

New electoral arrangements for Gravesend Borough Council Final Recommendations

April 2022

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Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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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 Parliament¹. 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.

¹ 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

Why Gravesham?

7 We have conducted a review of Gravesham Borough Council ('the Council') as some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. This is 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as equal as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

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

- The wards in Gravesham 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 Gravesham

9 Gravesham should be represented by 39 councillors, five fewer than there are now.

10 Gravesham should have 17 wards, one fewer than there is now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change; none will stay the same.

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

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.

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 Gravesham. 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 May 2021	Number of councillors decided
25 May 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
2 August 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
2 November 2021	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
10 January 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
5 April 2022	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ 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 Gravesham	76,069	85,994
Number of councillors	39	39
Average number of electors per councillor	1,950	2,205

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 our proposed wards for Gravesham 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

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 borough level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 13% by 2027.

23 Two submissions were received during the first round of consultation which queried the electoral figures put forward by the Council. One, from Gravesham Conservatives ('the Conservatives'), disagreed with the Council's forecast for Meopham parish. This forecast was also challenged by a councillor. The electorate

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

forecast was again queried by the Conservatives, a councillor and a resident during consultation on the draft recommendations. Having considered the information provided, we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been presented to justify any significant change to the forecast that was agreed at the beginning of this review. We remain satisfied that the projected figures provided by the Council are the best available at the present time and have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

24 Gravesham Borough Council currently has 44 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that decreasing this number by five will 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 39 councillors: for example, 39 one-councillor wards, 13 three-councillor wards, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

26 We received **one** submission about the number of councillors in response to the consultation on our draft recommendations. This submission, a full scheme submitted by a resident, recommended that an extra councillor be introduced to allow a two-councillor Istead Rise ward and a one-councillor Cobham & Luddesdown ward. However, as detailed later in this report, the electoral variance of the proposed Istead Rise ward was 21%. We have not been persuaded to adopt this proposal given the high variance that would result and have maintained the number of councillors at 39 as part of our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

27 We received 21 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included three borough-wide proposals from the Council, Gravesham Conservatives and a resident. A partial scheme of the rural areas beyond Gravesend was submitted by Vigo Parish Council. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

28 The three borough-wide schemes provided mixed patterns of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for Gravesham. Of these, only the resident's scheme provided good electoral equality for all wards, which we adopted for the urban area of Gravesham, with minor variations, in our draft recommendations. In the rural south of the borough, we adopted the Council's proposed wards for Meopham and the Conservatives' Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown ward.

29 Our draft recommendations also took 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.

30 As a result of the restrictions arising from the Covid-19 outbreak at the time of preparing draft recommendations, there was a detailed virtual tour of Gravesham. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the draft recommendations.

31 Our draft recommendations were for seven three-councillor wards and nine two-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

32 We received 51 submissions in response to the consultation on our draft recommendations. These included five borough-wide proposals from the Council, the Conservatives, Gravesham Labour Party (Labour), Councillor Robert Lane ('Councillor Lane'), and a local resident. These schemes all made relatively minor modifications to our draft recommendations. We also received a submission from Adam Holloway MP (Gravesham), whose comments were broadly in line with the proposals put forward by the Conservatives. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for wards arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

33 Our final recommendations are based upon the draft recommendations with minor modifications to a number of wards in the urban area of the borough. These modifications were based primarily upon the Conservatives' scheme, but also included elements from the other complete schemes, most notably the Labour proposal to split the Chalk & Westcourt ward into a one-councillor Chalk ward and a two-councillor Westcourt ward.

Final recommendations

34 Our final recommendations are for six three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward. 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.

35 The tables and maps on pages 9–22 detail our final recommendations for each area of Gravesham. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

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

36 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 29 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Northfleet



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Coldharbour & Perry Street	3	6%
Northfleet & Springhead	3	2%
Painters Ash	2	2%
Rosherville	2	-6%

Coldharbour & Perry Street, Northfleet & Springhead, Painters Ash and Rosherville
 37 We received three submissions from residents and one from Adam Holloway MP (Gravesham) in response to our draft recommendations for this area in addition to the five complete warding schemes. Of these, one recommended merging the two Northfleet wards and the Coldharbour and Painters Ash wards. However, this would necessitate six-councillor and four-councillor wards, respectively. While there is no

upper limit in legislation regarding the number of councillors that may be returned from each ward, we take the view that wards returning more than three councillors results in a dilution of accountability to the electorate and we will not normally recommend a number above that figure.

38 Another resident suggested the wards follow the boundaries of the former Northfleet and Gravesend Urban Borough Councils, which were abolished in 1974, but these are historic boundaries and we are not persuaded that they necessarily reflect current and developing community identities in this area. A third resident expressed concern that, under the draft recommendations, the polling station they currently use would no longer be in her ward. However, polling districts and polling stations will be reviewed by the Council following this review.

39 The schemes submitted by the Conservatives, Councillor Lane and the resident sought to return the boundary between our draft Northfleet East & Rosherville and Coldharbour wards to the railway line, on the basis that this provides a strong boundary between two distinct communities. This would result in the number of councillors in the ward north of the railway line being reduced to two and the ward south of the line being increased to three. This was also supported by Mr Holloway. Upon our virtual tour of the area we were convinced that the railway does indeed provide a strong boundary given the limited access points and the large amount of empty land either side of the railway line.

