

New electoral arrangements for Worcester City Council Final Recommendations

August 2023

Translations and other formats:

To get this report in another language or in a large-print or Braille version, please contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England at:

Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Licensing:

The mapping in this report is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Keeper of Public Records © Crown copyright and database right. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and database right.

Licence Number: GD 100049926 2023

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.

Contents

Introduction	1
Who we are and what we do	1
What is an electoral review?	1
Why Worcester?	2
Our proposals for Worcester	2
How will the recommendations affect you?	2
Review timetable	3
Analysis and final recommendations	5
Submissions received	5
Electorate figures	5
Number of councillors	6
Ward boundaries consultation	7
Draft recommendations consultation	7
Further draft recommendations consultation	8
Final recommendations	9
North-west	10
North-east and East	12
Central	17
West and South	20
Conclusions	25
Summary of electoral arrangements	25
Parish electoral arrangements	25
What happens next?	27
Equalities	29
Appendices	31
Appendix A	31
Final recommendations for Worcester City Council	31
Appendix B	33
Outline map	33
Appendix C	34

Submissions received	34
Submissions received in response to our draft recommendations	34
Submissions received in response to our further draft recommendations	34
Appendix D	36
Glossary and abbreviations	36

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
- Liz Treacy
- 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 Worcester?

7 We are conducting a review of Worcester City Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2002, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.³ 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 Worcester 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 city.

Our proposals for Worcester

9 Worcester should be represented by 35 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Worcester should have 16 wards, one more than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 12 wards should change; three will stay the same.

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

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

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

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Worcester. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the city and an additional period of further consultation for the south of the city. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 March 2022	Number of councillors decided
17 May 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
25 July 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
9 May 2023	Publication of further draft recommendations; start of limited consultation
19 June 2023	End of limited consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
29 August 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 Worcester	76,425	82,992
Number of councillors	35	35
Average number of electors per councillor	2,184	2,371

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 Worcester are forecast to 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 9% by 2028.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and were satisfied that the projected figures were the best available at that 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.

24 Nunnery ward councillors expressed concern that the Council's forecast may not have been robust with regards to some ongoing and recently completed developments which are not yet fully occupied around Gotland Road and Williamson Road. They listed several streets in their submission. They also wondered if two newer developments around Williamson Road were included, in particular, one on the site of 'the Lotus Plant' which they state was only approved in December 2022. We note that in addition to including the existing electorate in the Gotland Road area, the forecast includes more than 200 electors from the new development. In the Williamson Road area, we note that there are existing electors and housing development included in the forecast figures. The Council also confirms that its forecast includes all the sites raised by the councillors.

25 Furthermore, we take the view a line must be drawn and that the forecasts provided at the beginning of a review are those that should be used as the base forecast throughout. This is because it ensures that all who wish to make a submission to us can use the same baseline forecast figures. We are aware that planning decisions are likely to be made throughout the duration of this review. Our approach of not updating the forecast throughout the review ensures that we are able to maintain clarity over what the figures are so that people are able to respond on the same basis throughout.

26 We remain satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present and have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

27 Worcester City Council currently has 35 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that keeping this number the same 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 35 councillors.

28 In February 2022, the Council voted to move to all-out elections meaning there is no presumption in legislation⁶ that the Council should have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. Therefore, proposals could be 35 one-councillor wards or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

29 We did not receive any submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on ward patterns and we based our draft recommendations on a 35-councillor council.

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

30 We received a submission about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. This submission, from a resident, advocated for a reduction in the number of councillors and wards. However, it did not include any evidence to support this view, nor did it specify a council size that would enable the Council to carry out its duties effectively. We therefore maintained 35 councillors for our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

31 We received 33 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included a city-wide proposal from the Council plus four alternative patterns from the Council each giving a modification to its primary proposal for the Gorse Hill, Rainbow Hill and Warndon area of the city. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for ward arrangements and/or names in particular areas of the city.

32 Our draft recommendations were based on one of the patterns proposed by the Council. We also 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.

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

34 Our draft recommendations were for five three-councillor wards and 10 two-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

35 We received 38 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included city-wide comments from the Council and Worcester Labour Party ('Labour').

36 The Council expressed support for our draft recommendations except for two wards on which it did not comment. Labour also supported our draft recommendations.

37 The majority of the other submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our proposals in Gorse Hill, Nunnery and Warndon.

38 A number of submissions commented on the external boundaries of Worcester City Council. This electoral review does not involve changing or moving the boundaries of the local authority area and we cannot make recommendations for such proposals. This electoral review relates to areas that fall within Worcester City only.

Further draft recommendations consultation

39 In response to our draft recommendations, we received several submissions about Warndon & Gorse Hill ward with regards to the Avon Road and Teme Road area. Some presented alternative views about the Woolhope Road area. We also received a new proposal for the Bedwardine and St John's areas which was very different to our draft recommendations. We considered that these alternative views have merit and should be explored further.

40 Our further draft recommendations were based on our draft recommendations with modifications and consequential adjustments to Battenhall, City Centre (renamed Cathedral), Fort Royal, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill and Warndon & Gorse Hill wards. In the south-west, our further draft recommendations were for three two-councillor wards, replacing our draft recommendations two three-councillor wards.

41 We received 27 submissions in response to our further draft recommendations, from the Council, Worcester Conservative Association ('Conservatives'), Labour, councillors and residents.

42 The Council supported a three-councillor ward in the Warndon and Gorse Hill area but proposed an amendment to the proposed boundaries. It objected to moving the Cromwell Crescent area into Nunnery and moving the Woolhope area into Battenhall but did not provide comments on the new warding pattern in the south-west, or the uniting of Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close with the rest of the Woodland Edge Estate.

43 The Conservatives expressed support for the further draft recommendations in the south-west of Worcester.

44 Labour provided similar comments to the Council about the Warndon and Gorse Hill, Cromwell Crescent and Woolhope Road areas. In addition to this it expressed its objection to the further draft recommendations for Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close and in the south-west of the city.

