



Chailey Parish Council

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
21-24 Millbank
LONDON
SW1P 4QP

FAO: The Review Officer (East Sussex)

13th June 2016



Dear Sirs

Electoral Review of East Sussex County and Districts Lewes District – Chailey & Wivelsfield

I am writing to on behalf of Chailey Parish Council ("the Council") in response to your call for comments as part of the above review.

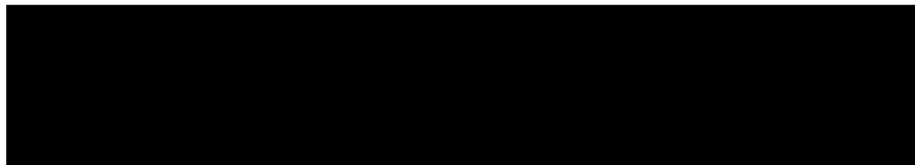
Please will you amend your records to show the Council's new address and telephone number.

On 23rd November 2015 I wrote to set out the Council's opposition to the suggested change in respect of the Ward of Chailey and Wivelsfield. The proposal put forward by Lewes District Council ("LDC") at the time was that Chailey and Wivelsfield Ward should be split with Chailey Parish joining the neighbouring Parish of Barcombe and Hamsey in a new Ward called Chailey, Barcombe & Hamsey. Wivelsfield would become a separate Ward.

In summary the Council's opposition was founded on the following points:

- neither the Working Group nor any official of LDC saw fit to inform the Parish Councils concerned, far less consult them, on the proposal;
- no notice appeared to have been taken of the guidance that has been issued as to the need to balance electoral equality, the interests and identities of the communities concerned and effective local governance. Instead, in order to justify its conclusion, LDC gave total and distorting priority to electoral equality and the numbers; and
- the figures used by LDC to justify its proposal did not make sense.

Chailey Parish Council,



I note from the documents available on your website that all three Parish Councils concerned wrote to voice opposition to the proposals, as did the District Councillors who would be affected if the proposal went ahead. I think that I have counted correctly when I say that seven members of the public also wrote to record their opposition. So far as I can see, the Commission not been contacted by any person or organisation to support the proposal.

The Council is therefore very disappointed to see that the Commission's draft recommendations adopt the unilateral proposal put forward by LDC.

Interests and identities

It is not a coincidence that a common theme amongst those who have voiced opposition has been the deleterious effect that the proposal, now enshrined in the Commission's draft recommendations, would have on the interests and identities of the communities concerned. This important criterion was ignored by LDC and now appears to have been ignored also by the Commission. The points put forward in my letter dated 23rd November 2015 have been echoed by others in their submissions. Put simply, and without repeating the points made by the Council and others, Chailey and Wivelsfield have much in common which tie them together. Splitting the existing Ward would break those ties. There are few if any ties between Chailey and Barcombe and Hamsey and the geography and demographics of the two Parishes mean that this will always be the case.

The Council believes that, when formulating its proposal, LDC ignored the interests and identities of the affected communities because the case for changing the current structure cannot reasonably be made if this criterion is taken into account. To make its case LDC, which has shown on many occasions that it is remote and that its understanding of what goes on in the rural parts of the District is at best sketchy, chose to concentrate solely on the numbers. The Council believes that the Commission is in danger of making the same mistake.

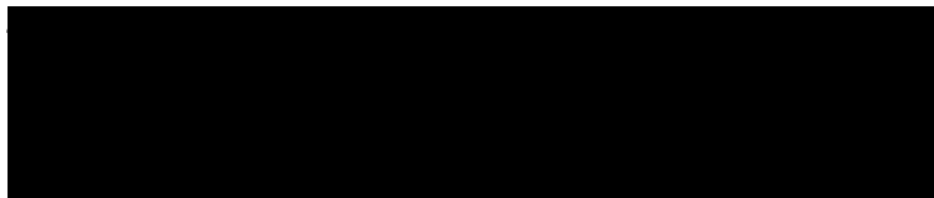
Electoral equality

As I explained in my letter dated 23rd November 2015, the data on which LDC based its proposal included the suggestion that the electorate of Chailey Parish is expected to show an increase of 20% by 2021 (2,291 rising to 2,755). This figure, which has not been explained, is not recognised by the Council.

A brief analysis of the figures used by LDC and by extension now also the Commission suggests that a broad brush approach has been taken when estimating future numbers of electors. For each existing Ward it appears to have been assumed that elector numbers will rise by the same percentage in each constituent Parish. Both Chailey and Wivelsfield Parishes (the constituent parts of Chailey and Wivelsfield Ward) have been given increases of 20%. The neighbouring Wards of Ditchling and Westmeston and of Plumpton, Streat, East Chiltington and St John Without have been given increases of 7% and 15% respectively, as have all their constituent Parishes. This approach completely ignores the differences in nature between some of the individual Parishes concerned. It is a very blunt instrument.

Perhaps more importantly there has been no explanation of the wildly varying increases ascribed to each Ward. The three increases mentioned in the foregoing paragraph range from 7% to 20%. The neighbouring Ward of Newick is apparently going to see an increase of 8% in elector numbers. These wide variations do not make sense. In November 2015 Lewes District Council published its Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which suggests that the Parishes of Wivelsfield, Chailey and Newick

Chailey Parish Council,



(in size the most comparable of the Parishes in the area and which are immediately adjoining) each have 3 or 4 developable sites yielding 55, 74 and 62 dwellings respectively. For Chailey's part the Council has been informed that between now and 2030 some 30-40 dwellings will need to be built. These figures come nowhere near explaining the figures for the increases in elector numbers used by LDC and certainly do not explain the 20% increase ascribed to Chailey.

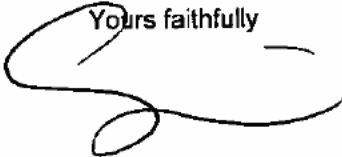
The Council believes (1) that the numbers used by LDC are crude and may well be incorrect, and (2) it is wrong for such figures to be used as the sole determining reason for rearranging the Ward structure in the District.

Concluding remarks

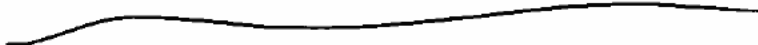
The Commission's draft recommendations are based wholly upon a flawed and unfair proposal put forward by LDC. To justify the proposal it was formulated purely on numbers, which have not been properly explained and which the Council considers may well be wrong. No regard at all was paid to the fact that the proposal, if implemented, would break the strong, longstanding links that exist between the Parishes of Chailey and Wivelsfield and would tie Chailey to Barcombe and Hamsey, a Parish with which Chailey has few if any links or interests.

To repeat what was said in my letter dated 23rd November 2015, the Council considers that the existing Ward of Chailey and Wivelsfield should be retained. The approach taken by LDC, to rely solely on numbers and to ignore all other relevant criteria, is flawed and should not simply be nodded through by the Commission. Any issues over electoral equality should be resolved by other means, for example by adjusting the number of District Councillors, rather than by ignoring the interests and identities, and the wishes, of the communities concerned.

Yours faithfully



Stephen Treharne
Clerk to the Council



Chailey Parish Council,