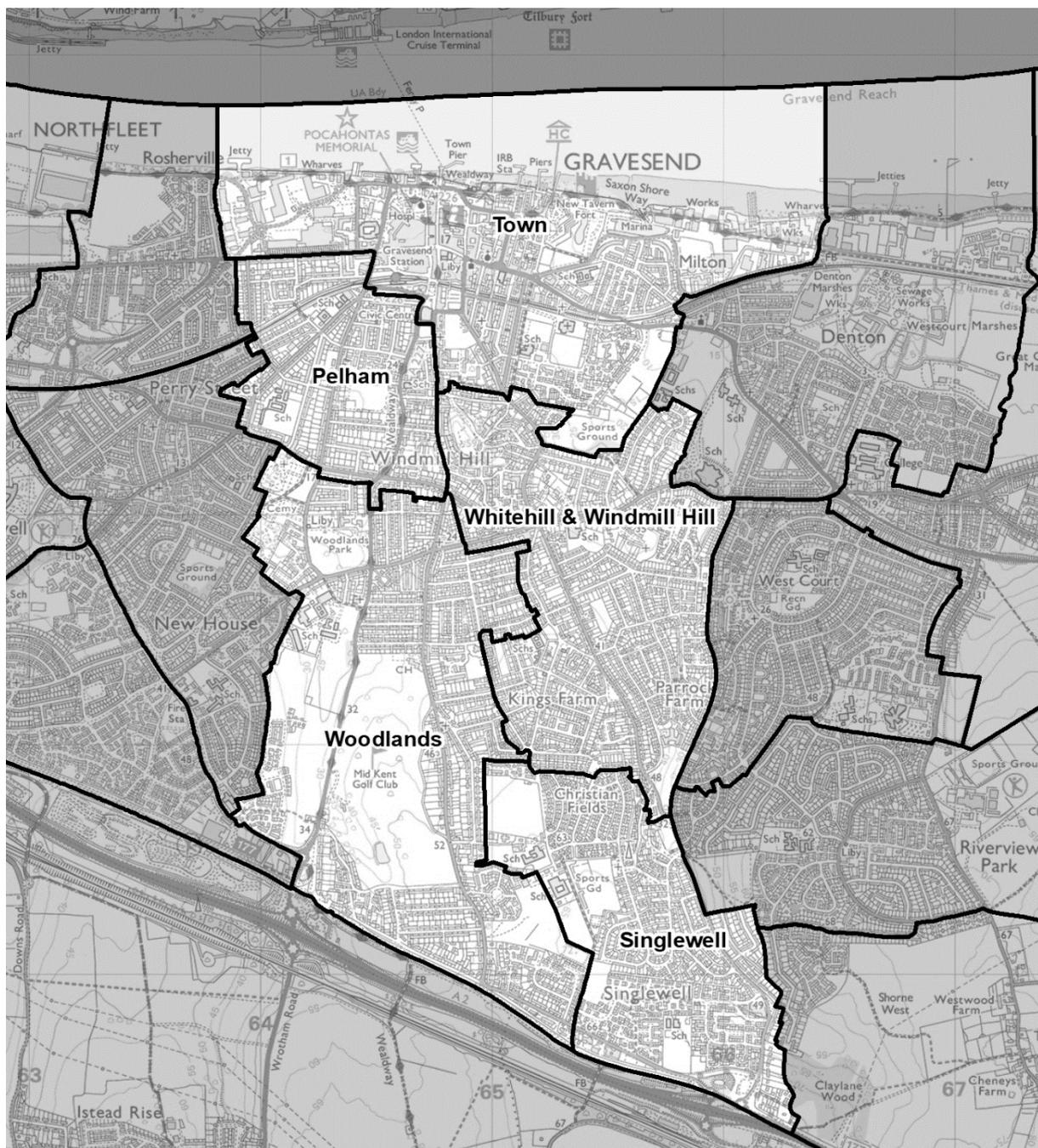
40 There were minor variations between the proposed schemes. The schemes submitted by Councillor Lane and the resident also included areas in the north-west of the ward in their proposed Pelham ward. In the resident's proposal, this included Old Road West and houses on Havelock Road and Granville Road east of Campbell Road. Councillor Lane's proposals included this area minus the south side of Old Road West. Councillor Lane also proposed including houses on Havelock Road and Granville Road as far as The Campbell Arms, as well as Campbell Road and Quarry Close in the proposed ward. We carefully considered the alternatives but noted that both proposals contributed to a Pelham ward having 16% more electors per councillor than the borough average. We were not persuaded that we had received sufficient evidence to justify the high electoral variances that would result and so have not adopted these proposals in our final recommendations.

41 Three names were also suggested for the ward south of the railway line. The Conservatives suggested 'Coldharbour & Perry Street', Councillor Lane suggested 'Perry Street & Coldharbour', while the resident suggested 'Perry Street'. While we believe there is merit in all these suggestions, we chose 'Coldharbour & Perry Street' for its greater representation and continuity with our draft recommendations. Both the Conservatives and the resident renamed the northern ward 'Rosherville' on the basis that this better reflected the community identity of the revised ward. We have decided to adopt this ward name as part of our final recommendations.

