Newhaven Town Council

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Mr. J. McMahon, OBE MP,
Minister of State for Local
Government & English Devolution,
Parliamentary Office.
House of Commons,
London.
SW1A 0AA.

12th August 2025

Dear Mr. McMahon,

Brighton and Hove City Council's Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation – Option C (uniting the coastal corridor) and D (coast and downs partnership).

The Town Council has instructed me to write and set out its views regarding the above matter.

Following detailed analysis of the above proposals and a meeting with Cllr Sankey (Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council) on 30th July 2025, Newhaven Town Council are in broad agreement that any plans for eastward expansion to include Newhaven should be rejected.

As the Town Council, we align with Lewes District Council, which has consistently opposed these proposals, and whose position reflects a strong understanding of local needs and widespread support for Newhaven to remain under the existing East Sussex governance structure.

Newhaven has a distinct identity, deeply rooted in the geography, history, and culture of East Sussex. Its position along the River Ouse ties it naturally to the Ouse Valley, a defining geographical feature that lies predominantly within East Sussex. It also shares significant cultural, social, and economic ties with neighbouring Seaford (together often referred to as 'Seahaven'), with whom it shares a bay. The additional separation of Newhaven from nearby South Heighton under the proposed boundaries would also disrupt shared heritage and longstanding community networks.

Newhaven's governance needs are best served within the established structures and service models of East Sussex. The Towns' vulnerability to riverine flooding for example, is already well-managed through existing local expertise and infrastructure, which Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) lacks.

Additionally, the severing of Newhaven from existing District boundaries and East Sussex County Council electoral divisions (Newhaven and Bishopstone and Ouse Valley West) cannot be justified. Cllr Sankey acknowledged that the merger would likely prompt a boundary review, further delaying the implementation of Local Government Reform (LGR), and impeding electoral processes. Newhaven is part of the Lewes parliamentary constituency, and disrupting this alignment between our authority and parliamentary representative would similarly confuse residents and reduce effective representation.

Although Newhaven has faced socio-economic challenges, recent regeneration initiatives — funded through national 'levelling up' schemes managed by Lewes District Council — are beginning to show results. A sudden administrative shift risks undermining this progress, and there are also concerns that BHCC's significant debt burden could divert much-needed investment away from Newhaven.

Whilst we support addressing the ongoing housing crisis, we believe Newhaven (which sits predominantly outside the South Downs National Park) would be disproportionately impacted under a Brighton-led authority, which lacks the broader land base of East Sussex. Increased development pressure on an already stretched transport infrastructure — concerns echoed by the MP for Lewes and acknowledged by Roads Minister Lilian Greenwood — would also be unsustainable.

Whilst we recognise BHCC's need to expand its population to form a viable unitary authority, the preference for eastward over westward growth is unclear—especially given BHCC's strategic ties to Shoreham Port. Cllr Sankey has also cited an 'engagement exercise' with just 597 respondents as part of their justification for this direction of expansion, yet the exercise findings revealed that *'…a significant number of respondents are opposed to combining with areas east of the city'*. Cllr Sankey and BHCC have similarly yet to provide any compelling financial or strategic justification for including Newhaven.

Given that BHCC appears set on expanding East, it is interesting to note that all of its models include East Saltdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven, areas it is more geographically aligned with due to its urban sprawl. However, the natural boundary created by the significant hill between Newhaven and Peacehaven makes Options C & D even more unclear and further reinforces the case for excluding Newhaven.

For these reasons, we believe BHCC's proposal fails to meet the government's LGR criteria, and we therefore urge that Options C and D be withdrawn from any considerations.

Yours faithfully,

Ken Dry,
Town Clerk.
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