

Canterbury

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Comment text:

Related subject: Canterbury, Chartham & Stone Street and Blean Forest

I disagree with large parts of the urban part of Canterbury being moved into rural wards. I do not believe this will best represent community interests and thereby lead to less effective governance. Please see attached proposal that will allow the rural areas to have a distinct voice on the council and likewise give better representation to the various parts of the city. My suggestions also leads to good electoral equality. Thank you for taking this into consideration.

Attached Documents:

- boundary-review_0.docx

Dear Sirs

I have read with great interest your proposals for new boundaries for Canterbury City Council.

I would like to propose a different configuration to certain wards.

I believe my proposal would better reflect the identity and interest of local communities, as well as better help the council to discharge its responsibilities effectively, whilst still providing good levels of electoral equality.

I do not feel the proposed Chartham, Thanington & Stone Street ward would best serve the interests of the local community. The electorate of Thanington (CWI1 & CWI2) is due to grow from 2,023 to 3,614. Whilst Thanington is a parished area, it is very much a suburb of the urban Canterbury community, and the house building in the area will make it even more densely populated. To place this in a ward alongside some very rural areas would not best reflect the identity and interests of local communities, as the interests of the urban and rural communities may not always be aligned. With the growth of the Thanington community it is important that the community has a voice to represent the needs of a growing community, which contrasts with the needs of the villages. Thanington has historically been linked with Wincheap in its representation on the council. They share the same shops with a large supermarket located within the area and they share schools, although there is a proposed new school for Thanington as part of the development.

The existing Chartham & Stone Street ward is a ward that people are used to, the villages have similar needs and the ward has good electoral equality. To add an additional area such as Thanington would be detrimental to the councillors being able to represent their ward.

I appreciate this has knock on effects and if Thanington does not move into the rural ward then this would necessitate a revised arrangement for St Lawrence. A Wincheap ward of CWI1, CWI2, CWI3, CWI4 would provide good electoral equality whilst representing the interests of those in the City who live on the roads leading off Wincheap. Holm Oak Close is within CWI4 but the road access to this is from CWI5 – it would therefore make sense to move this road into Barton along with CWI5. When added to the CB4 ward south of the railway line and the whole of CB5 would produce a 2 member Barton ward with a community with common interests and a well defined geography.

Whilst there is no perfect dividing line between Wincheap ward and Barton ward, the communities on the roads that lead off Wincheap and the communities on the roads that lead off the Old Dover Road are distinct communities within Canterbury, and therefore keeping 2 separate Wincheap and Barton wards better reflects the community interests than a new combined St Lawrence ward. Given the additional house building at Thanington and in the current Barton ward, having councillors representing these two areas of population growth will ensure the needs of these two distinct parts of the city can best be represented and allow the council to ensure the needs of the residents of both developments, and those already living in the area and will be impacted by the development, are adequately considered, thus leading to better outcomes are more effective governance.

The Rhodus Close area (CB6) would be suitable to join the community of the new St Martin's ward. This would lead to a clear boundary of the railway line. The majority of the housing in the Rhodus Close area is student accommodation and therefore it would seem suitable when looking at community interests and representation for this to be located in the St Martin's ward which contains

the main Christ Church University campus. This would mean the main campus, a large part of the student community around North Holmes Road, the student union, the university library and other buildings associated with Christ Church University would all be in the same ward and thus mean community interests are best represented. This is a similar argument to the one that has seen the University campus of UKC move into the St Stephen's ward from Blean Forest. I feel in terms of community interest this would be the best solution, but this area could be placed in Barton ward if required to achieve better electoral equality, along with the houses on and South West of Old Dover Road, thus meaning the whole of the Old Dover Road electorate would be contained within one ward.

