

New electoral arrangements for Worcester City Council Further Draft Recommendations

May 2023

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Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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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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Analysis and further draft recommendations in the areas of Battenhall, Cathedral, Gorse Hill, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill and the south-west of Worcester City

1 Following our consultation on the draft recommendations for Worcester City, the Commission has decided to hold a period of consultation on further draft recommendations in the areas of Battenhall, Cathedral, Gorse Hill, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill and the south-west of Worcester City, prior to publication of its final recommendations. The Commission believes it has received sufficient evidence relating to the rest of the city to finalise its recommendations, so this consultation is focused on the above-mentioned areas only.

2 During consultation on the draft recommendations, that were published on 1 November 2022, we received 38 representations. These included city-wide comments from Worcester City Council ('the Council') and Worcester Labour Party ('Labour Party'). Others were from councillors, a local organisation and residents.

3 Several of them raised issues with the draft recommendations in Gorse Hill and Warndon with regards to the Avon Road and Teme Road area. Some presented alternative views about the Woolhope Road area. We considered that these alternative views have merit and should be explored further.

4 We also received a new proposal for the Bedwardine and St John's area which is very different to our draft recommendations. We would like to ask for comments on whether this warding pattern better reflects the communities in this area.

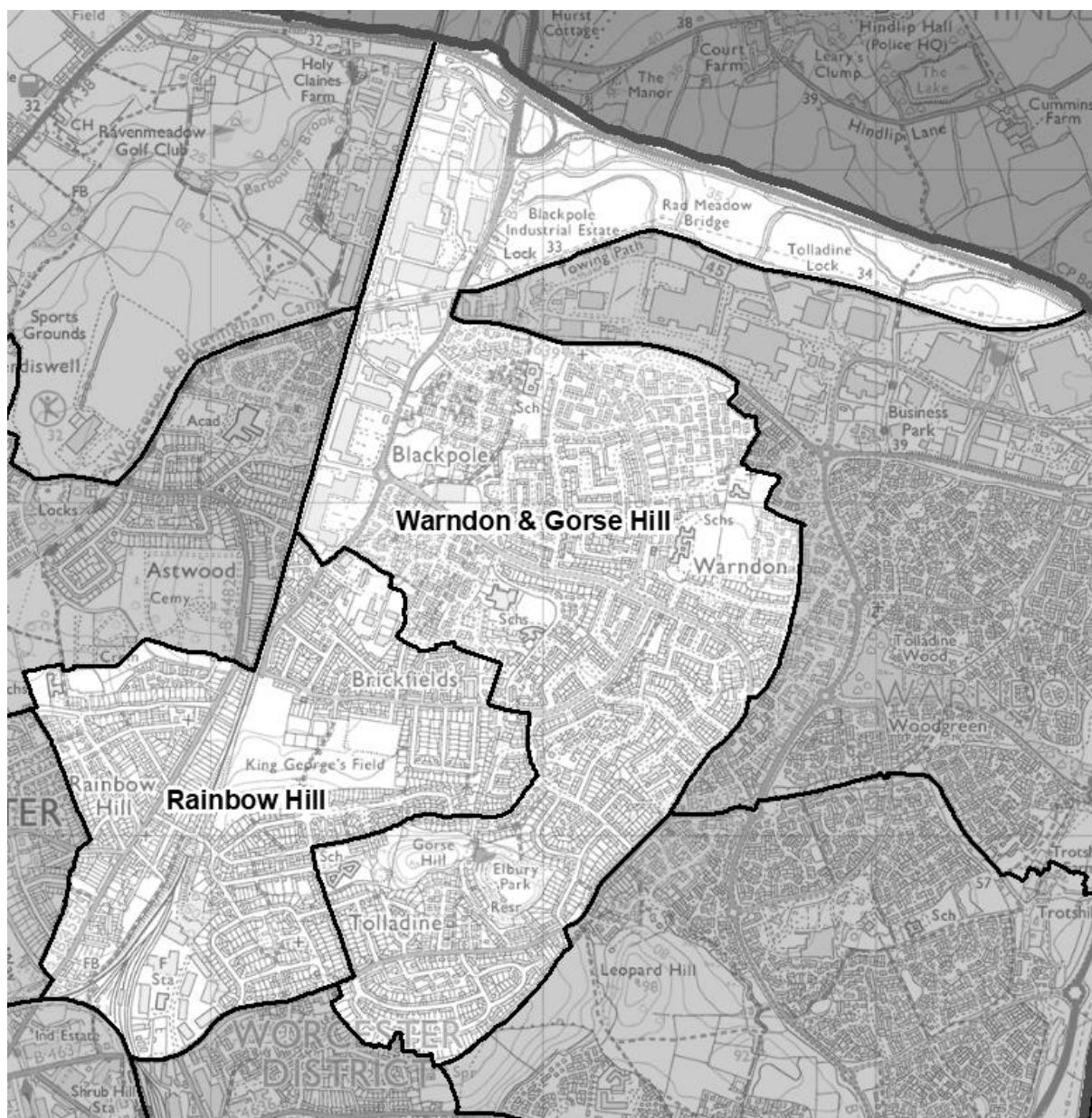
5 Accordingly, we have been persuaded to amend our proposals and publish further draft recommendations for Battenhall, Cathedral, Gorse Hill, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill and the south-west of Worcester City. We are now inviting further views in these areas.