42 Councillor Lane retained the name 'Northfleet East & Rosherville', as his proposed ward also included houses east of Dover Road. This was 'to better reflect the identity and interest of the communities concerned', though no further evidence was provided. His proposals here would result in the ward having 9% more electors per councillor than the borough average, and Northfleet West & Springhead ward having 9% fewer. These variances, while reasonable, were somewhat higher than those proposed in other schemes and in our draft recommendations. On balance, we have not been persuaded that sufficient community identity evidence has been received to support this alternative and we have not adopted it as part of our final recommendations.

43 The three schemes also proposed transferring Gravesend Cemetery, Dashwood Road, The Downage and Farmcroft from the Coldharbour ward into Woodlands ward to the east, on the basis that they identify strongly with the Woodlands community. We also noted on our virtual tour that there was greater access to these areas from the east, favouring convenient and effective local government. We have therefore adopted these proposals as part of our final recommendations.

Gravesend West



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Pelham	2	3%
Singlewell	2	3%
Town	3	3%
Whitehill & Windmill Hill	3	2%
Woodlands	3	-2%

Pelham and Town

44 We received one submission from a resident and one from Adam Holloway MP in response to our draft recommendations for this area in addition to the five complete warding schemes. The resident's submission was in favour of our proposal to create a Town ward. All the complete schemes submitted, except Labour's, proposed to expand our proposed Town ward. The Council's submission made the most minor changes. It suggested adding the proposed Old Barracks redevelopment – as access is via Armoury Drive in our proposed Town ward – and including the full length of Wellington Street and Parrock Street up to Christ Church Gardens for a clearer boundary between the Town and Whitehill & Windmill Hill wards. The Council also proposed extending the boundary of Town ward eastward along Norfolk Road to Mark Lane – an area with no electors – as the Canal Basin housing development is expected to continue into this area beyond 2027. We have adopted this proposal in our final recommendations as we consider it sensible for the ward boundary to reflect the long-term footprint of the Canal Basin development.

45 The schemes submitted by the Conservatives, Councillor Lane and the resident went further in also including properties north of William Street, on the basis that residents in this area do not consider themselves part of Windmill Hill and use amenities in the town centre. Councillor Lane also proposed that Bronte View be transferred from our proposed Town ward into Whitehill & Windmill Hill ward, as access is from Parrock Road. These schemes also proposed including Gravesham railway station, the Civic Centre and the one-way road system around them in Town ward. These changes were supported by Mr Holloway. We consider there is merit in including these civic amenities in Town ward and have adopted all these proposals in our final recommendations. These changes also improve electoral equality in Town ward from 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average to 3% more.

Singlewell, Whitehill & Windmill Hill and Woodlands

46 In addition to the five complete warding schemes, we received five submissions from residents in response to our draft recommendations for this area, which has seen the most substantial changes in our final recommendations. One noted that signs for Kings Farm 'start at Sun Lane, Kings Drive and Christian Fields Avenue but the boundaries don't represent this'. With the exception of Christian Fields Avenue, we believe the boundaries in our final recommendations will better reflect this. Another argued that 'Riverview Park is an estate and should remain as it is, without new roads included', but no further evidence was provided to support this proposal. Two other submissions commented on the socio-economic status of residents in different parts of our proposed wards. While community identities and interests is one of our three key criteria, social-economic characteristics, of themselves, are not a factor we take account of. A fifth submission asserted that The Rise should be included in Riverview Park ward rather than Singlewell. This is discussed further in

paragraph 60.

47 Our final recommendations are based mostly upon the Conservatives' submission, which provided greater electoral equality than the other schemes, as well as strong supporting evidence for the proposed changes. Nonetheless, we have departed from this scheme in some areas, notably on the boundary between Town and Whitehill & Windmill Hill wards, as discussed above. The Conservative scheme proposed that the existing boundary between Pelham and Woodlands wards, along the middle of Old Road West, be maintained. However, based upon the evidence we received in this and the previous round of consultation, we still believe the boundary in our draft recommendations best reflects community identity in the area. This boundary was maintained in the Council and resident schemes, while variations were proposed by Councillor Lane and Labour.

48 Councillor Lane's proposal was similar to our draft recommendations but did not include Old Road West, west of Wrotham Road, or a number of electors at the St Thomas' Almshouses in his proposed ward. Labour suggested extending the Pelham boundary southwards to include Bartlett Road, Lynton Road South, Pinnock's Avenue and St Thomas' Avenue, further suggesting that the number of councillors for Woodlands & Kings Farm be decreased to two and Pelham increased to three members. However, this would result in there being 51% more electors per councillor than the borough average in Woodlands & Kings Farm and 25% fewer in Pelham. The resident's scheme proposed including all of Old Road West as well as Granville Road and Havelock Road in Pelham ward, but this would result in there being an electoral variance of 16% by 2027.

