

New electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire District Council Final Recommendations

May 2023

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Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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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 North Hertfordshire?

7 We are conducting a review of North Hertfordshire District Council ('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'.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 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 25 wards, one more than there is now.

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

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire.

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 take into account 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 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 final recommendations.

16 The review was 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 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 North Hertfordshire	98,824	112,728
Number of councillors	51	51
Average number of electors per councillor	1,938	2,210

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 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

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 14% by 2028.

23 During the warding patterns consultation a resident argued that the review should be deferred until after the Local Plan is completed. Kimpton Parish Council

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.

questioned the level of growth attributed to Kimpton parish. We noted these comments, but asked the Council to provide its best estimates on where it considers development will occur in the next five years. We noted that in a number of instances the Council 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.

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

25 We have not received any significant further comments on the electorate figures and remain satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

26 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 should have a council size divisible by three.

27 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.

28 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.

29 In response to this consultation, the district-wide submissions all put forward proposals based on 51 councillors, arguing that this provided a better allocation of councillors across the district. While a number of residents objected to an increase, there were no other significant comments.

30 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received, noting 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 examined this in more detail, noting that 50 and the existing 49 do not provide such a good allocation of councillors. Therefore, we were persuaded that the draft recommendations should be based on 51 councillors.

31 In response to the draft recommendations, we did not receive any significant new comments on council size and are therefore basing the final recommendations on a council size of 51.

Ward boundaries consultation

32 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 Constituency Labour Party ('Hitchin & Harpenden 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 Branch ('North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party'), the Green Party and North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party ('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.

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

34 We noted that a number of the district-wide proposals supported the creation of parish wards with no or only a handful of electors. We acknowledged that these were proposed to reflect areas of development in rural parishes that would access towns or sit better within urban wards. However, we were concerned that the small number of electors under the existing figures in these parish wards would not make them viable. We therefore decided that these proposals would not provide for effective and convenient local government and looked to modify the proposals that have used unviable parish wards.

35 We noted that some respondents expressed views on the number of councillors that wards should have, depending on their setting, for example rural vs urban. We noted 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.

36 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.

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

38 We also noted 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.

39 The district-wide schemes provided mixed patterns of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for North Hertfordshire. Our draft recommendations took 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 consultation

40 We received 81 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included district-wide comments from the Council, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour Party Branch ('Letchworth & Baldock Labour Party'), Oliver Heald MP, Councillor Strong (Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo ward), County Councillor Hill (Royston East & Ermine division) and a number of local residents. The remaining submission put forward comments on specific areas. A significant number of respondents objected to the draft recommendation for a three-councillor Ashwell & Weston ward, arguing that community identity evidence should outweigh concerns about the creation of parish wards.

41 A resident questioned the electoral cycle. However, this is a matter for the Council.

Final recommendations

42 Our final recommendations are for six three-councillor wards, 14 two-councillor wards and five one-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.

43 Our final recommendations are based primarily on the draft recommendations, subject to some minor modifications.

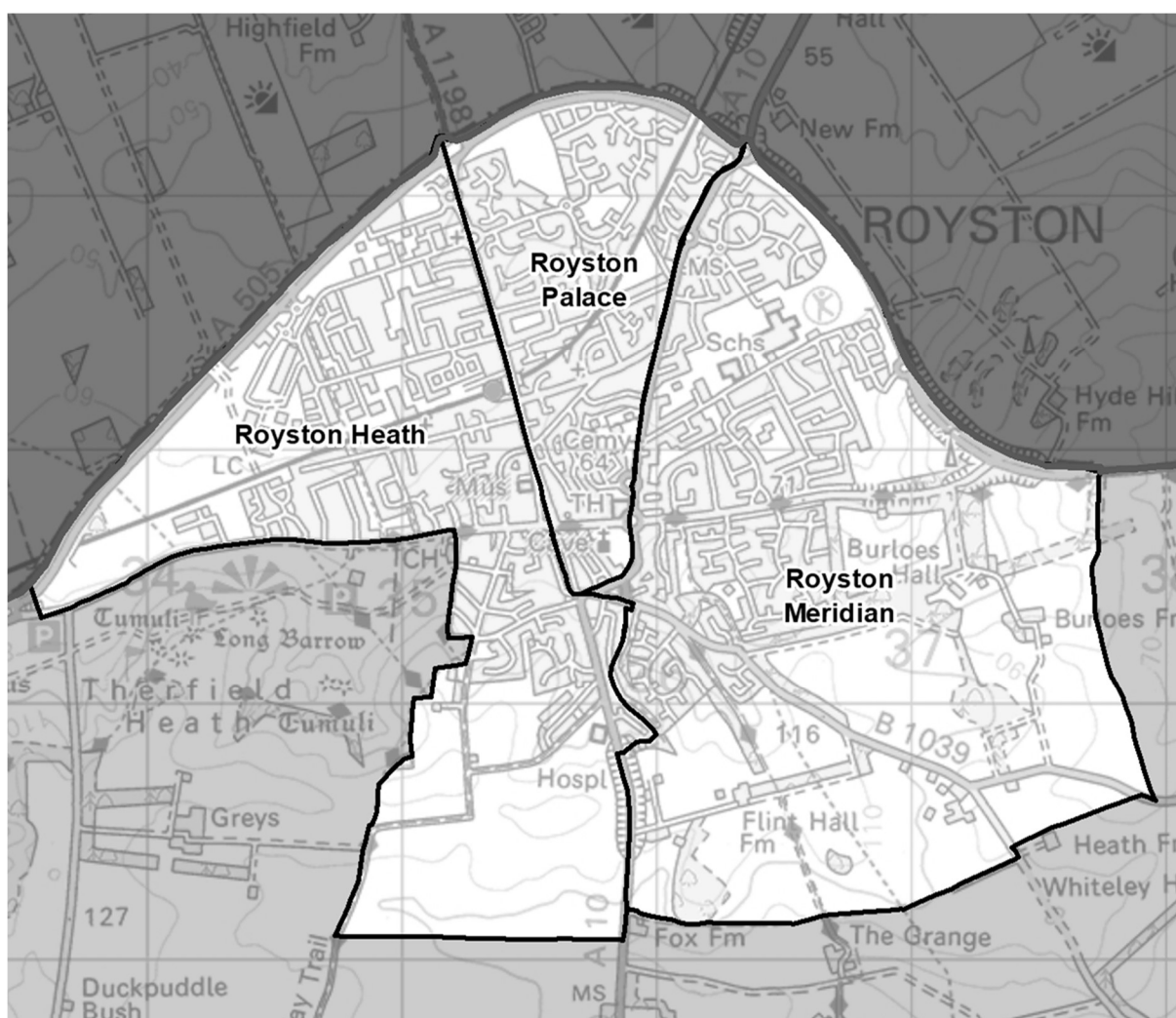
44 The tables and maps on pages 10–25 detail our final recommendations for each area of North Hertfordshire. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁶ criteria of:

