

New electoral arrangements for Harlow Council Final Recommendations

April 2023

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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 Commission² are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- 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.

² Peter Maddison QPM was present during Board meetings where draft/final recommendations were discussed and agreed. He ceased his role as a Commissioner on 31 December 2022.

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 Harlow?

7 We are conducting a review of Harlow District Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2000 and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.³ 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 Harlow 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 Harlow

9 Harlow should be represented by 33 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Harlow should have 11 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Harlow.

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 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.

14 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

³ Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

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

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
25 April 2022	Number of councillors decided
10 May 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
28 July 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
4 October 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
12 December 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
4 April 2023	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation⁴ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁵ 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.

18 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.

19 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 Harlow	63,895	74,056
Number of councillors	33	33
Average number of electors per councillor	1,936	2,244

20 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 of our proposed wards for Harlow will have good electoral equality by 2028.

Submissions received

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

Electorate figures

22 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 16% by 2028. This increase is being driven by significant housing development in the Newhall and Harlow town centre areas.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

⁴ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁵ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Number of councillors

24 Harlow District Council currently has 33 councillors. The Council proposed an increase of three councillors to 36 councillors. We carefully considered the evidence provided by the Council and concluded that keeping the existing council size of 33 will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 33 councillors. As the Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years), there is a presumption in legislation⁶ that it have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

26 We received no submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore maintained 33 councillors for our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

27 We received 66 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included district-wide proposals from the Council and Harlow District Council Labour Group ('the Labour Group'). We also received a submission from Harlow & Epping Forest Labour Party in support of the Labour Group submission. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

28 The two district-wide schemes provided a uniform pattern of 11 three-councillor wards for Harlow. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in some areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

29 We did, however, notice both district-wide schemes provided noticeably poor electoral equality in the Newhall/Old Harlow and town centre areas where the most significant housing development was taking place. In these areas we sought to provide wards that provide for electoral equality whilst reflecting the community evidence in submissions we have received.

30 Our draft recommendations were based on the submission made by Harlow District Council. We also took into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In

⁶ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

31 We visited the area in order to look at the various different proposals on the ground. This tour of Harlow helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

32 Our draft recommendations were for 11 three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

33 We received 26 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included a response from Harlow District Council as well as two submissions coming from local councillors and 23 from local residents. These submissions all provided localised comments for wards arrangements in particular areas of the district.

34 The submission from the Council made comments on the boundaries and name of Little Parndon ward and the name of Latton Bush & Commonside ward.

35 The submissions from Councillor Saggars of Harlow District Council and Councillor Garnett of Essex County Council were in full support of the draft recommendations.

Final recommendations

36 Our final recommendations are for 11 three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

37 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with two minor changes based on the submission received from Harlow District Council. We propose to adopt the Council's suggested ward boundary to Little Parndon ward to ensure all of Harlow town centre is in the same ward. We also propose to adopt the two name changes made by the Council. We do not propose to make any other changes to the draft recommendations as we do not consider we have received sufficient evidence to propose any other amendments to our draft recommendations.