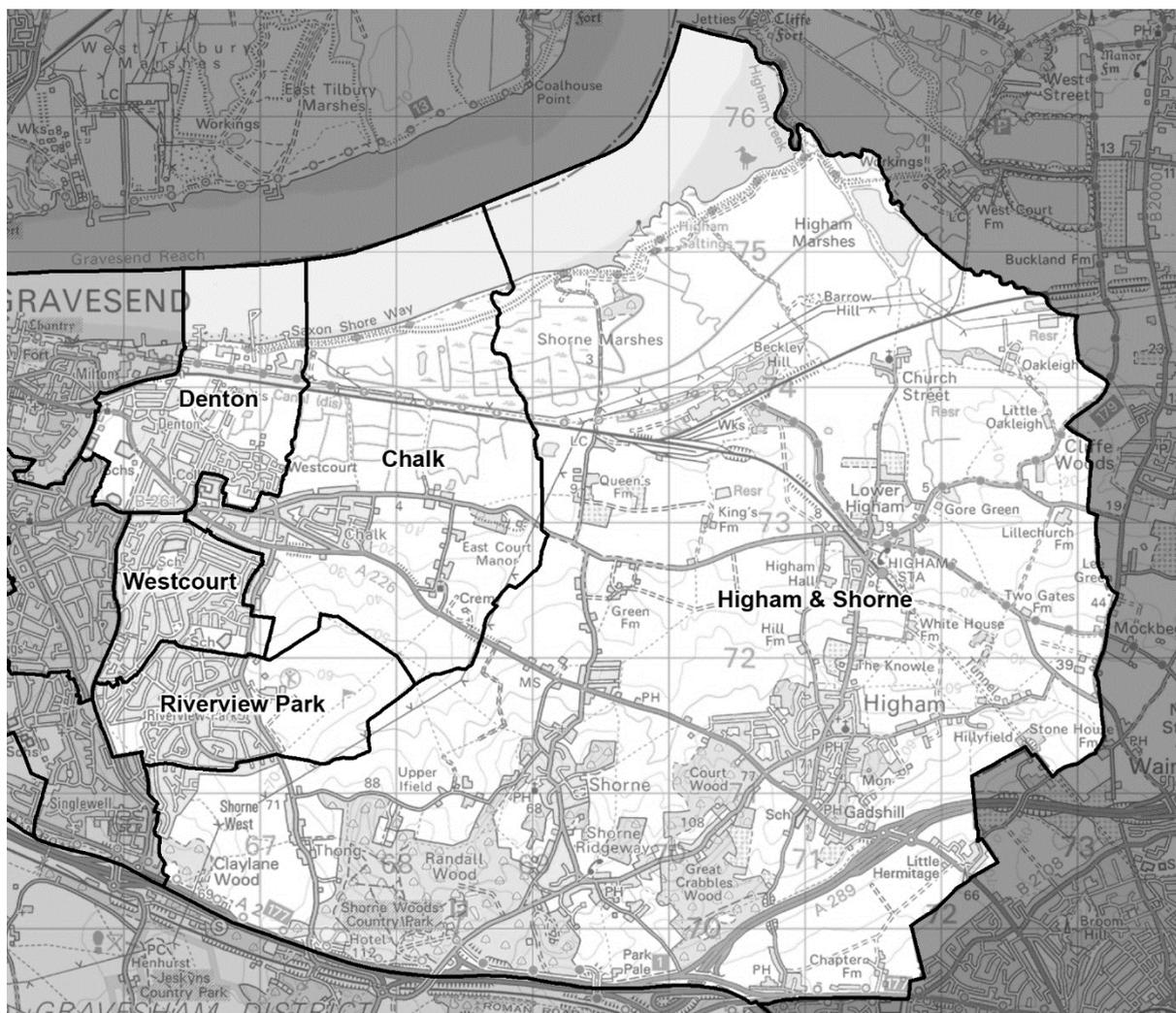
49 All schemes submitted recommended that Woodlands & Kings Farm should continue to be known as 'Woodlands', except Councillor Lane's, which suggested it should be known as 'Woodlands & Singlewell', on the basis that residents in the south of ward strongly identify with Singlewell. However, having carefully considered the evidence received, we have decided to name the ward 'Woodlands'. The schemes submitted by the Conservatives, the Council and the resident included Ifield School in Singlewell ward, owing to the access being from Cedar Avenue. The Conservative proposals for Singlewell also included King's Farm Primary School, which we noted on our tour is also accessed via Cedar Avenue. We have adopted these proposals in our final recommendations in order that our wards better reflect road transport links and access.

50 The Conservative scheme also included Hawthorn Close in Singlewell, due to access being via Cedar Avenue, as well as houses on Ash Road, Cedar Avenue and Poplar Avenue, citing their lack of identification with Woodlands and use of King's Farm and Singlewell Primary Schools. We noted that the playing fields between Cedar Avenue and Windsor Road in Woodlands ward also place considerable distance between residents on either side, so have adopted the Conservatives'

proposals in our final recommendations. The Conservatives' proposals also included Ferndale Road, Malvina Avenue, part of Portland Avenue and Smarts Road in Woodlands ward for reasons of 'electoral equality and good local governance'. We note that, without this transfer, Woodlands ward would have 8% fewer electors than the borough average, and Whitehill & Windmill Hill ward 11% more, significantly increasing electoral inequality. While we have considered Central Avenue to be a good boundary between the wards, we noted on our virtual tour that this boundary bisects Portland Avenue, and that there seemed to be no discernible difference between the housing on either side. We have therefore decided to adopt this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

51 Both the Conservatives' and the resident's schemes included Elm Road, Gloucester Road, Kings Drive, Kitchener Avenue, Princes Road, Queens Road, York Road, and the lower part of Whitehill Lane in Whitehill & Windmill Hill ward. This was on the basis that residents in these areas identify with Whitehill and make use of amenities on Whitehill Parade. Given the proximity of these streets to this shopping parade, we have adopted this proposal in our final recommendations. As this warding pattern would leave Singlewell with a 15% electoral variance, we have slightly adjusted the Conservatives' proposed ward boundary with Riverview Park and Chalk & Westcourt, which is discussed below.

Gravesend East



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Chalk	1	-1%
Denton	2	-3%
Higham & Shorne	3	-10%
Riverview Park	2	-3%
Westcourt	2	2%

Chalk and Westcourt

52 We received four submissions in response to our draft recommendations for this area, in addition to the five complete warding schemes. Two of these submissions were from residents and another from Councillor John Caller. They objected to the grouping of Chalk and Westcourt into a single ward and argued they were two distinct communities and did not share a sense of community identity or interest. Councillor Caller added that the ward was bisected 'by one of the busiest roads in the Borough of Gravesham, the A226, Chalk being on the north and Westcourt on the south, creating two individual communities'. However, Adam

Holloway MP argued that Chalk and Westcourt were historically the same community and shared a parade of shops at the roundabout on Rochester Road, adding that any division between them would be 'arbitrary'.

53 Of the schemes submitted, only Councillor Lane and Labour proposed splitting our proposed Chalk & Westcourt ward into two. Councillor Lane included both sides of the A226 Rochester Road, as well as Forge Lane, both sides of Barr Road and part of Thong Lane in a single-councillor Chalk ward. This ward would have 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2027. The remainder of our proposed ward would form a two-councillor Westcourt ward, with the addition of Pankhurst Place, St David's Crescent, St George's Crescent, St Hilda's Way, St Patrick's Gardens and Valley Drive. This ward would have 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2027.

54 The Labour scheme used Rochester Road as the boundary between Chalk and Westcourt wards up to Thong Lane. It was proposed that a number of electors on Thong Lane be included in the proposed Chalk ward 'given the community links with this road before Westcourt was built as a distinct neighbourhood' and the similar style of properties to those in Chalk. This ward would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. Labour's proposed Westcourt ward was formed of the remainder of our draft Chalk & Westcourt ward with the addition of Beltana Drive, Cerne Road and Dorset Crescent. However, this ward would have an electoral variance of 16% by 2027.

55 We considered the merits of both schemes carefully in the light of other submissions made throughout the review. We have decided to adopt a combination of the two schemes in our final recommendations for Chalk ward – following Labour's proposed boundaries but with the addition of properties on the south side of Rochester Road. This ensures that only those properties with a clear relationship with Chalk are added to the ward, while improving electoral equality in the ward to -1% by 2027. Our recommended Westcourt ward will also have good electoral equality containing 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2027. It should be noted that the Conservatives' scheme included Pankhurst Place, the lower end of St Dunstan's Drive, St Hilda's Way and St Patrick's Gardens in Singlewell, resulting in a ward with 15% more electors per councillor than the borough average. Including these streets in Westcourt reduced this figure to 3% more.

Denton

56 We received 16 submissions from residents concerning the placement of the Dalefield area in Denton ward in our draft recommendations. Many argued that Dering Way served as an effective boundary between the two communities of Denton and Chalk and that Dalefield had always been considered part of the village. Some commented on the socio-economic makeup of the Denton community. On our

virtual tour to the area we noted that Dering Way served as a clear boundary between the two areas but, on the other hand, we also noted that Dalefield was well-served by road connections to Denton and further west into Gravesend, but was accessible from Chalk only via Dering Way and was somewhat removed from the village itself. However, even if we were inclined to move Dalefield into Chalk ward, this would result in there being 47% more electors per councillor in Chalk than the borough average and 27% fewer in Denton ward by 2027. We have therefore retained the Dalefield area in Denton ward in our final recommendations.

Higham & Shorne

57 We received two submissions from Shorne Parish Council and a resident, in addition to the five complete warding schemes, in response to our draft recommendations for Shorne & Higham ward. Both were supportive of our proposed ward boundaries, with the resident noting that the two parishes had many similarities. Both the Conservatives' and resident's schemes suggested naming the ward 'Higham & Shorne' in recognition of Higham's greater electorate size. We have decided to adopt this proposed name change in our final recommendations.

