



Sandyhurst Lane Residents Association



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SUBMISSION TO ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION

24 May 2015

Introduction

Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association (SLRA) has been active for over thirty years representing the collective interests of the residents of Sandyhurst Lane and all adjacent roads which constitute its neighbourhood of 340 dwellings.

The mission statement of the Association is

“Protecting the rural character of Sandyhurst Lane and the adjoining area”.

With this priority in mind we welcome the opportunity to contribute to Ashford Borough Council's consultation on the Community Governance Review.

SLRA Recommendation

Whilst we generally support the creation of new Community Councils within Ashford, evidence shows our residents believe their interests would be best served by their not being part of any new urban parishes replacing the Central Ashford Community Forum (CACF) and the Kennington Community Forum (KCF).

We therefore recommend that:

Any decision to create Urban Parishes to replace CACF and KCF should be conditional on ABC making strong representations to the Boundaries Commission to realign the Downs West Borough Ward and Westwell Parish boundaries to include all that part of Sandyhurst Lane together with Potters Close, Hoads Wood Gardens and the Potters Corner part of Maidstone Road currently within the Bockhanger Ward.

Evidence

SLRA Footprint

A little over one half of Sandyhurst Lane, a length of one mile, from the junction with the A20 Maidstone Road, to the boundary with Boughton Aluph & Eastwell parish, adjacent to no.196 Sandyhurst Lane, currently are constituents of the borough wards of Downs West and Bockhanger . Similarly the same boundary also divides the county divisions of Ashford Rural West and Ashford Central.

Whilst Westwell is an existing rural parish of 597 registered voters (May 2015), that part of Bockhanger ward that falls within the SLRA area, comprising 285 registered voters (April 2015) is presently unparished. These residents are, however, within parts of **two** existing Community Forums, namely **Central Ashford Community Forum** (CACF) for those from the A20 to the Ashford Golf Club (M20 traverse) and the **Kennington Community Forum** for those from the Golf Club to no.196.

Following the successful Petitions of both these Forums and the resulting Borough Community Governance review we have consulted with those of our residents likely to be affected by any Community Parishing.

SLRA Consultations

Views of affected residents

To complement the Consultation being undertaken by Ashford Borough Council as part of its Community Governance Review and to inform the response that the SLRA will make we invited EVERY resident in the affected area of the SLRA to respond to the simple question

Do you want to stay in your existing Community Forum?

OR

Do you want to become part of the Westwell Parish?

The ballot paper was supported by a fact sheet (Appendix 1). The referendum took place over the weekend of 15th – 17th May 2015. The results are tabulated below

RESPONSE BY ELECTORS	
STAY THE SAME	JOIN WESTWELL
30	115
20.69%	79.31%
Turnout =44.21%	

Consultation with affected organisations

The SLRA has shared the results of this Referendum with Westwell Parish Council and the Central Ashford and Kennington Community Forums.

SLRA Conclusions

Whilst we appreciate that decisions on boundaries often involve features such as roads and watercourses, we question the wisdom of having the boundary drawn along the **centre line** of Sandyhurst Lane.

This results in an illogical and divisive situation whereby neighbours on opposite sides of the Lane, part of the same community, are residing in different administrations at all levels – county, borough and parish.

There is an overwhelming desire from nearly 80% of all the respondents to our survey of the unparished part of the SLRA to be part of the Westwell community and its governance.

This view reflects the principles set out in the national guidance that good community governance should offer

- *a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector*
- *a sense of place - with a positive feeling for people and local distinctiveness*
- *effective engagement with the local community at neighbourhood level*

However good the governance of any new urban community parishes, it is unlikely that our residents would enjoy the same level of community engagement in those communities with around 8000 members.

We believe our recommendations to bring these dwellings into the parish of Westwell, like their neighbours 'over the road' will provide a much more cohesive community than the present division allows.

It would also make much more sense for single councillors, at both county and borough level, to represent these constituents rather than the split dual responsibilities which currently pertain.

SLRA Recommendation

To implement Community Parishes in the neighbouring CACF and KCF and realign the Downs West Borough Ward and Westwell Parish boundaries to include all those parts of Sandyhurst Lane, Potters Close, Hoads Wood Gardens and the Potters Corner part of Maidstone Road, currently within the Bockhanger Ward.

