

STONE PARISH COUNCIL

Review Officer (Dartford)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
London SW1P 4QP

6 April 2018

Draft Proposals for Borough Wards & Parish Electoral Arrangements

Dear Review Officer (Dartford),

Stone Parish Council has met formally to consider the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Dartford Borough Council.

We have the following response to make:

We are pleased the LGBCE has upheld our submission to achieve more effective electoral equality and efficiency and therefore support proposals to create the wards of Stone House and Stone Castle, felt by us to represent the most logical arrangements from both a physical landscape and community identity perspective.

We would suggest a minor amendment to the proposed Stone House ward boundary. The lower quadrant of this ward is shown with a chimney-shaped deviation at the top, presumably designed to encompass the existing two dwellings at this site. However, although not quite yet at the formal planning application stage, recent scoping opinion and public consultation regarding development of the Stone Lodge site indicates demolition of these houses to enable construction of a secondary school along with circa 150 dwellings. As such, we would propose removing this 'chimney' to continue a straight-line boundary along London Road. This would keep the site intact with the main road forming a clear boundary in the future.

We note the modified enlargement of the proposed Stone House ward to encompass the area south of Watling Street to Princes Road. We identified this option during initial discussions as it was noted that properties on both sides of Watling Street are predominantly residential (leading to the quirk that electoral arrangements changed depending on which side of the road a resident lived), whereas properties on the northern side of Princes road are wholly commercial, avoiding such outcomes.

This was felt to provide more convenient governance and better reflect the community identity. However, in attempting to achieve convenient local government through

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coterminous boundaries where possible, we restrained our submission proposal to align with the existing parish boundary to the south.

With the above in mind, we are supportive of this proposed modification. This would achieve electoral coherence for residents, felt to represent the most effective and convenient governance arrangement.

We are pleased the draft proposals retain Bluewater within the proposed Stone Castle ward. Despite its prominence as a regional destination, Bluewater is also well connected to the parish community identity, both geographically and in spirit.

As the LGBCE has upheld the parish council's proposals, we are naturally supportive of the proposed parish electoral arrangements, which further strengthen effective governance.

We agree with the proposed number of councillors to represent each ward which, given the proposed larger ward area span, will enable better utilisation of councillor time and availability to respond to local issues.

As a consequence, we strongly support revision of the parish boundary to fully encompass the two proposed wards to achieve these aims. The reasons given to extend the proposed Stone House Ward to the M25 boundary apply equally to parish representation as well as borough. Therefore, logic should prevail in the forthcoming community governance review to deliver the same objectives to local electors.

In the draft proposals, the LGBCE acknowledged we demonstrated in-depth awareness of our community identity. It is this intrinsic knowledge of the local area that best places us as an able and effective delivery body and we therefore welcome both the improved electoral reflection of our existing community identity, and the strengthening of our capacity to provide increased benefits to local residents.

Thank you for consideration of our submission proposals. We look forward to publication of final recommendations in June.

Yours sincerely,

Jennie Thomas
Parish Clerk
Stone Parish Council