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Councillor Gavin Grant  
Chairman Electoral Review Committee  
Wiltshire Council  
County Hall  
Trowbridge  
BA14 8JN

27 February 2026

***Dear Councillor Grant,***

### **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW SUBMISSION**

#### References:

- A. Democratic Services Briefing Note 25-09: Community Governance Review, dated 19 November 2025.
- B. Email Clerk to Bishops Cannings Parish Council / Wiltshire Council Democracy Manager, dated 30 January 2026 @ 14:41 (Subj: Community Governance Review).
- C. Informal meeting of Electoral Review Committee with Bishops Cannings Parish Council on 19 February 2026.

1. Further to the References, and in response to the Community Governance Review of Parishes within the Devizes Area, Bishops Cannings Parish Council confirms that it:

- a. wishes to retain its existing boundaries;
- b. does not wish to reinstate wards;
- c. wishes to retain its existing number of seats, namely 11; and,
- d. will likely seek a name change, to be confirmed at its meeting on 12 March.

2. The Parish Council, led by its Chair, Councillor Darren Bone, was grateful for the opportunity to meet informally with the Electoral Review Committee on 19 February. As promised at that meeting, the Parish Council's formal response to the review is forwarded at the **Enclosure**. The Council stands ready to address the Committee's questions.

3. I am copying this letter to Bishops Cannings Parish Councillors, Councillor Philip Whitehead (Unitary Councillor for Urchfont and Bishops Cannings) and Kieran Elliot and Lisa Armstrong, both of Wiltshire Council Democratic Services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Kent'.

Alison Kent  
Clerk to Bishops Cannings Parish Council

Enclosure:

1. Bishops Cannings Parish Council's Submission to the Community Governance Review 2025/26, dated 27 February 2026.

# **BISHOPS CANNINGS PARISH COUNCIL**

## **SUBMISSION TO THE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2025/26**

27 February 2027

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## **Executive Summary**

Bishops Cannings Parish is a coherent, vibrant and connected community which successfully bridges the rural and semi-urban environments. Both elements remain key to the core identity of the parish, as this submission and its evidence demonstrates.

Bishops Cannings Parish Council has transformed in less than two years. It is a diverse and appropriately representative body. As the data shows, it is also innovative, dynamic, forward-thinking and focused on local service delivery at pace.

This submission demonstrates the success which the Parish Council has had in investing in its residents, its stakeholders and its infrastructure. The delivery of a range of ambitious projects has presented the entire community with significant and tangible benefits. Equally important has been the success in gaining support and investment from the local authority, as well as a wide range of local and national stakeholders and organisations.

Bishops Cannings Parish Council is aware that Devizes Town Council wishes to take control of two areas of land and subsume them, their infrastructure and their electors into the town. The Parish Council's compelling case is that residents would gain nothing from such a move, nor would it be compliant with the two statutory criteria for the Community Governance Review.

The evidence speaks for itself. Local residents are speaking with one voice. Only by reaffirming the existing boundaries of Bishops Cannings Parish will the identity and interests of the community be truly reflected and protected. The evidence shows that only Bishops Cannings Parish Council can offer the requisite efficiency and effectiveness of governance, which the local community deserves and which the statutory criteria demand.

In recognition of the issues raised, Bishops Cannings Parish Council formally gives notice that it will likely seek to secure a name change for the parish as part of this 2025/26 Community Governance Review. This would be subject to formal resolution at its scheduled meeting on 12 March 2026.

## Introduction

*'This matter goes to the heart of local governance. It is not a question of administrative convenience, nor of cartography, nor of perceived urban expansion. It is about identity, representation, accountability, and the principle that communities should be governed as closely and as locally as possible.'*<sup>1</sup>

1. Wiltshire Council announced its intention to conduct a Community Governance Review through the publication by Democratic Services of Briefing Note 25-09 on 19 November 2025. Bishops Cannings Parish Council and Devizes Town Council are both included in this review process by dint of their being two of the 20 parishes which collectively form the Devizes Area.

2. A Community Governance Review provides a periodic opportunity to review and, where necessary, amend governance arrangements to town and parish councils. The aim of the process is to ensure that this lowest tier of governance continues to be reflective of the identity and interest of the local communities, and that they are as efficient and effective in their governance as possible. These are referred to as the statutory criteria.<sup>2</sup>

3. At its meeting on 27 January 2026, the Governance and Personnel Committee of Devizes Town Council resolved *inter alia* to apply for 15 boundary changes as part of this review. Two of those boundary changes sought to secure the transfer to Devizes Town Council of land currently within the boundary of Bishops Cannings Parish. This included an entire polling district, designated SG2, which comprises the urban element of Bishops Cannings Parish. This is home to some 2,070 electors.<sup>3</sup> It is shown in Figure 1 below.<sup>4</sup>

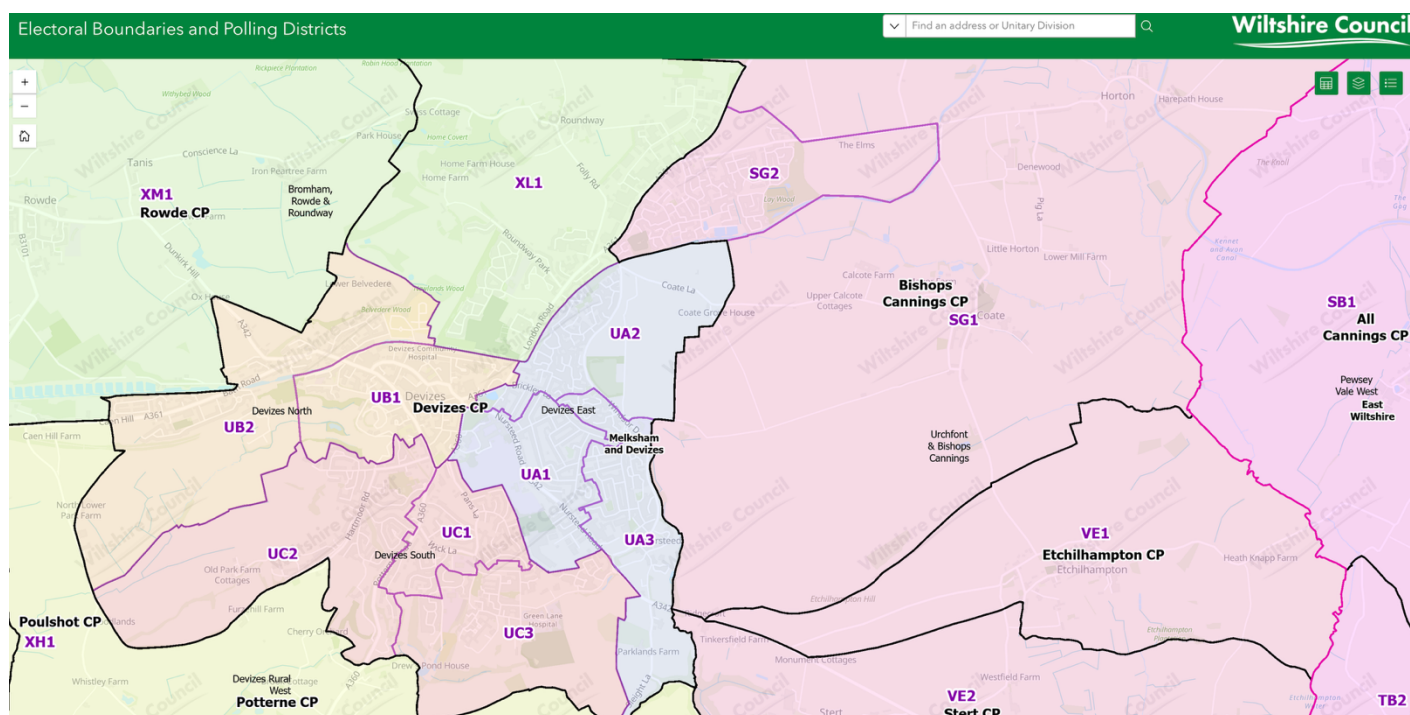


Figure 1: Polling District SG2 within Bishops Cannings Civil Parish.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a resident's letter to the Chair of Bishops Cannings Parish Council of 30 Jan 2026 following the previous evening's Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council re: Community Governance Review [see **Enclosure 2**].

<sup>2</sup> Democratic Services Briefing Note 25-09, dated 19 November 2025: What are Community Governance Reviews?

<sup>3</sup> As registered with Wiltshire Council for the Parish Elections in May 2025.

<sup>4</sup> <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6bc1b3157eec400bae075afa81a982c2/page/Page>.

4. On 19 February 2026, members of Wiltshire Council's Electoral Review Committee met informally with the Chair, Councillors and Clerk of Bishops Cannings Parish Council. The Chair, Councillor Darren Bone, reiterated the Council's position with respect to the Community Governance Review, as submitted on 30 January 2025.<sup>5</sup> In sum, Bishops Cannings Parish Council:

- a. wished to retain its existing boundaries;
- b. did not wish to reinstate wards;
- c. wished to retain its existing number of seats, that being 11, with no increase or reduction required; and,
- d. might wish to consider changing its name, whether as part of the process or separately.

5. On behalf of the Parish Council, the Chair acknowledged the two statutory criteria as being the only relevant tests for decision-making within the review process. He undertook to submit a detailed paper which would enable the Electoral Review Committee to assess the strength of the Parish Council's case. The Council considers its case for maintaining its existing boundaries to be compelling. This paper, with its clear data and evidence, forms that submission.

### **Devizes Town Council Proposals**

6. At its meeting on 27 January 2026, Devizes Town Council's Governance and Personnel Committee had considered, at Agenda Item 5, the Council's proposed response to the Community Governance Review.<sup>6</sup> Two Councillors and the Clerk from Bishops Cannings Parish Council had attended that meeting as observers, although no invitation had been extended.

7. A total of 15 boundary changes were proposed. Councillor authors of the proposal informed members of the committee that 14 of the proposed changes were '*entirely uncontentious*', while acknowledging that one proposal [SG2] would create debate. The committee unanimously adopted the changes with little discussion. It is assumed that this formed the Town Council's formal submission to the Electoral Review Committee.

8. Bishops Cannings Parish Council accepts that Devizes Town Council had every right to submit whatever proposals it wished in response to the request by the Electoral Review Committee and Democratic Services in its Briefing Note 25-09.

9. The fact remains, however, that at no stage did Devizes Town Council attempt to reach out in any way to its neighbouring parish, despite its clear intent to take control of significant portions of that parish's land, as well as a large population hub and some 2,070 electors. Neither the Town Clerk nor any Devizes Town Councillor showed even the slightest courtesy to inform its Bishops Cannings Parish Council. Nor has any attempt been made to rectify this oversight since the Town Council's intent first became known to the Parish Council on 22 January, through the publication of the Agenda for the meeting of the Governance Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> Email Clerk to Bishops Cannings Parish Council / Democracy Manager, Mr Kieran Elliott, of 30 Jan 2025 at 14:41 (Subj. Community Governance Review).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.devizes-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/26-01-27-Governance-Personnel-AGENDA.pdf>.

10. Of the 15 proposed changes, locations 12 and 13 relate entirely to land within the boundary of Bishops Cannings Parish Council. Respectively, they are undeveloped land to the east of Windsor Drive, and the population centre designated as Polling District SG2.

11. Location 12: Area to East of Windsor Drive. This is an area of land south of Nursteed School, which Devizes Town Council describes as ‘a potential development site.’ As its justification, it claims that the land: ‘would sit better in Devizes than Bishops Cannings which is some distance away.’ The wording here is important. It is an example of an evident trend where the Town Council has chosen not to refer to Bishops Cannings correctly as a large, integrated Parish with a strong and distinct sense of identity and community. Instead, it has chosen to address Bishops Cannings in the context of a small, insignificant and distant rural village. The impression sought is one whereby the removal of this land would be of no consequence. Further examples will be highlighted later.

12. Polling District SG2. Here, the Town Council’s undisguised intent is to subsume the entirety of the residential areas of North Fields, Cannings Hill, Corn Croft, Laywood, Wellington Drive and Marlborough Close into Devizes. In making that bid, and without proffering any evidence in support, the Town Council chose to declare that:

*‘This is a large urban area which identifies geographically, economically and socially much more strongly with Devizes than with the very rural parish of Bishops Cannings. Many residents in this area already believe they live in Devizes and tend to default to Devizes for service requests. They also access services in the town such as the Leisure Centre which is subsidised by DTC rate payers.’*

Such a brash, yet unsubstantiated statement is far from reality, as this paper will demonstrate. Neither Bishops Cannings Parish Council, nor especially its residents have been shown any evidence to validate such bland, yet all-encompassing claims. Doubtless Wiltshire Councillors will be equally quick to point out that Devizes Leisure Centre is in fact a valued resource provided for **all** residents in the Devizes Area, and that it is owned and largely funded by the local authority, rather than by the residents of Devizes.

## A Parish Council Transformed

13. Bishops Cannings is indeed a large parish, both in terms of population and land area. It is shown graphically at **Enclosure 1**. It currently has 2,628 electors.<sup>7</sup> They are distributed across the historic village of Bishops Cannings; the hamlets of Coate, Horton, Little Horton and Bourton; and the semi-urban area known as Polling District SG2. The great majority of the latter area has always been part of the parish. Over the last 35 years, it has seen growth in housing and the electorate as land was developed. This occurred in line with the general decline and subsequent withdrawal of a permanent military presence in the area and later through the sale of pockets of land owned by the Crown Estate.

14. Most recently, the far western part of North Fields was incorporated into Bishops Cannings Parish in 2017. Consisting of the residential areas centred on the old Le Marchant Barracks, as well as around Kingfisher Drive and Kingsmanor Wharf, this transfer arose as a result of the abolition of Roundway Parish. The majority of that Parish, including the Hopton Industrial Estate, was subsumed into Devizes Town Council at the same time.

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<sup>7</sup> Total number of registered electors the parish, as recorded by Wiltshire Council in November 2025.

15. Regardless of boundaries, it is important to acknowledge that Bishops Cannings Parish, and particularly its Council, has had a somewhat chequered past. Previous iterations of the Council were characterised – perhaps unsurprisingly – as being focused almost exclusively on the interests of the village of Bishops Cannings. Evidence of this is easy to find: in the period up to 2017, fully six of the 11 seats were warded to the village of Bishops Cannings; none to Coate nor Horton; and only five to Cannings Hill, despite it being the population hub. Parish Council Chairmen also tended to come from the village.

16. In truth, the Parish Council has not always enjoyed the best reputation, whether that be amongst those from the village, its hamlets or main area of population, let alone more broadly from Devizes. As a body, it was arguably unrepresentative, largely inactive and ultra-conservative in terms of expenditure. This was exemplified by poor relations even with local stakeholders, not least Bishops Cannings Primary School and the Village Hall trustees. Relations with both organisations were strained: each consistently submitting strong objections to the Council's earlier planning applications to extend the village car park.

17. However, today's iteration of Bishops Cannings Parish Council is unrecognisable compared to its predecessors. The transformation has been highly visible, tangible and achieved in less than two years. In that time, new blood has been injected into the Council, reflecting a determination both to encourage and recruit participation from across the parish and to reflect more closely the population demography. Whole communities have been engaged in a series of inclusive meetings. These have included candid discussions about the Council's aspirations and intent, along with an open invitation to hold it to account. Residents have welcomed and responded to this positive, innovative and action-focused approach.

18. In December 2025, the Council had 10 members from a capacity of 11. Notably, this demonstrated a welcome infusion of diversity into the Council, with a 50:50 split between men and women. That alone has had a positive impact on the Council, as has the introduction of new members of different ages. Collectively, they have brought fresh ideas and life experiences to the Council and to the way it serves the public.

19. The Parish Council's intent, approach and focus on public service delivery is now widely understood and acknowledged. First-hand engagement, correspondence and social media interactions all recognise the breadth and depth of what the new Council is now doing at pace, via multiple workstreams. It has resulted in better outcomes for local residents, delivered more quickly. Success has bred success, not least through consistent stakeholder engagement. Relations with the school's leadership team, Village Hall trustees and the Crown Estate have improved markedly. Trust in relationships is now evident, characterised by open dialogue, collaboration and integrity.

20. There is now a surfeit of candidates to bring the Council up to full capacity. This is expected to be achieved at the Council's ordinary meeting on 12 March 2026. This alone is testament to the extraordinary reversal in interest, activity and effectiveness. Less than three years ago, it was not uncommon to have to ask whether a scheduled meeting would be quorate, despite that only requiring four Councillors to be in attendance. Now the Council stands on the brink of having a full set of members, with meetings increasing attracting members of the public, who come to listen and actively engage.

## A Parish Council Delivering

*'Bishops Cannings Parish Council is not a distant or abstract authority. It is present, visible, and engaged. Its Councillors know the parish, understand its character, and respond directly to the concerns of residents. Decisions are taken with local knowledge and with a clear line of accountability to the people affected by them. That relationship between community and council is tangible and meaningful.'*<sup>8</sup>

21. Since May 2024, an invigorated Bishops Cannings Parish Council has embarked on a complex and multi-faceted programme of strategic analysis, stakeholder and community engagement, project development and delivery. This work was founded on the core principle of investing in transparent and collaborative relations with residents, the local authority, community organisations, local businesses, service providers and adjacent parish and town councils.

22. Central to this has been the fact that a new body of Councillors has stepped up and taken responsibility for leading and contributing to various workstrands, with support from the Parish Clerk. This has delivered depth and created greater stability within the Council.

23. Strong foundations have enabled the Council to embark on an ambitious programme of maintenance, enhancements and new provision, delivered equally across both rural and semi-urban areas of the parish. Over the last 22 months, multiple projects have been identified, assessed, planned, developed, negotiated, delivered and reviewed. All of it done at pace. Other projects remain in the planning stage, but progress is apparent. Some examples are set out below. They stand as testament to this change.

