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21 APR 2008

new Labour for Britain

North Shropshire
Constituency Labour Party

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18th April 2008

Dear Mr Lawrence

Shropshire Boundary Review

You should be receiving Shropshire County Council's submission of proposed electoral divisions for the new Unitary Authority on 21st April. This is to inform you that we strongly object to certain of the proposed divisions.

We are aware of, and support, the resolutions conveyed to you by Market Drayton Town Council and Woore Parish Council, objecting to any mix of rural and urban areas in creating the new divisions, as producing potential conflicts of interest among a Councillor's constituents, and failing to meet the criterion of natural communities. The wishes of these Councils have not been met in any way in the County Council proposals, in particular Ward N18 runs entirely contrary to the wishes of residents, and to the expressed views of the Boundary Committee itself in its 2003 review of the County. That report read:

"We were concerned at the high level of electoral variance resulting from the Council's and the Conservatives' proposed Market Drayton and Shawbury divisions.... We therefore examined alternative options to improve electoral equality ..."

Paragraph 85 said: "As a result of our considerations ... we propose a new two-member Market Drayton division, containing the district wards of Market Drayton East, North and South, and a new Market Drayton Rural division, containing the district wards of Hinstock, Shavington, Sutton and Woore. ... Our proposed two-member Market Drayton Division would contain the whole of the town in a single division and would facilitate a separation between urban and rural areas while our proposed Market Drayton Rural division would combine similar rural areas... (but) ... result in an electoral variance of more than 20%." (Page 32, Paragraph 84.)

Although this Party supports single member divisions for the new Unitary Authority, and would not wish to see a multi-member seat in Market Drayton, the remarks about separation of rural and urban areas are equally appropriate today and represent the consensus view of this area of the County. Indeed, at Woore's meeting the (Conservative) County Councillor, who previously represented the mixed ward, confirmed how unsatisfactory his constituents had found this to be.

At the presentation of the proposals to Parish and Town Council representatives at Shire Hall, Shrewsbury, on 17th April, Richard Thomas of the County Council regretted this outcome, but said there was no other practicable "home" for the electors of Woore and Norton in Hales Parishes, situated as they are in the North Eastern extremity of the county. In effect he confirmed the cynical view of Woore parishioners, expressed at the Annual Parish Meeting on 14th April, that they had been overlooked until it was too late to do anything else. (The Chairman of Norton in Hales Parish Council informed the Shire Hall meeting that his Council also had strong reservations about this proposal.) As Chairman of Woore Parish Council, I know that residents of the village, at its Annual Meeting, expressed the view that a more natural community, although large in size, would circle the Town on its North and West sides and even include some electors to the South.

At Shire Hall we discovered, to our surprise, that Councillor David Murray of Bridgnorth District Council, had already submitted to you his own proposals for the whole County, which include three seats for Market Drayton entirely within the urban area, and a rural seat including Woore, Norton in Hales, Adderley, Moreton Say and Sutton on Tern of approximately 3000 electors, which exactly mirrors the views independently expressed at Woore last Monday. We can endorse this aspect of Councillor Murray's counter proposals as being acceptable in North East Shropshire. Without commenting on the detail of his proposals beyond our own area, he has clearly demonstrated that other workable schemes are entirely possible.

In Market Drayton itself, clearly the existing ward boundaries, which because of the building programme in the North ward have become unbalanced, will need revision. I **attach** two draft boundary lines which arose during the preparation of the County's proposal and which have been endorsed by Market Drayton, Shawbury, Whitchurch and Wem Branch of this CLP. Either would be acceptable, although we marginally favour the second on the sheet. Equally, the County's proposal shows an acceptable new boundary between North and South wards, but this would need further amendment if, as we hope, East Ward is kept separate from the rural hinterland.

