

Worcestershire

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Please see attached.

Attached Documents:

- boundary-commission2.docx



For the attention of the Review Officer (Worcestershire),
The local Government Boundary Commission for England,
PO Box 133,
Blythe
NE 24 9FE,

Dear Sirs,

We have recently become aware of the New Electoral Arrangements for Worcestershire County Council and the proposed Draft Recommendations.

We understand that the three main aims for the proposed pattern of divisions for Worcestershire include:

- Electoral equality: each councillor represents a similar number of electors
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

These do not seem to have been met in the draft proposals re the boundary regarding Clent Hills. We live in the Parish of Belbroughton, our post code being [REDACTED]. In changing our electoral division to that of Woodvale our community identity would be totally eroded. Currently ourselves and our area are focussed on the village of Belbroughton and the Clent Hills division including Hagley. Bell End, Bell Heath, Madeley Heath and Chadwich Lane have for many centuries been an integral part of Belbroughton, not separate villages as indicated in the new proposals.

Community identity from within these clusters of residents identify themselves as an integral part of Belbroughton Parish. Belbroughton has our one and only local shop, our post office and its facilities, our doctors surgery at the Glebeland, our parish church and many other traditional events such as the scarecrow weekend. Most of our area cast electoral votes at the sport and community centre close to the centre of Belbroughton as we do ourselves. The village has three local pubs which have existed for over 100 years as well as the CIU working men's club which is a hub for the community. We enjoy the shops and facilities that Hagley offers us as well, easily reached along the A491.

Many children attend the church primary school in Belbroughton and our area local secondary school at Hagley in our Clent Hills division. Children throughout our area and all over Belbroughton are collected and returned close to their homes by coach at the beginning and end of the school day to their school in Hagley.

We are situated in the foothills of the Clent Hills as is Sling pool and Shut Mill Lane which lead to the narrow roads within the Clent Hills and its associated paths and bridle ways. These

areas are also a part of our community and reflect our location within the Clent Hills division and its semirural community. Up until recent years the landscape of this area was designated as a 'Landscape Protection Area' reflecting its importance in the foothills of the Clent Hills division.

Electoral equality is focussed as one of the Commission's aims. The population in the area designated to be removed to Woodvale is I understand only just over 200 residents. To justify moving such a small but focussed community does not seem to be reasonable or sensible. The variance in population in comparison to the county average is only the same at Bromsgrove Central and not such a negative variance as in Bromsgrove East and as low as in the Beacon District Division.

Do those who have determined that the A491 should form a boundary and encase our area within Woodvale have any real understanding of the area? Within the Bromsgrove area there are two very distinct communities, some rural and some urban. Their needs are very different. The needs within our area are mostly rural. Should we join Woodvale it is hard to see how the rural needs of our area will be met when brought within a largely urban area. This combination would also seem to make it difficult to provide arrangements that support the effective and convenient local government which the Boundary Commission appears to strive for.

Residents easily access the main focus of Belbroughton through the series of traffic lights along the A491 at the Junction of the Bell at Bell End at Heath End Road and Hartle Lane leading to our community focus at Belbroughton. These are very safe traffic lights for walkers, cyclists and cars. The A491 creates an easy access between our local communities on the north side of the road, not an arbitrary boundary as seems to have been proposed in these draft proposals.

We trust that our comments will be considered and the current boundary between the Clent Hills and Woodvale divisions remain as they are currently. The Bromsgrove map clearly shows how the area encasing Bell End, Bell Heath and Madeley Heath up to and beyond the Holly Bush Public House should not be geographically located within the Woodvale division and belongs in the Clent Hills division.

Our community focus is towards the Clent Hills division with all its facilities in Hagley and in Belbroughton.

In the document Worcestershire LGBCE Worcestershire County Council make a draft response to the changes throughout Bromsgrove. With regard to the Clent Hills division they conclude, *'The Council acknowledges that its original proposal not to change the boundary of this division does not achieve electoral equality but having examined alternatives which do not meet the criteria, suggests that in this instance the local community links and constraints imposed by the divisions location have sufficient weight to enable the current boundary to be retained.'* With regard to Woodvale it states, *'The council does not support the LGBCE proposal to move Bell and Bell Heath into this division for the reasons it has set out at Clent Hills above.'*

At a meeting of our Parish Council held this week issues regarding these proposed changes were discussed after being raised by a resident. Discussions that followed confirmed support for the boundary lines to be retained with the Bell End and Bell Heath areas to remain with the Clent Hills division.

Yours sincerely,

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]