## Play Areas

24. Figure 2 shows the 12 play areas located within the semi-urban area of the Parish.

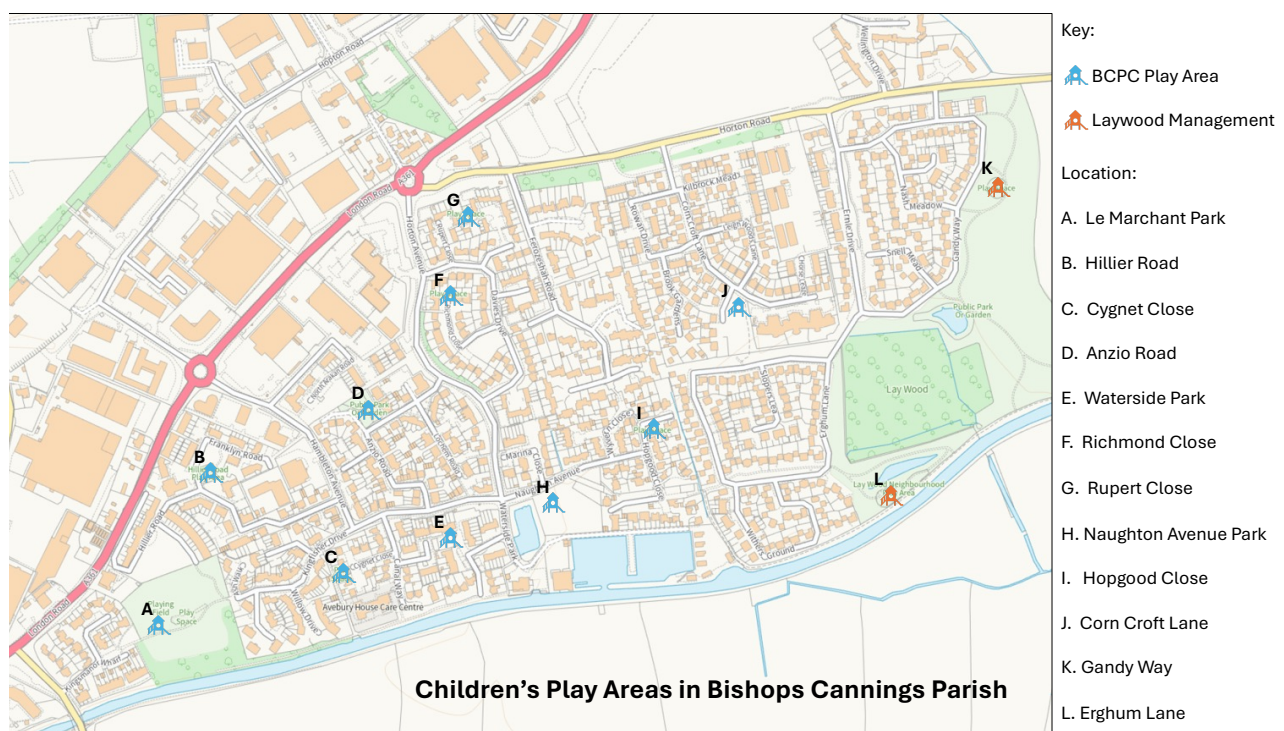


Figure 2: Play Areas in the semi-urban area of Bishops Cannings Parish.

<sup>8</sup> Extract from a resident's letter to the Chair of Bishops Cannings Parish Council of 30 Jan 2026 following the previous evening's Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council re: Community Governance Review [see **Enclosure 2**].

25. There are 12 children's play areas within the semi-urban area of the Parish (shown as A – L in Figure 2 above). The two on the Laywood development are privately managed. The remaining 10 play areas were the subject of a community asset transfer to the Parish Council from the local authority in 2022. They present a mix of facilities ranging from small, corner sites aimed at children under five years old to the significant provision at Le Marchant Park, catering for children of all ages, as well as adults.

26. It is unclear how much maintenance was actually conducted when these areas were under the control and oversight of Wiltshire Council. However, having assumed responsibility, the Parish Council immediately instigated formal inspections from qualified and certified Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) inspectors. Issues of upkeep and maintenance identified in these regular reports has immediately been actioned by the Parish Council and delivered through certified contractors. The result is that all 12 of the Council's play areas are safe and remain fully available for residents to use.

27. Since 2023, **£2,597** has been spent on those regular RoSPA inspections.<sup>9</sup> Upkeep maintenance or replacement equipment costs over the same period stand at **£14,461.74**. An example of the transformation in status, care and presentation of the play areas under the Parish Council's ownership is shown at Figures 3 and 4 below. This is the play area at Rupert Close in Cannings Hill. Figure 3 shows a small slide and a damaged seesaw, sited on a surface material that is in desperate need of replacement. The overgrown shrubs, full of dog roses and other vegetation with long thorns had already been cut back. Figure 4 starkly illustrates the transformation of this site into an attractive, welcoming and safe play area for our youngest children.



Figure 3: Rupert Close Play Area before refurbishment by the Parish Council: an uninviting place.

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<sup>9</sup> All costs are shown ex-VAT.



Figure 4: Rupert Close Play Area with new play equipment, managed vegetation and a safe new surface.

28. The Council's inspection and maintenance regime is continuous. Scheduled replacement of a double toddler swing at the Hillier Road site is shown in Figure 5 below. The equipment is being replaced with a better design, where steel legs are secured in the ground, instead of the timber legs. This work has been achieved safely, in controlled conditions, while keeping the rest of the area open and accessible for play.



Figure 5: Scheduled replacement works at Hillier Road, showing investment in new equipment.

29. The proactive and compliant maintenance and upkeep regime being enacted by Bishops Cannings Parish Council is in stark contrast to the inaction demonstrated by Devizes Town Council. It owns and manages a number of play areas and yet seemingly only formed a Play Areas Project Task Group in February 2026 to determine what needs to be done to bring a number of its facilities up to a safe standard. It has cited financial issues for the delay scheduled works and the failure to undertake routine repairs.

30. Figure 6 shows the Brickley Lane play area, which has been sealed off for a year. Children continue to be denied access to play equipment in a safe environment.

Figure 6:  
Part of the  
Brickley  
Lane play  
area  
complex  
which has  
been shut  
for a year,  
awaiting  
repair.



31. This is bizarre from the Town Council which has stated that it wishes to take control of the entire semi-urban area of Bishops Cannings Parish. If it cannot even keep up with the maintenance demands of its own relatively simple sites, how are residents to be convinced that it would fare any better, were it to take on a further 10 play areas?

32. By comparison, Bishops Cannings Parish Council has, since 2023 alone, invested **£64,033.50** in bespoke new play equipment for the benefit of our younger residents. That investment is in addition to spending **£14,461.74** to replace worn out or damaged equipment in its 10 play areas (see paragraph 27 above).

### Le Marchant Park

33. The largest area in the Parish in terms of public space is Le Marchant Park, situated behind the old barracks of the same name. This, too, was part of the community asset transfer from Wiltshire Council in 2022. Other than a large, robust steel climbing frame, there was little to be proud of at the time. The adult-specific fitness equipment had not been well-maintained, and a rope agility trail for children had been condemned and had to be removed. Moreover, the park was subject to regular reporting to the police of incidents involving anti-social behaviour by groups of youths, often not local to the area.

34. Despite much local opposition, in 2022 the previous Council secured planning approval for a multi-use games area (MUGA). A sizeable structure (30m x 15m x 4m), it would have been constructed of aluminium panels. In 2024, the Council rescinded the earlier decision and consulted with residents about alternative provision. Responding to that feedback, the Council spent **£50,000** of that investment fund to install swings, a 30m long agility trail and an exciting 30m long double zip-line, as shown in Figures 7 and 8.



Fig 7: Agility trail, swings and climbing frame.



Fig 8: Double zip-line run.

35. The Parish Council officially opened the new play equipment at Le Marchant Park in a community event on 1 February 2025. An instant success, children, parents and residents alike, delighted in park's regeneration, as highlighted in Figures 9 and 10 below.



Figures 9 and 10: Extracts from social media posts in February 2025, showing public responses to the new play area.

## Coronation Orchard

36. On the same day that the new play area was opened, the Parish Council and local community planted a Coronation Living Heritage Orchard, having previously secured grant funding.

37. The orchard also lies in Le Marchant Park, but on the other side of the central path. The Parish Council has installed new benches in this wild area, surrounded by mature trees. It is a haven for peace and for anyone wishing to enjoy the orchard in nature.

38. Joining the community in planting the trees were residents and staff from the Avebury House and Hayward Care Centres, which are also located in the semi-urban area of the Parish and with whom Councillors have established active links.



Figure 11: The community planting the Coronation Orchard.

39. Since planting the orchard, the Parish Council, together with resident volunteers from the local community, have worked together to water, prune and care for these young trees. This was not easy during one of the hottest and driest years on record. However, this combined effort and perseverance has resulted in the fruit trees flourishing, as is clearly shown in Figure 12.

Fig 12: One of the fruit trees in the new Coronation Orchard.



## **Safety and Security**

40. Aware that it was going to invest significantly in Le Marchant Park, and with an equally clear resolve to address anti-social behaviour issues, Bishops Cannings Parish Council procured, installed and commissioned a high specification, day and night capable CCTV system within the park. A significant investment, costs to date stand at **£7,041**.

41. The system is remotely connected to the central CCTV control hub in Devizes, ensuring that it is a coherent part of a real-time system. Data and recordings can be provided to Wiltshire Police on request.

42. The Police Inspector leading the Neighbourhood Policing Team has welcomed the provision of this equipment. More importantly, perhaps, the reaction from the local community has been universally positive. It is telling that the incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced to practically zero since the system was installed.

43. The Council has also been successful in its bid to Wiltshire Council for a full design and costs appraisal for a scheme which would see the paths through Le Marchant Park rebuilt, to address historic flooding issues, and for the provision of lighting. This would be done to enhance personal security and to encourage safe active travel for everyone.

## Urban Tree Management

44. In 2022, as well as the 10 play areas, Wiltshire Council's community asset transfer handed control and responsibility to the Parish Council for well over 300 semi-mature and mature trees, along with various green spaces. As before, these assets were all located within the semi-urban part of the parish, otherwise referred to as Polling District SG2.

45. Rather than simply sitting on these assets, the Parish Council commissioned specialist and detailed analysis to ascertain the status and needs of each individual specimen. The most pressing issue was the overgrown and densely packed swathe of mature ash and other trees along the south side of Horton Road, between Ferozeshah Road and the Corn Croft Lane development. It had clearly been unmanaged for years. Here, a full 40 mature trees had to be felled both to deal with evidence of disease and to ensure that sufficient light reached the remainder to allow them to thrive. Both objectives were achieved, as shown in Figure 13. These essential works cost **£20,717.31**.



Fig 13: Horton Road frontage after the felling of 40 mature trees to allow others to thrive.

46. Meanwhile the detailed survey had revealed the requirement for extensive works to make safe and manage the large portfolio of trees right across the semi-urban area. Work was broken down into five priority groupings, from the most urgent down to routine oversight. For each of the last three winter seasons, the Parish Council has undertaken a programme to tackle each priority group, as well as dealing with emergent works. This has come at significant cost but has meant that these living community assets are now properly managed. It also means that the Parish Council is compliant with risk and insurance requirements. The Council's commitment to invest in this way has also helped to assure the safety and future enjoyment of residents, pedestrians and all users of our pavements and community spaces. The breakdown of works is as follows:

- a. Winter 2023/24. Priority 1 and 2 works, costing **£1,925**;
- b. Winter 2024/25. Priority 3 works, costing **£9,700**; and,
- c. Winter 2025/26. Priority 4 and 5 works (ongoing), costing **£36,960**.

