

Proposal to include the whole of the Furzehill area within Holt Parish

submitted on 28/10/21 to
Dorset Council Community Governance Review (CGR) 2021
by the

Committee of Furzehill Residents Association on behalf of Furzehill Residents

Summary

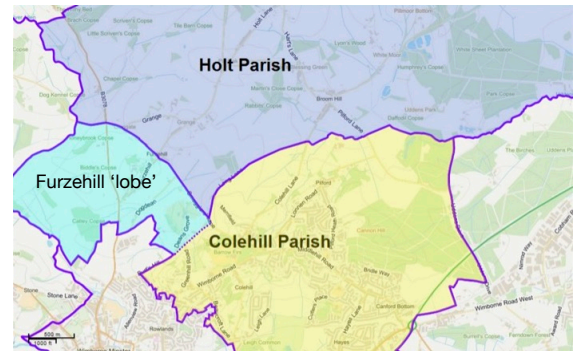
Furzehill Residents Association (FRA) was formed in January 2015 and has over 200 members. It supports an area that includes the three adjacent Hamlets of Bothenwood, Dogdean and Grange, as well as Furzehill itself. Please see [Appendix A](#) for further details.

The village of Furzehill and its immediate area is divided between Colehill and Holt Parishes. There is strong support from residents for the whole of the Furzehill area to be included within Holt Parish.

The main reasons are:

- To improve community cohesion and spirit
- Green Belt protection
- Similar rural environmental and rural concerns

The Committee of Furzehill Residents Association (FRA) is therefore making this proposal to include the whole of the Furzehill area within rural Holt Parish by transferring the rural Furzehill 'lobe' of the largely urban Colehill Parish into Holt Parish. See map.



Holt Parish Council (HPC) is aware of our proposal and has received significant support for it from Furzehill residents, including the results of a survey. In response, it has submitted its own proposal for the same boundary change.

Colehill Parish Council (CPC) has produced an alternative proposal to unify Furzehill within a single parish by bringing the 57 dwellings in the Holt Parish section of the Furzehill area within Colehill Parish. On this, it has not sought the opinion of residents in either part of Furzehill and does not have support. Furthermore, it would require changes to parliamentary and Dorset ward boundaries, which it is understood the CGR cannot change.

Conclusions

(derived from arguments on subsequent pages and appendices)

Moving the rural and lightly-populated Furzehill Lobe of Colehill Parish into the similarly rural and lightly-populated Holt Parish has 100% support from surveyed residents and should successfully achieve:

- The desired community cohesion
- A true reflection of the existing community identity
- A true reflection of the local geography
- Compliance with Local Government Boundary Commission England (LGBCE) guidance
- Reduced risk to the Green Belt
- A warding arrangement with an acceptable electoral variance
- No change in the workload for the Stour and Allen Vale Councillor

In contrast, neither the 'status quo' nor especially the CPC proposal has any identified support within the Furzehill area and the latter does not appear to comply with LGBCE guidance or be workable from a warding perspective. Neither promises a benefit to the Furzehill community over that available within Holt Parish.

Evidence of strong support for proposal

1. Petition in recent past

In 2017, over 70% of Furzehill area electors signed a petition for a different unifying proposal: a Furzehill Parish.

2. Written representations to Holt Parish Council

After the 2021 CGR was announced, HPC recorded in its minutes for 08/09/21:

“The Chairman confirmed that there have been 33 written representations received from residents in favour of the Colehill Parish part of Furzehill to be incorporated into Holt Parish by realigning the Parish boundary.” [No alternative opinion was received]

HPC then wrote to CPC on 09/09/21 saying:

“Members agree with the principle of this for community cohesion and welcome Colehill Parish Council’s comments on this proposal.”

3. Survey by Furzehill Residents Association

After receiving Holt’s letter, above, CPC published its own proposal without consultation with residents.

FRA therefore organised a rapid further survey in time for Holt Parish Council’s meeting on 13/10/21. Residents who had already supplied an email address were invited by email, together with a few others by word of mouth, to complete an opinion form on its website which would be sent to FRA on the understanding that the information supplied, including contact details and additional comments, would be forwarded to both Parish Councils.

