

Mr A Lawrence
Review Officer (Herefordshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

7 January 2013

Dear Mr Lawrence

Electoral Review of Herefordshire

This is a joint response on behalf of the Hereford & South Herefordshire Conservative Association and the North Herefordshire Conservative Association. We write in response to the Commission's Draft Recommendations published on 13th November 2012.

COUNCIL SIZE:

The Commission has now proposed that Herefordshire Council consist of 53 councillors.

This is a variation from the reduction to 54 councillors as proposed by Herefordshire Council and which the Commission originally used as the basis for representations.

Having considered the Commission's reasoning for this further reduction in the number of councillors, Herefordshire Conservatives strongly support the Commission's proposal that the size of the Council be reduced to 53 members.

SINGLE MEMBER WARDS:

As noted in our original submission, Herefordshire Conservatives are *firmly committed* to single member wards throughout the County and supported Herefordshire Council's request that the Commission recommend a uniform pattern of single member wards.

We reaffirm our view that single member wards provide better local representation.

We **note** that the presumption in favour of single member wards is enshrined in legislation (Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009) and we would *strenuously oppose* any recommendation that did not conform to this presumption.

Whilst aware that any change in electoral arrangements causes some disruption to residents and may cause a degree of disquiet, we *strongly support* the Commission's recommendation that the County be divided into 53 single member wards.

GROUPED PARISHES:

We are pleased to note that the Commission has made proposals that place grouped parishes within single wards.

We **endorse** this approach and believe that it will assist with the delivery of efficient local government. We would **oppose** any recommendation that did not retain grouped parishes within single wards.

NAMING OF WARDS:

We have some concern that the Commission has suggested a number of ward names based on the name of the largest village. This approach is frequently seen as 'unfair' when the largest village is only marginally larger than others within the proposed ward and the suggested name does not properly reflect the whole ward area.

We make specific counter-proposals below and hope that the Commission will agree that a naming-scheme that attracts widespread local support is preferable to one that causes unintended upset- especially as the names of the wards do not alter the Commission's recommendations but do engender considerable local feeling.

Comments on specific recommendations:

The scheme proposed by the Commission is one that we can largely support but we make counter-recommendations in respect of the following (ward names and numbers given are those proposed by the Commission):-

Ashperton, 1

We **propose** that this ward be renamed *either* Newtown Cross *or* Burley Gate, Newtown and Trumpet. Both suggestions relate to major road junctions that are well known and relate to a geographically large ward.

Birch, 4

Whilst we accept the principle that ward names should have a distinct relationship to a geographical feature or other locally notable landmark or historical reference, we are advised that the County Councillors and Parish Councillors that represent the areas defined as Birch, Golden Valley North and Golden Valley South are increasingly working closely together as a 'locality' across the full range of local government services. To reflect this key strategic alignment it may be appropriate that Birch should be renamed Golden Valley East.

Bishops Frome, 5

We **propose** that this ward be renamed Bishops Frome and Cradley after the two major villages in the ward.

Bromyard East, 8

We *propose* that this ward be renamed Bromyard Bringsty to reflect the inclusion of Bringsty Common, as 220 acres of common land that is designated a Special Wildlife Site and of immense local importance. Our suggested name also reflects the part urban/part rural nature of the ward.

Clehonger, 13

We *propose* that this ward retain the name Stoney Street to reflect the historical reference to the Roman road that runs through part of the ward.

Eardisley, 18

We *propose* that this ward retain the current name Castle as a reference to the 11th Century motte and bailey castle that was such an important part of the area's history and to reflect the wider geographical area that forms the ward.

Fownhope, 20

We *propose* that this ward retain its existing name, Backbury, to reflect the historic hill fort that lies east of Priors Frome.

Kimbolton, 26

We *propose* that this ward should be renamed Leominster with Upton to reflect the part urban/part rural nature of the new ward and to avoid selecting the name of a single parish to name the whole ward. Upton is a settlement within the parish of Little Hereford and thus the proposed name gives an indication of the ward's extent without selecting the name of a single parish to represent the whole ward.

Kingsland Ward, 28

We *support* the representations made by Richards Castle Parish Council that the parish be part of the proposed Kingsland ward rather than the proposed Mortimer ward based on local community ties.

We are aware that this variation to the scheme proposed by the Commission does increase the electoral quota deviation in 2018 in respect of the proposed Kingsland ward but do not believe that such a deviation is, of itself, an over-riding reason to disrupt well-established community links.

We also *propose* that the ward retains the name Bircher to reflect the local importance of Bircher Common.

Lugwardine, 38

We *propose* that this ward retain the name Hagley. The change suggested by the Commission uses the name of a single parish to denote the whole ward. Our proposal is derived from the 17th century Hagley Hall which is one of the most notable local landmarks.

Much Marcle, 40

We *propose* that this ward *either* retain the name Old Gore (our preference) or be named Marcle Ridge if the Commission does not accept that no change is required.

Pembridge, 42

We *propose* that this ward be renamed Arrow to reflect the fact that the River Arrow flows through the ward and avoids selecting the name of a single settlement giving its name to the whole ward.

Walford, 50

We *propose* that this ward, which is otherwise unchanged from the existing ward, retain its current name of Kerne Bridge. We make this proposal on the basis that the current name is locally well known and understood, being a central point and feature of the ward. Selecting one or other of the principal communities as the name would cause unnecessary local resentment especially as there has been no change.

On behalf of both Associations, we commend this submission to the Commission.

Yours sincerely


Robert Jenrick
Chairman
North Herefordshire
Conservative Association

David Sheppard
Chairman
Hereford & South Herefordshire
Conservative Association