

# New electoral arrangements for Maidstone Borough Council Final Recommendations

November 2022

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### **A note on our mapping:**

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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# Introduction

## Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.<sup>1</sup> We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

## What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Why Maidstone?

7 We are conducting a review of Maidstone Borough Council ('the Council') at the request of the Council. The Council requested this review as part of a move to all-out elections, and to ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose. We are also conducting a review of the Council as its last review was completed in 2001, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Maidstone are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

## Our proposals for Maidstone

9 Maidstone should be represented by 49 councillors, six fewer than there are now.

10 Maidstone should have 22 wards, four fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 22 wards should change; one will stay the same.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Maidstone.

## How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

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<sup>2</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

## Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Maidstone. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
18 January 2022	Number of councillors decided
25 January 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
4 April 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
5 July 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
28 September 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
29 November 2022	Publication of final recommendations



## Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation<sup>3</sup> states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors<sup>4</sup> there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

19 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2021	2027
Electorate of Maidstone	128,574	146,228
Number of councillors	49	49
Average number of electors per councillor	2,624	2,984

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All but two of our proposed wards for Maidstone will have good electoral equality by 2027.

## Submissions received

21 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 14% by 2027.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

## Number of councillors

24 Maidstone Borough Council currently has 55 councillors. We initially looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that decreasing by seven would ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 48 councillors: for example, 48 one-councillor wards, 16 three-councillor wards, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

26 The Commission, when proposing a council size, reserves the right to alter this number if it discovers that an alternative council size would provide a pattern of wards that better reflects its statutory criteria. During our analysis of the proposals for warding arrangements in the borough, we noted that the submissions received for Harrietsham & Lenham strongly argued against the Council's proposed two-councillor Harrietsham, Lenham & Hollingbourne ward that split Lenham parish. As part of our draft recommendations, we allocated an additional councillor in this area to provide for a pattern of wards that better reflected our statutory criteria.

27 We have therefore based our final recommendations on a 49-councillor council.

## Ward boundaries consultation

28 We received 168 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included one borough-wide proposal from Maidstone Borough Council ('the Council'). The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

29 The one borough-wide scheme provided a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for Maidstone. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

30 Our draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

31 There was a detailed virtual tour of Maidstone. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the proposed draft boundary recommendations.

32 Our draft recommendations were for seven three-councillor wards, 12 two-councillor wards and four single-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

## Draft recommendations consultation

33 We received 68 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. The majority of submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our proposals in Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs and Fant & Oakwood.

34 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with modifications to the wards in central Maidstone, Fant & Oakwood and Bearsted & Downswood based on the submissions received.

## Final recommendations

35 Our final recommendations are for eight three-councillor wards, 11 two-councillor wards and three one-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

36 The tables and maps on pages 8–25 detail our final recommendations for each area of Maidstone. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory<sup>5</sup> criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 31 and on the large map accompanying this report.

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<sup>5</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## Central and North Maidstone



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Grove Green & Vinters Park	3	-10%
High Street	3	-10%
Penenden Heath	3	-10%
Ringlestone	1	10%

### *Grove Green & Vinters Park*

38 We received three submissions regarding this ward from three residents. Two residents supported our draft recommendations.

39 One resident stated that Ashford Road should be the southern boundary for Grove Green & Vinters Park ward, and that Mote Park should be placed in Shepway ward. They argued that Ashford Road is widely recognised as the southern boundary of Grove Green and that the majority of access points into Mote Park are within Shepway ward. Following consideration of this evidence, we have been convinced to adopt this change. We consider that the Ashford Road is a clear and identifiable boundary in this area, and further note the connection of Mote Park to Shepway.

40 Grove Green & Vinters Park ward will be represented by three councillors and will have an electoral variance of -10% by 2027.

#### *High Street and Penenden Heath*

41 We received three submissions regarding this area from the Council and two residents.

42 The Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between High Street ward (previously Central Maidstone in the draft recommendations) and Penenden Heath ward, in order to accommodate a change between Tovil and High Street wards to unite Coombe Farm Estate, further discussed in paragraph 68. The Council proposed to extend the northern boundary of High Street ward to Brewer Street, Jeffrey Street and the railway line. We consider this to be a clear boundary and note that this allows for the unification of a housing estate and a good level of electoral equality.

43 Two residents stated that Penenden Heath ward extends too far southwards into the town centre. One resident suggested that all properties south of Holland Road should be within High Street ward. However, using Holland Road as the northern boundary of High Street ward would result in Penenden Heath having an electoral variance of -17%. We note that the Council's proposal includes more of the town centre within High Street ward, rather than Penenden Heath ward.

44 The Council further proposed to rename Central Maidstone ward to High Street ward. They stated that this name would reduce confusion with the Maidstone Central electoral division.

45 We have been convinced to adopt the Council's proposed boundary and name changes. High Street ward and Penenden Heath ward will be represented by three councillors each and will both have electoral variances of -10% by 2027.

