[redacted]

From: Walsh, Simon <simon.walsh@gravesham.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 July 2021 15:11
To: reviews
Cc: Nizinskyj, Paul; Batstone, Michelle
Subject: GRAVESHAM - Draft Warding Consultation Submission from Gravesham Borough Council
Attachments: GBC Ward Arrangements FINAL Submission - July 2021.pdf; download_file_boundary_geojson.json

[redacted] [redacted]

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached a warding consultation submission from Gravesham Borough Council and a geojson file with the ward boundaries contained within.

Please could I ask that you acknowledge receipt and if you have any further questions please feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards

Simon Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)
Gravesham Borough Council
[redacted]
Email: simon.walsh@gravesham.gov.uk

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Warding Arrangements Submission

July 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Boundary Commission identified Gravesham Borough Council as a local authority that requires a review of its electoral arrangements for two key reasons. The first is that it had been almost twenty years since the council had its last review in 2001. Secondly, there was an evident level of electoral imbalance across the borough which breaches the acceptable 'levels of equality' endorsed by the Local Government Boundary Commission.

The review commenced earlier in 2021 and as part of the first stage of the review, a proposal was provided to the Commission in May 2021, seeking a reduction in the number of Borough Councillors from 44 to 39, a reduction of five (11.4%) elected representatives. The Commission were minded to recommend this reduction and moved to the second stage of the process; to determine revised warding arrangements for the borough, based upon 39 councillors representing the borough.

This document sets out the council's submission for a revised warding pattern for the borough of Gravesham, giving due consideration to the three main criteria set by the Commission in determining warding arrangements:

1. Delivering electoral equality for local voters

2. Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities

3. Promoting effective and convenient local government

It is felt that the attached proposal meets the criteria as set by the Commission.

Initial proposals were considered at a Member Cross-party Working Group consisting of the Leader's of the three political groups in Gravesham, and additional suggestions to the warding patterns were received. These were duly considered by officers to ensure they met the requirements of the Commission and were technically sound. Whilst some proposed amendments were accepted by the Cross-party working group on the basis of this analysis, others were recommended for refusal. As a result of the analysis undertaken, the Leader of the Conservative group did not feel able to fully support the proposals being put forward and withdrew from further discussions.

The attached proposals are supported by the Leader of the Labour Group and the Leader of the Independent Group. It is understood that it is the intention of the opposition group to submit their own proposals.

[redacted]

Councillor John Burden

Leader of the Council

[redacted]

Councillor Harold Craske

Leader of the
Independent Group

WARDING ARRANGEMENTS SUBMISSION

Following on from the collaborative approach across all groups represented on Gravesham Council that was used in the submission of Council Size proposals in May 2021, the Cross-party Working Group comprising the Leader of the Executive and the Leaders of the Conservative and Independent Groups was re-convened to consider options for the warding arrangements for Gravesham.

The working group were presented with and reviewed relevant data on future ward patterns as well the supporting rationale for the potential warding arrangements presented. The data considered by the Cross-party Group has included:

- the electorate forecast for 2027, taking account of new developments in the borough.
- details of the average number of electors required per councillor (and therefore per ward) including the tolerance levels that would be accepted in the proposed warding patterns, noting that *perfect* electoral equality across all wards would not be feasible.
- digital maps showing the proposed warding patterns, supported by the elector/councillor ratio per ward and a detailed rationale to support the proposed boundary.

In addition, the local knowledge of the Cross-party Working Group and officers within the Election Team has formed a critical part in the formation of the warding arrangements for the borough. Suggested amendments received through the Cross-party Working Group were considered and, where these were agreed by the group, they were incorporated into the final proposals.

Elector/Councillor Ratios

The proposed warding arrangements increase the number of wards across the borough from 18 to 19 and leaves each councillor representing a comparatively equal number of electors. The only ward that does not meet this requirement is the Higham Ward due to its unique community identity and location within the borough:

Proposed Ward Name	Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
Central	6717	3	1.54%
Chalk	2110	1	-4.31%
Coldharbour	4806	2	8.98%
Higham	3662	2	-16.97%
Istead and Cobham	4528	2	2.68%
Meopham North	4128	2	-6.39%
Meopham South, Vigo and Luddesdown	4388	2	-0.50%
Northfleet East	4036	2	-8.48%

Proposed Ward Name	Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
Northfleet South	6327	3	-4.35%
Northfleet West	4496	2	1.95%
Painters Ash	4376	2	-0.77%
Pelham	6729	3	1.72%
Riverview	4588	2	4.04%
Riverside and Denton	4764	2	8.03%
Shorne	2082	1	-5.56%
Singlewell	4650	2	5.44%%
Westcourt	4516	2	2.40%
Whitehill	4894	2	10.96%
Woodlands	4926	2	11.70%

Reflecting community interests and identities

In defining the proposed warding arrangements for Gravesham, consideration has been given to the following:

- identification of areas with a specific community identity, such as parish areas, to ensure the community identity for the area is not disrupted.
- using natural boundaries, such as the A2 trunk road and the railway line as guides for setting boundaries to ensure that ward boundaries respect the boundaries and natural divisions that are created wherever possible to do so.
- using local knowledge from the Cross-party Working Group and council officers to ensure that proposed changes to boundaries do not dissect known community groups or areas in the borough, but also to expand boundaries where communities are not reflected in the current warding patterns.

Promoting effective and convenient local government

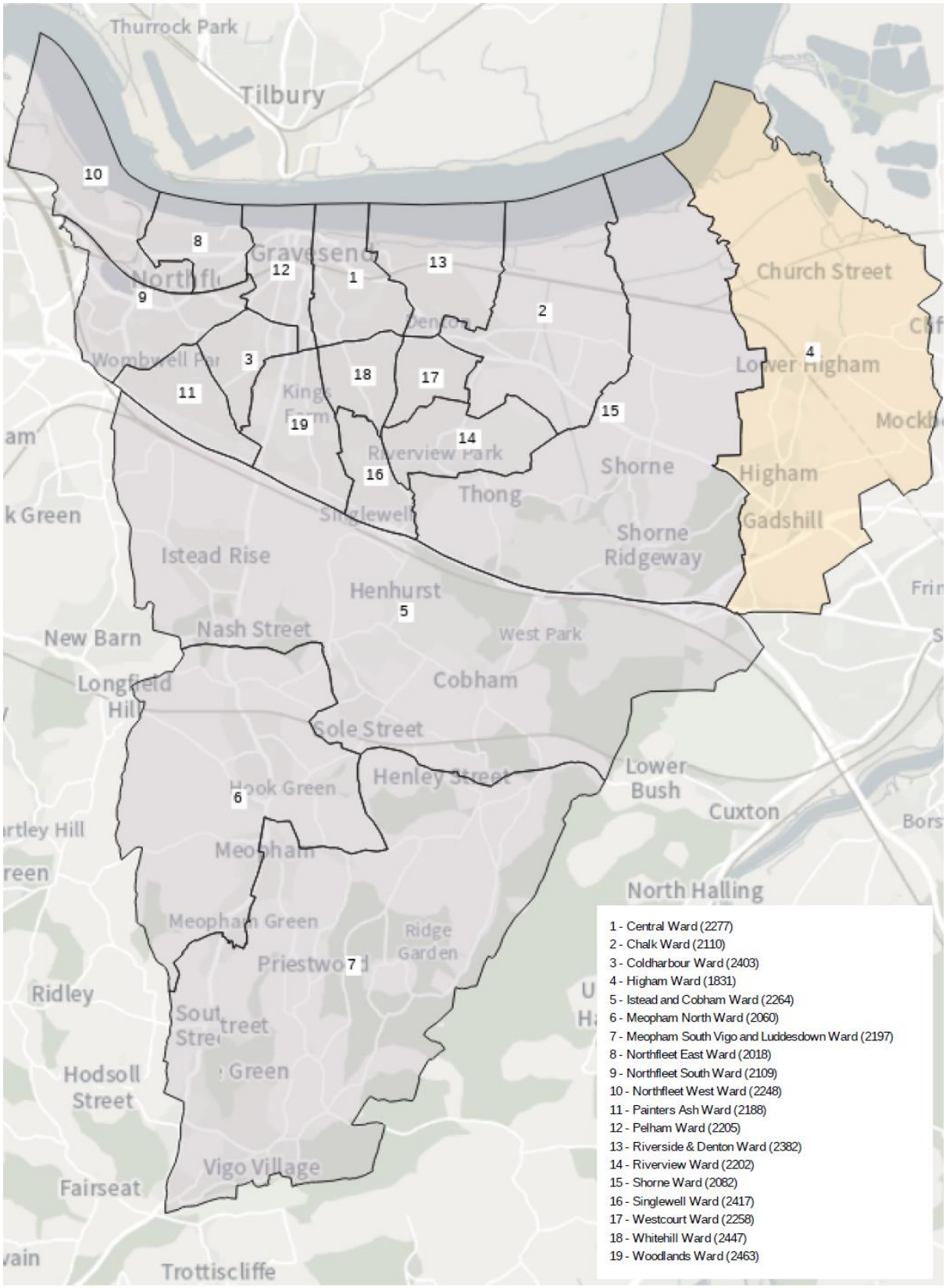
In considering the warding arrangements for Gravesham, consideration has also been given to both the administrative aspects of running elections as well as ensuring that the electoral process is as easy as possible for electors.

