

Shropshire Council

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Comment text:

Church Stretton Town Council's evidence to support the change from a Binary Division to a Single Member Division entitled "Strettondale". Church Stretton CP is unique in that it is the only one of the seven historic market towns in Shropshire that sits wholly within the Shropshire Hills AONB; it is also the only one of the seven that is a Binary Division. Currently the Division includes the town of Craven Arms some 12km south of Church Stretton. Dorrington is closer to Church Stretton than Craven Arms. Church Stretton currently has an electorate of 3,956 which is estimated to rise to 3,989 by 2028. The data for Craven Arms gives broadly similar values of 3,351 current and a forecast of 3,637 by 2028. There the similarities end. Church Stretton is geographically located within a narrow valley bounded by steep hills. The Long Mynd creating a natural boundary to the west and the eastern boundary marked by the hills of Caer Caradoc, Hope Bowdler Hill and Ragleth Hill. This narrow valley is markedly wider to the south at Marshbrook and to the north at Gorsty bank. Church Stretton is the principal town within the Shropshire Hills AONB and is heavily dependent on visitors to support its many and varied independent retail outlets and over 400 people are employed within its tourism sector. Visitor pressures at weekends and during the summer months especially, bring their own unique difficulties with visitors travelling from all over the West Midlands and further afield to visit Carding Mill Valley in particular. The median working age as a percentage of population is the lowest in Shropshire at 47.7 years of age whilst the figure for Craven Arms is 57.2. This again impacts on the services that are required and provided within Church Stretton. There are many nursing and care homes within the Parish and of course the Mayfair Centre which not only provides health and wellbeing services to local residents but also some that cover the whole of South Shropshire. The protected landscape which envelopes the parish is under great pressure from developers who see an opportunity to maximise their profits. This pressure from speculative developers is unrelenting and has resulted in the median house price in Church Stretton being £320,000 as opposed to the less profitable Craven Arms with a median house price of £175,000. Whilst the current binary division may have been convenient at the last electoral review it fails to address the vast difference between the economy and demographic of the parishioners across the division. This is recognised by Shropshire Council in the ongoing Local Plan Review process where Church Stretton and Craven Arms are considered to be separate Key Centres, providing services to different rural hinterlands and with radically different proposed residential and employment land requirements. the Town Council feels that a Single Member Division is justified on the grounds of its strong sense of community identity, its clearly defined locality within the natural environment and its unique pressures as a visitor destination. The creation of the new single member division for Church Stretton, named "Strettondale" would give the unitary representative the ability to focus on its unique needs and the wishes of its electorate.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded