

New electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire District Council Draft Recommendations

November 2022

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why North Hertfordshire?

7 We are conducting a review of North Hertfordshire Council District ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2006, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.² Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in North Hertfordshire are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the district.

Our proposals for North Hertfordshire

9 North Hertfordshire should be represented by 51 councillors, two more than there are now.

10 North Hertfordshire should have 24 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of 20 wards should change; four will stay the same.

How will the recommendations affect you?

12 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the district or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

² Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 1 November 2022 to 9 January 2023. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

15 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 9 January 2023 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 37 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

17 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for North Hertfordshire. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the district. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 February 2022	Number of councillors decided
1 June 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
10 August 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
1 November 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
9 January 2023	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
28 March 2023	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

20 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

21 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2022	2028
Electorate of North Hertfordshire	98,824	112,728
Number of councillors	51	51
Average number of electors per councillor	1,938	2,210

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All but one of our proposed wards for North Hertfordshire will have good electoral equality by 2028. Great Ashby ward will have 11% fewer electors than the district average by 2028.

Submissions received

23 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2028, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2023. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 14% by 2028.

25 A resident argued that the review should be deferred until after the Local Plan is completed. Kimpton Parish Council questioned the level of growth attributed to

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Kimpton parish. We note these comments, but have asked the Council to provide its best estimates on where it considers development will occur in the next five years. We note that in a number of instances the Council has included developments that are yet to receive planning permission. We are cautious about accepting such areas as part of the forecast figures. However, we also look to use the most accurate figures possible, so if the Council can persuade us that not including these figures would produce inaccurate forecasts, we will include them.

26 We carefully considered the information provided by the Council and, on balance, are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

Number of councillors

27 North Hertfordshire District Council currently has 49 councillors. It has resolved to move to all out elections from its current cycle of thirds. Therefore, there is no longer a presumption that it have a council size divisible by three.

28 In line with this decision the Council submitted a proposal to increase council size by one, to 50. There was cross-party support for this proposal. We received no other submissions on council size.

29 We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that increasing council size by one will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively. We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 50 councillors.

30 In response to this consultation the Council, North Hertfordshire Conservatives ('the Conservatives'), North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party Branch ('North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party'), Hitchin & Harpenden Constituency Labour Party ('Hitchin & Harpenden CLP'), North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Green Party ('the Green Party'), North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party ('North East Hertfordshire CLP'), Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident put forward proposals based on 51 councillors, arguing that this provided a better allocation of councillors across the district.

31 While a number of residents objected to an increase in council size, one objected to the Council having an even number of councillors, arguing that this could result in the Council being under no overall control.

32 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general objections to an increase in council size. However, these respondents did not put forward strong evidence to support an alternative number. Therefore, we are not moving significantly away from the 50-member council previously agreed.

33 We note that all the district-wide schemes were based on 51 councillors and that there was agreement that this provided the best allocation of councillors across the district. We have examined this in more detail, noting that 50 and the existing 49 do not provide such a good allocation of councillors. Therefore, we are persuaded that the draft recommendations should be based on 51 councillors.

Ward boundaries consultation

34 We received 54 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included district-wide proposals from the Council and Conservatives that proposed different warding patterns across the district. Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident all put forward the same proposals, based on the Council's scheme, but with an alternative warding pattern in the south of Letchworth. North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, the Green Party and North East Hertfordshire CLP expressed support for the Council's proposals, but supported the same alternative proposals as the Labour groups for the south of Letchworth.

35 The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

36 We note that a number of the district-wide proposals supported the creation of parish wards with no or only a handful of electors. We acknowledge that these were proposed to reflect areas of development in rural parishes that would access towns or sit better within urban wards. However, unless it has been demonstrated that there will be sufficient electors to warrant at least one parish councillor, we do not consider such wards as viable. While we note that the Council predicts significant growth in these areas, we are not persuaded that they will contain sufficient electors at the time of the next election. We have therefore decided that these proposals would not provide for effective and convenient local government and have looked to modify the proposals that have used unviable parish wards.

37 We note that some respondents expressed views on the number of councillors that wards should have, depending on their setting, for example rural vs urban. We note these comments, but have no set view on where single-, two- and three-councillor wards should be appropriate. We consider each area on its individual merits, and will propose a ward size that provides the best balance of the statutory criteria.

38 We received a number of comments about separating areas of the district and establishing new authorities or transferring areas to neighbouring districts. Neither of these scenarios can happen as part of this review and can only be addressed by a Principal Area Boundary Review, which is a separate process.

39 A resident suggested that the voting system should be changed. However, this is beyond the scope of this review.

40 We also note that some respondents argued that their proposals reflect county divisions and that these should be taken into consideration when drawing up wards. When conducting a review of a county council, we have regard for district wards, when drawing up county divisions. However, we are not required to have the same regard for divisions when reviewing a district council. In some places we may move away from county division boundaries if we consider this will provide a better balance of the statutory criteria – therefore, while reflecting county division may provide effective and convenient local government, this must be weighed against the need to ensure good electoral equality, and reflect community identity and interests.

41 The district-wide schemes provided mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for North Hertfordshire. Our draft recommendations take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

Draft recommendations

42 Our draft recommendations are for seven three-councillor wards, 13 two-councillor wards and four one-councillor wards. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

43 The tables and maps on pages 9–33 detail our draft recommendations for each area of North Hertfordshire. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

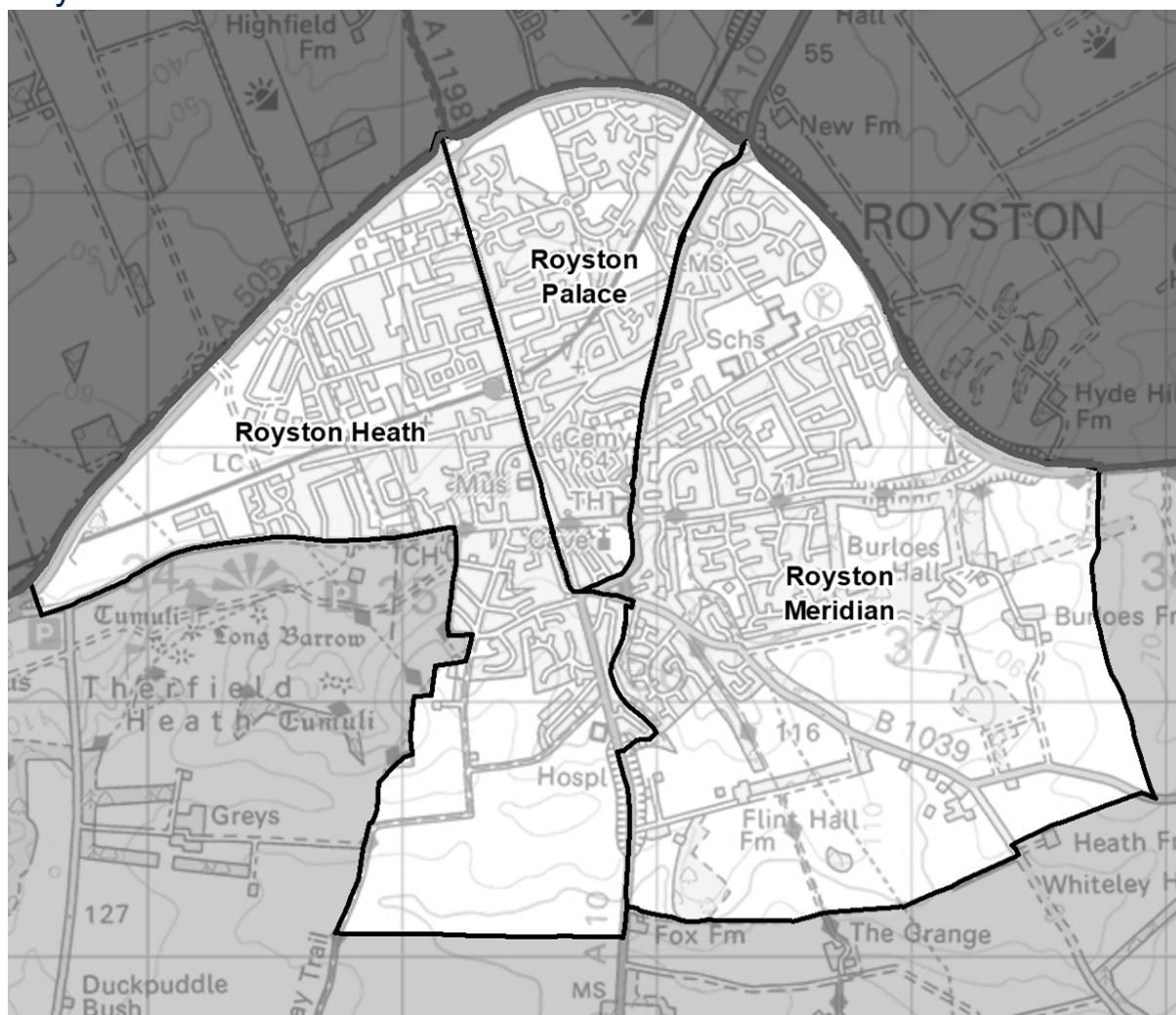
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

44 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 41 and on the large map accompanying this report.