Parish boundaries have been maintained and have acted as the building blocks for the development of ward patterns across the borough. This has ensured that the links between the Parish Councils are maintained; many of the proposed wards runs coterminous with the Parish boundaries or encompass whole parish areas

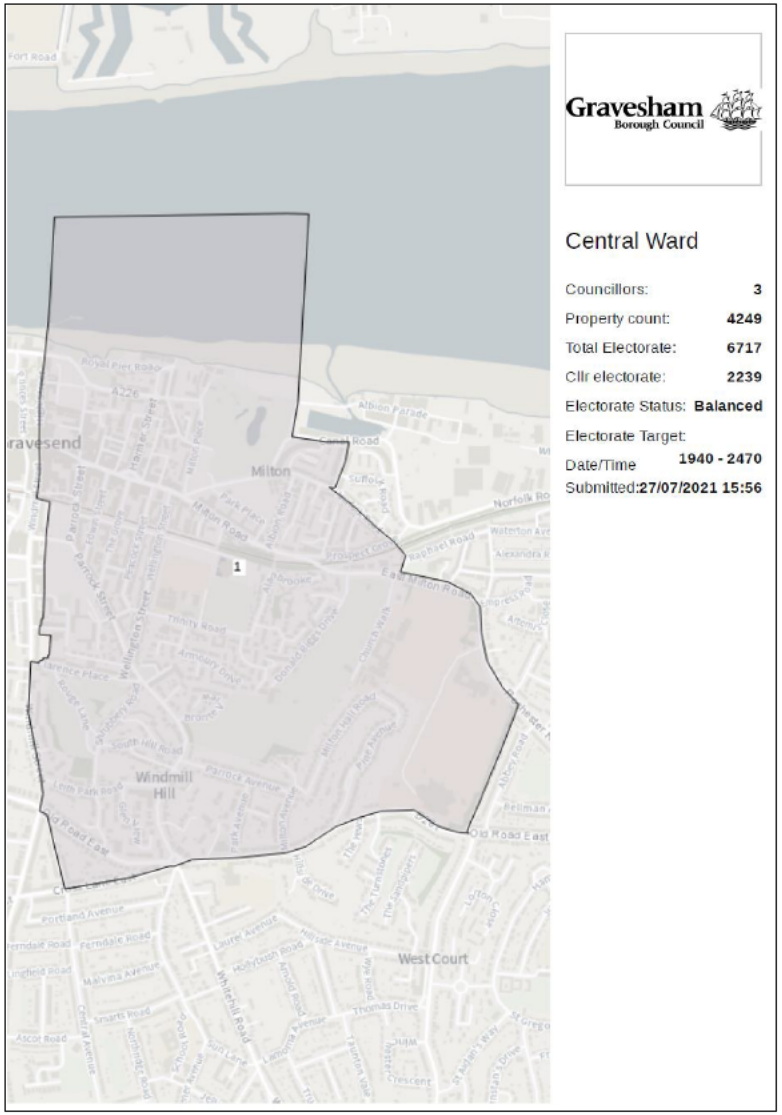
Submission

The council's proposed warding arrangements, building upon the recommendation in the first phase of the review to reduce to 39 councillors, are set out over the remaining pages of this pack. Consideration has been given to all of the available information and it is considered that the final warding arrangements set out in this submission, best meet the requirements of the Commission as well as the future needs for the borough of Gravesham.

MAP OF THE PROPOSED WARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRAVESHAM



1. Central Ward



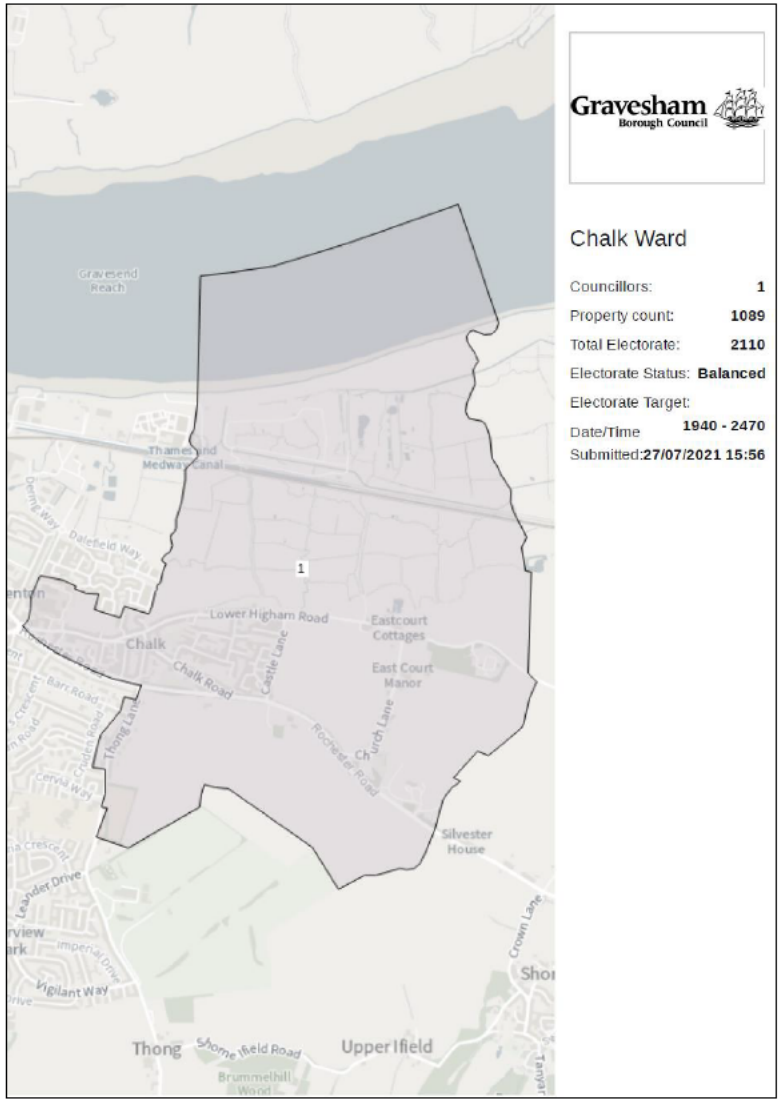
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
6717	3	1.54%

Rationale for ward proposals

The boundary of the previous Central ward has been significantly changed. This ward now encompasses the majority of the town centre area, made up of a large part of the previous Central Ward and some of the previous Riverside ward. The boundary amendments have enabled better representation across the area by the three councillors proposed, ensuring better electoral equality.

The changes to the ward boundaries now better reflect the town centre community, with the majority of residents represented within one ward.

