

Results of Consultation on Barming Ward Name Change

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
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Classification	Public
Wards affected	Barming Ward

Executive Summary

This report details the results of the consultation on changing the name of Barming Ward to Barming and Teston following approval to go out to consultation on the name change by the Democracy Committee in September.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To review the consultation results and agree whether to recommend the change of ward name from Barming to Barming and Teston to Council

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy Committee	15 November 2017
Special Council meeting	To be confirmed

Results of Consultation on Barming Ward Name Change

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Committee at its meeting in September considered a request from Councillor Mrs Gooch to change the name of Barming ward to more accurately reflect the two parishes the ward covers. This follows feedback from residents in the ward and the parish council of Teston.
- 1.2 By law, a local authority may not pass a resolution to change the name of a ward unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult with persons that it considers appropriate on the proposed name. A consultation was carried out from the 1 October 2017 to 31 October 2017 via a hand delivered letter to each household in the ward.

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The results of the consultation are:

Barming Consultation Results

	Electorate	No	Yes	Response
Barming Parish	1373	134	172	24.33%
Teston parish	556	34	162	30.22%
Total	1929	168	334	26.02%
% result		8.71%	17.31%	26.85%

Rejected votes:

Uncertainty 5
Blank 5
Undelivered 6

17.31% of the electorate were in favour of changing the name from Barming Ward to Barming and Teston Ward.

Of those who responded 67% were in favour of the name change.

- 2.2 The Committee must decide if the results are sufficient to recommend a name change to Council. The results are clearly in favour of change with 27% of the electorate responding to the consultation.
- 2.3 A number of comments were received as part of the consultation. A few comments reflected confusion over the boundary of the ward with a number

of respondents believing the name change constituted a boundary change to bring in Teston into the Barming Ward. To clarify Teston is already within the boundary of the ward and the consultation was run on change of name and not boundary. There was also a link by a couple of comments to housing suggesting the name change would allow more houses to be built between the two villages or by combining the two villages. An assertion that it would be more logical to link Teston and Wateringbury. A comment "not sure if going to make ward bigger and disrupt it then no" and another comment that they were not moved either way as long as it did not involve updating records. Other comments stating that they were two distinct areas so should not be put together, showing the understanding of which areas are in Barming Ward could be improved. There were also a number of comments in favour of the name change including that change "seems obvious" was long awaited and a reasonable proposal. Other comments included it would improve identity and it would be good to have Teston recognised in the ward name. A full list of comments is attached at Appendix A.

2.4 If the Committee are minded to recommend to Council the change of name this will be considered at a special meeting of full Council. As there is a by election in November the Council will now not be publishing the revised register until 1 February 2018, this means that a special meeting could be convened by the proper officer in December or January to consider the name change.

2.5 Section 59 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables a Local Authority to agree to change the names of any of its electoral areas (normally known as wards) by passing a resolution at a Special Meeting of the full Council held for that purpose, subject to the statutory procedure being followed. The Act specifies steps that must be taken by an Authority in order to change the name which are summarised as follows:

- a. Before passing a resolution at a Special Meeting to change the name of an electoral area the authority must take all reasonable steps to consult such persons as it considers appropriate on the proposed name.
- b. A resolution to change the name must be passed by a majority of at least two-thirds of members voting at a specially convened Council meeting.
- c. Notice of the object of the meeting must be given.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 As stated in the September report the local ward Councillor, Councillor Mrs Gooch put forward the proposal following feedback from the residents and Teston parish Council:

"The parish of Teston is one of two parishes that make up the ward of Barming. Teston is a well-defined rural village of about 300 homes with its village shop and village hall which lie together in the centre of the village which is a conservation area. Teston lies to the west of Barming Ward.

The other parish is Barming and is semi-rural. It lies on the western edge of the Maidstone urban area, comprising approx. 720 homes. Its boundary with the adjoining wards of Heath and Fant (neither of which is parished) runs up the middle of one of its estates: the Beverley Estate. It is not uncommon for residents in those adjoining wards to mistakenly believe they live within the parish of Barming.

The two settlements of Barming and Teston are separated by almost 1.5 miles of open countryside. They are both very distinct and separate communities.

