

Gloucestershire

Personal Details:

Name:

[REDACTED]

Email:

[REDACTED]

Postcode:

[REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Cheltenham Constituency Labour Party (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Related subject: Cheltenham Borough area

Local Government Boundary Commission: Gloucestershire Electoral Review

Initial Consultation (28th March – 5th June 2023)

Response from Cheltenham Constituency Labour Party (CLP)

1 Background and context

In two-tier County Councils like Gloucestershire, with County and six district councils, electoral divisions are not permitted to cross district council boundaries. Furthermore, the Commission must ‘have regard for’ ward boundaries. The Commission states as follows:
in reviewing two-tier county councils we are required to have regard to the boundaries of district or borough wards. We will seek to use them as the building blocks for county electoral divisions. In making our recommendations, we must ensure that every electoral division is wholly within a single district, so that no division crosses the boundary between two neighbouring districts.

The consequence of these two requirements are:

- Cheltenham Borough can be considered in isolation from the rest of the county;
- Electoral divisions should follow ward boundaries within Cheltenham.

Cheltenham currently has 10 divisions, each comprising a pair of district council wards. The current divisions are based on the 20 wards as they currently (2023) exist. We note that three of the current divisions are $\pm 10\%$ or more from the average:

- Benhall & Up Hatherley (-12%);
- Hesters Way & Springbank (+10%);
- St Mark's & St Peter's (+12%).

(See Table 1)

Although the total number of County Councillors will rise from 53 to 55, none of this increase applies to Cheltenham, which will continue to be represented by 10 county councillors elected from 10 divisions.

Unlike the rest of the County, Cheltenham Borough has itself recently been reviewed by the LGBCE, the final report of which was published on 4th April 2023. The outcomes of this review have implications for the review of Cheltenham as part of the review of Gloucestershire County, since the new arrangements for Cheltenham will be effective from May 2024, i.e. one year before any new electoral arrangements for Gloucestershire will come into effect.

2 Projected Cheltenham electorate

Before making our proposals for the 10 divisions in Cheltenham, we wish to address the question of projected electorate for Cheltenham and for the wards which will make up the divisions.

The projected Cheltenham electorate for 2028, as published by LGBCE in its review of Cheltenham is 95,483 electors. The projected Cheltenham electorate for 2029, as published by LGBCE for its review of Gloucestershire is 92,747 . It seems to us that it is inconceivable that both figures can be correct. We have requested an explanation for this discrepancy from LGBCE, but have not had any response. It is difficult to plan on the basis of the lower 2029 figure, since this is based on projected electorates for the current wards, and not the new wards that will in place in 2029. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that the figure of 95,483 is the correct projected figure to use.

3 Cheltenham wards and electorates

The 10 current divisions in Cheltenham are based on the current 20 wards. However, all the 20 ward boundaries in Cheltenham are about to change. One ward will have a different name: Benhall & The Reddings will become Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that these new ward boundaries will be used to determine the 10 electoral divisions in Cheltenham

The LGBCE review of Cheltenham Borough provides projected electorates for 2028 for all new 20 wards in Cheltenham, the combined total of which provides the projected overall electorate of 95,483. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that these projected ward

electorates are the correct figures to use (even though they are for 2028 and not 2029. (See Table 2)

4 Target electorate per division

Projected electorate figures for Gloucestershire published by LGBCE show a total electorate in 2029 of 522,747. However, this figure includes 92,747 for Cheltenham. If the Cheltenham figure of 95,483 is to be used, the overall total for GCC should be 525,483. The increase in the number of councillors from 53 to 55, means that the target electorate per councillor should therefore be 9,554, with a maximum of 10,510 and a minimum of 8,599. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that the target electorate per division is therefore 9,554.

5 Planning assumptions: summary

Our response is therefore based on the following planning assumptions.