47. The total spend over the last three years on tree management in the semi-urban area has been **£69,302.31**. This includes the ongoing winter season. The Parish Council remains committed to timely and effective management of its extensive tree stock, recognising the safety-critical nature of this work.

## Health and Social Care

48. This Parish Council has actively taken steps to engage and interact with staff and residents at the two care homes in the urban part of the parish. One Councillor acts as the dedicated liaison for both the Avebury Care Home and the Hayward Care Centre, building those relationships, while others have also visited regularly. Both providers look after residents with dementia and so it was uplifting to see some of them join the community at the opening of the Le Marchant Park. They clearly enjoyed helping to plant the orchard.

49. The Council owns and maintains a network of five public defibrillators at locations right across the parish. It also funds and facilitates a volunteer-led emergency telephone system in Coate village. This is used to good effect as a means of providing low-level social care and reassurance from within the village to more vulnerable residents.

50. Most recently, Bishops Cannings Parish Council chose to invest proactively in the local provision of emergency healthcare. It has done so by donating £3,200 to the South Western Ambulance Charity. This donation has meant that the two professionally-trained Community First Responders who live in the parish will have permanent access to a complete emergency medical kit, including a defibrillator and oxygen.

51. These individuals – one of whom is a serving Parish Councillor – are members of the Ambulance Service, acting as volunteers. They are tasked in response to 999 and 111 calls across the Devizes Area and beyond. They are often on scene with patients well in advance of an ambulance crew, especially where a call is categorised as not being immediately life-threatening. Both volunteers report routinely being tasked to attend patients within Bishops Cannings Parish, including individuals at home and residents of both care homes. This is the epitome of a community standing up and looking after its own people when they are at their most vulnerable.

## Road Safety Improvements

52. The programme where the new council first demonstrated its determination to address long-standing local issues and make a tangible difference was road safety. These changes have focused predominantly on the roads in and around the parish's villages and hamlets. That said, every resident has seen the benefit as they all drive or cycle on these roads, regardless of where they live in the parish.

53. In April 2024, it became evident that road safety had been an historic problem, neglected for a dozen years or more. Excessive speed was the key concern for residents, especially on the approaches to, and within, the rural settlements where few pavements exist. Bishops Cannings had the additional issue of parents and children needing to park safely and then having to walk to and from school, via a busy crossroads.

54. From the outset, the Parish Council sought to establish a transparent, collaborative and constructive relationship with key traffic engineers and managers from Wiltshire Council Highways. Early site visits led to the rapid development and agreement of priority tasking. The Parish set the conditions for progressing this with a compelling and prioritised business case, backed up with a clear intent to be seen to invest and play its own part. The Parish Council's investment programme included the procurement and installation of four speed indicator devices. The last of these has just been commissioned at Coate, with the Council covering the entire cost of the programme, namely: **£12,430**.

55. Utilising the same collaborative approach, the Parish Council is funding the procurement and installation of five new sets of village white gates and signage, all contracted through Highways. This work will be complete by the end of the financial year, with the Council expecting to fund costs of **c.£7,500**.

56. A major success has been the Parish Council's work with the Devizes Area Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG). Having presented a compelling case for a speed review of West End at the start of 2025 as its top priority enhancement, LHFIG and Highways accepted the bid, commissioned the review and supported the positive recommendations which emerged. Just 12 months later, the public consultation on the proposed Traffic Regulation Order has just ended. If approved, this will see the imposition of a significant speed limit reduction (60mph reduced to 40mph) for the length of the road. At the eastern end of West End, the 30mph zone will be extended back by a further 100m. Residents have been wholly supportive of this proposal.

57. When the main A361 into Devizes was closed for two weeks during September and October 2025 for major repairs, it was immediately apparent that the village of Bishops Cannings would be inundated with local traffic, including HGVs seeking to avoid a 22 mile diversion. The Parish Council worked assiduously with Highways, the village school and Wiltshire Police to set the conditions for assuring the safety of all road users, especially young children and their parents walking on the clogged village roads to school. This involved maintaining a physical presence for hours each day, with Councillors assisting with traffic flow and ensuring that pedestrians remained safe. This commitment and the measures taken had a positive and lasting impact on parents and the community more widely.

## Village Car Park Extension

58. Arguably the Parish Council's key achievement has been its success in securing planning approval for a major extension of the Bishops Cannings car park (Figure 14).

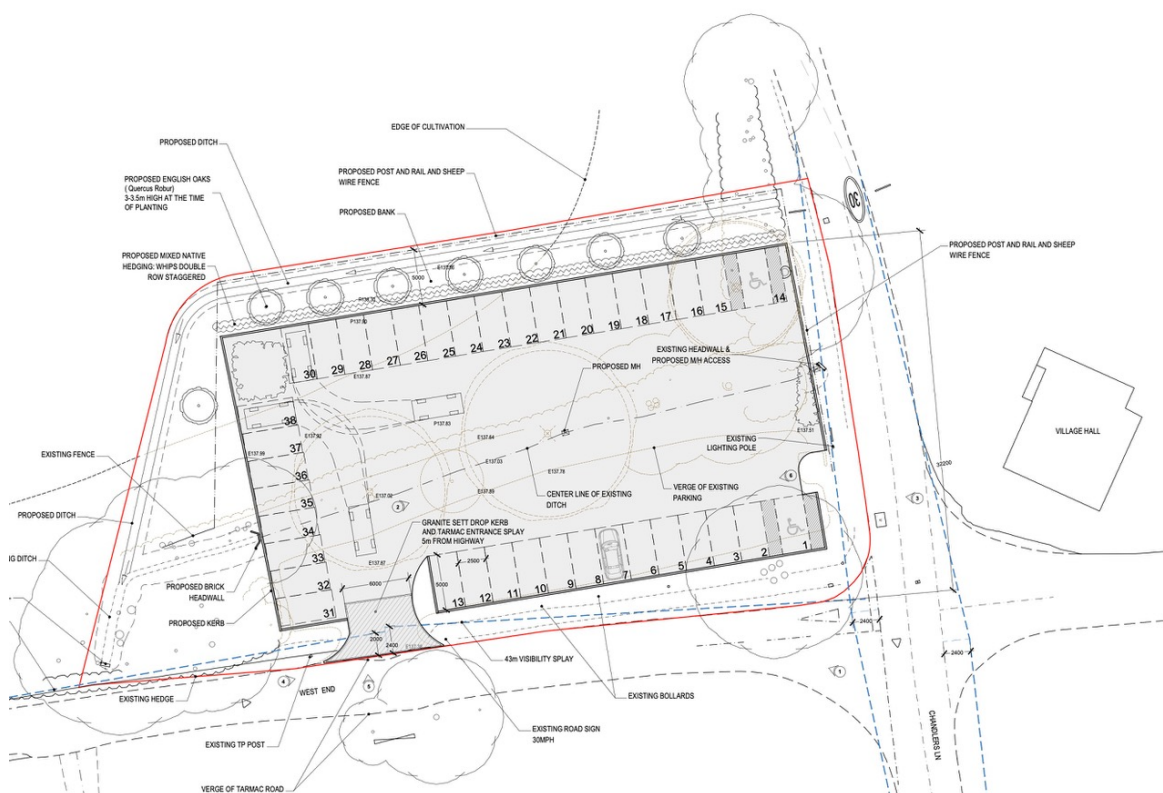


Fig 14:  
Plan for  
the new  
car park

59. Previous Council's were twice forced to withdraw planning applications in the face of consistent and robust opposition from residents and organisations alike; the latter notably including Bishops Cannings Primary School's Board of Governors and the Village Hall trustees. There had been no attempt at dialogue with stakeholders. That changed in 2024 with the new Parish Council embarking on a focused outreach programme. Trust was nurtured through transparency, leading to both organisations reversing their positions to one of strong support. Planning approval was granted in June 2025.

60. In a similar shift in approach, open engagement began between the Council, The Crown Estate (through its Agent) and the tenant farmers. This benefitted all parties and proved to be especially productive, given the farmers' offer of more land and the Crown Estate making clear its strong support. Even more extraordinary was the news at the end of February 2026 that the Crown Estate had agreed to the Parish Council's request that it donate and plant 187 new trees in the vicinity and attribute that explicitly to the Parish Council in order to discharge a planning condition tied to bio-diversity net gain regulations. That stands as a marker to the improvement in relations and the success in the Council's negotiations.

61. Construction is scheduled for summer 2026. In parallel planning, the Parish Council has worked closely with the village school, the LHFIG and other elements of Highways to exploit other funding opportunities. This has also been successful, such that Highways will now deliver and construct both a crossing point and a build-out at the crossroads; all designed to enhance pedestrian safety. Those plans are shown at Figure 15.