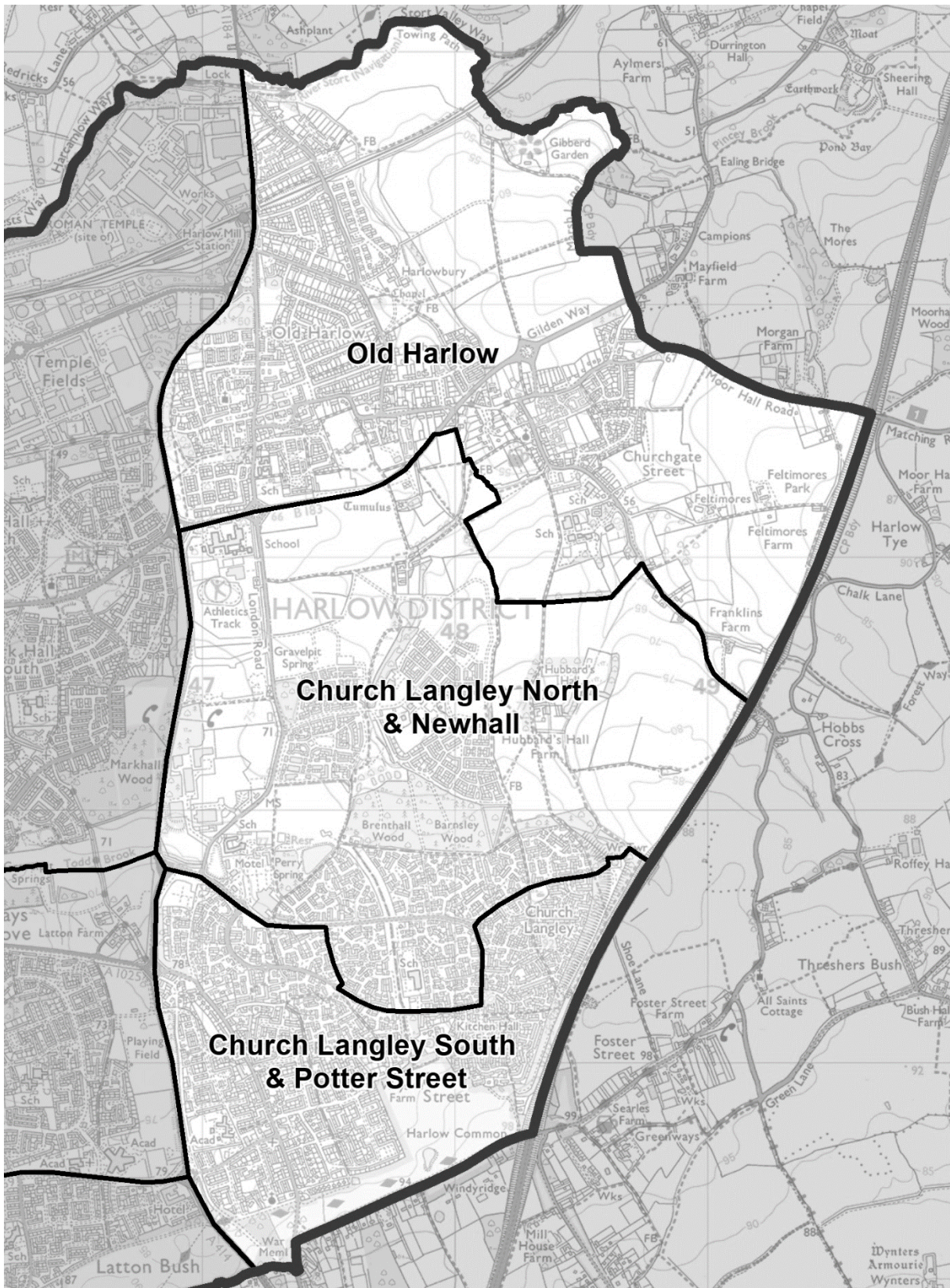
38 The tables and maps on pages 9–16 detail our final recommendations for each area of Harlow. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁷ criteria of:

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

39 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 23 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁷ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Harlow: East of the A414



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Church Langley North & Newhall	3	7%
Church Langley South & Potter Street	3	6%
Old Harlow	3	0%

Church Langley North & Newhall and Church Langley South & Potter Street

40 We received nine submissions that made direct reference to the wards in this area. As mentioned earlier, three submissions (Councillors Garnett and Siggers and a local resident) were in full support of the draft recommendations. One local resident also wrote in support of the division of Church Langley between wards. Two local residents wrote in support of the inclusion of Potter Street in a ward with parts of Church Langley. Six local residents wrote in opposition to the division of Church Langley between wards.

41 The two submissions from residents of the Potter Street area stated that they had much closer links with Church Langley than with Latton Bush (with whom the area is currently paired in an existing Harlow District Council ward) and that the proposed Church Langley South & Potter Street ward greatly strengthens these links. The local resident who wrote in favour of the division of Church Langley stated that this would facilitate the integration of new electors in the Newhall neighbourhood with their close neighbours in Church Langley. This resident also supported the use of the A414 as a boundary.

42 The six submissions that objected to the division of Church Langley argued that an increase in the number of councillors covering the area (due to it being contained within two wards rather than one) would make the area harder to represent. None of the submissions proposed alternative warding patterns for the Church Langley area.

43 We considered all the submissions we received for these wards and as we noted in our report on the draft recommendations for Harlow, we do not take the division of a community lightly, preferring wards that unite two potentially disparate communities to those that divide them.

44 We had therefore previously considered a number of potential options in this area in order to avoid a division of the Church Langley community, including the creation of an entirely new three-councillor ward that would cover the Newhall community and increase the number of councillors from 33 to 36. However, we were unable to identify a warding pattern that could maintain the existing Church Langley ward and provide for acceptable electoral equality for the remainder of the area. All the options investigated would create wards with electoral variances over 20% from

the average. We are not persuaded that the evidence provided justifies this level of electoral inequality.

