

Maidstone Borough Council

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Comment text:

Dear Boundary Commission, My thoughts on your proposal are set out in the attached file. Kind regards Stuart

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1660463611+Comment+on+Boundary+Commission+proposal+v2.docx)

Comment on Boundary Commission proposal 4th Aug

Summary

I am concerned that the Boundary Commission's proposal splits apart a community that covers the Buckland Hill area (B3), the Bower Mount Rd area (B4) and the Victoria St area (B5) while bringing together two areas that have little in common other than being between the A20 and the river (Allington, A1/ A2 and Bridge B3).

Your proposal also makes Fant and Oakwood a large ward (9% variance in 2027) and a small ward for Allington and Bridge (-8% in 2027).

Appendices 1 & 2 provide explanations of labels and elector numbers.

I believe Bridge Ward (B3) would be better separated from Allington (A1/A2) but with addition of Bower Mount area (B4). An Allington and Bridge Ward would better served with the addition of the Bower Mount area (B4) and Victoria St (B5).

Issues in detail:

1. Allington and Bridge would bring together two very different communities.
 - a. Areas A1 and A2 were built between 1950 and 1980 with a late addition in the 2010's (Bunyards Way). The area is sub-urban and generally older than average.
 - b. Areas B3 and B4 are a mixture of Victorian properties (including many that are HMOs) and modern flats. The population is generally young or affluent (e.g. Bower Mount Rd).
 - c. Both areas identify separately with A1/A2 identifying clearly as Allington and B3/B4 as Buckland / Bower Mount Rd areas.
 - d. Apart from the London Road, A1/2 and B3/4 are only connect by a long foot path by the railway.
 - e. It is therefore felt that Bridge and Allington should not be considered to be a single ward but two wards with one councillor each.
2. Fant and Oakwood, as proposed, provides a large and extensive ward.
 - a. Area F6 would fit more closely with Fant and Oakwood as all the flats are on the Fant side of the triangle.
 - b. Currently you have put areas B4 and B5 in Fant and Oakwood. These areas fit better with B3 as it has a similar mix of Victorian houses and HMOs. Given that Fant and Oakwood is already at a high variance and that Bridge is low in variance, it makes sense to include B4 and B5 (which is in the current Bridge Ward) in a revised Bridge Ward rather than Fant and Oakwood.
3. Bower Mount Surgery is a focal point of a community that stretches across from Buckland Hill area through Bower Mount Road area.
 - a. While the London Rd divides B3 from B4 and B5, the reality is that there is significant community across these areas.
 - b. There is a highly popular GP surgery in the centre, used by people in both areas.

- c. There are natural walking routes from B4 and B5 into the town centre that goes through the heart of B3.
- d. There is no significant flow of pedestrians into F7, particularly as Oakwood Park is private land.
- e. F6 probably sits better with Fant and Oakwood as the residential properties are on that side of the area and there is reasonable continuity of community between the two however it currently sits in Bridge Ward and should it remain there then it does not compromise the variances greatly.

Counter proposal

I suggest two counter options in order of favourability:

1. Therefore my favoured proposal is as follows:

- a. Bridge Ward, one councillor: covers areas B3, B4 and B5
- b. Allington Ward, one councillor: covers areas A1 and A2. This has a high initial variance (but a lower initial variance than for other wards proposed by BC).
- c. Fant and Oakwood, three councillors: covers areas F6 and F7
- d. Proposed ward numbers for option 1:

	2021	2027		2021	2027
Allington	3082	3264		17%	9%
Bridge	2715	3185		3%	7%
Fant and Oakwood	8073	8739		3%	-2%

2. Second best:

- a. Allington and Bridge Ward comprising of A1, A2, B3, B4 and B5 with two councillors.
- b. Fant and Oakwood, three councillors: covers areas F6 and F7
- c. Proposed ward numbers for option 2:

	2021	2027		2021	2027
Allington and Bridge	5797	6449		10%	8%
Fant and Oakwood	8073	8739		3%	-2%

Appendix 1: Elector numbers for options:

Area	Description	2021	2027
A1	Allington	2541	2723
A2	Grace Ave	541	541
B3	Buckland	1588	2058
B4	BMR	810	810
B5	Victoria	317	317
F6	Triangle	75	75
F7	F&O without F5 or B4	7998	8664

Appendix 2: Maps