45 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries, and the names of our proposed wards.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Royston



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Royston Heath	2	-7%
Royston Meridian	3	-5%
Royston Palace	2	-2%

Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace

46 The Council, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident put forward identical proposals for Royston. They proposed a single-councillor Royston Burloes ward which would have 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2028. They also proposed two-councillor Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace wards which would have 4% fewer, 8% fewer and 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. They stated that the north is separated by the railway, which has few crossing points. However, to secure electoral equality they transferred the area north of the A10 to their Royston Palace ward. They also stated that their proposals reflect

'distinct communities' but did not expand what these were. These proposals were supported by North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party and the Green Party.

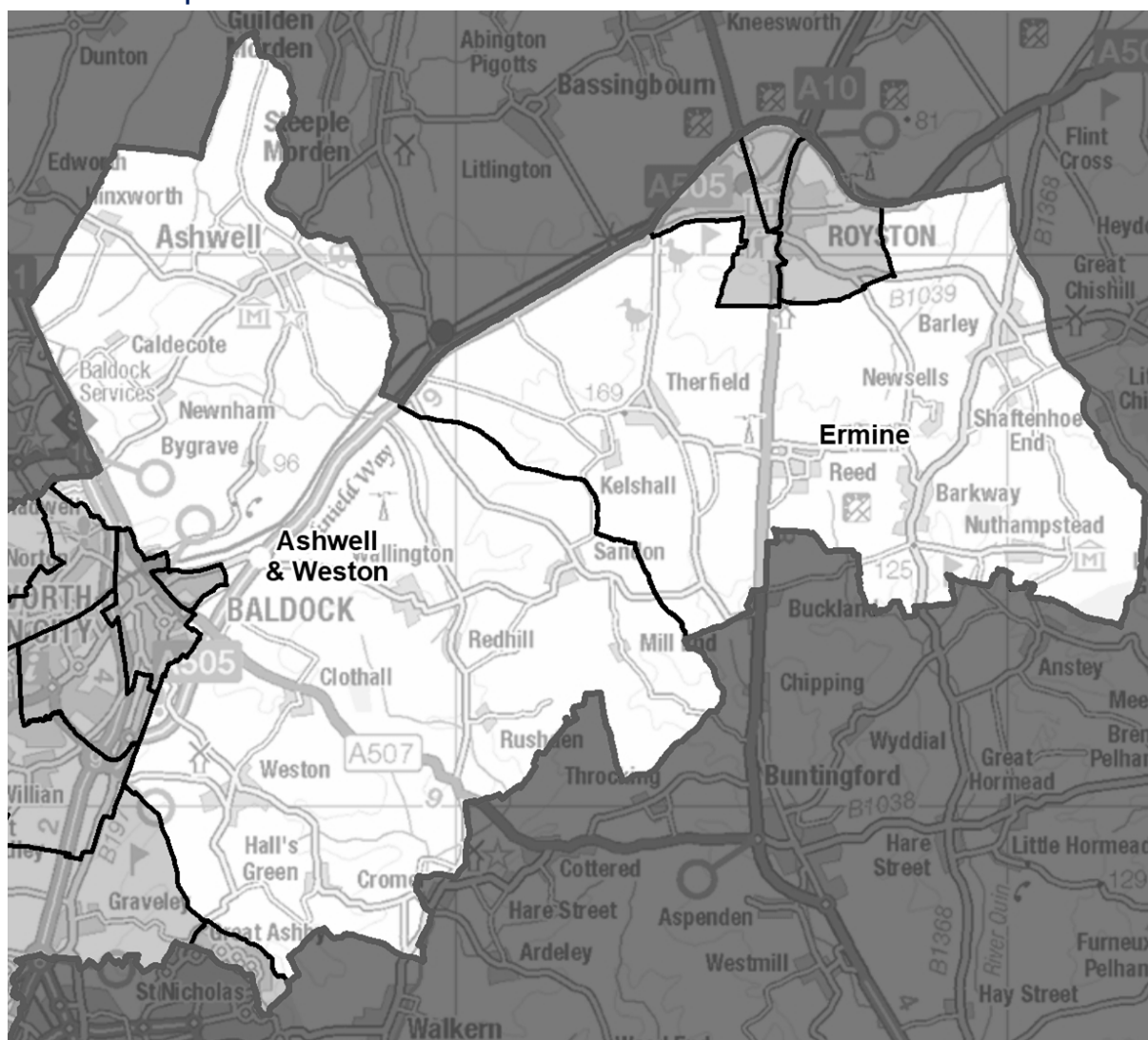
47 The Conservatives put forward an alternative configuration for Royston, proposing two-councillor Royston Heath and Royston Palace wards and a three-councillor Royston Meridian ward. These wards would have 7% fewer, 2% fewer and 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. They argued that their proposals use main roads and follow the 'same pattern' which allows existing communities to stay intact. They stated that their Royston Meridian ward was everything to the east of the A10, with the exception of the Garden Lane and Shrubbery Grove area, which they put in Royston Heath ward, arguing they have a better connection to the Layston estate and Sun Hill area.

48 A resident expressed partial support for the Council proposal, but argued that its single-councillor Royston Burloes ward should be combined with the two-councillor Royston Meridian ward. They argued that this would provide greater resilience and facilitate teamwork. They added that this ward would have a better geographic size. Another resident argued that the A10 is not a clear boundary and suggested a north ward and one around the train station.

49 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting that the proposals for this area were supported by relatively limited evidence. We note that both proposals divide the town centre area between two wards. We note that under both proposals it is necessary to cross the railway, but consider that the Conservative proposals use clearer boundaries while securing marginally better electoral equality. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence received, we are adopting the Conservative proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

50 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Royston Heath and Royston Palace wards and a three-councillor Royston Meridian ward. These wards would have 7% fewer, 2% fewer and 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

North-east parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Ashwell & Weston	3	3%
Ermine	1	10%

Ashwell & Weston

51 The Council and Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area. They proposed single-councillor Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards, which would have 2% more and 8% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. The Ashwell ward requires an area of Bygrave parish, which will be subject to significant development, to be transferred to a Baldock East ward, while the Weston & Sandon ward requires an area of Clothall parish, which will also be subject to significant development, to be transferred to Baldock East ward. The Council stated that these areas of development were likely to be more similar in nature to Baldock than the rural parishes.

52 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg, North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party and a resident all supported these proposals. The Green Party also supported them, but argued that Arbury ward should be named Ashwell, reflecting the largest population centre in the ward.

53 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the agreement that the areas of Bygrave and Clothall parishes that will be subject to development should be transferred to a Baldock East ward. However, as highlighted in the Ward boundaries consultation section (above), these areas would have to form parish wards of their respective parish councils and we do not consider them to have sufficient electors to be viable, particularly in terms of the number of electors forecast to be resident at the time of the first election under new boundaries. In order to ensure effective and convenient local government, we are not persuaded to adopt these proposals in our draft recommendations.

54 We note that warding these development areas with the remainder of their parishes significantly worsens electoral equality in Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards. The predicted growth for Bygrave parish is 1,424 electors and if this is retained in Arbury ward, it results in an electoral variance of 67% by 2028. The predicted growth in Clothall parish is 712 electors and if this is retained in Weston & Sandon ward the ward would have 40% more electors than the district average by 2028.

