

Lenham Heritage Society

Local Boundary Commission
via email

Secretary
Henny Shotter



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Ref: Maidstone

To whom it may concern

Lenham Heritage Society understands the need to redefine the ward borders in Maidstone Borough but we believe this can be done in a way which respects the historic integrity of the parishes and fulfils the requirement of more evenly-sized wards with fewer District Councillors.

Our concern:

The suggestion made by Maidstone Borough Council assigns the Parish of Lenham to two different wards. This is, in our opinion, unnecessary and is in stark conflict with the strong sense of identity to be found in the parish.

Our suggestion:

We would like to suggest that the ward borders are redrawn in line with historic borders, which respect the historic integrity of the parishes involved and their historic affinity.

We would like to support the suggestion made by Lenham Parish Council.

Historic Rationale

The existing parish of Lenham consists of several manorial estates, which are mentioned in the Domesday Book. They formed the parish of Lenham with one parish church, one Vestry (the predecessor of the Parish Council, which administered poor law, raised taxes etc). Documented in records from the 16th century is the parish described as 'the Town', the 'Hill', 'Liverton' and 'Heath'. From 1709 the Manor of Lenham was in the hands of the owners of Chilston Park, who were chairing the Vestry. The first chairman of Lenham Parish Council was the Right

Honourable Aretas Akers-Douglas, Viscount Chilston. Lenham, as it exists today, is an ancient parish and has a very strong identity.

Harrietsham and Lenham

The two parishes have a strong affinity, as they are not only adjoining but both have included in their parish borders to the north areas of the Kent Downs,
the village centre on the spring line
and to the south, the heath.

They are located in the same landscape area, with the same landscape characteristic, the Eyhorne Vale.

Historic Ward and District borders

Both parishes in their entirety were part of the Hollingbourne Rural District, before this was abolished, and the villages became part of Maidstone District.

At no time anywhere in history were there any administrative connections between parts of the parish of Lenham and the parish of Headcorn.
In landscape terms, Headcorn is part of the Lower Weald whereas the whole of Lenham and Harrietsham are part of the Eyhorne Vale. In our opinion, it makes absolutely no sense to assign Lenham Heath, Liverton, Sandway and Platts Heath to one ward with Headcorn, if there is a different and better solution which respects history, landscape and historic borders and fulfils the need to increase the size of the ward.

Summary

The centre of Headcorn is 7.8 miles away from the centre of Lenham Heath. It takes 18 minutes to drive on rural roads from one to the other. The new ward borders as suggested by Maidstone Borough Council would create an administrative construct which is neither sustainable in ecological terms, nor historically justified and unnecessary, as there are solutions (as identified in detail by Lenham Parish Council) which will fulfil the need to realign the ward borders in order to reduce the number of Borough Councillors and create a ward which is in size numerically comparable with others in the district.

Could you please confirm receipt of this letter? Thank you.

Regards

Robert Boyd-Howell
Chairman