Hence Members are asked to approve a request to change the name of the ward from 'Barming' to 'Barming and Teston'. This will add clarity and will enable a more accurate reflection of the make-up of the electoral area i.e. that the ward comprises the two distinct parishes of Barming and of Teston.

There are other wards within the borough that already carry the identity of its parishes, such as Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton; also Sutton Valance and Langley.

Members are asked to note that no boundary change is involved. This is purely a request to amend the title of the ward. The added value of the amendment will be three-fold:

- 1. To accurately reflect the electoral make-up of the ward i.e. two distinct and separate communities;*
- 2. To foster the identity of Teston and inclusivity of its residents, being just as much a distinctive part of the ward as the residents of the parish of Barming.*
- 3. To illustrate to residents in neighbouring communities such as St Andrews and Fant that they are not electorally in Barming (even though estate agents and Royal Mail like to think they are) thus helping to reduce confusion."*

- 3.2 In light of the above and the results of the consultation the Committee is asked to consider whether to recommend the change of ward name to full council or not.

4. RISK

- 4.1 The Committee will need to consider risk as part of their options appraisal there are risks to the council's reputation if we run a consultation and fail to take action as a result. The risk is within the councils risk appetite.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The results of the consultation are set out at 2.1 above.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the Committee agrees to recommend the name change to full council a special council meeting will be held to consider this in December 2017 or January 2018 to enable the name change if agreed to be incorporated into the new electoral register which will be published on 1 February 2018. A

number of actions are then required including issuing a press release, notifying teams in the council to update systems and publishing notices.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Limited risk.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers.	
Privacy and Data Protection	If the recommendation is carried at full council to change the name systems across the council will need to be updated, the volume of data will not be increased and the activity will not be high risk in relation to data protection	[Legal Team]
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

	We will ensure our communications reach all residents, including hard to reach groups.	
Crime and Disorder	N/A	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	N/A	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A – Comments received in response to consultation

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Comments received in response to consultation on Barming Ward Name Change

- It would be informative for newcomers to both villages.
- No problem.
- Approved and support the renaming of the ward to Barming and Teston ward.
- Would have been helpful to include a map to show the reason for the name change.
- None.
- Our borough councillor already represents Barming and Teston (we believe).
- This seems obvious to me
- If I lived in Teston I would like the name of the ward to reflect my area. So this proposed name change is a very reasonable proposition
- If Teston is included in the ward then should be in the name.
- This makes good sense as the ward covers both villages geographically.
- None.
- Our wards are so close combining them could make us stronger at debates and future elections
- Wholly appropriate and long overdue
- Makes sense as it better describes the ward
- A sensible idea
- Have no opinion either way as long as service continues to be good
- No if it's going to cost more. Yes if it doesn't change the present situation.
- Sounds good.
- None
- Having spoken to many people, they are not aware that Teston and Barming are already in the same ward for local elections. It was not made clear in your letter.
- Excellent idea identifies us more as a village and country area. Great to be connected or identified with Teston.
- Don't mind either way, but if Teston wants it ok.
- Fine as far as I am concerned.
- It would be good to have Teston recognised in the ward name.
- None.
- We strongly support the change of name to Barming and Teston Eard to recognise the extent of the ward and its component parts.
- I feel it is important that Teston retains its own identity.
- Yes because we are a distinct and separate village and should not be disregarded and lost or seen as a part of Barming.
- Overdue.
- Perhaps living in Teston I am greatly in favour of our village being named in the ward – long overdue.
- Yes we prefer the new ward name. Thank you.
- About time too.
- I think it is a good idea and I fully support it.