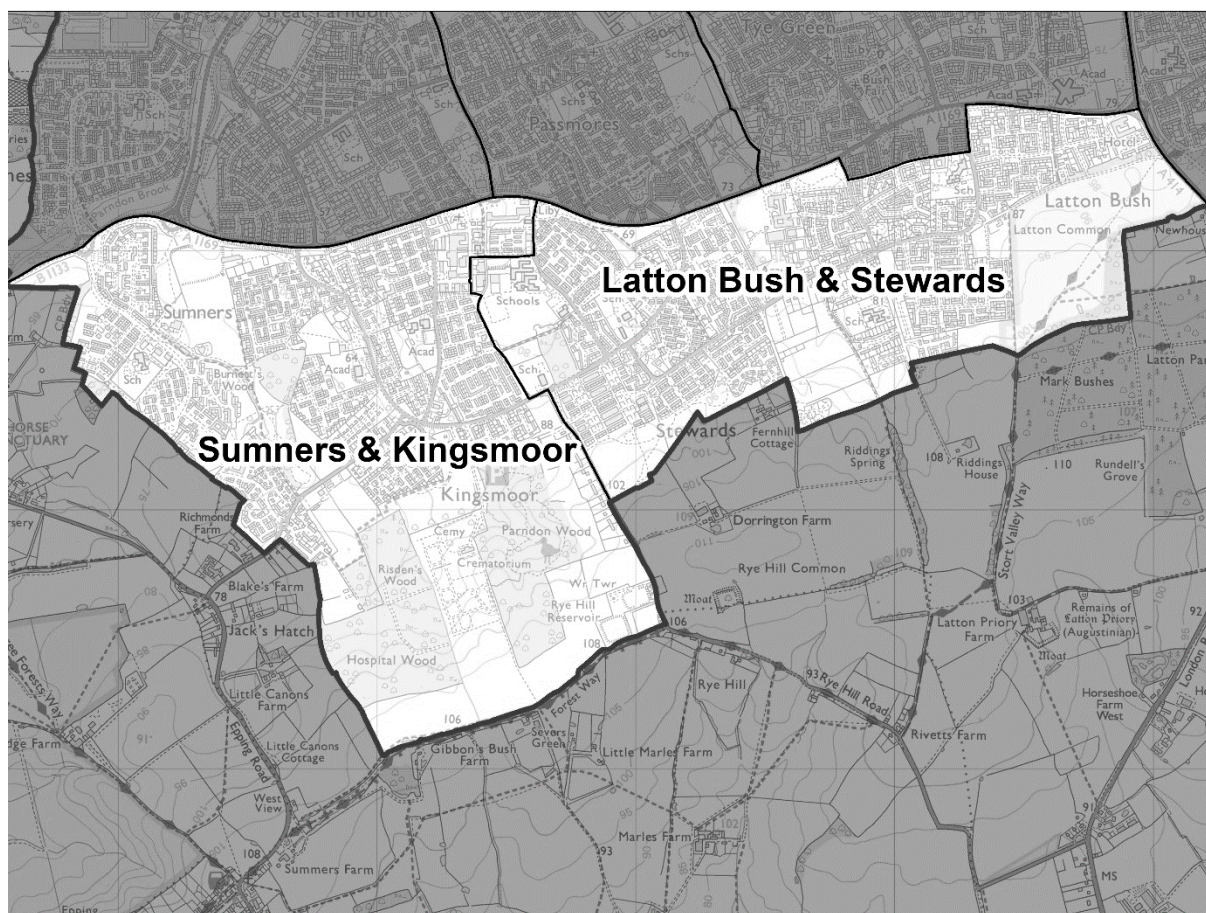
45 We do not consider that we have received any further evidence to support moving away from our draft recommendations for two three-councillor wards of Church Langley North & Newhall and Church Langley South & Potter Street. These wards are forecast electoral variances of 7% and 6%, respectively, by 2028.

Old Harlow

46 We received five submissions regarding our proposed Old Harlow ward, all of which were in support of our draft recommendations, and specifically the proposal to retain the Churchgate Street settlement in the same ward as Old Harlow.

