

To:

Cllr. Keith Glazier OBE – Leader, East Sussex County Council

Cllr. Zoe Nicholson – Leader, Lewes District Council

CC: Cllr Sarah Osborne – ESCC, Cllr Stella Spiteri – LDC Kingston Ward

24 August 2025

**RESPONSE BY THE KINGSTON WARD PARISHES OF THE LOWER OUSE TO PROPOSED
UNITARY AUTHORITY EXPANSION BY BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

We are writing on behalf of POLO (the Parishes of the Lower Ouse) to express the unanimous rejection by these 5 parishes of the proposal by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) to remove the ward of Kingston from East Sussex and to absorb it into an expanded Brighton and Hove Unitary Authority.

No convincing rationale for the proposals has been provided, whether in terms of benefits to a B&H unitary authority, to an East Sussex Unitary Authority, or to the residents of the Lewes District Council ward of Kingston.

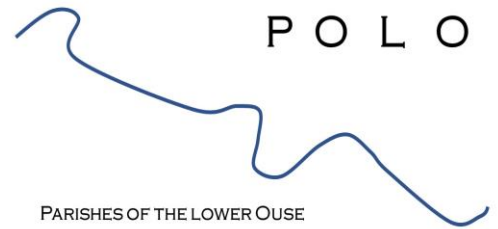
Contextual Information

The Lewes District Council ward of Kingston lies to the east of Brighton. Kingston ward comprises the parish of St. Anne (Without), and part of Falmer located in the west of the ward, and five small parishes in the east of the ward. These five parishes are ranged along the Lewes-Newhaven Road, which follows the path of the River Ouse between Lewes and Newhaven, a distance of 6.5 miles, running north-south.

The five Lower Ouse parishes are: Kingston Parish Council (pop 830), Iford Parish Meeting (pop 209), Rodmell Parish Council, including Northease (pop 527), Southease Parish Meeting (50) and Piddinghoe Parish Council. (234).

Kingston ward is a sparsely populated rural area. The parishes and settlements are set amidst agricultural land, within an area of outstanding natural beauty. All the Lower Ouse Parishes lie within the boundary of the South Downs National Park. All the villages have conservation areas. Responsibility for planning lies with the SDNPA.

Representatives of the 5 parishes meet three times per year as POLO (the Parishes of the Lower Ouse). The purposes of POLO include: encouraging parish collaboration on issues of common interest and co-ordinating and lobbying on matters of common concern.



The five Lower Ouse parishes are united in their rejection of the proposals for the following reasons:

- Brighton and Hove City Council – its services and systems – have been designed for an urban, densely populated and relatively compact, well connected environment. In contrast, the parishes of Kingston, Iford, Rodmell, Southease and Piddinghoe are separated by agricultural land and bounded by steep ridges of the South Downs National Park, and by a river and railway, with no public road bridges to allow east-west travel. Most residents are without access to piped gas, and many households rely on septic tanks for sewerage. The villages are served by a single bus service between Lewes and Newhaven with a very limited daily service and no service in the evenings.

If the ward of Kingston was taken over by Brighton and Hove it is unlikely that the needs of these small settlements on the periphery of the authority would be given much consideration in terms of the design and provision of services, or fair consideration in decision making and prioritisation. It is highly likely that the efficiency and appropriateness of services for these rural villages and businesses such as farms, would deteriorate, and that there would be limited accountability by the authority to local users.

- The Lower Ouse parishes are very close – geographically, culturally and historically – to Lewes, and a long way from Brighton and Hove. The POLO parishes lie along the 6.5 mile C7, a road which runs north-south between Lewes and Newhaven. As the name suggests, the road leads directly to Lewes or to Newhaven. There are no east west routes for residents or businesses in these parishes, because of their physical location between the Downs, the river and the railway line. To get to Brighton by public transport, it is necessary to first travel to Lewes to catch a train or bus to travel the 8 – 11 miles distance depending on the route taken. To drive to Brighton, it is necessary to first drive towards Lewes to join the A27 east-west route, or to Newhaven to join the A259 coast road, which already suffers from chronic congestion and which can only get worse if more homes are built along the route. Parking in Brighton is notoriously expensive.

