

Canterbury

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Please see attached.

Attached Documents:

- canterbury-city-council-comments-on-bce-proposals---conservative-councillor-group.pdf

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

COMMENTS ON THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS FOR WARDS SUBMISSION BY THE CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLOR GROUP

28 April 2024

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ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL: COMMENTS ON THE BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS PROPOSED WARDING PATTERNS BY THE CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLOR GROUP

Section 1: Executive Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of Canterbury City Council's electoral arrangements. The outcome of the review will be implemented for the May 2027 Council elections.

The review will cover the entire district. The statutory criteria that the LGBCE will apply when making its proposals are: -

1. Electoral equality (a consistent number of electors per councillor).
2. Community identity (strong ward boundaries that reflect communities); and
3. Effective and convenient local government (coherent wards with good internal transport links).

The review was initiated in 2023 and the preliminary stage of the review determined the future Council size: the preferred option of LGBCE is to increase the council size by one to 40 members.

The period for interested parties to submit their comments on the proposed warding patterns is May 6 2024.

It is the opinion of the Conservative Group that most of the suggestions by the Boundary Commission have merit and are acceptable, but in the case of the proposals for the wards of Herne Village, Hillborough, Wantsum and Greenhill we have a number of concerns which we will explain below.

We propose that:

- 1/ Herne & Broomfield should not be split in two and the ward name Herne & Broomfield is retained. That the parish council remains as it is now: Herne & Broomfield Parish Council.
- 2/ That the proposed Hillborough and Wantsum wards are combined as a two-member ward and renamed Reculver & Wantsum ward
- 3/ That the northwestern boundary between Herne & Broomfield and Greenhill is not Plenty Brook but the A299

We have considerable concerns that while electoral equality may have been achieved in these wards, that this has been achieved at the cost of community identity, effective and convenient local government and historic links across communities.

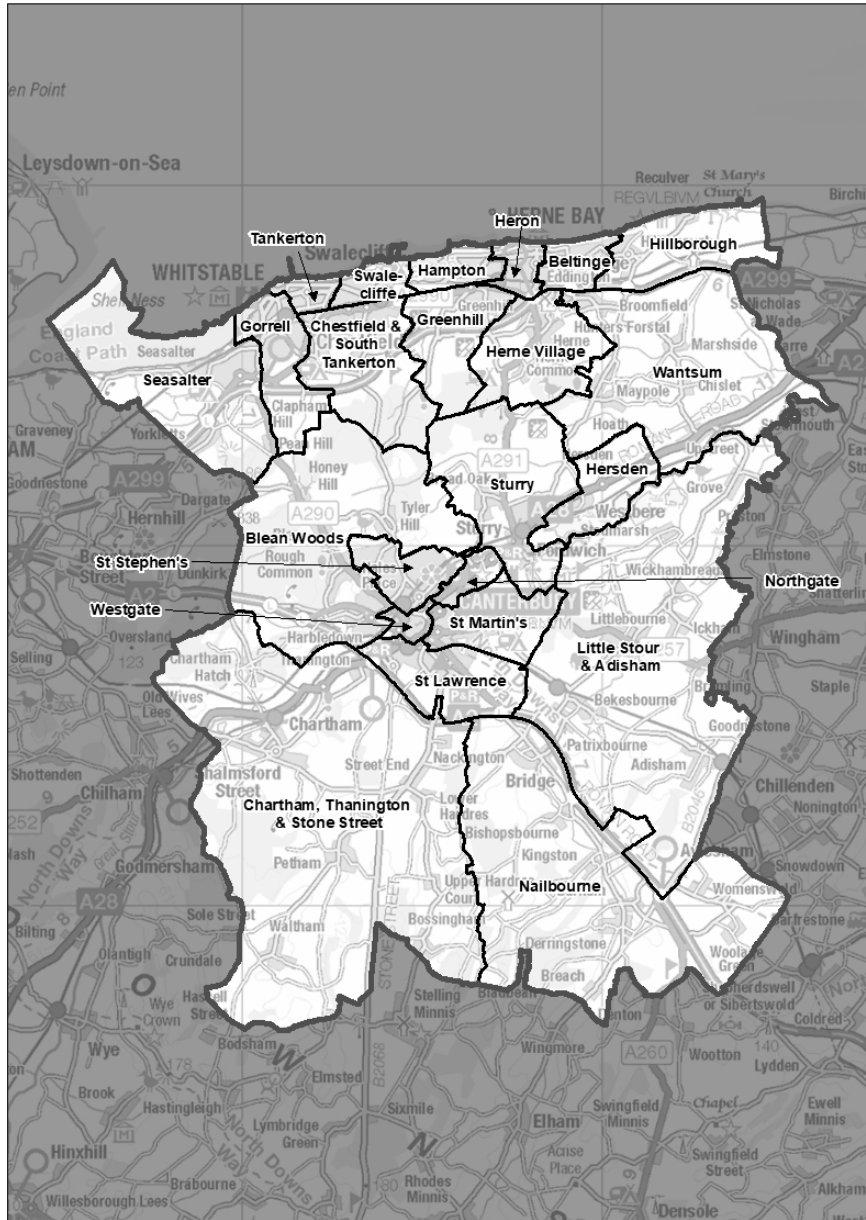
We also believe that while there may very rarely be merit in splitting a parish council, the splitting of Herne & Broomfield does not make sense and has been objected to by the existing parish council, neighbouring parish councils, ward councillors and residents.