They were asked whether they wanted:

- A. The whole of the Furzehill area to fall within Holt Parish
- B. The whole of the Furzehill area to fall within Colehill Parish
- C. The Furzehill area to remain divided between the two parishes

The results were as follows:

- 29 replies received from 46 residents surveyed in the Holt section of Furzehill.
- 64 replies received from 91 residents surveyed in the Colehill section of Furzehill.
- Every reply from both parish sections of our village chose option A.
- Some included additional comments to explain or underline their feelings.
- None of the 93 replies chose option B or C.
- **Verification of survey results:**
Appendix F includes the confirmation from Holt Parish Council that on 13/10/21 it received the 93 forwarded emails underpinning the survey results.

4. Holt Parish Council support

HPC’s meeting on 13/10/21 was attended by many Furzehill residents. The survey results (see above) were presented and the council confirmed its receipt, together with the corresponding 93 emails. After further discussion, the council decided to change its position from support for this proposal to a substantive CGR proposal of its own,. Appendix G carries the text of HPC’s proposal, submitted on 21/10/21.

Geography, Populations and Guidance by Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

The detail of these important elements of the argument behind the proposal can be found at Appendix B, along with supporting maps. In particular:

- The border between Holt and Colehill parishes runs along Grange and Smugglers Lane, through the heart of the village. One-third of the community and the Stocks Inn is in Holt Parish to the north-east of this boundary; and two-thirds of the community and the Village Stores & Post Office is in Colehill Parish to the south-west.
- The whole of the Furzehill area shares with Holt Parish its rural nature. It looks toward Holt Parish for its social and geographical identities.
- This proposal (and HPC's proposal) comply with LGBCE guidelines. CPC's proposal and the 'status quo' do not.

Parish Warding, Electoral Variance, Dorset Ward Boundary, Parliamentary Boundary and Dorset Councillor Implications

FRA contends that these issues mean its proposal can be implemented readily. It also contends that CPC's proposal is unworkable. Please see Appendices C, D & E for details.

APPENDICES

Appendix A : Furzehill Residents Association (FRA)

FRA was established in January 2015 and recognised by East Dorset District Council (EDDC) after the latter's issue of its 2014 structure plan and start of a CGR because:

- The width of the Green Belt between Wimborne and Furzehill had been halved;
- The CGR had attempted to move two-thirds of the area's 150 dwellings into the Town of Wimborne;
- The residents felt Furzehill needed a stronger community spirit, to try to combat further development.

FRA has over 200 members and supports Furzehill itself and also the three adjacent hamlets of Bothenwood, Dogdean and Grange. It runs social events and a support group, and coordinates the expression of residents' views. To help with these, it runs a private Facebook group and its own website <https://www.furzehillresidents.co.uk>, which has a Boundary Review section.

Furzehill and its recognised village envelope is partly in Colehill Parish and partly in Holt Parish. Grange is also partly in Colehill Parish and partly in Holt Parish. Dogdean is totally in Colehill Parish and Bothenwood is totally in Holt Parish.

FRA has always held its AGMs and social gatherings in Holt Village Hall, as it feels it is a more fitting venue than those in Colehill. FRA and its residents have interacted with local councils on many occasions, particularly on planning and traffic issues.

Both parts of Furzehill fall in the catchment area for St James First School at Gaunts Common, so from an early age children and their parents associate themselves with the rural Holt area.

Holt Parish areas are in the Dorset Ward of Stour and Allen Vale and in the Parliamentary Constituency of North Dorset. Colehill Parish areas are in the Dorset Ward of Colehill and Wimborne East and in the Parliamentary Constituency of Mid Dorset and Poole North.

Appendix B : Geography, Populations and LGBCE Guidance

Map 1 (below) shows an enclosed area indicated by red 'A's, known as the Furzehill 'Lobe'. The proposal is to add this to Holt Parish. The purple line indicates the current local boundary between Holt and Colehill parishes. The red/orange line indicates the proposed new local boundary between the parishes.

The Furzehill lobe was formed when part of the Colehill West ward was moved into Wimborne in the 2014 CGR. The western boundary is marked by the River Allen. The north-eastern boundary follows Grange and Smugglers Lane, which run through the heart of the settlement. The Village Stores & Post Office is therefore in Colehill Parish, while the closely situated village pub, The Stocks Inn, is in Holt Parish.

