

  
Mr T Bowden  
Local Govt Boundary Commission for England  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
Millbank Tower  
LONDON SW1P 4QP

15<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Dear Mr Bowden

**District and County Council Boundary Changes**

Thank you for agreeing to accept this late submission to the consultation process.

My Council have only very recently become aware of the devastating effects upon this Parish of the proposals from Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council.

This parish comprises the town of Heathfield, the villages of Cross-in-Hand, Waldron, Broad Oak, Punnetts Town (part – the remainder is in Warbleton parish) and the hamlets of Old Heathfield and Cade Street.

Although the parish is already served by 5 district councillors, these are split into 3 wards, which, although not ideal, electors have had time to become accustomed to the boundaries and there is some community cohesion. The new proposal from Wealden would result in the same number of district councillors – 5 – but the wards would be changed significantly and apart from the town of Heathfield itself, the grouping of the villages/hamlets which make up the remainder of the Parish, within these wards have no basis in community identity.

The two parishes of Heathfield and Waldron were grouped together in 1992 and the Parish Council has worked hard to build a community identity and foster community spirit. The Heathfield Partnership Trust (upon which the Parish Council is strongly represented) has introduced some outstanding initiatives to the benefit of local electors and my Council are in the process of setting up a community hub (based at the Parish offices) where information and services will be brought together and in conjunction with a new Volunteer Centre, volunteering opportunities and services will form an essential part of the new facilities.

Support for the Hub was proven by means of a community survey earlier this year and my Council are deeply concerned that splitting the District representation in the manner proposed will jeopardise these efforts to enhance facilities and services for all our residents, some of whom are somewhat isolated due to personal circumstances and restrictions in public transport provision.

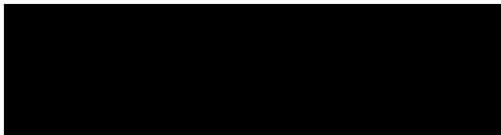
The knock-on effect of Wealden's proposals and the subsequent proposals by East Sussex County Council is that the parish would be represented by no less than 5 County Councillors, 3 more than at present.

The extent of the confusion this will cause to local electors can only be imagined, as well as the administrative implications for the Parish Council. Whilst there is currently provision for reports from County and District Councillors at our full Council meetings, the proposed new arrangements would make this unmanageable.

My Council would strongly urge the Boundary Commission to take these views into account and to produce a model which takes account of the strong community identity within this parish and seeks to undo the damage proposed by the District and County Council proposals.

I must apologise again for this late submission but the Parish Council had been led to believe that they would be consulted in the Spring and that they need take no action at this juncture. It was not until Wealden's proposals were made available via their website that my Council realised the adverse effects upon this parish.

Yours sincerely

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Diana Francis  
Parish Clerk