

Lewes District

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Comment text:

Dear Sir/Madam Following representations from local residents and consultations with the Members of the South Highton Parish Council, as Chairman I have been requested to submit the following comments in respect of the Commission's proposed review of Ward Boundaries in the District of Lewes. The Parish of South Highton is principally within the South Downs National Park, made up of rural downland with the village of South Highton (now adjacent to the eastern suburbanised area of Newhaven following previous encroaching residential development into the Parish) bounded mainly by the Ouse valley and downland to the north, with the smaller more isolated hamlet of Norton set further to the east of the Parish fully within the rural area of the National Park. Although one edge of South Highton lies adjacent to Newhaven, the Parish has always seen itself as rural in nature and character with its own identity and has continually opposed boundary changes that would see it absorbed in any way within the urban area of Newhaven. This is still the case and both the residents of South Highton and Norton continue to feel more aligned with the similar villages and rural areas of the Ouse Valley and Ringmer than the urban area of Newhaven and in the case of Norton, Seaford. The opportunities, problems and issues faced by the Parish, South Highton and Norton are synonymous with those of rural parishes within the Ouse valley and not of an urban area. The Parish Council would therefore object to any proposed boundary revision that would prejudice or degrade this relationship and feels that the Parish should continue to be part of the rural Ward of the Ouse Valley and Ringmer. The reasons for this view are expanded below under the headings provided in your guidance documents: 1 Delivering electoral equality for local voters According to the Commission's calculations the Ouse Valley and Ringmer currently has close to the average number of electors per Councillor it is seeking to achieve and this would remain the case as predicted for the year 2021. As the representation is slightly under the target figure (currently the variance is -6% compared with the District average of 1,817 electors per councillor and by 2021 this would be -8% of an average 1,993 electors) there is a clear case for retaining the whole of the Parish within the Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward boundary. The Parish Council recognises that there is a problem of predicted electoral inequality in Newhaven, but this is not just a numbers game and the inclusion of South Highton village within a Ward of Newhaven to help facilitate this would result in a rural oriented community being swallowed up and represented by an urban electorate/Councillor, hardly equality for those voters resident in the village. The same holds true for the local voters of Norton, should any revision to the current Parish boundary be considered which would mean they were to be absorbed into Seaford. In respect of Newhaven it would surely represent greater equality to consider re-drawing the boundaries within the town itself, since the 2021 variance prediction for Newhaven Valley of -24% is roughly balanced by the +19% for Newhaven Denton and Meeching. 2 Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities Transport links – The A26 and A27 link all parts of the existing Ward of the Ouse Valley and Ringmer as does the network of footpaths and bridleways crisscrossing the National Park and Ouse Valley. Whilst providing connectivity, there are common concerns within the current Ward, shared by the Parish Council such as the decreasing provision of public transport services linking villages and the problems associated with maintenance and use of footpaths and bridleways. Community groups - South Highton and Norton have distinct characters and communities that reflect these. Norton as a small Hamlet has continued to maintain its independence, but is effectively

and conveniently represented by South Heighton Parish Council which maintains regular contact with the community and actively pursues the particular concerns that are expressed by the local residents. South Heighton village has its own community groups and activities with a Village Hall Management Committee which provides a key community resource for these, whilst the Parish Council manages the Village Green and Recreation Ground providing for open air events. Again these groups and communities are more akin to those of rural villages in the Ouse Valleys and Ringmer. This is reflected in the Parish Councils membership the Lewes District Association of Local Councils, but particularly the Parishes of the Lower Ouse Group (POLO), which was formed by local Parish Councils and residents groups based around the southern end of the Ouse River who face similar issues. Facilities – The residents of the Parish utilise the informal recreational facilities afforded by the South Downs National Park and the Ouse Valley which form the majority of the Ward of Ouse Valley and Ringmer, sharing the opportunities and concerns for this countryside. Like many villages in the Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward, South Heighton has suffered the loss of local shop and post office facilities having to deal with the consequences, whilst trying to maintain its village hall and open spaces for the benefit of the local community. Identifiable boundaries – Although part of the southern boundary of the Parish at South Heighton has become obscured by connective residential development, the majority of the existing parish boundary is well-defined and clearly delineates the characteristically rural parish from the adjacent urban areas, which is again far more reflected by the Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward. Parishes – As previously referred to the Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward consists of a number of parishes of similar character to that of South Heighton, typically rural village settlements surrounded by farmland such as Tarring Neville, Beddingham, Firle, Glynde and Ringmer. Shared interests – Again as referred to earlier the Parish of South Heighton has similar issues to those of the other parishes within the current Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward. It is therefore only sensible and appropriate that the Parish should remain in within this Ward, as the other adjacent Ward areas are far more urban in nature being managed by town Councils more concerned with urban issues. 3 Promoting effective and convenient local government The current and past Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward Councillors have represented the interests of the Parish at both District and County levels effectively and have always been easy and convenient to contact. Most importantly the Councillors have been able to readily relate to the concerns and issues of the Parish as they are often reflective of those expressed by other communities within the Ward, which also provides the opportunity to present common arguments and share experiences. In summary, the Parish Council feels that its local community has been well represented through the existing structure and sees no reason to change the Ward's boundaries to exclude South Heighton Parish from the Ouse Valley and Ringmer Ward as part of this review. Yours faithfully Cllr. Chris Bradshaw Chairman South Heighton Parish Council

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded