

# Maidstone Borough Community Governance Review – 2022 - 2023

## Introduction

1. Following a Local Government Boundary review of Maidstone Borough Council Wards by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), a number of changes were proposed, and have now been made, to Borough ward boundaries.
2. The Council undertook this CGR for the whole of the Borough to ensure that all localities had an opportunity to express a view on community governance. The Review considered population changes and shifts in 'natural settlements' caused by new development.
3. Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full CGR at least every 10 to 15 years. The Council had not undertaken a full CGR in that time and not since that guidance was issued. Timing the review to follow the Local Government Boundary review allowed the opportunity to resolve a number of boundary issues.
4. One of the aims of this CGR was to consider the impacts of those changes and whether to bring Parish Council Boundaries into line with the new Borough Ward Boundaries, and vice versa with consideration of impacts on ward boundaries of changing Parish boundaries being considered throughout. This has meant that some requests to the LGBCE for alteration of Borough Ward boundaries will arise from parish changes.
5. Maidstone Borough Council continues to recognise that Parish Councils play an important part in community empowerment at a local level and wishes to ensure the parish governance in the Borough continues to be robust, representative of the locality and able to meet future challenges. It is also important that electoral arrangements are appropriate, equitable and understood by the local electorate.
6. This Community Governance Review has been conducted in accordance with Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act), and having regard to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
7. The Democracy and General Purposes Committee, on behalf of the Council, would like to thank all those who responded to, and took part in, the review.

## Review Objectives

As set out in the Terms of Reference (Appendix A), at every stage the review had the following objectives:

### Objective 1

Support the Identities and Interests of Communities

- To recognise parishes as coming from the community, belonging to the community and requiring community support
- To listen and respond to the needs and concerns of communities
- To create fair boundaries that represent communities and avoid arbitrary differences between neighbours

*Key Questions:*

*Does the community want a parish council and is it able to support one?*

*Does/would this parish represent a community or coherent communities?*

### Objective 2

Support Effective and Convenient Local Government

- To identify existing issues with parish boundaries and seek resolutions to them
- To respond to the Local Government Boundary Review and Parliamentary Boundary Review to create effective and efficient parish boundaries
- To minimise disruption to existing parishes through effective warding

*Key Questions:*

*Is a parish council, or change to a parish boundary the most effective resolution to the community's needs?*

*Is this parish boundary practical and reasonable?*

## Review Stages and Timetable

The CGR was conducted in accordance with the following timetable ([amended by D&GP Committee in March 2023](#))

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Consideration of Terms of Reference by Democracy and General Purposes Committee	19 September 2022
Approval of Terms of Reference by Council	28 September 2022
Terms of Reference Published	3 October 2022
First Consultation Stage	7 November 2022 – 29 January 2023
Democracy and General Purposes Committee Workshop	8 June 2023
Approval of second stage consultation proposals by Democracy and General Purposes Committee	21 June 2023
Second Consultation Stage – Draft Recommendations	23 June 2023 – 6 August 2023
Democracy and General Purposes Committee Workshop	30 August 2023
Final Recommendations considered by Democracy and General Purposes Committee	13 September 2023
Final recommendations approved by Council	27 September 2023
Community Governance Order(s) made to come into force 1 April 2024	October 2023+

## **First Consultation Stage**

The first consultation stage involved a broad consultation requesting the views of the Parishes and communities across the Borough. An officer working group reviewed the proposals and issues identified, as well as assessing existing boundary issues identified through the administration of the electoral register and elections, the local government boundary review and through previous polling district and polling place reviews.

The Stage 1 Consultation outcome report is available at <https://letstalkmaidstone.uk.engagementhq.com/community-governance-review>.

## **Officer Working Group**

The officer working group for the review consisted of:

- Ryan O’Connell – Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
- Kathy Hildige – Principal Electoral Services Officer
- Claire Peake – Senior Electoral Services Officer
- Dan Pease – GIS Manager
- Mark Priddis – Revenues Inspector

With support from Clare Harvey, Consultation and Engagement Officer, in carrying out the consultations.

A series of proposals arising from the Stage 1 consultation and the officer working group were then developed at a Member workshop consisting of the members of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee. Those proposals were then formally debated and agreed by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee.