47 We therefore confirm our Old Harlow ward as final. It will have an electoral variance of 0% by 2028.

Harlow: South of the A1169



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Latton Bush & Stewards	3	8%
Sumners & Kingsmoor	3	1%

Latton Bush & Stewards and Sumners & Kingsmoor

48 In addition to the three submissions in support of the entirety of the draft recommendations, we received two submissions that commented specifically on this area. A submission from a local resident was in support of the proposed Latton Bush & Commonsides ward. The resident argued that the ward 'better reflected established communities.' The submission from Harlow District Council noted that the proposed ward included the entirety of the Stewards neighbourhood and should therefore be renamed Latton Bush & Stewards. The Council stated that Stewards is widely accepted to be the name of the western end of the proposed ward and is more relatable to the electorate than Commonsides.

49 We have been persuaded to adopt the name change suggested by Harlow District Council and therefore confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to that name change. Our Latton Bush & Stewards and Sumners & Kingsmoor wards will have electoral variances of 8% and 1% by 2028, respectively.

Harlow: Town centre and western Harlow



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Great Parndon	3	-9%
Little Parndon & Town Centre	3	4%
Passmores	3	-10%

Great Parndon, Little Parndon & Town Centre and Passmores

50 As mentioned previously, three submissions supported all of the draft recommendations for Harlow. As well as those submissions, we received two representations that made direct reference to the wards in this area.

51 The submission from a local resident expressed support of the proposal for Great Parndon, noting that the ward addressed the ward's previous overrepresentation. The submission from Harlow District Council proposed a small amendment to the boundaries of Little Parndon ward to ensure the entirety of Harlow town centre be included in the ward. The revised boundary would include Harlow College and Harlow Leisurezone in a renamed Little Parndon & Town Centre ward.

52 We have been persuaded to adopt the Council's suggested boundary amendment as well as the proposed new name of Little Parndon & Town Centre. We

agree that the ward should include all of the town centre and the name should acknowledge its inclusion in this ward.

53 Subject to these two changes, we confirm our draft recommendations as final for this area. Our final recommendations will consist of three three-councillor wards of Great Parndon, Little Parndon & Town Centre and Passmores. These three wards will have electoral equality of -9%, 4% and -10%, respectively, by 2028.

Harlow: East of town centre and west of the A414



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bush Fair	3	4%
Mark Hall	3	-8%
Netteswell	3	-4%

Bush Fair, Mark Hall and Netteswell

54 The three submissions received that covered all the wards in Harlow were in support of the draft recommendations for these three wards. As well as these submissions we received one other submission that mentioned these wards.

55 This submission supported our proposed Bush Fair ward which they considered brought together the full extent of the Westfield and Stony Wood communities within a single ward.

56 The only proposed amendment we make in this area is as a result of the revised Little Parndon & Town Centre ward suggested by the Council and discussed above. This proposal makes a slight amendment to the boundaries of Netteswell ward but affects no electors.

57 Subject to this small change, we confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final. Our three three-councillor wards of Bush Fair, Mark Hall and Netteswell will have electoral variances of 4%, -8% and -4%, respectively, by 2028.

Conclusions

58 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Harlow, 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

	Final recommendations	
	2022	2028
Number of councillors	33	33
Number of electoral wards	11	11
Average number of electors per councillor	1,936	2,244
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	3	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendations

Harlow District Council should be made up of 33 councillors serving 11 wards representing 11 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 Harlow.

You can also view our final recommendations for Harlow District Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

What happens next?

59 We have now completed our review of Harlow District Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2024.

Equalities

60 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

Final recommendations for Harlow

	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	Bush Fair	3	6,378	2,126	10%	7,000	2,333	4%
2	Church Langley North & Newhall	3	4,944	1,648	-15%	7,174	2,391	7%
3	Church Langley South & Potter Street	3	6,676	2,225	15%	7,169	2,390	6%
4	Great Parndon	3	5,619	1,873	-3%	6,130	2,043	-9%
5	Latton Bush & Stewards	3	6,627	2,209	14%	7,281	2,427	8%
6	Little Parndon & Town Centre	3	5,258	1,753	-9%	7,015	2,338	4%
7	Mark Hall	3	5,647	1,882	-3%	6,225	2,075	-8%
8	Netteswell	3	5,418	1,806	-7%	6,453	2,151	-4%
9	Old Harlow	3	5,854	1,951	1%	6,763	2,254	0%
10	Passmores	3	5,261	1,754	-9%	6,037	2,012	-10%