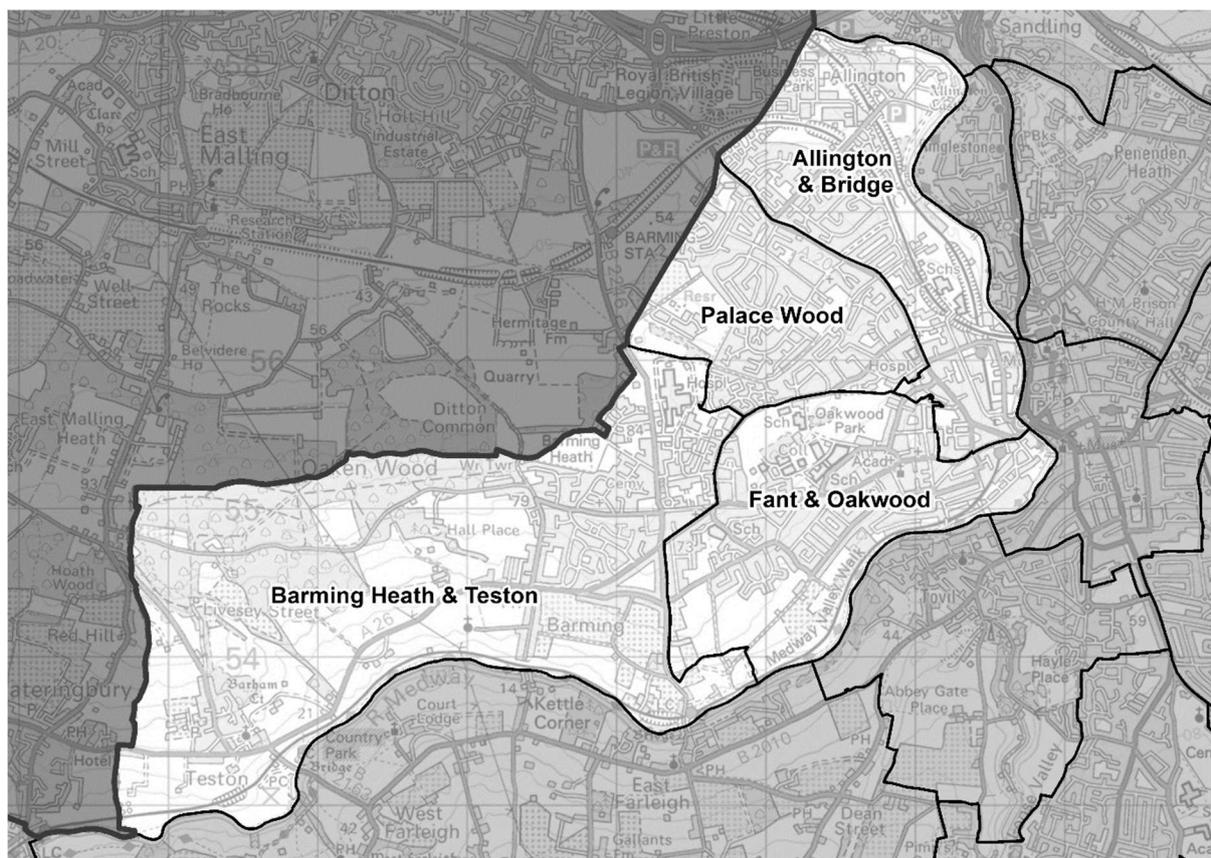
#### *Ringlestone*

46 We received one submission from a resident who stated that Ringlestone ward is too small but offered no other evidence or alternative.

47 We consider that Ringlestone ward utilises strong boundaries and contains a recognisable community. We have therefore not been convinced to alter our draft recommendations.

48 We confirm our draft recommendations as final.

## West Maidstone



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Allington & Bridge	2	1%
Barming Heath & Teston	2	9%
Fant & Oakwood	3	3%
Palace Wood	2	7%

### *Allington & Bridge and Fant & Oakwood*

49 We received eight submissions regarding this area from the Labour Group, Fant & Bridge Labour Party, Councillor Coates, Councillor Harper, Councillor Jeffrey and three residents.

50 The Labour Group, Fant & Bridge Labour Party, Councillor Coates, Councillor Harper and three residents all submitted the same proposals for alterations between Allington & Bridge and Fant & Oakwood wards.

51 They argued that the area bounded by Bower Mount Road, Tonbridge Road and London Road is not a cohesive area and that it should not all be included in Fant & Oakwood ward. They stated that residents in the east of this area access onto London Road and are more connected to Allington & Bridge ward. Additionally, they stated that residents in the west, such as those on Bower Mount Road and Bower

Street, look west and south towards Tonbridge Road and are an extension of the Oakwood community, with many residents in this area having access to Oakwood Park Playing Fields.

52 They proposed three options for this area. Two options were solely based on improving electoral equality; one suggested moving the entirety of this area from Fant & Oakwood ward to Allington & Bridge ward, with the other proposing to move only Warwick Place, Bower Street and Bower Close into Allington & Bridge ward.

53 Councillor Jeffrey also proposed to move the entirety of this area out of Fant & Oakwood ward. He argued that the boundary along London Road splits a community in this area, with Bower Mount surgery acting as the centre of the community. He further argued that Allington and Bridge are two separate communities and therefore should be represented in two wards. However, two single-councillor Allington and Bridge wards would both have an electoral variance of 11%. His second option was to retain a two-councillor Allington & Bridge ward, including the entire area between Bower Mount Road, Tonbridge Road and London Road in this ward. As discussed above, this was also an option proposed by all other respondents. However, this would result in an electoral variance of 11% for Allington & Bridge ward. We have not been convinced to adopt either of these proposals. In this area, we do not consider that the evidence provided justifies the higher electoral variance and note that electoral equality and community links can both be better accommodated in another arrangement, discussed below.

