

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 September 2022 19:46
To: reviews
Subject: MBC Boundary review T&J Sams
Attachments: Letter - MBC proposed Ward Boundary Change - Harrietsham - Sept 2022.pdf; [REDACTED] email.docx; Democracy & Democracy and Governance Appendix A.pdf; [REDACTED] email.docx; LGBCE 3rd submission T&J Sams final.pdf

Categories: [REDACTED] Submissions

Dear team, hope you are keeping well

Please find our submission regarding the Maidstone Borough Boundary Review

Also attached are

- Harrietsham Parish Council response
- Email received from [REDACTED] following the MBC meeting yesterday 28th September
- Appendix A from Democracy and Governance Committee meeting 21st September mentioned in our submission
- Email from [REDACTED] following the MBC meeting yesterday 28th September

Wear a mask where appropriate,

Protect our *NHS*

Janetta & Tom Sams

Independent Borough Councillors for Harrietsham & Lenham Ward

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Harrietsham Maidstone

Kent [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

**29/09/22 Extension as
agreed with LGBCE**

Re Maidstone Boundary Review 2nd Consultation

Further to our submission regarding Harrietsham Lenham & North Downs Ward

We were very concerned that there is a new proposal put forward on September 21st by Maidstone Borough Councils Democracy and Governance Committee, and was finally ratified on the evening of the 28th September, the deadline date for the LGBCE consultation.

This gave to all intents and purposes no time for the Parish Councils and residents to digest, process nor comment on what will be a significant change for many. Indeed, the proposal was not even on the agenda of the meeting, so the public were unaware that this change was even a possibility. Yet very disappointedly the prepared maps were available to councillors on the night. These were available to aid member discussion but were never directly used.

To this end Harrietsham Parish Council have asked us to put forward their views on their behalf from their meeting that was held on the same evening of the MBC full council meeting, 28th September **(See HPC Response attached)**

This suggestion could have been put forward in July or August to give time for the democratic process amongst the communities affected to take place

Lenham Parish Council are particularly dismayed with the removal of the Lenham war graves cemetery and the historic Lenham chalk cross, which is of this historical importance, protected, and listed on the national heritage list for England

Residents who have been alerted to this draft proposal and would be affected, are horrified to be told that they have more affinity to Hollingbourne and small villages within the North Downs than Lenham, which they see as their

community. (We additionally attach two further emails from residents [REDACTED]
[REDACTED])

The proposal seems to be a cynical attempt to retrofit a single ward that currently does not have the numbers to make it viable. To draw a line along the A20 with the justification that these residents have more affinity and it improves community cohesion is ridiculous. Hill Crescent is part of a group of houses less than a quarter of a mile from Lenham Square not in a sparsely populated area used as validation to move them in to a suggested North Downs ward. This is not community cohesion as suggested.

To suggest that houses that lie within a stone's throw of the Lenham Cross, Ironically one named "House by the Cross" should be moved out of the Harrietsham & Lenham ward is equally preposterous.

The councillor suggesting this idea who currently represents North Downs ward, found that after splitting the Lenham Parish in this way the numbers did not fit within the LGBCE variance. To make up the numbers he then turned to Harrietsham Parish and included in his proposal, a park over 250 homes, completely at odds to any criteria used to rationalise his proposal in question.

Additionally, our house which neighbours the site is removed from the Harrietsham & Lenham ward.

We believe this suggestion has been made to keep a winnable seat for one political party and not on the LGBCE criteria for equality, community and governance and can find no other reason for this proposal.

We feel this proposal was not added to the agenda and left until the last day possible to submit to prevent democratic, transparent discussion.

We understood that the second consultation was about minor amendments and the Democracy and Governance agenda of 21/9/22 reflected this. (**See Appendix A attached**).

We include our comments of the meeting on 28th September because we feel they are relevant to reinforce people's anger at the situation MBC has created. The note is of who spoke

J Sams Proposed amendment deleting the MBC proposal point 1 The Splitting of Harrietsham and Lenham to assist numbers for North Downs Ward

Seconded T Sams

J Sams

The committee on Wednesday agreed to create a two member and one member ward Harrietsham and Lenham and a North Downs Ward.

There was nothing in the committee papers to suggest it was even a consideration.

