

**Gravesham Borough Council****Personal Details:****Name:** Dan Baber**E-mail:** [REDACTED]**Postcode:** [REDACTED]**Organisation Name:** Gravesham Labour Party**Comment text:**

Dear Commission, Please find below this submission on behalf of The Gravesham Labour Party to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of the draft recommendations for Gravesham. Please note that an incorrect version of our submission was given earlier, at 14:15hrs. Please disregard the older copy and refer to this one. Yours faithfully, Dan Baber Chair Gravesham Labour Party.

**Uploaded Documents:**

**[Download \(https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1641849805\\_Gravesham+Labour+Submission+to+the+Local+Government+Boundary+Commission+for+England+January+2022+-+Published.pdf\)](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1641849805_Gravesham+Labour+Submission+to+the+Local+Government+Boundary+Commission+for+England+January+2022+-+Published.pdf)**

Dear Commission,

Please find below this submission on behalf of The Gravesham Labour Party to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of the draft recommendations for Gravesham.

Yours faithfully,

Dan Baber

Chair

Gravesham Labour Party.

## **Gravesham Labour Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for the 2023 Boundary Review**

### **Introduction**

The following submission from Gravesham Labour is in response to the LGBCE boundary review and proposals for new ward patterns for Gravesham Borough Council from the 2023 local authority elections onwards.

This submission on behalf of the Gravesham Labour Party and our membership as the local Labour Party unit for the Borough and Constituency of Gravesham and has been agreed through our democratic structures.

### **Key Principles from last submission**

We thought it would be helpful to set out again the points we made in the Key Principles submission regarding the ward patterns. We are grateful some of our original points have been accepted.

- The Government Housing Targets for many wards, particularly in the urban area, will see an increase in electors from 2023 onwards. Many current wards, particularly in the urban area, will need greater representation moving forward. It was noted that the projections given on your website <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Item%20%20-%20%20Electoral%20Forecasting%20Proforma.xlsx> reflected this. Rural wards will not see an increase in the population of such a magnitude. The largest population increase will occur in the urban wards in Gravesham and to ensure appropriate representation for the population and that a Councillor should represent the same number of residents as far as is possible, the Commission may wish to consider the increase in urban population density in line with their own guidance.
- We agree and support the proposal that the number of Gravesham Borough Councillors is lowered to 39.
- While considering the number of people that each councillor must represent, it is important that there is a commitment to respecting community identity. While much of the urban area and therefore the population of the Borough is not in a village or parish council, there are still areas of identity and community that we strongly believe are as important as those experienced by people living within a village or parish council boundary. The parish boundary of Northfleet for example should be maintained in modern Northfleet, preventing its egress into Gravesend as much as possible (similar to the old Northfleet Urban District Council and Parish Boundary). Northfleet is as distinct an area as Meopham, Shorne or Higham with its own history, family and identity.
- For absolute clarity Northfleet – from the perspective of community identity - comprises the wards of Northfleet North, Northfleet South, Coldharbour and Painters Ash north of the A2. Historically, Istead Rise south of the A2 considers itself part of this community. Within the Borough there are estates such as Painters Ash, Coldharbour, Riverview, Singlewell (known as Kings Farm normally) and Westcourt that are clear communities in their own right.

- The A2 and the High-Speed Rail Line represents a natural break in the urban/rural split and make-up of the Borough. There is a clearly a break in ward boundaries and communities due to the size of the A2 and the High-Speed Rail Line.

**Comments on the Consultation arising from the above:**

- Members of Gravesham Labour support the proposals and approach of the LGBCE in recognising the ancient nature, parish boundary and communities of Northfleet with the proposed wards of Coldharbour, Northfleet East and Rosherville, Northfleet West and Springhead and Painters Ash. We sincerely believe this proposal should be retained now and included in any future consideration.
- Gravesham Labour continues to support the proposals in the consultation to reduce the number of councillors to 39.
- Gravesham Labour believes that the proposal for ward boundaries in the rural part of Gravesham retains the separate community identities of the villages while ensuring appropriate representation for residents based on population density. It may appear that there is an imbalance in representation between urban and rural wards however; considering the ever-increasing housing targets that are set by central government and dictated to the local authority, the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and national planning policy priorities will increase population density in the urban areas of the Borough. The Commission - in line with their own principles - may wish to consider the effects of population increase by proposed developments in the urban areas and the affect this will have on future electoral representation, equality and efficiency.

**Ward by Ward Comments and Response:**

Gravesham Labour would urge the Commission to implement the following ward by ward proposals based on the evidence below.

**1) Chalk and Westcourt**

Gravesham Labour strongly oppose the proposal for a joint Chalk and Westcourt Ward. Both Chalk and Westcourt are distinct communities. For example, Chalk still recognises itself as a village with separate services and facilities and historically its own Parish Council. Chalk has never extended into the existing ward area of Westcourt which is a distinct community in its own right with its own demographic makeup which begins at the current boundary of Westcout and Chalk. Westcourt maintains its own community identity with community facilities and services that support residents in Westcourt. To recognise the two communities as one is an inappropriate assumption and certainly does not reflect the current make-up of the two distinct wards. To recognise the ward as one would contravene the principles of the review as it would ignore these two distinct communities.

We would recommend recognising the unique nature of this proposed ward set out by the LGBCE by splitting it and while retaining the overall number of councillors, create two separate wards one of Chalk with one councillor and one of Westcourt with two councillors.