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

45 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 33 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁶ 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 In response to the draft recommendations, the Council, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour Party, North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, Royston Town Council and a resident expressed general support for the draft recommendations for Royston.

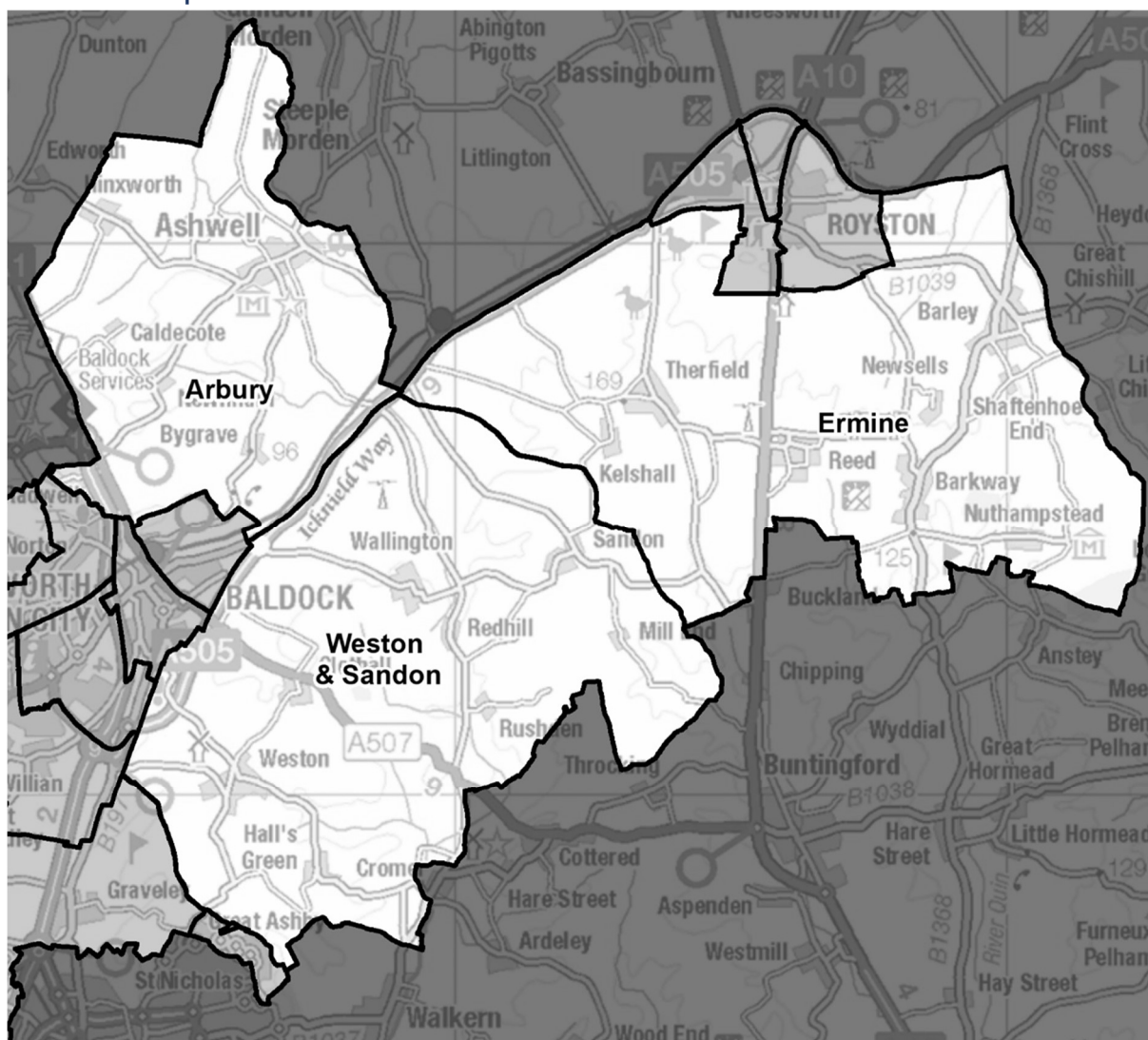
47 However, the Town Council also expressed concern about the proposed parish wards, particularly those with a single councillor. A resident also questioned why Royston Palace ward is not divided, with part merged with Royston Meridian and part with Royston Heath.

48 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received noting the general support for the draft recommendations. We also note the comment from a resident about dividing Royston Palace ward. However, the respondent did not provide any evidence to support their comment. In addition, their suggestion would require the creation of one ward with four councillors, which is not something we would propose. We are therefore confirming the draft recommendations for these wards as final.

49 We note the concerns of Royston Town Council about the creation of small parish wards. However, these are required to reflect the division pattern in this area. We would recommend that any other changes are picked up as part of a community governance review, that the District Council could carry out.

50 Our final 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
Arbury	1	2%
Ermine	1	10%
Weston & Sandon	1	8%

Arbury and Weston & Sandon

51 We received significant objections to our three-councillor Ashwell & Weston ward. The Council, Oliver Heald MP, County Councillor Hill, Councillor Tyson, Councillor Derbyshire, North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, North East Hertfordshire Management Committee, Ashwell Parish Council, Bygrave Parish Council, Weston Parish Council and over 30 residents all objected to the proposals.