45 The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments on specific wards.

Final recommendations

46 Our final recommendations are for three three-councillor wards and 13 two-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.

47 Our final recommendations are based on the draft and further draft recommendations with modifications and consequential changes to Warndon & Gorse Hill and Rainbow Hill wards, based on the submissions we received. We also rename Warndon & Gorse Hill ward, Warndon & Elbury Park.

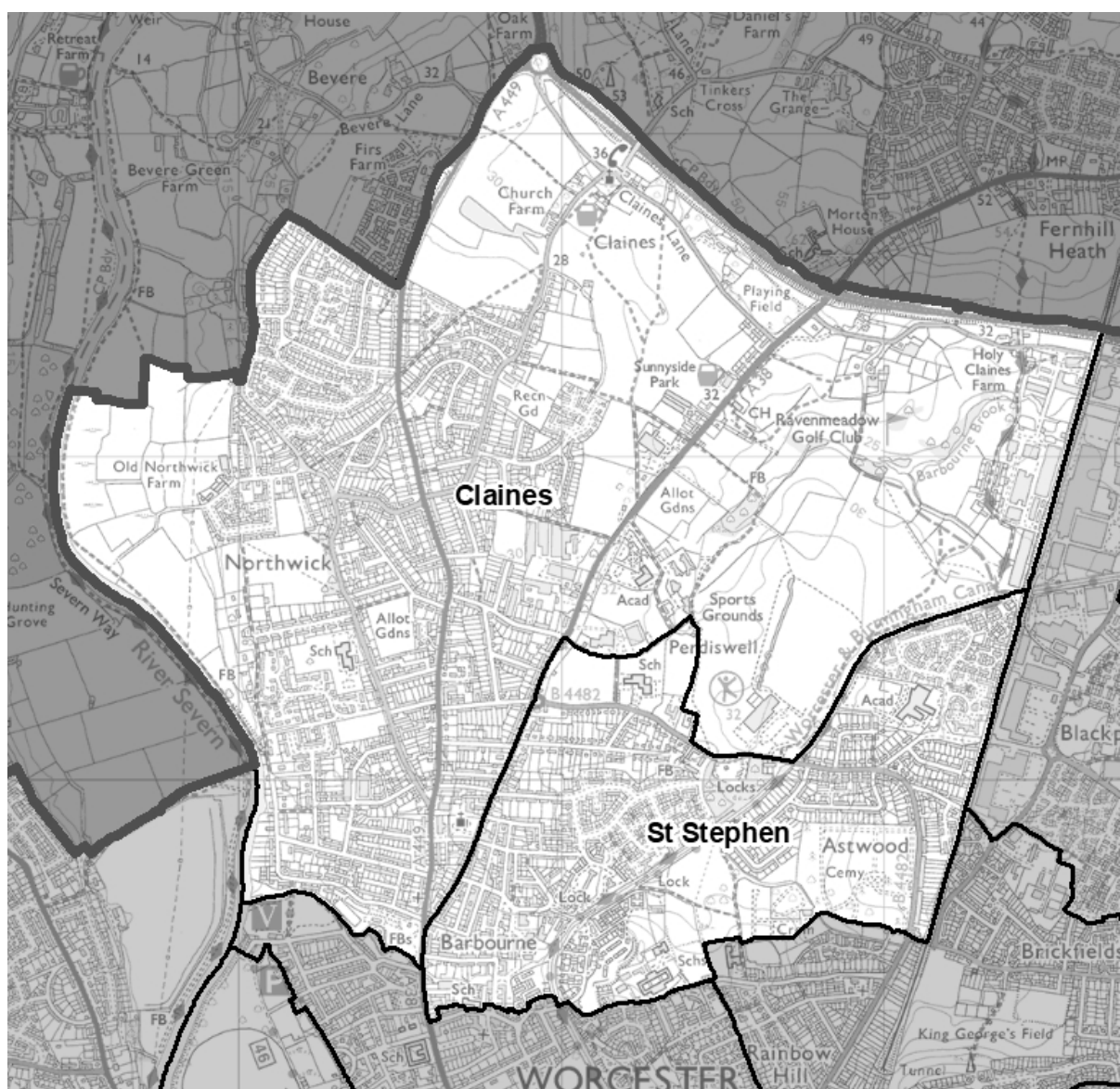
48 The tables and maps on pages 10–24 detail our final recommendations for each area of Worcester. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁷ criteria of:

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

49 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 31 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁷ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

North-west



Ward	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Claines	3	-3%
St Stephen	2	-9%

Claines

50 We received two submissions about our draft recommendations Claines ward in addition to the city-wide comments.

51 The Council expressed support for our draft recommendations Claines ward, including the minor modification to align the boundary with ground details.

52 A resident was of the view that Claines was too large and ought to be split. However, the resident did not propose any boundaries, nor did they provide any

evidence to support their view. Therefore, we did not adopt this proposal and are confirming our draft recommendations for this ward as final.

53 We received a submission from a resident who proposed renaming this ward Northwick ward since in their view a significant part of what could be deemed as being Claines was in Wychavon district. They did not provide any evidence that this name would be widely accepted by residents of the ward, and we have not been persuaded to rename the ward.