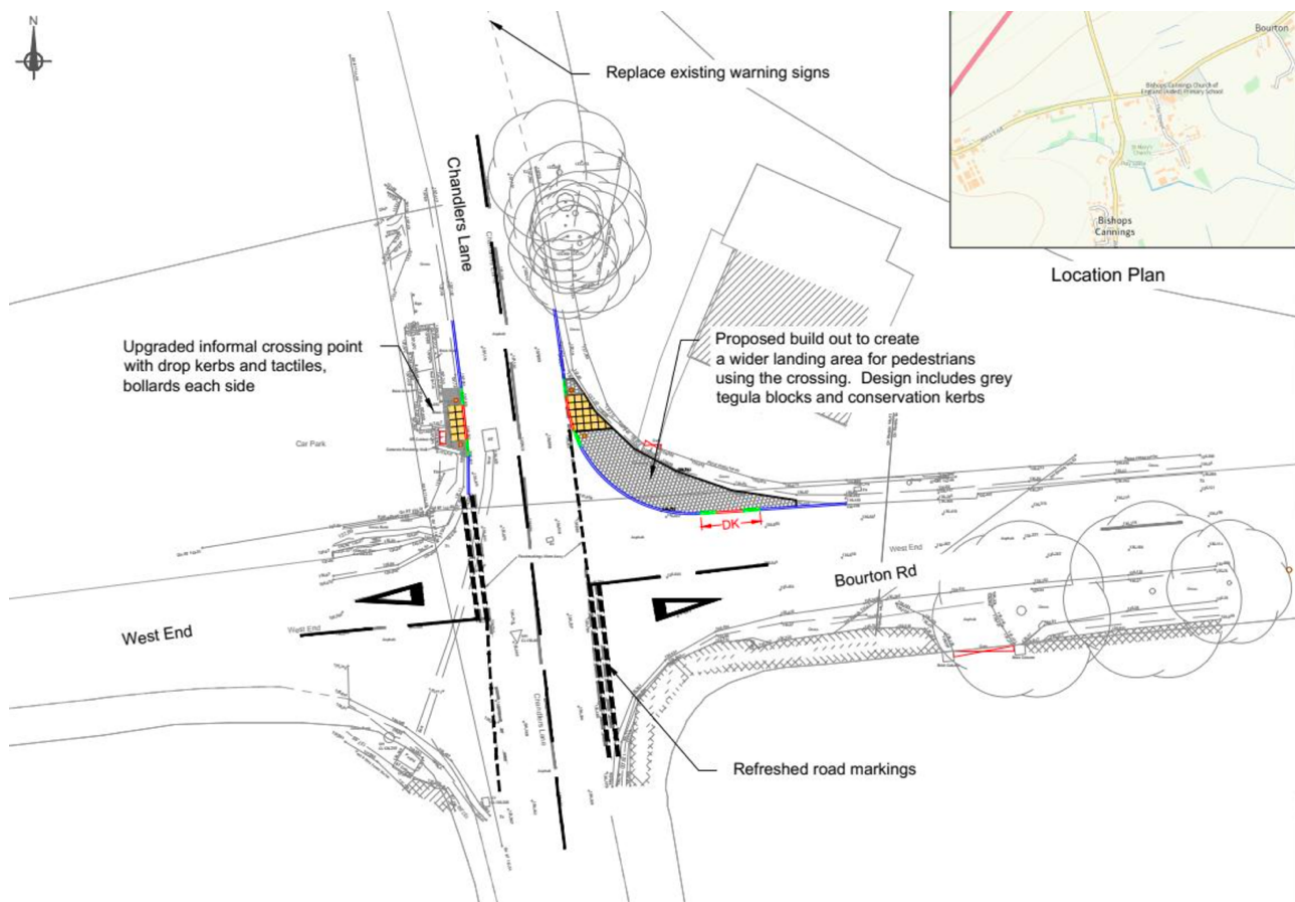


Figure 15: Design of the new crossing point and build out at the crossroads to enhance pedestrian safety.

## Community Identity and Cohesion

62. Looking in from beyond the parish boundaries, many might be forgiven for feeling confused. What is Bishops Cannings Parish? Where is its synergy? Where are the connections? Where is the sense of collective identity?

63. Observers could perhaps be forgiven for focusing on Bishops Cannings, the principal rural village, from which the parish has historically taken its name. It does indeed stand proud, and seemingly taller than it should, by dint of its imposing Grade 1 listed church and grandiose spire. Looking beyond that rather unassuming settlement, across acres of downland, dominated by farming, they might notice a series of smaller isolated hamlets. And juxtaposed against all of that – and in all likelihood lost entirely to the casual observer - lies the more densely populated semi-urban area. How could the latter have any meaningful connection to the predominantly rural parish beyond, they might ask?

64. Such thoughts would demonstrate only that an observer had failed to see what is obvious to all residents who live there. The parish of Bishops Cannings is not a bland, colour washed canvas camouflaged against the Wansdyke and devoid of identifying features, beyond a single church spire. Instead, the opposite is true.

65. Our parish is unique. It is complete, akin to a spider's web, built with myriad tiny connections, which combine to give the web its strength, purpose and identity. For the stranger this can be difficult to grasp. But those fortunate enough to live in this setting see it differently. To them, the connections in this large, unique, historic, yet modern; rural and semi-urban parish setting are evident. That web is our eclectic parish. It represents our community; our identity; our sense of place. It is real, binding and relevant.

66. Perhaps we should leave it to our younger residents to illustrate this concept. Of the 247 children who attend the sought-after Bishops Cannings Primary School and its Pre-School, fully 165 of them (67%) come from 123 families living within Bishops Cannings Parish. Of those, 137 children (56%) come from 100 families living within the semi-urban area. There are 1,179 dwelling in that area; so at least one child attends the parish school from every 12 homes across our integrated semi-urban area.

67. These children and their parents represent that web and its community connections. They use, reinforce and cherish those links every day. In many cases they also follow in their parents' footsteps. Far from being an enigma to the parish, the semi-urban area is a central element of our community and identity.

68. Many examples of how Bishops Cannings Parish Council feeds that innate and tangible sense of identity have already been given. Despite only assuming responsibility for the land around Le Marchant from the abolished Roundway Parish in 2017, the Council has invested tens of thousands of pounds in the last two years alone. It has invested in extraordinary new play equipment – universally welcomed – as well as community security measures and the appropriate management of urban trees. It could have done nothing, yet it has chosen instead to act quickly, decisively and innovatively to the benefit of the whole community.

69. Any number of other examples could have been given. Suffice it to say that broader community investments have included:

- a. Grants to Bishops Cannings Village Hall for urgent material upgrades and repairs as part of its plan to be ready to enter its third century of service to the community in 2030 (**£17,800** in 2024);
- b. Annual grant to the Parochial Church Council at St Mary the Virgin for the maintenance and upkeep of church grounds and graveyard (**£4,300** in 2026);
- c. annual grant to the Brownies (**£900**);
- d. investment in Bishops Cannings Cricket Club, whose ground is at Coate and whose members, including seniors, boys and girls' teams all benefit from first rate all-weather training pitches and nets (**£36,000** 2024); and,
- e. annual grant to the Clean Up Devizes Squad (CUDS) of volunteer litter pickers. Their focus is on Devizes, but we continue to work with this excellent group and benefit from occasional visits (**£300**).

## A Parish Misunderstood

70. Our recent collaborative work with both Rowde Parish Council and Devizes Town Council on a joint Devizes Area Neighbourhood Development Plan has been conducted in good faith. Bishops Cannings Parish Council recognises that local authority strategic planners must take a broader perspective, focusing on larger settlement, rather than parish, boundaries when considering issues such as the allocation of future housing development numbers. That is understood. It is why we have considered, and accepted, potential development sites within the Bishops Cannings Parish boundary.

71. That said, it should not follow that all residential areas within the limit of a settlement boundary should, by default, be transferred into an adjacent Town Council's domain. In this instance, as demonstrated by the extensive evidence provided, we would argue most strongly that it would run counter to the tenets of the two criteria against which the recommendations of this community governance review are to be tested.

72. The draft Neighbourhood Plan has highlighted that the term 'Bishops Cannings' is not properly understood. Devizes Town Council used this term (in the context of the small, isolated, rural village) in setting out its argument for taking control of land south of Nursteed School (see paragraph 11 above). No attempt was made to refer to Bishops Cannings as the successful, inclusive parish, which is where that land currently sits.

73. That plan remains in draft so the issues and language can and will be addressed. But it serves to remove the veil and highlight just how the parish is viewed by our closest neighbour. For example, paragraph 12 of the current draft plan refers to:

*'Bishops Cannings, while the largest parish by land area, has the smallest population and is predominantly rural, with the edge of Devizes extending into it.'*

Apart from being false, the term 'Bishops Cannings' is used to draw the reader into imagining the small, insignificant rural village, rather than considering the coherent, vibrant and connected parish and community which successfully bridges the rural and semi-urban environments.

74. The danger of deep-rooted ignorance and presumption is further encapsulated in the very Vision Statement of the Neighbourhood plan, as drafted by Devizes Town Council and its consultants:

*'Rowde and the non-urban elements of Bishop's [sic] Cannings will retain their unique rural character as separate sustainable settlements...'*

75. There could be no clearer indication of the lack of awareness within Devizes Town Council of the realities of the situation and the feelings of residents within our community. The core message presented is that the semi-urban area is irrelevant to the rural setting and can therefore be removed without consequence to what little is left behind. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the evidence presented in this paper has shown.

### **Future Community Hub**

76. Looking to the future, Bishops Cannings Parish Council has identified the need for a Community Hub to act as a focal point and serve the needs of the more than 2,300 residents living in the semi-urban part of the parish. Modern planning standards talks of residents being able to reach the centre of a community and access its services within a distance of 1600m, meaning a walk of 20 minutes. For Devizes that point is taken as the Market Cross. By contrast, homes within the semi-urban area of our parish lie as far as 3000m away from that datum point, or nearly a 40 minute walk.

77. This, and the fact that no alternative is currently available, is why Bishops Cannings Parish Council aspires to deliver a community hub within the semi-urban area. Outline discussions have been conducted with Wiltshire Council's Head of Development and Estates, with use of a shared space considered. No detailed plans have emerged, but the availability of the Old Council Depot has been noted by both parties. An outline policy to capture the need will be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Conclusions**

78. Since April 2024, Bishops Cannings Parish Council has been transformed. It is now well-found and acknowledged as successful. It has appropriate and diverse representation, reflecting the interests of all residents within both its rural and semi-urban setting.

79. It has attracted a fresh, enthusiastic cohort of Councillors, whose approach is characterised by transparent collaboration with residents, organisations and authorities.

80. In less than two years, this new Council has shown itself to be innovative, dynamic and forward-thinking.

81. By any measure the list of actions and achievements described in this paper is extensive and significant. That this has been conceived, planned and delivered within the last 22 months is demonstrative of a Council that is working at pace and with some skill.