- About time!!!
- Nice idea!
- No comments I'm happy with it☺.
- Providing there is no change to council charges unless a reduction is available.
- A very good proposal.
- Excellent idea. Recognition that Teston exists.
- We fully support the reason given for the proposed change.
- We both agree that this is a good thing to do for the benefit of Teston.
- “firstly I resent the first line of your hand delivered letter:- following requests from residents in the area.....how many people have actually asked for this.....possibly just a handful, but it suits the council for the change of name. We who live in Barming wish to stay IN BARMING, WE DO NOT WANT TO BE LUMPED WITH TESTON, the next village along. I have lived in Barming for 53 years, in three different houses, two of which I own and DO NOT wish to live in any other village. We came to Barming because it was a village set on it's own. In the so called wisdom of the council (who by the way I do not trust, I've sat in your meetings and many councillors went to sleep) it suits yourself to lump us with Teston. This will enable you to build more house between Barming and Teston and you won't have to do any changes of name. This will enable you to build yet more houses. How very convenient for the council. It's not what the residents want it's what the council wants.....More houses which we and many others have contested against over the years will mean our village, at the moment, is just an extension of Maidstone Town, getting nearer and nearer to Tonbridge. There should be a public meeting regarding the changes of name, not a letter to sent out late on a Saturday night by hand about a decision o be discussed at a special meeting on 15 November....is this a public meeting? Can I attend? If so then I wish to attend, tell me where it will be held because your letter does not give this information.”
- With reference to the prosed renaming of the ward I feel contrary to the assertion that it would reflect the community identity of the area, ity would have the reverse effect. In the first place, the locations of Barming and Teston are very separate and one only has to travel from the junction of North Street westwards to understand that there is a considerable distance between the two areas. With the frenetic construction of housing within the Barming area, this will become obvious and the fact that Barming is becoming an increasingly suburban area as opposed to a rural entity is ignoring reality. A more logical link would be between Teston and Watlingbury! I somewhat sceptical as to the reasons behind the proposition. How many residents asked for this change? Were they hopeful election candidates whose location of permanent residencies disqualifies this from standing.
- The proposal to rename Barming Ward is a classic example fo Council waste at time of economic stringency.
- Not sure if going to make ward bigger and disrupt it then no.

- All my records and papers use “Barming etc” only without the addition of anything else. As long as this does not involve my having to alter countless records. I remain totally unmoved.
- Why change something that is already established
- There is no evidence from your letter that the residents have followed any formal petitioning process when approaching MBC and set out proper reasons for wanting the change (“better refelects the community identity of the area” is no reason at all. It tells me nothing.) and How the alteration could in the long terms affect the status of the two parish councils. The parish precept and the numbers of members representing both villages. My own view is that the 2”community identity of the area” is best described by reference to two separate villages. Both are still geographically discrete units being separated by fields, a walk of some 45 minutes, two churches, two/three village halls. Currently there are more points of distinction than similarity in that the “area” is not one amorphous housing mass where it would be difficult to assess where one begins and ends.
- Would prefer to keep Barming as it is now with no outsider additions which might affect the current status.
- Don’t see any reason or advantage in change of name. It suits us as it is!
- Changing a name will only cause an increase in expenditure re-printing forms etc etc etc what a waste of money!!!! Councils waste enough already.
- Each area is separated by a boundary.
- If its not broke don’t fix it. You should be more worried about the extra housing and hermitage lane fiasco.
- Why would we?
- Teston is to far waya and has a substantial rural area between boundaries.
- With the public purse strings under real strain this consultation strikes me as a frivolous use of money.
- I have lived here since 1973 – in all that time I have not been aware or considered that the VILLAGE of Teston is part of Barming community or even part of Maidstone Borough – except the letter in name/administration only. I would expect the residents of Teston consider they live within a VILLAGE – not a suburb of Maidstone. As I consider this to be so I am not aware of residents to Barming and Teston taking joint part in any regulation annual activities. Or is this merely pre-empting the time in the not to distant...future when all the green fields and woodlands between are approved for development making each identity one.
- This seems to be a waste of money – distributing all these leaflets what gain could there be by changing the name. Also would Teston residents have a say in Barming? Why?
- I would be interested how many requests you had for thus change NO ONE I know, has even heard or discussed this matter.
- Another waste of time, money and bureaucracy!!
- You don’t say who requested the change and why is it necessary. The lower end of Hermitage lane comes under Tonbridge and Malling, look at the chaos there. We have always been a village with our own well kept church and well attended also good

school. Please sort out the traffic coming through Barming especially Heath road. Open up the heath for those who live there.

