

Community identity – Nuthurst is a parish of one village, Mannings Heath, and 5 hamlets, Copsale, Maplehurst, Monks Gate, Nuthurst and Sedgwick. For many years, local residents and the Parish Council have sought to bind a community divided by the A281 together. This has not always been easy, but recent developments and joint endeavours, such as the making of the parish's Neighbourhood Plan and recent planning appeals have begun to reforge the parish's unified identity. The current draft proposed boundary would once again divide the parish, and in doing so, would incidentally create parish wards where the majority of the councillors would have to be residents of Mannings Heath, instead of distributed equally around the parish as now. We have studied the proposed boundary between the two wards carefully and cannot understand how this can be seen to be a strong, easily identifiable boundary. It does not run along the main road, the A281, in fact it crosses it twice, in order to include the hamlet of Monks Gate, the nearest settlement to Mannings Heath, in the southern of the proposed parish wards. It is difficult to see either digitally or on the published map exactly where it runs, but it follows no route or natural barrier recognised by local residents. Such an arrangement would also unnecessarily confuse Mannings Heath residents, who would be electors in Nuthurst Parish and Nuthurst Ward of Horsham District Council, but not in Southwater and Nuthurst Division of West Sussex County Council.

Effective and convenient local government – the current proposed arrangements mean that residents and the Parish or District Council would need to contact two different County Councillors about two of the most important county services in the area – Highways and Education. The A281 and Nuthurst Road are the two busiest roads in the parish. Traffic on the A281 is heavy and regularly breaks the speed limits, with 48.5 mph being recorded as the average speed in the 40 mph stretch through Monks Gate. Similarly, Nuthurst Road is used as a cut-through by business traffic and commuters between the A281 and the A272 or the A24. This has been a key factor in recent planning inspections. A County Councillor would need to have a comprehensive and full understanding of the interaction between these two roads to represent constituents, not a partial or split one. Similarly, the only school in the parish is St Andrew's Primary in Nuthurst, at which many Mannings Heath resident children attend. Neither the school nor residents should have to be confused about which County Councillor of two (as proposed) might best represent their interests.

Conclusion

With our local knowledge, we are clear that the alternative proposal we make above, to retain the whole of Nuthurst Parish in the Southwater and Nuthurst Division, equalises electoral numbers better, better reflects community identity and provides for more effective and convenient local government. As this reflects the wishes of those closest to the local electorate and the community and in the spirit of localism, we urge you to alter the draft recommendations accordingly.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Hall
Clerk to Nuthurst Parish Council