6 We welcome all comments on these proposals, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries and the names of our proposed wards. This stage of consultation begins on 9 May 2023 and closes on 5 June 2023. Please see page 13 for more information on how to send us your response.

7 The tables and maps on pages 2–11 detail our further draft recommendations for the above-mentioned areas. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory criteria of:

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

Rainbow Hill and Warndon & Gorse Hill



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Rainbow Hill	2	1%
Warndon & Gorse Hill	3	12%

Rainbow Hill and Warndon & Gorse Hill

8 We are consulting on this area because some respondents opposed the exclusion of several streets around Avon Road and Teme Road from our draft recommendations three-councillor Warndon & Gorse Hill ward, and their inclusion in Nunnery ward to the south. We did not receive any objection to our draft recommendations for Rainbow Hill ward and both city-wide comments expressed support for it.

9 While the Labour Party, Councillor Desayrah and some residents supported our draft recommendations Warndon & Gorse Hill ward, several councillors and residents did not. The Council stated that it had not reached a consensus and therefore was unable to comment on it.

10 Councillors Altaf, Cleary and Stanley opposed the inclusion of the Avon Road and Teme Road area in Nunnery ward on community identity grounds. They stated that residents of this area used facilities and schools within or close to Gorse Hill and that they had no shared interests with those in Nunnery ward. This view was shared by a resident who stated that they were not eligible for schools in Nunnery ward and that road access to the south was limited. The councillors put forward two proposals to facilitate the inclusion of the area in question in a ward to the north. Option 1 was based on the existing two-councillor Gorse Hill and Warndon wards and a council size of 36, one more than the draft recommendations proposed. Option 2 retained 35 councillors for the city and a single three-councillor Warndon & Gorse Hill ward.

11 Option 1 moves the Martindale Close and Shap Drive area from the existing Gorse Hill ward into Warndon ward on community identity grounds. The Balliol Road and Ronkswood Hill area moves from Nunnery ward into Gorse Hill ward. Finally, under this proposal, the new development west of Sherriff Street and east of the Worcester Shrub Hill station moves into Nunnery ward to the south, for electoral equality reasons.

12 Option 2 moves Goldsmith Road into Rainbow Hill ward. They state that this road is linked to Rainbow Hill by Walnut Avenue and that residents use the King George V playing fields.