82. The Parish Council's success in delivering much-needed and long-awaited local improvements and investment across a broad range of issues stands testament to its efficiency and effectiveness in acting on behalf of all residents.

83. Bishops Cannings Parish Council recognises and properly reflects the identity and interests of the local communities. It has won the support of residents, be they living in the village, in rural hamlets or in the semi-urban development.

84. Neither boundary change proposed by Devizes Town Council is supported. The view shared by both Parish Council and residents is that the Town Council does not appreciate the unique nature of the community which it seeks to subsume. It is considered highly probable that the efficient and effective local governance currently being delivered would be diluted or simply lost were the boundaries to be changed.

85. Based on current experience and evidence, there is also a high risk that the tangible investments made within these communities would not be supported going forward.

86. The alternating use by others of the term 'Bishops Cannings' to refer to both the parish and then the small, rural village is confusing and unhelpful. Supported by residents, the Parish Council is increasingly of the view that this warrants, and indeed necessitates, a change in name. This would end the current confusion in terminology and avoid any future misperception, while cementing the sense of community identity and sense of place.

### **Recommendations**

87. In light of the evidence presented, it is recommended that:

- a. the proposal by Devizes Town Council to subsume land to the east of Windsor Drive be denied;
- b. the proposal by Devizes Town Council to subsume the area, dwellings and residents within Polling District SG2 be denied;
- c. Bishops Cannings Parish Council's wish to retain the existing boundaries of Bishops Cannings Parish be supported;
- d. Bishops Cannings Parish Council's wish not to reinstate wards be supported;
- e. Bishops Cannings Parish Council's wish to retain its existing number of seats at 11 be supported; and,
- f. the Electoral Review Committee looks favourably upon an anticipated request by Bishops Cannings Parish Council for a name change as part of this Community Governance Review. The parish council respectfully informs the Committee that this resolution would be made at the ordinary meeting of the Council on 12 March 2026.



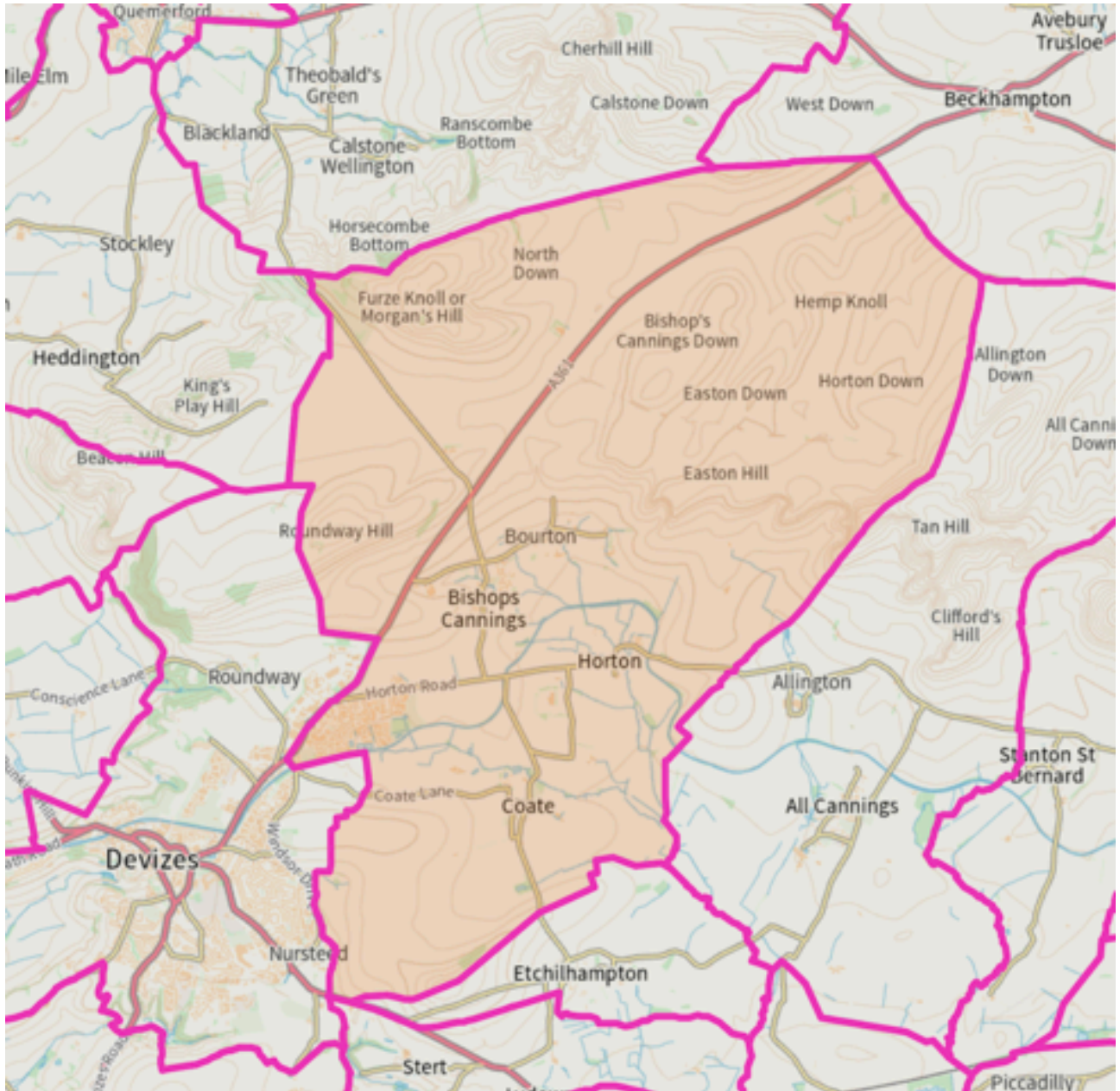
Darren Bone  
Chair and Councillor  
Bishops Cannings Parish Council

Enclosures:

1. Schematic of Bishops Cannings Parish.
2. Transcript of letter sent to the Chair of Bishops Cannings Parish Council from Chris and Sam Nicholls, dated 30 January 2026.
3. Extracts from social media & online publications: Community Governance Review.

**ENCLOSURE 1 TO  
BCPC SUBMISSION  
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW  
DATED 27 FEBRUARY 2026**

**BISHOPS CANNINGS PARISH BOUNDARY**



Source: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/index.html>.

**ENCLOSURE 2 TO  
BCPC SUBMISSION  
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW  
DATED 27 FEBRUARY 2026**

30 January 2026

Subject: Community Governance Review Formal Objection to Proposed Transfer from Bishops Cannings Parish

Dear Sir or Madam,

We write as residents of Laywood and as electors within Bishops Cannings Parish, to place on record our clear, considered, and deeply held objection to any proposal that would remove our community from Bishops Cannings Parish Council and incorporate it into Devizes Town Council.

This matter goes to the heart of local governance. It is not a question of administrative convenience, nor of cartography, nor of perceived urban expansion. It is about identity, representation, accountability, and the principle that communities should be governed as closely and as locally as possible.

Bishops Cannings Parish Council is not a distant or abstract authority. It is present, visible, and engaged. Its Councillors know the parish, understand its character, and respond directly to the concerns of residents. Decisions are taken with local knowledge and with a clear line of accountability to the people affected by them. That relationship between community and council is tangible and meaningful.

By contrast, absorption into Devizes Town Council would place our community within a much larger and more remote structure. Our voice would inevitably be diluted. Our concerns would compete with many others across a far broader area, and the focused representation we currently benefit from would be replaced by a more distant and less responsive form of governance. This is not speculation; it is the natural and unavoidable consequence of scale.

We strongly identify as residents of Bishops Cannings Parish. Laywood was consented, built, and established as part of this parish, and our sense of belonging reflects that. Governance should respect existing community identity, not redefine it for administrative neatness. Being geographically close to a town does not automatically confer town identity, nor does it justify the loss of parish-level representation that works well and commands the confidence of residents.

We are also concerned about the weakening of local accountability in the allocation and prioritisation of resources raised from our community. Under Bishops Cannings Parish Council, there is a clear and transparent link between local representation and how locally raised resources are prioritised and deployed. Councillors are directly answerable to the communities affected by those decisions. Absorption into a much larger town council would inevitably weaken that link, as decisions on priorities would be taken across a broader area, with no mechanism to ensure that local needs remain visible or properly represented.

The benefits of remaining within Bishops Cannings Parish are clear and demonstrable:

- Strong and accessible local representation
- Direct accountability between residents and decision-makers
- Governance informed by detailed local knowledge
- A parish council that actively advocates for its communities

The disadvantages of transfer are equally clear:

- Dilution of representation and influence
- Reduced local focus
- Loss of parish identity
- Less responsive and less accountable governance

We do not believe that the effective and convenient governance of our area would be improved by this change. On the contrary, we believe it would be diminished. Smaller, engaged parish governance is not an anachronism to be tidied away; it is a strength to be protected.

Communities are not commodities to be absorbed, nor electorates to be reassigned for structural convenience. They are living entities, shaped by shared identity, stewardship, and local responsibility. Bishops Cannings Parish embodies those qualities, and Laywood is firmly part of that parish.

We therefore urge Wiltshire Council to reject any proposal that would remove Laywood and neighbouring communities from Bishops Cannings Parish Council, and to respect the clearly expressed preference of residents to retain strong, local, parish-level governance.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Nicholls  
Sam Nicholls

Residents of Laywood  
Bishops Cannings Parish

# ENCLOSURE 3 TO BCPC SUBMISSION COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW DATED 27 FEBRUARY 2026

## EXTRACTS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO THE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

**Bishops Cannings Parish Council**  
Published by Ali Kent · 25 January at 12:30 · 🌐

You will be aware that Councillor Darren Bone has called an Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council for Thursday, 29th January at 7.30pm. It will take place in the function room of the Hourglass in Horton Avenue. The choice of location is deliberate.