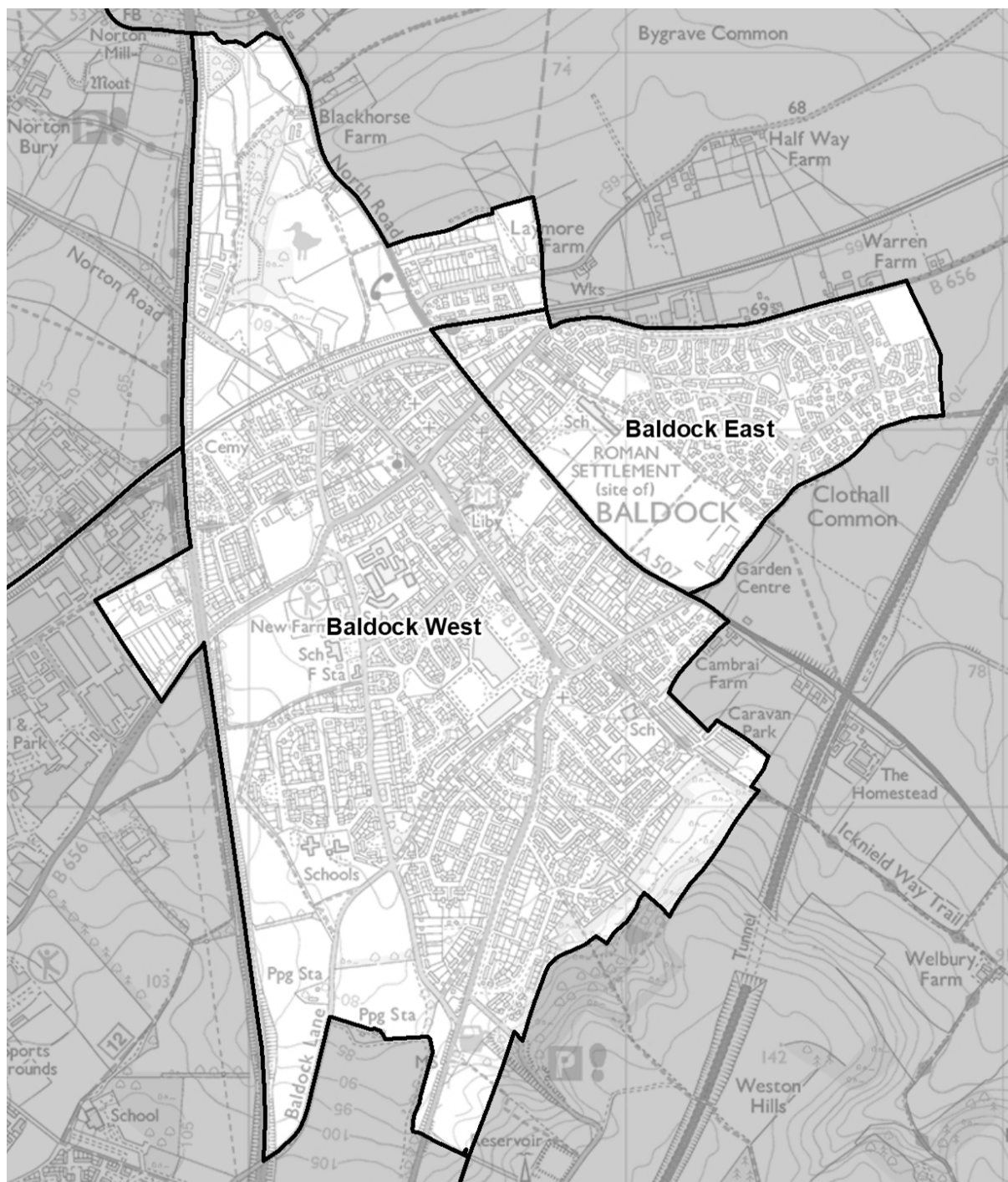
55 We have therefore looked at alternative warding patterns. However, we have been unable to identify a pattern based on two rural single-councillor wards that secures good electoral equality. We note that by removing these areas of development, the Baldock area is actually entitled to one fewer councillor, while the rural area covered by the proposed Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards is entitled to one more. Therefore, given the lack of a single-councillor option for this area, we propose combining the Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards, plus the areas that were to be transferred to Baldock East, in a three-councillor Ashwell & Weston ward. This ward would 3% more electors than the district average by 2028. We acknowledge that this ward covers a large geographical area. Furthermore, while the A505 runs through the ward, it does not necessarily divide communities and we note that there is access across this via Cat Ditch Road. The proposed ward name reflects the two largest settlements in the ward.

Ermine

56 The Council and Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area, proposing a single-councillor Ermine ward. This would have 10% more electors than the district average by 2028. Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg, North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, the Green Party and a resident all supported these proposals.

57 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting no other proposals for this area. Although the proposed ward has a level of electoral equality towards the top end of what we consider to be acceptable, the options to address this are limited. The only option would be to transfer Kelshall parish to our Ashwell & Weston ward. While this would improve electoral equality, it would add another parish to the two-councillor rural ward, while also disrupting Kelshall's links to Therfield, which appears to be its nearest neighbour. We are therefore adopting the proposed Ermine ward without amendment.

Baldock



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Baldock East	1	-7%
Baldock West	3	-8%

Baldock East and Baldock West

58 The Council and Conservatives put forward very similar proposals for this area, comprising three-councillor Baldock Town and two-councillor Baldock East wards.

59 As addressed in the Ashwell & Weston section (above), both proposals transferred an area of Bygrave parish that will be subject to significant development to Baldock East ward. The Conservatives transferred the area of Clothall parish that will be subject to development into Baldock East ward. The Council proposed transferring the same area out of Clothall parish, but putting part in Baldock East ward and the rest in Baldock Town ward. As a result, the Council also proposed transferring the Bygrave Road and Salisbury Road areas to its Baldock Town ward.

60 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident supported the Council proposals, but argued that Baldock Town should be named Baldock West to reflect that both Baldock wards are part of the town and should not be differentiated. A number of residents also argued that Baldock Town ward should be named Baldock West. North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party and the Green Party also expressed support for the Council proposal.

61 A resident stated that we should create a four-councillor ward for Baldock. However, while the legislation provides no upper limit on the number of councillors per ward, there are no current wards in mainland England returning more than three members. We consider that wards returning more than three councillors result in a dilution of accountability to the electorate. Without very compelling evidence, we will not recommend a number above that figure. We have not been persuaded to move away from our approach in this case.

62 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. However, as detailed in the Ashwell & Weston section (above), while we note the proposals to transfer areas of Bygrave and Clothall parishes to the Baldock East ward, we do not propose doing so, to avoid the creation of unviable parish wards in those parishes. As a result, without the development in these areas being transferred to Baldock, the town is only entitled to four councillors, rather than five. We have therefore looked to create a warding pattern that accommodates this.

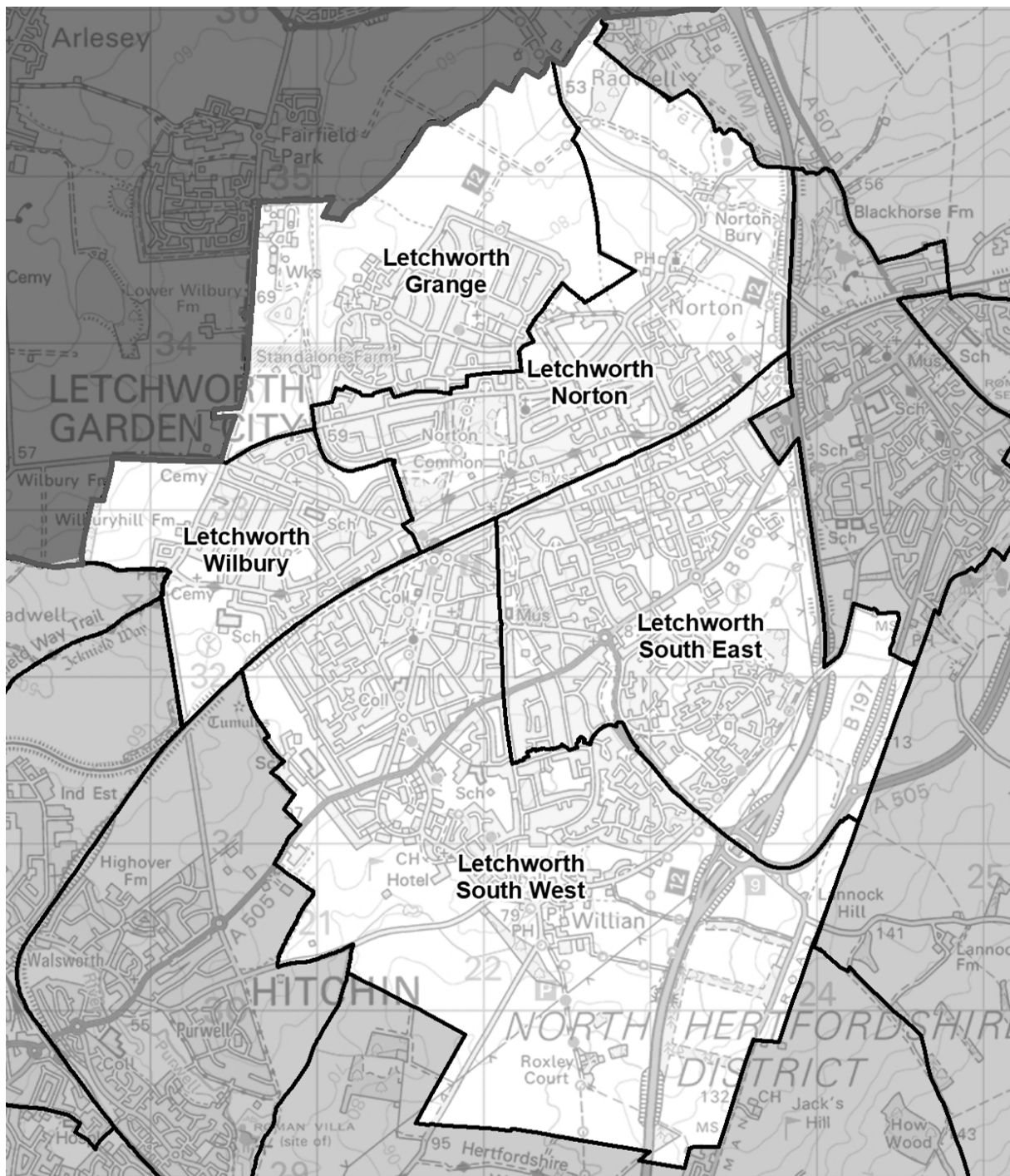
63 We note that subject to a minor modification to transfer the Bygrave Road and Salisbury Road area to Baldock Town ward from Baldock East, the existing wards provide good electoral equality. We are therefore proposing this small amendment to the existing three-councillor Baldock Town and single-councillor Baldock East ward. With this amendment these wards would have 8% fewer and 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

