



15th June 2016

Dear Sir

Electoral Arrangements for East Sussex County Council

Proposed Division of Polegate and Watermill

Proposed Division of Willingdon and South Downs

Electoral Arrangements for Wealden District Council

Proposed District Wards of Upper Willingdon; Lower Willingdon; Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill; Polegate Central

Electoral Arrangements for Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council

Proposed Wards of Upper Willingdon, Lower Willingdon and Watermill and abolition of Jevington Ward

I write on behalf of Willingdon and Jevington Liberal Democrats to strongly support the views of Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council, Willingdon Residents Association and others and to register our own concerns about your recommendations for new Divisions and Wards affecting Willingdon and Jevington. I ask that you read this submission with our submission of 30th November on the same subject.

Parish Council

We are very surprised to read your recommendation to change the warding arrangements for the Parish Council without any prior warning at all. We take the view that this recommendation is both unnecessary and premature.

Whilst we accept the need for weight to be given to numerical equality when forming electoral boundaries, the area of Jevington and Filching is entirely different from the rest of the Parish, being a rural area and the only part of the Parish inside the South Downs National Park. When the Parish Councils of Willingdon and Jevington merged it was felt necessary then and accepted subsequently by the Commission to retain a one Member seat for Jevington Ward. Whilst that councillor represents less voters than the average he or she is but one of nineteen Parish Councillors. The current arrangement enables that part of the Parish to be represented by a resident of Jevington who is able to directly represent the residents there. This has worked very well over the years and your recommendation runs the risk of that area being swamped by the much larger adjacent urban Ward in terms of representation.

The second reason for objecting to your recommendation is the imminent development of almost 400 dwellings on land in the Upper Willingdon Ward. The prospects of this development were not even known at the time your projected population figures were compiled and you could not have taken that in to account when making your recommendations. Your figures also do not take in to account the development of further land part of which is in Lower Willingdon Ward where we are told an application will be made shortly. Since this development will straddle the Willingdon and Polegate boundary and includes employment land, a school, medical centre and community use it is not known yet exactly where the housing will be proposed. The likelihood though is that the majority of the housing will be in Willingdon and will come forward at a different time scale to that

in Upper Willingdon.

This development which is likely to take place sooner than later given Government pressure for additional housing inevitably will result in changes in Parish Ward boundaries. Until it is known how and where the build will take place we believe the Parish Ward boundaries should remain the same. The review should take place at a time when it is more likely to achieve a more reasonable outcome based on what is actually happening.

District Council

At District level your recommendation for Upper and Lower Willingdon Wards will mean that the Wards will become unbalanced as soon as the build out commences.

The removal of Watermill Ward of Willingdon and added to Polegate South Ward results in the loss of a strong and clearly identifiable boundary at District level. It is not understood from your maps why you are proposing to revert to a pre 2001 boundary when that change then produced a much stronger boundary between Lower Willingdon Ward; Willingdon Watermill Ward; and Polegate South. Your proposal using the pre 2001 boundary moves five bungalows in Broad Road from Lower Willingdon Ward to Watermill Ward and nine houses in The Thatchings from Watermill to Lower Willingdon so splitting those roads between District Wards. Surely that was not intended.

When one examines your proposals for District Wards in Willingdon and Polegate, little weight appears to have been given to community identity. There is a 13% difference between Polegate North and Lower Willingdon and we feel very strongly that it should have been possible to retain Willingdon Watermill Ward as part of the Willingdon District Wards by changing the boundary between Lower and Upper Willingdon Wards so that the variant was reasonable when compared with Wards elsewhere.

It does need to be noted that although you are reducing the number of Willingdon District councillors by one the size of the proposed development in Willingdon is such that at the very next review you are likely to have to increase the number to three again. We also think it very strange indeed that a large part of Stone Cross, not part of Polegate and in Bexhill and Battle Parliamentary Constituency has been included in Polegate Central apparently just to make the numbers up !

We agree with the Parish Council that your proposals for Willingdon and Polegate District Wards should be reviewed again and more sensible boundaries drawn up giving weight to the need for community identity.

County Council

Regarding your proposal for changing the County Council Divisions, when the last review took place the Commission accepted that the Willingdon, Polegate and East Dean District Wards could not be reasonably split and a two Member Division resulted.

Clearly, there are difficulties again this time as the Division which includes Willingdon has now been extended westwards to include Alfriston, nearly seven miles from Willingdon.

This new District Ward formed by merging the former East Dean District Ward with the village of Alfriston is entirely in the South Downs National Park and is rural in nature. We can understand the

wish to make a Ward for the part of Wealden which is in the National Park but then the proposal does not include Berwick which is partly in the National Park or Alciston entirely in it. However, it does include a large rural area outside the Park west and north west of Polegate which is part of the old East Dean District Ward.

That new rural Ward has been added to Willingdon which is now an urban area to make up the proposed new Division of Willingdon and South Downs but Watermill Ward of Willingdon Parish Council has been removed from the Division and added to Polegate forming a Polegate and Watermill Ward. It is our view that does not make sense and does not respect community identity.

We feel very strongly that Watermill Ward of Willingdon should be part of the Willingdon County Division and it seems to us that given variances in your other recommendations between Divisions of as much as 23% there is every opportunity to redraw your proposals in this area so that community identity is respected. Even if you disagree with our views we would contend that the name of the Polegate and Watermill Division should be changed to Polegate and Willingdon Watermill Division.

We have to say that the difficulty in constructing the District Wards and County Divisions is clearly evident when the proposals for three Polegate District Councillors and a separate Polegate County Councillor has to include a large area of Stone Cross as far as the Wealden boundary with Eastbourne and part of Willingdon to make up the numbers. That confirms our view that your recommendations are wrong and these Divisions and Wards should be looked at again.

Yours faithfully

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