Riverview Park

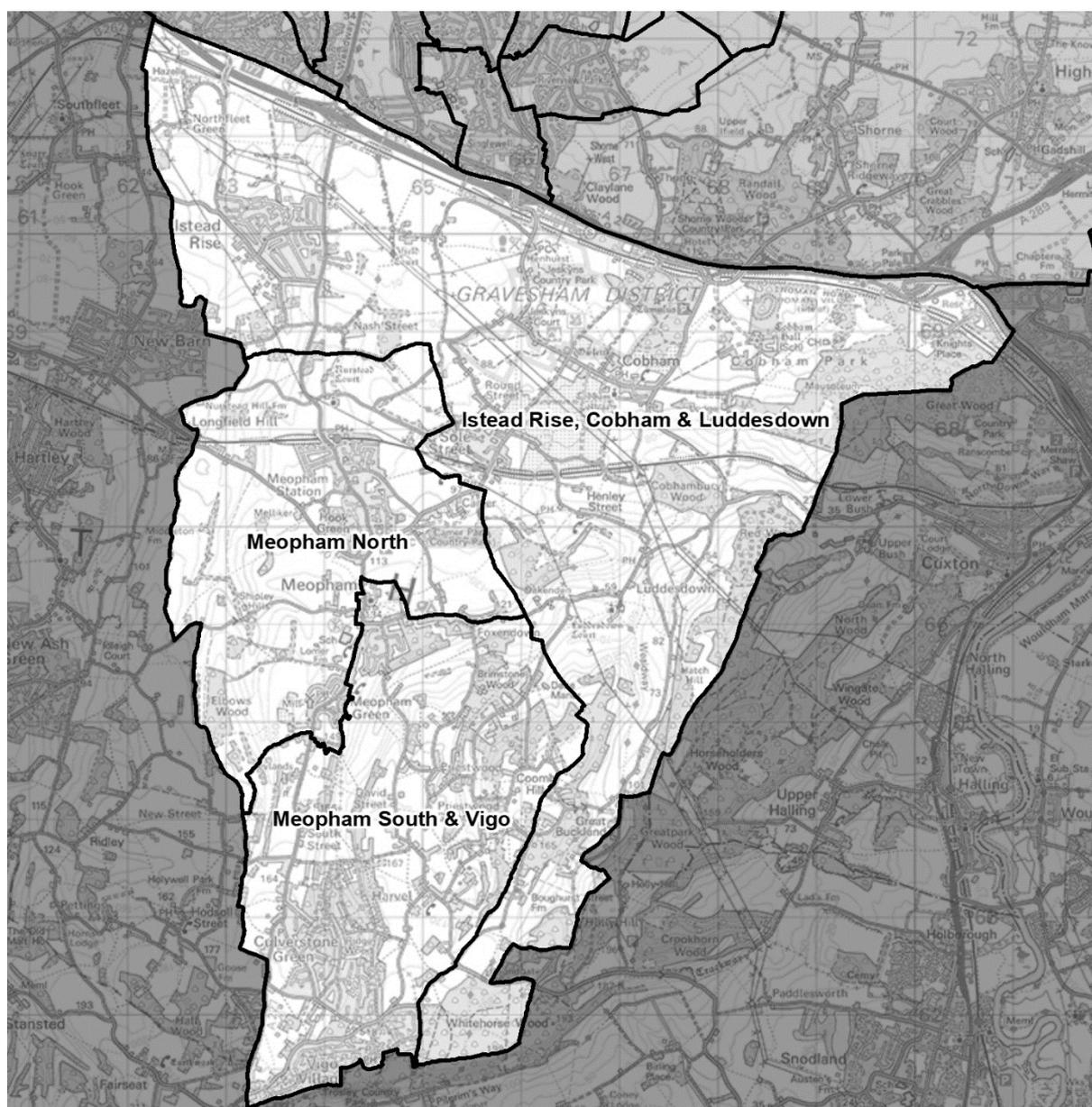
58 We received two submissions from residents, in addition to the five complete warding schemes, for Riverview Park ward. One suggested that 'Riverview Park is an estate and should remain as it is, without new roads included', but did not provide community evidence to support this. Another resident referred to the socio-economic characteristics of electors added to the ward in our draft recommendations.

59 As described earlier in this report, we have included the St Patrick's Gardens area in Westcourt ward in our final recommendations, based on the evidence received. The Council's and Labour's submissions also proposed including Beltana Drive, Cerne Road and Dorset Crescent, but this would have resulted in a high electoral variance for the ward. Furthermore, while the Labour submission described these properties as being built around the same time as those in Westcourt, we noted on our virtual tour that they appeared to have more similarities with those in Riverview Park. Having carefully considered the evidence received, we have decided to retain them in this ward in our final recommendations.

60 The Council and Labour proposed including Dobson Road, Read Way, Stacey Close, St David's Crescent, St George's Crescent, The Drive, The Rise and The Warren in the ward. This was on the basis that they identify with the Riverview Park community. The schemes submitted by the Conservatives and Councillor Lane included only The Drive, The Rise and The Warren in this list. However, all appeared to be in agreement that the boundary between Riverview Park and Westcourt is generally considered to be the junction at which St Hilda's Way and St Francis Avenue meet, with the Council's submission clarifying that the boundary should be drawn behind the houses on St Hilda's Way. We have therefore adopted the Council

and Labour proposals in our final recommendations, with the exception of Dobson Road, Read Way and Stacey Close. This is because we noted on our virtual tour of the borough that these roads are accessed via Valley Drive in Singlewell ward. We therefore concluded that they should remain in Singlewell ward as part of our final recommendations.

