



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Open consultation

Proposals for local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway

Published 5 February 2026

Applies to England

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This statutory consultation seeks views on the proposals that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received following the Secretary of State's invitation to councils in Kent and Medway to submit proposals for unitary local government for Kent and Medway. The (5) proposals in this consultation were made by the following councils on 28 November 2025:

Kent County Council proposed 1 unitary council comprising the current areas of:

- Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Swale, Thanet, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, and Medway

Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **North:** Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, and Swale
- **West:** Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, and Tunbridge Wells
- **East:** Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, and Thanet

Dover District Council, Swale Borough Council, and Thanet District Council proposed 4 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **North:** Dartford, Gravesham, and Medway
- **West:** Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells
- **Mid:** Swale, Ashford, and Folkestone & Hythe
- **East:** Canterbury, Dover, and Thanet

Medway Council, Ashford Borough Council, and Canterbury City Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of (please see maps in the proposal for full details):

- North Kent: Medway (98%), Gravesham (87%), Swale (81%), Dartford (78%), small parts of Tonbridge and Malling (3%), and Maidstone (2%)
- West Kent: Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling (61%), Dartford (22%), Gravesham (13%), and Medway (2%)
- East Kent: Canterbury, Dover, Thanet, Folkestone and Hythe (64%), and Swale (Faversham area 17%)

- Mid Kent: Ashford, Maidstone (98%), Folkestone and Hythe (36%), Tonbridge and Malling (36%), and Swale (3%)

Dartford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council proposed 5 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of (please see maps in the proposal for full details):

- **North Kent:** Dartford, Gravesham, Medway (25%), and Sevenoaks (18%)
- **West Kent:** Maidstone, Sevenoaks (82%), Tonbridge and Malling, and Tunbridge Wells
- **East Kent:** Canterbury, Swale (24%), and Thanet
- **Mid Kent:** Medway (75%) and Swale (76%)
- **South Kent:** Ashford, Dover, and Folkestone & Hythe

This consultation asks questions about each proposal to help inform the assessment of the proposals.

Scope of this consultation

This consultation is about the structure of local government in Kent and Medway.

Geographical scope

These proposals relate to England only.

Impact assessment

An impact assessment has not been prepared for this consultation as it will only affect local government in Kent and Medway and so there will be no direct regulatory, economic or social impacts.

Body/bodies responsible for the consultation

This consultation is conducted by MHCLG.

Duration

This consultation will last for 7 weeks from 5 February 2026 to 23:59 on 26 March 2026.

Enquiries

For any enquiries about the consultation please contact:

lgrconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk

How to respond

You may respond by completing the [online survey](https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/kent-and-medway) (<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/kent-and-medway>).

If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which proposal you are responding to. You can email your response to the questions in this consultation to lgrconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk

Alternatively written responses should be sent to:

LGR Consultation
Fry Building 2NE
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

When replying please include your name and indicate in which council area your home or organisation address is located:

- Kent County Council
- Medway Council
- outside the affected area

We would also like you to confirm whether you are replying as a named consultee, submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation that is not on the list of named consultees, or replying as an individual.

Named consultees

If you are a named consultee please also include:

- the name of the organisation
- your position in the organisation
- an email address that can be used to contact you

Responses from organisations that are not named consultees

If you are submitting a response on behalf of an organisation that is not on the list of named consultees please indicate the type of organisation as below:

- business organisation
- education organisation
- local government organisation - parish/town council
- local government organisation - other
- police organisation
- fire organisation
- health organisation
- other

Background

Residents and businesses in Kent and Medway are currently served by a two-tier system of local government. The County Council is responsible for services such as

- adults' and children's social care
- maintaining roads
- libraries
- waste disposal

The 12 district and borough councils are responsible for services such as

- rubbish collection
- housing and planning
- environmental health

Medway Council is a unitary authority meaning that it is responsible for delivering all local government services in the area it covers.

Our ambition is to simplify local government, ending the two-tier system and establishing new single-tier unitary councils that are responsible for all local government services in an area. Our vision is clear: stronger local councils in charge of all local services, equipped to drive economic growth, improve local public services, and lead and empower their communities.

Strong local government will help grow the economy and drive up living standards – the government's number one mission. With one council in charge, we will see quicker decisions to grow our towns and cities and connect people to opportunity. Reorganisation will speed up house building, get vital infrastructure projects moving, and attract new investment – with more people able to buy their own homes and access high-quality local jobs.

New, unitary councils must support wider devolution structures. Our ambition is that all of England can access devolved powers by establishing Strategic Authorities – groups of councils working together over areas that people recognise and live and work in – to make the key decisions over strategic scale and to drive economic growth. Strategic Authorities use their powers over housing, planning, transport, energy, skills, employment support and more to deliver growth and opportunity to communities across the country.