54 Claines is a three-councillor ward forecast to have 3% fewer electors than the average for Worcester, by 2028.

St Stephen

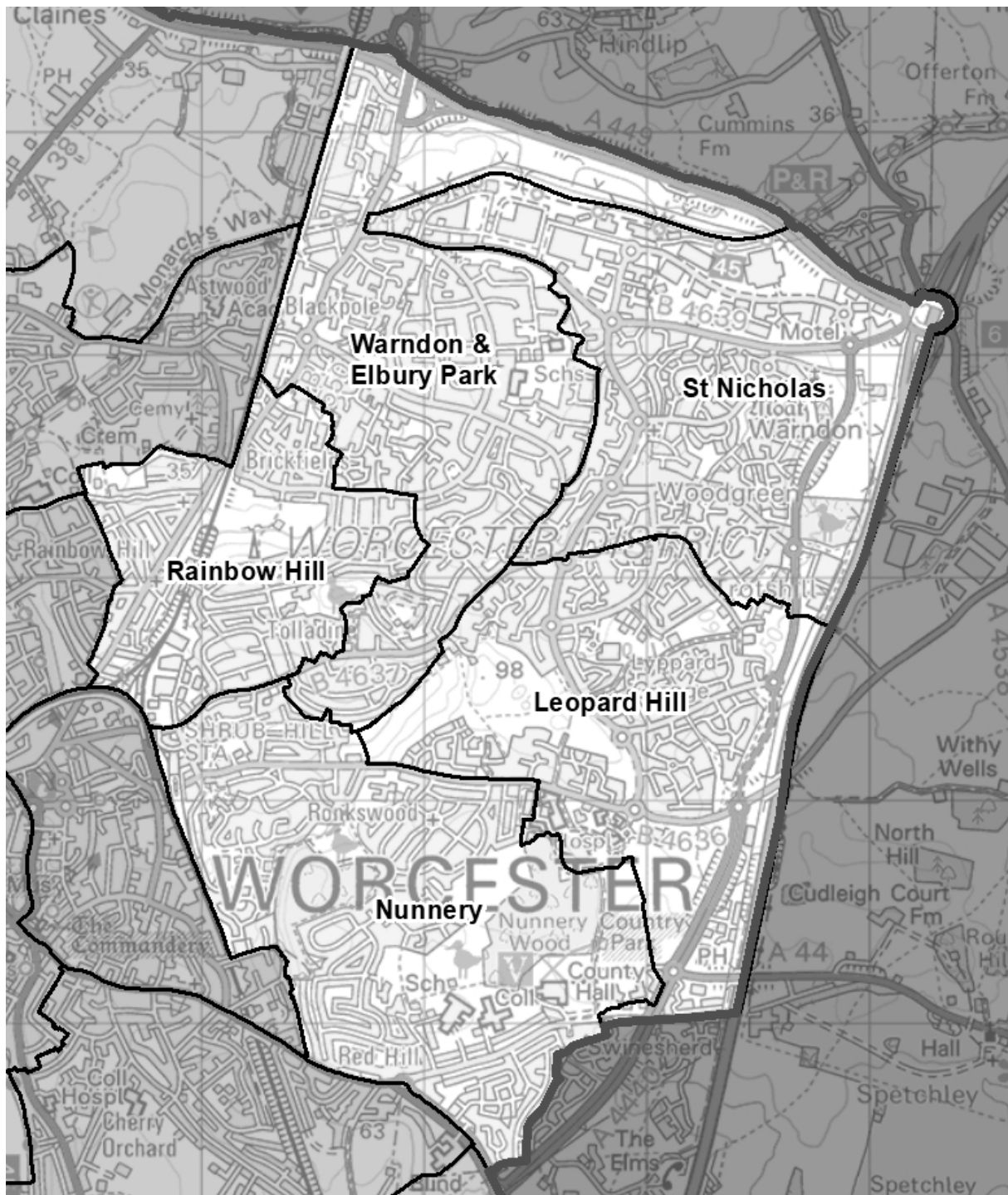
55 The city-wide comments we received expressed support for our draft recommendations for St Stephen.

56 We also received comments from a resident who advocated that we include them in St Stephen ward because they do not share a community of interest with Arboretum ward where they currently are and where our draft recommendations placed them. They did not support this with any specific community evidence, nor did they propose any alternative boundaries between Arboretum and St Stephen wards.

57 As this was the only comment we received aside from the city-wide comments, which supported our draft recommendations, we have not been persuaded to modify them. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for St Stephen ward as final.

58 St Stephen is a two-councillor ward forecast to have 9% fewer electors than the city average by 2028.

North-east and East



Ward	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Leopard Hill	2	4%
Nunnery	3	-1%
Rainbow Hill	2	5%
St Nicholas	2	-10%
Warndon & Elbury Park	3	9%

Leopard Hill and St Nicholas

59 Our draft recommendations for this area were for two wards named Warndon Villages North and Warndon Villages South. The north ward was entirely within Warndon parish. The south ward also included an area which is not part of Warndon parish.

60 In addition to the city-wide comments, we received several submissions about these wards from Councillor Roberts, Warndon Parish Council, and residents. Most of them were about the name of the wards, in particular Warndon Villages South ward.

61 The Council, Labour, Councillor Roberts and Warndon Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for these wards. They welcomed the removal of the word 'parish' from the ward names and our replacing it with 'villages'.

62 However, in response to our request for comments on the name of the wards, Councillor Roberts was of the view that the inclusion of Warndon in the names of these wards would still cause elector confusion. A resident stated that Warndon was the name of an estate which was in a different ward, thereby supporting this view. They also pointed to our draft recommendations report which cited comments by a resident of Chalmers Close outside of Warndon parish, who stated that they did not identify as living in Warndon or Warndon Villages. Councillor Roberts and several residents proposed Leopard Hill and St Nicholas in place of Warndon Villages South and Warndon Villages North wards, respectively.

63 Warndon Parish Council also noted that those who lived south of Leopard Hill did not identify as living in Warndon Villages and suggested that Warndon Villages South city ward be renamed either Warndon Village South with Leopard Hill or Leopard Hill. Furthermore, it suggested that if the south ward name was changed to Leopard Hill, the north ward should be renamed St Nicholas.

64 Respondents told us that these names would avoid confusion, reflect the history of the areas and that they were still relevant today. Warndon Parish Council stated that Leopard Hill was within the southern city ward and included the area in question outside the parish. It also stated that St Nicholas church was 'the most significant historic feature in the whole of the parish, and it is very closely associated with the area'.

65 After careful consideration, we have been persuaded that the name Warndon Villages South does not reflect the geography of the city ward, and that there is support for these alternative names. Therefore, we have renamed these city wards accordingly.