13 Councillors Agar, Ali and Cronin, who represent the existing Nunnery ward, also opposed the inclusion of these streets in Nunnery ward, for two reasons. Firstly, they were of the view that these residents shared little community of interest with the rest of the ward. Secondly, they were concerned that their inclusion would make Nunnery ward too large 'in terms of electors'. They suggested that we increase the number of councillors for Worcester to 36 and create two separate two-councillor wards in Gorse Hill and Warndon.

14 Councillor Desayrah supported our draft recommendations Warndon & Gorse Hill ward expressing the view that it made sense locally. She stated that many Gorse Hill residents contacted her on the assumption that they lived in Warndon. She felt that including Windermere Drive in a single ward made sense and united what is currently an 'artificially split community'. Two residents also supported our draft recommendations. One of them expressed a similar view that our draft recommendations reunited the 'community of Windermere Drive'.

15 We carefully considered these representations, including the two options put forward by Councillors Altaf, Cleary and Stanley. We note that this is an area where there are no clear distinctions between communities and therefore hard to identify where the ward boundaries should be. We also note that during the first consultation, Councillor Stanley defined Warndon as much wider than is represented by Option 1. At the time, Councillor Desayrah stated that these two communities (Gorse Hill and Warndon) were linked in the minds of residents.

16 We have been persuaded that residents of Windermere Drive are part of a single community, and we note that Option 1, while uniting most of it, splits the eastern end of this road across wards. This option also relies on moving Ronkswood Hill and Somerville Road area into Nunnery ward. While this latter move has some merit, we do not consider that we have received strong evidence across the two consultations to suggest that these residents share community with residents to the north or use facilities (including schools) in the north. Furthermore, under this proposal, the development to the west of Sherriff Street moves into Nunnery ward purely for electoral equality reasons.

17 Option 2 produced good electoral equality in the proposed Gorse Hill and Warndon wards, but its proposed Rainbow Hill ward is forecast to have 14% more electors than the average for Worcester. We are not minded to create wards with such poor electoral equality, especially in a ward that we received support for. We therefore did not consider this option should be adopted.

18 Nevertheless, we have been persuaded that the residents of the Avon Road and Teme Road area identify with the community to the north and not in Nunnery ward. We therefore considered the best way to reflect this.