64 We have given consideration to the argument that Baldock Town should be named Baldock West, noting that the Conservatives consider changing the name to something similar to the existing ward name will create confusion. However, we are persuaded that this is an opportunity to create ward names that reflect local

communities. We are therefore naming Baldock Town ward as Baldock West, but would welcome further local views.

65 Our draft recommendations are for a single-councillor Baldock East ward and a three-councillor Baldock West ward with 7% fewer and 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

Letchworth



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Letchworth Grange	2	4%
Letchworth Norton	2	-1%
Letchworth South East	3	3%
Letchworth South West	3	2%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	-7%

Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Norton and Letchworth Wilbury

66 The Council and Conservatives put forward broadly similar proposals for this area, comprising two-councillor Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Norton and Letchworth Wilbury wards. Both proposals argued that the whole of this area is separated from the south of Letchworth by the railway and that their Letchworth Grange wards were based around the Grange estate. They also argued their Letchworth Norton wards were focused on Norton common and village. The Conservatives included the properties along Wilbury Road in their Letchworth Norton ward, while the Council put those to the north of the road in Letchworth Wilbury. As a result, the Conservatives' two-councillor Letchworth Grange and Letchworth Norton wards would have 4% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor by 2028, respectively. The Council's two-councillor Letchworth Grange and Letchworth Norton wards would have 10% more and 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

67 Their Letchworth Wilbury wards were very similar with the exception of the south end of Cowslip Hill, which the Council included in the ward, while the Conservatives placed the west half in their Letchworth Norton ward, arguing that this unites the whole road in a single ward. As a result, the Council's Letchworth Wilbury ward would have 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2028 and the Conservatives' ward would have 9% fewer.

68 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident supported the Council's proposals for these wards. The Green Party also expressed general support for the Council's proposals in this area.

69 A local resident argued that the Haymoor area should be in Letchworth Wilbury ward, rather than Letchworth Grange ward, citing a number of facilities they use there.

70 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the agreement and broad similarities for the proposals in this area. We are therefore basing the draft recommendation on elements of both proposals. We note that the Conservative proposal to include the roads to the north of Wilbury Road in its Letchworth Norton ward provides better electoral equality in Letchworth Grange. We also note that these roads have primary access onto Wilbury Road and not north into the Grange Estate. We are therefore adopting their proposed boundary between these wards.

71 We note the comment from a local resident about including the Haymoor area in Letchworth Wilbury; however, this would worsen electoral equality in our proposed Letchworth Norton to 15% fewer electors than the district average by 2028. This is a high electoral variance that we have not been persuaded to adopt.

72 We are, however, adopting the Council's proposal to put the southern part of Cowslip Hill in Letchworth Wilbury ward. While the Conservatives argued that their proposal places the whole road in Letchworth Norton, they do not in fact include the west side, so the road remains divided between wards. By adopting the Council's proposal this improves electoral equality in Letchworth Wilbury ward.

73 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Norton and Letchworth Wilbury wards. These will have 4% more, 1% fewer and 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West

74 The Council and Conservatives put forward proposals for the same boundaries in this area, but with different ward names. The Council proposed a single-councillor Letchworth East ward (Letchworth Pixmore under the Conservative proposal) with 11% more electors than the district average by 2028. A two-councillor Letchworth West (Letchworth Town under the Conservative proposal) was proposed with an electoral variance of 10% by 2028 and a three-councillor Letchworth South ward (Letchworth Willian under the Conservative proposal) with 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

75 The Council described its Letchworth East ward as a 'small distinct area'. It stated that its Letchworth South ward contains 'areas of the town (such as Jackmans) without artificially splitting them as at present' and that its Letchworth West ward contains communities that are 'distinct' from others in southern Letchworth.

76 The Conservatives stated that their Letchworth Pixmore ward uses natural boundaries and contains shops and schools and the majority of the town's industrial estate. Their Letchworth Town ward contains the town centre and the core of the original Letchworth Garden City. Finally, their Letchworth Willian ward contains the 'natural communities' of Lordship estate, Jackmans estate and Willian village.

77 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident objected to the Council's proposals for this area, expressing support for an 'Option B' that proposed three-councillor Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West wards. These wards would have 3% more and 2% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. They argued that the Council's proposals provide a poor level of electoral equality. They also argued that the proposals split Pixmore Junior School and The Crescent from their natural community in Letchworth East ward. They stated that while 'Option B' is not perfect, the creation of two larger wards both avoids dividing the Lordship area and the placing of the Lordship area in a ward with the Jackmans community. They added that these areas have very different needs in terms of Council services and the

amount and nature of councillor casework. They also stated that the Jackmans community has more in common with residents in the Council's Letchworth East ward.

78 The Green Party also expressed support for 'Option B' in this area. North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party expressed support for 'Option B', objecting to the Council's proposals that place the Jackmans estate in a ward with the Lordship estate highlighting a difference in the amount of 'social housing' in the areas. It also objected to the Council's creation of a single-councillor ward in an urban area.

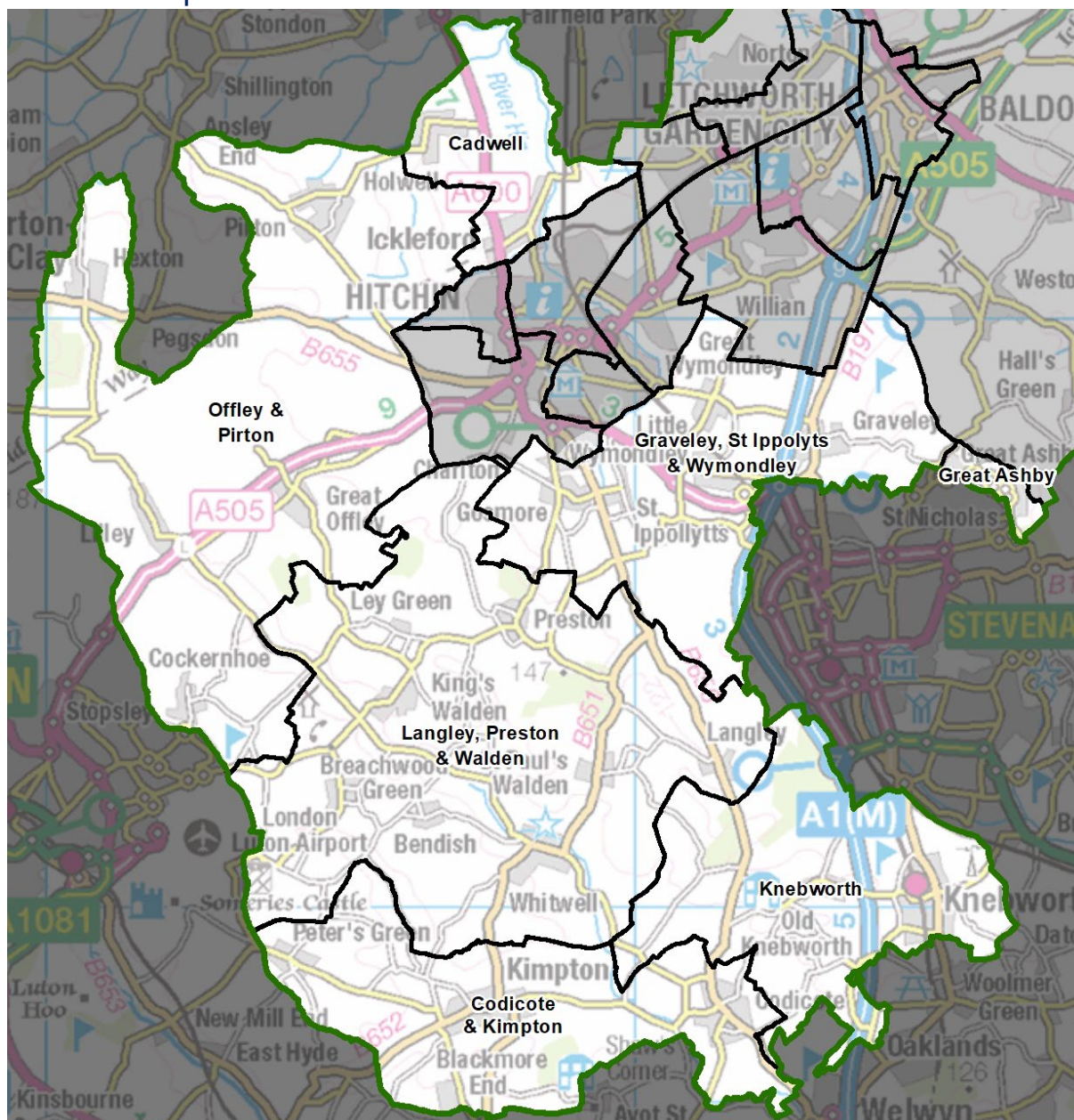
79 A local resident also supported 'Option B', supporting its treatment of the Jackmans estate and also avoiding the creation of a single-councillor ward.