- a) Cheltenham will continue to be represented by 10 County Councillors elected from 10 electoral divisions, each comprising a pair of wards within Cheltenham Borough;
- b) The projected Cheltenham Borough electorate for the purposes of this review will be as in the LGBCE final report for Cheltenham published on 4th April 2023 – 95,483
- c) The 20 wards, their boundaries, and their projected electorates, in Cheltenham, used for the purposes of this review will be those set out in the LGBCE final report for Cheltenham published on 4th April 2023 (See Table 2)
- d) The target or average electorate for each division will be 9,554, with a maximum of 10,510 and a minimum of 8,599.

6 Current 10 electoral divisions based on 20 new wards

Table 3 and Map 1 show the 10 current electoral divisions in Cheltenham using the new wards and ward boundaries, and the projected electorates for each ward and division. All the divisions achieve electoral equality although one (Charlton Park & College) only does so by 10 voters. Amongst the 20 new wards in Cheltenham, these two wards have the lowest projected electorates, so it is not surprising that this should be the case.

7 Charlton Park & College division

It is difficult to see how the position for Charlton Park & College division could be improved, without causing considerable disruption to existing pairings of wards in south east Cheltenham. (see Map 1)

Pairing Charlton Park with the adjoining Charlton Kings would require Battledown ward to be paired with (for example) Oakley, and in turn, All

Saints (currently paired with Oakley) to be paired with College.

Alternatively, pairing Charlton Park with the adjoining Leckhampton would require Warden Hill (currently paired with Leckhampton) to be paired with Park and Lansdown (currently paired with Park) to be paired with College. So far as we are aware, there is no community benefit or popular requests for any of these potential changes.

The only other alternative would be to place part of Leckhampton ward in the Charlton Park & College division, which would breach one of the Commission's policies, which is to use whole wards as the building blocks for electoral divisions.

We therefore propose that the Charlton Park & College division should be retained, accepting that is (just) within the limits of electoral equality.

8 St Paul's & Swindon Village division

The pairing of these two wards is one area of Cheltenham where there is notable dissatisfaction with the current arrangements, in particular from the community in St Paul's. This was most evident (in a different boundary review context) during discussions about the constituency boundary review of Cheltenham by the Boundary Commission for England. It was argued (by some) that St Paul's ward should be transferred to the Tewkesbury constituency using the rationale that it is paired with Swindon Village ward as part of the County Council electoral division, and since Swindon Village is already in the Tewkesbury constituency, it was logical to transfer St Paul's as well.

These arguments were strongly contested by representatives from St Paul's, who argued that St Paul's is an urban town centre ward, with little in common with the semi-rural Swindon Village ward, which has its own parish council. It was said on the record that when the time came to review the electoral divisions in Cheltenham it would be proposed to separate St Paul's ward from Swindon Village ward, and pair it with another more appropriate ward in the centre of Cheltenham. Presentations from representatives of St Paul's on this issue to the public hearing in Gloucester on 24/5 March 2022 can be viewed on YouTube – see Annex 1.

We agree with those sentiments and we support the separation of St Paul's from Swindon Village. The two wards are very different in character and represent different types of communities. St Paul's is an urban ward: it has the highest population density of all Cheltenham wards and encompasses the most central parts of Cheltenham. It is not parished, but it has an active Residents' Association (SPRA) – see (20+) St Paul's Residents' Association | Facebook. Swindon Village on the other hand, whilst it covers some urban parts of Cheltenham is largely semi-rural. It has one of the lowest population densities in Cheltenham, it is parished, with its own parish council, with its own distinctive concerns which are very different from those of St Paul's – see Village News | Swindon Parish Council.

9 Proposed St Paul's & Pittville division

St Paul's has more similarities with the adjoining Pittville ward. A report on research on St Paul's, undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council reported, for example, that residents of both wards:

- considered Pittville Park to be part of their community;
- had similar concerns about housing development
- shared issues related to the impact of the growth of University of Gloucestershire student residential facilities;
- shared a Neighbourhood Coordination Group (NCG)
- shared a police neighbourhood policing team

Although there are, of course, differences between the two wards, St Paul's is much more similar to Pittville than it is to Swindon Village.

