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Supplementary Paper

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

First Floor Meeting Space, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton,
OX14 4SB

on Monday, 7 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

6. **Community Governance Review - terms of reference** (Pages 2 - 10)

A supplementary document for the item.



Boars Hill Association - Parish Boundary Review

Summary

The Boars Hill Association has long felt that the community of Boars Hill would be better served if it was not, broadly, divided between two civil parishes. The BHA has taken the opportunity of the upcoming review of parish boundaries to invite the residents of the western part of Boars Hill to consider a transfer to Sunningwell parish.

Although, when visited, there was no reply from a number of households, nevertheless 208 voters out of 343 signed a petition calling for revised boundaries as detailed below. This represents 60.6% of all voters. But, excluding those households who did not answer when called on, 66.0% of registered voters were in favour.

Background

The residents of Boars Hill form a very distinct community with a strong sense of identity. The Boars Hill Association (BHA) was founded in 1974 as a residents' association and its constitution states:

“The purpose of the Association shall be to engender a sense of identity and community among the residents of Boars Hill including the provision of a forum for the presentation of information, entertainment and exchange of views among the residents of Boars Hill and to provide a focal point for discussion, representation and action in respect of any issue of interest or concern to the community of Boars Hill in Oxfordshire”

Further information on the BHA constitution may be found on the BHA website:

<https://boarshill.info/background-to-bha/>

For almost 50 years every household has received a free quarterly Newsletter, now in full colour, which is also distributed via email to nearly 300 residents on the BHA database. A pdf of the latest Newsletter may be seen here: <https://boarshill.info/latest-newsletter/> The majority of households pay an annual subscription to the BHA and participate more fully in the activities organised by the BHA.

During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, the BHA established a support hub for the Boars Hill community which was officially recognised by the Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWH DC).

Proposed Boundary Change

The Boars Hill boundaries have been laid down by the BHA since the 1970s as shown on the BHA map. See: <https://boarshill.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/BHA-boundaries-10-final2.jpg> See also Appendix 3 below. The boundaries are delineated to coincide with Land Registry cadastral parcels so as to avoid splitting residential holdings.

At the end of November 2021, the BHA became aware that a parish boundary review was to be undertaken by the VoWH DC. The BHA has held a very long standing view that Boars Hill would benefit from a community cohesion viewpoint if it were not divided largely between Sunningwell and Wootton parishes.

The existing parish boundaries typically follow old agricultural field ditches and are mostly obsolete having been delineated in the 19th century at a time when there were hardly any houses on Boars Hill. Today there are numerous anomalies such as the division of residential gardens between different parishes and in one case, at least, the boundary runs through the middle of a dwelling house. In the case of Lincombe Lane, one branch belongs to Wootton parish but is completely cut off from the rest of the parish as it is necessary to travel through another branch of Lincombe Lane which belongs to Sunningwell parish in order to reach the rest of the parish.

The BHA notes that the Local Government Boundary Commission gives guidance on community governance reviews and in particular notes that this provides for public petitions to trigger such reviews. The guidance stresses the importance of community cohesion and that the views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.

Para 39 states:

“In recent years, the Government has been keen to encourage more community engagement. The 2006 White Paper confirmed this development further stressing the intention to build on the existing parish structure improving capacity to deliver better services, and to represent the community’s interests.”

Whilst Para 40 states:

“Under the 2007 Act, local electors throughout England can petition their principal council for a community governance review to be undertaken. The petition must set out at least one recommendation that the petitioners want the review to consider making. These recommendations can be about a variety of matters including *inter alia*:

- the alteration of boundaries of existing parishes
- a strong, inclusive community
- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area;
- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion;

Para 50 states:

“... it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity. **The views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.**”

Accordingly in early December 2021 the officers of the BHA drafted an explanatory leaflet incorporating a map and petition which was discussed, amended and then approved by the full committee of the BHA. This was subsequently distributed to all households in the western part of Boars Hill which currently belong to Wootton parish. The BHA necessarily had to summarise the key arguments in favour of the recommended change and it is not for us to consider and raise all the possible factors which might be debated on either side in a leaflet advocating community cohesion on Boars Hill. As a courtesy, a copy of the circular was sent to both the Sunningwell and Wootton parish clerks. The circular gives further explanation for the changes sought and a copy is shown as Appendix 1 below.