Any resident reading the officers report would have been unaware. On the day Cllr Garten proposed to retain his ward to the exclusion of any consultation with Harrietsham and Lenham residents he wished to affect.

Cllr Garten Stated on Wednesday “I have thought long and hardhow to retain the current North Downs Ward and retain the current Harrietsham and Lenham Ward and the simple solution there is to take the Parish of Lenham and split it exactly at the natural boundary of the A20,

so if we take anything north of the A20 of the Parish of Lenham that would give us a huge chunk of required numbers of voters”

He added “the current ward boundary does not really reflect any sort of boundary of thought or affiliations”.

Now in Lenham that feels a very hurtful comment as he includes Lenham Cross and Lenham Cemetery including the war graves in his annexation with his pen.

Cllr Garten stated that “my proposal was about helping community cohesion.

Cllr Garten then continued

the second point where we need to conjure up some numbers is the caravan mobile home park of pilgrims retreat. Again Pilgrims retreat is a very independent little setting on its own, sitting right at the boundary at the moment so just moving this line a little bit across, (and i am quoting), would also assist us very much with the numbers

Members this is a truly cynical political act and has no place being put forward in this manner.

The suggestion was verbally supported on that evening by Cllr Blackmore and Cook

Cllr Cook added “there is an argument for creating and maintaining a single member ward with the North Downs and clearly what we've been able to do here is to do here is find the numbers that actually substantiate that and meets the criteria that is the overriding consideration of the boundary commission”.

We believe that there is no evidence submitted save

No evidence from residents,

Nothing supportive from the Parish councils,

No time to gauge residents' views .

Cllr Garten is correct in conjuring up numbers like any good magician.

This proposal is extremely political. Lacking transparency and objectivity and is truly undemocratic in the way it has come forward
Please support this amendment

Cllr Cooper as Chair of committee tried to get the amendment to be thrown out but was overruled by the responsible officer

Properly proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Blackmore
Cllr Garten Cllr for North Downs Ward spoke against amendment

J Sams *moving again the amendment. I totally get that Cllr Garten had suggested this, the point i was making is that it was not on the agenda, nobody would have known it was going to be discussed at that meeting*

Cllr Cook Spoke against amendment

Cllr Cooper general comment

Cllr Jeffrey Spoke in favour of amendment as former candidate in North Downs Ward

T Sams *seconding the amendment*

You will be thankful I'm not going to speak for 3 minutes, and I'm certainly not going to speak for 6 minutes as cllr Garten was allowed to last Wednesday evening

I take great personal umbridge to be told by Cllr Garten that in spite of living in Harrietsham for 55 years he knows with his proposal all about helping community cohesion better than anyone else.

That social cohesion was needed during covid where links were forged and strengthened.

We feel strongly That residents at Pilgrims Retreat should not be excluded and are entitled to be involved in the discussion.

I also note Cllr Garten lives in Kingswood 7 miles from the entrance to Pilgrims retreat our direct neighbours

The meeting agenda contained no reference to Cllr Garten's proposal. It was not in the appendix of potential options. The situation was created and played out for cynically political purposes.

A Lenham resident stated MBC seem hell bent on wanting to break Lenham. The very thought of taking the cross out of Lenham surely indicates a significant degree of insanity

If we send this tonight to the boundary commission, we are saying that consultations with residents are worthless. What they say doesn't matter. We don't even need to inform you we are doing it. We know best.

Members residents will feel this is arrogant.

Members residents feel this is disingenuous

Members residents feel it is manipulative, and members it should not be supported by this council and in particular the tactic of how it came about. Thank you

Cllr J Sams replying at end of debate

So, Members obviously I have watched the whole process unfold from the previous suggestion

From creating a plan to split Lenham south from Lenham

To now splitting Lenham North from Lenham and carving up Pilgrims retreat

It's painful personally and to many that the area around our hugely significant Lenham cross is seen by Cllr Garten as he states "lacking thought or affiliation" with those residents. Similarly for the cemetery. The new boundary of Lenham has been conveniently annexed for political purposes. Only last week we walked to the cross from Lenham village for the crosses rededication, our Mayor was there, commemorating it's centenary. It's historical local social connections which are important

Pilgrims retreat site has had close connection to Harrietsham since its creation as a caravan park over 80 years ago. In recent times those residents have closely aligned with Harrietsham and Lenham being their closest significant villages. Most residents use Stede hill south to access the A20, using the public transport within the village, village shops and services and to disconnect this community in such a manner is

Well I'm horrified

As an aside The irony really does make us laugh us in this absolute debacle, the two councillors who represent Harrietsham and Lenham ward will by this slip of the magic pen line for political expediency will also be out of this ward, be removed from the ward they have represented for nearly 40 years. But we obviously have no social connections to Harrietsham !