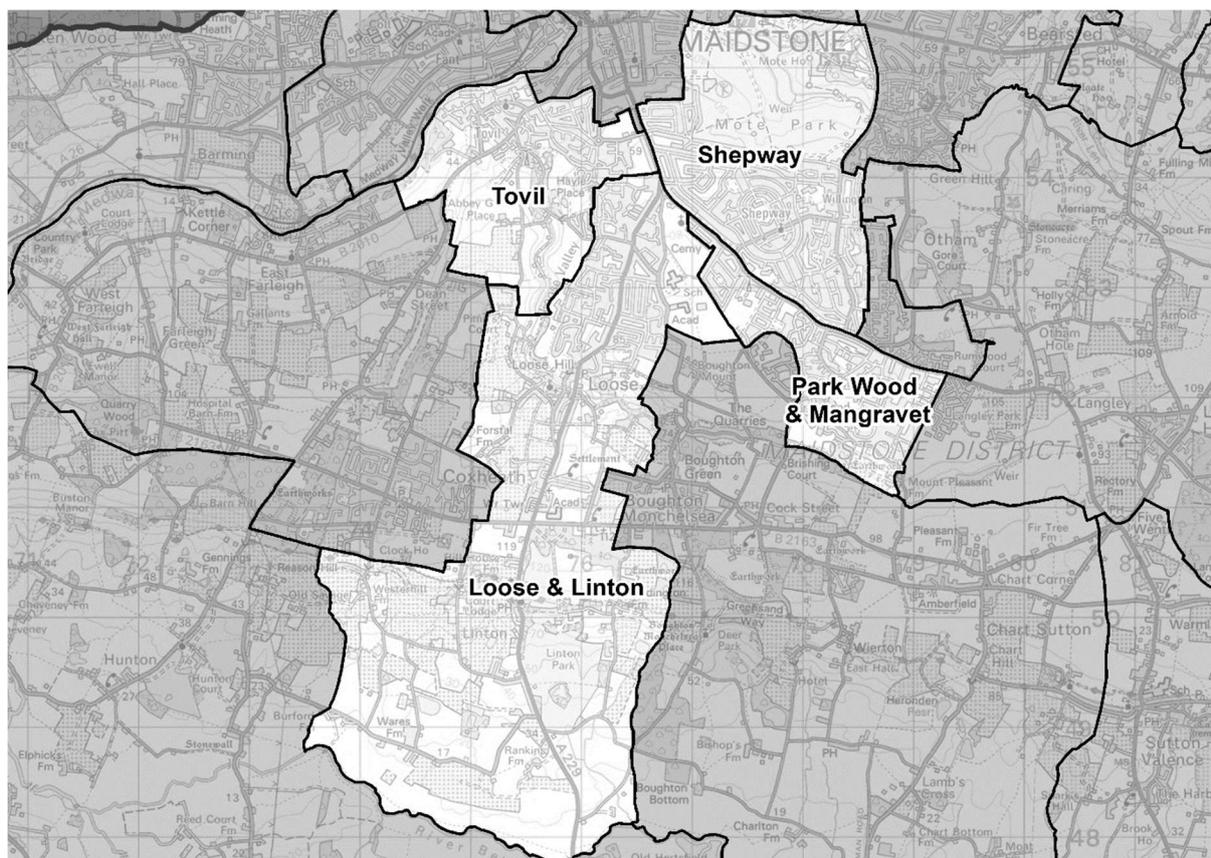
54 In our view, the most convincing option proposed by respondents was to split the area bounded by Bower Mount Road, Tonbridge Road and London Road, placing the eastern area in Allington & Bridge ward and the western area in Fant & Oakwood ward. The proposed boundary would run along Scrubbs Lane, before running south behind the properties on the eastern side of Bower Street and along Warwick Place. The Labour Group, Fant & Bridge Labour Party, Councillor Coates, Councillor Harper and three residents argued that this would reflect a natural split in the community. We note that this option allows for the community on either side of London Road to be united in a single ward, which reflects the evidence submitted by Councillor Jeffrey. We are therefore adopting this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

55 Allington & Bridge and Fant & Oakwood wards will be represented by two and three councillors respectively. They will have electoral variances of 1% and 3%, respectively, by 2027.

#### *Barming Heath & Teston and Palace Wood*

56 We received no submissions regarding these wards. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

## South Maidstone



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Loose & Linton	2	10%
Park Wood & Mangravet	2	-5%
Shepway	3	1%
Tovil	2	1%

### *Loose & Linton*

57 We received four submissions from Loose Parish Council, North Loose Residents' Association and two residents.

58 Loose Parish Council and North Loose Residents' Association supported the draft recommendations for Loose & Linton ward. However, they proposed a slight amendment to the boundary between this ward and Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward. They stated that in order to include the entirety of the area considered as Loose, the eastern boundary should extend from The Wheatsheaf Junction along footpath KB 27 until the rear entrance to Kent Police HQ, then south along Cliff Hill, to turn west along Cliff Hill Road, Boughton Lane and along footpath KM 65, until it meets the boundary with the existing Loose ward.

59 This area is currently within Boughton Monchelsea parish, and the number of electors contained within this area is 62. Consequently, we are unable to make this change as it would result in an unviable parish ward in Boughton Monchelsea parish. In order to create a viable parish ward, 100 electors need to be present within an area. This change could be made in the future by a Community Governance Review conducted by the Council.

60 One resident supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the name of this ward be Linton & Loose. They stated that this would level the playing field between the two areas, as Loose is larger and likely to receive more attention within this ward. We were not convinced to make this change as we consider that the name Loose & Linton accurately reflects the communities present within this ward.

61 A resident stated that the proposed Loose & Linton ward will be split across constituency boundaries. We are unable to take parliamentary constituency boundaries into consideration when drawing up wards.

62 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Loose & Linton ward as final.

#### *Park Wood & Mangravet*

63 We received one submission regarding this area from a resident. They stated that Park Wood ward should be renamed Park Wood & Mangravet to represent the distinct area of Mangravet present within this ward. They argued that Mangravet has never been regarded as part of Park Wood, and that the Mangravet Estate has its own schools, post office and shops. We note that the Mangravet area is physically separated from the rest of Park Wood ward by the Kent Police HQ and is a self-contained area within the ward. We have therefore been persuaded to make this change as we consider the name Park Wood & Mangravet will better represent the communities present within this ward.

64 Following this name change, we confirm our draft recommendations for Park Wood & Mangravet as final.

#### *Shepway*

65 We received one submission from a resident who argued that Mote Park should be included in Shepway ward, with Ashford Road as the northern boundary for Shepway ward. They argued that Ashford Road is widely recognised as the southern boundary of Grove Green and that the majority of access points into Mote Park are within Shepway ward. Following consideration of this evidence, we have been convinced to adopt this change. We consider that Ashford Road is a clear and identifiable boundary in this area, and further note the connection of Mote Park to Shepway.