80 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting that the 'Option B' proposal secures significantly better electoral equality than the proposal from the Council and Conservatives. We also note the evidence that the Council and Conservative proposals join the Jackmans estate with areas that others argue it does not have good community links with. While we have no specific concerns about the creation of a single-councillor ward in this area, we do have concerns that the proposed Letchworth East/Pixmore ward separates Pixmore Junior School and The Crescent from their natural community.

81 On balance, we are persuaded to adopt the 'Option B' proposals for this area. In our view, they will provide for good electoral equality and a better reflection of community identities and interests.

82 Our draft recommendations are for three-councillor Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West wards. These wards would have 3% more and 2% more electors than the district average by 2028.

South-west parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Cadwell	1	8%
Codicote & Kimpton	2	0%
Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley	2	-10%
Great Ashby	2	-11%
Knebworth	2	9%
Langley, Preston & Walden	1	9%
Offley & Pirton	2	4%

Great Ashby and Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley

83 The Council put forward proposals for two-councillor Great Ashby and Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts wards, with 2% more and 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. It argued that while Wymondley and Graveley parishes sit either side of the A1(M) motorway, along with St Ippolyts parish, they are all rural parishes that lie between the urban Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth. As a result, they face similar community issues and should all be included in the Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts ward. It also proposed that the more urban North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish should be included in this ward, along with the more rural South parish ward, arguing that it could not be included in Hitchin if good electoral equality was to be achieved.

84 The Council proposed creating a Great Ashby ward comprising Great Ashby parish and an adjacent area of Graveley parish that will be subject to significant development. It added that ideally a further development in its proposed Weston & Sandon ward would be included, but that it had not proposed this because of the poor electoral equality that would result. Finally, the Council proposed moving a small area of the existing Weston & Sandon ward to correct a boundary anomaly.

85 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident expressed general support for the Council's proposals in this area. A number of local residents echoed arguments that Great Ashby parish should be separated from its more rural neighbours, with some arguing that development in the adjacent rural parishes should be included in Great Ashby ward, with the parish boundaries amended to reflect this. A number also supported addressing the boundary anomaly between Great Ashby and Weston & Sandon wards.

86 A local resident also expressed support for these proposals, particularly the separation of Great Ashby parish from its more rural neighbours. Another resident echoed the comments separating Great Ashby parish.

87 The Conservatives put forward proposals for a three-councillor Chesfield ward which would have 3% more electors than the district average by 2028. This ward would comprise Graveley, Great Ashby and Wymondley parishes. The rural South parish ward of St Ippolyts would be in its two-councillor Icknield ward and the urban North parish ward in its two-councillor Hitchin Whitehill ward.

88 They stated that their Chesfield ward retains the existing ward, subject to addressing the small boundary anomaly with Weston & Sandon ward that the Council's proposals address. They also expressed concern about the rural/urban mix of this ward, but noted that Graveley and Great Ashby parishes share issues around the development of the Graveley area which is immediately adjacent to Great Ashby parish. They also stated Wymondley parish might be better served in a more rural

ward, but that options are limited and it would share similar concerns to Graveley parish over their proximity to Stevenage.

89 Wymondley Parish Council stated that it should be in a ward with Graveley and St Ippolyts parishes, rejecting the current arrangements which place it in a ward with Great Ashby. St Ippolyts Parish Council expressed support for the Council's proposals, referring to the proposal to place both North and South parish wards in the same ward. It also stated that the ward name should be based on the constituent parishes, but in alphabetical order. A local resident put forward very similar comments to St Ippolyts Parish Council. Another local resident argued that Gosmore Gate is currently split between wards, with the boundary cutting through a house.

90 A resident put forward proposals for dividing up the existing three-councillor Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo ward. However, these proposals secured poor levels of electoral equality and did not take into account the wider area. Therefore, we are not adopting these proposals.

91 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the proposals from the Conservatives retain the current link between Great Ashby and the neighbouring rural wards. However, the evidence received suggests that Great Ashby should be separated from these parishes given its more urban nature and proximity to Stevenage. We also note that a number of respondents argue that proposed developments in neighbouring rural parishes should be placed in a ward with Great Ashby. The Council proposals do this for the development immediately adjacent in Graveley parish, but not for a development in Weston parish, arguing that this would create poor electoral equality.

92 We are generally persuaded by the Council's approach in this area, noting that the Conservatives express some reservations about their own proposals to retain links between Great Ashby and rural parishes in their Chesfield ward. However, while we consider that the Council's proposals provide a stronger solution, we have a number of concerns.

93 Firstly, we note the argument for including the area of Graveley parish that will be subject to development in Great Ashby ward. However, as highlighted in the Ward boundaries consultation section (above), this area would have to form a parish ward of Graveley parish and the area does not contain any electors, so we do not consider it to be viable. While we note that the Council predicts significant growth in these areas, we are not persuaded that they will contain sufficient electors at the time of the next election to be viable and would therefore not provide for effective and convenient local government. As a result, we have decided not to adopt these proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

94 In addition, we note the argument for amending parish boundaries to include development sites in Great Ashby. However, this cannot be done as part of this electoral review and instead must be done as part of a Community Governance Review, which would be conducted by the District Council.

95 Secondly, as discussed in the following section, we consider that the Conservatives provide good evidence for retaining the North parish ward of St Ippolyts in a Hitchin ward. We concur that this area is more urban than the rest of St Ippolyts parish and as such will share community identities and interests with Hitchin.

96 We have therefore looked to base the draft recommendation on the Council's proposals, while also addressing the concerns outlined above. We are proposing a Great Ashby ward solely comprising Great Ashby parish. While this ward would have 11% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, the alternative options are limited given its location at the edge of the district. While we acknowledge that it might be sensible to include the development in Graveley parish we cannot do this for the reasons given above. In addition, we note that the Council's proposals did not address a similar issue regarding the development in Weston parish. This ward would address the small anomaly with Weston parish flagged by a number of local respondents.

97 Retaining the area of development in Graveley parish in the Council's Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts ward would change its level of electoral equality from 6% fewer to 7% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2028. While this falls within what we call good electoral equality and we could therefore propose no other changes, we have also been persuaded to address the concerns about North parish ward highlighted by the Conservatives. We note the comments from St Ippolyts parish about retaining the whole parish in a ward, but consider that the Conservative argument about including the urban North parish ward in a Hitchin ward is more compelling. As a result, removing this area from Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts ward would increase the electoral variance to -10% by 2028. On balance, we consider this level of electoral equality acceptable given the improved reflection of community identity by including this more urban area in an urban ward.

98 We also note the argument that Gosmore Gate is divided between wards. However, we are unable to address this because there is also a division boundary coincident with this line. As a result it would require the creation of an unviable parish ward to address it. This issue would be best addressed by a Community Governance Review.

99 Finally, we note the argument that the Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts ward should be named with the parishes in alphabetical order. Although we would sometimes use the names of the largest constituent parishes, in light of no other

evidence, we are persuaded to use alphabetical order, but would welcome further evidence on the ward name during the current consultation.

100 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley and Great Ashby wards. These would have 10% fewer and 11% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2028.