66 In line with the support received for the ward boundaries, we confirm our draft recommendations as final, except for the change of names. Leopard Hill and St Nicholas wards are two-councillor wards forecast to have 4% more and 10% fewer electors, respectively, than the average for Worcester by 2028.

67 Warndon Parish Council requested that we retain the names of the draft recommendations parish wards, and we are content to do so.

Rainbow Hill and Warndon & Elbury Park

68 Our further draft recommendations for this area were for a two-councillor Rainbow Hill ward and a three-councillor Warndon & Gorse Hill ward which included Avon Road and Teme Road. We excluded Derwent Close, Fairmount Close and Fairmount Road from this ward and placed them in Rainbow Hill ward instead. In response, we received comments from the Council, Labour, Councillor Desayrah, Councillor Cookson and residents.

69 We received support for the inclusion of Avon Road and Teme Road in Warndon & Gorse Hill ward. However, the Council, Labour, Councillor Desayrah and two residents did not support the inclusion of Fairmount Road in Rainbow Hill. They were of the view that Derwent Close, Fairmount Close and Fairmount Road residents were part of the Warndon community. Labour stated that these roads form part of the local community linked to Fairfield School, the Fairfield Centre, and Fairfield Medical Centre on Carnforth Drive.

70 They all proposed the same modification to the boundary between these two wards. The modification unites all of Trout Beck Drive and Tunnel Hill in Rainbow Hill. It also moves Holly Mount Road, Maple Avenue and Portefields Road into Rainbow Hill and unites Birch Avenue in a single ward.

71 After careful consideration, we have been persuaded that uniting residents of each of these roads in a single ward will facilitate effective and convenient local government. We note that it also improves the electoral equality of Warndon & Gorse Hill ward. We have therefore adopted this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

72 Although Councillor Desayrah expressed support for uniting Brickfields Road in a single ward, we have not done this as part of our final recommendations. This is because having included Derwent Close, Fairmount Close and Fairmount Road in Warndon & Gorse Hill ward, we considered the draft recommendations boundary to be clearer and more identifiable.

73 The Council proposed that Warndon & Gorse Hill ward be renamed Warndon & Elbury Park to provide a better reflection of communities in the area. The Council had considered Warndon & Holly Mount as a potential ward name but was of the view that Holly Mount was not a distinct area and therefore did not propose this. Councillor Cookson also objected to naming the ward Warndon & Holly Mount.

Labour proposed the names Warndon or Warndon & Elbury Mount. We note that Elbury Park and Elbury Park Road are both in this ward and therefore have adopted the Council's proposal and renamed it Warndon & Elbury Park.

74 Our final recommendations are for a two-councillor Rainbow Hill ward and a three-councillor Warndon & Elbury Park ward. They are forecast to have 5% and 9% more electors per councillor than the city average by 2028.

Nunnery

75 Our further draft recommendations for Nunnery ward included Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close. They also included the area around Cromwell Crescent because we noted that it was separated from the rest of Battenhall ward by the railway line. As mentioned in the section above, Avon Road and Teme Road were not included in Nunnery ward, and we received support for this.

76 We received comments from the Council, the existing Cathedral ward councillors, and some residents.

77 Most of them objected to the inclusion of Cromwell Crescent and the area east of the railway line in Nunnery ward, and advocated for their retention in Battenhall ward.

78 The Council was of the view that while the railway line seemed to form a natural barrier, there was a bridge crossing it. Labour stated that Cromwell Crescent was easily accessed from Battenhall. The comments we received from residents also supported the view that access to the rest of Battenhall ward, to the west of the railway line, was easy. They told us that they used schools, shops and other facilities in Battenhall and that they had different interests and issues from Nunnery ward residents to the north.

79 With regards to Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Road, the Council made no comments. However, Labour and the existing Cathedral ward councillors objected to their inclusion in Nunnery ward. Instead, they wanted them to be included in Fort Royal ward. Labour pointed to the absence of any road links between these roads and the rest of the Woodland Edge Estate. The councillors stated that these roads were the oldest part of the new development and that there was no sense of community between these residents and those in the new part of the development. In their view, these residents are part of the Perryfields and Wyld's Lane community.

80 However, a number of residents expressed support for our further draft recommendations. As residents of the Woodland Edge Estate, they were of the view that the estate should not be split across wards. They told us that there was an active Facebook group for the whole estate and that they held social and community events. Furthermore, it was noted that there was a recently formed Woodland Edge Community Group which represents the entire estate, including the roads in question.

