

Boundary Commission England: Electoral Division Review, Shropshire

Consultation Response from Clive Parish Council, Shawbury Division

The Boundary Commission for England has stated that the three criteria for agreeing division boundaries are:

1. Electoral equality – ideally approx. 3600 electors per division
2. Community identities and interests
3. Effective and convenient local government

Clive parish is currently part of Shawbury division in North Shropshire, and is currently forecast to have 478 electors in 2027. We understand from briefings held in Dec 2022 that Shropshire Council had asked the Boundary Commission for 76 members, but that the Boundary Commission's current preference is for Shropshire to have 74 single member divisions.

Electoral inequality in Shawbury

We note that the target number of electors in Shropshire is 3600 per division, with a margin of 10% above or below that target being considered acceptable. Looking at the Shropshire Council electoral forecasting figures, Shawbury was 11% over the 3600 target in 2021 (3742 electors), and is currently forecast to be 13% over the target in 2027 (4046 electors).

If there are to be no additional divisions created in Shropshire, then this suggests that Shawbury division boundaries may possibly need reviewing to reduce the number of electors. As Clive is on the western edge of the Shawbury boundary we have explored what possibilities there could be for changing the electoral division on the western boundary.

One of the neighbouring divisions is **The Meres**, (made up of the wards of Myddle, Broughton, Harmer Hill, Welshampton, Lyneal, Ellesmere Rural, and Loppington), however The Meres Division is already 16% over the ideal number of electors, and is forecast to be 18% over the target in 2027. If the boundary of the Shawbury Division was changed so that Clive became part of The Meres, this would add an extra 478 electors to The Meres, bringing their total forecasted number of electors to 4735, which would be 32% over the 3600 target. So from a purely electoral equality perspective, it makes no sense to change the boundary so that Clive becomes part of The Meres Division, as this would only serve to exacerbate electoral inequality.

The other possibility would be to change the Shawbury Division boundary so that Clive became part of **Wem Division**. Wem Division is currently a 2-member division made up of the Wem Rural wards, and Wem Urban wards). With 2 members, Wem Division is currently only 1% over the target of 3600 per member, and is forecast to be on target for 2027, so adding Clive's forecast of 478 electors would mean Wem Division would have approx. 7669 electors in total, which would be 6% over the target.

However, considering the other criteria for the Boundary Commission Electoral Division Review (Community identities and interests, and Effective and convenient local government), we do not believe that moving Clive into Wem Division would make sense, as Clive has far more, and much closer ties to its existing neighbouring parishes in Shawbury, than any of the parishes to the north in Wem Division.

Shared community identities and interests within existing Shawbury Division:

Amenities and Education:

Clive shares many amenities with its neighbouring Shawbury parishes, including Clive Medical Centre. Arguably the most important shared amenity is Clive Church of England Primary School. Clive CofE Primary School is attended by children from Clive, as well as Grinshill and Preston Brockhurst parishes. The 'School on the Hill' turned 150 years old this January, and whilst its location on top of Grinshill Hill presents some restrictions in terms of space, children have access to a special 'Woodland school' on Grinshill Hill (which itself extends across parish borders). The challenges that the small school site presents however mean that school life for the children is closely entwined with the Clive community – there is no vehicular access to the school, so children use local footpaths and restricted byways to walk to school; Renshaw's Playing Field in Clive is used by the school for outdoor sports and other activities, and Clive Village Hall is used for indoor PE and larger school activities and assemblies; Clive All Saints Church is also used by the primary school for the annual carol service. By contrast, neighbouring parishes in the Wem Rural areas are in the catchment area for schools closer to Wem town, such as St Peters CofE school.

Communications: Whilst the shop and Post Office sadly closed in Clive in 2019, there is now a mobile Post Office service in Clive Village Hall, which is also the nearest Post Office for Grinshill and Preston Brockhurst parishioners. There is also a joint newsletter covering the Clive and Grinshill area which shares local news and matters of interest, events, and updates from both parish councils.

Community events: For the Platinum Jubilee in 2022 there was a lot of collaboration between Clive and Grinshill parish councils, and other local organisations in the combined area, and a timetable of events took place in various locations across both parishes over the Jubilee weekend, including a Jubilee beacon on top of Grinshill Hill. The Hill is the location for readings and pipers for Remembrance Day activities which also brings together the two parishes.

Recreation and outdoor facilities

As there is no longer a bowling green in Clive, the (unaffiliated) Clive Bowling Club has used the bowling green facilities in Preston Brockhurst since 2018, and Grinshill cricket ground (home to Acton Reynald Cricket Club) is also used by players from Clive. Grinshill Hill and Corbet Wood also serve as popular destination for outdoor recreation (walking, running, cycling, horse riding, bouldering, and fossil hunting) for villagers from Clive and Grinshill, as well as other Shawbury wards of Moreton Corbet and Lee Brockhurst. Parents and small children from the wider Shawbury Division area also make use of the Clive Toddler Group, which meets in Clive Village Hall. The Village Hall is also host to the Friendly Bridge Club which again attracts participants from a wide catchment area. The Clive & Grinshill Women's Institute group holds meetings variously in Clive or Grinshill Village Halls.