52 Respondents put forward a range of objections. They objected to our argument that we had moved away from the Council's original proposal to avoid the creation of parish wards in Bygrave and Clothall parishes. They reiterated that the parts of these

parishes that they proposed including in Baldock wards would be urban in nature and would not sit comfortably in a rural wards, looking instead to Baldock for services. They stated that our draft proposals would lead to a failure in representation for the urban residents in these new areas, as well as for the residents in the rural parishes since they have different representational needs, adding that the urban needs may dominate. They argued that the Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall Neighbourhood Plan reflected the fact these areas would be closely associated with Baldock. Respondents argued that Ashwell is a village of over 2,000 residents and acts as a focus for the surrounding villages. Their needs are different from other rural areas, 'let alone' the urban areas of North Hertfordshire.

53 Respondents rejected the argument that the proposed parish ward of Bygrave parish would be unviable since it contains '16%' of the population, while they considered the argument against an unviable parish ward in Clothall invalid because the area does not have a parish council, but rather a parish meeting. They also argued that the 'good governance' of parishes should not come at the expense of good governance at district level.

54 In addition, respondents objected to the size of the proposed ward, both geographically and because of the number of parishes it would contain, arguing this would be difficult to meaningfully represent. They argued that the ward is divided by the A505 dual carriage and that the only crossing point is via a single-lane road, at an unlit junction.

55 A large number of respondents expressed support for the Council's original proposal for this area, while others expressed support for the existing proposals.

56 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour also objected to the draft recommendations, putting forward similar arguments to those outlined above. They reiterated support for the Council's original proposal. However, failing that they proposed transferring Bygrave parish and the area of development in Clothall parish to a two-councillor Baldock East ward, using the argument that Clothall parish does not require parish wards because it is a parish meeting.

57 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the strong objections to the draft recommendations and consider that respondents have put forward good evidence in a range of areas. We also note the general support for reverting to the Council's original proposal.

58 We acknowledge that the areas of Bygrave and Clothall parishes that will be subject to significant development will be different in nature to the rest of the rural Ashwell & Weston ward. These areas abut Baldock and will have a more urban focus, as reflected in the neighbourhood plan. Combining these areas in a rural ward

will not reflect communities as well as separating them out. In addition, we acknowledge that our draft recommendations required the creation of a large rural ward containing 11 parish, although this is offset by the fact the ward would have three councillors. Finally, we acknowledge that the crossing point of the A505 is somewhat limited.

59 However, this must be balanced against the concerns about the creation of unviable parish wards, discussed in paragraph 34 and the draft recommendations. Although the area of Bygrave parish that would be warded may contain over 10% of the electorate for the parish, the actual number of electors is around 29. Generally, we would have concerns about the viability of a parish ward with so few electors. However, given the proposed development, we accept that this will improve with time. Equally, while the areas of Clothall parish contain even fewer electors, we accept that these will improve with time.

60 On balance, the evidence has persuaded us to move away from the draft recommendations. We propose adopting the Council's original proposal for single-councillor Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards, that would see parts of Bygrave and Clothall parishes transferred to Baldock wards (discussed in the next section).

61 Our final recommendations are for single-councillor Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards. These would have 2% more and 8% more electors than the district average by 2028.