66 Shepway ward will be represented by three councillors and will have an electoral variance of 1% by 2027.

#### *Tovil*

67 We received two submissions regarding this ward from the Council and a resident.

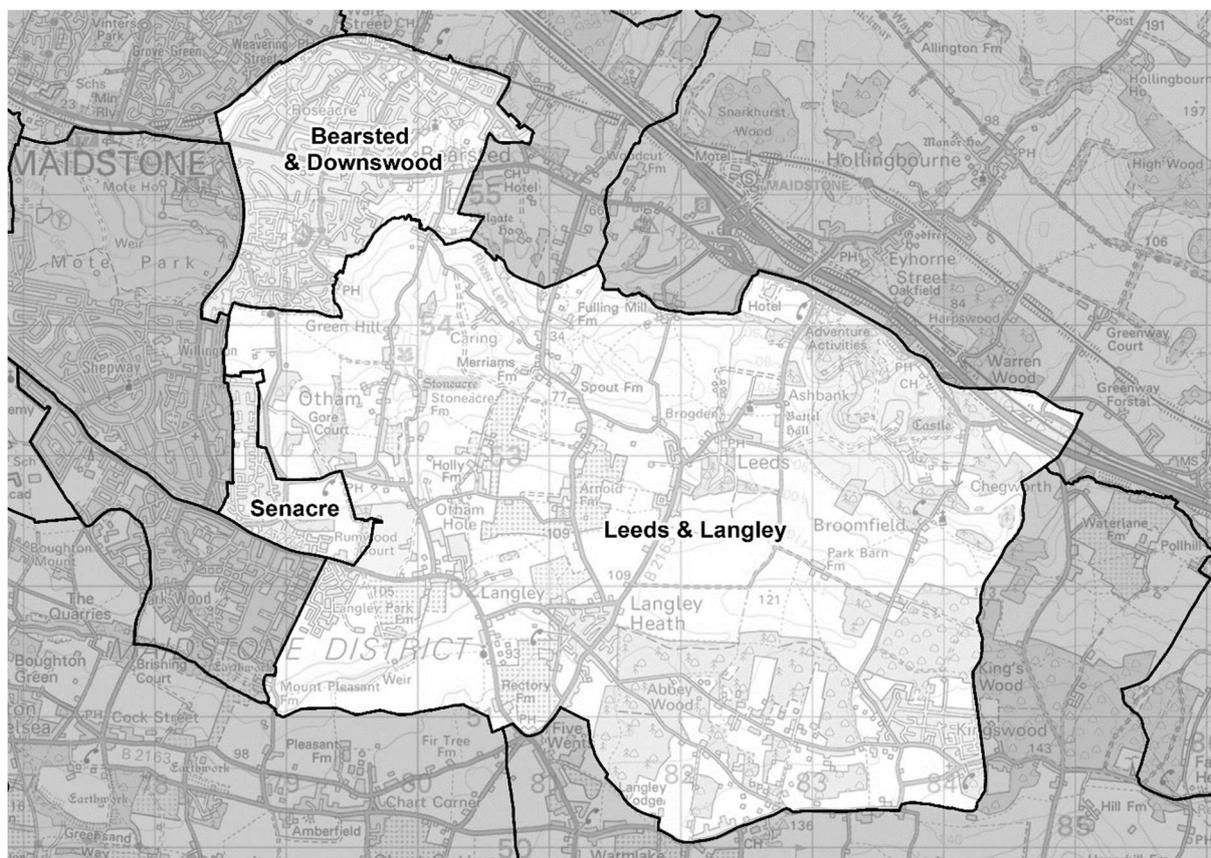
68 The Council argued that the boundary proposed in our draft recommendations between Tovil and High Street wards cut through the Coombe Farm Estate, thereby splitting a community. They therefore proposed to extend Tovil ward eastwards to include the entirety of this estate, running the boundary behind the properties on the eastern side of Quarry Road. The Council stated that the Coombe Farm Estate has links to the Tovil community.

69 A resident opposed adding Coombe Road and Quarry Road into a ward with Tovil parish, stating this these areas contain different demographics. However, we note that there is continuous housing across the parish boundary and that a ward containing only Tovil parish would have an electoral variance of -30%.

70 We have been persuaded to adopt the Council's proposal and are therefore extending Tovil ward to unite the Coombe Farm Estate. As discussed in the High Street section, we are also adopting their proposal to extend High Street ward northwards into Penenden Heath ward to provide a good level of electoral equality for these wards. Without this additional change, High Street ward would have an electoral variance of -14%.

71 Tovil ward will be represented by two councillors and will have an electoral variance of 1% by 2027.

## East Maidstone



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Bearsted & Downswood	3	1%
Leeds & Langley	2	5%
Senacre	1	6%

### *Bearsted & Downswood*

72 We received one submission regarding this area from the Council, who argued that the draft recommendations for the two wards of Bearsted & North Madginford and Downswood split the community of Madginford along Madginford Road. They instead proposed that these two wards be combined into a three-councillor ward to unite the Madginford community and to include the entirety of Bearsted parish in a single ward. Following consideration of the evidence, we have been persuaded to adopt this proposal. We consider that the communities in this area will be better represented in this ward.

73 Bearsted & Downswood ward will be represented by three councillors and will have an electoral variance of 1% by 2027.

### *Leeds & Langley*

74 We received one submission regarding this ward from the Council. The Council stated that our proposed name of Langley with Otham, Leeds & Kingswood was too long and that this ward should be renamed Leeds & Langley. They stated that these are recognised destinations for large parts of the ward and will have meaning locally. We consider that this proposed name will better represent the communities present within the ward, and that it is more recognisable. We are therefore adopting this proposal.