Shared history:

Grinshill Hill is a historical link between the Clive and Grinshill communities. Clive also shares its quarrying and mining history with Grinshill **parish**, and books on the local geological history (David B Thompson, "A Guide to the History and Geology of Quarrying at Localities Along the Natural History Trail in Corbet Wood, Grinshill, North Shropshire", 1995) demonstrate that villagers in Clive have quarried Grinshill sandstone for 1000 years, and the other local natural resource copper has been mined since at least the 1600s according to records. The discovery in the 1800s of fossils of a lizard-like animal (Rhynchosaurus) that predated the dinosaurs played an important role in the establishment of the Clive and Grinshill quarries as a Site of Significant Scientific Interest (SSSI), as well as a challenge to commonly held Christian beliefs from the time. The Clive and Grinshill History Society exists to research and publicise the history of the villages of Clive and Grinshill, with meetings, talks, and presentations usually taking place in Clive Village Hall.

Shared interests and concerns:

There are often shared interests for both Clive and Grinshill Parish Councils in terms of rights of way maintenance and access, and when needed the two parish councils come together to ensure there is a coherent approach. Although they have been less active in the years since Covid-19, there is a Parish Paths Partnership (P3) group covering the combined Clive and Grinshill parish area that undertakes footpath clearance, and reports issues such as damaged stiles or blocked rights of way to Shropshire Council. There is sometimes conflict between users of Grinshill Hill and Corbet Woods (often between cyclists and other users); also something that brings together the neighbouring parishes. During lockdown a working group was set up involving councillors from both Clive and Grinshill parishes, local landowners Sansaw Estate and Acton Reynald Estate, as well as local mountain biking enthusiasts and Shropshire Council representatives. The local RAF base, RAF Shawbury holds regular Helicopter Liaison Group meetings to share information and allow representatives from the nearby Parish Councils to ask questions and voice any concerns, and staff from RAF Shawbury also attend Parish Council meetings to proactively share updates. The rural nature of the existing parishes under Shawbury Division, and the many shared interests and concerns facilitate effective and convenient local governance by the elected member. For example, the elected member for Shawbury is able to share examples of solutions to shared concerns (e.g. traffic calming) that have/have not worked in the other parishes under Shawbury Division, which in turn saves time and helps Parish Councils run more efficiently and effectively.

However, the urban nature of Wem Town wards means there are fewer shared concerns and interests between Clive parish and the Wem Division parishes. For example, crime and policing concerns in Wem Urban are understandably different to those in the rural parishes of Shawbury Division, where the main crime and policing concerns are fraud – high levels of elderly residents who are more at risk of falling victim to scams - rural crime e.g. theft of agricultural equipment, and traffic offences such as speeding. Many of the Shawbury parishes experience the same problem of motorists using their respective villages as a 'rat run' when commuting to urban employment centres such as Wem, Whitchurch, and Shrewsbury, etc. This is obviously less of an issue within the Wem urban wards. Highways concerns are also different, as many of the parishes in Shawbury Division are more concerned about pot holes and road surface degradation due to heavy agricultural traffic and poor surface water drainage.

The case for keeping Clive in Shawbury Electoral Division

As we have demonstrated, there are numerous examples to demonstrate the close geographical, historical, and community ties, shared amenities and interests between the existing parishes that

make up Shawbury electoral division, but especially between Clive and Grinshill parishes. The parishes in Shawbury Division already have a long history of working together on shared concerns, and the similar rural nature of the parishes under this existing Division is conducive for effective local governance. By contrast, there are far fewer links between Clive parish and other parishes in Wem division. To the clerk's knowledge there has been no specific collaboration between Clive Parish Council and any of the local councils under Wem Division in recent years. The only real links between the two are public transport in the form of the 511 Shrewsbury to Whitchurch bus service, the railway line that goes through Yorton, and the fact that Clive comes under the West Mercia Police Wem Safer Neighbourhood Team. Therefore, there is a very strong preference for Clive to remain part of the Shawbury Electoral Division.

“Severn Vale East” proposal

Clive Parish Council has very recently been made aware of one possible proposal from Shropshire Council, whereby a 75th electoral division would be created (“Severn Vale East”) which in one version would include Weir Hill to the East of Shrewsbury and extend upwards in a narrow strip to also include Hadnall, which is currently part of Shawbury electoral division. This would therefore reduce Shawbury's elector numbers and bring the division close to the target of 3600 electors. Clive Parish Council does not feel qualified to comment on boundary changes in other division areas (e.g. Tern, Monkmoor, Abbey etc.), and has had no opportunity to discuss this proposal with Hadnall Parish Council. It is unknown at this point whether the Severn Vale East proposal would be positively received by Hadnall Council or residents, so Clive Parish Council does cannot say whether or not it would be in favour of this particular proposal at this stage.