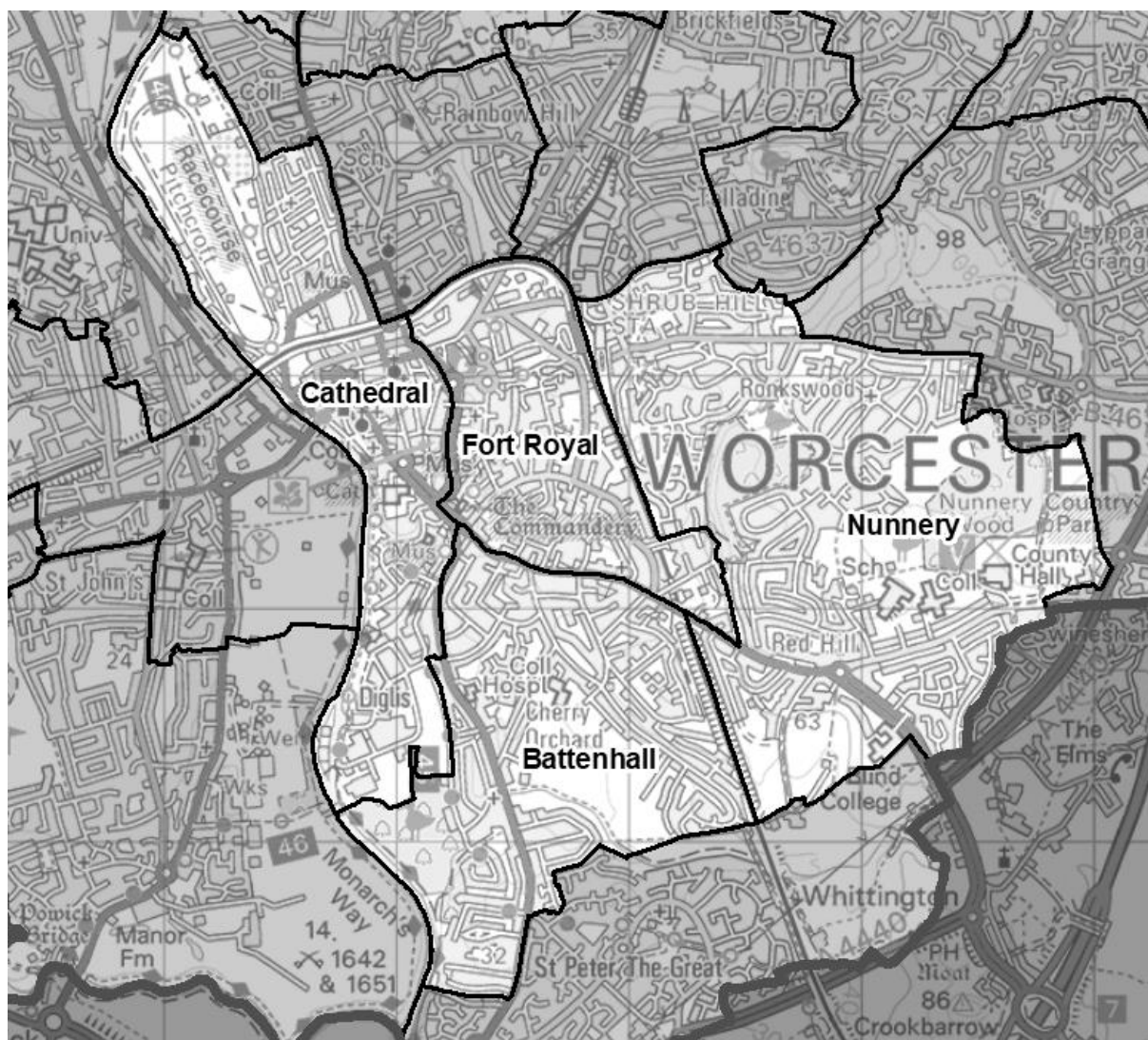
19 As noted in our draft recommendations report, a three-councillor ward consisting of the existing Gorse and Warndon wards produces a ward forecast to have 15% more electors than the average for the local authority area, by 2028. We consider this variance too high, and we sought to improve it. To do this, we propose moving Derwent Close, Fairmount Road, Fairmount Close and 67–103 Brickfields Road into Rainbow Hill ward. We note that this places all of Brickfields Road in Rainbow Hill. This produces a Warndon & Gorse Hill ward with 12% more electors than the average for Worcester. However, due to the community evidence supporting the inclusion of the Avon Road and Teme Road area here, we are content that this represents the best balance of our statutory criteria.

20 Our further draft recommendations are for a two-councillor Rainbow Hill ward and a three-councillor Warndon & Gorse Hill ward. They are forecast to have 1% and 12% more electors than the average for Worcester by 2028, respectively.

21 We welcome comments on whether this is a better reflection of communities than our draft recommendations.

22 The Labour Party proposed renaming Warndon & Gorse Hill ward, Warndon & Hollymount or Warndon & Elbury Park. We also welcome comments on whether either of these better reflects the identity of the communities living here.

Battenhall, Fort Royal, Cathedral and Nunnery



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Battenhall	2	8%
Cathedral	2	-9%
Fort Royal	2	-9%
Nunnery	3	6%

Battenhall, Cathedral, Fort Royal and Nunnery

23 Our draft recommendations for this area were for four wards: Battenhall, City Centre, Fort Royal and Nunnery. Under our draft recommendations, the existing Cathedral ward was split into two wards: City Centre and Fort Royal. Fort Royal ward included Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close which are part of the existing Nunnery ward. As discussed in the section on Warndon & Gorse Hill, we also moved an area around Avon Road and Teme Road into Nunnery ward in our original draft recommendations. These received support from the city-wide comments from the

Council and Labour Party. We received additional comments from councillors, Britannia Square Residents' Association and several residents.