South Gravesham



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown	2	9%
Meopham North	2	-2%
Meopham South & Vigo	2	-4%

Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown

61 We received 11 submissions in addition to the five complete schemes in response to our draft recommendations for Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown ward. With the exception of a submission from Cobham Parish Council, which was in favour of the recommendations, these were from residents and Adam Holloway MP and were generally against the grouping of Istead Rise in a ward with Cobham and

Luddesdown parishes. One submission was in favour of Istead Rise being included with Cobham parish but objected to the southern part of Luddesdown parish being included in the ward, arguing it should be included in Meopham South & Vigo ward. However, the great majority of electors in Luddesdown live near the boundary with Cobham parish and, as we are obliged to create new parish electoral arrangements where we split parishes between wards, the remaining electors would, in our view, constitute an unviable parish ward. We have therefore not adopted this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

62 We acknowledge the concerns expressed in the other submissions regarding Istead Rise. However, as detailed in our draft recommendations report, this was the only warding pattern which avoided either splitting Cobham and Luddesdown parishes or creating a geographically large ward, which would also include Higham and Shorne parishes. Furthermore, establishing either an Istead Rise ward or a Painters Ash & Istead Rise ward would result in poor electoral equality.

63 The resident's scheme suggested several warding patterns for this area but these all either resulted in poor electoral equality or required wards with four councillors. While there is no upper limit in legislation regarding the number of councillors that may be returned from each ward, we take the view that wards returning more than three councillors results in a dilution of accountability to the electorate and we will not normally recommend a number above that figure. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown ward as final.

Meopham North and Meopham South & Vigo

64 We received one submission from Adam Holloway MP in response to our draft recommendations for Meopham, in addition to the five complete warding schemes. The resident's proposals included a number of alternatives for the area, including a four-member ward and a three-member ward for the whole of Meopham. Mr Holloway also favoured a single ward for the whole Meopham parish. However, as mentioned above, we are not minded to recommend wards of more than three members. Additionally, the resident's second option would result in a high electoral variance.

65 The Conservatives, Councillor Lane and the resident expressed dissatisfaction with the electoral forecast for Meopham North in particular, adding they could not account for the large increase in the electorate, which is expected to grow by 1,555 by 2027. However, the Council provided details of extensive housing development in the ward area with its forecast, totalling 1,356 electors. This includes developments on land north of Steele's Lane, between Melliker Lane and Longfield Road, north of Melliker Lane, east and south of Lomer Farm, south of Green Lane and east of Wrotham Road, and west of Norwood Lane. The remainder of the increase in electors is expected through natural growth based upon previous trends. These

submissions also expressed some concerns about the boundary between Meopham North and Meopham South wards, particularly around Wrotham Road.

66 We have carefully considered the evidence received and reconsidered the boundary between the two wards. However, given the difficulties involved in drawing a boundary which ensures good electoral equality and the pattern of communities in this area, we are content that this warding pattern, originally submitted by the Council, offers the best available solution. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Meopham North and Meopham South & Vigo wards as final.

Conclusions

67 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Gravesham, 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	39	39
Number of electoral wards	17	17
Average number of electors per councillor	1,950	2,205
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Final recommendations

Gravesham Borough Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 17 wards representing one single-councillor ward, 10 two-councillor wards and six three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for the Gravesham Borough Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Gravesham Borough Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

68 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.

69 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, Gravesham 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.

70 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 Meopham Parish Council.

71 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Meopham parish.

Final recommendations

Meopham Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Camer & Meopham Green	4
Culverstone & Harvel	4
Nurstead & Hook Green	4

What happens next?

72 We have now completed our review of Gravesham 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 2023.

Equalities

73 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 Gravesham 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	Chalk	1	2,141	2,141	10%	2,184	2,184	-1%
2	Coldharbour & Perry Street	3	6,574	2,191	12%	6,990	2,330	6%
3	Denton	2	3,670	1,835	-6%	4,298	2,149	-3%
4	Higham & Shorne	3	5,154	1,718	-12%	5,933	1,978	-10%
5	Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown	2	4,070	2,035	4%	4,792	2,396	9%
6	Meopham North	2	2,775	1,388	-29%	4,330	2,165	-2%
7	Meopham South & Vigo	2	4,159	2,080	7%	4,233	2,117	-4%
8	Northfleet & Springhead	3	5,503	1,834	-6%	6,727	2,242	2%
9	Painters Ash	2	4,334	2,167	11%	4,484	2,242	2%
10	Pelham	2	4,235	2,118	9%	4,543	2,272	3%
11	Riverview Park	2	4,113	2,057	5%	4,273	2,137	-3%
12	Rosherville	2	3,077	1,539	-21%	4,138	2,069	-6%
13	Singlewell	2	4,483	2,242	15%	4,534	2,267	3%

