



**SUBMISSION TO  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S  
CONSULTATION ON WARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

5 September 2016

**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 LGBCE's consultation on warding arrangements for Ashford Borough Council (ABC).

We believe this review provides a threefold opportunity to

- continue the rationalisation of the governance of the Sandyhurst Lane area initiated by the ABC Local Governance Review in 2015
- further protect and safeguard the rural character and nature of the Sandyhurst Lane area against what ABC acknowledges is the creeping urbanisation resulting from the Ashford urban growth
- enable the existing community to build on its the present cohesion and strengthen its identity

**The SLRA therefore proposes:**

- **that the new Downs West ward boundary should be redrawn to locate all the properties in the Sandyhurst Lane area and its environs into it as a single rural ward. (See amended Map 9 attached)**
- **that the eastern Downs West boundary should be drawn so as to be beyond the tree line behind the even numbered houses along Sandyhurst Lane and its environs.**

## Background

Sandyhurst Lane is a rural lane with strip housing interspersed with agricultural land which runs for 1.7 miles from the junction with the A20 Maidstone Road to the junction with Faversham Road. The southern end from the A20 for about 1 mile is divided between Downs West ward and Bockhanger ward. The boundary runs down the centre of Sandyhurst Lane. All properties in the northern 0.7 miles are currently in a third ward, Boughton Aluph and Eastwell (BA&E).

In 2015 the SLRA electoral allocation was:

Westwell Parish	= 204 voters
Bockhanger Ward	= 304 voters
BA&E	= 280 voters

To the north and west the area is bounded by, and in parts included in, the Kent Downs AONB, to the south east the area bounds Ashford Warren & Hoads Wood Nature Reserve.

The nature of the properties, the natural environment, the history of the area and the community focus is very much that of a rural fringe to an urban conurbation.

## Supporting arguments

- 1) The recent draft Ashford Local Plan 2014-2030 recognises the threat of creeping urbanisation to the Sandyhurst Lane area and seeks to mitigate its impact on our area by setting conditions on the development of the strategic Site S20 – Eureka Park, which falls in the new Bockhanger and Trinity wards. These conditions include:
  - the provision of “***a generous landscaped buffer to residential properties along Sandyhurst Lane***”
  - “**Vehicular access to the site [Eureka Park] shall be provided from Trinity Road only**” i.e. access to Sandyhurst Lane will remain restricted to pedestrians and cyclists only.
- 2) Following representation from members and a positive response to a survey of the affected residents, the SLRA’s proposal to the ABC Governance Review (2015) to realign the Westwell Parish boundary to include properties in the Bockhanger ward was included in the final recommendations. **This is now included in the ABC warding review proposed to the LGBCE. (Downs West - Map 4)**

- 3) After the publication by ABC of its “**Review of Ward Boundaries for Ashford Borough Council**” on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 the SLRA again consulted with its members and received a unanimous objection to the inclusion of any of Sandyhurst Lane and its environs in the patently urban Trinity ward.
- 4) Implementation of the ABC’s warding proposals will still leave governance of the Sandyhurst Lane area unnecessarily complicated by being split between two wards, one of which (Downs West) has rural parishing, the other (Trinity), will be either unparished or part of a new Urban Parish (or a combination of both).
- 5) Adoption of the SLRA proposal is fully in accordance with the criteria set down in Paras 3.5 and supports the intentions of Para. 3.6 of the LGBCE Technical Guidance recognising “***the location and boundaries of parishes and the physical features of the local area when drawing boundaries***” and will reinforce the common identity of the Sandyhurst Lane area community.
- 6) Community facilities e.g. Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre will remain in the existing rural parish.
- 7) Relocating the eastern Downs West boundary beyond the tree line behind the even numbered houses in Sandyhurst Lane will protect ancient trees and their foliage, better delineate the rural/urban border and provide a “*clear and long lasting boundary*”
- 8) The SLRA proposal is fully compliant with the new KCC divisional boundaries proposed by LGBCE.
- 9) The SLRA acknowledges that its proposal will add about 230 voters to Downs West ward but is still within the +10% band and this can be accommodated without needing any adjustments to the proposed ward boundary on the basis that the rural nature of the proposed Downs West ward is likely to preclude a high trajectory increase in electoral numbers in the future.
- 10) Adjustments may also be necessary to the boundary of Trinity and Kennington wards to rebalance the loss of 230 voters from Trinity ward although the Site S20 development across Trinity and Bockhanger wards is planned to include up to 300 new dwellings with a commensurate increase in electoral numbers.