24 Our City Centre ward received the most submissions for any single area. Most respondents, including the Britannia Square Residents' Association, accepted the splitting of the existing Cathedral ward and the boundaries of the new City Centre ward but they objected to its name. They were of the view that the name did not reflect their identity and proposed retaining the existing name, 'Cathedral'. The Britannia Square Residents' Association stated that 'City Centre' referred to the commercial and retail part of the city and not the residential properties. Furthermore, it suggested that the cathedral is a central and focal point for the area and the name is recognised by electors. This view was supported by a resident who said that 'the cathedral remains very central to the reduced ward'. The resident too felt that although the city centre was within the ward, the majority of electors do not live within the business area, but on its periphery. Another resident felt that those who lived in the Diglis area of the ward would not identify as living in 'city centre'.

25 After careful consideration we note that Worcester Cathedral from which the existing ward derives its name is still within this ward, and that residents do not appear to identify as living in city centre but instead identify with the name Cathedral. We are therefore content to rename it Cathedral ward.

26 Two residents proposed that Commandery Road and a northern section of Bath Road be used as a boundary, moving the very north of Bath Road and Bolston, Green Hill, London and Woolhope roads from Cathedral ward into Battenhall ward on community identity grounds. One of them cited proposed parking proposals for Bolston and Woolhope roads as a shared issue and one reason to do this. However, this produced a Battenhall ward forecast to have 18% more electors than the average for Worcester City by 2028. We consider this very poor electoral equality, and are not adopting this proposal as part of our further draft recommendations.

27 Nevertheless, we note that residents in the Cromwell Crescent area of the existing Battenhall ward, east of the railway line, appear somewhat isolated from the rest of the ward. As part of our further draft recommendations, we are asking if moving these residents into Nunnery ward and simultaneously moving residents in the Woolhope Road area into Battenhall is a better reflection of communities in this area, when compared to our draft recommendations. We especially welcome comments with evidence of community ties on this proposal.

28 As mentioned in the previous section on Warndon & Gorse Hill, Councillors Agar, Ali and Cronin and some residents did not support the inclusion of several streets in the Avon Road and Teme Road area in Nunnery ward. This was on community identity grounds and because of the councillors' concerns about the size

of Nunnery ward. We have included them elsewhere as part of our further draft recommendations, in response to these and other representations.

29 With regards to Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close, which we included in Fort Royal ward in our draft recommendations to reflect their road access, the councillors stated that they took a 'neutral view'. They felt that these residents had little connection with the rest of Nunnery ward and that their connection to the rest of the development of which they were a part was by footpath only.