SLRA Sandyhurst Lane Residents Association



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Dear Resident,

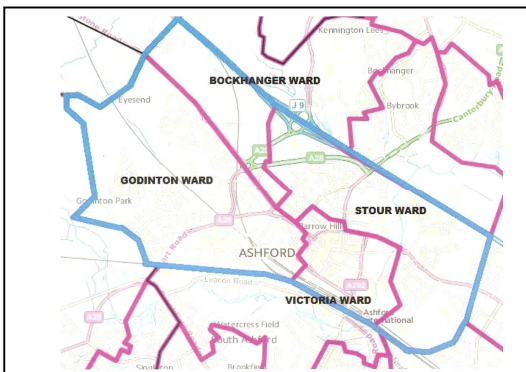
Ashford Borough Council (ABC) is currently undertaking a **community governance review** to examine and put in place, or make changes to, the community governance systems and structures across the whole Borough. Its outcome will result in creating, merging, abolishing or changing parish or town councils.

(<http://www.ashford.gov.uk/community-governance-review>)

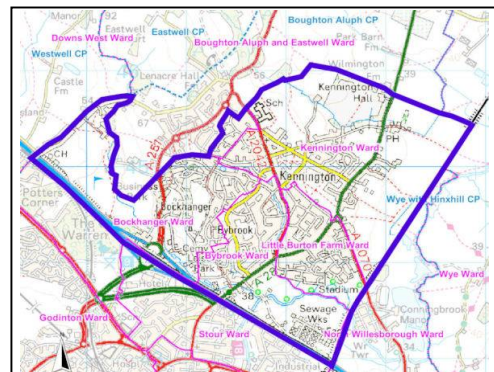
ABC define Community Governance as *“the way in which local communities are represented and governed at local authority level and through the involvement of other statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups and by the efforts of local people themselves. It is also about the way in which individuals and groups within the community are listened to and able to influence decisions that affect them.”*

Why now? Prior to local government re-organisation in 1974, most urban areas of England had an Urban District Council serving a single town. Since 1974, Ashford Borough Council has directly governed the larger, mainly urban area, whilst town areas, e.g. Tenterden, and the rural parish councils have continued to exist and provide a statutory voice for their communities. **The Community Governance review is an opportunity to change this**

At the moment, residents in odd numbered houses in Sandyhurst Lane, from the A20 up to Lilac Cottage, and in Westwell Lane are part of the Westwell Rural Parish. All those in even numbered houses in Sandyhurst Lane (A20 to No. 196) and its adjoining roads - Potters Close, Hoads Wood Gardens and A20 Maidstone Road (south of Sandyhurst Lane) are in Bockhanger Ward and are only represented by the two independent voluntary Community Forums - **Central Ashford** and **Kennington Forum**. See maps



Central Ashford Community Forum



Kennington Community Forum

- Both the **Central Ashford Community Forum (CACF)** and the **Kennington Community Forum (KCF)** each covers around **4,000 properties**.
- **Only 146** of that total of nearly **8,000 properties (less than 2%)** are located in the SLRA area.
- It is likely that the Governance review will result in these Community Forums being upgraded to **Local Community Council** status and granted the same statutory and tax (precept) raising powers as their rural parish counterparts.

The Council is currently undertaking a public consultation and has asked all interested groups and residents to give their views. The SLRA wish to respond to that. But before proceeding we, and Westwell Parish Council, wish to know the views of those residents likely to be affected.

Please complete the Questionnaire overleaf, which we will collect on Sunday 17th May.

Thank you. Your voice is important.

PTO

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE CONSULTATION

May 2015

National government guidance indicates that characteristics of good community governance to be considered in assessing the options when undertaking such a review include:

- *a sense of civic pride and civic values*
- *a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector*
- *a sense of place - with a positive feeling for people and local distinctiveness*
- *effective engagement with the local community at neighbourhood level*
- *strong leadership*
- *the ability of local authorities to deliver quality services economically and efficiently*
- *an area that is of a size that is viable as an administrative unit of local government.*

Ashford Borough Council suggest local people might consider these characteristics when submitting their views

Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association would like your view as to whether you prefer

To stay in your existing Community Forum

OR

To become part of an enlarged Westwell Parish Council:

Property Post Code.....

The views of ALL registered voters in the property are invited - **CIRCLE YOUR PREFERENCE**

I would prefer to: (stay the same) / (join Westwell)
(print name)

I would prefer to: (stay the same) / (join Westwell)
(print name)

I would prefer to: (stay the same) / (join Westwell)
(print name)

I would prefer to: (stay the same) / (join Westwell)
(print name)

I would prefer to: (stay the same) / (join Westwell)
(print name)

Prepared by Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association with the knowledge of Westwell Parish Council