

Proposal for a Community Governance Review for Ware

For discussion at Ware Town Council, 18 July 2022.

Background

The current town boundary of Ware is tightly drawn around the residential built-up area. This means that the proposed new North and East Ware housing development, designated as WARE2 in the East Herts District Plan (EHDP) 2018, largely lies outside the town boundary and in the parish of Wareside and, currently, the Hunsdon district ward. There are also a number of smaller anomalies in the boundaries of town wards which are then carried over to district and county wards.

It has been recognised from the outset of the District Plan that the new development is an extension of Ware and looks towards the town for many of its services and facilities; in EHDP 2018 it is included under Ware section, rather than the surrounding villages, and designated as WARE2 rather than VILL#. This is reinforced by the draft proposals on the recent Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of the East Herts District, taking into account submissions from local political parties, organisations and residents. They have proposed that the whole of the WARE2 development should fall within Ware Trinity ward, rather than Hunsdon as at present. These provisional recommendations are under review and the final recommendations will be published on 2 August 2022. For the purposes of this document it is assumed that the LGBCE draft proposal regarding WARE2 remains unchanged.

Clearly the same logic would apply to town and parish wards; WARE2 should be incorporated into the Ware town boundary rather than being part of Wareside parish. This would greatly assist effective local governance. If the town and parish ward boundaries remained as they are currently, part of the new Ware Trinity district ward would be in Ware Town Council, but the remainder would be a “Wareside Urban” ward in Wareside Parish Council, with a very different character to the remainder of the ward designated as “Wareside Rural”. Links from WARE2 to Wareside are far weaker than those to the town of Ware itself. Moreover, Wareside is in the Green Belt whereas the land allocated to WARE2 has been removed from Green Belt status.

Therefore, we request that East Herts District Council should undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) of Ware and the immediately surrounding area, as soon as possible, with the principal aim being to expand the Ware town boundary to include the whole of the designated area for WARE2. Most of this will come from Wareside parish, with a small corner of Thundridge parish. Other minor boundary anomalies can also be addressed and rectified at the same time. These changes are also expected to be reflected in the associated district and county ward boundaries. A list of suggested changes is shown in the Appendix below.

A District can set a CGR in motion at any time and the LGBCE recommends that this is done promptly where a significant change such as a new housing development is taking place. The WARE2 masterplanning process has been in progress since 2019 and the developers presented final plans in May 2022 with the intention of seeking planning permission shortly. Hence this is an appropriate time to undertake the CGR so that when the new housing is built, the electors will be in both town and district wards with the natural linkage to Ware.

Our understanding is that the Town Council can request a Community Governance Review by contacting, via the Town Clerk, the Head of Legal Services of East Herts District Council (James Ellis). This is proposed as the preferred way forward, with this document providing supporting evidence.

This is subject to the final recommendations of the LGBCE and that these still include the WARE2 area within Ware Trinity District ward, which will be known in August. The approach to EHDC can then be made immediately after the final LGBCE recommendations are published.

Recommendation: This Council requests the Town Clerk to contact the Head of Legal Services at East Herts District Council to request a Community Governance Review for Ware.

This recommendation is subject to the final outcome of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) due to be published on 2 August 2002. The Council delegates the Leader of the Council and Town Clerk to make any changes to the request depending on the final proposals from the LGBCE.

APPENDIX: Suggested changes to town ward boundaries in and around Ware

We commend the following changes to East Herts District Council for consideration as part of the Community Governance Review.

1. The extensive area designated for WARE2 in the East Herts District Plan currently within Wareside parish should be transferred to fall within the Ware town boundary by extending the boundary eastwards and northwards. It would then form part of Ware Trinity town ward as well as Ware Trinity district ward.
2. A small part of the WARE2 designated area lies north of the current district, county and Parliamentary constituency line which runs through the middle of a field west of Moles Farm and lies in Thundridge parish. For consistency, the Ware town boundary should be expanded to also contain this small area, which currently contains no electors, and it would become part of Ware Trinity town ward.
3. Orchard Close is arbitrarily cut in half, currently between St Mary's and Christchurch wards, and in the new proposals between St Mary's and Priory district wards. It is a cul-de-sac with its only physical link being to Priory ward and all this road logically belongs in that ward.
4. A single house in Gladstone Road currently falls in Christchurch ward and would be in Priory ward. The boundary should be along Baldock Street and this house would then fall in St Mary's ward along with the rest of Gladstone Road.
5. The area just to the west of Baldock Street is arbitrarily split between Christchurch/Priory and St Mary's wards, whereas it should preferably all belong in one or the other; for example, the eastern edge of Buryfield Park would provide a strong and clearly defined boundary line.
6. The Gentlemen's Field industrial area logically belongs as part of Ware town and Ware St Mary's ward. This is recognised in the East Herts District Plan 2018 which designates this area as the WARE3(c) Employment area, not Hertford. It is physically much closer to Ware, adjacent to housing in the Ware town boundary and all its road connections are with Ware. The Hertford/Ware town boundary would be moved slightly to achieve this.
7. In south Ware, the area round Presdales Pit is logically linked to Ware and the only road access is into Hoe Lane. The Ware town boundary could be moved southwards to the A10 and this area could be taken out of Great Amwell Parish. The logical eastern boundary would be the public footpath from Amwellbury Farm to the A10.

For all these proposed changes, few or zero current electors would be involved and therefore electoral balance would not be adversely affected. It is anticipated that the district and county ward boundaries would also be adjusted in cases 2-7 to give a corresponding resolution of the anomalies. The Community Governance Review would of course take each case on its merits and conclude which of these changes, or others, would be most appropriate.