Government's invitation to the councils

On 5 February 2025, the then Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution issued a [statutory invitation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-kent-and-medway) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-kent-and-medway>) to all councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitary authorities to develop proposals for unitary local government for the whole area.

In Kent and Medway, the invitations were sent to:

- Ashford Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Dover District Council
- Folkstone and Hythe District Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Thanet District Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Medway Council

The invitation was issued under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). It invited the councils to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government, which could take the form of any of the types of proposal provided for by the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local government covering the whole of the county concerned.
- Type B – a single tier of local government covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts.
- Type C – a single tier of local government covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas.
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals, but not as alternatives.

The invitations specified that any councils responding must have regard to the guidance appended to the invitation, including six criteria for unitary local government and other matters that should be taken into account when formulating a proposal. That guidance is at Annex A of the [invitation letter \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-kent-and-medway\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-kent-and-medway).

The invitations also asked all invited councils to make every effort to work together collaboratively and proactively on proposals for unitary councils and jointly submit one proposal in the best interests of the whole area, which was complementary to devolution plans. It acknowledged that this may not be possible in all areas, despite councils' best efforts, and we committed to consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities. In the invitations, we indicated that, while existing district areas should be the building blocks, we would also consider more complex boundary changes where there is a strong justification.

Since issuing the invitation we have supported and engaged with all councils, including providing a financial contribution towards the development of a shared evidence base. We have encouraged councils to work together on complementary proposals across the wider area, consider the complexity and risk, take their own legal advice to ensure legal compliance, and submit any full proposals in line with the statutory invitation given. Each council could only submit one proposal.

All councils in the two tier areas of Cambridgeshire, Devon, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire together with their neighbouring unitary councils for the areas of Peterborough, Plymouth, Torbay, Derby, Medway, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Leicester, Rutland, North Lincolnshire, North-East Lincolnshire, Nottingham and Stoke-on-Trent, were invited to submit full proposals by 28 November 2025. All 134 councils in these areas engaged with the process and shared their views in response to the invitations. In total, 52 local government reorganisation proposals were received from one or more councils. Five of the invited councils have chosen not to submit a proposal.

This consultation relates to the invitation area of Kent and Medway.

Submissions from councils

The proposals received by MHCLG by the deadline of 28 November 2025 are set out above. The detailed information and supporting analysis within these 5 proposals can be found by clicking the link below:

- www.kentcouncilleaders.org.uk/lgr-consultation
(<https://kentcouncilleaders.org.uk/lgr-consultation>)

This consultation

The 2007 Act requires that, before a proposal for local government reorganisation can be implemented, there must first be a consultation with any council affected that has not submitted the proposal, as well as any other persons considered appropriate.

All councils which fall within the Kent and Medway invitation areas are being invited to respond to the consultation. We also consider it appropriate to consult neighbouring councils, public service providers, including health providers and the police, and certain other business, voluntary and community sector and educational bodies. Where boundary changes have been requested, we consider it appropriate to consult the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. A full list of named bodies being consulted on each proposal is at [Annex C](#).

Although this will be a technical exercise, focused on the criteria, rather than a public consultation, we also welcome the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.

This consultation is on the 5 proposals received for Kent and Medway. Respondents will be invited to provide a separate response for every proposal made in respect of the given area.

No area has been able to jointly submit one proposal, and there is considerable complexity in some of the different proposals. This is particularly the case where councils have sought to submit proposals affecting neighbouring areas without the inclusion of their own area and those where extensive boundary change modifications have been requested.

In order to enable an assessment of the councils' proposals to be made against the criteria in the statutory invitation, views are sought on all proposals that meet the terms of the invitation (i.e. where the proposals seek to achieve the invitation criteria and provide all the information specified in the guidance). This includes the proposals that include reorganisation of local government areas adjacent to (and not including) their own, and those that include requests for changes to district boundaries.

The responses to this consultation will help to inform the Minister's assessment of whether, and to what extent, the proposals meet the criteria

set out in the invitation.

Furthermore, given the complexities outlined above, Ministers will in due course also need to consider whether the proposals are capable of being lawfully implemented as proposals under the 2007 Act; whether it is necessary and appropriate for the Secretary of State to exercise his power to modify a proposal, were he minded to implement one or more proposal(s); and, where boundary change is sought, what the most appropriate route to achieve that might be. The fact that the Secretary of State has decided that it is appropriate to seek views on the proposals received does not mean that he has made a decision in respect of these issues. Should consultees have any observations on any of these issues, these can be provided using the free text box at question 8.

