

Community Governance Review (Boundary Review)

October 2015

Along with many other local councils in Wiltshire, Corsham Town Council submitted a request to Wiltshire Council for a Community Governance Review (CGR) of its parish. The CGR, often referred to as a Boundary Review, is currently being carried out by Wiltshire Council. If any changes are made to the boundary it is expected that they would be implemented from the date of the next local elections, due in May 2017.

At the request of Wiltshire Council, the Town Council has submitted a plan showing the area which it thinks should be considered as part of the CGR. This plan deals with the area to the west of Corsham, within Box parish (see Fig. 1 – Proposals Plan). The hatched area indicates the land which the Town Council wishes to see transferred. The areas shaded green are those that landowners have submitted as potential housing development sites – some of which already have planning permission. The area shaded blue indicates an alternative proposal which would move the part of Rudloe estate currently within Corsham, into Box. The thick blue line shows the current parish boundary between Corsham and Box.

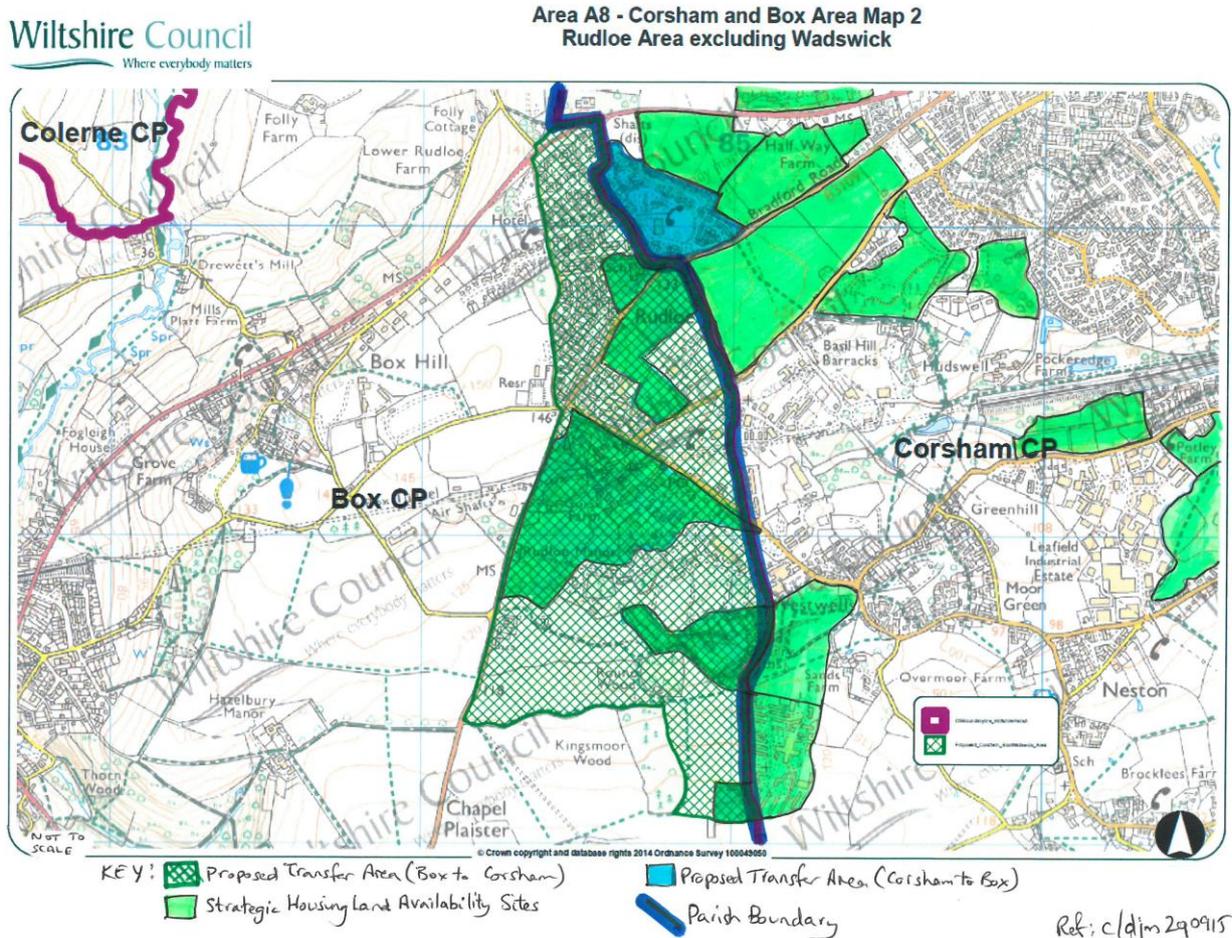


Fig.1 – Proposals Plan

Note: Chippenham Town Council has also requested a CGR, which could affect Corsham parish boundary, north-east of the A350 (West Cepen Way). Corsham Town Council has no objection in principle to Corsham's boundary with Chippenham to the east of the A350 being reviewed and possibly re-aligned.

Corsham's existing parish boundaries are not based on the reality of where communities are currently or where they are planned to develop. A CGR would be able to address this.

Corsham's current boundaries have little relevance to our current communities or planned development under the Draft Core Strategy or the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Plan. The planned development of Chippenham to the east of Corsham and developments to the west demand a logical review of where community boundaries lie. The Government believes that effective local government should be judged on its ability to deliver high quality services economically and efficiently and give a democratic voice to the people who use them. The Town Council, which already serves both the town and surrounding villages, is in a strong position to deliver services to an expanding community in a very cost-effective and sensitive way, reflecting the needs of different communities. New boundaries will provide the basis of greater integration of our communities, around a common vision of how we meet the challenges and benefits from the opportunities the future offers.

The Town Council has the desire to provide the very best service possible to all the communities which can clearly be identified as being part of Corsham today and as it is earmarked to develop. We are a Council seeking to achieve the very best possible outcomes from change. The Town Council aims to realise the aspirations and needs of our whole community through protecting our heritage and environment, and being proactive in providing the required homes and economic growth, supported by the necessary infrastructure. We are not seeking to simply increase our revenues, indeed we would seek to reduce the burden on all our council tax payers by improving the services we provide while achieving economies of scale.