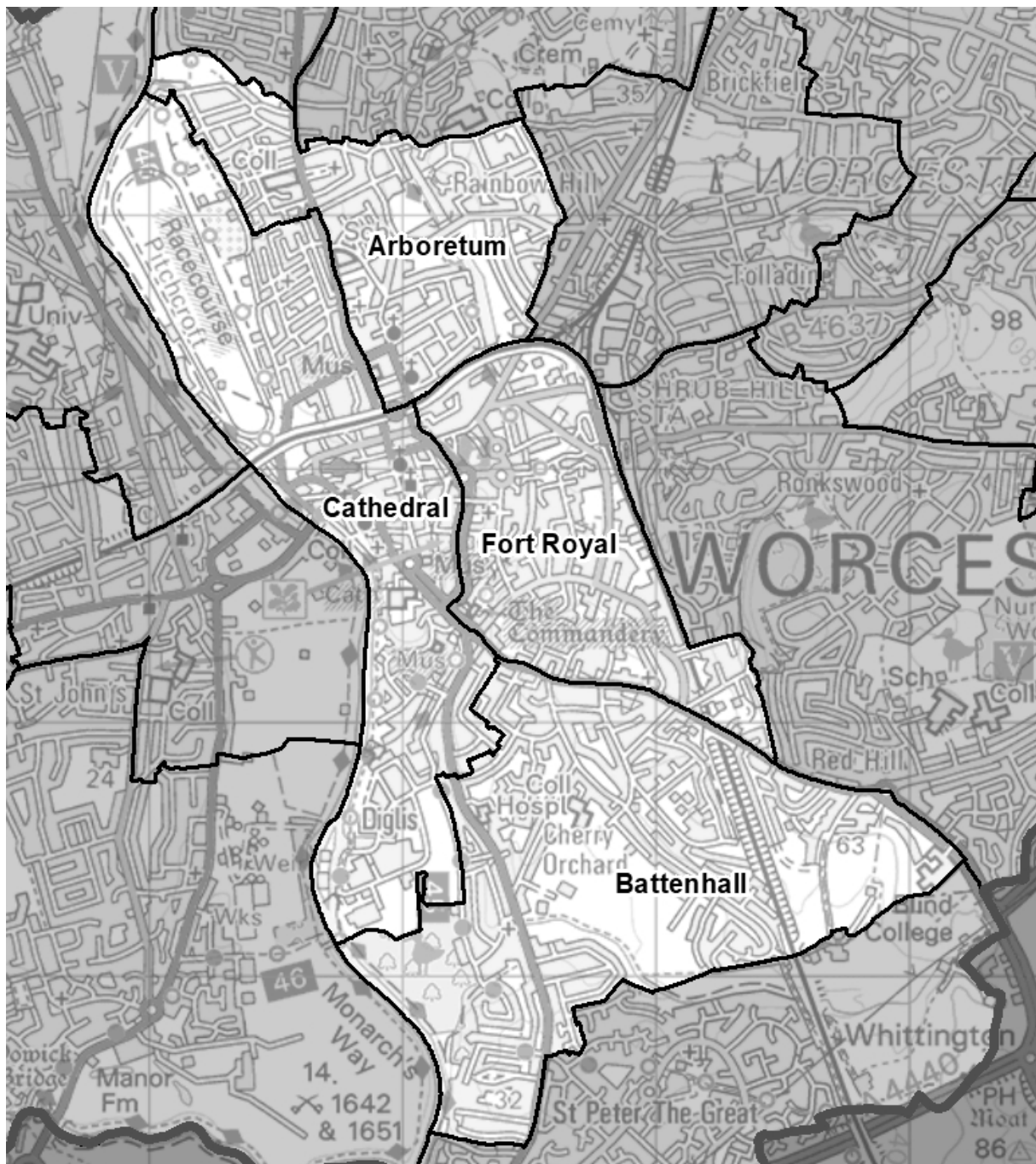
81 After careful consideration of the submissions we received, we have been persuaded that residents of the area east of the railway line, around Cromwell Crescent, share interests and community identities with those to the west. Therefore, as part of our final recommendations, we are excluding them from Nunnery ward and including them in Battenhall ward instead.

82 We have also been persuaded that residents of Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close share community links with the rest of Woodland Edge Estate, regardless of there not being vehicular access. During the last consultation we heard that the footpath connecting these roads to the rest of the estate was 'wide and well used', that there was a strong sense of community across the estate, that residents paid into the same private housing management company and that they were likely to face different issues to those on Wyld's Lane and the rest of Fort Royal ward.

83 Therefore, we are including Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Close in Nunnery ward.

84 Our final recommendations are for a three-councillor Nunnery ward which does not include the area south of London Road and east of the railway line. Nunnery ward is forecast to have 1% fewer electors per councillor than the average for Worcester, by 2028.

Central



Ward	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Arboretum	2	6%
Battenhall	2	9%
Cathedral	2	1%
Fort Royal	2	-9%

Arboretum

86 We received two submissions from residents, in addition to the city-wide comments.

87 The Council supported our draft recommendations including our decision to move two properties on Pitchcroft Lane into this ward.

88 A resident stated that where they lived in 'the Barbourne area' was better included in St Stephen ward because they had 'no connection' to Arboretum ward. The resident did not propose an alternative boundary or provide specific community identity evidence. The resident also expressed the view that those living near Gheluvet Park had little connection to Arboretum and would also define themselves as living in the Barbourne area and have different issues. Another resident who stated that they lived 'on one side of Tything and go to Gheluvet Park on the other' expressed support for our draft recommendations, explaining that their place of worship and where they schooled were both within the ward.

89 While we note the comments from the resident who did not feel a sense of community with the rest of Arboretum ward, without any proposal with evidence to support an alternative boundary, and considering the support our draft recommendations received in the city-wide comments and from another resident, we have not modified our draft recommendations for Arboretum ward.

90 Arboretum ward is a two-councillor ward forecast to have 6% more electors than the city average by 2028.

Battenhall, Cathedral and Fort Royal

91 The Council, Labour, the existing Cathedral ward councillors, and residents provided comments on this area of the city.

92 As part of our further draft recommendations, we asked if moving residents east of the railway line (around Cromwell Crescent) into Nunnery ward and simultaneously moving residents in the Woolhope Road area into Battenhall was a better reflection of communities in this area, when compared to our draft recommendations.

93 The Council, Labour and the existing Cathedral ward councillors did not support the exclusion of the north of Bath Road, Bolston Road, Green Hill Bath Road and Woolhope Road from Cathedral ward. Labour was of the view that these residents identify with those living at the edge of the city centre and not with those in Battenhall ward. The councillors stated that the suggestion to move these roads into Battenhall stemmed from the current Worcestershire County Council consultation on residents' parking and should not affect decisions regarding Worcester City ward boundaries.

94 Most of the residents who wrote in supported excluding these roads from Cathedral ward and including them in Battenhall, stating that the boundary between Battenhall and Cathedral wards would be stronger and reflect the local community. One stated that these roads were only added to Cathedral ward for reasons of electoral equality at the time of the last review.