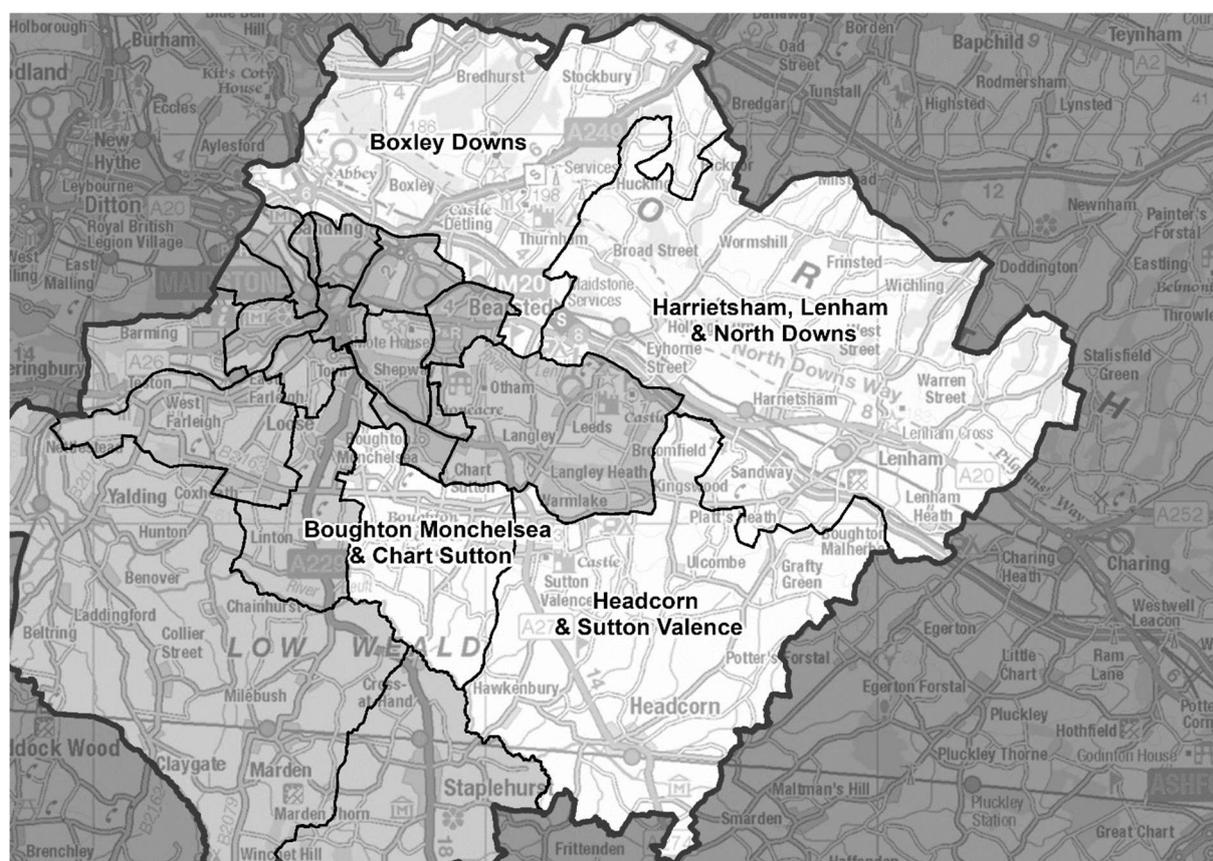
75 Following this name change, we confirm our draft recommendations for Leeds & Langley ward as final.

### *Senacre*

76 We received one submission regarding this ward from a resident, who argued that residents in the north and south of Senacre ward access different facilities and are not well linked. They stated that the northern area of this ward is closely linked to Shepway, whereas the southern area is better connected to Otham parish. We investigated the possibility of splitting Senacre ward to accommodate this, but such an amendment would result in a variance of 16% for Shepway ward and -12% for Leeds & Langley ward. We were not convinced that the evidence provided justifies this higher level of electoral inequality and are therefore not adopting this proposal.

77 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Senacre ward as final.

## Eastern Parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton	1	9%
Boxley Downs	2	6%
Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs	3	-12%
Headcorn & Sutton Valence	2	13%

### *Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton*

78 We received five submissions regarding this ward from Chart Sutton Parish Council, Loose Parish Council, North Loose Residents' Association and two residents.

79 Chart Sutton Parish Council and two residents both supported the draft recommendations for this ward. They stated that this ward reflects the community and combines areas that face common issues.

80 As discussed in the Loose & Linton section, Loose Parish Council and North Loose Residents' Association proposed a slight amendment to the boundary between Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton and Loose & Linton wards to include an area currently in Boughton Monchelsea parish in Loose & Linton ward. However, we were not able to adopt this suggestion as it would result in an unviable parish

ward, with under 100 electors. This change could be made in the future by a Community Governance Review conducted by the Council.

81 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton as final.

### *Boxley Downs*

82 We received five submissions regarding this ward from Thurnham Parish Council, Councillors T. & J. Sams and three residents. One resident stated that Boxley Downs ward is too large but did not elaborate or offer an alternative.

83 Thurnham Parish Council argued that the entirety of Thurnham parish should remain in a single ward, and that the southern area of the parish should not be included in Grove Green & Vinters Park ward. However, we received support from residents within Grove Green & Vinters Park ward who supported our draft recommendations, and further note the submissions received during the first round of consultation which argued that the area south of Ware Street, currently in Detling & Thurnham ward, should be included in an urban-facing ward. We have therefore not been convinced that retaining the entirety of Thurnham parish in a single ward would best reflect communities within this area.

84 Finally, as discussed in the Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs section, we have been convinced to include Stockbury parish in North Downs ward. Councillors T. & J. Sams and two residents proposed to place Stockbury parish in Boxley Downs ward, stating that Stockbury is more closely linked to these similar parishes and shares common issues related to the A249. We consider that including Stockbury parish in Boxley Downs ward better reflects community links in this area.

85 Boxley Downs ward will be represented by two councillors and will have an electoral variance of 6% by 2027.

### *Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs*

86 We received 31 submissions regarding this ward from the Council, Harrietsham Parish Council, Hollingbourne Parish Council, Lenham Parish Council, Otterden Parish Council, Stockbury Parish Council, Councillor Ardley, Councillor Garten, Councillor Prendergast, Councillors T. & J. Sams, Lenham Heritage Society and 20 residents.

