

## Wealden District

### Personal Details:

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### Comment text:

[REDACTED] 30 November 2015 LGBCE, 14th Floor, Millbank Tower, London, SW1P 4QP. Dear Sirs Boundary Review Wealden District Council I am a Wealden District Councillor representing the Hellingly Ward that includes the Parishes and Polling Districts of Arlington and Hellingly and the Polling District and Hailsham Town Council Ward of Upper Horsebridge. I have represented the District Ward since 2003 and have a good knowledge of the area and of its residents. I am also the Chairman of Hellingly Parish Council. Having held that position since 1990, and having first been elected to the Parish Council in 1987. I am aware of the proposals to reduce the number of Wealden District Councillors from the present 55 to a total of 45 and for each District Councillor in the future to represent single member wards consisting of approximately 2909 electors. I agree with the principle of the proposed changes that I accept will result in a more efficient and cost effective District Council. At present Hellingly Ward is a two member Ward comprising approximately 5600 electors in three polling districts. The polling districts of Arlington and Hellingly are coextensive with the parish boundaries of the respective Parishes of Arlington and Hellingly whilst the Upper Horsebridge polling district is coextensive with the Upper Horsebridge Ward of Hailsham town Council. The system has worked well and my co-ward member and I, who both represented Hellingly Ward from 2003 until May 2015, had no difficulty in providing effective representation for the whole of the area notwithstanding that it covered two rural Parishes and one urban ward with the rural and urban parts having different needs. The Ward is however changing as a consequence of the new developments taking place in both Hellingly and Upper Horsebridge and the resultant growth in the population. This together with the wish to reduce the overall number of Councillors and to move to single member District Wards with equal numbers of electors suggests that changes are required. Although I have not been involved in the discussions that have taken place in the District Council (having lost my seat in the elections in May and only just regained the seat in a by election at the end of October) I am aware of the District Council's suggestion of creating a new District Ward based upon the Upper Horsebridge polling district and Hailsham Town Ward, a new District Ward based upon the Hellingly polling district and Parish boundary, and a new Arlington Ward and merging Arlington Parish and the Arlington Polling district with other rural Parishes of Selmeston, Berwick, Alciston, Laughton, and Chalvington & Ripe. I am in complete agreement with the creation of a new District Ward of Hailsham North West comprising the majority of the Upper Horsebridge town ward. However I disagree with proposals involving the changes to Arlington and to a lesser extent those affecting Hellingly Turning first to Arlington. At present the polling district and parish boundary are coextensive and include 536 electors, a number which because of the rural nature of the area is unlikely to rise significantly in the foreseeable future. The area is bounded on the east by the A22 Hailsham By pass, a dual carriageway road providing one of the main routes to Eastbourne and the coast, and which forms a clear electoral boundary between the rural Arlington Parish and the urban Hailsham Town on the east side of the road. Wealden Council propose however to vary the present boundary and to transfer the area of Hempstead Lane West consisting of some 43 properties and 73 electors to the new Ward of Hailsham West and the first part of Arlington Road West including the Glade and Robin Post Lane comprising 17 properties and 43 electors to the new ward of Hailsham South. The net effect is to reduce the number of electors

in the proposed new Arlington ward to 2469 (giving a variance of minus 15.12%) and to increase those in the proposed new Hailsham West Ward by 73 to a total of 3133 (increasing the variance from plus 5% to plus 8%) and to increase those in Hailsham South by 43 reducing the variance from minus 4.3% to 2.76%. Although the variance for both Hailsham Wards remains within acceptable limits there appears to be no justification for reducing the number of electors in the Arlington Ward particularly as this would result in the move away from the clear physical boundary, the splitting of the polling district, and the imposed transfer of some 116 electors from the rural parish of Arlington, with which they presently have close associations, to the urban wards of Hailsham town. Having represented the area for the last twelve years I am satisfied that the residents on the west side of the A22 regard themselves as part of the rural parish of Arlington and not the urban town of Hailsham. They both receive and participate in the Parish Newsletters. Further evidence of the association can be found in the fact that two of the seven Arlington Parish Councillors, including the present Chairman of the Parish Council, are residents of the area proposed to be transferred. The proposal therefore fails to achieve electoral equality, fails to preserve community association and will result in confusing electoral arrangements and therefore less effective local government. As regards the changes propose for the Hellingly Ward whilst agreeing with the proposal to create a new ward based upon the urban area of Upper Horsebridge that clearly forms part of Hailsham town and is regarded as such by its residents I do not agree with the removal of the Arlington polling district from the Hellingly ward and its replacement with the area of Magham Down and parts of Cowbeech that respectively from parts of the present wards of Hailsham North and Central and Herstmonceux. The numbers of electors are broadly similar but the community associations and electoral convenience are completely different. Arlington Parish comprises two small rural communities of Upper Dicker and Arlington Village whilst Hellingly Parish is made up of several small settlements including Lower Dicker (the immediate neighbour of Upper Dicker), Lower Horsebridge, Hellingly Village and Roebuck Park, as well as scattered housing along the roads that traverse the Parish. The two Parishes are connected by the same roads and share the same vicar who officiates at the Churches at Hellingly and Upper Dicker. The problems of the residents of both Parishes are similar. Retaining Arlington as part of the new Hellingly Ward would therefore result in a cohesive area of 2468 electors that is predicted to increase to 3158 by 2021. Magham Down however, although part of Hailsham North and Central, is associated more with Herstmonceux than either Hailsham or Hellingly. At present the road from the A271 Carters Corner roundabout to Carters Corner Place forms a clearly defined electoral boundary between Hellingly and Magham Down and although the boundary running north from Carters corner Place until it meets the boundary with Horam, crosses country side and is not clearly delineated on the ground, the justification for this is that it runs behind several residential properties that are accessed from Grove Hill, the road that runs through Hellingly Parish from Union Corner to North Corner. Similarly the areas around Cowbeech Hill, Court Horam, Gingers Green and Gildredge Farm have no direct access to or relationship with Hellingly Parish. The only justification for their inclusion as part of the Hellingly Ward is the objective of equalising electoral numbers but this is to ignore the community associations and benefits of convenient local government. The benefit of numbers would I suggest be outweighed by the confusion of splitting parishes and polling districts. The electoral balance could be more readily achieved by redefining the boundaries for the Ward of Herstmonceux and Ninfield, the Wards for Pevensy and Westham, the Ward for Hailsham East and the wards covering the settlements along the South Downs where appropriately sized wards can be achieved that more readily reflect community associations and effective local government. Yours sincerely David G White Hellingly Ward Councillor Wealden District Council Chairman Hellingly Parish Council

### **Uploaded Documents:**

None Uploaded