

Electoral Review of the Borough of Dartford

**Submission by the
Labour Group of
Councillors in
response to Draft
Recommendations**

- This document contains a further submission to the electoral review of Dartford Borough Council from the Labour Group of Councillors on Dartford Borough Council. It follows our initial submission to the consultation on warding arrangements made on 3rd December 2017. Our initial submission set out the context and background underpinning our recommendations. These have not changed and therefore, we do not propose to revisit these in this submission. Our original submission can be viewed [here](#).
- The Boundary Commission published draft recommendation on 30th January 2018. This submission is made in response to those draft recommendations and has been informed by consultation with residents in specific wards where we feel the draft recommendations are not optimal in meeting the objectives of the review and/or are not in the interests of local residents. Our submission focuses on the proposals for Greenhithe & Knockhall, Town and the exclusion from the draft recommendations of our previous proposal for a Fleetdown ward.
- The ruling Conservative administration at Dartford approved a further submission to the review on 5th April 2018. The Labour Group of Councillors did not support that submission and voted against it. It remains our view that the submission of Dartford Borough Council represents the view of a single political group and it would be appropriate for the Commission to consider it in that regard. It remains the case that it has not been possible to achieve a consensus amongst all elected representatives in the Borough of Dartford.

Labour Group Submission

Greenhithe and Knockhall

We disagree with the warding arrangement proposed in the draft recommendations and submit a counter proposal that this area should be represented by two wards – A distinct, single member ward representing Knockhall and a larger two-member ward representing the Ingress Park area of Greenhithe and surrounding areas

Proposed Ward Name: INGRESS

Number of Councillors: 2

Electorate: 3,894

Variance: 92%

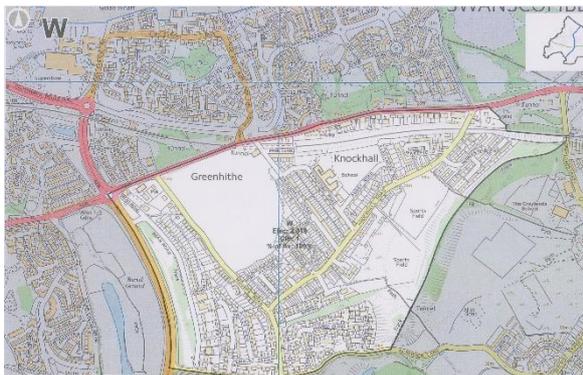


Proposed Ward Name: KNOCKHALL

Number of Councillors: 1

Electorate: 2,319

Variance: 109%



Rationale

Knockhall is distinct from the other parts of the proposed 'Greenhithe & Knockhall' ward in regard to demographics, housing and infrastructure.

Unlike the other parts of Greenhithe, housing in Knockhall dates mainly from the Victorian and pre-war era. It has faced a number of infrastructure challenges over recent times and many

residents would see themselves as surrounded by, and negatively affected by, the large-scale development that has happened in the surrounding areas.

The demographic of this community is less London commuter based and contains a higher proportion of residents in receipt of housing benefit. While Knockhall is geographically part of Greenhithe, it is also a distinct community with a school, amenities and an identity of its own. Many residents have told us they don't feel the concerns and priorities of Knockhall are always heard by being part of the wider Greenhithe ward. It's understandable to see why - representing the interests and concerns of both Ingress and Knockhall communities would be very difficult for any Councillor and reinforces our view that the residents of Knockhall would be better served by its own council ward and dedicated Councillor.

The Ingress Park development completed its first phase in 2001 and the majority of residents in this area have moved to Dartford in the last 10-15 years, many from London Boroughs. Much like the Bridge development this community is well defined by the recent developments and the aspirations of those who live here. A combined ward that encompasses both Knockhall and the Thames Waterfront Priority Area is risks distinct concerns of residents not being well reflected at a Borough level.

A primary aim of the remit of the Boundary Review to reflect community identity is to try and ensure that every possible community experience is represented in the overall make up of our Borough Council. In demographic and infrastructure measures, Ingress Park is distinct from Knockhall. Residents in each of these wards are demonstrably best served by separate representation.

Town

We disagree with the warding arrangement proposed in the draft recommendations and submit a counter proposal that this area should be represented by three single member wards, each representing the distinct pre-existing and emerging communities in the centre of Dartford.

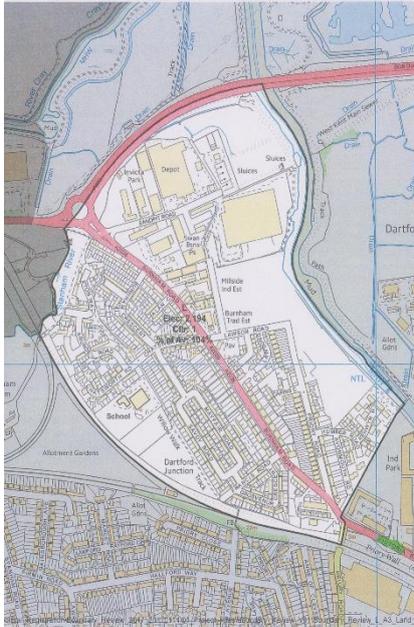
We acknowledge that Boundary commission cited a lack of clear evidence in the submissions it received about where the distinct communities in this area were. We hope this further submission addresses these points.