2. Chalk Ward



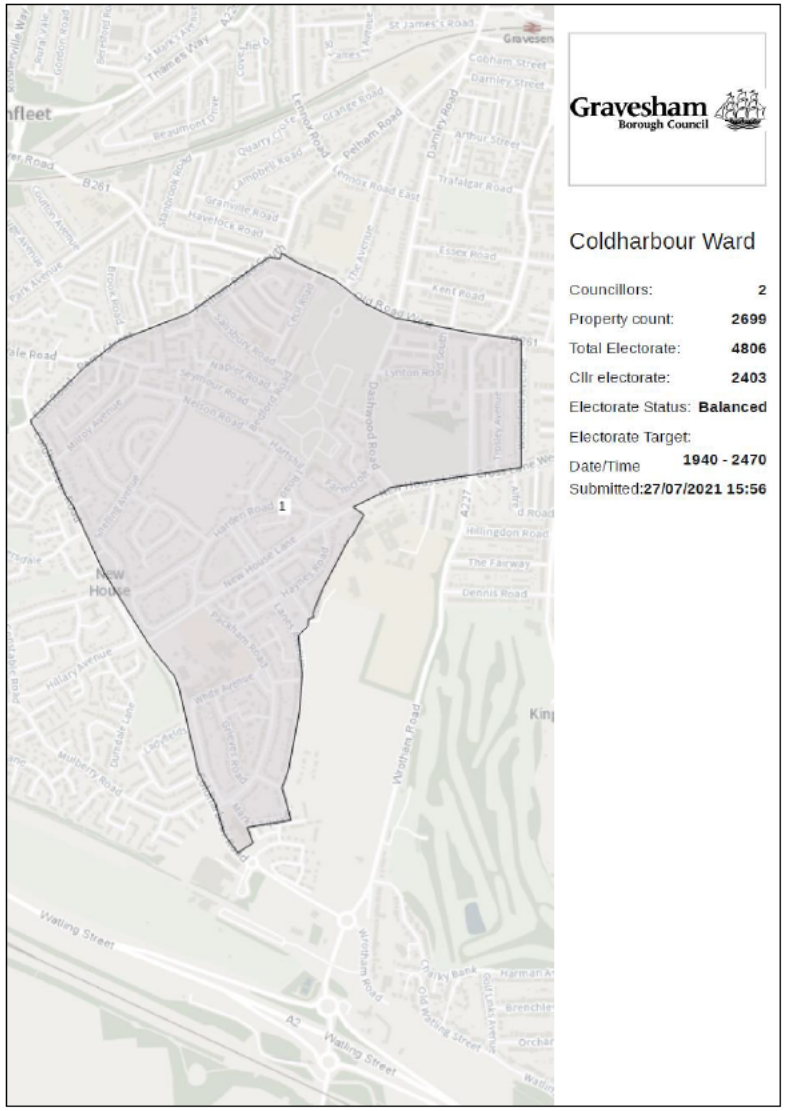
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
2110	1	-4.31%

Rationale for ward proposals

Chalk is a long-established community in its own right with local shops, doctors surgery, pre school and community hall. The boundary of the Chalk ward has been extended to incorporate land to the south of the A226, which is to be developed in the coming years. It now also includes an area of Thong Lane. Previously, this area was part of the Westcourt ward, however the communities within this area recognise themselves more as part of the Chalk area and as such, this boundary amendment recognises the communities in this area better. The new development to the south of the A226 will be a better fit with Chalk rather than the neighbouring Westcourt ward which also has its own distinct identity.

This boundary change also provides a better electoral equality balance for the ward, which was previously over-represented by one councillor, and still recognises Chalk as the community it is known to be.

3. Coldharbour Ward



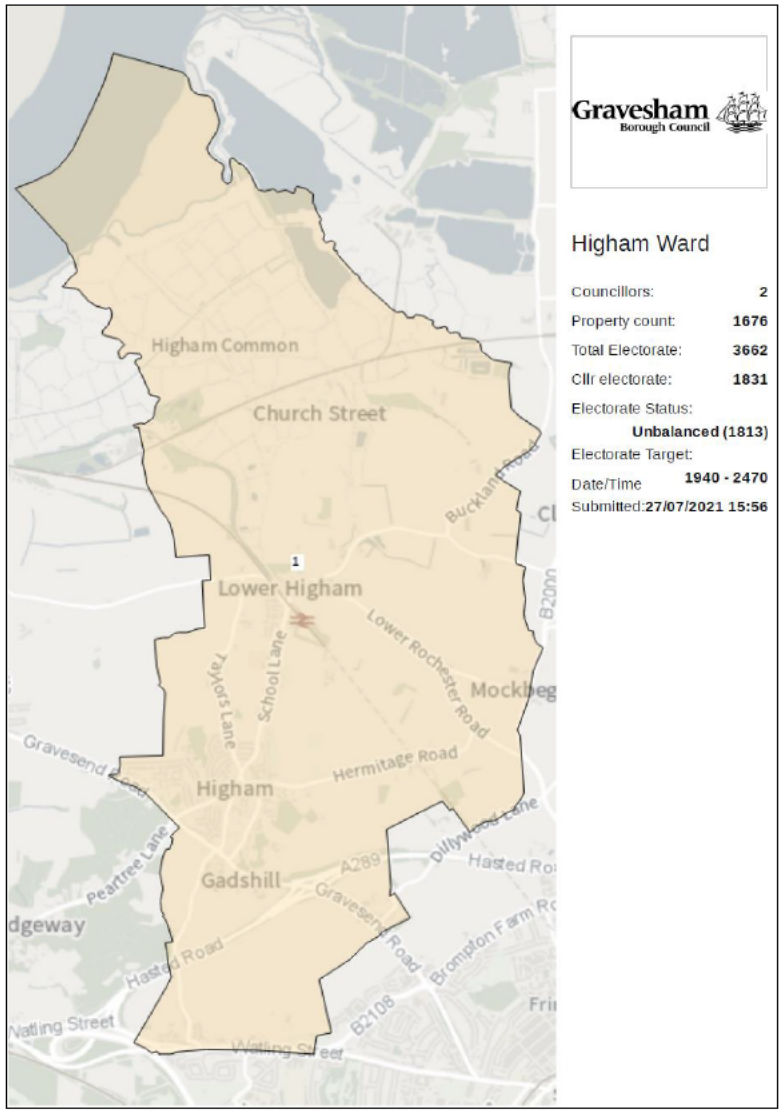
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4806	2	8.98%

Rationale for ward proposals

The boundary for the Coldharbour ward has been expanded to the north of the area as far as Old Road West which provides a natural ward boundary. It includes areas previously in the Pelham/Westcourt wards. This ensures better electoral equality for the area.

The Coldharbour ward encompasses the main road, Coldharbour Road, and the area is recognised by residents in the area as being a community in its own right with schools (Shears Green) and a pre-school as well as a local parade of shops and take-aways.

4. Higham Ward



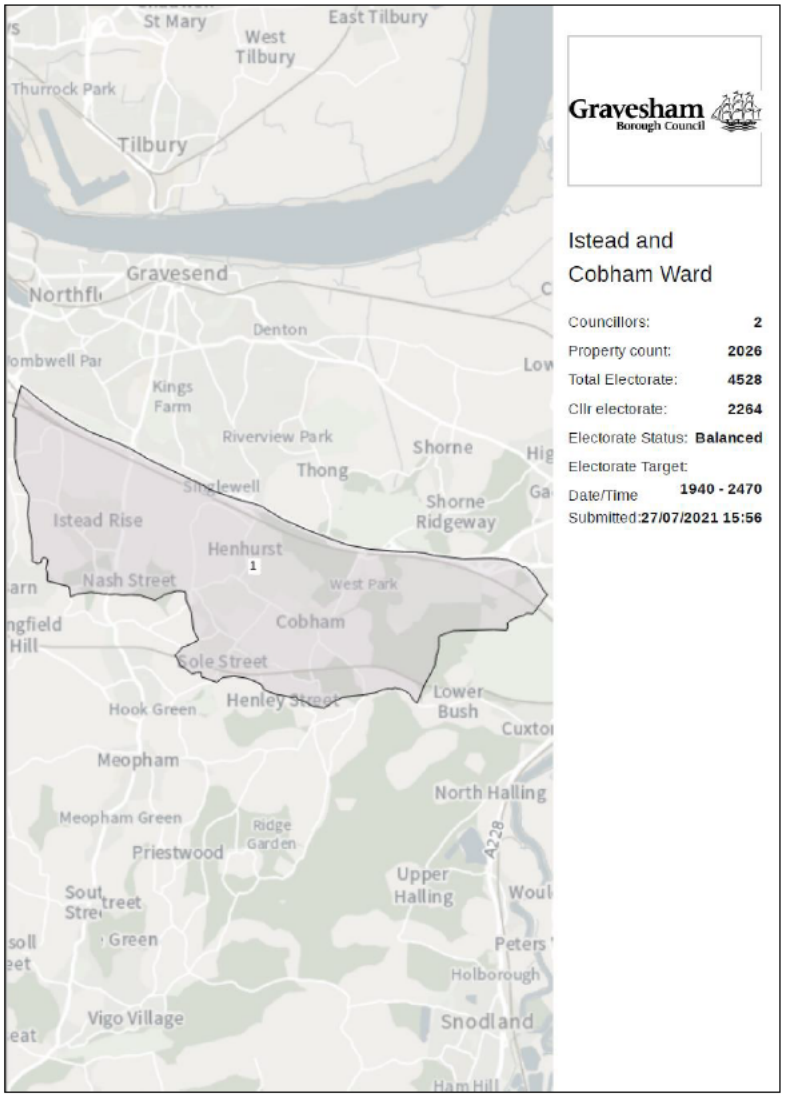
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
3662	2	-16.97%

Rationale for ward proposals

There is no proposed change to the current ward boundary. Higham is a very distinct, rural area to the far east of the borough, bordering Medway Council. It has its own parish council (Higham Parish Council), train station, schools and local facilities. There is no logical way to either enlarge or decrease the ward area and as such, it is recommended that this remain as it currently stands. Higham is undoubtedly a community within its own right.