Codicote & Kimpton, Langley, Preston & Walden, Knebworth and Offley & Pirton

101 The Council put forward proposals for a single councillor Langley, Preston & Walden ward which would have 9% more electors than the district average by 2028. It also proposed two-councillor Codicote & Kimpton, Knebworth and Offley & Pirton wards which would all have reasonable electoral equality by 2028. It acknowledged that its Codicote & Kimpton ward combines two parishes with different identities, but that they are adjacent, and this is preferable to other options. The Council also acknowledged that its proposals retain a split in Codicote parish with part being in the Knebworth ward. However, the Council stated that this enables a better warding pattern for the wider area.

102 The Council stated that the parishes in its Langley, Preston & Walden ward are currently together in a larger ward and that they would be better served in a smaller ward, sharing concerns around Luton Airport. It stated that the parishes in its Offley & Pirton ward would also be better served in this smaller ward, including concerns over developments in Offley.

103 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident expressed general support for the Council's proposals in this area.

104 The Conservatives proposed single-councillor Cockernhoe and Kimpton & Breachwood Green wards with 8% fewer and 10% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. They also proposed two-councillor Ickniel, Knebworth and Upper Mimram wards. They stated that their Cockernhoe ward comprises Cockernhoe parish ward of Offley parish, which will see significant development, will be urban in nature and look increasingly to Luton which it abuts. They added that they did not consider it would have a connection with wider North Hertfordshire.

105 Their Ickniel ward comprises rural communities which have 'reasonable rural transport connections'. They acknowledged that their proposals separate Kings Walden parish ward of Kings Walden parish from Breachwood Green. However, they argued that this was necessary to improve electoral equality. They also proposed placing the unparished village of Charlton in this ward, arguing that it is more rural in nature than Hitchin where it currently sits. They provided good evidence for including

the urban North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in a Hitchin ward, arguing that this was of similar nature to urban Hitchin and essentially an extension of the town.

106 The Conservatives stated that their Kimpton & Breachwood Green ward comprises two similar communities that are Luton or St Albans facing, with both sharing concerns over Luton Airport. They also stated that Kimpton parish wished to remain a single-councillor ward.

107 Their Knebworth ward comprises part of the parish with the west area transferred to their Upper Mimram ward. They argued that this area is separated from the rest of Knebworth by Hitchin Road. Finally, they stated that their Upper Mimram ward enabled the whole of Codicote parish to be in a single ward, while linking it to Langley and St Paul's Walden parish, using the west area of Knebworth parish.

108 Codicote Parish Council expressed support for the current split of the parish between two wards, arguing that it means it has representation from three councillors, which improves the representation it gets. Knebworth Parish Council argued that the east area of Codicote parish should be excluded from a ward with Knebworth, otherwise it would have poor electoral equality.

109 Kimpton Parish Council put forward good evidence for remaining a single-councillor ward, arguing that being served by one councillor enables that councillor to have intimate knowledge of the area and its issues. It provided good evidence of community facilities and engagement with residents. The parish council also stated that it has friendly relations with neighbouring parishes, but no strong links. It argued that development was due in the parish that was not included in the forecast figures or the local plan. Finally, it stated that should expansion be necessary, it should be placed in a ward with a 'comparable rural area' and that any increase in size should be modest to 'maintain strong representation for our parish area'. Councillor Muncer expressed support for Kimpton Parish Council's submission, putting forward similar supporting evidence.

110 A resident argued that while some villages may not wish to be joined, it is acceptable particularly if the resulting two-councillor ward is not too large. They cited linking Codicote and Kimpton as an example, albeit while acknowledging that parishes might argue that they are quite different. The resident also expressed general support for the Council's proposals for this area.

111 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We have a number of concerns with the Conservative proposals. Firstly, we note that their Upper Mimram ward requires the creation of a parish ward of Knebworth parish. However, this would only have 28 electors which, as discussed earlier in this report, we do not consider to be viable and therefore would not adopt. We are also

concerned that their proposals split a number of other parishes, albeit using established parish wards. We consider this should only be done where necessary to secure electoral equality or reflect community identity and we are not persuaded that this is the case in these instances. Finally, we consider that their Icknield ward covers a very large and somewhat disparate area linking St Ippolyts parishes with parishes as far away as Hexton and Pirton.

112 We consider that the Council's proposals provide a more balanced set of wards. We note the good evidence from Kimpton Parish Council for remaining a ward in its own right. However, under the Council's figures this would have 18% fewer electors than the district average by 2028. This is not an electoral variance that we have been persuaded to adopt. We note the argument that some development had not been included in the forecast figures. However, we can only have regard for the figures provided by the Council. We therefore find that the Council's proposals to link it with part of Codicote provides the best solution.

113 We note that the Council's proposals mean that Codicote would continue to be represented by three councillors. We also support the Council's relatively compact Langley, Preston & Walden and Offley & Pirton wards noting that they have good internal road links and secure good electoral equality.

114 Finally, we note the comments from Knebworth Parish Council. While it is the case that the east area of Codicote parish could be removed from the ward and leave a Knebworth ward with good electoral equality, transferring this to Codicote & Kimpton would leave this ward with 15% more electors than the district average by 2028. This is not a level of electoral inequality that we have been persuaded to adopt. Retaining this area in a ward with Knebworth leaves that ward with 9% more electors than the district average by 2028. We consider this level of electoral equality to be acceptable.

115 Our draft recommendations are for a single-councillor Langley, Preston & Walden ward which would have 9% more electors than the district average by 2028. We also propose two-councillor Codicote & Kimpton, Knebworth and Offley & Pirton wards which would have equal to the average, 9% more and 4% more electors than the district average by 2028.

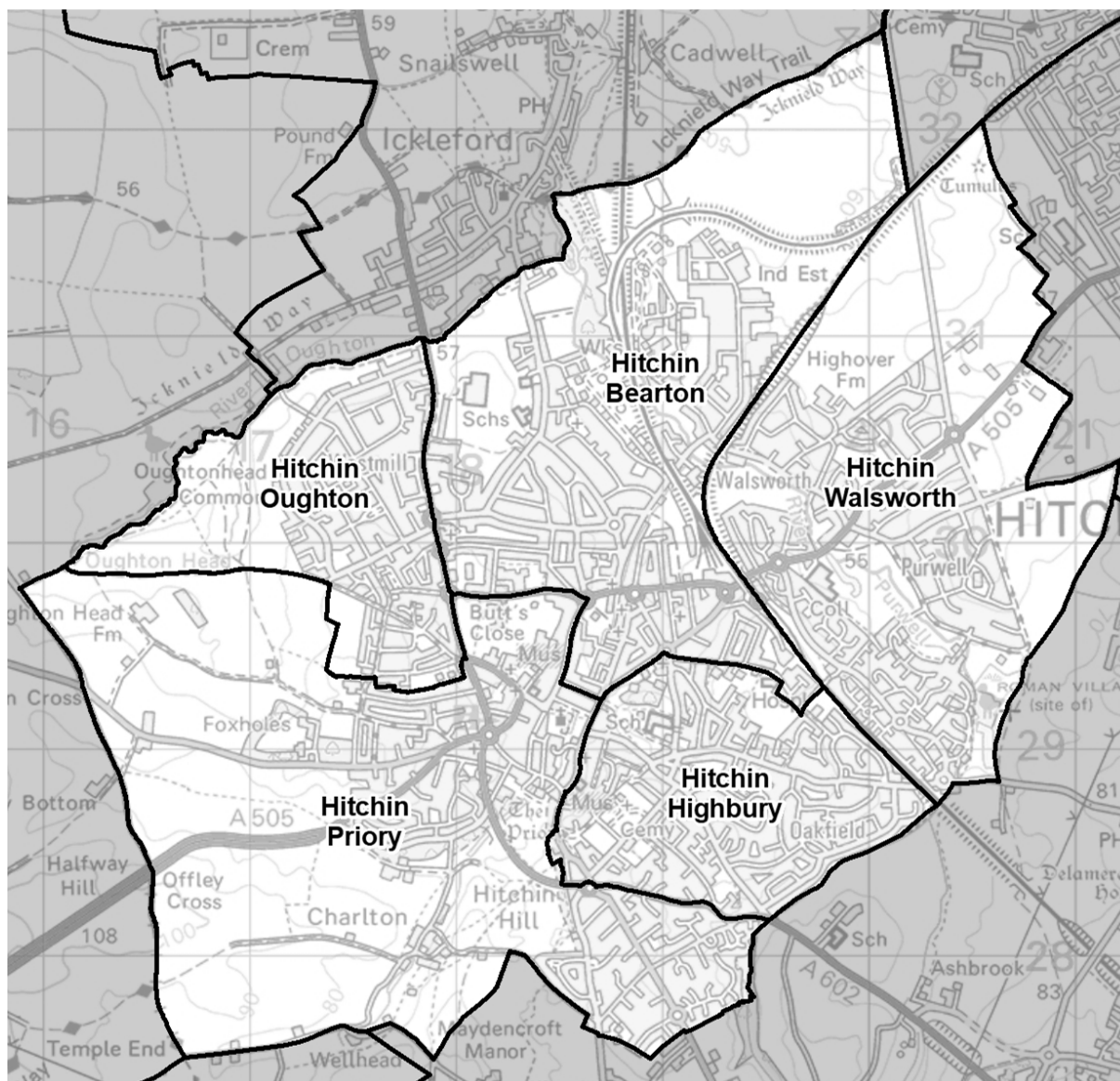
Cadwell

116 The Council and Conservatives both proposed the retention of the existing single-councillor Cadwell ward arguing that it secures good electoral equality and that the constituent parishes face Hitchin and have good road links. A local resident also supported the retention of this ward.