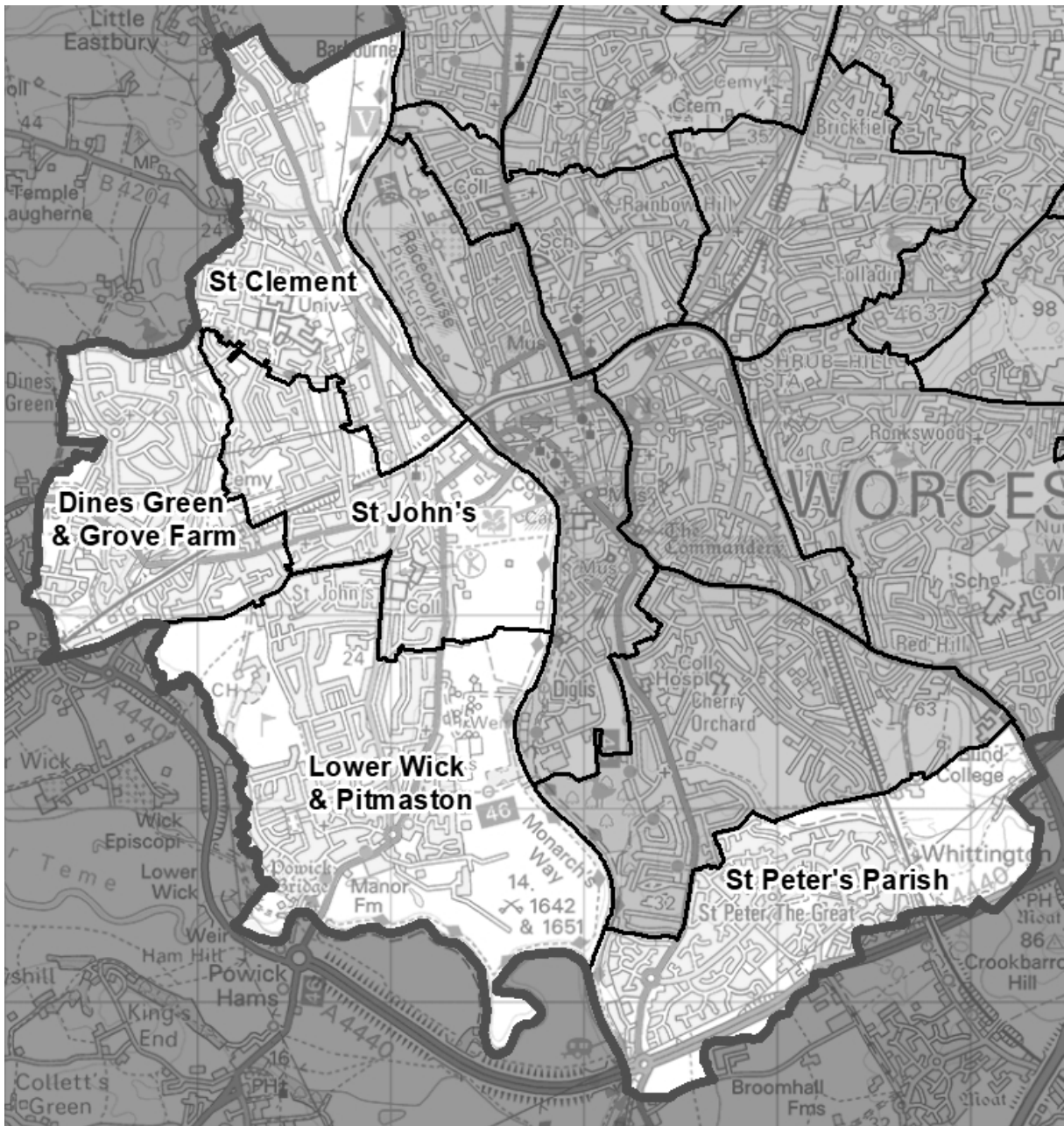
95 We have considered the comments made to us very carefully. We note that these residents are close to the City Centre and also to Battenhall ward, which may explain the different views about where they share greater community links. As explained in the section on Nunnery, we have been persuaded to include the Cromwell Crescent area, east of the railway line, in Battenhall ward. This means that if we also include the roads in question in Battenhall ward, it will have a forecast electoral variance of 18% by 2028. We consider this too high and have therefore not adopted this proposal but have retained the roads in Cathedral ward as part of our final recommendations.

96 One resident was of the view that Cavendish and Orchard streets ought to be included in Cathedral ward and not Battenhall ward. However, considering the general support and evidence for this aspect of our original draft recommendations, we have not been persuaded to adopt this.

97 As part of our further draft recommendations, we asked for comments on whether to move Wych Elm Close from Fort Royal ward into Nunnery ward. We did not receive any support for this, and we have retained it in our proposed Fort Royal ward. As explained in the section on Nunnery ward, Cranbourne Grove and Lilburne Road are not included in Fort Royal, on community identity grounds. Therefore, we confirm our further draft recommendations for Fort Royal ward as final.

98 Our final recommendations for Battenhall, Cathedral and Fort Royal are for three two-councillor wards, which are all forecast to have good electoral equality by 2028.

West and South



Ward	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Dines Green & Grove Farm	2	5%
Lower Wick & Pitmaston	2	2%
St Clement	2	-3%
St John's	2	-8%
St Peter's Parish	2	0%

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

99 While our draft recommendations for this area were for two wards based on the existing arrangements, our further draft recommendations were for three smaller wards.

100 In response to our further draft recommendations, we received comments from Labour, the Conservatives, Councillor Udall, and residents. We also received a joint submission from councillors Lamb, Norfolk, Smith and Udall.

101 Labour and the councillors opposed our further draft recommendations, while the Conservatives and residents supported them.

102 Those who opposed the new proposals were of the view that Dines Green looked to the St John's area for its shopping and leisure activities, that there were good transport links between them and that Laugherne Brook and the nature reserve were shared amenities. They also pointed to the boundaries of Bedwardine ward as being strong and that our draft recommendations in the area provided for good electoral equality. The councillors felt that the new proposals broke existing community links and did nothing to improve effective and convenient local government.

103 Councillor Udall also stated that Dines Green churches were linked to St John-in-Bedwardine Church and St Clement's Church. He mentioned that many Dines Green residents moved into sheltered accommodation in the St Clement's Close area of St John's ward upon retirement. He was also of the view that Bransford Road was a natural boundary between wards.