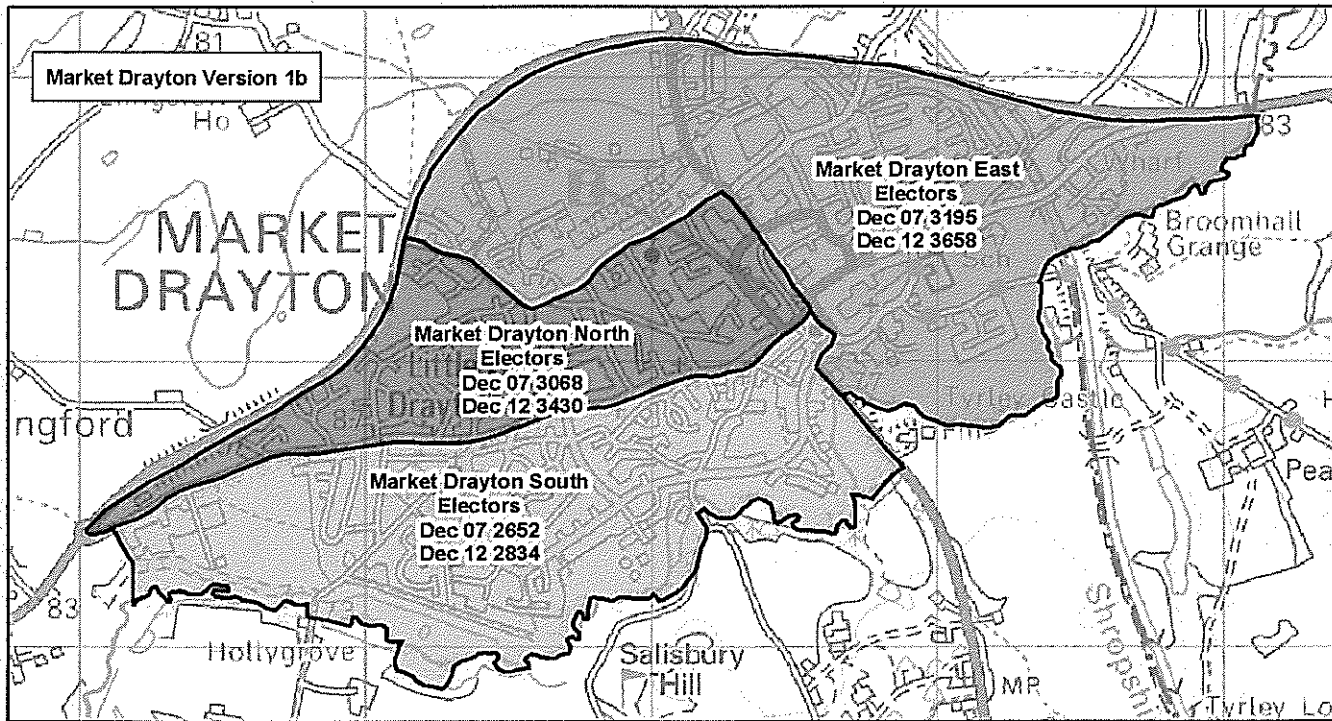
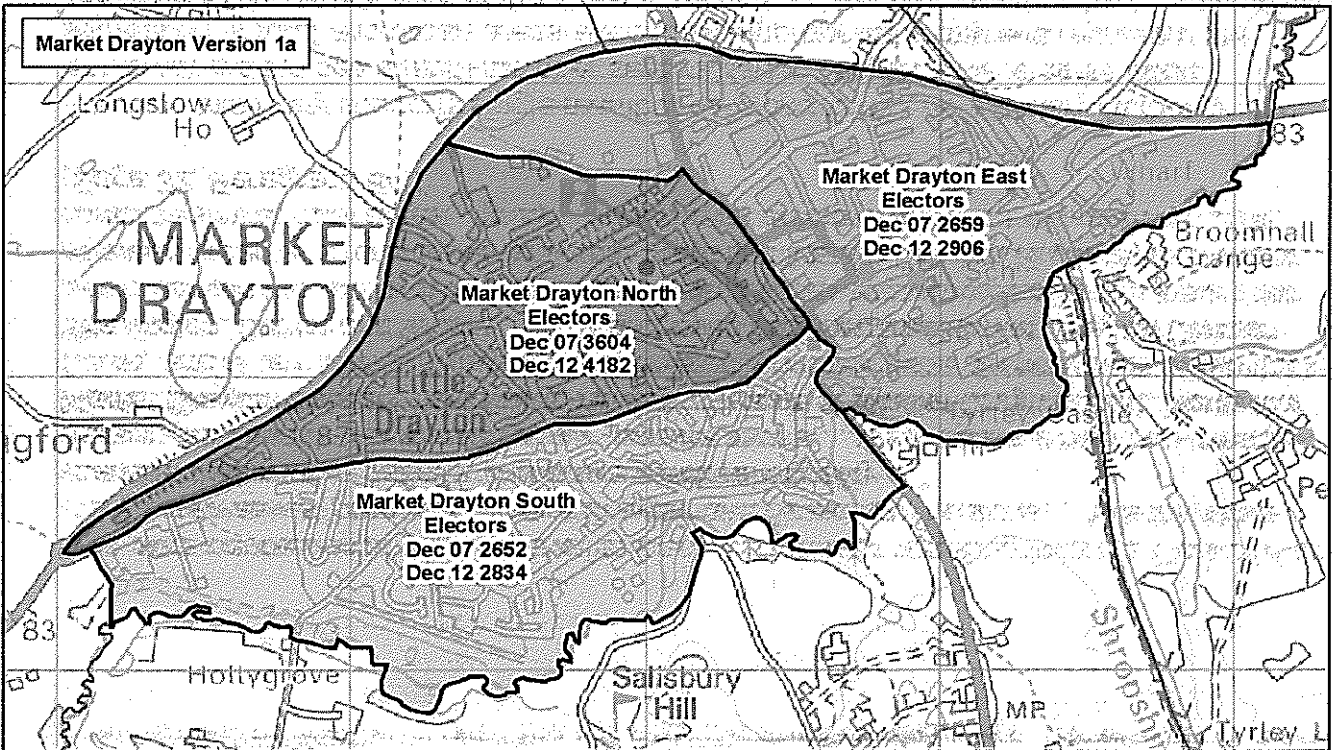
We trust that the Committee will resist the proposals of the County Council in favour of natural communities in all areas of the County.

Yours sincerely


Stephen Clifford
CLP Secretary
(and in a personal capacity, Parish Councillor for Woore)

Mr Arion Lawrence
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**Alan Mosley Market Drayton Option
Electorate December 2007 and Electorate Forecast December 2012**



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The elector figures have been provided by the districts from their electoral roles for 2008 (December 2007).