87 Harrietsham Parish Council, Lenham Parish Council, Lenham Heritage Society, Councillor Prendergast, Councillors T. & J. Sams and six residents supported the draft recommendations for Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs ward. Councillors T. & J. Sams and Lenham Heritage Society stated that Hollingbourne is well linked to Harrietsham and Lenham by both rail and road, and while Councillors T. & J. Sams

stated that the ward is large, they supported the proposal to retain Lenham parish in a single ward.

88 The Council, Hollingbourne Parish Council, Otterden Parish Council, Councillor Ardley, Councillor Garten and 12 residents proposed to split Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs ward. The Council and Councillor Garten suggested dividing this ward into a two-councillor Harrietsham & Lenham ward and a single-councillor North Downs ward. The retention of a single-councillor North Downs ward was supported by the majority of these respondents, who stated that rural residents should be represented in a solely rural-facing ward, excluding the larger population centres of Harrietsham and Lenham.

89 The proposal from the Council and Councillor Garten would extend the current North Downs ward, which unchanged would have an electoral variance of -28%, to include two areas: the area north of the A20 in Lenham parish and Pilgrims Retreat Mobile Home Park in Harrietsham parish. These amendments would achieve a good level of electoral equality for North Downs ward, with a variance of -6%. Councillor Garten argued that residents north of the A20 live in a sparsely populated area and that their concerns align more with residents in the current North Downs ward than with Lenham village. He further stated that while this proposal would split Lenham parish, it would allow for the effective governance of the rural North Downs population.

90 Harrietsham Parish Council, Lenham Parish Council, Councillor Prendergast, Councillors T. & J. Sams and six residents opposed the proposal to retain North Downs ward at the expense of the integrity of Harrietsham and Lenham parishes. They argued that residents who live north of the A20 would be split from their service centres of Harrietsham and Lenham, which are the focus of daily interactions and offer vital services, such as medical centres. They further argued that this proposal would split the Lenham community and would remove Lenham Cross from the majority of Lenham parish. It was further noted that residents across the North Downs look towards Harrietsham and Lenham for their services.

91 Following careful consideration of the evidence, we have not been convinced to adopt the proposal from the Council and Councillor Garten to retain and extend North Downs ward. While we appreciate the evidence demonstrates that the North Downs community is considered by some as distinct from Harrietsham and Lenham, making this change would necessitate the splitting of the Harrietsham and Lenham communities. We consider that combining these communities within a three-councillor ward to be preferable to splitting communities in this area. We further note that the rural parishes around Harrietsham and Lenham access facilities within these villages.

92 Finally, Councillors T. & J. Sams, Stockbury Parish Council and two residents stated that Stockbury parish should not be included in Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs ward. Stockbury Parish Council did not define an alternative ward, but rather stated that this parish should be represented in a smaller rural ward. Councillors T. & J. Sams and two residents proposed to place Stockbury parish in Boxley Downs ward, stating that Stockbury is more closely linked to these similar villages and shares common issues related to the A249. Removing Stockbury parish from Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs ward would result in this ward having an electoral variance of -12%. However, after careful consideration of the evidence, we were convinced to adopt this change. We consider that Stockbury parish has better links to Boxley Downs ward and note the connection along the A249. We therefore consider that the evidence provided justifies an electoral variance of -12%.

93 Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs ward will be represented by three councillors and will have an electoral variance of -12% by 2027.

#### *Headcorn & Sutton Valence*

94 We received four submissions regarding this area from the Council, Sutton Valence Parish Council and Councillor Young.

95 Sutton Valence Parish Council and Councillor Young both argued that Sutton Valence should not be included in a ward with Headcorn. Sutton Valence Parish Council stated that Sutton Valence parish has best connections with East Sutton and Chart Sutton parishes, with these three parishes containing farm communities and sharing common issues. They further stated that they share community events, churches and facilities, such as GP surgeries. They supported the initial proposal from the Council, made during the first round of consultation, to group together the parishes of Chart Sutton, East Sutton and Sutton Valence, named The Suttons. However, this ward would have an electoral variance of -13% and we further note the support received for Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward from Chart Sutton Parish Council, who stated that this ward well reflects community links in this area.

