

## **Local Government Boundary Commission – Maidstone Consultation**

To whom it may concern

I write to express my concern over proposals from Maidstone Borough Council that will significantly alter the existing Harrietsham and Lenham ward.

The proposal includes the enlargement of the ward in one direction while reducing it in another. I believe that this would completely alter the representation that has been enjoyed for several years.

Lenham and Harrietsham ward is presently served by two elected Members at Maidstone Borough Council.

I believe that this results in good community building as the two parishes of Lenham and Harrietsham, sit on the eastern boundary of Maidstone borough and are quite distinct from the other major settlements, for example Headcorn that lies 6 miles to the south, and share significant common infrastructure in terms of services, for example:

- Both have been designated in the 2017 Maidstone Local Plan as Rural Service Centres
- Both are in the same Kent County Council Member Division and are served by the same KCC councillor
- Both are covered by the same County Council Community Warden
- Both form part of the same Kent Police area and so are served by known and shared Police Community Support Officers
- Both are covered by Len Valley Practice, the part of the Ridge Primary Care Network, with the primary surgery at Groom Way Lenham and a secondary surgery at the Glebe Medical Centre in Harrietsham

As well as these shared statutory services, which make continuity a strong facet of the distinct communities of both parishes, many of the organisations that run for both young and old, involve residents from both parishes. The football club, the cricket club, Young at Heart, community hub club, Dance club, Ballet School, Scouting and Guiding movement are but some of the examples of joint enterprises.

Furthermore, the one secondary school serves both parishes and beyond, including pupils from Maidstone and Ashford.

The current elected members are completely integrated within the fabric of the ward they represent. When the COVID pandemic emerged they were at the forefront, organising local volunteers to deliver food and help people get their medication under the difficulties imposed lockdown. That is but one recent example of how they constantly strive to serve this part of the borough.

I would support the suggestion made by Lenham Parish council that parts of North Downs Ward adjacent to and north of Lenham and Harrietsham villages, consisting of the settlements of Otterden, Wichling, Frinsted and Wormshill which are currently in North Downs Ward, could be incorporated into an enhanced Lenham and Harrietsham ward. These areas, adjacent to both villages, already have strong associations with the two villages. Such a change would further align the areas of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) from the North Downs into the

enlarged ward footprint, providing additional enhancement for tourism and greater cohesion for the communities within them.

The proposed changes, on the other hand, may result in the communities to be moved into the Headcorn ward finding themselves disadvantaged as a result of the new representatives being distanced from the many important issues presently dealt with by their local representatives.