Further we would wish to retain the following roads within the Ward of Westcourt (Polling District 'T') This polling district was built at the same time and has always formed part of the area known locally as Westcourt with its own special and distinct community relationship which is not shared by Chalk.

- St Patrick's Gardens
- Cerne Road

We propose that the lower portion of Thong Lane should be included within the proposed Chalk Ward given the community links with this road before Westcourt was built as a distinct neighbourhood. The style of the properties at the lower end of Thong Lane closest to the A226 and historical connection with the Parish of Chalk will be maintained whilst respecting the separate community of the remaining area to be called Westcourt.

## **2) Coldharbour**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Coldharbour including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members as this will provide appropriate representation for residents. Maintaining the current boundary proposed by the LGBCE is supported by Gravesham Labour. We would not support an increase beyond the roads set out in the consultation as this would not recognise the distinct and individual communities within Northfleet. In addition to supporting the whole boundary, we particularly support the current and proposed Eastern boundary of Coldharbour as this represents the ancient parish and community boundary of Northfleet. We support the proposed boundary as it continues to support this link.

## **3) Denton**

Gravesham Labour supports this proposal with the knowledge that new building developments in the area will mean that this does not meet the electoral population requirement in the near future. However, based on expected population density towards the end of the review period we would support moves to ensure that the new proposed development is included in the proposed ward boundary.

## **4) Istead Rise, Cobham and Luddesdown**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Istead Rise, Cobham and Luddesdown including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of Elected members.

## **5) Meopham North**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Meopham North including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of Elected members.

## **6) Meopham South and Vigo**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Meopham South and Vigo including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of Elected members.

### **7) Northfleet East and Rosherville**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the LGBCE proposal for the ward of Northfleet East and Rosherville, including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members.

The observance of this ward as a boundary of Northfleet is important and we are glad this has been maintained, we note that this proposed boundary area reflects the historical boundaries that this ward had prior to the last review.

### **8) Northfleet West and Springhead**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the LGBCE proposal for the ward of Northfleet West and Springhead including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members.

### **9) Painters Ash**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the LGBCE proposal for the ward of Painters Ash including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members. The continued observance of this ward as a boundary of Northfleet is important to the identity of the community that lives there and we welcome that this has been maintained.

### **10) Pelham**

Gravesham Labour believes the proposals fail to recognise the current distinct communities and the similarity between the residents in those neighbourhoods. Gravesham Labour would strongly recommend that the following roads are moved into Pelham Ward from the proposed Woodlands Ward, making Pelham Ward a three-member ward and reducing the number of members for Woodlands ward to two considering the population density based on representative proportionality:

- Lynton Road South
- St Thomas's Avenue
- Pinnock's Avenue
- Bartlett Road

### **11) Riverview Park**

Gravesham Labour supports this being a two-member ward and the name of the proposed ward. However, we do not support the proposed boundary which has absorbed a whole polling district (Polling District 'T') from the community of Westcourt to achieve electoral equality numbers. We would strongly urge that the LGCBE to restore this polling to Westcourt. The proposal that polling district 'T' should be absorbed from Westcourt into Riverview fails to recognise the distinct neighbourhoods. The needs of residents in polling district 'T' tend to be very different from those in Riverview Ward.

Gravesham Labour suggests that to maintain appropriate representation the following roads should be retained in the Riverview Park Ward:

- Stacey Close
- Dobson Road
- St George's Crescent
- St David's Crescent
- Read Way
- The Drive
- The Rise and
- The Warren

This recommendation would ensure there is electoral equality as the aforementioned polling district is removed and placed back into Westcourt while also protecting the different community identities.

#### **12) Shorne and Higham**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Shorne and Higham including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members.

#### **13) Singlewell**

Gravesham Labour supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Singlewell including the name to a certain extent. As most of Kings Farm does seem to sit within this area, the naming 'Singlewell and Kings Farm' would better serve notions of community and identity rather than the proposed 'Woodlands and Kings Farm' Ward which would then be named 'Woodlands'. We support the boundary lines along with the proposed number of elected members.

#### **14) Town**

Gravesham Labour supports this proposal with the knowledge that proposed developments in the area may mean that this does not meet the electoral population requirement in the very near future - towards the end of the review period – and would support moves to ensure that this proposed development was included in the proposed new ward boundary.

#### **15) Whitehill and Windmill Hill**

Gravesham Labour fully supports the proposal of LGBCE for the ward of Whitehill and Windmill Hill including the name and boundary along with the proposed number of elected members.

#### **16) Woodlands and Kings Farm**

Gravesham Labour objects to the proposal based on the recommendations we have made regarding Pelham Ward above. We believe the ward should be reduced in size to reflect the distinct and very different communities within the ward, with the roads listed above moved from Woodlands and Kings Farm Ward into Pelham. Additionally, we believe the representation for the Woodlands and Kings Farm Ward should be reduced to two elected members based on the reduction in size of the ward. Furthermore, we oppose the name of the proposed ward as the 'Kings Farm' nomenclature is more suited to Singlewell as outlined above in our response concerning Singlewell ward.



### **Conclusion**

Gravesham Labour would formally like to thank the LGBCE for their work in submitting ward boundary changes and would request that the above submission is considered recognising not just the electoral numbers although very important but the distinct communities and neighbourhoods that should be kept intact as well now and in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Dan Baber

Chair

On behalf of The Gravesham Labour Party

January 2022