

Appendix B – Further Representations to the Electoral Review Committee

Malmesbury 1

Dear Cllr Blair-Pilling,

Please forgive me contacting you directly but I recognise you from the public meeting held in Malmesbury Town Hall recently and am also unsure to whom I should direct my concerns (presumably the secretary to your committee)?

I listened intently to the various views expressed during that meeting and repeatedly heard you and others say that the precept should not be a consideration in any decision taken by the committee. Ordinarily, this may be viewed as an acceptable position to take; however, we are all living in extraordinary times, facing daily unprecedented increases in the cost of living, placing serious financial challenges on an ever increasing number of households, including those in MSPWPC.

It seems clear to me that aside from the fact that there do not appear to be any compelling reasons to alter the status quo (indeed nothing significant was exposed at the meeting to justify the change), the increased charges in precept associated with the proposed change would pile ever more misery on households struggling with the daily impacts of rising costs of living. Hopefully your committee will not be persuaded to alter the status quo but if not, I would urge you and your committee to also exceptionally consider the financial impact that your decisions would have on households affected.

Thank you for considering this request.

[Malmesbury Resident]

Calne Without 1

I agree that some of the changes are helpful, including uniting the whole of the historic part of the estate surrounding Bowood House into the the new Derry Hill & Studley parish as well as including the two houses at Black Dog Halt.

Unfortunately the Review Committee is now recommending that the new Derry Hill & Studley council should have wards rather than be 'unwarded' as was requested by 769 voters in Derry Hill, Studley, Old Derry Hill and the surrounding rural area that signed the petition. The change follows a request by only a very small number of residents who supported warding and backed by a majority of Parish Councillors.

Warding as proposed (3 wards - Pewsham, Sandy Lane and Derry Hill & Studley) needlessly introduces a number of boundary problems where residents of some houses that are clearly in the villages of Derry Hill and Studley will find themselves yet again not being able to vote for councillors to represent their own village. All the houses in the Bowood Estate, even the 4 cottages on the Bowood side of Church Road and the Golden Gate in the heart of Derry Hill, have been put into the Sandy Lane Ward. Similarly the 17 houses on Devizes Road opposite the Lansdowne Pub will be in the Pewsham Ward. The Lodge on Old Rd has also been placed in Sandy Lane. Whilst the consultation maps are not entirely clear, houses in Studley including two houses at Black Dog Halt and others on the south side of the A4 may bizarrely be in the new enlarged Sandy Lane Ward. There

are a number (20+) of residential properties within the Bowood Estate including those at the main house Buckhill that have no links to Sandy Lane and access is via Derry Hill or the A4

Residents of all these properties have little or no direct links to Sandy Lane or Pewsham and have been grouped in these wards purely to bolster the voter numbers up to a level that could justify separate wards for both Sandy Lane and Pewsham. If there is to be warding I believe that the vast majority of properties within the Bowood Estate and all of those on Devizes Rd and the A4 should be in a Derry Hill and Studley Ward. These properties are within the signed village boundaries or have such close connections to Derry Hill & Studley that the villages are the focus of residents' day to day activities.

The national guidance on Community Governance reviews (paragraph 162) is very clear that principal councils like Wiltshire ***"should take account of community identity and interests in an area, and consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by drawing of particular ward boundaries"***.

I think it's very clear that Wiltshire's latest proposal for "warding" does break ties and linkages that residents of several dozen houses have with the villages of Derry Hill & Studley. I would urge the Electoral Review Committee to go back to their original recommendation of an unwarded parish, meaning that all councillors are elected by the whole of the parish to serve the whole parish.

There is a growing trend for parishes to be unwarded which improves community cohesion, reduces divisiveness and completely removes ward boundary issues and the common problem where there are contested elections in some wards and vacant seats in adjoining wards where not enough candidates stand. The losing candidate very often (which has happened here several times) then, understandably in some ways, does not want to be co-opted as a councillor to fill the vacancies in the neighbouring ward where they do not live.

The fear amongst those relatively few supporters of warding, that Pewsham & Sandy Lane might not be properly represented in an unwarded parish is unfounded. This has been demonstrated in the past, in that despite having far fewer voters than Derry Hill, Studley has always had more than its fair share of villagers elected even though it does not have its own separate ward. Even in an unwarded parish, individual councillors can still be given particular responsibility for particular parts of the parish and can easily act as a contact point for residents.

In the past there have been major electoral inequalities between wards in Calne Without, with Derry Hill & Studley being significantly underrepresented in comparison with Pewsham and particularly Sandy Lane which was grossly over represented. In an unwarded parish such inequalities between wards are completely removed, which is in marked contrast to the proposed warding, that tries to artificially create electoral equality by bolstering voter numbers in Pewsham & Sandy Lane by incorporating significant parts of Derry Hill and Studley into those wards.

In truth, without the properties on the A4, Devizes Road and in the Bowood Estate, Sandy Lane only has 30 or so houses with little more than 60 voters. Pewsham and Old Derry Hill has only around 120 voters. Although an unwarded parish is a much better arrangement, If it were felt that wards were absolutely essential, a single ward of 180 or so voters for Pewsham & Sandy Lane would be far more preferable to hiving of parts of Derry Hill & Studley. Seven or eight councillors could then collectively represent the 1200 to 1300 voters in the remaining part of the new parish.

At a time when many people feel that the fantastic Jubilee celebrations organised in our villages have made our communities more cohesive than ever before, it would be a great shame to introduce divisive warding with major boundary issues breaking long established ties and linkages.

I would urge the Electoral Review Committee to revert to an unwarded parish for Derry Hill & Studley which was supported by the petitioners including the vast majority of the Pewsham Ward

Ioan Rees – lead Petitioner