

## Maidstone Borough Council

### Personal Details:

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### Comment text:

Lenham Parish Council's original response to the Local Government Boundary Commission (England) (LGBC(E)) was submitted in March 2022. At that time Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) proposal was to divide the parish of Lenham at the railway line which crosses the parish on an east-west trajectory, aligning everything south of the railway with Headcorn which is six miles away. We would refer you to our original submission regarding that proposal. Fortunately, the LGBC(E) agreed with us that the proposal from MBC to bisect the parish for the purposes of "evening up the numbers" took no account whatsoever of the impact this would have on the existing and future communities and this proposal did not feature in the recommendation to MBC from the LGBC(E). We understand that MBC has now come up with an equally unworkable and illogical proposal for the Lenham and Harrietsham Ward which suggests using the A20 as a new ward boundary for Lenham, aligning everything north of this line into a "new" North Downs Ward. This is an equally preposterous idea. Whilst Lenham Parish Council recognises this is a reshaping of the borough electoral boundaries, our concern, and one MBC Members were reminded of at the committee meeting which decided to agree and recommend this suggestion on 22 September 2022, is that once these boundaries have been reset and future realignment of parish boundaries is undertaken, which we now understand is scheduled to be completed by November 2023, may follow suit. Were that to materialise it would be unworkable. For example, immediately north of the A20, in this "new" North Downs Ward, would be the Lenham Cemetery, which houses war graves and is owned and maintained for the parish by Lenham Parish Council. Less than half a mile north from the Lenham Cemetery we find the Lenham Cross, a 100-year-old chalk cross, cut into the south-facing scarp of the North Downs AONB and recognised as a war memorial by the War Graves Commission as well as being listed by Historic England. The Lenham Cross was created in September 1922 by public subscription from the parishioners of Lenham to mark those lost in WW1. It was recently rededicated in a ceremony attended by parishioners from all points of the parish and in the presence of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent and the Mayor of Maidstone both of whom praised the community effort to maintain such a locally important memorial. The submission from MBC, and particularly the elected Member currently representing the area of North Downs, that those living on the North Downs adjacent to the Rural Service Centre of Lenham do not associate with the village is ridiculous. This is not correct. Lenham has a long and detailed history of community and agriculture which extends up onto the Downs north of the village. That is precisely why the parish council's original submission suggested including these areas into the Harrietsham and Lenham ward. It appears to Lenham Parish Council that MBC is desperately seeking a solution which would allow one political party to "hold on" to political areas it is concerned about losing which is clearly not an issue covered within the wide parameters of the Boundary Commission's criteria for agreeing changes to electoral wards. Lenham Parish Council believes this matter should not be politicised for the benefit of current MBC incumbent to the detriment of the affected people they allegedly represent. We strongly recommend that the Local Government Boundary Commission (England) rejects this latest attempt from MBC to divide the communities of Harrietsham and Lenham ward for political purposes and supports the parish's original position that the areas currently in North Downs ward adjacent to the rural service centres of Harrietsham and Lenham are incorporated into a new extended Harrietsham and Lenham ward.

### Uploaded Documents:

**[Download \(https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1664296074\\_Proposed+Ward+Boundary+-+Option+1+%28Lenham+Parish+Council%29.pdf\)](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1664296074_Proposed+Ward+Boundary+-+Option+1+%28Lenham+Parish+Council%29.pdf)**

Proposed Ward Boundary - Option 1 (Lenham Parish Council)

Harrietsham and Lenham

Lenham

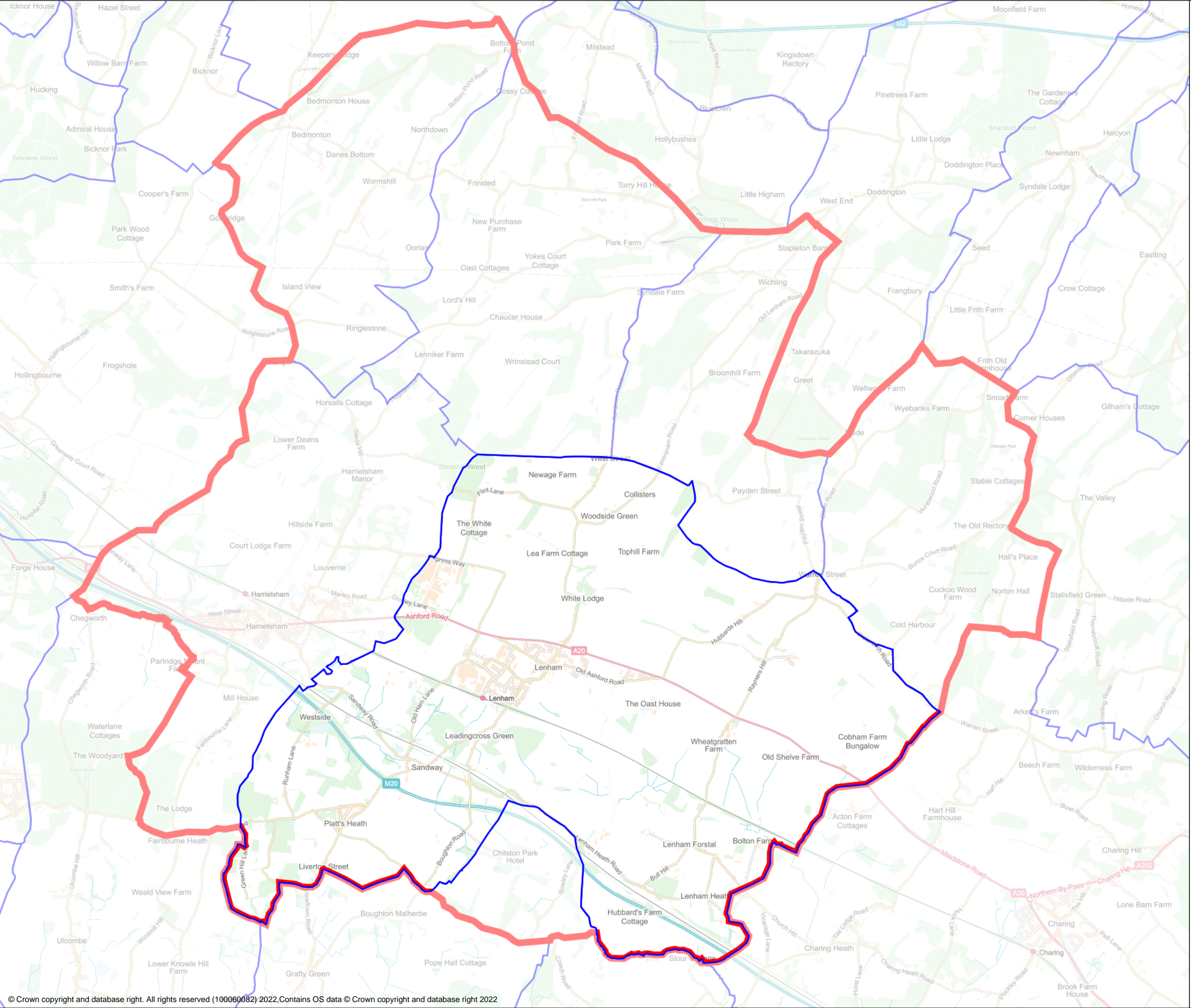
Author: L. Westcott

Date: 16/03/2022

200 800m

Scale: 1:40000

ParishOnline



Parish

Proposed ward boundary