- Barming and Teston are separate villages and should have separate identities. Barming's village identity is already being destroyed by Maidstone Borough Council's ill considered unsustainable and disastrous for future generations planning policy. Our air quality is poor, the road infrastructure is at breaking point, health and social care services overstretched. Barming and Teston are villages (or in Barming's case was) not suburbs of Maidstone. Is there an ulterior motive for the council merging the two?? I.e. once every bit of green space in Barming is engulfed by houses will Teston in turn lose its identity and become part of the giant housing estate that Barming now is as well??
- Our village names are what makes this country unique.
- Why change the name after all these years – what is the benefit or could it be our suspicious minds thinking its motives are extra house building in the area.
- There is no connection between the two parishes. And I see no point in the proposed new ward name, Barming should keep its identity.
- We have lived in Barming since Jan 1966 and wish to remain in Barming Ward.
- Barming and Teston are separate villages.
- We do not think this is a good idea because joining the two into one ward could be used as a reason to develop the land between Barming and Teston by developers and government bodies looking at ways of and reasons for such development.
- Not enough details on implications of proposal.
- Cannot see the point
- I don't live in Teston – I live in Barming and therefore current name adequately reflects that.
- There is a need to maintain the individuality of both wards. There is a need to maintain the physical gap between them to prevent overdevelopment alongside the A26 Tonbridge Rd.
- We do not agree the name change for the ward and do not accept that it better reflects the community identity of the area. They are significant distance apart and do not have any social interaction or common interests.
- Barming is a unique parish and should not be slowly assimilated into other parts.
- Absolutely not to the proposed change of ward name.
- Pointless! Why?
- We're nearly 2 miles from teston.
- Unnecessary and unwelcome change.
- Cannot see any benefit in the proposed change. Possible this would cost money our parish could ill afford.
- Maidstone Borough Council appears to be pushing up towards Tonbridge and Malling Council. They didn't have common sense to get hermitage lane with enough at the London road end, and only now trying to correct their mistake. Perhaps Tonbridge and Malling council and Maidstone borough council don't communicate with each other.

- Cannot even think of a reason why this is being considered. Is it because Heath road becomes full of incoming and outgoing traffic weekdays??? We already have Heath Road being used to avoid Tonbridge Road (which is the main road to get to hermitage lane (a hospital)) Would the name Barming and Teston be an excuse for motorists to use heath road and more readily. Or even used as an excuse to get from one place to another. When is the council; going to reduce council taxes for us residents? The state of Heath Road is currently a disgrace because of the way the road works carried out have made the road bumpy not very comfortable to drive on and in an my case quite damaging to me chronic disease of my spine. My apology for being negative but please be assured that the traffic in Heath Road is quite worrying. At times I've noticed cars speeding along this road. How safe is he road to residents and school children??
- There is currently a clear divide between the Barming and Teston and green fields spate the two areas – combining the names may be first step to combining development.
- No explanation given for the change. We are two separate villages/wards so don't understand how the proposed change would better reflect the community identity.
- Barming is far bigger than Teston, therefore it should remain Barming ward.
- I cannot agree on the change I would like Barming ward to protect its uniqueness.
- I fail to see any real benefit or affect and would regard this as potentially a waste of public funding.
- I don't really see the point of this. We already pay extra on our council tax for the “privilege” of living in Barming – will it cost us more? We still won't get our paths and roads taken care of.
- Pointless.
- Cannot see any gain in a name change, surely the money could be spent more wisely on infrastructure of Maidstone.
- We feel it would be a waste of council money for this minor change or just the title.
- We need to know what this is all about what the advantages etc are.
- Waste of money and time
- Teston is a lovely village, Barming isn't why change it we don't consider the reason given would not reflect a better identity to the area.
- Teston is a village please keep it that way. That why we live here.
- We should prefer Teston to remain as a separate ward. We feel it has very different characteristics to Barming and is easily recognisable as a village in its own right.
- How will a change of name help the residents of Teston or Barming???
- We would like to stay as a village in our own right. If we are joined with Barming our views will not count as they are a bigger ward.
- I can't see the point and a change would cost money! (as does this survey)
- Concerned that large scale housing development in Barming could eventually extend to Teston.
- There is no reason to change the name of the village. Teston has it's own attractions with many visitors each year. Please leave it as it is. Thank you.