The BHA feels that the predominantly semi-rural community of Boars Hill has far more in common with Sunningwell parish, which is essentially rural in nature and to which the eastern part of Boars Hill already belongs, rather than the larger parish of Wootton. Wootton parish has a population which is about three times the size of Sunningwell and, after the proposed boundary change, would still remain substantially larger even without counting the various housing developments currently proposed in Wootton.

The BHA has also been aware for some years that Wootton PC appears very focussed on the affairs of Wootton and, by contrast, appears very disinterested in the concerns of Boars Hill residents who live in the Wootton part of the Hill. This has been apparent not only to members of the BHA committee, but also to many residents when they have attended meetings to raise matters of great concern to Boars Hill. By contrast Boars Hill residents have noted various projects implemented by Sunningwell PC which have benefitted Boars Hill.

The circular was distributed to the Wootton part of Boars Hill by BHA volunteers and after a few days volunteers started to call on dwellings in the affected area. However they were somewhat hampered by the Christmas and New Year holiday period, when more people were away than usual, and, it is thought, by some residents still shielding from Covid-19.

Nevertheless 208 voters out of 343 have signed a petition calling for revised boundaries as detailed below. This represents 60.6% of all registered voters. But, excluding those households who did not answer when called on, 66.0% of registered voters were in favour (see separate spread sheet). In addition, a further 21 adult residents who are not on the current electoral roll also signed.

We attach as Appendix 4 a map showing the location and number of petition forms signed for each house. The votes in favour of a change are well distributed throughout the area. The BHA would like to thank VoWH Democratic Services Dept. for kindly providing a sanitised list of voter numbers for the western part of Boars Hill.

Cumnor Parish

As an additional matter, there are a few properties in the extreme eastern part of Cumnor parish on Boars Hill, about a dozen in total, which merited consultation at the same time.

The residents living in the extreme eastern salient of Cumnor parish are presently completely cut off from direct road access with the rest of Cumnor parish. The existing parish boundary actually dissects two of the properties whilst another four are directly adjacent to the parish boundary. All the properties concerned form a part of the community of Boars Hill and represent just a half of one percent of Cumnor parish which has a total population about six times that of Sunningwell parish.

A similar circular with a map and petition has resulted in 25 (c 83%) out of about 30 residents being in favour of the boundary change as set out. As a courtesy, a copy of the circular was sent to the Cumnor parish clerk and is reproduced as Appendix 2 below.

Our Request

A schedule of houses showing the names of those who have signed is attached in the separate Excel spread sheet. The original petition forms are available for inspection upon request.

In light of all the above, the Boars Hill Association hereby requests that the clear wishes of the residents of Wootton parish who live in the western part of Boars Hill and those of the extreme east of Cumnor parish as expressed in the attached petitions be accepted and implemented as provided for in the legislation so that the whole of the community of Boars Hill falls within one parish.

Kate O'Donovan

Chair, for the BHA.



Boars Hill Association - Parish Boundary Review

The District Council is currently reviewing local government parish boundaries.

The community of Boars Hill is presently divided into two halves: the western part falls under Wootton parish and the eastern part is in Sunningwell parish. Many residents feel that Boars Hill is a single clearly defined community and that it should be wholly in one parish. The boundary review presents an opportunity to request that the western part of Boars Hill should be merged with Sunningwell parish. Boars Hill would then be united providing greater community cohesion and be better able to address matters of common interest. The revised boundary would be based on official land registry records so that properties would not be split.