117 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident expressed general support for the Council's proposals in this area.

118 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received noting the agreement over retaining the existing ward. We are therefore retaining this as part of our draft recommendations. Our single-councillor Cadwell ward would have 8% more electors than the district average by 2028.

Hitchin



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Hitchin Bearton	3	0%
Hitchin Highbury	2	8%
Hitchin Oughton	2	-5%
Hitchin Priory	2	6%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	6%

Hitchin Bearton, Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton, Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Walsworth

119 The Council proposed two-councillor Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Priory wards which would have 9% more, 5% fewer and 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. It also proposed three-councillor

Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Walsworth wards which would have 5% fewer and 6% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

120 The Council stated that its Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Walsworth wards are unchanged from the existing wards as they reflect established communities. Its Hitchin Oughton ward is expanded southward to take in the Gaping Lane area, reflecting views of local councillors. Finally, its Hitchin Priory ward ensures the Priory is now in the ward of that name.

121 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP, Councillor Dennis-Harburg and a resident expressed general support for the Council's proposals in this area. They expressed particular support for the Council's proposal to keep Hitchin Highbury and Hitchin Priory separate and as two-councillor wards.

122 North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party expressed support for retaining a two-councillor ward for Hitchin Oughton and objecting to joining it to a neighbouring community. It also supported the retention of the existing Hitchin Walsworth ward.

123 The Conservatives proposed single-councillor Hitchin Benslow and Hitchin Priory wards which would have 5% and 8% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. They also proposed two-councillor Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Whitehill wards which would have 7% more and 2% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. Finally, they proposed three-councillor Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Walsworth wards which would have 10% more and 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

124 The Conservatives stated that their Hitchin Walsworth ward 'improves on the current Hitchin Walsworth ward' by including the residents who live by the Wilbury industrial estate. They argued that this area has better links along Woolgrove Road into Hitchin Walsworth ward than it does via Grove Road into Hitchin Bearton ward, adding that this reflects a more continuous residential community than that separated by the East Coast Main Line and River Purwell.

125 To accommodate the inclusion of this area and secure good electoral equality, they transferred the area around Wedgewood Road to a Hitchin Benslow ward. They acknowledged that this crosses the railway line but that this area is in Hitchin South division, 'reflecting the shared community it has across the railway line'. They added that the area is linked across the railway line by Benslow Path reflecting a 'common community identity'. They stated that their Hitchin Benslow ward was focused around Pinehill Park and includes Benslow Nursing Home and Benslow Music Trust.

126 They proposed the inclusion of the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in their Hitchin Whitehill ward, arguing that it is an urban area and should not be split from Hitchin and placed in a more rural ward despite falling within that parish. Finally,

as stated above, they removed part of the existing Hitchin Bearton ward and transferred it to their Hitchin Walsworth ward. They stated that their Hitchin Bearton ward uses clear boundaries and has a 'consistent community identity'.

127 The Conservatives stated that their Hitchin Priory ward puts 'Hitchin's historic centre in a single ward', including town centre housing and businesses, as well as the 'heart of the medieval town', including Bancroft, Butts Close and Hitchin Priory. It also includes Bancroft recreation ground and Whinbush Road, keeping a local community in single ward. Hitchin Cemetery forms the boundary between the town centre and Hitchin Highbury. They stated that this area is best represented by a single councillor focused on the specific needs of town centre residents and businesses.

128 Finally, the Conservatives stated that their Hitchin Oughton ward reflects communities to the west of Bedford Road which they consider forms a strong boundary and that This area has shared concerns over the development of 'Worboy's field'.

129 Councillor Hoskins stated that wards should be coterminous with divisions 'as far as possible' and also reflect school catchment areas. He also suggested that the area of the existing Hitchin Walsworth ward that is placed in Hitchin South division (around Wedgewood Road) could be retained in Hitchin Walsworth ward. He stated that 'Bearton and Oughton could be more closely aligned as they are focussed on Priory School', but did not expand further. Finally, he suggested that Hitchin Priory ward could be extended north to Maxell's Path so that the whole of Oughton Head Lane is in a single ward.

130 A resident expressed support for the existing Hitchin Highbury ward and objected to any plan to merge Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Oughton wards. Another local resident expressed support for the Council's proposals, objecting to the notion of single-councillor wards in an urban area.

131 A resident highlighted that Gosmore Gate is divided by the existing boundary and should be placed in a rural ward. We recognise these concerns but note that there is a county division boundary running through this area. To move this would require the creation of a parish ward with a handful of electors in it. We do not consider this would provide for effective and convenient local government.

132 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the different proposals put forward by the Council and Conservatives. As discussed in the South-west parishes section, we have been persuaded by the evidence from the Conservatives to place the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish into a Hitchin ward. While we acknowledge the comments from St Ippolyts parish, we consider that

this area is of a more urban nature and would be best served in an urban district ward.

133 This has a knock-on effect to our consideration of the options in Hitchin. We note that the Conservatives' proposals incorporate this area in their Hitchin Whitehill ward and while they provided good evidence for their proposals across Hitchin we have a number of concerns.

134 We note the argument about including the residential area near the Wilbury Industrial estate in their Hitchin Walsworth ward. We acknowledge these links, but note that this proposal is dependent on transferring the Wedgewood Road area to their Hitchin Benslow ward. While they provided some evidence of links between the Wedgewood Road area via the pedestrian Benslow Path, we consider this area is cut off from the majority of their Hitchin Benslow ward by the railway and has no direct road access.

135 We note the argument that this reflects the division boundary, however, as discussed previously, when reviewing district wards we do not have to regard for existing division boundaries. In this instance we consider the railway line to be a stronger boundary and do not consider it should be breached. We have weighed this against the proposal to transfer the residential area near the Wilbury Industrial estate. While this may have better access into Hitchin Walsworth it also has good access into Hitchin Bearton. Therefore, on balance, we are not persuaded to adopt the Conservatives' Hitchin Walsworth ward as part of our draft recommendations.

136 In doing so, this has a knock-on effect to our consideration of their proposals in the rest of Hitchin as their Hitchin Benslow ward was dependent on the inclusion of the Wedgewood Road area. Not including this area leaves that ward with 16% fewer electors than the district average by 2028. In addition, with the residential area near the Wilbury Industrial estate retained in their Hitchin Bearton ward, this would result in a 23% electoral variance by 2028. Addressing these variances would require very significant amendments to the Conservative proposals.

137 We have therefore examined the Council's proposals in more detail, looking to incorporate the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish. We consider it possible to adopt the Council's Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Walsworth wards without amendment, while incorporating the North parish ward in Hitchin Priory ward with a few amendments to the proposed Hitchin Highbury and Hitchin Bearton wards.

138 We therefore propose including the North parish ward in the Council's Hitchin Priory ward, noting that it links directly into the neighbouring area via London Road. However, this worsens electoral equality in Hitchin Priory to 12% more electors than the district average by 2028. We therefore propose retaining the area north of Stevenage Road in Hitchin Highbury ward, rather than in Hitchin Priory ward. As a

result, the electoral variance in Hitchin Priory ward would improve to 6% more electors than the district average by 2028. This amendment worsens electoral equality in their Hitchin Highbury ward to 15%, so we are transferring the area to the north of Benslow Lane into Hitchin Bearton ward. This means that Hitchin Bearton ward improves from having 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2028 to being equal to the average, while Hitchin Highbury would have 8% more electors.

139 We acknowledge that these proposals do not reflect the evidence received in support of the Conservatives' proposed Benslow ward. In addition, because of the knock-on effects described above, we are unable to adopt their Hitchin Priory ward. However, our proposed Hitchin Priory ward does contain many of the areas they proposed placing in their ward. There may be scope for bringing more of the Bancroft area into this ward, but we would welcome local views during the current consultation. However, on balance, we consider that our proposals provide the best balance of the statutory criteria.