Separately, I do not feel the proposed Blean Woods ward adequately reflects the community identity. Whilst the London Road Estate (CWE3) is geographically close to Harbledown, the interests and needs of the community there are very different to the rural communities it is being combined with. London Road estate has been part of Westgate ward for many decades and would be considered to be part of the City of Canterbury. The movement of the London Road estate to Blean Woods seems to be based on the Liberal Democrat proposal which stated that the area is "something of an orphan area whichever ward it sits in". In the absence of a compelling argument that it belongs appropriately in the Blean Woods community I feel it should remain within the Westgate ward, rather than move it to a rural ward that doesn't necessarily share the same interests. Similarly the part of CWE2 being moved into Blean Woods does not adequately share community interests with the rural communities it is proposed to be linked with. I feel a better solution would be to move the Cherry Drive/St Thomas' Hill (RBF5) area back into the Westgate ward that it always used to be a part of. These communities (CWE3, CWE2, RBF5), being part of the City of Canterbury, have far more in common with the St Dunstan's and City Centre that they border than the villages they are surrounded by and historically all would be part of Westgate & St Dunstan's community groups. It would also seem to make sense given the above proposed changes to move the Bingley Court area back into the Westgate ward. With the movement of the University into St Stephen's ward, by moving these areas back into the Westgate ward this would leave Blean as a rural ward which would be represented by one councillor who would be able to represent the distinct interests of a rural community to the North West of the City.

I accept that my proposals would have the disadvantage that Harbledown and Rough Common would be in different city council wards, but this is no worse than the current state of affairs. Bearing in mind the need for electoral equality, dividing Harbledown and Rough Common, which is divided by the A2 in any event, would seem to be the least worst option when compared to the inadequate commonality of identity and interests of mixing parts of urban Canterbury with the rural villages surrounding it. I also note that one objection to the current pattern in your initial consultation was having 3 councillors for Blean Forest and 2 councillors for Chartham & Stone Street attending parish council meetings of Harbledown Parish Council. My proposal would mean only 1 councillor for Blean Forest and 2 for Chartham & Stone Street, and it should be easier to explain to residents that 1 councillor represents Rough Common and 2 represent Harbledown.

I have tried to estimate as best I can the electorate of each ward. Given you do not publish anything more granular than the polling districts these may not be entirely accurate particularly as you have moved small parts of polling districts into different wards, but I have estimated as best I can from the numbers available. I hope that my point regarding the importance of the rural nature of Blean

and Chartham, and the urban nature of Thanington and the areas of the City proposed to be in Blean Woods ward are taken into account. I am merely trying to demonstrate that it is possible to have sensible wards for the rural areas and for Westgate, and I am conscious that the division suggested for Barton and Wincheap may not be the best dividing line to ensure electoral equality – but I hope that you can improve on my suggested boundaries by taking into account the spirit of what I am suggesting should be achieved.

I believe my proposals also help with governance as the wards are more in line with the existing arrangements, which broadly speaking do a good job of representing the various communities and are well defined. Voters will have a better understanding of the area their councillors represent as the changes I propose are less radical, and councillors will have better knowledge of their wards needs as they will closely mirror existing areas that they represent.

Name of ward	Area	No of cllrs	Electorate (23)	Variance (23)	Electorate (29)	Variance (29)
Blean Woods	RBF1/4/6	1	2,680	-1%	2,910	-6%
Chartham & Stone Street	RCS1-8	2	5,660	+4%	5,972	-4%
Barton	CB5 + part CB4 + Holm Oak Close	2	3,926 (plus Holm Oak Close)	-28%	5,525 (plus Holm Oak Close)	-11%
St Martins	Initial Proposal + CB6	2	5,368	-1%	6,272	+1%
Westgate	RBF5, CWE1-4 (less part CWE2 to St Stephen's)	2	6,194 (less part CWE2 to St Stephen's)	+14%	6,573 (less part CWE2 to St Stephen's)	+6%
Wincheap	CWI1-4 (less Holm Oak Close)	2	4,958 (less Holm Oak Close)	-9%	6,711 (less Holm Oak Close)	+8%