There is also dissatisfaction among many Boars Hill Wootton parish residents with Wootton Parish Council's apparent lack of concern in Boars Hill interests, particularly in the last few years when there has been a clear disregard of Boars Hill residents' views during some council meetings.

Wootton is a large parish with about three times the population of Sunningwell parish. Even after such a boundary change Wootton would still be substantially larger than Sunningwell and due to grow even bigger with proposed development. Sunningwell parish would welcome the addition of the western part of Boars Hill.

The very long standing BHA boundaries, upon which these civil parish changes are based, would not alter ecclesiastical boundaries therefore church membership would not be affected.

The map overleaf demonstrates the proposed new arrangements. If you have any questions please do email us: bha@boarshill.info

The district council will not make changes against the wishes of the residents concerned but, equally, they will take note if most would like a change. A decision to change, or not, is entirely in your hands. That change is what this petition calls for.

If you agree and would like to have the parish boundaries amended along the lines suggested please enter your full name and address and then sign where shown. One form may be used for all voters resident at your address and all who are in favour should sign the form. If you need more space please email us or photocopy the form. Please note that only registered adult voters may sign this petition. We will collect your form in the next week or two. You may also drop it in to our BHA Secretary: Nigel Jones, Whitsun Meadows, Berkeley Road.

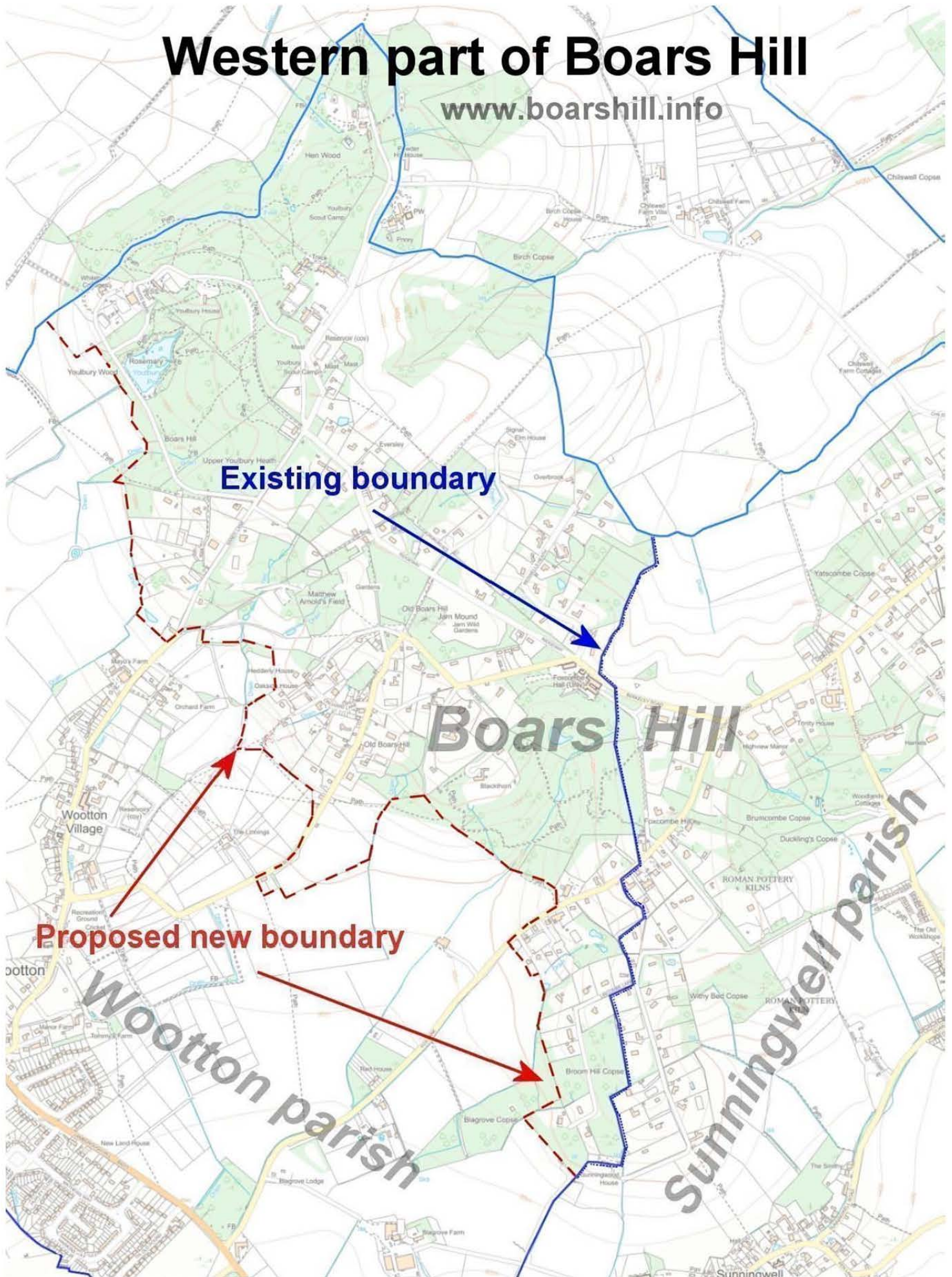
Thank you for your attention. - Kate O'Donovan, Chairman, on behalf of the BHA.

