

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. St Albans City and District Council has decided to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. A district-wide CGR was last carried out in 2022.
- 1.2. One area of focus, this time, is the unparished areas of the city and district and the Council wants to hear from the local community as to whether there should be one or more parish/town councils created within those unparished areas.
- 1.3. However, as set out in section 7, whilst this is a particular area of focus it is not the only area of focus. In this review, we will want to hear comments from all areas of the district, whether or not they are currently represented by a Parish Council.
- 1.4. This ensures that every resident and group has the opportunity to share their views about town and parish governance in the St Albans City and District Area.
- 1.5. The Council is required to have regard to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. This guidance has been considered when drawing up these Terms of Reference.

2. What is a Community Governance Review?

- 2.1. A CGR provides an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, which reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. A CGR can take place for the whole or part of the district to consider one or more of the following:
 - creating, merging, altering or abolishing Parishes/Town Councils.
 - the naming of Parishes and the style of new Parishes/Town Councils.
 - the electoral arrangements for Parishes/Town Councils including:
 - the ordinary year of election.
 - the number of Councillors to be elected; and
 - the warding (if any) of the Parish/Town Councils.
 - grouping Parishes under a common Parish Council or degrouping Parishes.
- 2.2. The Council is required to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:
 - reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
 - effective and convenient.

2.3. In doing so, the CGR is required to take into account:

- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or Parish/Town Council.

3. Why undertake a Community Governance Review

3.1. A CGR provides an opportunity for principal authorities to review and make changes to community governance within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population or in reaction to specific, or local, new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective and convenient and it reflects the identities and interests of the community.

3.2. The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16 December 2024. This set out the government's plans to devolve greater power and funding to local areas and to deliver Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in two tier areas. LGR will see the formation of one or several single unitary authorities for Hertfordshire, and the abolition of the existing ten District Councils within the county. Once one or more new unitary authorities are formed, those areas within St Albans City and District which are not parished, will have no lower tier of local government below that of the unitary.

3.3. Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full CGR at least every 10 to 15 years. The last CGR took place in 2022, however, the Council wishes to ensure that all localities have an opportunity to express a view on community governance in light of wider Local Government Reorganisation. It may be that existing Parishes/Town Councils have matters to bring to our attention and this Review will allow them to do so.

4. What do Parish Councils do?

4.1. Parish Councils represent the most local form of government and can own land and assets, employ staff and provide services at a local level, this can include open space and recreation, cemeteries, grass cutting, street lighting etc. They can raise funds to meet the costs of administration and provision of services through setting a precept which forms part of council tax bills levied on council tax payers in the parish. Parish Councils can also provide a local voice for the community responding to consultations and raising concerns with the relevant organisations.

4.2. A Parish Council is made up of parish councillors elected by the local government electors in the parish with elections taking place every four years. Vacancies within the four-year term are filled by co-option or by election if 10 local government electors request it.

5. Who will undertake the Review?

5.1. As the relevant principal authority, St Albans City and District Council is responsible for conducting any CGR within its electoral area. The Strategy and

Resources Committee will oversee the Review and produce draft and final recommendations; Council will approve the final recommendations which will be implemented by the making of an appropriate Order.

6. Areas under Review

6.1. The whole of the St Albans City and District Council area will be included in the CGR. A map showing the unparished area and related district wards can be seen at **Appendix A**. A map of the district showing all nine of the existing Parish Councils is attached at **Appendix B**.

7. Scope of Review and Factors to be Considered

7.1. St Albans City and District Council has resolved to undertake a CGR to consider whether there is a desire and need to create a Parish Council/s for the currently unparished areas of the district. We acknowledge that comments regarding existing Parishes and Town Councils may be brought to our attention and will be considered within the scope of this Review.

7.2. The scope of the Review will include consideration of:

- the creation of one or more Parish/Town Councils.
- the name of any new or existing Parish/Town Councils.
- the electoral arrangements for Parishes/Town Councils including:
 - the ordinary year of election,
 - the number of councillors to be elected; and
 - the warding (if any) of the Parish/Town Councils.
- minor boundary changes to Parish Council areas which lie adjacent to the unparished areas will be considered where appropriate.
- the abolition, dissolution, or grouping of Parish/town Councils.