On Thursday 22nd January, Councillors became aware that Devizes Town Council is seeking to have the parish boundaries redrawn. Their intent is for the entirety of North Fields, Cannings Hill, Corn Croft, Laywood, Wellington Drive and Marlborough Close to be removed from the parish of Bishops Cannings and to be subsumed instead within Devizes Town.

Bishops Cannings Parish Council would strongly oppose such an attempt. In our view, this would be a retrograde step, with adverse implications for all residents living within those areas. The Extraordinary meeting at the Hourglass is an important opportunity for residents to learn more about this unsolicited and brazen attempt at a landgrab and to ask questions of your Council. Residents are encouraged to attend.

[See insights and ads](#) [Boost post](#)

👍👎 17 15 comments 7 shares

**Bishops Cannings Parish Council's post**

Kirsty Player  
This could also have implications for secondary school catchment eligibility.

2w Like Reply Hide

Ben Mark  
Kirsty Player is what way?

2w Like Reply Hide

Ben Mark  
In\* what way?

2w Like Reply Hide

Kirsty Player  
Ben Mark I believe that if you are in the parish of Bishops Cannings you fall under a "rural parish" for say Lavington School. However if you are in Devizes you would be lower on the priority criteria list because you're in the catchment for Devizes School. It may be the same for other schools but I'm not 100% sure. Happy to be corrected!!

2w Like Reply Hide 2

Tulip Tulip  
Kirsty Player morning our son was at urchfont primary for the full 7 years and got into Lavington on an appeal otherwise it would have been Devizes School. I was never told about this 'rural parish' rule. There are so many kids going from Devizes to Lavington school that they run two buses every day term times.

**Bishops Cannings Parish Council's post**

Ben Mark  
Kirsty Player that's interesting to hear. Thanks for elaborating.

2w Like Reply Hide

Kirsty Player  
I've taken my info from the Lavington admissions policy but it does get updated each year.

1w Like Reply Hide

Reply to Kirsty Player

Martin Holstead  
It would appear that DTC who have no money want the money from the proposed development of the site by Cannings Hill Garage if the truth be known 😊

2w Like Reply Hide Edited 6

Amanda Hopgood  
Wish Uncle John Hopgood was still with us

1w Like Reply Hide

Tulip Tulip  
Sharon Gardner Endo Enderby

1w Like Reply Hide

Author  
Bishops Cannings Parish Council  
Laura Carpenter that was 2017 when Roundway Parish Council was dissolved, part moving to Devizes Town Council and part to Bishops Cannings.

1w Like Reply

Top fan  
Paul A Robinson  
Bishops Cannings Parish Council I was Chair of BCPC at that time and well recall the discussions and meetings. The old parish of Roundway was divided between DTC and BCPC. BCPC have invested in and improved the areas we inherited. What we have now is in a far better place than what we got - without any funding I might add. I'm not so sure I can say the same about the bits DTC got.

1w Like Reply Hide 2

**Bishops Cannings Parish Council**  
Published by Ali Kent · 30 January at 08:59 · 🌐

A huge "thank you" to 50 of our parishioners, who turned out for the Extra-Ordinary meeting of the Council last evening. Following a period of public participation, the Council unanimously voted to submit its initial response to the Electoral Review Committee at Wiltshire Council, confirming that the extant parish boundary should remain; the number of Councillors should remain and that a change of name may be considered in due course. We hope our parishioners left feeling much better informed about the Community Governance Review process and its implications on the Parish where we live.

[See insights and ads](#) [Boost post](#)

👍👎 34 6 comments 4 shares

All comments ▾

Tulip Tulip  
Good news, I'm working in the new youth hub in town and I would rather Devizes Town Council focus on supporting us and our local businesses in town.

1w Like Reply Hide Edited 2

Christopher Vaughan  
This was a very informative presentation that highlighted the fact that the advantages for the dwellers of the Bishops Cannings Parish were many and very applicable. Great effort.

1w Like Reply Hide 3

Steven Coles  
Would have liked to have gone but sadly had COVID all week. I'm glad it was well supported tho.

1w Like Reply Hide

Laura Carpenter  
Thank you. When we moved onto this estate c. Approximately 7 to 8 years ago the same item was discussed of boundary changes. I think that it was to Marlborough. To save money. Please correct me if I am wrong.

1w Like Reply Hide 2

At a meeting of Devizes Town Council on Tuesday, January 27 councillors voted to ask Wiltshire Council to redraw the boundaries to include North Fields, Cannings Hill, Corn Croft, Laywood, Wellington Drive and Marlborough Close in the town.

"This is a large urban area which identifies geographically, economically, and socially much more strongly with Devizes than the very rural parish of Bishops Cannings."

opening of the  
d at Le Marchant

for joining us. We

Wiltshire Council will be told.

"Many residents in this area already believe they live in Devizes and tend to default to Devizes Town Council for service requests.

"They also access services in the town centre such as the Leisure Centre, which is subsidised by Devizes Town Council rate payers.

"If moving this area across, it would also be sensible to transfer the new industrial estates between Horton Road and the A361."

If approved, residents would live in a new Devizes North ward, with the existing Devizes North ward being renamed.

2w Like Reply Share Edited

4 comments

Share

vests in its

2



## Bishops Cannings Parish Council ▸ Bishop's Cannings Notice Board

★ Rising contributor · 25 January at 12:30 · 🌐

You will be aware that Councillor Darren Bone has called an Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council for Thursday, 29th January at 7.30pm. It will take place in the function room of the Hourglass in Horton Avenue. The choice of location is deliberate.

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Bishops Cannings Parish Council would strongly oppose such an attempt. In our view, this would be a retrograde step, with adverse implications for all residents living within those areas. The Extraordinary meeting at the Hourglass is an important opportunity for residents to learn more about this unsolicited and brazen attempt at a landgrab and to ask questions of your Council. Residents are encouraged to attend.

👍👎 15

24 1

Like

Comment

Share



Leonie Freegard

"This is a large urban area which identifies geographically, economically, and socially much more strongly with Devizes than the very rural parish of Bishops Cannings. Many residents in this area already believe they live in Devizes and tend to default to Devizes Town Council for service requests. The also access services in the town centre such as the Leisure Centre which is subsidised by DTC rate payers. If moving this area across it would also be sensible to transfer the new industrial estates between Horton Road and the A361. Ideally the area would join the roundway ward so could transfer to the BRR unitary division but if not possible could stay in UBC as a separate ward likely called Devizes North with the existing Devizes North being renamed."

- I live in this area (near Lidl's) and I do not believe I live in Devizes. I am well aware that I am part of Bishops Cannings.
- I actually go to Marlborough leisure centre as it can be easier to get to than fighting through Devizes traffic at the time my children have their swimming lessons. My children also go to Bishops Cannings school. I'm not sure what other facilities I'm using... the parks are in BC, the streets I walk my dog are in BC...
- And here it is. DTC wants the S106 money (or something equivalent) from the development of the land between Horton Road and the A361, rather than it going to BC where we will actually profit from it. I would rather see the school that our children go to, and the parks that our children play in receive money from the land that is close by, then it be redistributed to services we don't use.

3w Like Reply Share

15

## Wiltshire town attempts 'brazen land grab' from neighbour

29TH JANUARY DEVIZES TOWN COUNCIL WILTSHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVIZES



However, Bishops Cannings Parish Council refuses to surrender the land without a fight, and has issued a call to arms to parishioners prepared to protect its boundary.

An extraordinary meeting of the parish council will be held on Thursday, January 29 at the Hourglass pub, next door to Devizes Marina.

"The choice of location is deliberate," says the parish council. The pub - and the marina - are in the parish of Bishops Cannings.

"We are aware that Devizes Town Council is seeking to have the parish boundaries redrawn," the council also said.

"Bishops Cannings Parish Council would strongly oppose such an attempt. In our view, this would be a retrograde step, with adverse implications for all residents living within those areas.

"The extraordinary meeting at the Hourglass is an important opportunity for residents to learn more about this unsolicited and brazen attempt at a landgrab and to ask questions of your council. Residents are encouraged to attend."

A Wiltshire town is starting to make an "unsolicited and brazen land grab" from a neighbour.

Devizes, population 18,000, is to ask Wiltshire Council to redraw the parish boundaries to include land on its northern border.

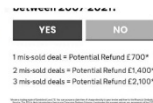
The parish of Bishop's Cannings, population 3,000, has a commanding military base, minerals - in the shape of bags of quarried stone chippings from B&Q - and a Lidl.

Most importantly, says Devizes Town Council, many of the hundreds of people who live in the parish of Bishops Cannings don't even know they live there.

### Sponsored stories



Devizes: The Discreet, Rechargeable Hearing Aid Is Now at Boots  
Boots Hearingcare



You Could Be Owed £700\* For Every Car Finance Deal You've...  
Refund Club

"They phone the town council when they want something done, and we have to tell them 'sorry, you don't live in Devizes!'" Devizes Town Councillor Iain Wallis told the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

"Sometimes they get quite cross and tell us 'I know where I live'.

"It makes sense for this urbanised part of the parish of Bishops Cannings to be in Devizes."



Wiltshire Live

30 January at 19:20 · 🌐

The 'attempted takeover' of an urban area on the edge of Devizes, which has been branded as an "unsolicited and brazen land grab," will be opposed.

At an extraordinary meeting of Bishops Cannings Parish Council last night (Thursday, January 29) councillors voted to fight the move by Devizes Town Council.

Two nights earlier, Devizes' own civic leaders had voted to ask the Electoral Review Committee at Wiltshire Council to extend the boundary of the town to encompass the Northfields housing estate and other parcels of development land to its northern boundary.

They said the people of Northfields – who live in roads named after battle honours won by the Wiltshire Regiment including Ferozeshah and Anzio – identified as being from Devizes, and were often unaware that they lived in Bishops Cannings.

