

Response of Eyton Parish Meeting to Phase Two Consultation on draft proposals for Telford & Wrekin Council Community Governance Review 2025

The Parish Meeting and residents are opposed to the proposal to merge Eyton Parish into a newly created Weald Moors Parish Council and strongly believe that the Parish should remain unchanged.

Briefly the reasons for this view are as follows:

- **Community Identity** – the Parish has a clearly defined community identity. There is no community identity between Eyton and the Parishes of Kynnersley and Preston.
- **Feedback received** - The consultation material clearly states that the proposals are based on feedback received. There is no feedback from residents of Eyton parish, or from the other Parishes, which supports the proposals made.
- **Representation/Disenfranchisement** – Residents are currently proactive and effectively represented by the Parish Meeting. They will lose this effective representation and be disenfranchised as a result of these proposals.
- **New development and influence** - The proposals in the local plan for new development at Wappenshall require an effective, proactive and consultative approach from the Parish that will be lost under the proposed arrangements.

In support of this position, we have expanded on these points and we would refer the Committee to the following:

1. Community Identity

Eyton Parish is a rural community, and contains a mix of small villages, hamlets and farms. Eyton and Wappenshall also have an important industrial heritage and a large number of listed buildings.

Despite Eyton being the smallest parish in the Borough, by population, and that population being scattered across a relatively large geographic area, there is a strong sense of community identity and cohesion throughout the Parish. Residents from across the whole Parish regularly attend Parish Meetings, social occasions and volunteering activities.

However, it should be noted that there are few geographical links between Eyton and the other Parishes around the Weald Moors. Although quite close as the crow flies, road links are lengthy. It is 3.6 miles by road from Eyton to Preston, 3.5 to Horton, and 4.6 to Kynnersley. Therefore, there is no community cohesion or everyday connection between the villages and hamlets in Eyton Parish and the larger villages of Preston and Kynnersley. Understandably, the respective residents do not mix, share community events or feel any particular sense of collective community identity.

We believe that the comments contained in the Proposal and Rationale section of Appendix A of the draft proposals considered by the Committee in the meeting on 12 May 2025 are based on a misunderstanding of the dynamics of the Weald Moors parishes and a misconception of the community identities that exist in the area.

It was stated that “the three areas [Eyton, Preston and Kynnersley] have a strong rural identity and this proposal is focussed on retaining that character and community identity.”

For the reasons set out above we fundamentally disagree with this assessment. The only characteristic shared by the three areas is that they are all rural parishes, which is not a compelling reason for merger given that we can see no advantage and definite disadvantages for Eyton in the proposal.

Eyton on the Weald Moors Parish has been a Parish Meeting since 2004 and has held regular meetings since then. The Parish has been very proactive in responding to issues and has involved the whole community in decisions relating to the Parish. Parishioners are currently proactive in running the Parish Meeting and responding to needs by volunteering rather than charging a precept (there is currently no precept for Eyton Parish). The officers are unpaid and do not claim expenses; any work that needs doing is carried out voluntarily. For example, by having work parties to clear vegetation or carry out repairs at the village hall, organising parish events and fund raising events when required. This is the true spirit of community identity.

Please note that as Eyton Parish Meeting is well established, proactive and represents a strong and cohesive community, the Parish wishes to continue with the current arrangement. Para 59 of the Local Government Boundary Commission Guidance on community governance reviews (the “Boundary Commission Guidance”) states that “parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity.” We believe that retention of the existing arrangements best achieves the intent of that provision.

2. Consideration of Feedback

The Boundary Commission Guidance requires, of course, that Councils consult local people and take account of any representations received in connection with the review, and the Council has stated that the changes contained in the draft proposals are based on the feedback received.

However, in the case of the proposals affecting Eyton, Preston and Kynnersley this is not apparent. We have studied the responses received to the Phase One consultation and can find virtually no support for merging Eyton into an enlarged Weald Moors parish.

In the review of the feedback from Kynnersley in Appendix A it was noted that “the Parish Council argued that there was no support for a larger Weald Moors parish.” Also, it was reported that “the primary theme from the other representations were that the existing arrangements should remain as they reflect the community’s rural identity. If a larger parish were to be created, that should be Kynnersley and Preston

and not with other areas such as Eyton, Horton, Wheat Leasowes as they have different characteristics and identity."

In the feedback from Preston it was noted that the Preston Parish Meeting submission focussed on two proposed options for future parish arrangements. These were "to retain a Preston Parish Meeting or join with Kynnersley Parish Council to form a larger parish. The rationale for this was shared rural community identity."

The clear majority preference view in Eyton as expressed in a Parish Meeting held to discuss the proposals was for retention of the existing arrangements.

3. Representation and Disenfranchisement

Residents are very concerned about the potential for Eyton Parish's identity and needs to be swallowed up by other larger parishes in any new parish council arrangement.

There is no physical or community connection with the parishes of Kynnersley and Preston. The needs, interests and issues of Eyton Parish are not necessarily those of the larger villages of Preston and Kynnersley, which are geographically distant and who have very different priorities. Eyton is unlikely to be able to exert much influence or effectively promote its own issues or views through a single councillor on an expanded Parish Council. Eyton residents would be disenfranchised!

The effectiveness of the existing governance arrangements for Eyton would be materially adversely affected by being subsumed into a proposed Weald Moors parish.

4. Interest in and Influence over proposed developments

The Wappenshall SUE development in the new draft Local Plan will directly affect the residents of Eyton Parish. Eyton Parish Meeting wants and needs to be able to continue and develop its strong, positive and consultative relationship with TWC planners and the developers over the next 10+ years as the development progresses. Any direct influence Eyton Parish may have had will be lost in the proposed new arrangement as the Parishes of Kynnersley and Preston are not as affected by the proposals, and the influence of, potentially, a single individual Councillor will be small. Therefore, the voice of the residents most affected will be lost. Again, the feeling of the residents is that, in practice, they would be effectively disenfranchised.

5. Boundaries

The current draft Local Plan envisages substantial new housing and other commercial development within the southern boundary of the Eyton Parish. It is strongly felt that such intensive developments have an entirely different identity and interests, more aligned with the existing built-up area of Telford, rather than the

essentially rural character of the Eyton (and other Weald Moor) parishes. Such developments would have no community cohesion with or similarity to the existing small rural villages and hamlets.

For these reasons we support the principle informing the comments contained in the Proposal and Rationale section of Appendix A that, “to ensure that the new parish retains its rural character, it is proposed that, if and when, the proposed development in the draft Local Plan is built out, then a localised community governance review will be completed to enable this development to be incorporated into another more urban parish arrangement.”

6. Effectiveness and Viability

The Boundary Commission Guidance (also reflected in the Council’s own Terms of Reference) confirms that the Council is required to ensure that parishes “reflect community identity and interest” and that they are “viable and democratic units”. Further, community governance should be “effective and convenient”.

The current draft proposals would not achieve these objectives for Eyton which has operated for many years as an effective, convenient, viable and democratic administrative unit. These attributes would only be reduced or lost if it were to be merged into an artificial and logically incoherent Weald Moors parish.

Furthermore, any grouping needs to be “compatible with the retention of community interests”, which this would not be, and we strongly endorse the principle that it is “inappropriate to use it to build artificially large units under single parish councils”.