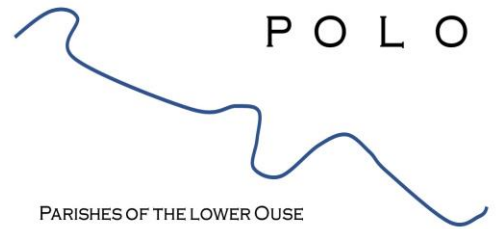
- Because of their close proximity and direct access to Lewes, most residents travel to Lewes (or Newhaven) for public services, GP, dentist, urgent treatment centre, schools, waste and recycling centre, shops, libraries, leisure and other amenities. To have to travel to Brighton and Hove for such services would be a cause of major inconvenience, increased cost, travel time, road congestion etc. It would particularly disadvantage elderly residents, and children/adults with 'special needs' who may be more reliant on public transport, less mobile, and have greater need of the services.

Providing local services such as household waste and recycling collection for remote rural areas would be an additional cost for Brighton and Hove and it is likely that efficiency would decrease.

As the historic County town of East Sussex, the headquarters of East Sussex County Council, district council offices, the police HQ and County Court are all located nearby in Lewes. The corresponding offices and services in B&H at Hove Town Hall are 11 miles distant. Services by

Lewes District Council are generally thought to be good, (recognising budget constraints), and local accountability to residents is also good.

- Culturally and historically, the villages and settlements in the Lower Ouse Valley ward have been linked to the ancient market town of Lewes since Saxon times, when Lewes was established as a crossing point over the River Ouse. All the villages appear in the Domesday Book. Then, as now, these were rural agricultural settlements close to the River Ouse, and they share their history with the market town of Lewes.
- Children in the ward of Kingston can currently attend primary school relatively close to home, but could be disadvantaged at the age of 11 in terms of transition to secondary education, if the local secondary schools are part of a different authority. The nearest secondary schools are located in Lewes and Newhaven. Many residents would be unhappy about their children having to travel to and from Brighton every day and having few school friends living nearby. Brighton and Hove would need to meet the cost of additional travel to school.
- The population size of Kingston ward is very low relative to the extent of the land it covers. Government guidance for proposals for new Unitary Authorities recommends a population of around 500,000. The population of West Sussex is around 880,000. An East Sussex Unitary Authority, as proposed by East Sussex (ie. retaining its existing boundaries, including Newhaven, Telscombe, Peacehaven and Kingston ward), would have 546,000, close to the recommended figure. Brighton and Hove, in contrast, have a current population of only around 277,000. The population of the Ward of Kingston is 1904 (2021 Census). Incorporating the ward of Kingston into a Brighton and Hove Unitary Authority is not therefore going to assist in boosting its population towards the 500,000 target.
- It would be more logical and effective to incorporate areas of West Sussex into an enlarged B&H than seeking to extend east wards. Extending the boundary westwards to the River Adur (Shoreham) would transfer a population of nearly 36,000, or to the River Arun (Littlehampton) a further 180,000. This would give an enlarged B&H UA a population of 505,500 and reduce West Sussex to around 650,000, thereby bringing both authorities closer to the target. Moreover, there are strong east-west road (A27) and rail links between B&H and the urban communities along the coast to the west of Hove, such as Shoreham and Worthing. These form a more homogenous and continuous urban settlement than eastwards towards Newhaven.
- B&H have indicated that by extending eastwards to include the coastal strip to Newhaven, they will gain the land they need to build more homes. This fails to take account of some significant geographical obstacles. At the back of the coastal strip, the South Downs form a physical barrier to building, and land within or bordering the national park would probably be protected from extensive development.



Secondly, the only A road along the coast is the A259, a very slow, congested urban road, which would not be able to function if there were a significant increase in road users as a result of extensive housing development. The faster east-west road route (the A27) is inland, just south of Lewes. There is no direct road access to the A27 from towns along the A259 coast road, due to the barrier formed by the South Downs

There is no rail route along the coast between Newhaven and Brighton, due presumably to the cliffs. The only rail route is via Lewes.

For these reasons, the Parishes of the Lower Ouse reject the proposal that they should become part of a Brighton and Hove Unitary Authority and fully support the submission by East Sussex Council, formulated with the participation of the component district and town councils, to form a Unitary Authority using existing County Council boundaries.

Yours sincerely

The Parishes of The Lower Ouse (POLO)

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Convener: Sue Carroll – ouse.valley.polo@gmail.com