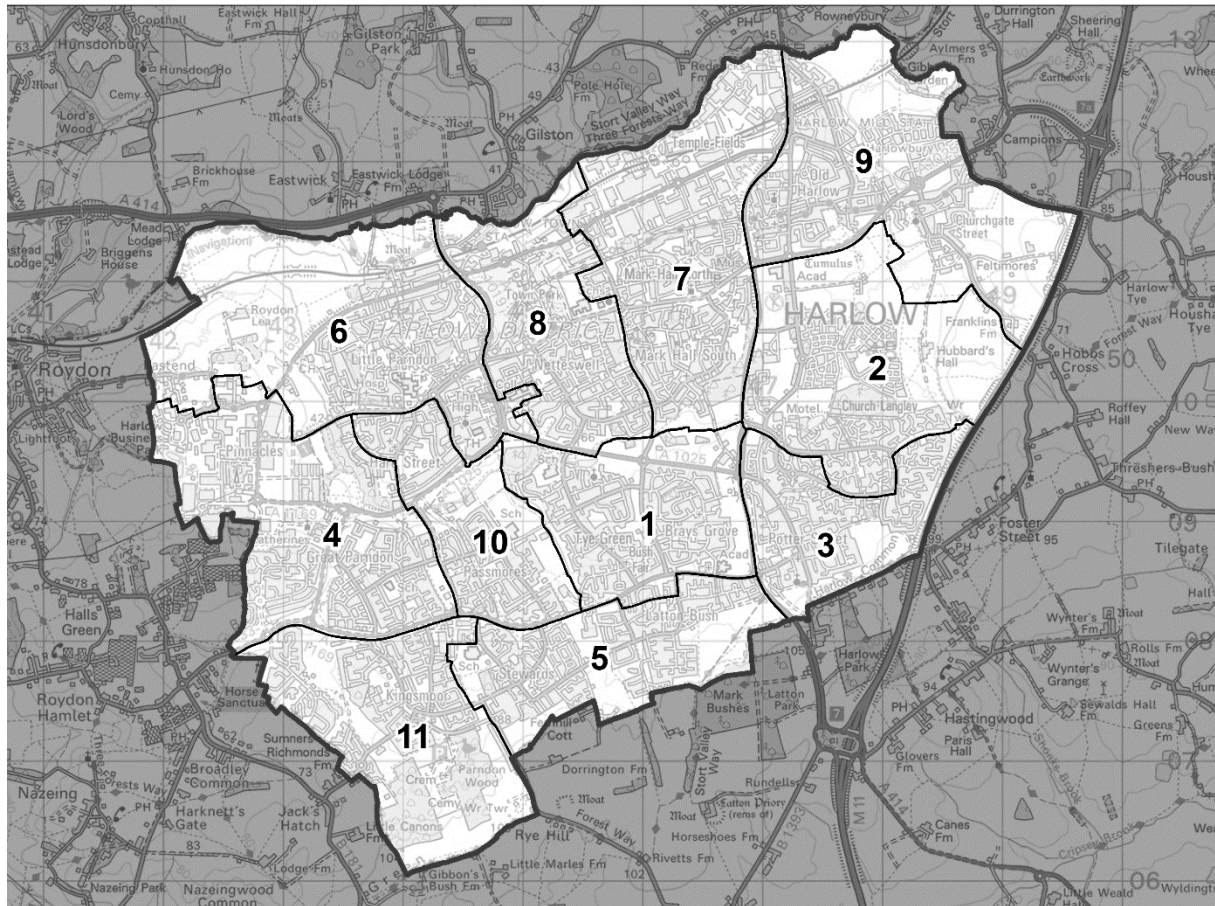
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Sumners & Kingsmoor	3	6,213	2,071	7%	6,809	2,270	1%
	Totals	33	63,895	–	–	74,056	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,936	–	–	2,244	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Harlow 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	Bush Fair
2	Church Langley North & Newhall
3	Church Langley South & Potter Street
4	Great Parndon
5	Latton Bush & Stewards
6	Little Parndon & Town Centre
7	Mark Hall
8	Netteswell
9	Old Harlow
10	Passmores
11	Sumners & Kingsmoor

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/essex/harlow

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/essex/harlow

Local Authority

- Harlow District Council

Councillors

- Councillor M. Garnett (Essex County Council)
- Councillor M. Sagers (Harlow District Council)

Local Residents

- 23 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 (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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