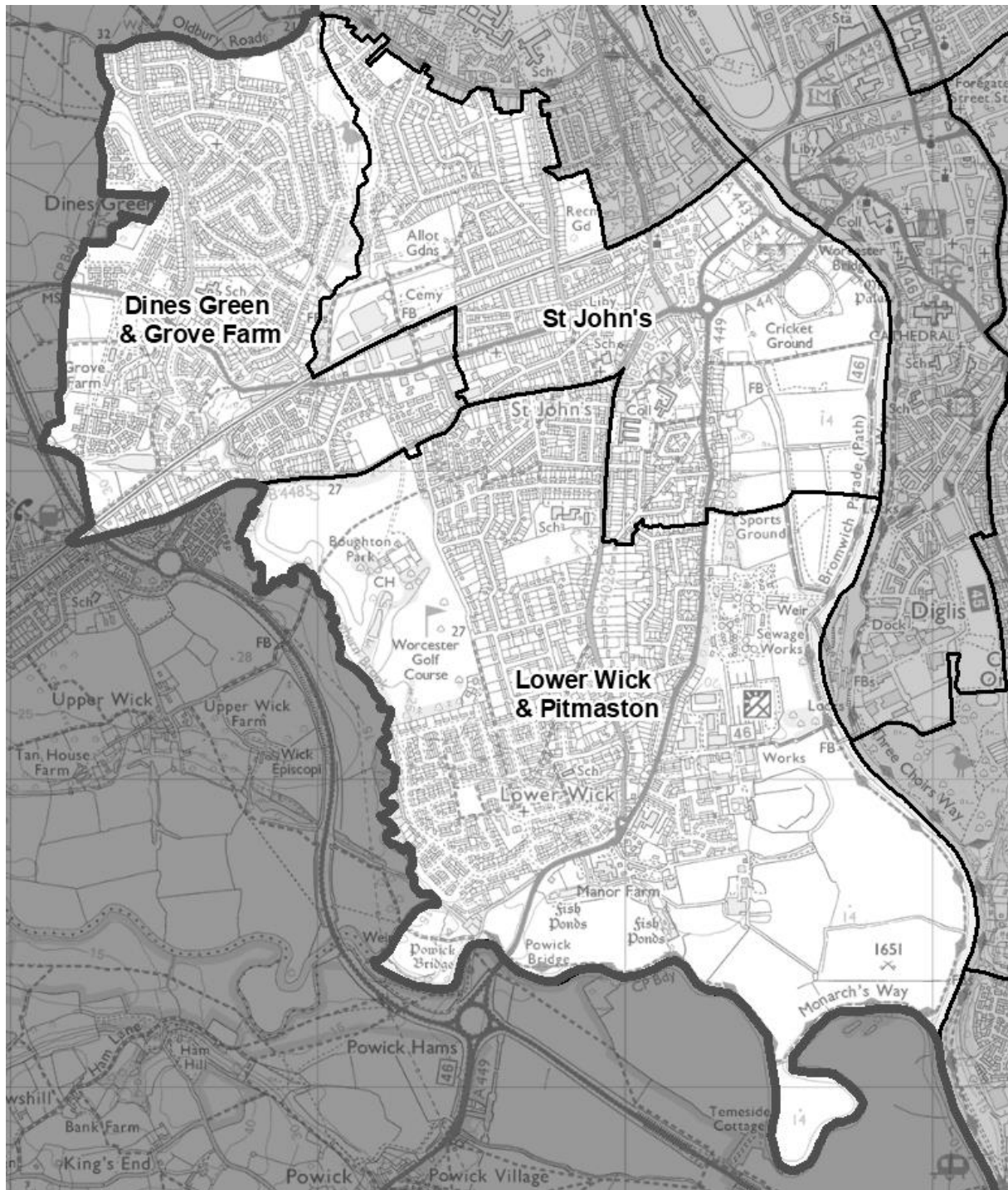
30 However, a resident objected to the exclusion of these roads from Nunnery ward, telling us that these properties were part of a larger development and that the footpath linking these two roads to the rest of the estate was 'wide and well used'. Furthermore, the resident stated that there was a strong community identity and that there was an active residents' Facebook group. Residents all pay into the same private housing management company. Finally, they also expressed the view that there are likely to be different issues affecting those on Wyld's Lane and in the rest of the new Fort Royal ward, due to the urban nature of that ward, when compared to the more suburban nature of this relatively new development.

31 We have been persuaded by the evidence presented by the resident to unite these two roads in a single ward with the rest of their estate because they share a community with them regardless of not having vehicular access. We consider that including them in Nunnery ward instead of Fort Royal is the best balance of our statutory criteria.

32 The Battenhall, Cathedral and Fort Royal wards outlined in our further draft recommendations are two-councillor wards. Nunnery is a three-councillor ward. Battenhall and Nunnery wards are forecast to have 8% more and 6% more electors, respectively, than the average for Worcester, by 2028. Cathedral and Fort Royal are both forecast to have 9% fewer electors than the average for the local authority area, by 2028.

33 We also considered whether to move Wych Elm Close from Fort Royal into Nunnery ward, to reflect their access. Although, we have not done so as part of our further draft recommendations, we welcome comments on this too.

