

Dear Sirs,

BABERGH DISTRICT BOUNDARY REVIEW

I wish to propose a boundary change for inclusion in your review of the boundaries of Babergh district, namely that **polling district BEBE (East Bergholt East End) should be moved from Dodnash ward to Alton ward** in order to be represented by the same councillor(s) as Brantham. This is based mainly upon the second of the three main criteria set out in your guidance documents, the need to reflect community interests and my belief that the interests of East End are more closely aligned with Brantham than East Bergholt. Nonetheless, all three criteria are addressed in the reasoning below.

1. Electoral Equality

- 1.1. The Boundary Commission to the Chief Executive of Babergh District Council states that the Commission is minded to set the number of BDC councillors at 31. Using the figures of electors from 2016, this gives a ratio of 1:2298 councillors to electors. Wards with two members would contain 4596 electors.
- 1.2. At present, Dodnash ward contains 2948 electors, of which 359 are in polling district BEBE. Alton ward contains 3232 electors. The proposed move of BEBE therefore gives new elector figures of 2589 for Dodnash and 3591 for Alton. Based on the desirable figures set out in the paragraph above, the new Alton ward, including BEBE, is less than the target for a two member ward by approximately 20%, whilst the new Dodnash ward is 12% above the figure for a single member ward and over 40% below the figure for a two member ward.
- 1.3. There are a number of possible solutions to these imbalances. The most straightforward is to move both BEBE and the Bentley polling district of 665 electors from Dodnash to Alton. This gives elector figures for each ward of 1924 and 4256 respectively, being 8% and 9% below the target average for a single and two member ward and achieves a reduction in the number of councillors overall. There are also options which would involve larger changes across the Shotley peninsula to gain broader electoral equality across the area. However, it is not the purpose of this submission to investigate these various alternatives in detail. The key point of this section is to demonstrate that moving polling district BEBE, being only 359 electors, to a new ward where its interests are better represented, does not adversely affect electoral quality and can be readily addressed within the broader changes that will be occurring within the boundary review.

2. Reflecting Community Interests

2.1 Parishes/ Community Links

The Boundary Commission guidance states that 'parishes often represent the extent of a community' and are often used 'as the building blocks of wards and electoral divisions'. East Bergholt parish is the exception to this rule and cannot be used in this way. The community of East Bergholt is clearly defined and can be seen on any map, the community having an obvious centre containing shops, the church, car park and so on and being spread around the village roads as far east as the B1070. East End is also clearly defined on the map, being

centred on Slough Road and East End Lane. East End is some miles from East Bergholt, being on the border with, and close to, the village of Brantham. Inevitably, given the physical distances, East End is more closely linked with Brantham, as the following points will elaborate. The reason for East End being originally linked with East Bergholt is believed to be historical. The vast majority of the housing in Brantham is post World War One, other than the southernmost part of the village known as Cattawade. East End and East Bergholt both contain housing from the Victorian era and earlier. In setting parish boundaries, our ancestors will have considered that East End was best placed in a joint parish with East Bergholt, given that Brantham did not exist as a village at that time.

2.2 Boundaries

As this proposal relates to moving an existing polling district from one ward to another, the boundaries are already in existence. The boundary of the polling district largely follows physical features such as roads, watercourses and field edges. There are some sections that are undefined on the ground, but these are part of the parish boundary between East Bergholt and Brantham north of Slough Road and unaffected by the proposed change.

2.3 Transport Links

East End does not have good transport links with East Bergholt. East Bergholt village centre is a ten minute journey by car from East End, along roads which are in some places single track with blind bends and which do not have street lighting or footways. East End does not have any public transport links, although there is a school bus service that runs from Brantham via East End to East Bergholt high school during term time.

In contrast, East End is close to and well linked with Brantham. Brantham village facilities (the shops, café, bus stops etc) are a five to ten minute walk from East End, along roads with footways and lighting or across well used public footpaths. East End residents wishing or needing to use public transport will walk to bus stops in Brantham. Buses through Brantham connect with Manningtree for access to the railway network, which buses through East Bergholt do not. East End residents requiring a greater range of facilities than the shops in Brantham can provide and wishing to use cars to drive to those facilities will use the supermarkets and high street in Manningtree, a ten minute drive along main roads.

2.4 Community Groups

There is no residents group or similar organisation exclusively in East End. The group most active in East End is the Brantham Good Neighbours scheme, a volunteer run group that assists those in need, particularly the elderly or infirm. For example, my own elderly neighbour is helped with transport to the doctors, collecting prescriptions and shopping trips by members of the scheme. Although any East Bergholt group would claim to cover East End, there are, to the best of my knowledge, no similar groups based in East Bergholt which are actively involved in the area.

2.5 Facilities

East End contains a hairdresser and a butcher, both used by residents. As described in 2.3 above, the nearest general shop and post office is in Brantham, a short walk away. There is also another hairdresser and a café. The facilities in Brantham are the same as those in the centre of East Bergholt, which also has a café, general store and post office, with the advantage that Brantham is much nearer and more easily accessible. This means that East End residents will invariably use the facilities in Brantham rather than East Bergholt. Those residents requiring a greater range of shops will drive, or take the bus from Brantham, to Manningtree or Ipswich.

East End is in the catchment area for Brooklands Primary School in Brantham. The children of East End join the various clubs and after school activities run in Brantham at the village leisure centre. The social life of the majority of East End residents is therefore focused around Brantham.

There is a large GP surgery in East Bergholt that is used by people from a sizable area, including all of Brantham and other villages, and so is not considered to be of relevance in this discussion.

2.6 Shared Interests

The particular issue affecting both East Bergholt and Brantham is the future provision of housing, with both villages being subject to speculative submissions for large residential development. In this regard, East End is to Brantham and not to East Bergholt. It is development in Brantham which will impact on East End residents by affecting school provision, public transport, traffic levels etc in the immediate area. Conversely development in East Bergholt will not affect East End, as the two areas are not linked and do not share facilities. It is important that the interests of East End residents are represented by the district councillors dealing with issues in Brantham.

3. Electoral Arrangements

- 3.1 The current electoral arrangement for Babergh District Council is a mix of single and two member wards. This proposal continues these arrangements and can allow for the reduction in overall councillor numbers required by the review. This also fits with the existing pattern of whole council elections.
- 3.2 The geographical area of the enlarged Alton ward would be little changed from the existing ward, the polling district being very small. The current Alton district councillors give regular updates to Brantham parish council which are circulated in the Brantham parish magazine, distributed free to East End. This allows the Alton councillors to keep East End residents informed without the need to attend parish council meetings in East Bergholt and so means the proposed rearrangement would not affect councillor workload or effectiveness.
- 3.3 It is recognised that the proposed change will result in differing boundaries between district and county council ward boundaries. However, I feel the argument for moving East End is a strong one, which in any review of county boundaries I would put forward for the same

reasons. I believe that issues of coterminosity caused by the difference will be minimal, given the small size of the difference, and can be readily addressed by simple co-ordination between the two councils.

I would be pleased to discuss or elaborate on this proposal and the points above if required.

Yours faithfully

Jim Warner