The Democracy and General Purposes Agenda is available here:

[Democracy and General Purposes - Stage 2 Consultation Report](#)

## **Stage 2 Consultation**

The Stage 2 Consultation outcome report is available at <https://letstalkmaidstone.uk.engagementhq.com/community-governance-review>.

These responses were analysed by the officer working group, and taken to a workshop with the Democracy and General Purposes Committee members. The table below summarises the changes to be made and should be viewed alongside the Map Pack at Appendix B. The table includes changes made to proposals as a result of the Stage 2 consultation, and where there are possible related alterations to be made which require the consent of the LGBCE.

## Stage 2 Outcome Summary Table

Parish Amendment	Map	Changes arising from Consultation	LGBCE Related Alteration Request
Barming	1a	Amended boundary at Fant Farm and implement reduced boundary in North East	Yes – Fant and Oakwood Boundary
Boughton Monchelsea – North East	2a	None	Permission required due to parish wards
Boughton Monchelsea – West/North West	2b	None	Permission required due to parish wards And related alteration to boundary with Loose & Linton Ward
Boxley – Orchard Drive	3a	None	Permission required due to parish wards
Boxley – Lombardy/Bargrove	3b	None	Permission required due to parish wards
Chart Sutton	4a	None	
Coxheath/East Farleigh	5a	Albert Drive Property Change	
Downswood	6a	None	
Loose	7a	Inclusion of Saxon Way from Tovil	Yes - Tovil Ward boundary Saxon Way
Otham	8a	None	Permission required due to parish wards
Thurnham	9a	Original proposal not taken forwards. Alternative proposal to retain area in Thurnham and amend boundary around Weaving Street	Permission required due to parish wards
Tovil	10b	None (but see Loose)	(see Loose proposal)

No recommendations are made for a new parish to be constituted.

No recommendations are made for a parish to be abolished.

## Final Proposal Assessments

Each proposal has been assessed against the objectives and key questions of the review throughout its development. A final assessment for each proposal is set below.

### **Proposal 1a. BARMING**

Proposal – Extend Barming parish boundary East along Fountain Lane.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – Barming parish has a strong identity and is sustainable currently.

Question 2 – The Barming/Heath area is currently artificially split by the Parish boundary and the parish and expanded area are closely linked. For example Barming Village Hall currently sits outside the parish boundary.

In addition the new Barming Heath ward gives the area a stronger identity.

Objective 2

Question 1 – Moving the boundary would resolve the artificial split between the areas.

Question 2 – The current boundary splits along a weak boundary, the proposed move to the East would create a stronger boundary along main roads that encompasses the community.

### **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

The overall response to the consultation was a majority being against the proposed changes, with a number of comments referring to matters that do not relate to boundary objectives. However, it was recognised that the boundary could be drawn less extensively and still achieve the objectives of the review. This revision was drawn up with input from the Parish Council.

### **Final Proposal**

The proposal has a reduced area that aims to accommodate the area known as Barming in full whilst providing strong boundaries. See Map 1a.

## **Proposal 2a. BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA**

Proposal – Consider the context of BM/Langley/Industrial Estate given the amount of urban growth and character/identity of the area.

The consulted proposal was to reduce the boundary in Boughton Monchelsea Parish North East (and extended Langley Parish boundary) so that the area marked for development would fall entirely within Langley Parish.

### **Objective 1**

Question 1 – The area is already parished as part of Boughton Monchelsea. There is no suggestion that the area could support separate parishes.

Question 2 – There is planned development along Sutton Road, and changing this boundary now will help to keep a coherent approach to that development in the future.

### **Objective 2**

Question 1 – The change is a simple one given the current status of the land, and the simplest and most effective way of preparing for the future.

Question 2 – Yes, it is a clear boundary.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

The Stage 2 consultation was in favour of this change, with a number of comments related to non-boundary matters such as housebuilding.

## **Final Proposal**

Go ahead as proposed.