The 'Guidance on Community Governance Reviews' issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England gives strong advice on such geographical and social division:

Para 80 includes:

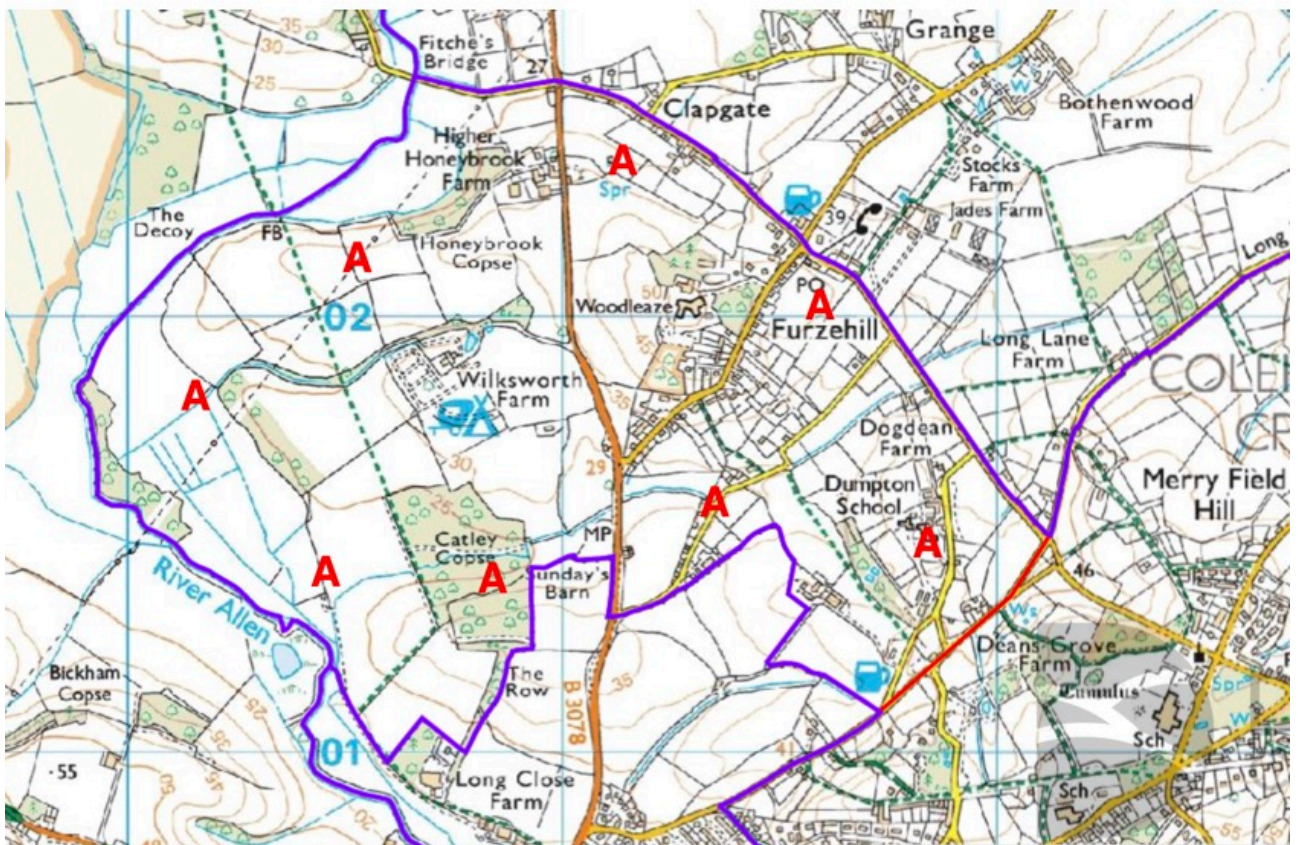
"The general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity....."

Para 83 includes:

"As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population"

Para 84 includes:

"In many cases a boundary change between existing parishes, or parishes and unparished areas, rather than the creation of an entirely new parish, will be sufficient to ensure that parish arrangements reflect local identities"