Several of the advantages of a CGR for Corsham are identified below. The list is not exhaustive.

A Community Governance Review of Corsham would aim to:

- Correct parish boundary anomalies through Rudloe and Westwells
- Replace the arbitrary parish boundaries which dissect and divide Rudloe housing estate and would avoid people living in different parishes to their neighbours
- Put in place clearer settlement boundaries and identities for Corsham and Box, based on fixed features which are likely to remain in place for many years. The current proposal follows the established and recognised Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the new access road to Wadswick Green retirement village as boundaries
- Facilitate the future sustainable development and expansion of Corsham
- Provide clearer, effective and relevant governance for both Corsham and Box, with more inclusive participation, representation and leadership in the challenging times ahead

- Offer more efficient, cost-effective and convenient delivery of Council services at a local level
- Enable a clear and effective Neighbourhood Plan to be produced for Corsham
- Build a stronger, cohesive and more engaged Rudloe and surrounding community which feels part of one place
- Improve democracy, electoral accountability and representation of united communities with increased elected representation in a new/merged ward
- Update out-of-date historic boundaries which have not been reviewed in over 100 years
- Strengthen relationships with MOD Corsham and businesses to the west of Westwells Road, promoting an economically vibrant community
- Align the boundary to likely changes in housing and employment land as indicated in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Wiltshire and Swindon Strategic Economic Plan
- Bring Corsham Primary School (Broadwood site) into Corsham, where the majority of its pupils reside

Box Parish Council's alternative suggestion for a boundary between Corsham and Box, which would see the Corsham part of Rudloe Estate transferring to Box parish, does not comply with the Government's guidance on Community Governance Reviews and would solve only one of the current boundary issues. Box Parish Council's proposal does not reflect the identities and interests of the developing communities in that area, nor does it provide for convenient and effective local government. Box's proposal does not take into account the size, population and boundaries of the Corsham settlement, especially considering the plans for growth to the east of Corsham.

This update was prepared by David Martin (Chief Executive), Councillor Mrs Ruth Hopkinson (Chairman) and Peter Pearson (Vice-Chairman).

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