7.3. The following factors will be considered as part of assessing proposals within the scope of the review:

- a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector,
- a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride,
- a sense of place – a place with a ‘positive’ feeling for people and local distinctiveness,
- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area,
- effectiveness and convenience,
- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion,
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or Parish,
- people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities,
- people knowing their rights and responsibilities.

8. Consultation

8.1. The Council is required to consult the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the Review and to take the representations that are received into account. The Council will also identify any other person who, or body that, it feels may have an interest in the Review and write to them inviting them to submit their views at all stages of the consultation.

8.2. Before publishing final proposals, the Council will comply with these statutory consultative requirements by:

- consulting local government electors for the area under review.
- consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Council to have an interest in the Review.
- notifying and consulting Hertfordshire County Council; and
- taking into account any representations received in connection with the Review.

8.3. The Council will publicise the Review by displaying a notice at the Council Offices and creating a dedicated page on the Council's website. The Council will also write to all Parish Councils/Town Councils or any other community or resident groups of which the Council is aware, District Councillors and the relevant County Councillors, and the MPs.

8.4. Information about each stage of the Review will be published on the Council's website. It will also be possible to view Review documents at: St Albans City and District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE.

9. Indicative timetable for the Community Governance Review

Event	Date
Approval of timetable and terms of reference for the Community Governance Review [CGR] by Council.	16 July 2025
Preparation for start of the CGR	Mid July to early August 2025
Formal commencement of CGR – Terms of Reference published.	Early August 2025
Initial consultation stage.	Early August to early October 2025
Consideration of consultation responses and production of draft recommendations.	October to November 2025
Report to Strategy and Resources Committee on proposed draft recommendations.	20 November 2025
Draft recommendations published.	Late November 2025
Consultation on draft recommendations.	Late November 2025 to late February 2026
Consideration of second consultation responses and drafting of final recommendations	February to June 2026
Pre-election period for district council elections	Mid-March to early May 2026
Proposed final recommendations submitted to Strategy and Resources Committee.	June 2026 (date TBC)
Final recommendations submitted to Council.	July 2026 (date TBC)
Legal drafting of the Community Governance Order	July to September 2026
Community Governance Order(s) made.	September 2026

9.1. Any Order made following a CGR should, for administrative and financial reasons (for example setting up a new Parish Council and arranging for its first precept) take effect on 1 April following the date on which the Order is made. Electoral arrangements will come into force at the first elections to any new Parish Council/Town Council following the making of the Order.

10. Electorate Forecasts

10.1. When considering the electoral arrangements, the Council must consider any likely future changes in the number or distribution of electors within five years

from the day the review commences. The Review will use the latest electorate figures available (April 2025) together with the estimated delivery of new dwellings within the five-year period taken from the Council's most recent forecast.

11. Consequential Matters

11.1. When the required consultation has been undertaken, and the Review completed, the Council may make an Order to bring into effect any decision that it may make taking account of the role of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. If the Council decides to take no action, then it will not be necessary to make an Order. If an Order is made it may be necessary to cover certain consequential matters in that Order. These may include:

- the transfer and management or custody of any property.
- the setting of a precept (Council tax levy) for the new Parish Council / Town Council.
- provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities.
- provision for the transfer of staff, compensation for loss of office, pensions and other staffing matters.

11.2. The Council will also take into account the requirements of the Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008 when calculating the budget requirement of any new Parish Councils / Town Councils when setting the Council tax levy to be charged.