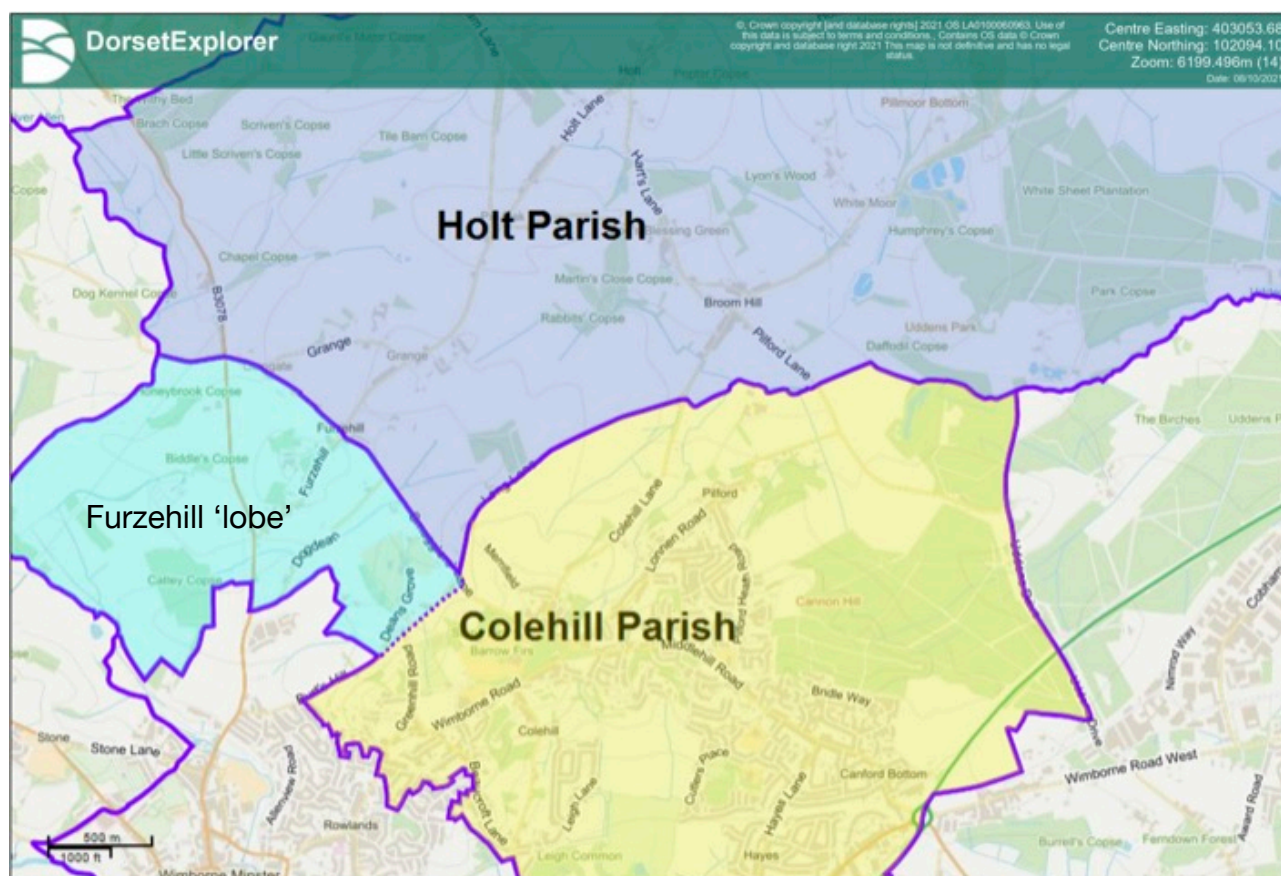


Map 1

Map 2 (below) shows the proposal in the context of the wider area.

The Furzehill lobe (light blue) contains about 107 dwellings. A few more are being built and tens more could be built on the old EDDC council offices site, but no planning application has been made. Consequently, the electorate could be more than 250 by 2026.

The attachment point of the Furzehill Lobe with the rest of Colehill Parish (yellow) is just 570 metres long. It runs along the roads of Burts Hill and Long Lane. This is the proposed new parish boundary between the Holt and Colehill parishes. It has very few dwellings with none directly facing one another. Both sides are in the Green Belt and so should not be developed. This makes it a suitable and practical position for a Parish Boundary, whereas the current Parish Boundary runs through the heart of the Furzehill community.



Map 2

Holt Parish has an area of 2,221 hectares with 1,156 electors predicted for 2026. Colehill Parish has an area of 910 hectares with 6,234 electors predicted for 2026. The population density of Holt Parish is therefore only 28% that of Colehill Parish. The Furzehill lobe is a significant part of the area of Colehill Parish, but it will only have about 250 electors which is less than 5% of Colehill Parish. This helps explain why those in the Furzehill Lobe consider the area to be more in keeping with the rural Holt Parish than with the more urban Colehill parish.

Appendix C : Warding of Holt Parish and Electoral Variance

The Parliamentary boundary and Dorset Ward boundary still run along the north eastern edge of the Furzehill lobe, so it seems this area will have to be a separate Holt ward.

