

SHOULD BOROUGH GREEN PARISH COUNCIL BECOME A TOWN COUNCIL?

In early 2025 the Government changed the current "Purposes of Greenbelt" (Annex 1 below). In the past Parishes have benefited where areas of Greenbelt between settlements can be deemed to be a "Green Wedge" to prevent "coalescence of settlements". The new Government changes mean this protection has been removed and we lose those Green Wedges. The sketch plan below (Annex 2) shows how red marked areas gave us that protection. The Government have removed clause "c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;", but if we were a town we could invoke clauses a & b, preventing towns from merging. That would prevent BG merging into the other villages and vice versa.

Whilst Borough Green Garden City is by no means a slam dunk for TMBC, the more policies we can invoke that control development the safer we are.

Whilst our four Parishes are not in danger of being swallowed up by a major conurbation, BGGC will join Wrotham, Borough Green, Platt and Ightham and we will become just such a conurbation.

TMBC have designated Borough Green as a Tier 2 "Regional Service Centre" in their Settlement Hierarchy (ANNEX 3) and I have long fought to get us "downgraded" without success to a Tier 3 or 4, which would limit the amount of development put on us.

A recent article in the Telegraph (ANNEX 4) reported that Solihull Council was considering changing four satellite villages into Towns in their own right to prevent them being swallowed up by the main conurbation.

This would not necessarily change the course of the Local Plan, that would depend on the Officers realising the implications, but it would be a significant extra card when our Planning Team present to the Inspector at the Local Plan Public Inquiry.

The first important step was to obtain legal advice on the process and implications of becoming a town, and we approached KALC's legal department, response in full at (ANNEX 5). The process is disarmingly simple, and would have no change to any status, rights or duties except the name change. We could have a mayor, but I would resist that; we can do it just by a Council vote but we think there should be a public consultation.

Bernie & I have discussed this at length, and suggest the timetable below.

6th October Meeting - agenda item tabled to allow a full discussion. If an agreement is reached that invoking a Town Council is a step we want to take, we agree:

1. To seek further legal advice which will have a cost
2. To agree funding for a letter drop to the village with a consultation period extending to the end of November
3. To agree a formal resolution to be tabled at the 1st December meeting.

1st December Meeting

Formal Resolution

1. making Borough Green Parish a Town Council on the 1st April 2026
2. Confirming retention of a Chair person, although the possibility of a Mayor could be introduced in the far future if required by a Town Poll run by TMBC Electoral Dept.

There will be a significant volume of work for Bernie, all our accounts will require a name change, and suppliers will need to be notified, and there will be a period where whilst we are a Town Council, we will still have payments to make as a Parish. It helps that email addresses and websites are all just [boroughgreen.gov.uk](mailto:boroughgreen@gov.uk). We are thinking of a 2-3 month overlap before accounts settle down, although a 1st April start will fit with the Financial Year and the auditing. I will forward this to our neighbours so they know what we are planning - they may want to become towns as well.

ANNEX 1 Original Greenbelt purposes

Gov.uk NPPF

142. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

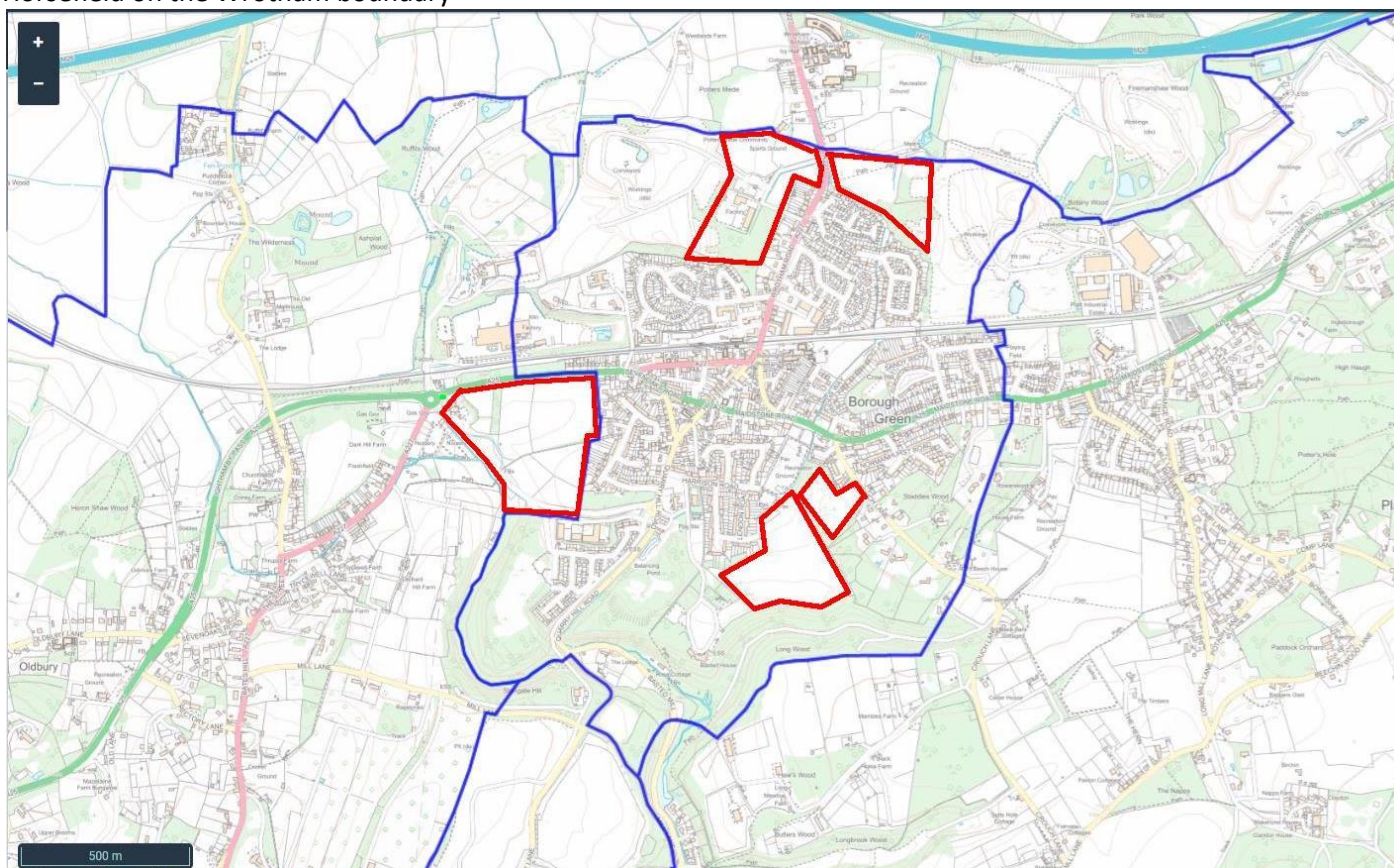
143. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

