

Maidstone Borough Council

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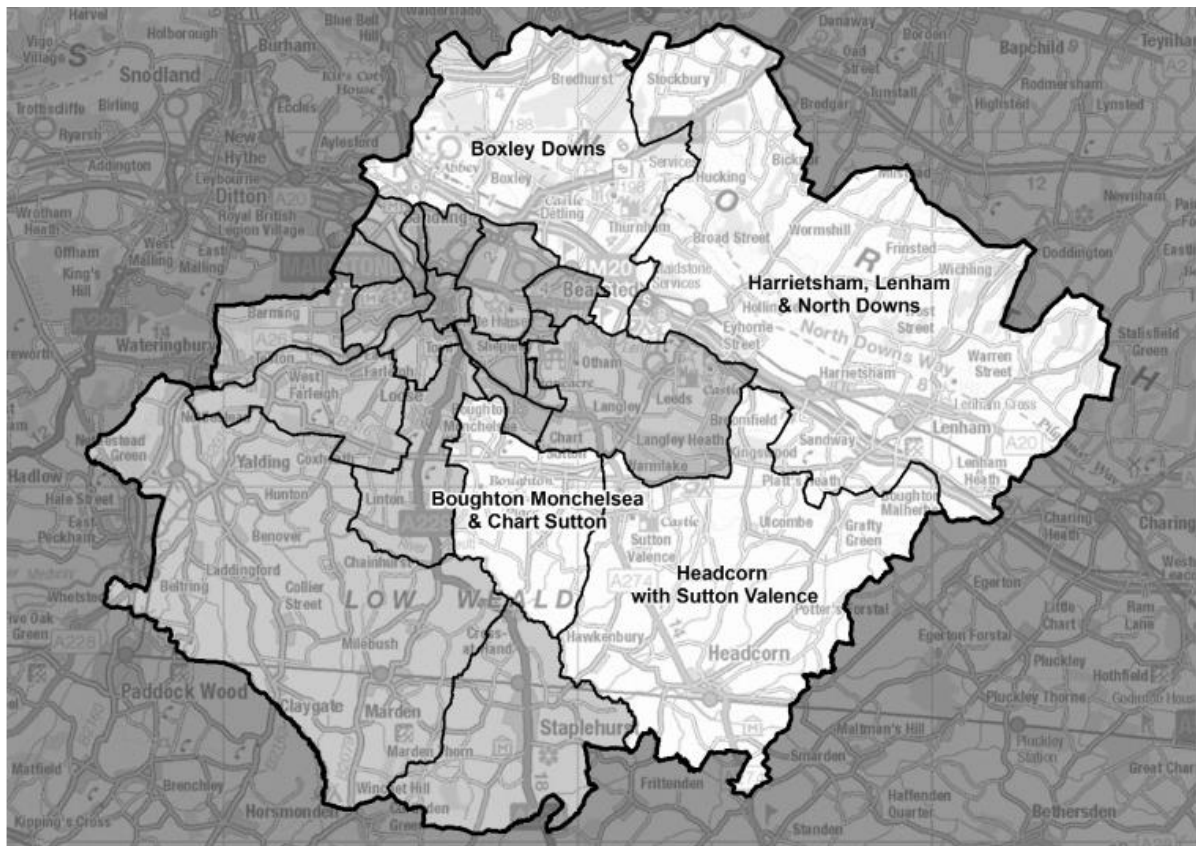
Organisation Name:

Comment text:

Thank you for all hard work to produce a draft boundary recommendation. Please find our comments and thoughts regarding the suggestion of a three member ward for Harrietsham Lenham & North Downs

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1659611916_MBC+Boundary+second+consulation+T+%26+J+Sams.pdf)



Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward proposal.

We would like to thank the team for the monumental efforts drawing up the draft proposals for the Maidstone Borough Council. We appreciated what a difficult task it must have been.

We are particularly interested in the Harrietsham & Lenham ward as the ward members on and off for over 25 years and are especially pleased that the voices of so many of our residents regarding the splitting of Lenham were heard and acted upon by yourselves. This has been greatly appreciated by the community and particularly those in the south part of Lenham Parish.

We have looked at the new three-member ward of Harrietsham Lenham and North Downs. We understand the rationale behind the decision to offer this as a potential possible amendment.