Holt Parish is predicted to have an electorate of 1,156 in 2026. Holt Parish has nine councillors which will equate to 128 electors per councillor. If the main Holt ward still had 9 councillors and the new Furzehill Lobe ward had 2 councillors, then the Furzehill lobe would have 125 electors per councillor giving an electoral variance of -2.2% whilst the main ward has one of +0.49%. If the number of electors was to change, there is plenty of scope for achieving a satisfactory electoral variance by adjusting the number of councillors in the main Holt ward.

Appendix D : Warding of Colehill Parish and Electoral Variance

CPC's proposal concedes that, for it to succeed, both the Parliamentary boundary and the Dorset Ward Boundary would have to change.

However, the Dorset Council CGR guidance states that it cannot change Dorset Ward Boundaries, which are the responsibility of the LGBCE. It also cannot change Parliamentary Boundaries, which are the responsibility of the Boundary Commission England (BCE).

Colehill Parish is predicted to have 6,234 electors in 2026. It currently has 16 councillors, which equates to 390 electors per councillor.

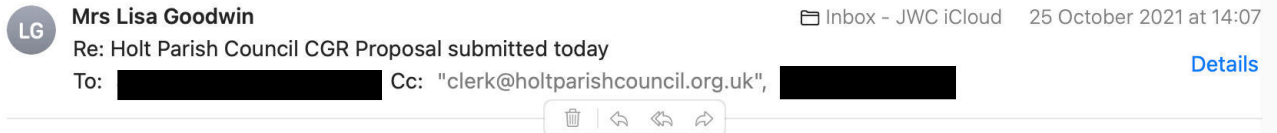
CPC's proposal is to move 57 dwellings from Holt Parish into Colehill Parish. However, because of the boundaries already mentioned, this will mean those dwellings having to be in a separate ward. The historical number of electors per dwelling for Holt has been very close to 2. So the number of electors would be around 114. We understand there is no legal limit to the amount of electoral variation. However, even if the number of councillors was raised to an implausible 25 (often suggested as a parish maximum) the electoral variation would not appear likely to be acceptable.

Appendix E. : Dorset Councillors Implications

The proposals by both FRA and HPC for Holt Parish will have only a small effect on the Dorset Ward Councillors for the area. The single Councillor for Stour and Allen Vale ward will still look after 7 different Parish Councils, but the two Dorset Ward Councillors for Colehill and Wimborne East will have to support a ward of one town council and one parish council plus the new Holt Furzehill lobe ward.

The proposal by CPC would pose a difficulty because it would mean the single councillor for Stour and Allen Vale ward, who already has one of the highest number of electors, would still have to support 7 different Parish Councils, but also part of an eighth parish council with another 250 electors. The two Dorset Ward Councillors for Colehill and Wimborne East will have to support a ward of one town council and one parish council as now. Fortunately, this situation seems unlikely to need consideration because of the unacceptable electoral variance discussed above.

Appendix F : Verification by Holt Parish Council of Residents Survey Outcome



Hello Jonathan,

Thank you for your email today.

I can confirm that Holt Parish Council received supporting evidence on 13th October 2021, from the Furzehill Residents Association of 94 copy emails (29 from Holt residents and 64 from Colehill residents of Furzehill) that demonstrated all are in favour of including the Colehill area of Furzehill within Holt Parish. None favoured the status quo or moving the Holt area of Furzehill into Colehill Parish.

Members took this evidence into consideration when preparing their proposal to the Community Governance Review which was submitted on 21st October 2021.

With Kind Regards,
Lisa Goodwin
Clerk to Holt Parish Council
01258 840935
www.holtparishcouncil.org.uk

Appendix G : Transcript of CGR proposal by Holt Parish Council (21/10/2021)

“Holt Parish Council proposes the realignment of the parish boundary between Colehill and Holt at Furzehill to incorporate the village of Furzehill wholly into Holt Parish

Holt Parish Council has received a large number of written representations from residents of Furzehill and who have been in attendance at our meetings.

The Furzehill Residents Association has supplied additional evidence to demonstrate the strong support for this proposal.

Residents feel that Furzehill is more connected to the parish of Holt and this proposal will retain the strong rural character and identity of the village which will be served well by Holt Parish Council.

Holt Parish Council understands the need for community cohesion in this setting and formally requests Dorset Council considers this proposal in the current review.”

[maps and evidence of support attached by HPC]