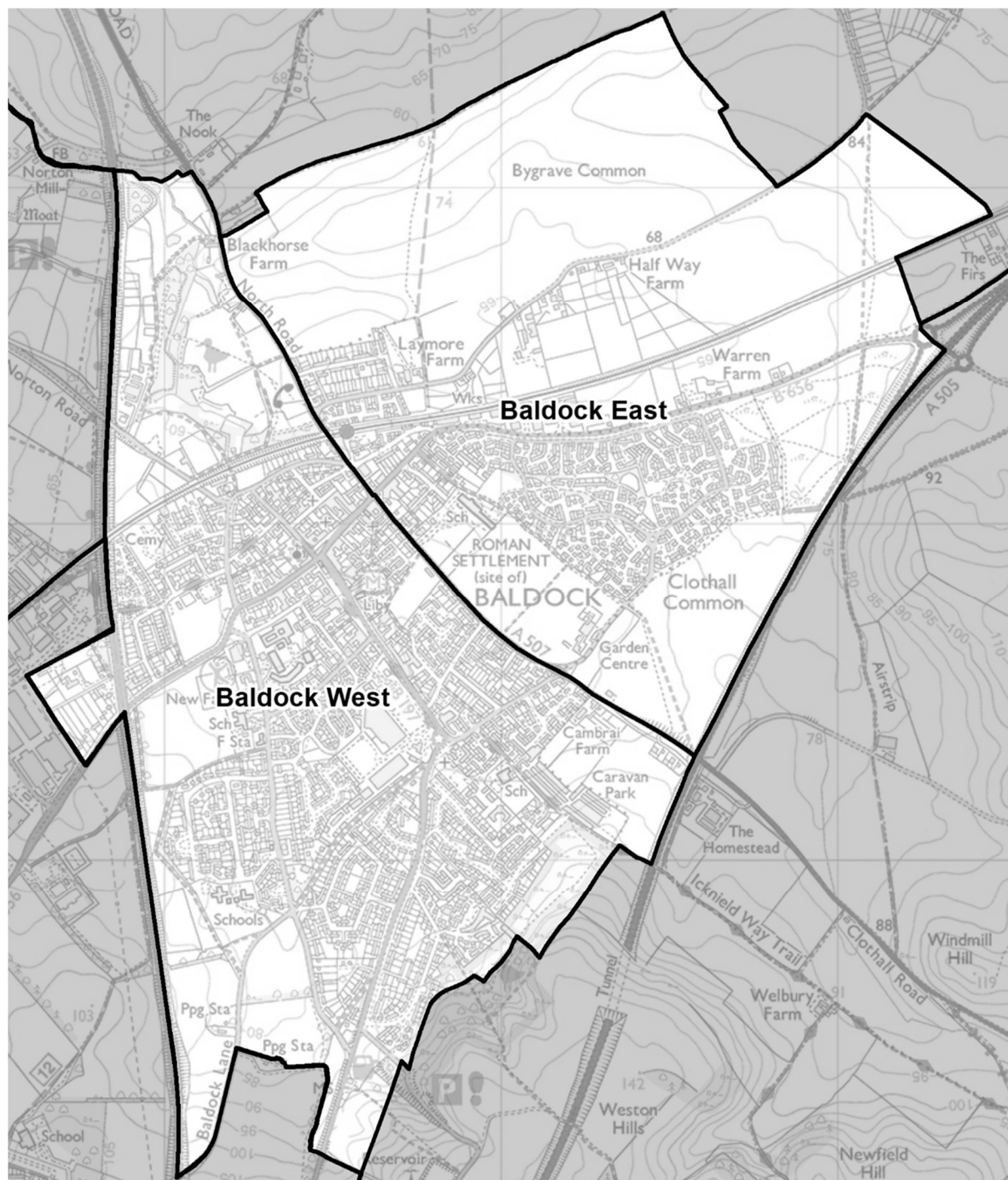
Ermine

62 There was general support for the draft recommendations for this ward, although a resident stated that he would support transferring Kelshall parish to Ashwell & Weston ward if it helped address the concerns about Ashwell & Weston ward, discussed above.

63 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the draft recommendations. We also note the comment from the resident; however, as discussed above, we are not moving away from our draft recommendations for Ashwell & Weston. There is therefore no need to reconsider the proposals in Ermine.

64 We are confirming our draft recommendations for a single-councillor Ermine ward as final. This ward would have 10% more electors than the district average by 2028.

Baldock



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Baldock East	2	-4%
Baldock West	3	-8%

Baldock East and Baldock West

65 We received significant objections to our proposals for Baldock wards, particularly in relation to the proposal for a three-councillor Ashwell & Weston ward.

The Council, Oliver Heald MP, County Councillor Hill, Councillor Tyson, Councillor Derbyshire, North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour, North East Hertfordshire Management Committee, Ashwell Parish Council, Bygrave Parish Council, Weston Parish Council and over 30 residents all objected to the proposals.

66 As discussed in detail in the Ashwell & Weston section above, respondents objected to the proposal not to include parts of Bygrave and Clothall parishes that will be subject to significant development in Baldock East and Baldock West wards. They argued that these areas should be parish wards of their respective parishes and included in the Baldock wards, as reflected in the Council's response to the warding pattern consultation.

67 A resident argued that Baldock West should retain the name Baldock Town, rejecting the argument it should be called 'West' simply because there is an 'East'. They said that Baldock West contains the historic centre of the town. The Council and another resident expressed support for the Baldock West name.

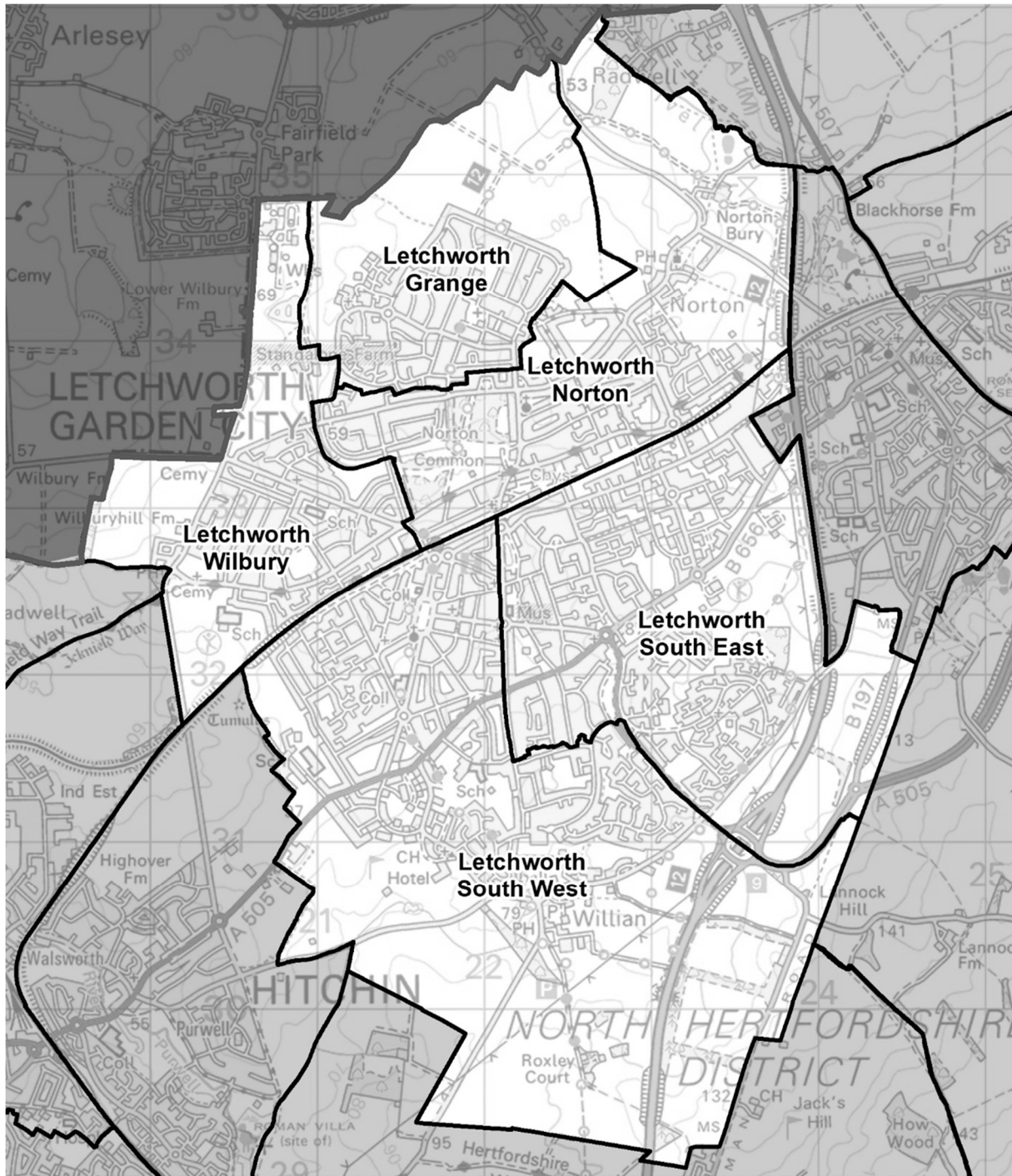
68 As outlined in the section above, we consider that respondents provided good evidence for why parts of Bygrave and Clothall parishes should be included in Baldock wards. Although concerns remain about creation of parish wards in these rural parishes, these are outweighed by the evidence supporting their inclusion in Baldock East and Baldock West ward. The area of Bygrave parish that would be included in Baldock East ward might contain over 10% of the electorate for the parish, but the actual number of electors is around 29. Generally, we would have concerns about the viability of a parish ward with so few electors. However, given the proposed development we accept that this will improve with time. Equally, while the areas of Clothall parish that would be transferred to Baldock East and Baldock West wards contain even fewer electors, we accept that this will improve with time.