I / we the undersigned hereby request that the western part of Boars Hill be transferred to Sunningwell parish as set out above and overleaf.

Full name	Address	Signature
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Western part of Boars Hill

www.boarshill.info



The proposed new boundaries coincide with Land Registry cadastral parcels.



Boars Hill Association - Parish Boundary Review

The District Council is currently undertaking a 10 yearly review of local parish boundaries.

The community of Boars Hill is broadly divided into two halves; the western part falls under Wootton parish and the eastern part is in Sunningwell parish. The BHA, as well as many residents, have long felt that Boars Hill is a single clearly defined community and that it should be wholly in one civil parish. The boundary review presents an opportunity to request that the western part of Boars Hill should be merged with Sunningwell parish. Boars Hill would then be largely united providing greater community cohesion and be better able to address matters of common interest. Where possible the revised boundary would be based on official land registry records so that residential properties would not be split.

The BHA, has been consulting in the Wootton part of Boars Hill where more than half of the residents have already supported joining Sunningwell parish.

There are about a dozen households, like yours, in the extreme east of Cumnor parish which are wholly cut off from direct access with the rest of Cumnor. These residents are close to and form a more natural part of the Boars Hill community. We hope very much you will take this opportunity to join the rest of us to create a single parish on Boars Hill. Sunningwell parish has indicated it would welcome the inclusion of residences from all parts of Boars Hill.

The map overleaf demonstrates the proposed new arrangements. If you have any questions please do email us: bha@boarshill.info