12. Representations

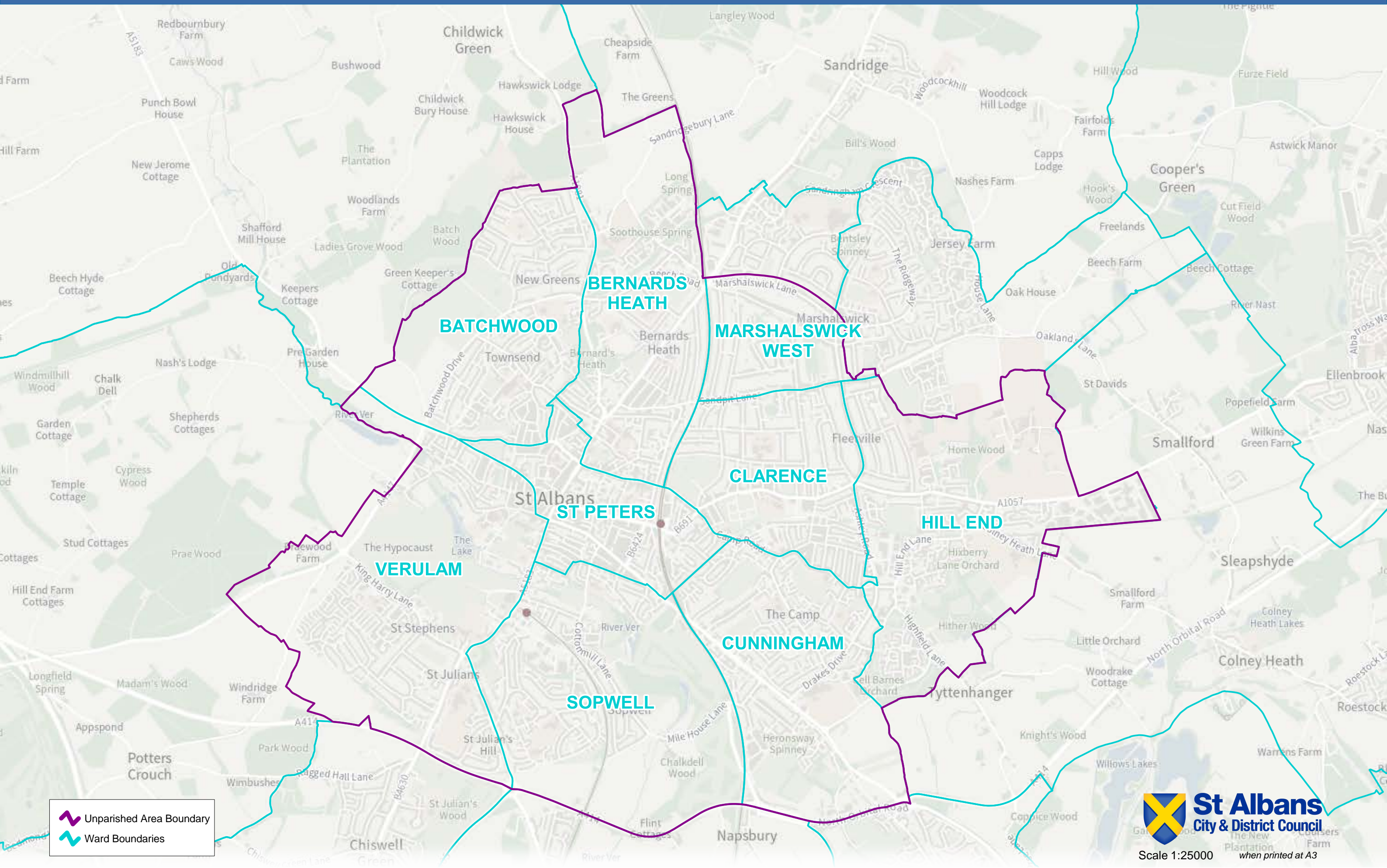
12.1. St Albans City and District Council welcomes representations during the specified consultation stages as set out in the timetable from any person or body who may wish to comment or make proposals on any aspect of the matters included within the Review.

Representations may be made in the following ways:

By Email: CGR@stalbans.gov.uk

By post: Electoral Services (CGR),
St Albans City and District Council,
Civic Centre,
St Peter's Street,
St Albans,
AL1 3JE

UNPARISHED AREA AND DISTRICT WARDS



PARISH AND PARISH WARD BOUNDARIES 2025