69 Therefore, on balance, the evidence has persuaded us to move away from the draft recommendations. We propose adopting the Council's original proposal for two-councillor Baldock East and three-councillor Baldock West wards.

70 Finally, we have given consideration to the evidence around the name of Baldock West ward and, while there was good evidence for retaining the name Baldock Town, it was not conclusive and must be weighed against the evidence received during the warding patterns consultation. Therefore, we propose using the name Baldock West, reflecting the fact that both wards are part of Baldock.

71 Our final recommendations are for a two-councillor Baldock East ward and a three-councillor Baldock West ward with 4% 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

72 We received general support for our draft recommendations for these wards. The Council, County Councillor Hill, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour and a resident expressed general support, but proposed a small amendment to transfer the area to the west of Pix Brook from Letchworth Grange to Letchworth Wilbury, arguing that the few electors there have better access to Letchworth Wilbury. A number of respondents, including North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party, expressed support for the draft recommendations. Finally, a resident stated that two councillors was not sufficient for the predicted growth in Letchworth Norton.

73 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the draft recommendations, but also the small amendment between Letchworth Grange and Letchworth Wilbury wards. We concur with respondents that the electors to the west of Pix Brook have better access into the proposed Letchworth Grange ward, so we are making this amendment. We note the comment from a resident about the level of representation for Letchworth Norton, but consider that the draft recommendation gave this area the correct number of councillors to secure electoral equality. Therefore, we are not proposing any further changes. Subject to the amendment described above, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

74 Our final 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.

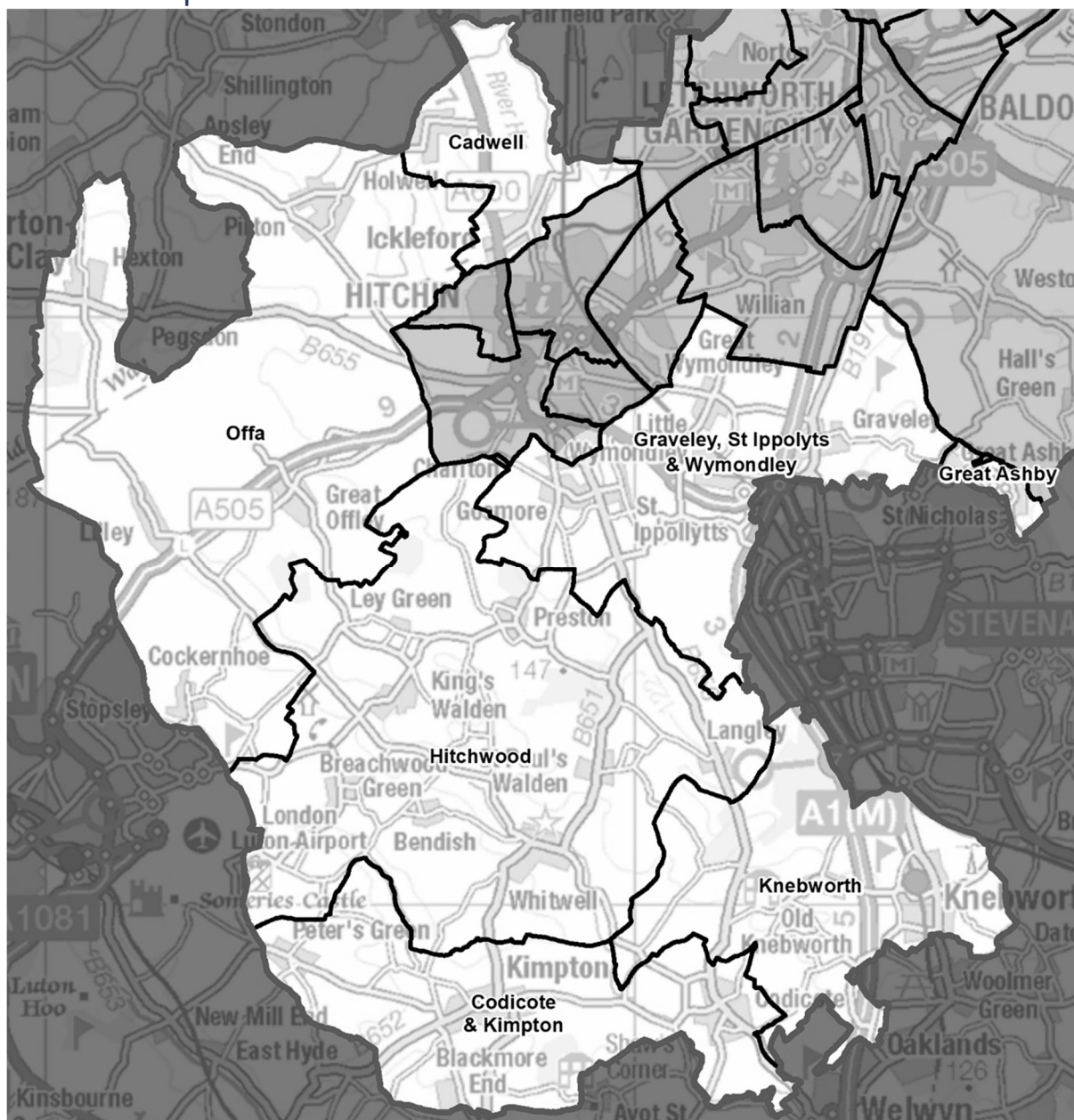
Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West

75 The Council, County Councillor Hill, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour and a resident expressed general support for the draft recommendations for these wards. Two residents objected to the inclusion of the Lordship Lane area in Letchworth South East ward, stating that the area has more in common with the South West area. A resident also stated that rural areas of Letchworth should be in a rural ward.