May we offer our thoughts and suggestions as to perhaps a modification might allow for a smoother transition and better reflect the needs of residents.

We are extremely concerned at the sheer size of the new ward. We feel that that it may not reflect community identity and may not provide arrangements that support effective and convenient local government. The complexity of issues associated with managing such a large area are complicated and easier to understand if some of the common factors were understood and working in particular with others such as Parish Councils County Councillors, MP's could be seen in practical terms.

The ward suggested after 2027 will continue to grow, and we believe that our proposal best reflects the needs for all communities. With the wide and varied issues around the area such as A20, M20, Channel tunnel rail link and with common issues such as now Operation Brock. There is and can be a very positive link forged between parishes and hamlets along the North Downs and indeed encouraged as many issues are similar and can be managed in a similar way by 3 councillors.

We feel that this is an opportunity to improve and offer residents opportunity access to their councillors, as the common factors would provide opportunities to improve communication. Indeed, we hope that the Parishes through this might see a collective being an opportunity to offer stronger representation for residents' to MBC.

We however would like to suggest an amendment to the proposal.

We would suggest that Stockbury Parish in its entirety be removed and placed within the Boxley Downs Ward.

We feel that incorporating Stockbury Parish adds another dimension which acts at odds to the cohesive possibilities of the newly created Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward. That Stockbury Parish being included in Boxley Downs Ward gives residents connection to villages with similar needs and issues.

Stockbury Parish at the Western Point of the ward, has different issues to the proposed new Harrietsham Lenham & North Downs ward. It has the busy main A249 passing directly through it. Although Stockbury is split by the road

many of the issues are relating to this link running north and south. The South Eastern part of Sockbury Parish though South of the A249 by its geographical location and practical layout means that residents primarily must travel to the A249. The Boxley Downs ward has the A249 entirely passing through it from north of Maidstone. The villages of Detling, Thurnham, Boxley and Bredhurst are incorporated within it. They have common factors that connect them. Common connectivity and also a link within the Kent Downs AONB.

A significant amount of work carried out by Stockbury Parish Council relates to the road network. The importance is reflected in their meeting agendas. This reflects concerns from local residents. The access through their County Councillor would remain the same and is the same for Detling and Thurnham all along the A249. The Borough Councillors should they be in the Boxley Downs ward would still have those connections to assist residents.

The boundary commission's latest proposal for the Parliamentary constituencies places the Stockbury Parish within a constituency with Detling, Thurnham along the A249. The MP would remain the same and the Borough Councillors would have access in the same way

There is concern that, in a huge 3 member ward covering very different types of Parishes like Harrietsham and Lenham, Stockburys issues may not be recognised or represented. This could be a justifiable concern. Certainly the significant size of the new ward may give representation extremely difficult.

For the realistically minded, travelling by car this remains, in practical terms, is the only way to move around the North Downs. Certainly, any one councillor seeking support for their election, the new ward is vast and visiting, leafleting the area, would be a huge task.

Arguments placed by residents to the importance of local connections changes the further west along the ward you travel. The residents from Hollingbourne have connections by rail eastwards towards Harrietsham and Lenham. They probably access the A20 and M20. This is probably reduced the further north and westward the location is.

Re numbers proposed by Boundary commission in draft recommendation

Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs ward it is proposed that there be 3 councillors 8952 with a -5% variance equalling 8504

Boxley Downs ward

2 councillors 5968 with a -5% variance equalling 5670

Our proposal with removal of Stockbury Parish area from Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs ward

Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward would then be

8504 minus Stockbury Parish 649 equals 7855 with just over -12% variation.

Boxley Downs Ward

5670 plus Stockbury Parish 649 equals 6319 with just under +6% variation

Within the draft recommendation we note Headcorn and Sutton Valence has a variation of 13%.

We believe that there is significant growth which will occur particularly in the Harrietsham and Lenham Parishes. They are both designated by MBC as Rural Service Centres and have been allocated developments, including a proposed large garden community, in the current Local Plan Review to be completed 2023. These developments will have an impact upon the electoral variance

We believe that the significant geographical area from Lenham Heath in east to Stockbury in west is 15km and from Liverton Hill in south to nearly Milstead in north is 9km. Making the area probably more than 100 square km. It is a substantial area and we believe allowing for this, and to enable fair representation for all concerned, our proposal is acceptable and would be believe be understood by all residents.

We hope you will take our submission into account.