Maintaining the Higham Parish boundary also enables convenient local government and effective electoral governance for the area.

5. Istead & Cobham Ward



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4528	2	2.68%

Rationale for ward proposals

The areas of Istead Rise and Cobham have the natural border to the north of the A2 which restricts any ward growth into the areas to the north.

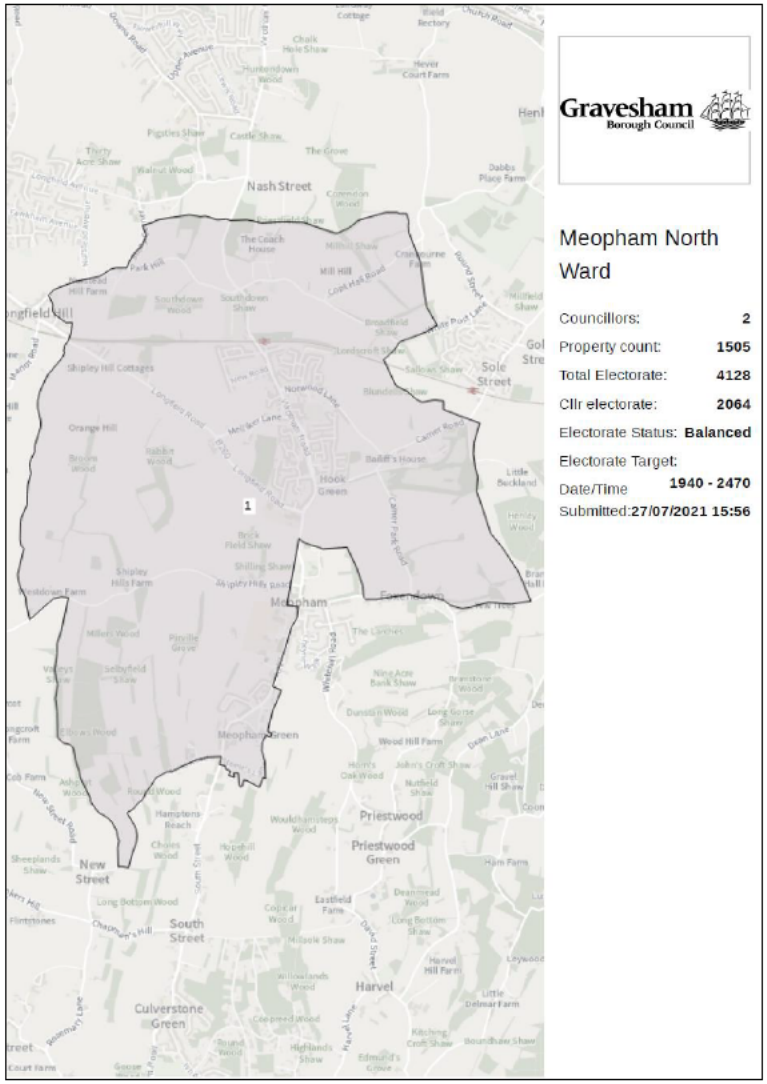
The previous Istead Rise ward was also bordered to the south by the Meopham North Parish ward and to the east by the Cobham Parish Ward.

As it stood, Istead Rise was too small in terms of electorate for two councillors and too big for a single councillor so the natural choice was to merge the Istead Rise area, which is unparished, with the Cobham Parish area to form one ward with two councillors, enabling electoral equality across the entire area.

The Cobham Parish boundary remains to enable convenient local government and effective electoral governance for the area, as it is not affected by joining with the previous Istead Rise ward.

Each of the two areas has its own primary school, local shops and community halls and whilst they are two distinct communities, there is a natural east-to-west border which follows the railway line to the south and the rural nature of the two areas.

6. Meopham North



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4128	2	-6.39%

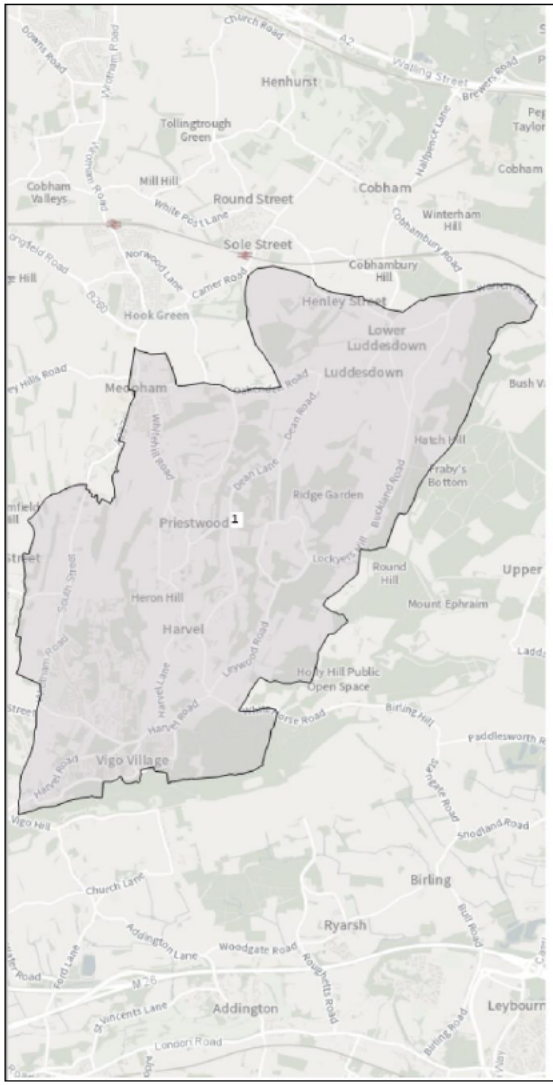
Rationale for ward proposals

The area of Meopham is a parished area made up of the Meopham North ward and Meopham South. The area is served by its own schools (pre-schools, primary schools, a wide ability secondary school and a special educational needs school) as well as its own railway station, medical centre and its own community bus service. The area of Meopham has its own unique, community identify.

Minor adjustments have been made to the Meopham North boundary to encompass areas to the south to improve electoral equality across the two areas.

By not amending the boundaries to the north and east of the area, it ensures that the parish boundaries are maintained to enable convenient local government and effective electoral governance for the area.

7. Meopham South, Vigo and Luddesdown



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4388	2	-0.50%

Rationale for ward proposals

The previous Meopham South and Vigo ward boundary has been amended slightly to enable better electoral equality between itself and the Meopham North ward.

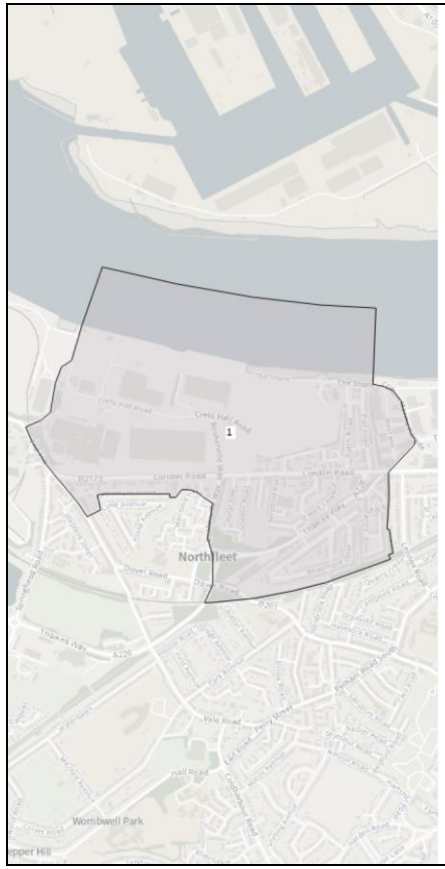
Meopham South is a parish ward within the larger Meopham Parish.

The area of Vigo is its own parished area with its individual community identity within the Kent Area of Outstanding Natural beauty.

