



## Manuden Parish Council

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29th May, 2013

Review Officer  
Uttlesford Review  
The Local Government Boundary  
Commission for England  
Layden House  
76 – 86 Turnmill Street  
London EC1M 5LG

Dear Sirs

### **Draft Recommendations on the New Electoral Arrangements for Uttlesford District Council**

I am responding on behalf of Manuden Parish Council to your invitation to comment on the draft proposals for new ward boundaries in the District of Uttlesford.

Manuden Parish Council is very strongly opposed to these proposals as far as they affect the Parish of Manuden.

Combining the Stort Valley ward containing three small villages, of which we are one, with half the town of Stansted fails to meet any of the three “main considerations” you are obliged by law to apply in devising your recommendations.

Taking these “main considerations” in turn:

- 1) “Secure effective and convenient local government”.

Having three district councillors to represent what would be a heterogeneous jumble of urban and rural interests is a recipe for disagreement between the councillors. It would deny us a clear and firm representation of our rural interests in the Council Chamber. We are very happy that we are represented by a single District Councillor at the moment. This would have remained the case had you not decided to tinker with Uttlesford's own well-constructed proposals in which the Parish of Ugley would be grouped with the parishes of Manuden, Berden and Farnham.

The argument which appears to have caused you to reject the District Council's proposal is that there is “no direct road links from Ugley to the Stort Valley Parishes”. This argument is specious. The geography of the area is such that the road link between Ugley and, say, Manuden is no worse than the link, say, between Farnham and Berden. We live in the countryside.

2) “Provide for Equality of Representation”

You clearly had difficulty in accepting the District Council’s estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors in an area over a five year period. We are even more sceptical of these estimates. The Council’s Housing Policy is currently in disarray. Placing any reliance on the projected demographics of the area is dangerous. Nevertheless we note that the number of electors per councillor in your proposed Stansted North ward would be very similar to the number in the District Council’s enlarged Stort Valley ward, both today and as projected for 2018. This reinforces the case for accepting the District Council’s proposal.

3) “Reflect the Identities and Interests of the Local Communities, in particular i) the desirability arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable and ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties.”

Your proposal fails both these tests miserably. Just a glance at a map demonstrates that there is no identifiable reason for merging half a town with three rural villages.

You also seek to deploy the argument that we share local services with Stansted. We do not have detailed statistics to prove the point but residents of the four villages make much more use of the services in Bishop’s Stortford than in Stansted. In Bishop’s Stortford there is more extensive shopping, medical, dental and other facilities and it is a much more convenient place to reach.

In the past Manuden Parish Council has regularly worked together with Farnham and Berden Councils to address issues of common concern. We have never felt the need to do so with Stansted – our big brother down the road.

For all of these reasons we hope you will think again and revert to the District Council’s proposal to bring the Parish of Ugley into the present Stort Valley ward or at least devise an alternative in which Manuden and its neighbouring villages in the Stort Valley are not lumped together with half the town of Stansted, and which allows the Stort Valley villages to continue to be represented by a single Councillor.

I am copying this letter to our District Councillor, Janice Loughlin, and to Uttlesford District Council’s Chief Executive, John Mitchell, for their information.

Yours sincerely

Dr Leslie Atkinson  
Chairman of the Parish Council