

Boxmoor and Hemel consultation paper

What is the issue?

The Diocese has had a policy since 2018 of reviewing the provision for ministry and pastoral arrangements for parishes where there is a significant ongoing shortfall in contributions to the cost of ministry through the Parish Share and/or a low Deployment Indicator (DI), a diocesan calculation comparing clergy workload in each parish and benefice across the diocese. The current average DI for one stipendiary priest is 116.

The Hemel Hempstead Team Ministry currently comprises four parishes with 5 church buildings and a population of around 50000 and has four stipendiary clergy – the Team Rector and three Team Vicars. The Team has a DI 530 across 4 posts = 132 per post. For a number of years, the parish of Warner's End and Gadebridge has shown signs of missional and financial difficulty reflected in comparatively low mission statistics and shortfalls in Parish Share contributions.

Since at least 2005, [before the appointment of the current team vicar,] the parish has been unable to pay the Parish Share requested as an appropriate contribution towards the costs of the stipendiary ministry provided. Over the 10 years to 2020, Parish Share contributions have averaged only 45% of the requested sum, even with the benefit of Pastoral Aid Support Grants totalling over £120000 in the same period [and with some support from other parishes within the Team]. There is a serious longstanding issue with financial viability which can no longer be sustained by subsidy from other parishes across the Diocese through the Parish Share system. There is not a financially sustainable model of ministry in this part of Hemel Hempstead.

The parish of Boxmoor has 3 church buildings, a population of 18,600 and one stipendiary incumbent. Its DI of 208 indicates its comparative "workload" is significantly higher than the diocesan average of 116 for a benefice with one stipendiary minister.

Major housing development is planned adjacent to the parishes of Warner's End and Gadebridge and Boxmoor. There is currently little capacity to engage in additional mission and ministry among the residents who will move into the new homes.

What options have been considered?

Option 1: To leave the current parish and benefice/team boundaries unchanged, but to reduce the number of stipendiary posts in the Hemel Hempstead Team to three. This would involve the reallocation of ministry across the team, with mission and ministry in Warners End and Gadebridge led by the Team Rector and the other Team Vicars. It would not provide any additional ministerial resources to the parish of Boxmoor or provide capacity to respond to the new housing developments.

Option 2: To move the parish of Warners End and Gadebridge into an enlarged benefice with Boxmoor and its associated churches at Chaulden and Hammerfield. The Hemel Hempstead Team Ministry would continue to serve the three remaining parishes in the Team with 3 stipendiary clergy. The addition of Warners End and Gadebridge to Boxmoor would be supported by the appointment of a 0.5 post of Associate Minister who would work with the Vicar to support ministry across the benefice of Boxmoor including among residents for the planned housing developments.

What is the rationale for the proposal?

The preferred option is Option 2. Moving Warners End and Gadebridge into the same benefice as Boxmoor (including Chaulden and Hammerfield) with a stipendiary incumbent and 0.5 Associate Minister post would enable support to be given to develop the financial and missional sustainability of Warners End and Gadebridge. It would respect geographical links between Warners End and Chaulden and enable ministry in the new housing developments to the west of Hemel Hempstead to be part of the parochial ministry of the benefice of Boxmoor.