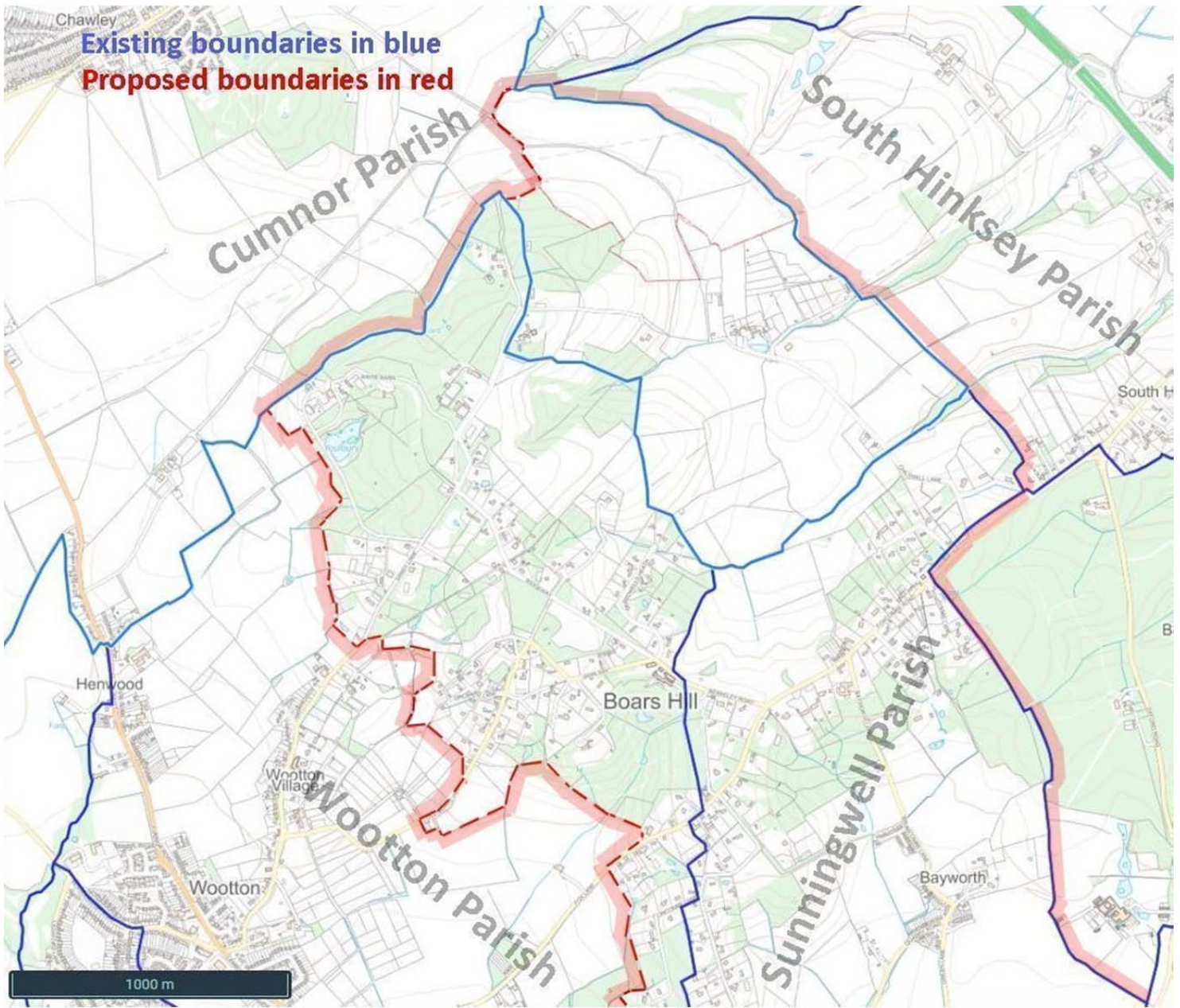
The district council will not make changes against the wishes of the residents concerned but, equally, they will take note if most would like a change. The decision to request a change, or not, is entirely in your hands – the residents of eastern Cumnor. That change is what this petition calls for.

If you agree and would like to have the parish boundaries amended along the lines suggested please enter your full name and address and then sign where shown. One form may be used for all voters resident at your address and all who are in favour should sign the form. If you need more space please email us or photocopy the form. Please note that only registered adult voters may sign this petition. We will collect your form in the next few days or you may drop it in to our BHA Secretary: Nigel Jones, Whitsun Meadows, Berkeley Road, OX1 5ET.