The parish of Luddesdown is a very small, self-contained community area comprising approximately 167 electors and around 92 dwellings (Luddesdown Parish Council website). Adding the parish of Luddesdown to the previous Meopham South and Vigo ward enables electoral quality across the three areas.

The separate parish boundaries for Meopham South, Vigo and Luddesdown have been maintained within this new boundary enabling convenient local government and effective electoral governance for the area.

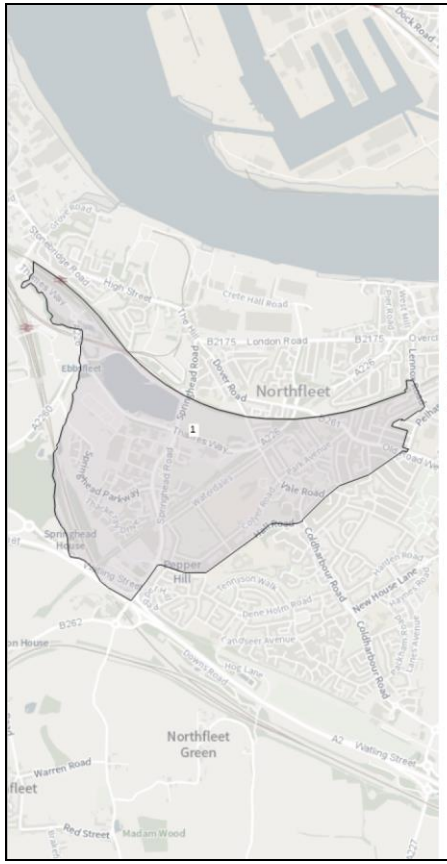
NORTHFLEET



Gravesham Borough Council

Northfleet East Ward

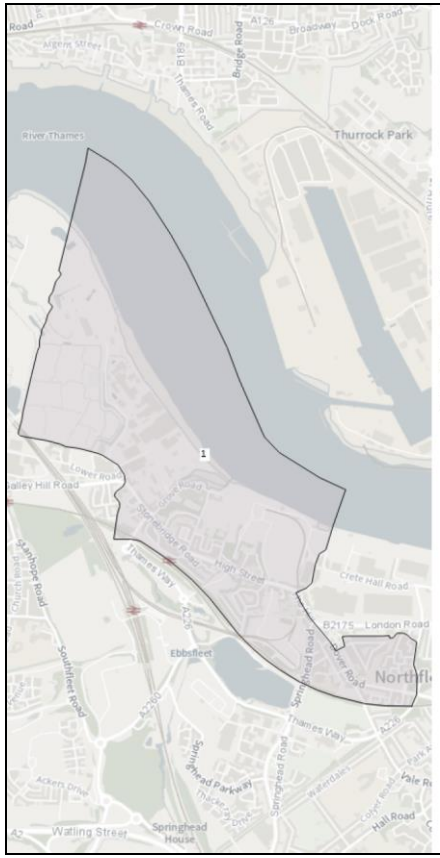
Councillors:	2
Property count:	2348
Total Electorate:	4036
Cllr electorate:	2018
Electorate Status:	**Balanced**
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	**1940 - 2470**
Submitted:	**27/07/2021 15:56**



Gravesham Borough Council

Northfleet South Ward

Councillors:	3
Property count:	3537
Total Electorate:	6327
Cllr electorate:	2109
Electorate Status:	**Balanced**
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	**1940 - 2470**
Submitted:	**27/07/2021 15:56**



Gravesham Borough Council

Northfleet West Ward

Councillors:	2
Property count:	2728
Total Electorate:	4496
Cllr electorate:	2248
Electorate Status:	**Balanced**
Electorate Target:	
Date/Time	**1940 - 2470**
Submitted:	**27/07/2021 15:56**

Proposed Ward Name	Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
8. Northfleet East	4036	2	-8.48%
9. Northfleet South	6327	3	-4.35%
10. Northfleet West	4496	2	1.95%

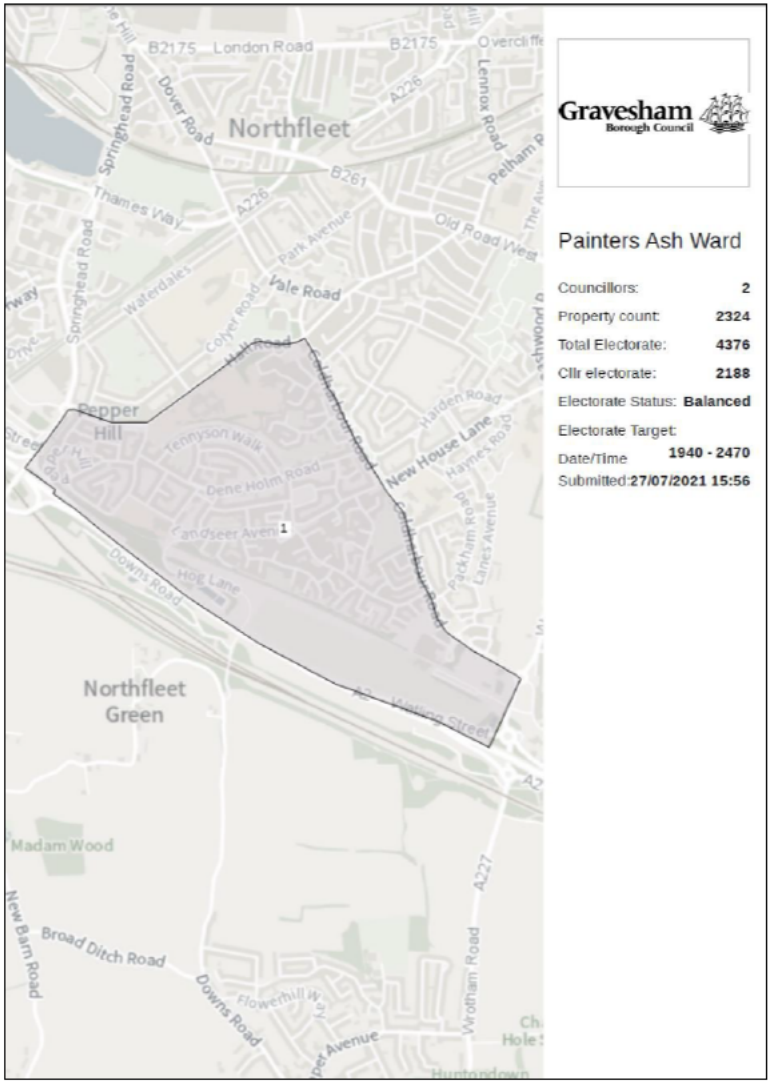
Rationale for ward proposals

The area of Northfleet is the second largest urban area within the borough of Gravesham to the west of the borough. It has its own railway station on the North Kent Line with close proximity to Ebbsfleet International. The area also encompasses the Northfleet Urban Country Park and Northfleet Technology College and is recognised as a specific area of the borough in its own right.

The previous ward of Northfleet North was very large and densely populated and was served by three councillors, resulting in electors being under-represented in the area. With some new significant developments due to take place in that area, the number of councillors representing the area needed to increase to four. This resulted in the Northfleet North ward being split into two specific areas and creating a new ward within the area, however still maintaining the Northfleet community.

The boundary for Northfleet South has remained untouched as the three councillors provided electoral equality for the area. In addition, the area is bordered by the railway line, creating a natural border with the north of the area.