76 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the draft recommendations. We note the concerns about the inclusion of the Lordship Lane area in Letchworth South East ward and suggestion that it should be in Letchworth South West. However, including this area in Letchworth South West ward would leave that ward with 15% more electors than the district average by 2028, while Letchworth South East would have 11% fewer. We do not consider that respondents have put forward sufficient evidence to justify this poor level of electoral equality, particularly in an urban area.

77 We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final. Our final 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%
Hitchwood	1	9%
Knebworth	2	9%
Offa	2	4%

Great Ashby and Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley

78 The Council, County Councillor Hill, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour and a resident expressed qualified support for the draft recommendations, reluctantly supporting the decision not to include the areas of development in neighbouring parishes in Great Ashby ward. As a result, they reluctantly supported the proposals for Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley ward.

79 North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party and a resident expressed support for the separation of Great Ashby from neighbouring rural parishes. St Ippolyts Parish Council and a resident objected to the proposal to retain the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in a Hitchin ward, arguing that the whole parish should be united in a single ward. Councillor Strong expressed support for the inclusion of this area in Hitchin ward, but stated that Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley should be renamed Ashbrook, reflecting an old ward name and being less of a 'mouthful'.

80 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the Great Ashby ward. We note the concerns about the inclusion of the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in a Hitchin ward. However, we do not consider that respondents have provided significant new evidence to persuade us to move away from our earlier conclusion that this area is more urban than the rest of St Ippolyts parish and as such will share community identities and interests with Hitchin.

81 Therefore, we do not propose ward boundary changes to these wards. We note the suggestion that Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley ward is renamed, but that there was no other support for the 'Ashbrook' name. Therefore, we propose retaining Graveley, St Ippolyts & Wymondley, noting that using constituent parishes in the name is consistent with other wards.

82 Our final 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, Hitchwood, Knebworth and Offa

83 The Council expressed support for the draft recommendations, but argued that Langley, Preston & Walden and Offley & Pirton wards should be renamed Hitchwood and Offa, respectively. County Councillor Hill and Councillor Strong supported these name changes. Councillor Strong also said that Codicote & Kimpton ward should be named Mimram, to avoid naming the ward after village names. St Paul's Walden Parish Council also supported the Hitchwood name, stating there is 'no place called Walden'. Lilley Parish Council suggested that Offley & Pirton ward should be renamed Offa & Hoo, reflecting and retaining historic names.

84 Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour, Preston Parish Council and a resident expressed general support for the draft recommendations.

85 Pirton Parish Council expressed concern that it would not be part of a 'mainly rural ward', but also that it would be in a ward with the Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green areas which it stated are linked with development in Luton. A resident objected to inclusion of only part of Codicote parish in Codicote & Kimpton ward, while Kimpton Parish Council said consideration should be given to the creation of parish wards in this ward.

86 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the draft recommendations. We note the comments from Pirton Parish Council, but observe that Pirton is already in a ward with the Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green areas, which are part of Offley parish, which is within Hitchin district. These areas are to remain within Hitchin, so we do not propose amending the boundaries of Offley & Pirton ward.

87 We also note the comments about including part of Codicote parish in Knebworth ward. However, as discussed in the draft recommendations, uniting the whole or Codicote parish in Codicote & Kimpton ward would leave this ward with 15% more electors than the district average by 2028. We have not received any new evidence to persuade us to adopt a ward with this poor level of electoral equality. We are therefore adopting the ward boundaries in our final recommendations without amendment.

88 Finally, we have considered the suggested ward name changes. Given the agreement on renaming Langley, Preston & Walden as Hitchwood, we are adopting this name. We note that there was some agreement on renaming Offley & Pirton as Offa, although Lilley Parish Council suggested Offa & Hoo. Although there was not complete agreement, we consider that 'Offa' would reflect a version of those names submitted. Therefore, we are adopting this suggestion. Finally, we note Councillor Strong's suggestion of renaming Codicote & Kimpton as Mimram. However, given no other support for this name we are not adopting it.