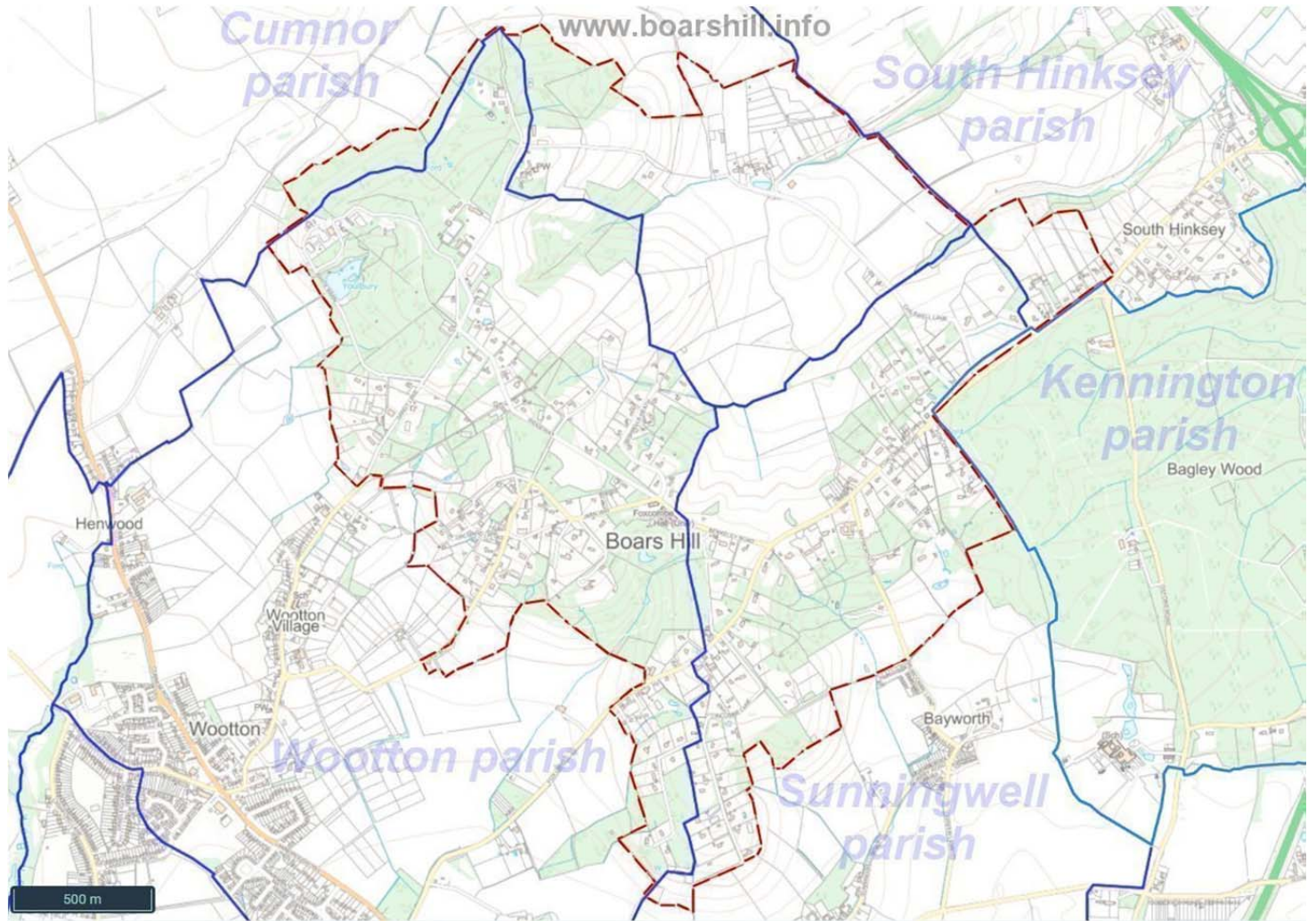
Thank you for your attention. - Kate O'Donovan, Chairman, on behalf of the BHA.

I / we the undersigned hereby request that the eastern part of Cumnor parish be transferred to Sunningwell parish as set out above and overleaf.

Full name	Address	Signature
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The proposed new boundaries coincide with Land Registry cadastral parcels.



BHA boundaries for Boars Hill