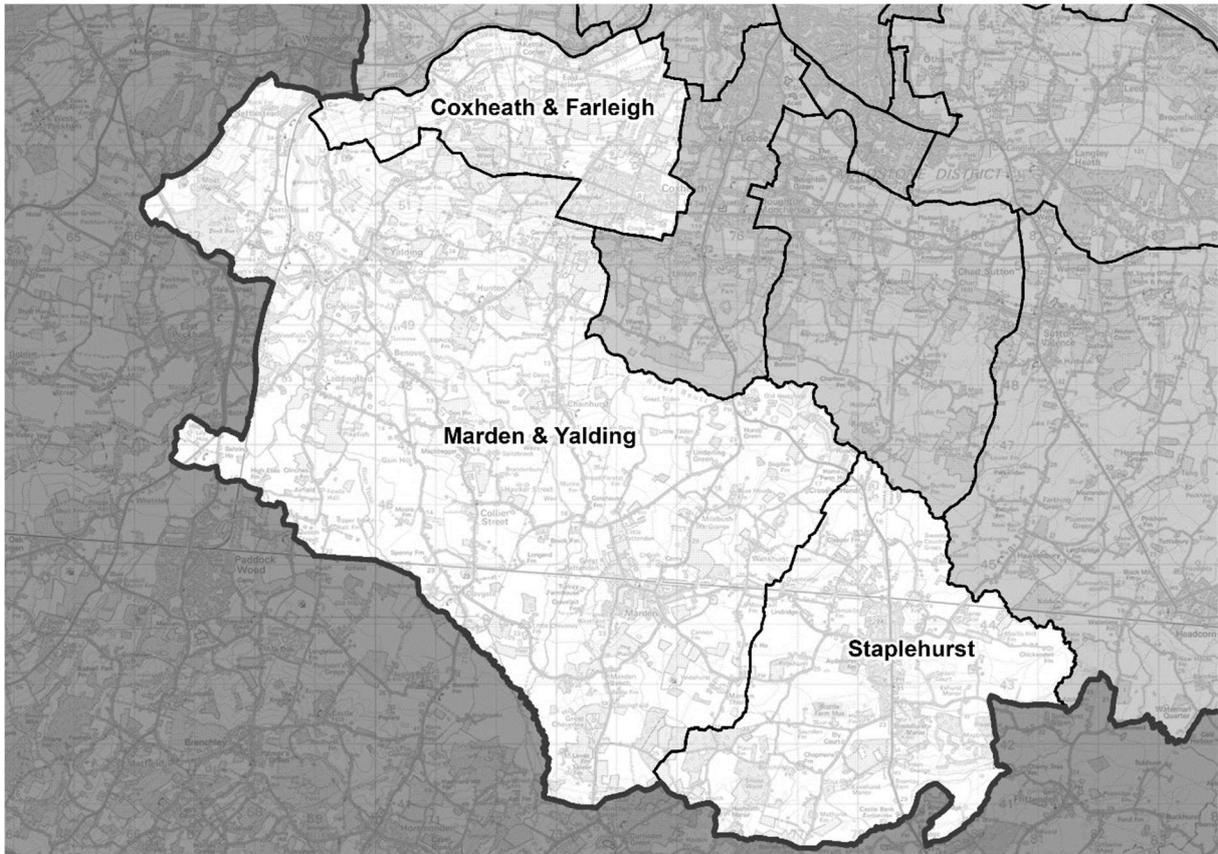
96 Additionally, removing Sutton Valence parish from Headcorn & Sutton Valence ward would result in this ward having an electoral variance of -22%. We do not consider this high level of electoral inequality to be acceptable and further note the position of Headcorn & Sutton Valence ward at the edge of the borough, which limits options to add electors into this ward. We were not convinced to include part of Lenham parish in a ward with Headcorn in the draft recommendations, and there have been no suggestions to extend a Headcorn ward into Broomfield & Kingswood and Leeds parishes. Therefore, due to the poor electoral equality that would result in removing Sutton Valence from Headcorn & Sutton Valence ward, as well as the support we have received for the draft recommendations in the surrounding wards, we have not been convinced to make these changes. We further note that the

community links between Sutton Valence and East Sutton can be retained within Headcorn & Sutton Valence ward, with both parishes included within this ward.

97 The Council made no comment on the boundaries for this ward, but instead proposed renaming the ward from Headcorn with Sutton Valence to Headcorn & Sutton Valence, to allow for naming consistency across the borough. We consider this a sensible suggestion and therefore have been convinced to make this change.

98 With this name change, we therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Headcorn & Sutton Valence ward as final.

## Western Parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Coxheath & Farleigh	2	5%
Marden & Yalding	3	-6%
Staplehurst	2	0%

### *Coxheath & Farleigh, Marden & Yalding and Staplehurst*

99 We received no submissions regarding these wards. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

## Conclusions

100 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Maidstone, referencing the 2021 and 2027 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

### Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2021	2027
Number of councillors	49	49
Number of electoral wards	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	2,624	2,984
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	8	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	1	0

#### Final recommendations

Maidstone Borough Council should be made up of 49 councillors serving 22 wards representing three single-councillor wards, 11 two-councillor wards and eight three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

#### Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Maidstone Borough Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Maidstone on our interactive maps at [www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk)

### Parish electoral arrangements

101 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

102 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Maidstone Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

103 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council, Boxley Parish Council, Otham Parish Council and Thurnham Parish Council.

104 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Boughton Monchelsea parish.

#### Final recommendations

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Joy Wood	2
Langley Park	4
North	2
South	7

105 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Boxley parish.

#### Final recommendations

Boxley Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Boxley Grove Green	5
Boxley North	6
Boxley South	2
Boxley South East	1
Boxley Woodlands	1

106 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Otham parish.

### Final recommendations

Otham Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Otham North	4
Otham South	5

107 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Thurnham parish.

### Final recommendations

Thurnham Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Thurnham East	3
Thurnham West	6



## What happens next?

108 We have now completed our review of Maidstone Borough Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2024.



## Equalities

109 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Final recommendations for Maidstone Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Allington & Bridge	2	5,311	2,656	1%	6,034	3,017	1%
2	Barming Heath & Teston	2	5,584	2,792	6%	6,509	3,255	9%
3	Bearsted & Downswood	3	8,376	2,792	6%	9,064	3,021	1%
4	Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton	1	2,836	2,836	8%	3,257	3,257	9%
5	Boxley Downs	2	5,791	2,896	10%	6,343	3,172	6%
6	Coxheath & Farleigh	2	5,499	2,750	5%	6,251	3,125	5%
7	Fant & Oakwood	3	8,612	2,871	9%	9,232	3,077	3%
8	Grove Green & Vinters Park	3	7,444	2,481	-5%	8,026	2,675	-10%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
9 Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs	3	7,014	2,338	-11%	7,854	2,618	-12%
10 Headcorn & Sutton Valence	2	6,132	3,066	17%	6,719	3,360	13%
11 High Street	3	6,705	2,235	-15%	8,097	2,699	-10%
12 Leeds & Langley	2	4,211	2,106	-20%	6,250	3,125	5%
13 Loose & Linton	2	6,135	3,068	17%	6,576	3,288	10%
14 Marden & Yalding	3	7,738	2,579	-2%	8,432	2,811	-6%
15 Palace Wood	2	5,855	2,928	12%	6,380	3,190	7%
16 Park Wood & Mangravet	2	5,059	2,530	-4%	5,676	2,838	-5%
17 Penenden Heath	3	7,488	2,496	-5%	8,069	2,690	-10%
18 Ringlestone	1	2,050	2,050	-22%	3,297	3,297	10%
19 Senacre	1	2,244	2,244	-14%	3,169	3,169	6%
20 Shepway	3	8,321	2,774	6%	9,023	3,008	1%
21 Staplehurst	2	5,307	2,654	1%	5,972	2,986	0%

