



"Not for self"

## Oswestry Rural Parish Council

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11 July 2023

LGBCE  
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Dear Sir/Madam

### Shropshire Council Review of Boundaries

The Oswestry Rural Parish Council has considered the draft report of the Commission in respect of changes proposed to electoral arrangements for Shropshire Council.

The Council notes that the Boundary Commission's assurance that a visit would be made to Shropshire to assess the nature of the County and the diverse communities has not been carried out.

The Council believes that the virtual tour referred to in the report is no substitute to actually experiencing the situation on the ground.

The Council is concerned that overall, the report in places appears to be a desk top exercise and would urge the Commission to visit and judge for themselves the issues – including the rural nature of the County which impacts on Shropshire divisions and Parish boundaries and wards.

The Council wishes to respond to the following matters.

#### Paragraph 62

*We have adopted the proposals from both the county-wide schemes, which retain the existing Whittington and Llanymynech divisions. Because of the impact on other divisions, the Council proposed retaining the existing St Oswald division, while the resident proposed expanding the division to cover all of Oswestry Rural parish. We have adopted this latter proposal as this offers good electoral equality and does not require Oswestry Rural parish to be divided between divisions.*

With respect to the St Oswald's Division, the Council accepts the expanding of the division to cover all of Oswestry Rural parish to offer electoral equality and does not require Oswestry Rural parish to be divided between divisions. This latter would impact on the subsequent Local Governance Review as it is understood that it is good practise NOT to split Parishes between difference divisions.

Paragraph 67

*Oswestry Town Council provided evidence that the Morda area, to the south of Oswestry, was becoming increasingly integrated into the town and suggested that this could be included within Oswestry Town. On our virtual tour of Shropshire, we considered that there is something of a division between the area north of the River Morda. We would welcome further evidence from residents of this area as to whether they consider that their community identity lies towards Oswestry, or towards the rural areas in the remainder of Oswestry Rural parish, and therefore whether this area should be included within an Oswestry division.*

However, the Council also rejects the assertion by Oswestry Town Council (p. 67) that there is a community of interest between the town and Morda. Historically these have always been two communities, with the area of Morda known for coalmining, brick making and other industries.

Prior to 1792, Morda comprised the Drill Inn, perhaps one or two farms, and possibly a small flour mill. The following decades of the Industrial Revolution saw several factories and mills spring up along the banks of the village's namesake river, which provided a ready source of power for machinery. These mills were used to grind corn for flour, and to manufacture textiles, paper, and animal products. Dwellings were also built at this time to house the local workforce, which comprised blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and millwrights among other craftspeople.

The village's main enterprise at the end of the 18th century was that of Warren Roberts & Co., originally of Manchester, who opened several mills for the printing and dyeing of calico. Calico activities ceased in Morda around 1818.

The village's present school was erected in 1872, replacing one that operated in a malt kiln behind the Drill Inn from around 1850.

While ribbon development along the Morda Road might suggest the merging of the urban and rural communities, exacerbated by the housing on the former Ambulance Station site, Glentworth Avenue provides a boundary to Weston Lane, as does the footpath known locally as Love Lane



The Council has received no representations from Morda residents expressing a wish to be included with Oswestry. The Council therefore strongly refutes any suggestion that residents would be content to be moved into the Oswestry Division.

In fact the Council believes that it would not be possible to move part of Morda – as seems to be suggested by the Boundary Commissions statement we considered that there is something of a division between the area north of the River Morda - into the Oswestry South Division, since this would actually divide the community into two parts north and south of the Morda River, one part being in the Oswestry Division and one part being in St. Oswalds. This would be contrary to Boundary Commission guidelines – and has been rejected in other areas in the report.

Furthermore, the Council is of the view that the River Morda does not provide an easily recognizable boundary in the way that a highway (A5/A483) or a railway does – both of which features are cited as reasons by the Commission for setting boundaries.

Nor is there any identifiable boundary past the Morda river to allow for the whole settlement to be moved into Oswestry South. This would be around 1,000 electors which if removed from St. Oswalds and inserted into Oswestry South would impact on the electoral numbers and might require further reconsideration of Oswestry Divisions but would also impact on the subsequent Local Governance Review.

The Council strongly urges the Commission

Yours sincerely



Councillor M. Bennett  
Chair, Oswestry Rural Parish Council.