104 The Conservatives were of the view that the Grove Farm area was geographically remote from the rest of Bedwardine and that there were weak transport links between them. They stated that the proposed Dines Green & Grove Farm ward brought together communities in the western part of this area in a rational way. They also stated that the proposed Lower Wick & Pitmaston ward brought together two communities who already 'form one clear entity together'.

105 Two residents were of the view that the further draft proposals united the heart of the St John's area in a single ward.

106 In response to the consultation on our draft recommendations, we were told that the existing wards were too big with one resident stating that different communities were separated by significant distances.

107 We have carefully considered the submissions we received in response to the three consultations we held. All of them make some valid points.

108 We agree that Dines Green residents will look to St John's for their shopping and leisure. However, we consider that this will be the case for other communities in the area, including Grove Farm residents, across Bromyard Road from the Dines Green area, and other parts of the existing Bedwardine ward.

109 We note that the St John-in-Bedwardine and St Clement's churches are affiliated to St Michael's in Dines Green but also to St David's Church in St Clement ward, as part of the Worcester City West Team of Churches. It appears that this collaboration extends beyond city ward boundaries and should not be affected by a new warding pattern.

110 We agree that Laugherne Brook Local Nature Reserve is a shared community feature which extends across both sides of our proposed ward boundary. However, we note that the brook and nature reserve, while mostly in the existing St John ward, extends north into St Clement ward and a small portion is in Lower Wick to the south. Therefore, it is likely that issues relating to the nature reserve are already dealt with by councillors from different wards. We recognise that members of the Friends of Laugherne Brook will be local residents from all around the wider area.

111 We note that Bransford Road makes an identifiable boundary and our further draft recommendations uses a longer stretch of it as a boundary. We also note that, like the existing Bedwardine ward, the proposed Lower Wick & Pitmaston and Dines Green & Grove Farm wards also have mostly strong boundaries.

112 The current boundary along St John's (the road) runs through the local centre of the St John's area and places many local shops and some community facilities in Bedwardine ward. We consider that the Grove Farm area, being at the edge of the local authority, will have some shared issues with Dines Green, including developments just outside the boundaries of Worcester City to the west. Grove Farm is some distance away from the Lower Wick area.

113 Therefore, after careful consideration, we have not been persuaded to move away from our further draft recommendations in this area and have retained the brook as a boundary. We consider that, although currently in the same ward, Dines Green and St John's are distinct areas and communities.

114 The Conservatives proposed that we move residents of The Avenue and those in Alexander, Ellis, Homefield and Withers roads into Lower Wick & Pitmaston ward to the south. While this has some merit, in order to have an identifiable boundary and not isolate some residents on Bromwich Road, we would have to move the entire area broadly east of Malvern Road and south of Christopher Whitehead Language College into this ward. This produces a St John's ward with a forecast electoral variance of 20%. We are not minded to create a ward with such high variance and

have therefore not adopted this proposal. Furthermore, under this proposal the ward to the south was forecast to have 13% more electors.

115 However, we have made a minor modification to include the commercial facility west of St John's Cemetery in Dines Green & Grove Farm ward, to reflect the access via Bromyard Road. This does not affect any electors.

116 Our final recommendations are for three two-councillor wards, which are all forecast to have good electoral equality.

St Clement

117 The Council and Labour both supported the draft recommendations for this ward. We received two additional comments from residents.

118 One was of the view that the existing Bedwardine and St John wards were too big especially when compared to St Clement ward and that we should 'even things out'. We note that those wards each have three councillors while St Clement has two. The wards in question all have good electoral equality, both having variances no greater or less than 10% from the average for Worcester by 2028. Therefore, we were not persuaded to modify the wards based on this representation.

119 Nevertheless, we have been persuaded to consult on a different pattern of wards in the Bedwardine/St John's area for community identity grounds based on evidence provided by another resident with respect to that area. This does not affect St Clement ward.

120 The other resident proposed changing the name of the ward because in their view the St Clement name has no real relevance to the ward and its communities. They pointed out that St Clement's Church was located outside the boundaries of this ward in the existing St John ward, as do a number of roads bearing that name including St Clement's Court, St Clement's Gardens and St Clement's Close. They proposed naming the ward Henwick, after the Henwick Park Estate, Henwick Grove and Henwick Road, one of the major roads running through the ward.

121 While we note the above comments we are not able to ascertain if Henwick is the most appropriate name for this ward or if there is community identity and sentiment attached to the current name, which our draft recommendations retained. Therefore, we have not renamed the ward.

122 However, if there is a desire to change the ward name in the five years following a review, a local authority may seek the Commission's agreement to change the name of a ward if this reflects community identity and sentiment. After five years, a local authority may make a change without seeking the agreement of the Commission.

123 St Clement ward has two councillors and is forecast to have 3% fewer electors than the city average by 2028.

St Peter's Parish

124 We received a submission from a resident in addition to the city-wide comments.

125 The city-wide comments supported our draft recommendations. The resident considered the merger of Battenhall and St Peter's Parish wards. A three-councillor ward comprising these two wards is forecast to have 39% more electors than the average for Worcester by 2028. We are not minded to create a ward with such poor electoral equality. For this reason and the lack of any supporting evidence, we did not consider this any further.

126 In view of the support we received from the city-wide comments, we are confirming our draft recommendations for St Peter's Parish ward as final.

Conclusions

127 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Worcester, 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	35	35
Number of electoral wards	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	2,184	2,371
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendations

Worcester City Council should be made up of 35 councillors serving 16 wards representing 13 two-councillor wards and three 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 Worcester City Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Worcester City Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

128 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.

129 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, Worcester City 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.

130 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 Warndon Parish.

131 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Warndon parish.

Final recommendations

Warndon Parish Council should comprise eight councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Warndon Villages North	4
Warndon Villages South	4

What happens next?

