



## ERCALL MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

### TELFORD & WREKIN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2025

1. Ercall Magna Parish Council (EMPC) strongly opposes the proposal to merge Ercall Magna and Waters Upton parishes and create a new parish council (PC) which is larger in size but has fewer councillors to replace the existing two councils. This proposal would undermine the current effective community governance and service provision provided by the two existing PCs and would weaken representation across our communities.
2. Following the proposal by Telford & Wrekin Council (T&WC) in May 2025, EMPC has consulted widely within the parish, including: drop-in sessions in High Ercall and Ellerdine village halls; encouraging residents to attend the T&WC drop-in session in Waters Upton; and, numerous individual conversations between electors and councillors. This response reflects the judgement not only of the Parish Council, but also the unanimous opinion of the 100 residents who have shared their views with EMPC.

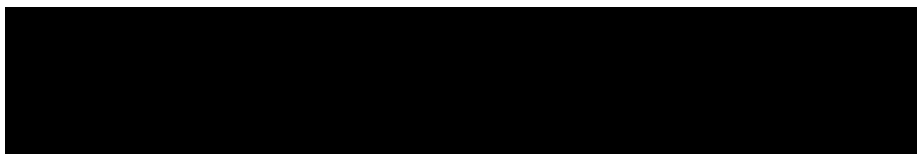
### **PROVENANCE OF THE PROPOSAL**

3. EMPC questions the provenance of this merger proposal, which was not advocated by any responses to the previous consultation round. We note that two responses suggested mergers across the whole borough, but these did not include merging Ercall Magna and Waters Upton parishes. One suggested merging Waters Upton with Rodington and the High Ercall area (which is but one element of Ercall Magna parish) while the other offered a merger of Waters Upton and Rodington but with no mention of Ercall Magna parish. Members accept the validity of suggestions from outside a respondent's own parish, where someone may have a good knowledge of other areas of the borough. However, it is highly unlikely that any one person (who may live, work, shop and socialise in different areas) would have a detailed understanding of all parishes and their individual communities. Given that the only comment to include any reference to Ercall Magna did not even name the parish correctly, it is probable that the author is from elsewhere and is not familiar with our parish and the communities therein.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

4. Unlike other proposals in the CGR, which feature background information and reasons for change, this proposal contains neither. Instead, it makes generalised assertions that a new parish council would remain viable, be capable of providing services to residents and that the proposal would maintain community identity - but with no indication of how. The proposal also asserts that effective governance and community representation would be supported by new (asymmetric) warding arrangements. There is no mention of any deficiencies or ineffectiveness within the current arrangements. As numerous residents have asked: what is broken and what benefits or improvements would this proposal bring to us? The answer in both cases is: none.

5. **Viability.** The use of the expression '*remain viable*' in the proposal accepts that the current Parish Councils are viable. EMPC has a full complement of councillors; and, while a few vacancies were filled by co-option (most recently following the death in-service of a valued colleague), we maintain over two thirds of elected members. Together with a highly experienced and qualified clerk, this allows EMPC to retain the General Power of Competence.



Our governance and financial management is sound, as evidenced by the internal audit reports in successive AGARs. As well as delivering a range of projects (including installation of LED street lights, provision of mobile and fixed SIDs and funding road safety enhancements within Highways Authority programmes) to improve the lives of residents, while maintaining appropriate financial reserves, EMPC has reduced the precept payable by residents for the last 5 years consecutively. EMPC works: we know our communities, we understand their needs and we have a positive track record of delivering results. Why risk unnecessary change?

6. **Community Identity and Interests.** Just because Ercall Magna and Waters Upton are both rural parishes does not mean that they share a common sense of identity. Ercall Magna parish is centred on the village of High Ercall which has a Conservation Area in order to protect, amongst other aspects, its Civil War history and archaeology and distinctive architecture. Residents across the parish use and identify with facilities in High Ercall, including the village store and post office, village hall, parish church and primary school. These facilities are replicated within Waters Upton parish, where residents feel a similar sense of community identity that is distinct and separate from that of Ercall Magna. This is further evidenced by the strong support for the separate Neighbourhood Plans within each of the parishes. In addition to tangible facilities, community identity is linked to history and many residents feel strongly that Ercall Magna Parish Council, having served the community well since 1894, should endure as their most local level of government. This is not merely an emotional response; but, reflects the fact that the interests and requirements of people in Shray Hill and Great Bolas are often different from those living in Roden or Poynton, for example.

7. **Convenience.** EMPC holds its regular meetings in High Ercall Village Hall, a central location that is conveniently accessible from anywhere in the parish. The proposed merger would create a much larger area; we calculate that it would take around 30 minutes to drive between extremities. Consequently, no matter where a new parish council chose to hold their meetings, some residents would be faced with extended travel in order to participate. This may deter some from doing so, especially in winter or bad weather, effectively disenfranchising some residents from their parish council.

8. **Effective Representation.** EMPC acknowledges that the CGR provides an opportunity to reduce imbalances between the numbers of parish councillors and the electors they represent, across the whole of the borough. However, in doing so, it is important to recognise the significant difference between urban and rural areas in terms of population density and distribution. The proposal seeks to reduce the number of councillors within the current Ercall Magna Parish area by almost half. A reduction of this magnitude would reduce councillors' ability to engage with residents and to effectively represent their interests. Additionally, the overall volume of work required to be undertaken by the parish council is not related to the number of its members. A reduction of this scale would significantly increase workload on individual council members and may deter people from standing for election to the parish council in future; thereby having the unintended consequence of damaging democratic representation. Turning to specifics; we note that the proposed warding arrangement, consisting of 3 wards with 6, 1 & 5 seats respectively, does not comply with the LGBCE's 2010 guidance on CGRs. The LGBCE believes<sup>1</sup> *'it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards.'* The differences in representation between wards, as proposed, would create the risk that some residents, and/or councillors, could be perceived as having more influence over the council than others.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 166.



RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Having considered electors’ views in formulating this response, EMPC has also consulted Waters Upton PC, who are equally opposed to the proposed merger. In order to respect the wishes of communities across both parishes, we strongly recommend that there are no changes to the external boundaries or identities of either parish or parish council at this time.

10. Additionally, this review offers the chance to address warding imbalance within Ercall Magna Parish, created following the previous Boundary Review, and to contribute to the borough-wide rebalancing of the number of councillors to electors. Accordingly, EMPC recommends reducing the number of its parish councillors from 13 to 10, across 3 wards. This would strengthen governance by recognising the distinct areas in the north, centre and south of the parish and allocating councillors proportionately based on population distribution as well as geography and community identity.

11. Consequently, we recommend the adoption of a revised EMPC structure (based on current polling districts) as follows:

Ward Name	Polling District	Seats
Ellerdine	WER	3
High Ercall	WEW	5
Roden	WWW	2
Total	-	10

This represents a 23% reduction in parish councillors from the current figure; which would be manageable and should still allow effective representation. The allocation of seats to wards conforms to elector distribution; where about half of electors live in or around High Ercall, with about a third in the Ellerdine & Rowton areas and the remainder in Roden & Poynton. Importantly, no individual ward would represent a majority of seats or electors, thus conforming to the LGBCE guidance.

12. Accepting this revised structure would allow Ercall Magna Parish Council to continue to build on its 136 years of continuous service to the communities it represents while also adapting to current and future needs; we commend these recommendations to the T&WC Boundary Review Committee.

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11 July 2025

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