11. Painters Ash



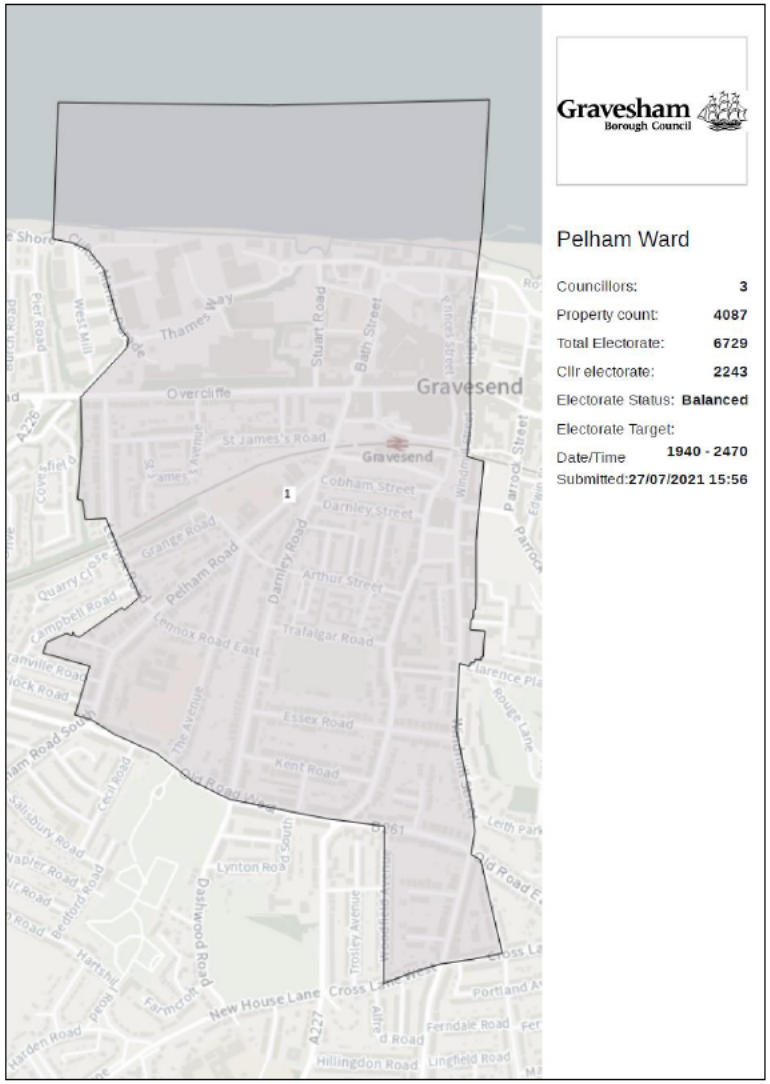
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4376	2	-0.77%

Rationale for ward proposals

There has been no change to the ward boundary for Painters Ash. The number of councillors previously representing the area was three; reducing this to two councillors has ensured electoral equality in the area.

In addition, the ward encompasses Painters Ash School which is a key asset for the community as well as Painters Ash post office and a parade of shops and as such, no amendments to the ward boundaries are suggested.

12. Pelham



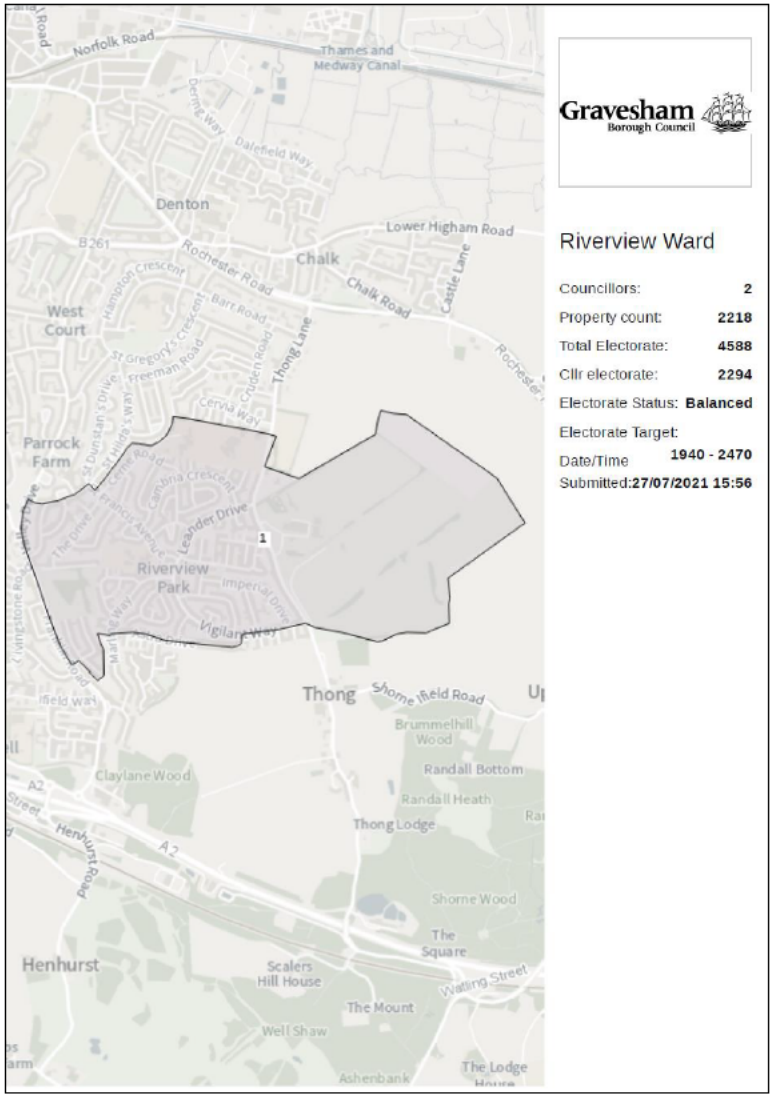
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
6729	3	1.72%

Rationale for ward proposals

There have been some minor amendments to the previous boundary for the area. The area encompasses a large part of Gravesend Town centre as well as the Pelham area and these changes have enabled better electoral equality across the area.

The area has its own community identify with the Pelham Arms Public House and the Pelham Medical Centre.

13. Riverview



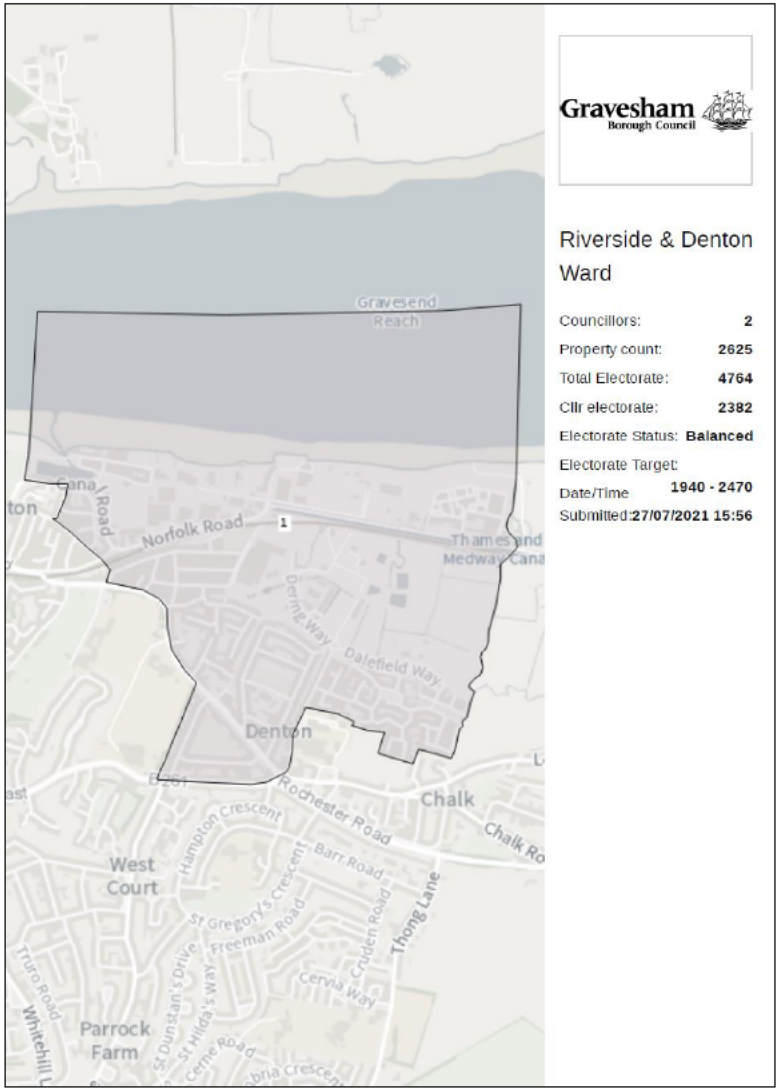
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4588	2	4.04%

Rationale for ward proposals

Minor amendments have been made to the ward boundaries to ensure electoral equality across the area.

The boundary changes have been made to include The Warren and parts of Valley Drive to the west and the area surrounding Thamesview School to the north of the area. Locally, the residents in these areas consider themselves to be part of the Riverview Park community and have easy access to a primary school, local shops, library and a doctors surgery.

