

Gravesham Borough Council

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Comment text:

Please see attached submission from Shorne Parish Council

Uploaded Documents:

https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1627833524+Shorne+Parish+Council+response+-+Local+Govt+Boundary+Commission+Review+%28Gravesham%29+-+20210801.pdf

Shorne Parish Council

— Borough of Gravesham —

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Submission to the Local Government Boundary Review Commission (Gravesham)

This response is submitted on behalf of Shorne Parish Council.

- Shorne Parish is located east of Gravesend and north of the A2, with the river Thames to its north and Higham Parish to the east.
- Shorne Parish is presently composed of electoral wards CD and CE, and is the northern part of the combined “Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown” GBC Council ward.

The consultation documentation published by Gravesham cites three legal factors that inform Boundary decisions:

1) “New Wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the **same number of voters** as other councillors elsewhere in the authority”:

- The part of the existing “Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown” ward that is north of the A2 (Shorne Parish, electoral wards CD and CE) has the smaller land area of the two parts of the combined ward but a greater size of electorate – 1981 in 2021.
- In contrast, the part of the present combined ward south of the A2 (Cobham and Luddesdown, electoral wards CA, CB and CC) has the larger land area of the two parts of the combined ward but a smaller size of electorate – 1305 in 2021.
- The elector number for Shorne Parish alone is greater than the average number of electors per councillor in Gravesham.
- The southern part of the ward is predicted to undergo a slight fall in electoral numbers by 2027 while Shorne Parish is predicted to undergo a 10% increase in electors by 2027.
- Against the background of greater predicted growth elsewhere in Gravesham, although the electorate numbers for Shorne Parish on its own are about 10% above average at present, by 2027 and with 39 councillors they will be very close to the new average.

2) “New wards should – as far as possible – reflect **community interests and identities**, and boundaries should be identifiable. Consider transport links, community groups and facilities, natural and physical boundaries, parishes and shared interests”:

- The Shorne wards of CD and CE are coterminous with the Parish boundaries which is very helpful administratively.
- All parts of the Shorne wards CD and CE have shared interests in protection of, and recreational enjoyment of, the local countryside north of the A2, local sports facilities and community groups meeting in local community premises such as Shorne Village Hall.
- All parts of Shorne wards CD and CE also have a very great particular shared interest at present in the construction and operational proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing which will pass through the Parish, particularly affecting and damaging the area of the Parish immediately east of Gravesend.

3) "New wards should **promote effective and convenient local government**. Consider the number of councillors for the geographic size of, and links between parts of the ward":

- The "Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown" GBC Council ward is the largest ward in the borough in terms of physical area.
- It is the most extensive ward, as it covers an area from the extreme south of the Borough to the extreme north, and from the extreme east to the urban edge north of the A2 or halfway across Gravesham south of the A2.
- The present two Councillors in fact organise their work geographically, with a longstanding informal separation along the natural and Parish border formed by the A2, so one Councillor covers everything north of the A2 (Shorne) and the other everything south of the A2 (Cobham and Luddesdown).
- However, excepting the Lower Thames Crossing issues as mentioned above, links between Shorne and the areas south of the A2 are generally weaker than those with the other rural wards that are north of the A2. There are much stronger links and much greater commonality of challenges faced between Shorne and Chalk to the west and especially Higham to the east.
- Within Shorne (CD and CE wards) there are strong internal links, a high degree of community cohesiveness, and good and productive working relationships between the Parish councillors, of which there are 9 in total (3 for CE and 6 for CD) and the GBC councillor. This beneficial situation should be preserved.

Suggestions for change:

- The existing "Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown" ward should be split east-west along the line of the A2.
- Wards CD and CE north of the A2 should together become a discrete "Shorne" ward, with one councillor. This would better reflect the extant, longstanding operational reality.
- Land north of the A2 might be removed from wards that are otherwise south of the A2.
- Otherwise, although we understand the reasoning behind the desire for electorate numbers to be equal, there needs to be some realism about the greater workload and complexity of issues that arise from representing very large physical areas. In the rural areas planning issues can be very complex, there are both residential and industrial areas, there are considerable environmental concerns, there are many more miles of highways with a much wider variety of types, and also many miles of footpaths and acres of public land.