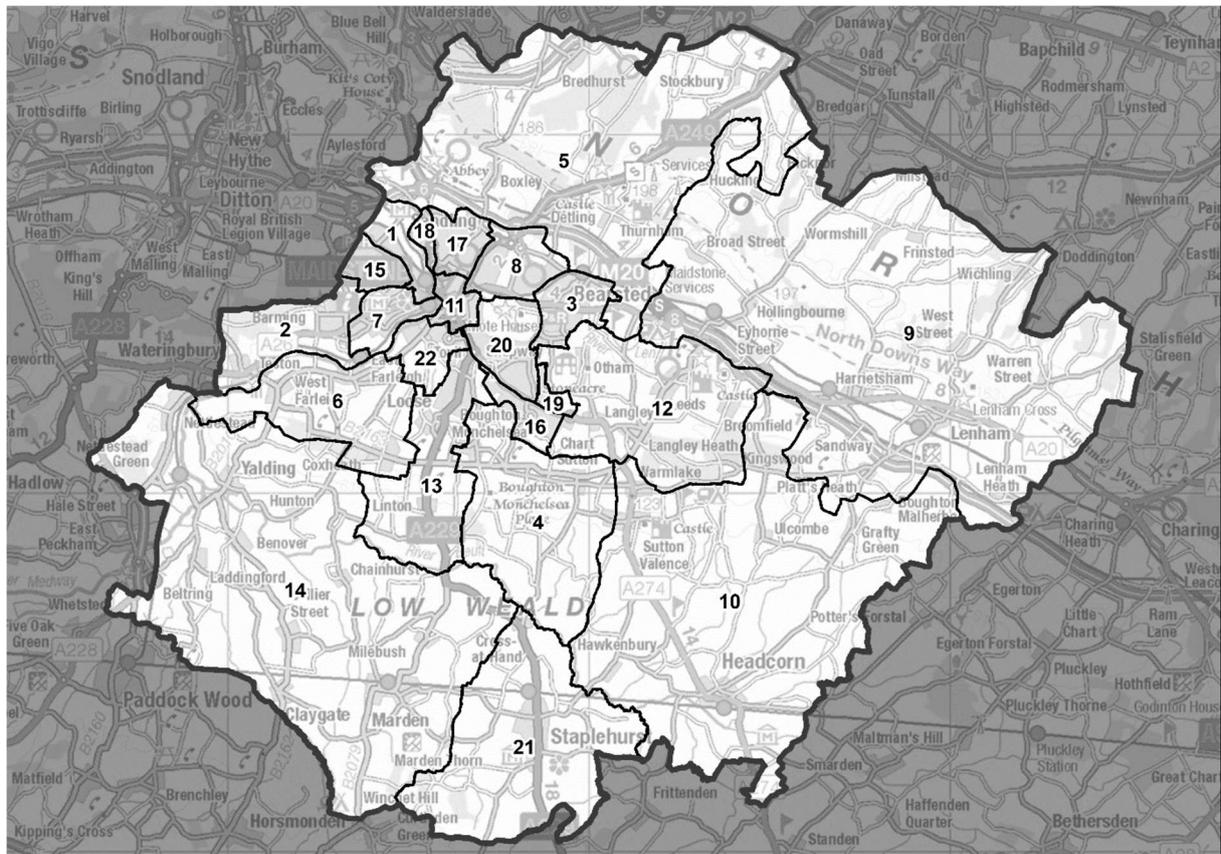
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Tovil	2	4,862	2,431	-7%	5,999	3,000	1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>128,574</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>146,228</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>2,624</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>2,984</b>	<b>–</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Maidstone Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

## Appendix B

### Outline map



Number	Ward name
1	Allington & Bridge
2	Barming Heath & Teston
3	Bearsted & Downswood
4	Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton
5	Boxley Downs
6	Coxheath & Farleigh
7	Fant & Oakwood
8	Grove Green & Vinters Park
9	Harrietsham, Lenham & North Downs
10	Headcorn & Sutton Valence
11	High Street
12	Leeds & Langley
13	Loose & Linton
14	Marden & Yalding
15	Palace Wood
16	Park Wood & Mangravet
17	Penenden Heath
18	Ringlestone

19	Senacre
20	Shepway
21	Staplehurst
22	Tovil

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: [www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/maidstone](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/maidstone)

## Appendix C

### Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:

[www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/maidstone](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/maidstone)

#### *Local Authority*

- Maidstone Borough Council

#### *Political Groups*

- Fant & Bridge Labour Party
- Maidstone Labour Group

#### *Councillors*

- Councillor D. Ardley (Hollingbourne Parish Council)
- Councillor P. Coates (Maidstone Borough Council)
- Councillor P. Garten (Maidstone Borough Council)
- Councillor P. Harper (Maidstone Borough Council)
- Councillor S. Jeffrey (Maidstone Borough Council)
- Councillor S. Prendergast (Kent County Council)
- Councillors T. & J. Sams (Maidstone Borough Council) (2 submissions)
- Councillor W. Young (Maidstone Borough Council)

#### *Local Organisations*

- Lenham Heritage Society
- North Loose Residents' Association

#### *Parish and Town Councils*

- Chart Sutton Parish Council
- Harrietsham Parish Council
- Hollingbourne Parish Council
- Lenham Parish Council
- Loose Parish Council
- Otterden Parish Council
- Stockbury Parish Council
- Sutton Valence Parish Council (2 submissions)
- Thurnham Parish Council

### *Local Residents*

- 44 local residents

## Appendix D

### Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority.
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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