## **Proposal 2b. BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA**

Proposal – Extend Boughton Monchelsea to the West/North West to encompass land and properties in Loose PC that identify with Boughton Monchelsea. The encompassed land will include a future development near Campfield Farm that would otherwise be split by the parish boundary.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – The areas in question are both already parished. Boughton Monchelsea submitted evidence with their stage 1 consultation submission that Hubbard's Lane residents identify with Boughton Monchelsea and Loose PC have raised no objection to the boundary change.

Question 2 – Yes it would. Hubbards lane identifies with Boughton Monchelsea, but extending the boundary in the north west it would encompass land that is to be developed in the future and keep it all in one parish. Further the area of Quarry Wood is currently split by the Parish boundary and this would no longer be the case.

Objective 2

Question 1 – Yes, as it is the only way to encompass Hubbards Lane residents into the area they identify with. Noting that Loose PC have withdrawn initial concerns regarding the land to the North West encompassed by the extended boundary change.

Question 2 – Yes, the boundary itself appears practical and reasonable and follows the boundary of the Loose Conservation area as far as is practicable.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

The Stage 2 consultation was in favour of this change, with a number of comments related to non-boundary matters such as housebuilding. One comment related to concerns over splitting Quarry Wood, however, Quarry Wood is already split and following the boundary proposed would unify it.

## **Final Proposal**

Go ahead as proposed.

## **Proposals 3a and 3b - BOXLEY**

- Boxley Proposal 3a. – Move Orchard Drive (North of Mote Park -> Boxley Parish)
- Boxley Proposal 3b. – Lombardy Drive, Bargrove etc. to become unparished

### Overall Proposal Options

Consideration needs to be given to the urban area north of Mote Park and South of the M20 around Grove Green. The area is of a different nature to the rural extent of Boxley, it has also been reconfigured in terms of its Borough warding, particularly to the East, and there has been extensive growth here over time that needs to be rationalised. To the West there is a parish boundary that splits down a community.

### Assessment

#### Objective 1

Question 1 – With the exception of Orchard Drive, which is a small area that would be joining a larger parish if parish status is retained, the areas are already parished.

Question 2 – The Lombardy Drive area is less identifiable with Grove Green/Boxley Parish which is why it is recommended to become unparished along with the rest of Vinters Park. In reverse, Orchard Drive is recommended to join with the rest of Grove Green.

#### Objective 2

Question 1 – Yes, the parish boundary changes proposed are relatively straight forward supported by strong boundaries.

Question 2 – Yes, the boundaries identified are clear and in the case of Lombardy Drive/Bargrove Road provide a stronger boundary than currently.

### **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

The significant majority of responses were in favour of these changes. The related change to Thurnham where the response was against has resulted in a change to the proposal considered under the Thurnham proposal.

### **Final Proposal**

Proceed as proposed.

**Proposal 4a. CHART SUTTON**

Proposal – Extend boundary along Chart Hill Road

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – As a minor extension and change to the boundary, yes.

Question 2 – Yes

Objective 2

Question 1 – Yes, a simple but effective change.

Question 2 – Yes

**Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

100% of responses were for the proposal.

**Final Proposal**

Proceed as proposed.

## **Proposal 5a COXHEATH/EAST FARLEIGH**

Proposal - Fairhurst Drive, Coxheath to East Farleigh to align boundaries with community identities and access.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – As a minor extension and change to the boundary, yes.

Question 2 – Yes

Objective 2

Question 1 – It is practical and simple change.

Question 2 – Yes

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

A significant majority were in favour of this change. It was highlighted in the consultation that one property on Albert Drive had the current boundary passing through it and recommended adjusting the proposal to take this into account.

## **Final Proposal**

Proceed with the proposal with the minor change to relating to Albert Drive and amending the boundary up to Pleasant Valley Road to produce a stronger boundary (see map 5a).

## **Proposal 6a DOWNSWOOD**

Proposal – Beams and Uptons - consider whether this area should be parished or not given its separation from the parish. If we parish this area then there is the possibility of applying for a related alteration to the KCC Divisional boundary to align.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – Either way the changes would represent a minor alteration to an existing boundary. Unparishing the few properties around the Beams would resolve this question. If the proposal was to extend the parish out to the West this is something that would need to be addressed in the Stage 2 consultation for those newly parished properties.