14. Riverside and Denton



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4764	2	8.03%

Rationale for ward proposals

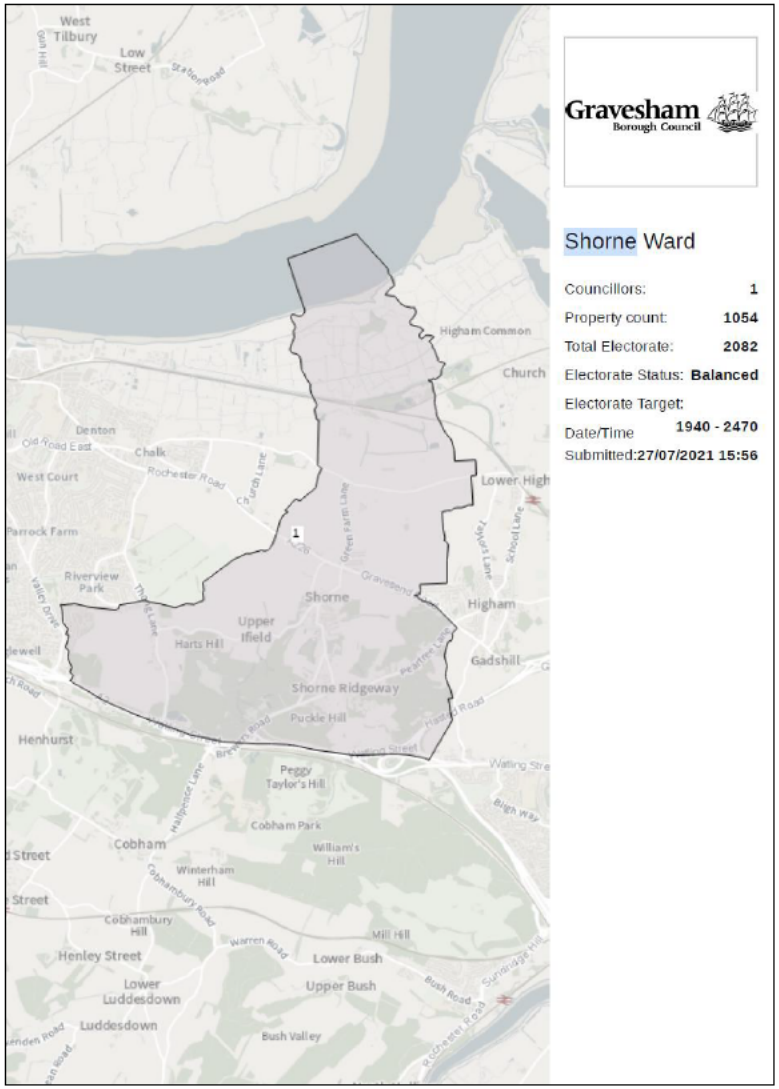
A complete review of the area surrounding Gravesend Town centre has been undertaken due to the population density across the area.

The previous ward boundary for Riverside to the North and East has been maintained but the border to the West has been amended to make the ward smaller to enable better electoral equality across the area with two councillors.

The ward name has been updated to reflect the two key areas contained within the boundary; the Riverside area and the Denton area.

As the name suggests, the Riverside area encompasses an area that runs parallel to the River Thames, which is due to undergo housing growth in the coming years. The area also encompasses the Norfolk Road Industrial Estate, which is considered to be part of the urban, Denton area of the borough. There is also a natural convergence of the two areas along the A226 road, which is a key trunk road in to the borough.

15. Shorne



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
2082	1	-5.56%

Rationale for ward proposals

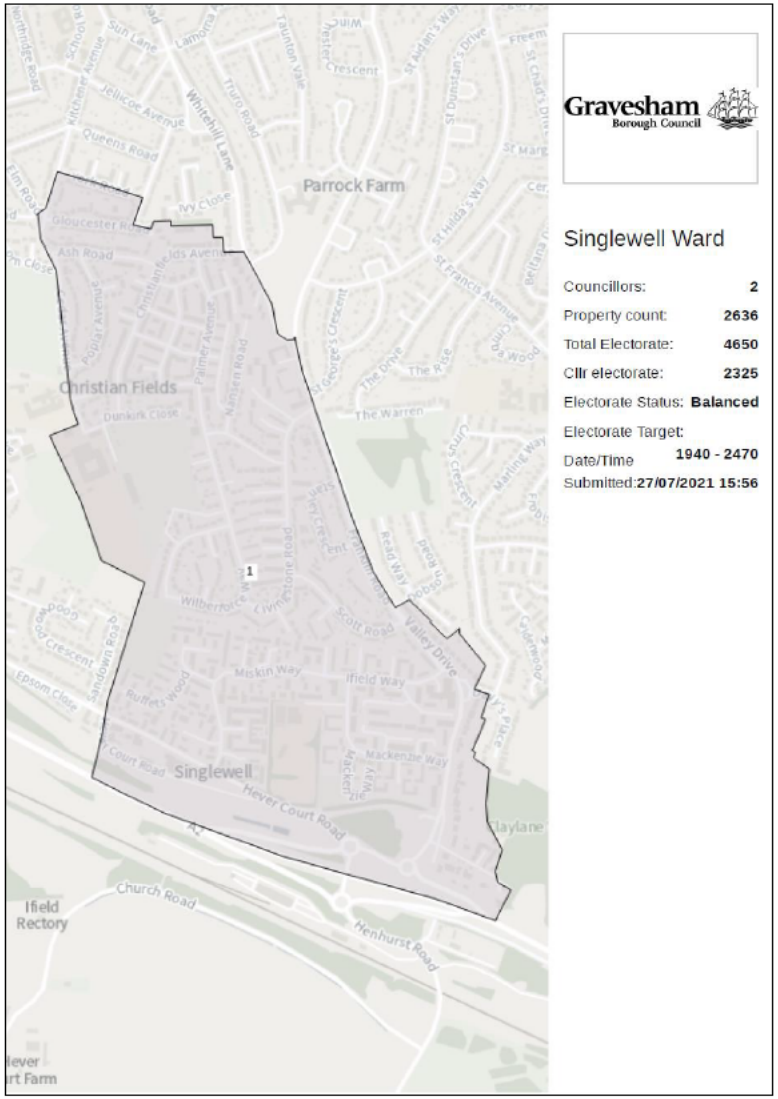
Shorne is its own parished area with its own unique community identity made up of several small hamlets in the area; Lower Shorne, Shorne Ifield, Shorne Ridgeway and Thong. The village area has its own primary school, community hall, a doctors surgery and a parade of shops.

The total electorate for the Shorne parish allows for one councillor to represent the area, whilst maintaining electoral equality.

Maintaining the parish boundary has enabled convenient local government and effective electoral governance for the area.

Separating Shorne from the previous, larger ward area along the natural boundary of Watling Street has enabled better electoral equality in other rural areas of the borough.

16. Singlewell



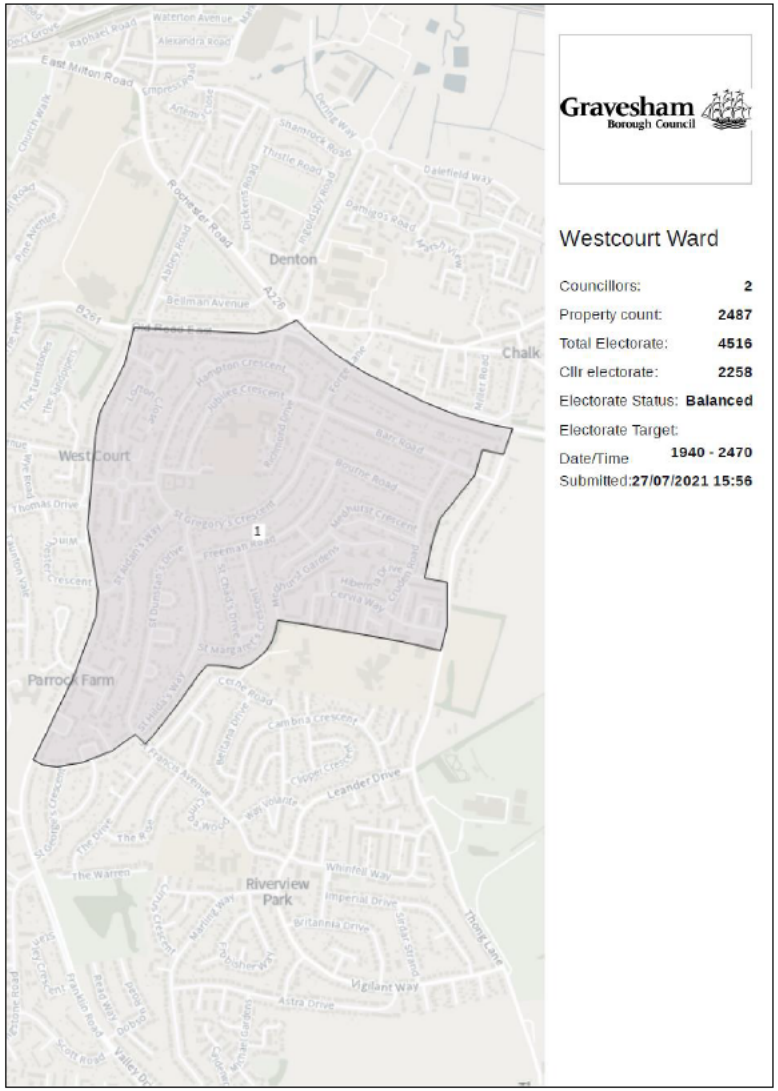
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4650	2	5.44%

Rationale for ward proposals

The boundary for this ward has been amended slightly with areas to the south and east being incorporated into the Riverview ward to enable better electoral equality across the area.