Proposed Ward Name: BURNHAM

Number of Councillors: 1

Electorate: 2,194

Variance: 104%

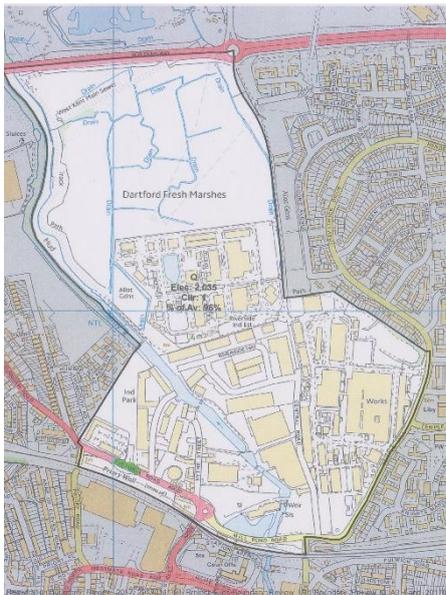


Proposed Ward Name: BURROUGHS

Number of Councillors: 1

Electorate: 2,035

Variance: 96%

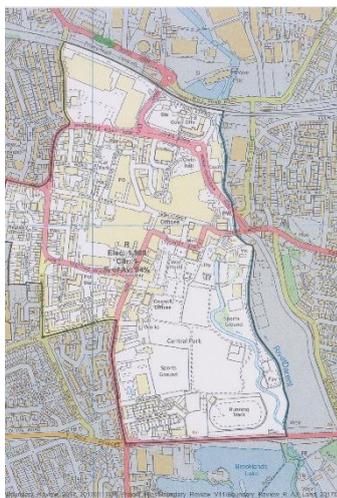


Proposed Ward Name: DARTFORD CENTRAL

Number of Councillors: 1

Electorate: 1,981

Variance: 94%



Rationale

Our proposal is based initially on our own experience in the current Town Ward. This current area is already two very distinct communities. The area we defined as **Burnham** is separated from the Town by the railway line. The majority of the housing dates from the 1940's and the area is a community with a distinct identity - arguably based on that separation from Dartford. Transport and road links are such that much of the community are as likely to travel to Crayford, Erith or Bluewater to shop. The area has its own school, an industrial estate and the concerns of the community are the M25, possible developments in neighbouring Bexley, congestion and residential parking.

It is our strong belief that this community will be very poorly served by being merged with a Town Ward whose representatives priorities should be focused on the regeneration of our town centre and the Lowfield Street development. We would strongly urge the commission to reconsider the inclusion of a Burnham Ward.

The town centre community is less family orientated, with a younger demographic more likely to commute and this separation is expected to become more marked as plans for the town centre are realised. It is currently quite transient and because of that an area difficult to canvass

and truly understand residents' concerns. In many respects a representative of the town centre is as much representing our town businesses as they are individual residents.

We agree with the extension along Lowfield Street to include this development because we see this development as defining the future identity of our town centre.

The proposed **Burroughs** ward in our submission is surrounded by two well established communities in Temple Hill and Burnham and again separated from the Town by the railway line. Recent large-scale development there has created a community that is not integrated to neighbouring Temple Hill or any other established community. There is a strong argument for this new community to be represented individually. The issues that have started to be raised by residents in this area are around things directly related to the development and the immediate community. We are concerned that merger with central Dartford during a time of much focus on our town centre and Lowfield Street will mean no sense of community is formed here. A Burroughs Ward is an opportunity to create an identity for this new development.

We note the representations made by the Conservative administration in support of their proposed merged three-member Town ward. They have argued that Town is defined by its height above sea level and the fact that if it is separated into individual wards, it will be to the economic detriment of some areas.

We would submit that height above sea level is not a compelling argument to support revised warding arrangements. The boundary commission will have noted that this area may be in a valley, but it is not in any way defined by it. Additionally, the argument proposed that a particular warding arrangement would economically advantage or disadvantage specific locations within this area of the Borough does not stand up to scrutiny and no evidence has been submitted by the Council to support this assertion. The economic health of the Borough will be determined by policy decisions and will not be impacted by specific local government ward boundaries.

It remains our view that the current warding proposal was unnecessarily large, unwieldy and geographically disparate. The proposal appears to be an artificial construct, taking in a number of established communities which previously had warding arrangements to reflect those communities. We are concerned that the current proposal is detrimental to the objectives of the review and to the established communities who live there. Labour's counter proposal of three separate wards – Burnham, Burroughs and Dartford Central offer more effective representation for residents and recognises established communities in this area of Dartford.

Fleetdown

We wish to resubmit a proposal for the creation of a Fleetdown ward is made up a development which is known locally as the Fleet Estate which was built in 1950. This proposal was not included in the draft recommendations.

Proposed Ward Name: FLEETDOWN

Number of Councillors: 1

Electorate: 2,283

Variance: 108%



Rationale

The estate is very characteristic and is identified as its own community which is supported by a primary school and a parade of shops.

We acknowledge the concern of the Boundary Commission regarding the viability of potential Parish wards as a consequence of our proposal. However, we strongly believe that parish boundaries should not prevent the establishment of Borough wards that properly represent communities. We would also note that a Community Governance Review is under way and therefore changes could be negotiated as part of that process. The area of Fleetdown particularly has distinct issues around its relationship with our local hospital, it's isolation during the regular periods of traffic congestion and resident parking. It also has a strong sense of community around its local school, community centre and library. It remains our view that this community is best represented by a distinct Fleetdown ward.

ENDS