rushwick should never be with Leigh Sinton, Alfrick or Suckley. We really just need to get away from these huge wards in rural areas - in both the north and the south and in the centre we need to do away with 3 member wards. What was wrong with Priory with 2 members and Pickersleigh with 1 for example? I don't think there should be any 3 member wards.

**Uploaded Documents:**

None Uploaded