

# Teston Parish Council

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To: Local Government Boundary Commission  
Review Officer (Maidstone), LGBCE, PO Box 133, Blyth, NE24 9FE

By email: [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

## **Maidstone Borough – Ward Boundary Review**

We have reviewed the proposal by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) that will be submitted to you by your deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> April, but note that it is subject to review and confirmation at Full Council on 13<sup>th</sup> April. Should that confirmed version differ from the draft submitted to you by 4<sup>th</sup> April, we may wish to submit further comments after the 13<sup>th</sup>.

We note that review of Ward boundaries is required because the number of Members is reducing from 55 to 48 and we are conscious of the fact that this exercise is very complicated. That is exacerbated by the need to base it on estimated electorate numbers for 2027 and, of course, because current Members have to wrestle with the fact that their number will reduce and they will, to some extent, need to weigh-up losses and gains to, or disappearance of, their current area of responsibility in potential opposition to other Members.

We recognise that MBC's Officers have therefore had an extremely difficult task, with no possibility of satisfying everyone. Credit is due for submitting a proposal that is substantially internally coherent in terms of delivering electoral equality i.e. equal number of projected electors per Member, plus or minus 10%. There are two exceptions: one exceeds that 10% criterion (plus 11%) and the other falls short (minus 13%).

### **Teston**

We are *reasonably* comfortable being placed within a proposed two Member Ward, Barming Heath & Teston. However, Teston is more rural than Barming Heath that has experienced very substantial housing development over the past five years or more. We are located in the western and south-western rural stretches of the Medway Valley in our Borough, with roads on either side of that valley and the railway (and River Medway) running through it providing communications with other villages.

### **Comments**

1. The MBC proposal contains two Wards that cut through the Parish boundaries of Lenham and Headcorn. The granularity of available information is such that there is uncertainty whether Loose, Bearsted or others have been similarly treated. By "playing" with available figures, we have concluded that respecting Parish boundaries, in the sense that a Parish is not split between Wards, is feasible, within the same range of variation around the average of electorate per Member as the current proposal (except Barming & Teston). We hesitate to offer the table below, as it is not our role to decide the placement of other Parishes and we do not appreciate their distinctive community characteristics, but we offer it as an example

that an alternative view of Wards may be feasible to place Parish boundaries within a Ward, rather than across Wards.

Polling Districts	Members	Electors per Member	Variance from Average
Hunton, Linton, Collier Street, Marden, Nettlestead, Yalding	3	2973	-2.4%
Staplehurst	2	2986	-2.0%
Barming, Teston	1	2454	-19.4%
Boughton Malherbe, East Sutton, Ulcombe, Broomsfield & Kingswood, Headcorn, Sutton Valence	3	2710	-11.0%
Leeds, Langley, Downswood, Otham	2	3361	10.3%
Lenham	1	3476	14.1%
Coxheth, East Farleigh, West Farleigh	2	3125	2.6%
Thurnham, Harrietsham, Bicknor, Frinsted, Hollingbourne, Hucking, Otterden, Wiching, Wormshill	2	2789	-8.4%
Boxley, Detling., Stockbury	2	2899	-4.9%

Our key point is to register concern that some Parishes are being spread across a Ward boundary and they may or may not be aware of, and content with, that.

2. While the focus has been on 2027 electorate numbers, should MBC's Local Plan Review be approved in due course by the Inspector at Examination the proposed Ward boundaries would very soon lose credibility. That would be because of:
  - a. very substantial development within two proposed Garden Communities (Lenham Heath and Lidsing);
  - b. major development in the Leeds-Langley Corridor, if the relief road proceeds; and
  - c. significant development at the Invicta Barracks strategic site.

Is it not prudent to take a view somewhat longer than 2027 to establish a Ward structure that would cope with those proposed developments, with, in the meantime, those relevant Wards having less than the average of electors per Member, but no worse variance than MBC has with its current Members and Wards?

Apart from that, we again give credit to the amount of effort devoted to developing the current proposal, within the context of an impossible task to satisfy everyone.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

Mrs Michelle Tatton  
Clerk

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