Boundary changes

The invitation set out that existing district council areas should be the building blocks for proposals for new councils. It was also clear that, if a council believed that moving boundaries (so splitting a district area) between the proposed new councils would achieve a better outcome, this would be considered if there was a strong justification. We have asked that councils submit a base proposal using current district boundaries and then request that the Secretary of State modifies existing district council areas to split them between the proposed new councils making clear the case for this. If a submission includes such a request, the questions asked will be about the version of the proposal that includes the split district(s). We also asked that proposals that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, would need a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification. We will also ask you for your views on whether you agree there is a strong justification for these proposals.

Consultation questions

Having considered the proposals at the links above, please respond to the following questions:

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Question 2

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Question 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Question 4

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of exceptional financial support?

As of 5 February 2026, within the Kent and Medway area, Medway Council had received in-principle Exceptional Financial Support to support their 2025/26 budget. This council will not necessarily be in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support in future financial years. Updates on Exceptional Financial Support can be found on the [Exceptional Financial Support gov.uk page](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/exceptional-financial-support-for-local-authorities) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/exceptional-financial-support-for-local-authorities>)

Question 5

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Question 6

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Question 7

To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?

Question 8

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Question 9

If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on the proposal.

Where a proposal includes a request that the Secretary of State modifies a proposal to achieve boundary change, or the proposal affects wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, you will be asked an additional question:

Question 10

This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change or that affects wider public services. To

what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?

Question 11

If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

For each question, you can provide the following answers:

- strongly agree
- somewhat agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- somewhat disagree
- strongly disagree
- don't know

You will also be invited to explain your answers to questions 1 to 8 using a free text box at question 9. If a question on boundary change is included at question 10, you will be invited to explain your answer in a free text box at question 11.

What happens next?

The consultation will close at 23:59 on 26 March 2026.

This consultation will inform an assessment by the Secretary of State of the merits of the proposals.

All proposals received from councils will be considered carefully, alongside all consultation responses and any other relevant information, before a decision is taken on how to proceed, including whether or not to implement a proposal, with or without modification. In deciding which proposal, if any, to implement in an area, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Secretary of State will assess the proposals against the criteria set out in the statutory guidance accompanying the invitation, as well as having regard to all representations received, including responses to this consultation, and to all other relevant information available.

The Secretary of State may decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, to implement a proposal with or without modification, or to not implement any proposal for an area, and may also seek advice from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

If any proposals are to be implemented, we would expect new unitary councils to take on full council roles from April 2028, with transitional arrangements in 2027-28 to support a smooth implementation.

The final decisions will be communicated to the councils as soon as practicable.

About this consultation

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and UK data protection legislation. In certain circumstances this may therefore include personal data when required by law.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Department is bound by the information access regimes and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will at all times process your personal data in accordance with UK data protection legislation and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. A full privacy notice is included below.

Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed the Consultation Principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact us via the [complaints procedure](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government/about/complaints-procedure) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government/about/complaints-procedure>).

Annex A: Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

1) A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

- a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.
- b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.
- c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.
- d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2) Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

- a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
- b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.

- c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.
- d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.
- e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.
- f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4) Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5) New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.
- b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.
- c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.
- b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

- a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.
- b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

- a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.
- b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.
- c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.
- d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.
- e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.
- f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation

Annex B: Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are entitled to under UK data protection legislation.

Note that this section only refers to personal data (your name, contact details and any other information that relates to you or another identified or identifiable individual personally) not the content otherwise of your response to the consultation.

1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk or by writing to the following address:

Data Protection Officer
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

2. Why we are collecting your personal data

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you to respond to the consultation, and we may also contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes or use it to contact you about related matters.

We will collect your IP address if you complete a consultation online. We may use this to ensure that each person only completes a survey once. We will not use this data for any other purpose.

For named consultees listed in Annex C, who MHCLG is emailing directly to inform them of the consultation, names and email addresses of relevant persons have either been taken from existing MHCLG systems, provided by other government departments or local authorities, or found on public websites.

Sensitive types of personal data

Please do not share [special category](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/#scd1) (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/#scd1>) personal data or criminal offence data* as we have not asked for this. By 'special category personal data', we mean information about living individual's:

- race
- ethnic origin
- political opinions

- religious or philosophical beliefs
- trade union membership
- genetics
- biometrics
- health (including disability-related information)
- sex life; or
- sexual orientation.

*By 'criminal offence data', we mean information relating to a living individual's criminal convictions or offences or related security measures.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data

The collection of your personal data is lawful under article 6(1)(e) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation as it is necessary for the performance by MHCLG of a task in the public interest/in the exercise of official authority vested in the data controller. Section 8(d) of the Data Protection Act 2018 states that this will include processing of personal data that is necessary for the exercise of a function of the Crown, a Minister of the Crown or a government department i.e. in this case a consultation.

