

Worcestershire

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Comment text:

Related subject: Actual/ proposed Malvern Link Division

The Commission's draft proposals for a revised Malvern Link division are far better than Worcs CC's suggestions, but could still be significantly improved in two aspects.

The name Malvern Link will not be appropriate as the majority of electors will lie outside that settlement. Link forms under half the electorate on 2022's figures and will decline further as a proportion going forward. It would be more appropriate to re-use the current MHDC ward name of Alfrick, Leigh & Rushwick for the Worcs CC division. Alternatively, a neutral name such as Teme Valley would be preferable. Whatever the name, it must not be Malvern Link if a majority of electors are to identify with the new division.

Figures for 2029 indicate an electorate 7% above the target level. Yet the increase in electorate shown is barely half that due to occur within the 15-20 year review cycle for LGBCE. It is inevitable that on the boundaries suggested, the division's electorate will be well above the quantity capable of being served adequately by a single councillor before the next LGBCE review. The Commission will be well aware that it is logistically harder to represent an oversize population in a mainly rural area than a densely packed urban one. Moreover, issues in rural areas typically vary more widely than those in a concentrated urban settlement.

It would be far better to seize the current opportunity and establish boundaries that both better reflect local realities – current and future – and provide room for growth beyond 2029, even if that means exceeding the 10% target temporarily around 2029. To that end, all or part of MHDC electoral area MLK2 should be removed from the proposed Malvern Link division and placed in other Divisions. Complete removal would produce

numeric issues of its own, but partial realignment is certainly possible. Either would also reflect the different characteristics of voting areas MLK2 & MLK3.

MLK2 is completely urban in character and strongly aligned with the core of Malvern Link. Shopping is local as are other services and provision of religious facilities. MLK3 looks more to Malvern's retail park and this can only increase as housing is developed in Newland parish, since the latter is and will be separate in all respects from Malvern Link, not least due to the difficulty of physically accessing it at peak travel times.

It is inevitable that Newland's new residents will look primarily to the retail park for shopping, medical and other services, since that is the obvious route for car travel and the only direct route for all public transport. Only after serving the retail park do buses proceed to MLK2, Malvern Link's core services area.

In addition, there will be no inbuilt community links with Malvern Link from Newland's new housing. The situation will be similar in Rushwick. Both developments are likely to have suburban outlooks and concerns, quite different from those of the existing, densely packed communities in MLK2.

On logistics and community grounds, I urge the Commission to be bold, revisit their plans with a more future-proofed solution and use the natural division between areas MLK2 and MLK3 to make the new Alfrick, Leigh & Rushwick division a more cohesive entity.

Attached Documents:

None attached