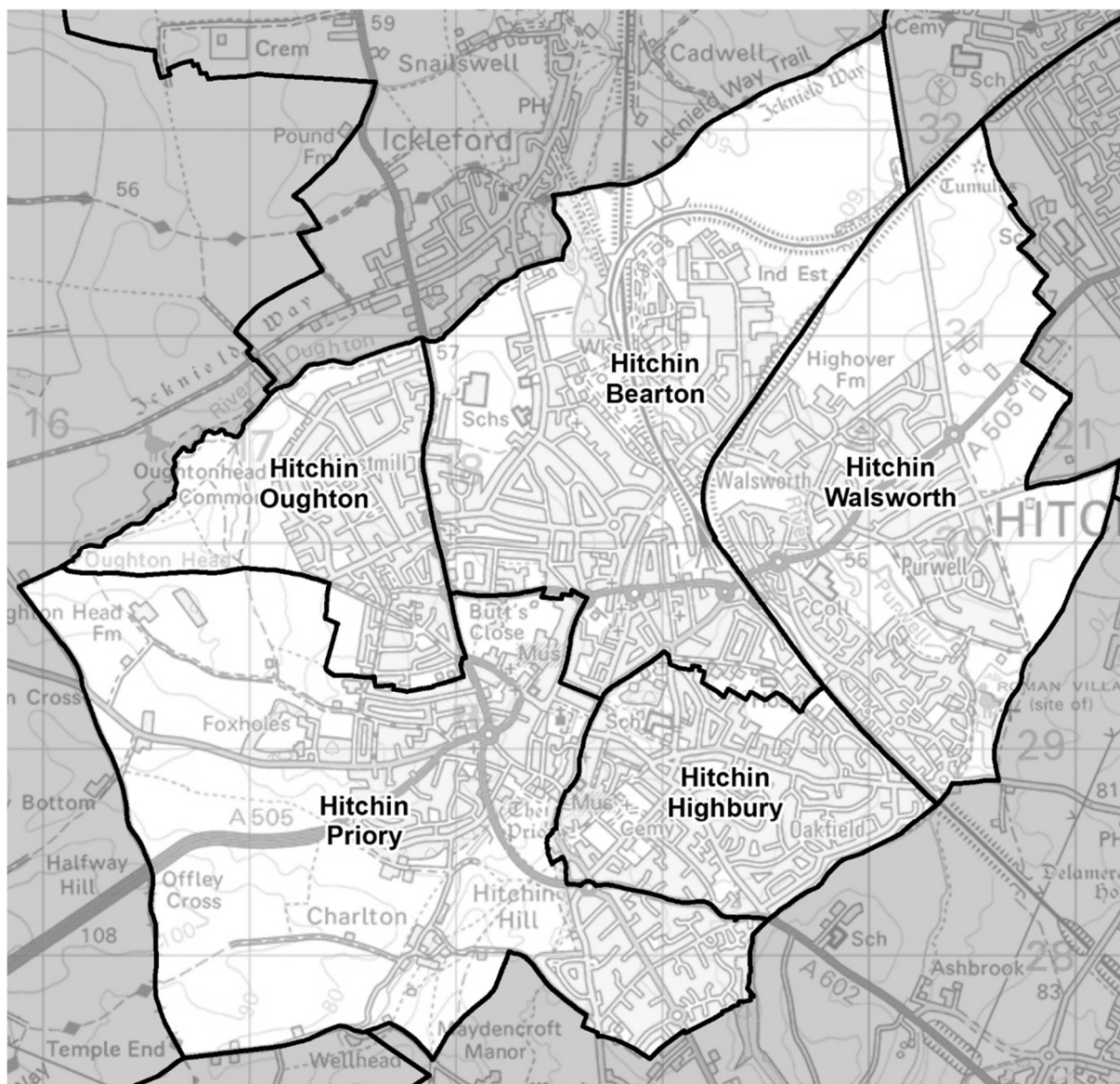
89 Our final recommendations are for a single-councillor Hitchwood ward which would have 9% more electors than the district average by 2028. We also propose two-councillor Codicote & Kimpton, Knebworth and Offa wards which would have equal to the average, 9% more and 4% more electors than the district average by 2028.

Cadwell

90 The Council, Councillor Strong, Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour and a resident expressed general support for Cadwell ward. We received no other significant comment on this ward.

91 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. In light of the general support for our draft recommendation for Cadwell ward, we are confirming this as final. 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	1%
Hitchin Highbury	2	7%
Hitchin Oughton	2	-5%
Hitchin Priory	2	6%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	6%

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

92 The Council and North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party expressed support for the draft recommendations. Hitchin & Harpenden CLP, North East Hertfordshire CLP and Letchworth & Baldock Labour expressed support for Hitchin Oughton, Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Walsworth. They also expressed general support for Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Highbury wards, but proposed a modification to include the

whole of the Benslow Lane area in Hitchin Bearton. They argued that this avoided placing opposite sides of the road in different wards. They also considered, but rejected, placing both sides of Fishponds Road in Hitchin Bearton ward, noting that the road forms a 'natural boundary'.

93 As discussed in the South-west parishes section above, St Ippolyts Parish Council and a resident objected to the proposal to retain the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in a Hitchin ward, arguing that the whole parish should be united in a single ward.

94 A resident stated that the boundary between Hitchin Bearton and Hitchin Highbury should run along Walsworth Road, arguing that the residents in the Benslow Rise area have community links with people south of Benslow Lane around The Avenue and Chiltern Road. Another resident objected to the inclusion of part of the existing Hitchin Priory ward in Hitchin Oughton ward. However, two residents expressed support for the revised Hitchin Oughton ward.

95 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the general support for the draft recommendations. We also note differing opinions around the Benslow Lane area. It is not possible to place the whole area in Hitchin Priory ward without significantly worsening electoral equality there. Therefore, we are not adopting this amendment. We do, however, concur that it would be better to place the whole of Benslow Lane in a single ward and are therefore amending the boundary to include both sides in Hitchin Bearton ward. This marginally improves electoral equality in Hitchin Priory from 8% more electors than the district average by 2028 to 7% more, while slightly worsening it Hitchin Bearton from 0% to 1% more.

96 We note the comments on the boundary between Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Oughton, but are not of the view that we have received significant new evidence. We also note the concerns about the inclusion of the North parish ward of St Ippolyts parish in a Hitchin ward. However, we do not consider that respondents have put in significant new evidence to persuade us to move away from our earlier conclusion that this area is more urban than the rest of St Ippolyts parish and as such will share community identities and interests with Hitchin. In light of this and the general support for the draft recommendation boundary, we are confirming this as final.

97 Our final recommendations are for two-councillor Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Priory wards, which would have 7% 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 1% more and 6% more electors than the district average by 2028, respectively.

Conclusions

98 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final 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

	Final recommendations	
	2022	2028
Number of councillors	51	51
Number of electoral wards	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,938	2,210
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	11	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	4	0

Final recommendations

North Hertfordshire District Council should be made up of 51 councillors serving 25 wards representing five single-councillor wards, 14 two-councillor wards and six 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 final recommendations for North Hertfordshire District Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

99 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.

100 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.

101 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 Bygrave Parish Council and Royston Town Council

102 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bygrave Parish Council.

Final recommendations

Bygrave Parish Council should comprise 5 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bygrave East	4
Bygrave West	1

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

Final 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

What happens next?

