

Maidstone Borough Council - Response to LGBR - Second Stage Consultation

The Council supports and welcomes the proposed boundary scheme from the commission. The difficulties in achieving electoral equality are recognised and the Council has not recommended any changes that significantly amend any electoral equality numbers.

Headcorn with Sutton Valence was the only area outside of tolerance and the Council considers that Sutton Valence paired with Headcorn, rather than its closer ties to the west, is not ideal. However, as when the Council was putting its own proposals together initially, it is recognised that amending the boundaries of this area is problematic and there are therefore no suitable changes identified.

There are three areas where changes are recommended to improve community recognition and effective local government.

1. Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs

The proposed ward is large and combines two distinct types of communities. The more rural communities, including the special interests of the North Downs, and the more service centre style communities of Harrietsham and Lenham. To recognise this it is recommended that the 3 member ward be split into a 2 member and 1 member ward.

A 1 member ward, named North Downs (projected electorate of 2838), covering the North Downs, Pilgrim's Retreat and rural parts of Lenham parish north of the A20 (as shown on attached maps 1 & 2), and a 2 member ward (projected electorate of 5667) covering Harrietsham and Lenham (and named as such). Both would be comfortably within tolerance (-5%).

Whilst it is recognised that this change will necessitate the creation parish wards, this is outweighed by drawing the boundary split so that the specific and separate interests of both the rural areas and the service centre areas are represented effectively.

2. Bearsted and North Madginford, and Downswood

The commission's proposed wards of Bearsted and North Madginford, and Downswood create a split in the Madginford community that can be avoided by simply combining the wards together into one three member ward named Bearsted and Downswood.

This change is proposed to avoid the harmful split of the recognised Madginford community and ensure the continuity of Bearsted Parish.

3. Tovil and Central Maidstone

The Council recognises the benefits of the commission's proposed expansion of Tovil to cover the Coombe Farm Estate, an area that does have linkages to the Tovil community. However, the current boundary as proposed splits the estate down the middle. The Council therefore proposes alternative boundaries as attached (Map 3).

The Coombe Farm Estate has been encompassed in full which takes just over 300 electors from Central Maidstone. To offset this the boundary in Central Maidstone is proposed to

move northwards along Brewer Street and Eastwards (Map 3). This balances electoral equality.

Naming Proposals

The Council recommends the following naming changes:

1. Central Maidstone → High Street

Central Maidstone is too similar to the County Division of Maidstone Central. It is recommended that the historic name of 'High Street' be retained for this area.

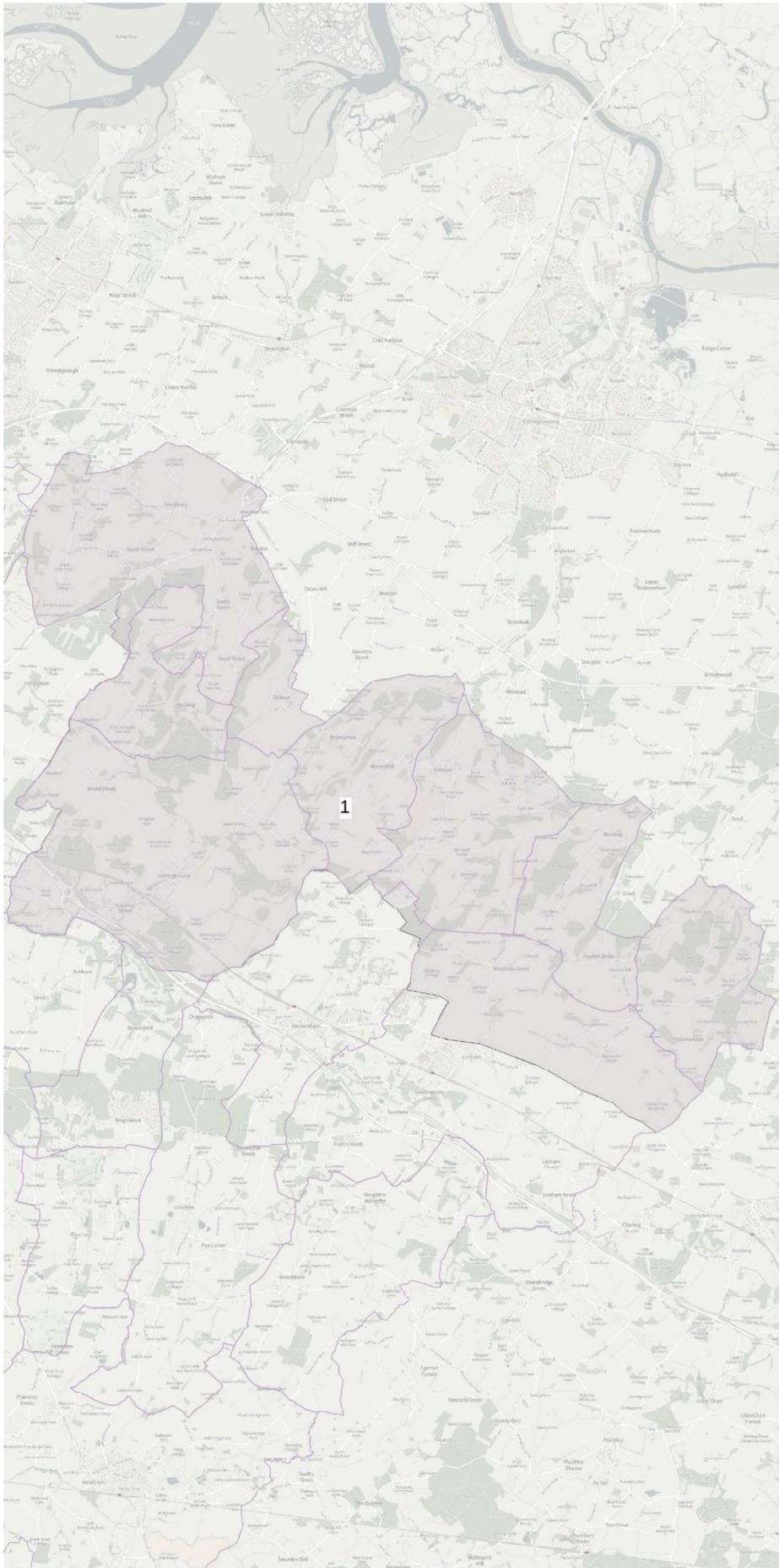
2. Headcorn with Sutton Valence → Headcorn **and** Sutton Valence

For naming consistency across the borough.

3. Langley with Otham, Leeds and Kingswood → Leeds and Langley

The proposed name is felt to be too long. The proposed name of Leeds and Langley is a recognised designation for a large part of the ward and is felt to have meaning locally.

Map 1



Map 2