Section 2: The proposed warding pattern

Proposed wards

Fig. 1 – Proposed warding patterns

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Proposed: Herne Village Ward

We propose: Herne & Broomfield Ward – two members

Proposed: two ward councillors.

Herne and Broomfield should not be split into two parish councils. There are historic reasons why the two areas have been united for some considerable time. If you are basing this on electoral quality alone then that is one thing, but you should be basing this on community identity and effective and convenient local government.

We believe the boundary should be changed back to include Broomfield and the ward should retain its existing name of Herne & Broomfield.

The proposals suggested by Labour, and that the Boundary Commission is minded to accept, are completely at odds with the wishes of the parish council and local residents and would split the village in two unnecessarily.

These proposals overlook the way that the parish council has functioned for a number of years and the investment in the Herne Centre which all residents of the existing parish have made through the precept. This is the heart of the village and an important asset for all residents in both Herne and Broomfield. The Parish Council itself has noted that the division will split the village unnecessarily and that the existing boundary should be kept.

Given the historic relationship between Herne and Broomfield, and there is no such relationship between Broomfield and either Hoath or Chislet, it would make far more sense to keep the eastern boundary of the ward at the western edge of Heart-in-Hand Road as it exists now.

While electoral equality is important, it is vital that this review does not split communities in haphazard ways or in ways that would damage community identity and the communities use of resources such as community centres and schools.

Although you did not take our suggestions into account for reasons of electoral equality, we would suggest that you need to look at this on a wider basis. In terms of community identity and effective and convenient local government, it makes no sense to split this ward in half: please look at transport connections, community interaction, schooling, and community activities.

On the western boundary of the ward, we ask again that the Boundary Commission looks at moving the northwestern boundary with Greenhill ward to the A299. This would mean that the new Redrow development at the Old Golf Course would in its entirety be within the Greenhill ward.

The current ward councillors believe this would help to deliver a better community identity and effective and convenient local government.

We ask the Boundary Commission to look at the new housing developments alongside Plenty Brook. It makes little sense to split these in two – although this was done in 2017 – but since this area at the Old Golf Course has been developed it is easier to see where the community cohesion works. Most new residents see themselves residing within Greenhill: they shop locally at Lidl, their children go to school at Herne Bay High, they use the new Sports Hub; and the A299 forms a natural boundary. There is no community identity with Herne & Broomfield for residents at the Old Golf Course development.

Proposed: Hillborough Ward and Wantsum Ward

We propose: Reculver & Wantsum Ward – two members

Reculver is a village and coastal resort about 3 miles (5 km) east of Herne Bay on the north coast of Kent and the ward extends southwards to encompass Hoath and Chislet.

Reculver once occupied a strategic location at the north-western end of the Wantsum Channel, a sea lane that separated the Isle of Thanet and the Kent mainland until the late Middle Ages.

It includes two parish councils at Hoath and Chislet. The north of the ward contains the housing developments at Hillborough, Bishopstone and Castle Chase, with new housing being built now. Much of the ward is rural, consisting mainly of agricultural farmland.

It has three infant and primary schools at Reculver, Hoath and Chislet.

Reculver is an historic area. Its name resonates with local people. Changing it to Hillborough would not. There is no recognisable community in Hillborough. The new housing development on Sweechbridge Road is named St Augustine's and not Hillborough. The local primary school names itself Reculver. The nearest community calls itself Hawthorn Corner or May Street. And most of the residents who live at the Castle Chase Development see themselves as living in Herne Bay, Reculver or Beltinge. We have not heard anyone refer to themselves as living in Hillborough apart from one resident! It appears that someone has looked on a Google map and seen Hillborough, rather than actually talking to residents or understanding the local community and the historic community that goes back beyond the Saxons and Romans.

We also believe that given the historic connections between Reculver on the coast and the parishes of Chislet and Hoath – through Marshside to Maypole to Boyden Gate to Chitty Lane to Shelvingford to Nethergong Sarre Penn – that the proposed Hillborough and Wantsum wards should be combined into one ward with two members and renamed Reculver & Wantsum ward. A cursory glance at a map shows the interconnections of the land and communities here from the coast southwards and the network of ditches.

This new name would demonstrate the community links between Reculver on the coast and the hinterland to Hoath and Chislet. In terms of community identity it makes no sense to split these areas in two. As we have written Broomfield should not be split from Herne and added into Hoath and Chislet – it is not a part of Reculver or Wantsum. Community identity and coherent wards is vitally important. Broomfield has no historic or current connection to Hoath and Chislet, while Reculver does. Again a look at the local road network also indicates that connection.

This area has been a two member ward in the past and it makes little sense to split it into two one member wards which would create a large disconnect in terms of community identity. If the Boundary Commission is to look at the network of ditches and the farming community in this area, it will see that it extends from the coast at Reculver to the Nethergong Sarre Penn and the Stour.

We agree that it makes no sense to split Bishopstone from Reculver as these areas are both within the Reculver Country Park and have a united community identity.

Greenhill – two members

We propose that the northwestern boundary with Herne & Broomfield should be redrawn on the northern edge of the A299 (please see notes for Herne Village as above). This would mean that the Redrow Development at the Old Golf Course would be included in the new Greenhill ward