

# **Boundary Commission for England, Shropshire Electoral Division Review.**

## **Ruyton XI Towns Parish Council consultation response**

The Boundary Commission for England has stated that the three criteria for agreeing electoral division boundaries for Shropshire are:

1. Electoral equality – ideally approx. 3600 electors per division
2. Community identities and interests
3. Effective and convenient local government

Ruyton XI Towns parish is currently part of Ruyton and Baschurch electoral division in North Shropshire, and is currently forecast to have 1081 electors in 2027. We understand from briefings held in Dec 2022 that Shropshire Council had asked the Boundary Commission for 76 members, but that the Boundary Commission's current preference is for Shropshire to have 74 single member divisions.

### **Electoral equality in Ruyton and Baschurch division**

We note that the target number of electors in Shropshire is 3600 per division for 2027, with a margin of 10% above or below that target being considered acceptable. Looking at the Shropshire Council electoral forecasting figures, Ruyton and Baschurch division was on target for elector numbers in 2021 (3363 electors) and is currently forecast to be 5% over the target in 2027 (3786 electors), so there are no concerns about this electoral division being significantly over or under the target of 3600 electors per division.

### **Proposal for Walford Heath to become part of Ruyton and Baschurch division**

The Parish Council is aware of a proposal from Shropshire Council to make some changes to the electoral division boundary which would result in Walford Heath being included within the Ruyton and Baschurch division. The Parish Council does not have electoral figures for Walford Heath, but we understand from Shropshire Council that the proposed change would mean that electoral numbers in Ruyton and Baschurch and neighbouring Tern West (provisional name) would be even after this proposed change. The Parish Council has no objections to the proposal to include Walford Heath in the division of Ruyton and Baschurch. This proposal is better for community cohesion, as the current division boundary splits the Walford Heath community in half, and therefore makes little sense.

### **Community identities and interests in Ruyton and Baschurch**

#### **Shared amenities**

There are numerous shared amenities within the parishes that make up Ruyton and Baschurch division. There is no village shop in Ruyton XI Towns, but villagers often travel to Baschurch to use the Spar, or the Moors Farm Shop. Many residents in Ruyton and the surrounding areas also use the Prescott Surgery in Baschurch.

Whilst Ruyton has its own CofE primary school (St John the Baptist school), children from Ruyton XI Towns (as well as Hordley and Weston Lullingfields) often attend the Corbet School in Baschurch when they reach high school age, or alternatively they may attend Walford College (a land-based

campus which is part of North Shropshire College in Oswestry). The campus at Walford currently sits just within the division boundary between Ruyton and Baschurch division and Tern division.

### **Public transport ties**

There are also areas of shared interests between the existing parishes that make up Ruyton and Baschurch. For example, the 576-bus service between Oswestry and Shrewsbury stops in Ruyton XI Towns, Baschurch, and Walford Heath. Whenever the Parish Council becomes aware of planned roadworks or other issues that may impact the 576 service, we liaise with Baschurch Parish Council so that they are also aware of the issue, and together we have worked with Shropshire Council and the bus operator on numerous occasions to agree shuttle bus services/diversions/timetable changes as needed to minimise disruption to passengers, and have communicated these changes within our respective communities.

The existing parishes in Ruyton and Baschurch division have also been engaged in an ongoing campaign to re-open the railway line and station at Baschurch. Ruyton XI Towns Parish Council recently supported a planning application in Baschurch that would release land for a station car park. The station car park is important, because whilst Baschurch residents will be able to walk or cycle there, a car park will enable residents from the neighbouring parishes or Ruyton XI Towns, Hordley, Weston Lullingfields to make the use of more sustainable public transport options through Baschurch train station. Having a car park therefore increases the catchment area of the Baschurch station and makes it more economically viable, which in turn makes it more likely that Network Rail will approve the re-opening of the station.

### **Conclusion**

Ruyton XI Towns Parish Council has no objections to Shropshire Council's proposal to move the division boundary so that the entirety of Walford Heath becomes part of Ruyton and Baschurch division, but otherwise has had no representations from residents with requests to change the boundaries.

There is no issue with electoral inequality in Ruyton and Baschurch division currently as the 2027 forecasted numbers are within the 10% margin of the 3600 target, and it is not anticipated that the extra electors from Walford Heath will make a substantial difference. There are examples of shared amenities and interests between the existing parishes that make up Ruyton and Baschurch division, e.g. schools, shops, GP practice. There are also examples of collaboration between the parishes in matters of shared interest, especially in matters relating to public transport. We believe this demonstrates sufficient cohesion and effective governance between the existing parishes in the division, and therefore it is preferred that, other than including Walford Heath in the division, there are no other changes to the electoral division boundary.