132 We have now completed our review of Worcester City 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

133 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 Worcester City 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	Arboretum	2	4,718	2,359	8%	5,023	2,512	6%
2	Battenhall	2	4,672	2,336	7%	5,150	2,575	9%
3	Cathedral	2	4,318	2,159	-1%	4,790	2,395	1%
4	Claines	3	6,438	2,146	-2%	6,908	2,303	-3%
5	Dines Green & Grove Farm	2	4,396	2,198	1%	4,974	2,487	5%
6	Fort Royal	2	3,511	1,756	-20%	4,310	2,155	-9%
7	Leopard Hill	2	4,551	2,276	4%	4,940	2,470	4%
8	Lower Wick & Pitmaston	2	4,586	2,293	5%	4,841	2,421	2%
9	Nunnery	3	6,374	2,125	-3%	7,067	2,356	-1%
10	Rainbow Hill	2	4,679	2,340	7%	4,974	2,487	5%
11	St Clement	2	4,156	2,078	-5%	4,613	2,307	-3%
12	St John's	2	4,115	2,058	-6%	4,351	2,176	-8%

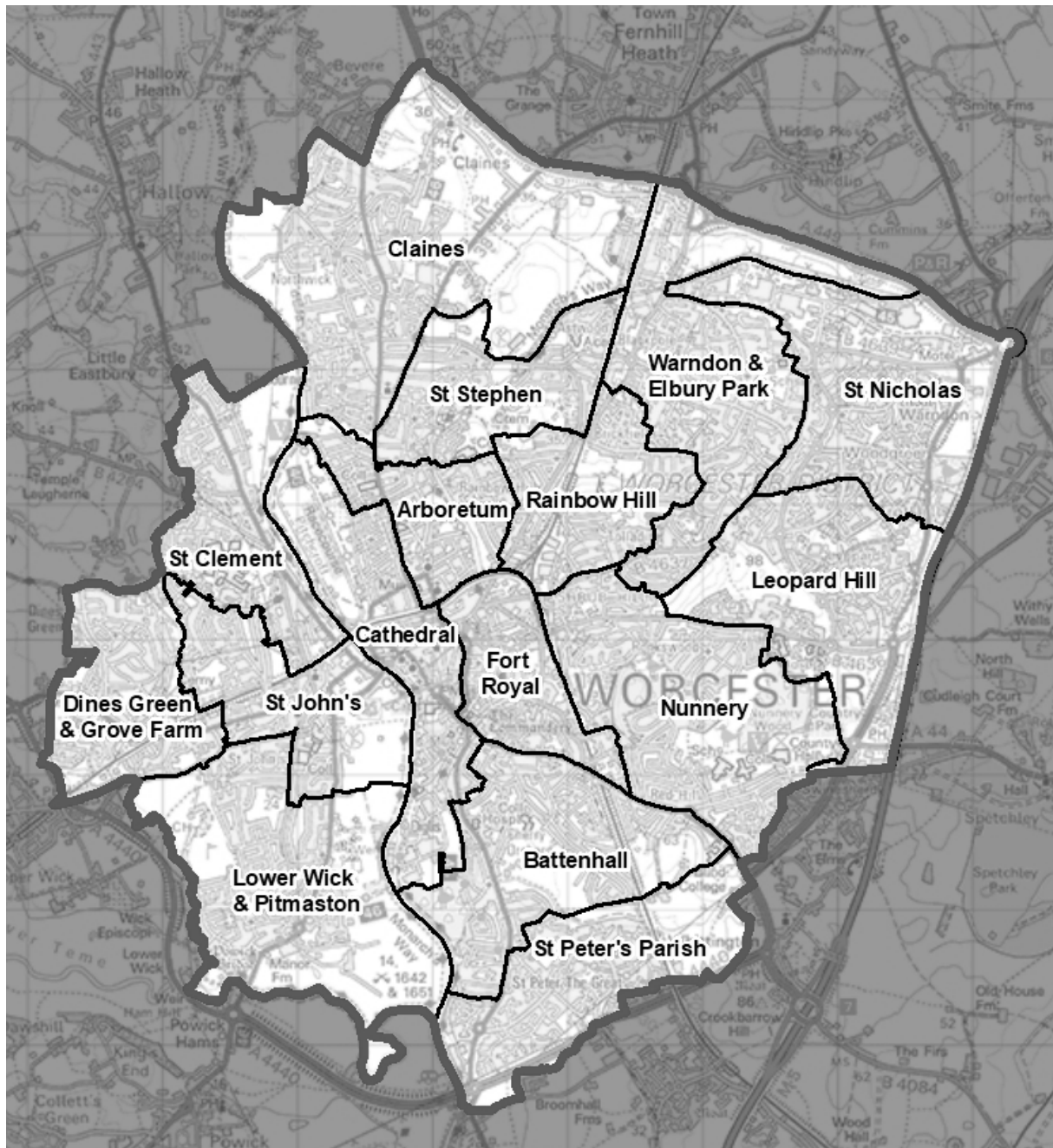
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 St Nicholas	2	4,031	2,016	-8%	4,248	2,124	-10%
14 St Peter's Parish	2	4,478	2,239	3%	4,722	2,361	0%
15 St Stephen	2	4,100	2,050	-6%	4,327	2,164	-9%
16 Warndon & Elbury Park	3	7,302	2,434	11%	7,754	2,585	9%
Totals	35	76,425	–	–	82,992	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,184	–	–	2,371	–

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

Outline map



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/west-midlands/worcestershire/worcester

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

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

Submissions received in response to our draft recommendations

Local Authority

- Worcester City Council

Political Groups

- Worcester Labour Party

Councillors

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

Local Organisations

- Britannia Square Residents' Association

Parish and Town Councils

- Warndon Parish Council

Local Residents

- 30 local residents

Submissions received in response to our further draft recommendations

Local Authority

- Worcester City Council

Political Groups

- Worcester Conservative Association
- Worcester Labour Party

Councillors

- Councillor Z. Cookson (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor L. Denham (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor J. Desayrah (Worcester City Council)
- Councillors M. Lamb, R. Norfolk, S. Smith & R. Udall (Worcester City Council)
- Councillor R. Udall (Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council)

Local Residents

- 19 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