South-west



Ward	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Dines Green & Grove Farm	2	5%
Lower Wick & Pitmaston	2	2%
St John's	2	-8%

Dines Green & Grove Farm, Lower Wick & Pitmaston and St John's

34 Our draft recommendations in this area were for two three-councillor wards: Bedwardine and St John. These were based on, and very similar to, the existing wards. The draft recommendations received support from the Council and Labour Party.

35 We received submissions from three residents who stated that these wards were too big. One of them expressed the view that this meant that the different communities are separated by significant distances. This resident also stated that a stretch of the boundary between the wards split the heart of the St John's community across two wards. The resident proposed three two-councillor wards and provided specific boundaries.

36 The resident proposed a Dines Green & Grove Farm ward which they state includes communities on the edge of the district who share common concerns including transport and access to services. Furthermore, the resident stated that these communities are impacted by proposed development to the west and north of the ward (outside the city boundary), as well as the significant development which is already taking place in the south and west of the proposed ward, in a way that other parts of west Worcester are not.

37 They state that their proposed St John's ward is centred around St John's district centre and would place the main facilities in a single ward rather than being split across wards.

38 Finally, the resident proposed a Lower Wick & Pitmaston ward covering the rest of the south-west of the city, including the communities at Lower Wick and those centred around Pitmaston Park and Pitmaston Primary School.

39 While we note the support our draft recommendations received from the city-wide comments, after careful consideration, we have decided to consult on this new proposal. In particular, we considered that there was merit in uniting the area in the proposed St John's ward which we note is divided by the existing arrangements and our draft recommendations. We wish to consult on this alternative proposal that we recognise is quite different from both the existing arrangements and our draft recommendations. This will help us consider whether this arrangement better reflects the communities in this area and will facilitate effective and convenient local government, or if our draft recommendations are better. We welcome comments with evidence on if there is support for smaller wards in this area and, if so, whether these boundaries are the right ones. We also welcome comments on the ward names.

40 Our further draft recommendations for the area are for three two-councillor wards. Dines Green & Grove Farm, Lower Wick & Pitmaston and St John's wards

are forecast to have 5% more, 2% more and 8% fewer electors, respectively, than the average for the local authority area, by 2028.

Have your say

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

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

43 Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps and draw your own proposed boundaries. You can find it at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

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

Review Officer (Worcester)
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

45 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Worcester 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

46 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

47 Electoral equality:

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

48 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?

49 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?

50 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 in Westminster (London) 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.

51 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as 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.

52 In the light of representations received, we will review our further 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 further draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

53 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 Worcester in 2024.

Equalities

54 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

Further draft recommendations for wards in Worcester

	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	Battenhall	2	4,676	2,338	7%	5,143	2,572	8%
2	Cathedral	2	3,865	1,933	-11%	4,306	2,153	-9%
3	Dines Green & Grove Farm	2	4,396	2,198	1%	4,974	2,487	5%
4	Fort Royal	2	3,511	1,756	-20%	4,310	2,155	-9%
5	Lower Wick & Pitmaston	2	4,586	2,293	5%	4,841	2,421	2%
6	Nunnery	3	6,823	2,274	4%	7,560	2,520	6%
7	Rainbow Hill	2	4,454	2,227	2%	4,768	2,384	1%
8	St John's	2	4,115	2,058	-6%	4,351	2,176	-8%
9	Warndon & Gorse Hill	3	7,529	2,510	15%	7,962	2,654	12%

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Worcester City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower-than-average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Submissions received

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

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/worcestershire/worcester

Local Authority

- Worcester City Council

Political Groups

- Worcester Labour Party

Councillors

- Councillor S. Cronin, Councillor P. Agar & Councillor B. Ali (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor J. Desayrah (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor A. Roberts (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor J. Stanley, Councillor M. Altaf & Councillor O. Cleary (Worcester City Council)

Local Organisations

- Britannia Square Residents' Association

Parish and Town Councils

- Warndon Parish Council

Local Residents

- 30 local residents

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.

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