

RE: Proposed Maidstone BC – Lenham Harrietsham Ward to Split Lenham Heath, Sandway, Platts Heath, Liverton Hill all moving to Headcorn Ward

I object to this proposal on the following main grounds:

Residents of the Lenham and Harrietsham Ward as it is at the moment,

- 1. Are covered by the Len Valley Practice, with the primary surgery at Groom way Lenham and a secondary surgery at the Glebe Medical Centre in Harrietsham.*
- 2. Both are served by the same Kent CC councillor.*
- 3. Both are covered by the same County Council Community Warden.*
- 4. Both form part of the same Kent Police area and are served by known and shared Police Community Support Officers.*
- 5. Many Organisations run for both young and old. i.e., The football Club, the cricket club, Young at Heart, Community hub Club, Dance Club, Ballet School, Scouting Guiding movement. These are just some of the examples. In addition the one Secondary School serves both Parishes.*
- 6. Lenham and Harrietsham is the hub for residents within the existing Ward, many would rarely travel to Headcorn (some 7.5 miles away) and have little knowledge of the Clubs and facilities there. There is no public transport between them.*
- 7. The historical links of the Lenham and Harrietsham Ward (please see below).*
- 8. The Transport links.*

I understand the need to redefine the ward borders in Maidstone Borough but 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.

The changes proposed by Maidstone BC do not make sense as the size of the Harrietsham-Lenham Ward can be aligned within historic ward and parish borders. (See the proposal submitted by Lenham Parish Council which I do support).

The changes suggested by MBC are also not fit for the future. Maidstone Borough Council, as developer, proposes a new garden town in Lenham Heath. It is at the moment completely undecided whether this scheme will go ahead. If it goes ahead, the Maidstone BC proposed border, will go through the new development. However, in any case, if the garden town (5000 homes) goes ahead, it will be so large, that it will require yet another ward and the concept of this 'Headcorn Ward' will be obsolete within a few years.

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

Suggestion:

I 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.

I 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 churchyard, 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 is 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.

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.

Thank you,

[Redacted Signature]
[Redacted Name]

3rd April 2022