Question 2 – Reducing the parish boundary to exclude the Beams would answer this question to the positive.

Objective 2

Question 1 – This is a minor boundary change which aims to address an alignment issue with the boundary in this area and where the communities primary connect to.

Question 2 – A reduction of the parish boundary would create something both practical and reasonable.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

Majority in favour.

## **Final Proposal**

Proceed with the proposal to unparish the properties on the balance of objectives, particularly objective 2.

## **Proposal 7a LOOSE**

Proposal – North Loose Area - given the strong Loose identity of the NLRA area including designation as a neighbourhood forum, should this area be parished, or joined with Loose Parish? If not, should the northern boundary of Loose be reconfigured to allow for the urban area and discrepancies between neighbours.

Preference is to identify the whole of the area known as Loose as part of Loose Parish and given the Stage 1 consultation response, extend Loose Parish Northwards to the Ward boundary. This was consulted on at Stage 2.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – The Community has a strong identity and active residents' association with its own neighbourhood plan and defined area.

Question 2 – It is identifiable as part of the Loose area and recognised as Loose locally. If the area is parished it would be supported as part of Loose Parish Council.

Objective 2

Question 1 – The boundary could remain as it is, with an active residents' association, but given the difficulties identified by the residents' association in terms of longevity an alternative is sought. The area could also become its own parish. However, with the strong Loose identity and more effective solution of joining with Loose Parish, this is recommended.

Question 2 – Yes, there are strong boundaries already present and identified with the Local Government Boundary Review.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

Majority of responses were in favour of the proposal, with a significant majority recognising North Loose as part of Loose. A suggestion was put forward that Saxon Way identifies with Loose and to form a complete community should be included. Saxon Way currently sits in Tovil Parish and on assessment a strong boundary can be drawn to include Saxon Way and Cripple Street.

## **Final Proposal**

Proceed with an amended proposal to include Saxon Way and Cripple Street as shown on Map 7a. This could lead to a related alteration to the borough ward boundary and will be raised with the LGBCE.

Given the significant size increase and recognised areas, for example through neighbourhood planning, the new Loose Parish area will need to be warded.

### **Proposal 8a OTHAM**

Proposal – Tichfield Road – should be changed to non-parish as its access is to the West and non-parished.

Recommendation - put firm proposal forward at stage 2 consultation.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – Not applicable.

Question 2 – The access on Tichfield Road is through non-parished areas and its connection is to a non-parished area.

Objective 2

Question 1 – Yes, the most effective and straightforward approach is to make a minor boundary change.

Question 2 – Yes the boundary follows around existing development.

### **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

Majority on favour of the change.

### **Final Proposal**

Proceed as proposed.

## **Proposal 9a - THURNHAM**

Consider South West Thurnham around the Weaving Street area. This area has a different feel to the rest of rural Thurnham, and there has been significant development in the area over a period of time.

The initial proposal was to change the parish for this area to recognise it as part of the urban development in this area. However, as discussed below a strong response from the Stage 2 consultation was received and it is clear that elements of the community here do not identify with Boxley Parish or Grove Green.

Further more, the existing boundary is not a strong boundary passing as it does through the middle of multiple properties and roads so an alternative boundary is required.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – The area is already parished.

Question 2 – The identity of this area is an important factor in where to draw the boundary. Though the area is part of the urban extension of the town and has had significant development over the years, it is clear that some parts of it identify with Bearsted and are strongly supported by Thurnham Parish. Furthermore, Bearsted and Thurnham do have historic links. The amended proposal therefore considers the properties with Bearsted addresses and those with Weaving addresses in determining the route of the boundary.

Objective 2

Question 1 – The issue here is that the existing boundary has had significant development build up around it and it is no longer fit for purpose as it runs through multiple properties. The simplest way to amend this is to change the boundary to go around developments. The fairest way of doing that in the absence of strong delineations between areas has been on those properties addressed as Bearsted and those as Weaving.

Question 2 – A minimal amount of the boundary has been changed, and in the absence of a strong road or natural boundary the delineation along address lines is the most practical.