There is also a statutory duty to consult. The 2007 Act requires that, before a proposal for establishing unitary local government can be implemented, the Secretary of State must first consult any local authority that is affected by a proposal (but which has not submitted it), and any such other persons as he considers appropriate.

4. What will happen to your data?

Your data may be analysed and summarised using technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI), to help us to handle consultation responses efficiently and accurately. We may also use your data to ensure that we improve how we process consultation responses as we develop our products. This may include your personal data if you choose to disclose personal information in your response. However, MHCLG will take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent personal data from the consultation responses being sent to an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

We will not:

- sell or rent your data to third parties
- share your data with third parties for marketing purposes

We will share your data if we are required to do so by law, for example by court order, or to prevent fraud or other crime.

For the purposes of this consultation MHCLG have appointed the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology as a 'data processor', acting on behalf of the Department and under our instruction, to help analyse the responses to this consultation. Where we do share data we will ensure that the processing of your personal data remains in strict accordance with the requirements of the data protection legislation.

MHCLG intend to use an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool called Consult AI. The AI tool processes data securely and does not copy or share data. The data will only be accessed and used by those authorised to do so.

The AI tool identifies themes present in the responses. The draft themes are reviewed and agreed by a policy team before the tool then maps responses to the themes to be used by policy teams to analyse the consultation. MHCLG will take steps to check for accuracy and identify and reduce bias. Your data will not be used to train the AI models.

5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for two years from the closure of the consultation, unless we identify that its continued retention is unnecessary before that point.

6. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, restriction, objection

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a. to see what data we have about you
- b. to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c. to ask to have your data corrected if it is incorrect or incomplete

- d. to object to our use of your personal data in certain circumstances
- e. to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/> (<https://ico.org.uk/>), or telephone 0303 123 1113.

Please contact us at the following address if you wish to exercise the rights listed above, except the right to lodge a complaint with the ICO:
dataprotection@communities.gov.uk or

Knowledge and Information Access Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
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7. Your personal data may be processed in the EU. The EU is covered by UK adequacy regulations.

8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

9. Your personal data will be stored in a secure government IT system.

We use a third-party system, Citizen Space, to collect consultation responses. In the first instance your personal data will be stored on their secure UK-based server. Your personal data will be transferred to our secure government IT system as soon as possible, and it will be stored there for two years before it is deleted.

Annex C: Named consultees

We welcome the views of all those interested in the proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses, and the voluntary sector. In this annex we list for information those who are specifically named consultees.

Before implementing a proposal, there is a statutory requirement to consult any local authority that is affected by the proposal (but which has not submitted it), and any such other persons as considered appropriate. This consultation is specifically inviting comments from the following councils and other named bodies:

Named consultee list

Principal Councils

- Ashford Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Dover District Council
- Folkestone and Hythe District Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Medway Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Thanet District Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Neighbouring Councils

- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Eastbourne Borough Council
- Elmbridge Borough Council
- Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- Hastings Borough Council

- Lewes District Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- Reigate and Bansted Borough Council
- Rother District Council
- Runnymede Borough Council
- Spelthorne Brough Council
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Waverley Borough Council
- Wealden District Council
- Woking Borough Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Braintree District Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- Castle Point Borough Council
- Chelmsford City Council
- Colchester City Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Essex County Council
- Harlow District Council
- Maldon District Council
- Rochford District Council
- Southend-on-Sea City Council
- Tendring District Council
- Thurrock Borough Council
- Uttlesford District Council
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Bromley

Strategic Authorities

- Greater London Authority
- Mayor of London

Health bodies

- Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust
- East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust
- Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board
- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust
- South East Coast Ambulance Service

Police Bodies

- Kent Police
- Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

Fire and Rescue bodies

- HM Coastguard Dover
- Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
- Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service
- Kent Resilience Forum

Education bodies

- Canterbury Christ Church University
- East Kent Colleges Group
- Mid Kent College
- North Kent College
- University of Kent
- University of Greenwich
- Kent Further Education
- University of Creative Arts (Canterbury Campus)

Other Public Sector

- Kent Downs National Landscape
- Kent Safeguarding Adults Board
- Kent Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership

VCSE

- Kent Community Foundation

- Medway Voluntary Action
- VCSE Steering Group Kent and Medway

Business Bodies

- Eurotunnel Folkestone
- Federation of Small Businesses in Kent
- Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
- Kent Chambers of Commerce
- Port of Dover
- Thames Freeport

National Bodies

- Environment Agency
- Local Government Association
- GMB Union
- National Association of Local Councils
- National Highways
- National Housing Federation
- UK Health Security Agency
- Unison
- Unite The Union
- Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Other

- Lord Lieutenant of Kent
- Visit Kent



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