140 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Priory wards, which would have 8% more, 5% fewer and 6% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively. We also propose three-councillor Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Walsworth wards that would have equal to the average and 6% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

Conclusions

141 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in North Hertfordshire, referencing the 2022 and 2028 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2022	2028
Number of councillors	51	51
Number of electoral wards	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,938	2,210
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	9	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	4	0

Draft recommendations

North Hertfordshire District Council should be made up of 51 councillors serving 24 wards representing four single-councillor wards, 13 two-councillor wards and seven three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for North Hertfordshire District Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for North Hertfordshire District Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

142 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

143 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, North Hertfordshire District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

144 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Royston Town Council.

145 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Royston Town Council.

Draft recommendations

Royston Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Royston Garden Lane	1
Royston Meridian	5
Royston Palace	4
Royston South	1
Royston West	3
Royston Willowside	1

Have your say

146 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole district or just a part of it.

147 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for North Hertfordshire, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

148 Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps. You can find it at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

149 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by writing to:

Review Officer (North Hertfordshire)
LGBCE
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

150 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for North Hertfordshire District Council which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

151 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

152 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in the area?

153 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents the area?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

154 Effective local government:

- Are any of the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?
- Are there good links across your proposed wards? Is there any form of public transport?

155 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

156 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

157 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

158 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for North Hertfordshire District Council in 2024.

Equalities

159 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for North Hertfordshire District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashwell & Weston	3	3,844	1,281	-34%	6,797	2,266	3%
2	Baldock East	1	1,971	1,971	2%	2,057	2,057	-7%
3	Baldock West	3	5,987	1,996	3%	6,101	2,034	-8%
4	Cadwell	1	1,845	1,845	-5%	2,390	2,390	8%
5	Codicote & Kimpton	2	3,869	1,935	0%	4,422	2,211	0%
6	Ermine	1	2,120	2,120	9%	2,441	2,441	10%
7	Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley	2	2,078	1,039	-46%	3,989	1,995	-10%
8	Great Ashby	2	3,932	1,966	1%	3,932	1,966	-11%
9	Hitchin Bearton	3	6,581	2,194	13%	6,661	2,220	0%
10	Hitchin Highbury	2	4,735	2,367	22%	4,779	2,389	8%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11 Hitchin Oughton	2	4,102	2,051	6%	4,186	2,093	-5%
12 Hitchin Priory	2	4,461	2,230	15%	4,691	2,346	6%
13 Hitchin Walsworth	3	6,171	2,057	6%	7,027	2,342	6%
14 Knebworth	2	4,132	2,066	7%	4,835	2,418	9%
15 Langley, Preston & Walden	1	2,269	2,269	17%	2,418	2,418	9%
16 Letchworth Grange	2	4,124	2,062	6%	4,595	2,297	4%
17 Letchworth Norton	2	3,853	1,927	-1%	4,359	2,180	-1%
18 Letchworth South East	3	6,392	2,131	10%	6,812	2,271	3%
19 Letchworth South West	3	6,620	2,207	14%	6,793	2,264	2%
20 Letchworth Wilbury	2	4,093	2,047	6%	4,102	2,051	-7%
21 Offley & Pirton	2	2,764	1,382	-29%	4,577	2,289	4%
22 Royston Heath	2	3,610	1,805	-7%	4,128	2,064	-7%

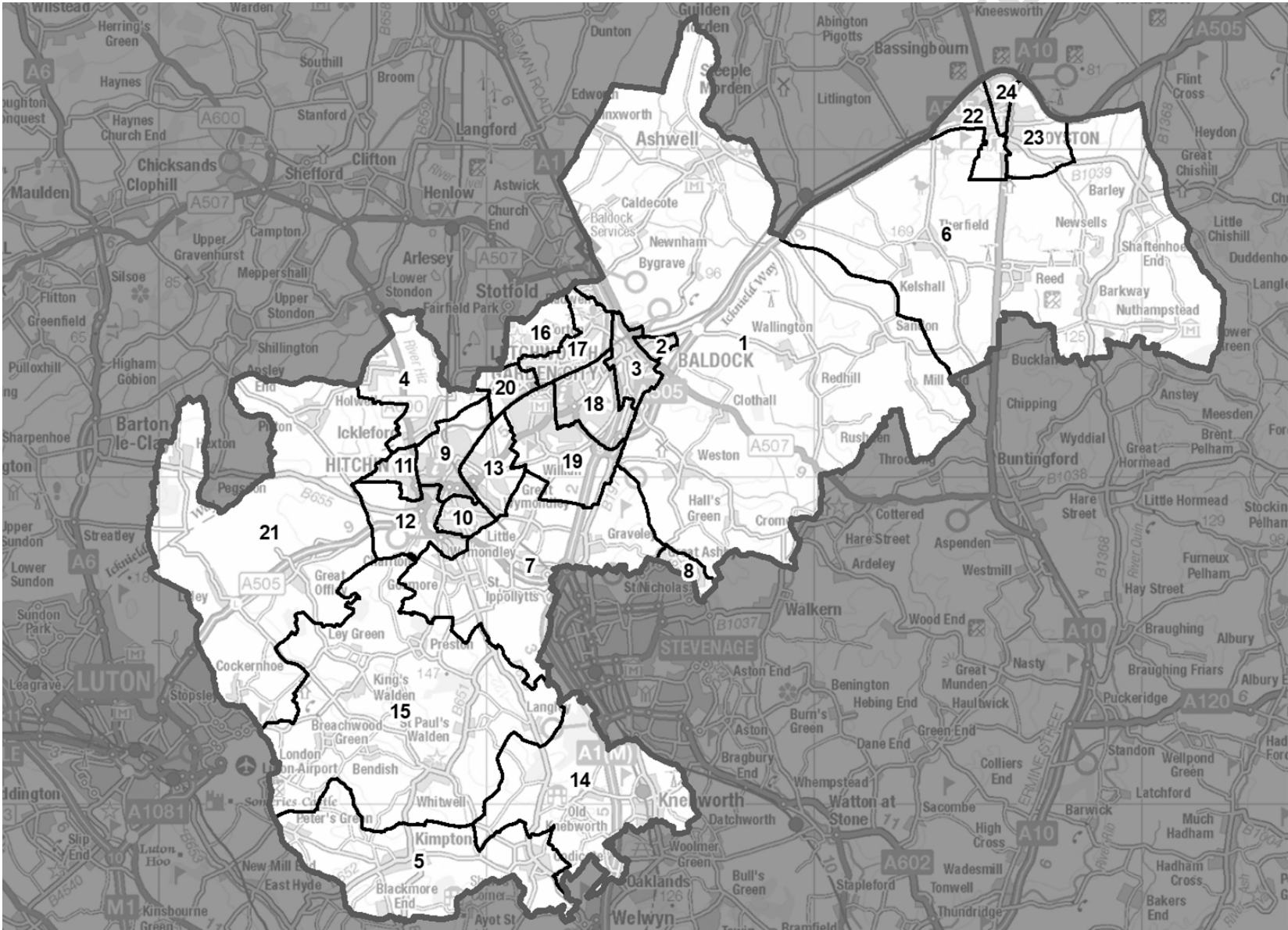
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Royston Meridian	3	5,134	1,711	-12%	6,304	2,101	-5%
24 Royston Palace	2	4,137	2,068	7%	4,332	2,166	-2%
Totals	51	98,824	–	–	112,728	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,938	–	–	2,210	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Hertfordshire District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name
1	Ashwell & Weston
2	Baldock East
3	Baldock West
4	Cadwell
5	Codicote & Kimpton
6	Ermine
7	Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley
8	Great Ashby
9	Hitchin Bearton
10	Hitchin Highbury
11	Hitchin Oughton
12	Hitchin Priory
13	Hitchin Walsworth
14	Knebworth
15	Langley, Preston & Walden
16	Letchworth Grange
17	Letchworth Norton
18	Letchworth South East
19	Letchworth South West
20	Letchworth Wilbury
21	Offley & Pirton
22	Royston Heath
23	Royston Meridian
24	Royston Palace

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/north-hertfordshire

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/north-hertfordshire

Local Authority

- North Hertfordshire District Council

Political Groups

- Hitchin & Harpenden Constituency Labour Party
- North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party
- North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party Branch
- North Hertfordshire Conservatives
- North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Green Party

Councillors

- Councillor E. Dennis-Harburg (North Hertfordshire District Council)
- Councillor K. Hoskins (North Hertfordshire District Council)
- Councillor R. Muncer (North Hertfordshire District Council)

Parish and Town Councils

- Codicote Parish Council
- Kimpton Parish Council
- Knebworth Parish Council
- St Ippolyts Parish Council
- Wymondley Parish Council

Local Residents

- 40 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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