Finally, I am concerned that the officer has been placed in this position. Apart from numbers and we can see how these have been

found we can't see any evidence commission are looking for other evidence and i know some councillors are reiterating the numbers but the commission are looking for other things as well , and we are looking for community , the community of Lenham and Harrietsham do not want to be split and it is not necessary

Vote taken

amendment lost 19-22. Conservative Group voted on block to oppose MBC proposal went forward

Finally

We reaffirm our submission on the draft proposal dated and sent to you on 10th August proposing Stockbury to be removed from the 3 member ward Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs, and placed in Boxley Downs Ward is considered. In addition, we reiterate the fact that Stockbury's location has that affinity with the A249 road network which is being extensively improved with a new motorway Junction.

Finally, with Stockbury within the ward the area is over 25% of the Borough, a significant area. We believe the realignment, will reduce the area to be covered and will make it a much more practical proposition. Can we add we have sent Stockbury Parish Council our submission and spoken to the clerk in early August.

Yours Sincerely

Tom & Janetta Sams

Maidstone Borough Councillors for

Harrietsham & Lenham ward

Appendix A

Boundary Issues

| Area | Issue | Proposal | Recommended Action |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton | Ward (and parish) boundary drawn so that it cuts off 6 and half properties along Heath Road East of Hubbard's Lane. | The Ward cannot be amended for those properties alone as insufficient electorate to create a parish ward. In order for this change to be made it will need to be identified in the CGR and then a requested alteration made to the LGBCE. The CGR terms of reference have been altered to accommodate this. | Do not include in response to LGBCE |
| Headcorn with Sutton Valence | Sutton Valence Parish Council's original submission was not received by LGBCE in stage 1. Sutton Valence parish council with Ward Member support feel that Sutton Valence should be linked to Chart Sutton due to strong community links. | Sutton Valence parish council are submitting their own representation to the LGBCE. As this was not considered at the stage 1 consultation Councillors will be asked if they wish to support this proposal. Note: Headcorn with Sutton Valence on 13% variance from average which is outside 10% tolerance. | Do not include in response to LGBCE as creates two wards with significant (14%/19%) variances. |
| Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs* | Move Stockbury to Boxley Downs | Move Stockbury to Boxley Downs to better balance workloads and geography of large wards. | Do not include in response to LGBCE as it creates ward with a significant (12%) variance. |
| Tovil | The 'Coombe Farm Estate' has been split in the current proposals. This is the splitting of a community. | Recommend redrawing the boundary to run West of Postley Road property back gardens and encompass whole estate. This brings 355 projected electors from Central Maidstone to Tovil. Central Maidstone's Northern boundary will need to be moved Northward to compensate. The proposed boundary is along Brewer Street and (North) Eastward until it joins the railway line. The electorate change is roughly equivalently (327 projected). | Include in response. |
| | | The 'weaker' boundary line in Central Maidstone is considered less of a negative than splitting a community. | |

Appendix A

Naming Issues

| Area | Issue | Proposal |
|---|---|--|
| Central Maidstone | Name too similar to County Division 'Maidstone Central' | <p>Possible alternative names:</p> <p>'High Street'</p> <p>'Town'</p> <p>Councillors have been surveyed for alternatives.</p> |
| Langley with Otham, Leeds and Kingswood | Name too long | <p>Possible alternative names:</p> <p>'Leeds Castle'</p> <p>'Castle'</p> <p>'Langley and Leeds'</p> <p>'Leeds and Langley'</p> <p>Councillors have been surveyed for alternatives.</p> |
| Headcorn with Sutton Valence | Use of with is inconsistent with 'and' naming convention across the Borough | <p>Recommended alternative name:</p> <p>'Headcorn and Sutton Valence'</p> |