This ward encompasses the Christianfields housing area of Gravesham, which is locally recognised as the 'Singlewell' area of Gravesend and maintains the community identity. Singlewell Primary School is within the ward boundary as well as local shops and a Premier Inn which, on the Premier Inn website, is called *Gravesend (A2/Singlewell)*'. The area has a well-known, community identity.

17. Westcourt



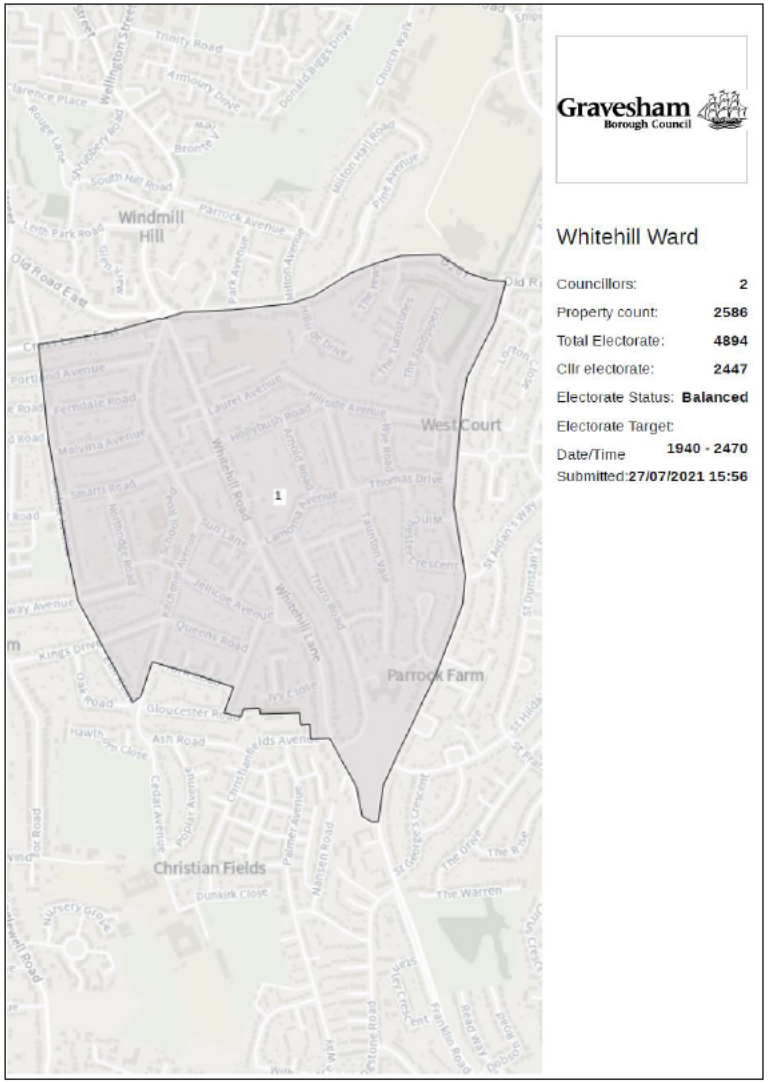
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4516	2	2.40%

Rationale for ward proposals

The ward boundary has been amended to recognise that previous roads included within the boundary were recognised locally as Riverview, rather than Westcourt, due to the distinguishable differences between the two areas, whilst maintaining electoral quality for the area.

Westcourt has its own unique identity and its community facilities include Westcourt primary school and local shops.

18. Whitehill



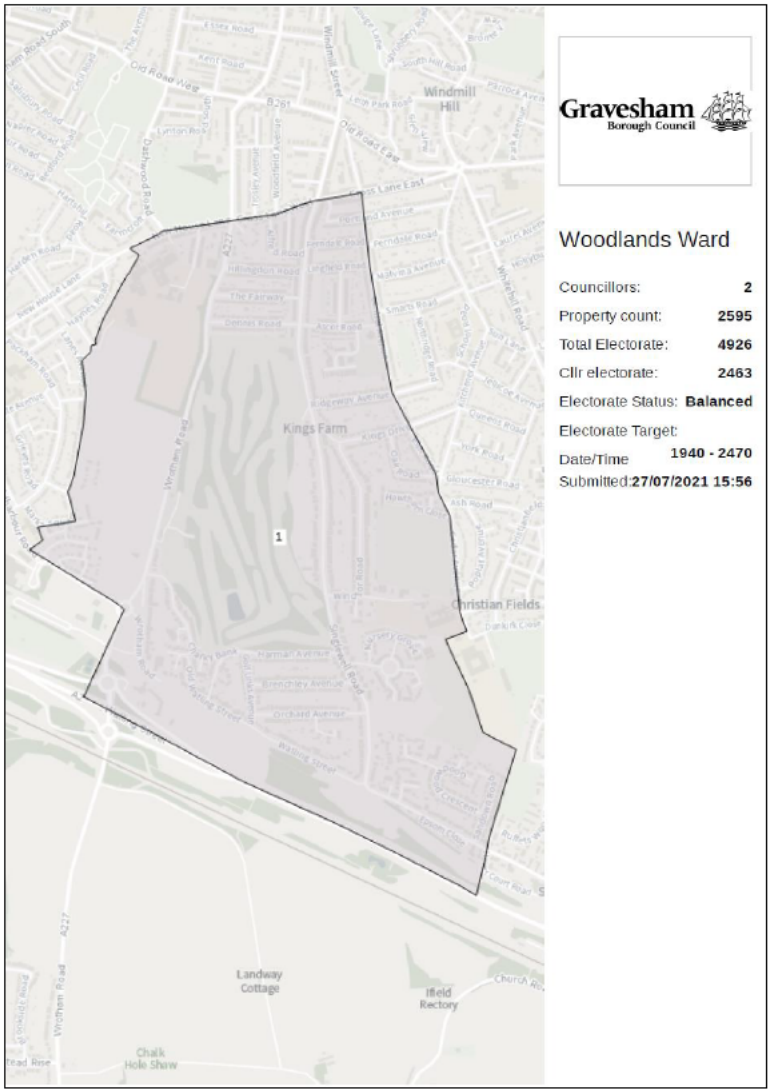
Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4894	2	10.96%

Rationale for ward proposals

The ward boundary to the north has been extended to follow the dissecting roads of Cross Lane East and Old Road East, which provide a natural break across the area. This enables the remaining elements of the previous Central ward to be encompassed in the area, ensuring better electoral equality for the area, whilst maintaining the two councillor representation.

Running through the middle of the Ward is Whitehill Road/Whitehall Lane, which acts as a key community identifier for those in the area. Whitehill Primary School falls within the boundary (almost in the centre of the ward) and the area if also served by its own local shops and library.

19. Woodlands



Forecast electorate in 2027	Number of councillors	Variance from perfect electoral equality
4926	2	11.70%

Rationale for ward proposals

There have been minor boundary amendments with the area to the west moving into the Coldharbour ward to ensure better electoral equality across the area.

Although the ward no longer encompasses Woodlands Park the ward name has been retained as the community in the area recognise their local area as 'Woodlands', particularly the area to the west of Wrotham Road (A227)

The area encompasses the Mid-Kent Golf Club and a number of the surrounding roads are named after specific links to the sport (Golf Links Avenue, The Fairway etc.). The sporting theme continues in the area with other road names associated with race courses (Aintree Close, Ascot Close) and this in itself provides a community identity for the area and it was felt that this was something that should be maintained.

Footnote on data

The submission made was modelled using commercially available software which required the electorate forecast to 2027 – this was forecast using the current electorate in addition to the expected growth between now and then.

It is inevitable and expected that there will be small differences between the published dataset for this exercise and the modelled data in this submission. These differences can attributed to timings of the data extracts, expected changes in current electorate and the way that new development data has been clustered by geographical location.