A hastily arranged extraordinary meeting of Bishops Cannings Parish Council attracted around 50 residents of the housing estate – making it "our best-attended meeting in many years."

The vast majority were in favour of staying in the parish of Bishops Cannings – the third largest parish in Wiltshire.

Council chairman Darren Bone told a packed function room at The Hourglass pub next door to Devizes Marina – which are both in the rural parish despite being in a heavily built-up area – of the work his council had done on behalf of the residents of Northfields.

One resident told the meeting: "Our kids go to Bishops Cannings School, the only church I have used is in Bishops Cannings, and my community is Bishops Cannings. To say I identify as living in Devizes is wrong."

Another said: "We have a parish council that is looking after us. If we become part of Devizes the money would flow to the centre. It would not be spent here."

And another said: "Of the two other areas they want to take over, one will have new housing and the other is for industrial use. That's how they will get their extra tax."

But one resident told the meeting: "The only time you have come to this part of the parish is when you need us all."

Cllr Bone explained that by law, parish councils were not allowed to meet in pubs unless there were no other options. He said he would like to see a parish hub built in the urban area as part of the new development of affordable housing.

Cllr Philip Whitehead, who represents the Urchfont & Bishops Cannings division at Wiltshire Council, told the meeting: "From a Devizes Town Council point of view, when I look at this area I see budget."

"They will say you live in Devizes. I think this community is different from Devizes."

"If you want to keep your community, it's up to you – you have huge influence."

Submissions to the Electoral Review Committee must be made in February, and the committee will publish its draft recommendations in March.

👉 Original copy via Local Democracy Service by Peter Davison

...

Well-maintained play areas, lit footpaths, tree maintenance, and public defibrillators were all thanks to Bishops Cannings Parish Council, he said.

Before the boundary row, many people were unaware that urban parts of Devizes were actually in the parish of Bishops Cannings – Le Marchant Barracks, B&Q, and Lidl among them.

Bishops Cannings also includes the site of the motorcycle training school, where Aldi wants to open a new supermarket.

The huge parish contains three villages, two hamlets, and the Northfields estate. A shade over 2,000 residents live in the urban area, while 537 live in the rural part.

At Bishops Cannings School, more than 60 per cent of the pupils – representing over 100 families – come from the urban area.

Cllr Bone said Bishops Cannings Parish Council might change its name to include its urban residents – Bishops Cannings & Northfields was a suggestion.

"We are rural and we are urban," he said. "I think your parish council is delivering for you."

And there were gasps when he told residents that the £66.98 they pay per year to Bishops Cannings Parish Council as an element of their council tax would rise to £228.64 if they became citizens of Devizes – although council tax cannot be considered by Wiltshire Council as a reason for staying in, or leaving, a parish.

All comments ▼



**Margaret Blacker**

i hope you succeed in your fight Bishop Cannings Residents!

2w

Like

Reply

10 👍



**Belinda Gibbs**

Stay with bishops Cannings devizes is a mess you will soon have a aldi as well envy you all

2w

Like

Reply



**Adrian William Champion**

Sounds like a special council mentality operation.

2w

Like

Reply

2 👍



**Rebecca Herd**

That edge of town area has been in the Bishops Cannings parish for decades , centuries ,though not in the village ,but getting closer ...

2w

Like

Reply

1 👍



**Faye Gordon**

Hoping Bishops Cannings win this fight.

2w

Like

Reply

8 👍



**Martin Brown**

Freedom for Bishops Cannings!! 🙌

2w

Like

Reply

11 👍



**Giles Morgan**

Martin Brown BCPF forever!

2w

Like

Reply



**Suzanne Morrison**

Wow well done

2w

Like

Reply

5 👍



**Victoria Harvey**

I stand with Bishops Cannings!

2w

Like

Reply

3 👍

## People Living in Devizes Could be Moving to Devizes!



**Do you live in Devizes? Are you sure? Sure sure? Sure sure sure?! You could actually be living under the oppressive regime of Bishop's Cannings Parish Council and not even know about it! But fear not blinkered comrades, an elite task force from Devizes Town Council is coming to liberate you!**

**The border between Devizes and Bishop's Cannings extends the Cannings side into the parts of the north-east of the town. Other than historic squabbles over who owns the Moonrakers fable, it has been pretty much alright and no one really gave a toss about it since it was first established around 1080, when Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, built the castle.**

Suddenly, nine hundred and forty-six years later, it's not, apparently. Devizes Town councillors are so furious about redirecting emails sent to them from folk unaware they come under Bishop's Cannings Parish Council, like copy and paste was never invented, they're plotting to invade and conquer the Devizes area of Bishop's Cannings' parish, best guess, for national security! If, bizarrely, it sounds textbook Trump, perhaps it is, perhaps it's not, and that all depends on who you talk to; sort it out, Osmund!

Needless to suggest, Bishop's Cannings Parish Council are unhappy, and say no, you can take our ScrewFix but you'll never take our Lid! So, if you live in North Fields, Cannings Hill, Corn Croft, Laywood, Wellington Drive or Marlborough Close, you could be moving to either North Fields, Cannings Hill, Corn Croft, Laywood, Wellington Drive or Marlborough Close soon whilst remaining exactly where you currently are, whether you like it or not; breaking news!

It may seem like a storm in a teacup, a petty spaff between councils, but what does it really mean for the residents of those areas? Again, this largely depends on who you speak to about it.

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Community Governance Review, happens every five years or so, apparently, whereby a town or parish council can whimper like Oliver Twist to Wiltshire Council, requesting they shift a border to better financially aid themselves, and I'm sorry to Devizes Town Council, for the want to remain impartial, but it does look this way from where I'm standing. Even the trusty Gazelle and Herod reported it as an *"unsolicited and brazen land grab."*

Those residents on Facebook are being told by the Devizes Town Council task force, that it's nothing to worry about, it happens all the time. But hang on a cotton-picking minute, the moving of this particular boundary has not happened before, has it? Not since 1080! And, if you're not in a certain Facebook group with a bad habit of banning folk, you've probably been left totally in the dark about the whole shebang.

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Even the Bishop's Cannings Parish Council themselves were NOT informed, until one councillor happened to stumble across it on Facebook, apparently. A spokesperson for the parish council told me, *"we saw this agenda on Facebook at Thursday lunchtime. Thank the lord I looked otherwise we still wouldn't know. Devizes Town Council met with Wiltshire Council on the 10th December. They've had plenty of time to chat to us about their intentions. They formed their task group on the 8th January, releasing a four page report on Thursday."*

You'd have thought it would be basic etiquette and good manners to have at least dropped them a line, though a spokesperson from Devizes Town Council, not involved with the task force, was surprised to hear they had not been informed. They assured me no malice is intended and they'd support a good working relationship, but Devizes Town Council voted to ask Wiltshire Council to redraw the boundaries on Tuesday, an emergency meeting of Bishop's Cannings Parish Council was held Thursday; it's all up in the air and reactions appear quite understandably handbags raised at dawn.

The task force, we are told, consists of two Conservative councillors; Iain Wallis, who as he is desperately holding onto a Devizes North seat, would benefit from the extra residencies, especially being geographically the further the border is moved outward from town the more affluent residents tend to be, and more likely to vote Conservative. And Richard Oliver, no stranger to landgrabs; taking over Roundway in the 2017 Community Governance Review, where Roundway civil parish was abolished and became a ward of Devizes parish. There's a third councillor on the task force, Guardian, Andy Geddes, maybe just there to even up the parties, who knows?!

*"It makes sense for this urbanised part of the parish of Bishops Cannings to be in Devizes,"* Iain is reported to have said, and there's reasoning in this, I believe, I mean, these aforementioned areas are in Devizes town, after all, just. He continued to say *"they also access services in the town centre, such as the Leisure Centre, which is subsidised by Devizes Town Council rate payers."* And, whamo! There it is!

These areas have been fortunate enough to pay a lower council tax rate, but still have access to the services of the town. Yet, for the Leisure Centre, for example, we're all paying customers, aren't we? And able to access this facility even if we live under a parish council outside of town, or are those from Potterne, Rowde, Chirton or the many other villages surrounding Devizes going to be taken over, otherwise they cannot dip a little toe in the Devizes pool?! Living on the outskirts of town, in these areas mentioned, you're not much closer to town than if you live in Rowde or Poulshot.

*"You cannot use the increase in council tax as a reason not to move the boundary. It all has to be around governance and how being with Devizes Town Council will improve the lives of the residents,"* my Bishop's Cannings Parish Council spokesperson laughed, exclaiming a Band D rate under Devizes Town Council would be £228, whereas the same band under Bishop's Cannings would only be £67. *"I'd want to see a ton of improvements for that increase!"*

So, the jury is out on the implications for the residents, and while I'm trying to piece this together impartially, I cannot help think it was irresponsible for the village council not to be informed, and the lack of communication between these two councils. But the bottom line is, if the implications for the residents of these areas are to be as adverse as the parish council suggest they will, surely those residents should have their say by the way of a referendum? Or are Devizes Town Council going to storm militarily into Bishop's Cannings with a Devizes ICE, "De-Ice" squad, and kidnap the parish clerk?! Then we really have a story!!

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They pointed out playparks, telling me Bishop's Cannings Parish Council has invested over £50K in Le Marchant Park, but Devizes Town Council, *"closed Brickley Park for over a year."* There's also been much discussion over catchment areas for schools, and that residents in those areas could find it more difficult to obtain places at schools such as Lavington. Our spokesperson for Devizes Town Council deflected this as false; again, "depending on who you talk to" is the running theme throughout the early stages of

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this proposal, but we are certain their council tax will be upped considerably, for questionably the same services.

*"Bishops Cannings Parish Council would strongly oppose such an attempt,"* they told the Gazette. *"In our view, this would be a retrograde step, with adverse implications for all residents living within those areas."*