104 We have now completed our review of North Hertfordshire 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

105 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 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	Arbury	1	2,163	2,163	12%	2,250	2,250	2%
2	Baldock East	2	2,332	1,166	-40%	4,245	2,123	-4%
3	Baldock West	3	5,656	1,885	-3%	6,079	2,026	-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	6,636	2,212	14%	6,716	2,239	1%
10	Hitchin Highbury	2	4,680	2,340	21%	4,724	2,362	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 %
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 Hitchwood	1	2,269	2,269	17%	2,418	2,418	9%
15 Knebworth	2	4,132	2,066	7%	4,835	2,418	9%
16 Letchworth Grange	2	4,112	2,056	6%	4,583	2,292	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	4,105	2,052	6%	4,114	2,057	-7%
21 Offa	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%
23 Royston Meridian	3	5,134	1,711	-12%	6,304	2,101	-5%

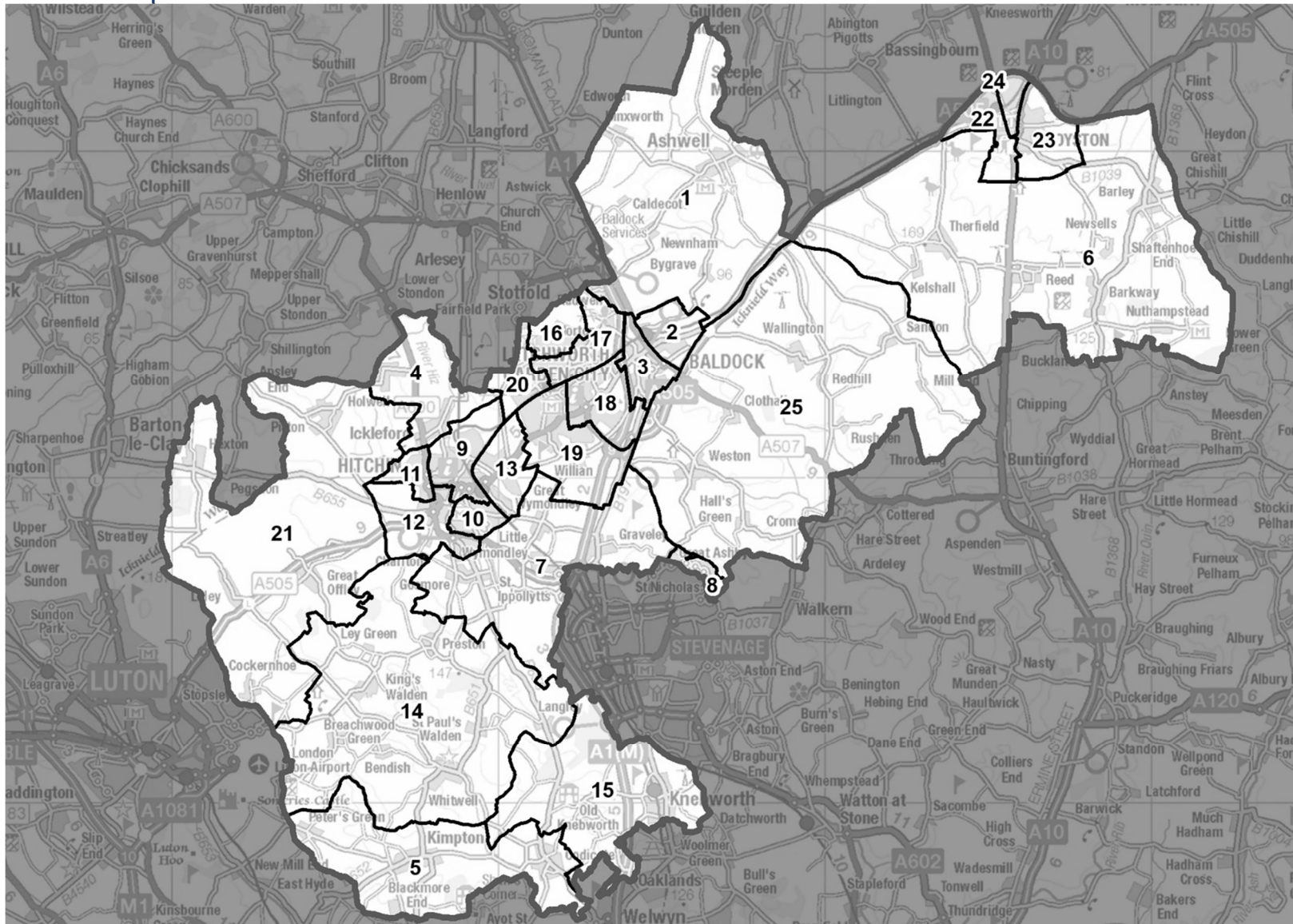
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Royston Palace	2	4,137	2,068	7%	4,332	2,166	-2%
25 Weston & Sandon	1	1,651	1,651	-15%	2,381	2,381	8%
Totals	51	98,824	–	–	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	Arbury
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	Hitchwood
15	Knebworth
16	Letchworth Grange
17	Letchworth Norton
18	Letchworth South East
19	Letchworth South West
20	Letchworth Wilbury
21	Offa
22	Royston Heath
23	Royston Meridian
24	Royston Palace
25	Weston & Sandon

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
- Letchworth & Baldock Labour Party Branch
- North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party
- North East Hertfordshire Constituency Management Committee
- North Hertfordshire Co-operative Party Branch

Councillors

- Councillor F. Hill (Hertfordshire County Council)
- Councillor M. Derbyshire (North Hertfordshire Council)
- Councillor C. Strong (North Hertfordshire Council)
- Councillor T. Tyson (North Hertfordshire Council).

Members of Parliament

- Oliver Heald MP (North East Hertfordshire)

Parish and Town Councils

- Ashwell Parish Council
- Bygrave Parish Council
- Kimpton Parish Council
- Lilley Parish Council
- Pirton Parish Council
- Preston Parish Council
- Royston Town Council
- St Ippolyts Parish Council
- St Paul's Walden Parish Council
- Weston Parish Council

Local Residents

- 60 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.

Local Government Boundary Commission for
England
1st Floor, Windsor House
50 Victoria Street, London
SW1H 0TL

Telephone: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Online: www.lgbce.org.uk

www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Twitter: @LGBCE