## **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

The stage 2 consultation outcome has been included in the assessment above. The consultation was a significant majority against the proposal with a strong submission from Thurnham Parish Council. Furthermore there were consistent comments relating to identity that have led to the revised proposal.

## **Final Proposal**

A new proposal has been put forward as detailed in Map 9a.

### **Proposal 10b TOVIL**

Proposal – amend Tovil Parish Boundary on Coombe Farm Estate following Ward Boundary change. The new ward boundary encompasses the Coombe Farm Estate and an amendment to the North Eastern part of the parish boundary is now feasible, to treat all of the Coombe Farm estate the same.

Assessment

Objective 1

Question 1 – The rest of the Coombe Farm Estate is unparished which is the key driver for the boundary change.

Question 2 – Yes, the resulting community recognises the Coombe Farm Estate as a whole.

Objective 2

Question 1 – Yes, it is a minor boundary change required.

Question 2 – Yes, the delineation of the boundary is clear.

### **Stage 2 Consultation Outcome**

Majority for the proposal.

### **Final Proposal**

Proceed as proposed.

## **Grove Green and Weaving Street**

24 responses to the Stage 2 consultation were received which expressed support for forming a new parish council to represent Grove Green and Weaving Street. These responses have been considered and are taken as an indication that this area should be reviewed in the future. Guidance recommends not reviewing an area for 2 years since its previous review. As a result this review recommends that this area have a targeted Community Governance Review in 2025/2026 after the related changes (Lombardy Drive/Bargrove Road/Orchard Drive and Thurnham) in this area have had time to take effect.

## Parish Sizes and Warding Arrangements

### Parish Size

Appendix C sets out the analysis of parish size considered by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee. It was agreed that as no significant variations from NALC circular 1126's recommended sizes existed, and the Stage 1 consultation responses from parishes indicated they were majority in favour of keeping existing sizes, no changes to sizes would occur unless a boundary change occurred that significantly altered the parish.

Significant changes to size have occurred in the parishes of Barming, Boxley, Loose and Thurnham and those sizes have been reviewed and has resulted in a recommended change to the numbers of Councillors in those parishes as follows:

Parish	Current Electorate*	Projected 2027 Electorate	Change in Electorate	New 2027 Electorate (Estimate)	Current Cllrs	New Cllrs
Barming	1443	1851	+1830	3681	9	12
Boxley	7303	7897	-628	7269	15	15
Loose	2042	2223	+3580	5803	13	13
Thurnham	996	1200	+180	1380	9	9

\*As at August 2022

### Parish Wards

With the changes to parishes sizes and boundaries the following new Parish warding arrangements and allocations are recommended:

Parish	LGBCE Parish Ward	New Parish Ward	Current Cllrs	New Cllrs
Boughton Monchelsea			15	15
A	Joy Wood	Joy Wood	2	2
B	Langley Park	Langley Park	4	4
C	North	North	2	2
D	South	South	7	7
Boxley			15	15
E	Boxley Grove Green	Boxley Grove Green	5	7
F	Boxley North	Boxley North	6	6
G	Boxley South	Boxley South	2	2
	Boxley South East*	Combine	1	-
	Boxley Woodlands	REMOVED	1	-
Otham			9	9
J	Otham North	Otham North	4	4
K	Otham South	Otham South	5	5

Thurnham			9	9
L	Thurnham East	Thurnham East	3	3
M	Thurnham West	Thurnham West	6	6

(See Parish Ward Maps Appendix D)

## Related Alterations – Borough Ward Boundary Changes

In the interests of effective government and community identity the review recommends requesting related alterations to Barming Heath/Fant & Oakwood, Loose & Linton/Tovil, and Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton/Loose & Linton arising from the new parish boundaries.

## Conclusion

The Community Governance Review conducted from October 2022 – September 2023 is significant in that it follows significant change to borough ward boundaries, and addresses issues that have arisen over a significant period of time. However, the majority of Maidstone's 41 parishes remain the same, with major proposals in Barming, Boxley (cumulatively), Loose and Thurnham, and minor changes in Boughton Monchelsea and Langley, Chart Sutton, Coxheath and Farleigh, Downswood, Otham, and Tovil. These changes are the outcome of the review and are recommended to Council for adoption.