

BOUGHTON ALUPH & EASTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

**SUBMISSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S CONSULTATION ON
THE ELECTORAL WARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

2 April 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Parish Council welcome this opportunity to comment on the LGBCE's draft recommendations for the electoral warding arrangements for Ashford Borough Council.
2. In general, we welcome the creation of a new ward at Goat Lees which has the potential to further a sense of shared identity and community in the newer housing developments of our parish around Trinity Road. We are pleased that the ward will go by the name of Goat Lees which has a long tradition in our parish.
3. The draft recommendations will result in our parish spanning two wards, Goat Lees and Downs West. Our response to the consultation focusses on the boundary line separating these two wards. While we are disappointed that this does not follow the long standing urban/rural boundary traditionally associated with Sandyhurst Lane, we acknowledge that a submission to redraw the boundary to the rear of properties on the south side of Sandyhurst Lane was rejected in the first phase of consultation and the reasons for this decision.
4. This paper recommends a small alteration to the ward boundary line as proposed by LGBCE. Our revision comprises two parts. While the LGBCE may want to examine each separately, it is the strong preference of the Parish Council that the whole scheme or Revision 2 be adopted by LGBCE.
5. This paper also recommends a revision of the proposed electoral arrangements for the Parish Council.

**RECOMMENDED REVISION TO THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN DOWNS WEST AND GOAT LEES
WARDS**

REVISION 1 - Repositioning the ward boundary to retain Eastwell Towers and adjacent section of wall with the remainder of Eastwell Park in the rural Downs West ward (shown by the blue line on MAP 1)

6. Eastwell Park is the historic estate at the heart of our parish. The historic rural settlements of Boughton Aluph and Eastwell grew up from Saxon times to service the changing needs of the estate. The ward boundary for Goat Lees put forward by LGBCE places Eastwell Towers, the Jacobean main gatehouse to Eastwell Park in a separate ward from the remainder of the 2,000 acre estate. Our view is that it would be more logical for the northern boundary of Goat Lees ward to be redrawn in front of Eastwell Towers which will then move into the rural Downs West ward with the remainder of the historic park. This would require the transfer of a single property, Tower Lodge, or 2-4 voters between wards.
7. In addition, as currently drawn, the LGBCE ward boundary for Goat Lees dissects a 150m section of the famous 6.5km great wall around Eastwell Park which runs from Rattle Hall, Challock to Lenacre Street and built from bricks made on the estate. Again, our view is that it would be logical for the boundary to be adjusted so that the entire wall falls within the same ward, Downs West. This will bring the northern

boundary of the new ward of Goat Lees into line with an existing historic boundary. We note that the LGBCBE's Technical Guidance recognises the physical features of the local area when drawing boundaries.

8. This minor adjustment of the boundary line would also conform to the natural boundary line of the Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) which runs along the wall on Lenacre Street to Sandyhurst Lane in front of Eastwell Towers to the A251 Faversham Road, then follows the curve of the A251 to the village of Boughton Lees. The listed buildings of Eastwell Towers and Tower Lodge form not only the gateway to Eastwell Park but also to the AONB.
9. We believe this alteration would provide a more coherent boundary with the rural land area than the boundary which has been proposed, which cuts into a small section of Eastwell Park only to swing back onto the A251. No historic, administrative or natural boundary has been found to support the proposed boundary incursion of Goat Lees ward into Eastwell Park.
10. The small parcel of land to the north of Eastwell Towers which we recommend to be transferred to Downs West ward is parkland within the AONB. As such, it will be very unlikely to be built on in the short, medium or long term. As such, there will be no impact on voter numbers.
11. For the reasons outlined above, we believe that redrawing the boundary in front of Eastwell Towers as shown on Map 1 provides a coherent historical, administrative and natural boundary between Goat Lees and Downs West wards.

REVISION 2 - Repositioning the ward boundary so that the whole of the community of Lenacre Street is within the same ward (shown by the green line on MAP 2)

12. Part 2 represents an extension of our first recommendation. We recommend a further adjustment to the northern boundary of Goat Lees so that the whole of Lenacre Street is within the same ward (together with Eastwell Towers and Lodge as per Revision 1). We recommend that the boundary be redrawn at the rear boundary of properties at the southern end of Lenacre Street as it joins Sandyhurst Lane. This would involve the minimal transfer of 9 properties between wards or 18-36 voters, based on 2-4 voters per household. This low number is well within the LGBCBE's +/-1% tolerance.
13. From a community perspective, it seems irregular for the whole of Lenacre Street not to be within the same ward. While it is the case that Lenacre Street is bisected by the parish boundary of Eastwell, it is also the case that the Boughton Aluph and Eastwell parishes have been joined as a single civil parish for some considerable period of time. We function as one parish sharing a joint Parish Council. The LGBCBE draft recommendation to follow the boundary of Eastwell parish thereby splitting off a small section of Lenacre Street (at Eastwell Towers) into another ward seems arbitrary and inconsistent treatment of this tight knit community of 28 properties following a boundary which in practice does not exist.
14. The rural lane of Lenacre Street runs through the farmland of Eastwell Park and has a long association with the estate and contains estate worker cottages. It forms a boundary to the AONB. Residents of Lenacre Street identify themselves as one of the rural settlements or communities of Boughton Aluph and Eastwell parish and more distinctly connected with the Eastwell estate and farmland area with than the urban area of Goat Lees. Revision 2 is the preferred option of the Parish Council.

RECOMMENDED REVISION TO THE PROPOSED ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

15. The LGBCE’s draft recommendations also cover the electoral arrangements of the Parish Council. We do not believe these draft recommendations will provide proper representation for the residents of our parish.
16. While the Parish Council should represent and reflect the make-up of the parish, a broad-brush approach based solely on population does not adequately reflect the land area of our parish or its scattered communities. It should be noted that two-thirds of our population reside in less than one tenth of the land area at the southern tip of our parish. While the remainder may be rural and sparsely populated, it should not lose out on adequate representation. The needs of both urban and rural communities are equal and must carry equal weight. We, therefore, strongly recommend the amendment shown in the table in section 18 below so that the urban and rural aspects of the parish will have fair and equal representation on the Parish Council.
17. In addition, we recommend that “Boughton Lees” should revert to “Boughton Aluph”, as now, to better represent the various settlements at the north of the parish. Boughton Lees is just one of a number of settlements in the rural north of our parish.

18.

LGBCE Proposal		Recommended Revision	
Goat Lees	6	Goat Lees	4
Boughton Lees	1	Boughton Aluph	3
Eastwell	1	Eastwell	1
Total	8	Total	8

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