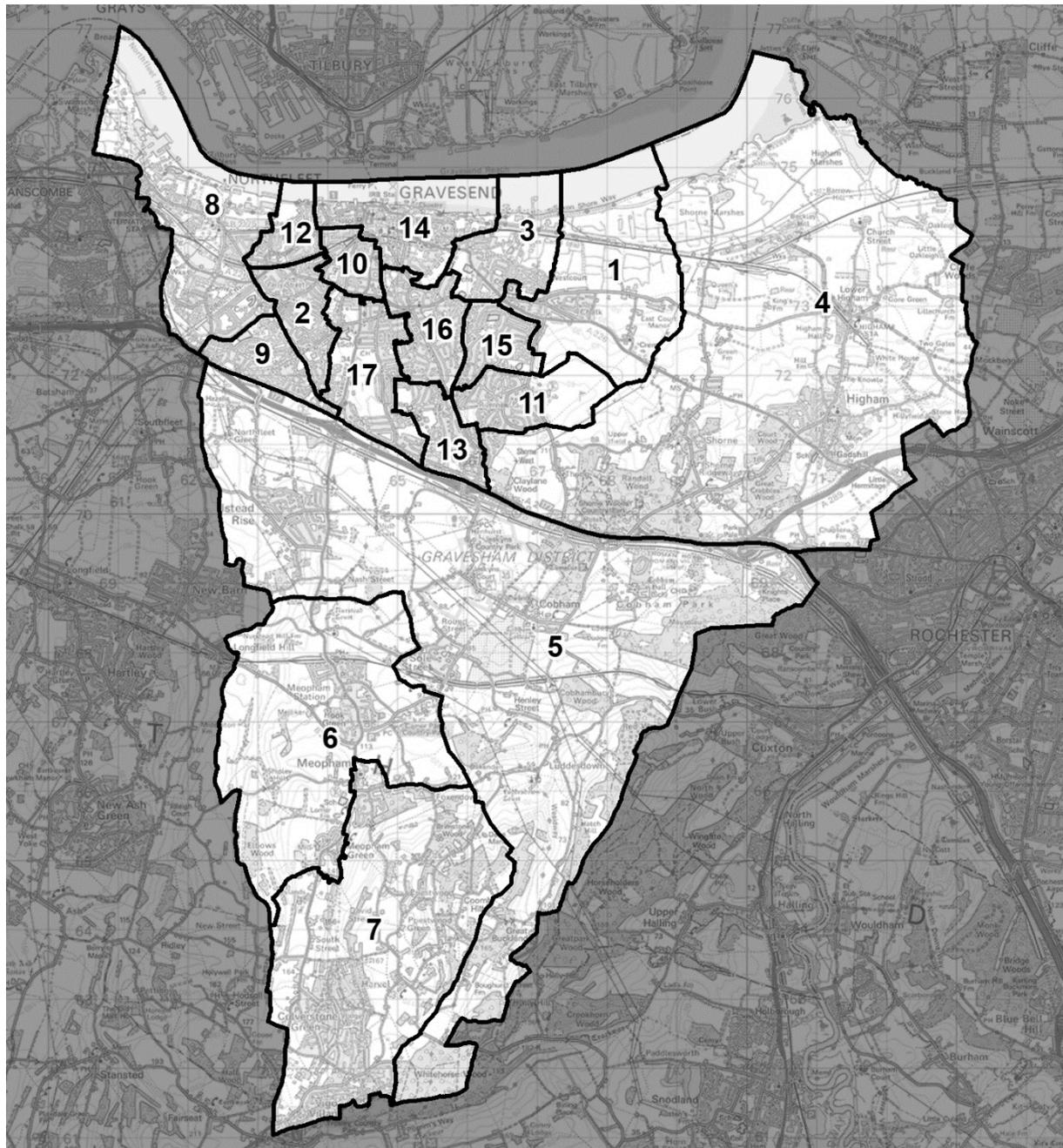
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
14 Town	3	5,446	1,815	-7%	6,815	2,272	3%
15 Westcourt	2	4,227	2,114	8%	4,492	2,246	2%
16 Whitehill & Windmill Hill	3	6,522	2,174	11%	6,776	2,259	2%
17 Woodlands	3	5,586	1,862	-5%	6,452	2,151	-2%
Totals	39	76,069	-	-	85,994	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,950	-	-	2,205	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gravesham 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	Chalk
2	Coldharbour & Perry Street
3	Denton
4	Higham & Shorne
5	Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown
6	Meopham North
7	Meopham South & Vigo

8	Northfleet & Springhead
9	Painters Ash
10	Pelham
11	Riverview Park
12	Rosherville
13	Singlewell
14	Town
15	Westcourt
16	Whitehill & Windmill Hill
17	Woodlands

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/gravesham>

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/kent/gravesham>

Local Authority

- Gravesham Borough Council

Political Groups

- Gravesham Conservatives
- Gravesham Labour

Councillors

- Councillor J. Caller (Gravesham Borough Council)
- Councillor R. Lane (Gravesham Borough Council)

Members of Parliament

- Adam Holloway MP (Gravesham)

Parish and Town Councils

- Cobham Parish Council
- Shorne Parish Council

Local Residents

- 43 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 www.nalc.gov.uk
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 borough 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 borough 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.

Local Government Boundary Commission for
England
1st Floor, Windsor House
50 Victoria Street, London
SW1H 0TL

Telephone: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Online: www.lgbce.org.uk

www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Twitter: @LGBCE