ANNEX 2

GREEN WEDGES

Darkhill Farm on the Ightham Boundary, Croudace & Gough Cooper fields on the Platt boundary, Body Landfill and Horsefield on the Wrotham boundary



ANNEX 3 SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Policy SP3: Settlement Hierarchy			
Appropriate development will be encouraged in accordance with the settlement hierarchy with the following tiers identified:			
Tier		Settlement	
One	Principal Town	1. Tonbridge	2.
Two	Major Settlements	1. Borough Green, 2. Kings Hill, 3. Snodland and Ham Hill, 4. Medway Gap*	5.
Three	Service Centres	1. Walderslade, 2. Hadlow, 3. West Malling, 4. East Peckham and Bainbridges, 5. East Malling and Mill Street 6. Hildenborough	7.
Four	Larger or Connected Villages	1. Hale Street, 2. Wouldham, 3. Addlestead, 4. Eccles, 5. Snoll Hatch, 6. Burham, 7. Aylesford Village, 8. Aylesford Forstal,	9. Wateringbury, 10. Peters Village, 11. Platt, 12. Wrotham, 13. Plaxtol, 14. Leybourne Chase
Five	Smaller Villages	1. Birling, 2. Blue Bell Hill, Ightham. 3. Oldbury, 4. Ryarsh, 5. Mereworth, 6. Shipbourne, 7. Scarborough,	8. Stansted, 9. Offham, 10. Fairseat 11. Golden Green 12. Parkers Green 13. Watts Cross Wrotham Heath 14. Addington Clearway 15. Trottiscliffe
Six	Other Rural Settlements	1. West Peckham, 2. Addington, 3. Barnes Street, 4. Little Mill, 5. Lower Haysden, 6. Dunks Green, 7. Goose Green, 8.	9. Labour-in-Vain, 10. Peckham Bush, 11. Budd Green, 12. Claygate Cross, 13. Coldharbour, 14. Crouch, 15. Pitts Wood
Note	*The "Medway Gap" comprises: Ditton, Larkfield, Leybourne, Lunsford, New Hythe, Aylesford (N&S of river)		

ANNEX 4 TELEGRAPH ARTICLE RE TOWNS

Villages may become towns to maintain green belt 'integrity'

Conservative-led Solihull Council is seeking to reclassify four green belt villages as towns in a bid to shield them from Labour's push for rural house building. The move would see Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath grouped into a single town of nearly 20,000 residents, while Balsall Common would stand alone with 7,000. Council leaders argue the change would protect the "integrity" of the green belt, since national planning policy prevents towns from being merged through development. Planning lawyers, however, warn the move could creating legal disputes and greater uncertainty due to the lack of formal definitions for towns and villages.

The Daily Telegraph

ANNEX 5 KALC ADVICE

The difference between a parish council and a town council is mostly in name and style, rather than powers. Both are the lowest tier of local government and have the same legal status and responsibilities.

To change a parish council into a town council the parish council would need to:

1. Resolution of the Council
 - The parish council must pass a formal resolution at a council meeting deciding that it wishes to be known as a *town council*.
 - This is done under Section 245(6) of the Local Government Act 1972.
2. Adoption of the Title
 - Once the resolution is passed, the parish council may call itself a *town council*.
 - The chairman of the council then becomes the town mayor (though they can still be referred to as chairman if preferred).
3. Notification
 - The resolution should be properly recorded in the council minutes.
 - The council may inform the borough council, but no higher approval (such as from government or the county council) is required.
4. Practical Steps
 - Update signage, stationery, website, and other materials to reflect the new name.
 - Inform residents and relevant bodies (e.g., local authorities, associations, grant providers).

It is important to note that the powers and duties of a parish council do not change simply because it becomes a town council. The change is symbolic and can reflect a sense of civic identity and status.

The parish council does not need to consult the public before becoming a town council.

Under Section 245(6) of the Local Government Act 1972, the parish council itself has the legal power to pass a resolution to adopt the style of *town*. It's entirely an internal decision of the council — unlike, for example, creating a new parish or changing parish boundaries, which require a community governance review by the principal authority (district/borough/unitary council) and usually involve consultation.

That said, while it's not legally required, many councils choose to consult residents informally or at least explain the change publicly, since it affects the community's identity and helps with transparency. We would strongly recommend that you do.

I hope this helps.

Alison Stevens
Deputy Chief Executive
Kent Association of Local Councils