We have looked at other possible pairings for St Paul's with adjacent wards. However, each of these possibilities would have knock effects on several other divisions and would be much more disruptive of current arrangements (see Map 1).

We therefore propose the creation of a new division of St Paul's & Pittville.

10 Proposed Prestbury & Swindon Village division

Only one other change is required as a consequence of this proposal, which is the creation of a new division of Prestbury & Swindon Village. The pairing of Prestbury and Swindon Village wards is appropriate since they share a number of similarities:

- Both are centred on their respective civil parishes, with part of Prestbury parish in Swindon Village ward
- Both parishes refer to themselves as a 'village', and have similar issues of concern, unlike the wards with which each is currently paired;
- Both have relatively low population density, compared with St Paul's and Pittville wards;
- Both are on the northern periphery of Cheltenham, bordering the neighbouring Borough of Tewkesbury
- Both are, for parliamentary purposes, in Tewkesbury constituency, rather than Cheltenham, (and this is unlikely to change with the forthcoming parliamentary boundary changes), however they are appropriately part of Cheltenham Borough;
- Both share a significant common boundary.

11 Proposed divisions and projected electorates

We don't propose any other changes to the divisions in Cheltenham. In summary we therefore propose:

- 10 divisions in Cheltenham using the new ward boundaries;
- Other than changes in ward boundaries (and one change in ward name), eight divisions to remain as currently;
- Two new divisions (St Paul's & Pittville, Prestbury & Swindon Village) to replace two existing divisions (Pittville & Prestbury, St Paul's & Swindon Village)

Table 4 and Map 2 show our proposed 10 divisions with their projected electorates.

Mike Farmer
Secretary, Cheltenham CLP
4th May 2023
Attachments

Table 1: Cheltenham: current electoral divisions and current wards with current electorate

Table 2 Cheltenham: new wards and projected electorates (2028)

Table 3: Cheltenham: current electoral divisions using new wards with projected electorates

Table 4: Cheltenham: proposed electoral divisions and projected electorates

Map 1 Cheltenham: current electoral divisions using new wards

Map 2 Cheltenham: proposed electoral divisions

Annex 1 Cheltenham: representations 24/5 March 2022 to the Boundary Commission for England on St Paul's ward (links)

Attached Documents:

- Cheltenham CLP initial response revised.docx



**CHELTENHAM CONSTITUENCY
LABOUR PARTY**

SPEAKING AND WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

**Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England
initial consultation on Gloucestershire Electoral Review**

4th May 2023

Local Government Boundary Commission: Gloucestershire Electoral Review

Initial Consultation (28th March – 5th June 2023)

Response from Cheltenham Constituency Labour Party (CLP)

1 Background and context

In two-tier County Councils like Gloucestershire, with County and six district councils, electoral divisions are not permitted to cross district council boundaries. Furthermore, the Commission must 'have regard for' ward boundaries. The Commission states as follows:

in reviewing two-tier county councils we are required to have regard to the boundaries of district or borough wards. We will seek to use them as the building blocks for county electoral divisions. In making our recommendations, we must ensure that every electoral division is wholly within a single district, so that no division crosses the boundary between two neighbouring districts.¹

The consequence of these two requirements are:

- Cheltenham Borough can be considered in isolation from the rest of the county;
- Electoral divisions should follow ward boundaries within Cheltenham.

Cheltenham currently has 10 divisions, each comprising a pair of district council wards. The current divisions are based on the 20 wards as they currently (2023) exist. We note that three of the current divisions are $\pm 10\%$ or more from the average:

- Benhall & Up Hatherley (-12%);
- Hesters Way & Springbank ($+10\%$);
- St Mark's & St Peter's ($+12\%$).

(See Table 1)

Although the total number of County Councillors will rise from 53 to 55, none of this increase applies to Cheltenham, which will continue to be represented by 10 county councillors elected from 10 divisions.

Unlike the rest of the County, Cheltenham Borough has itself recently been reviewed by the LGBCE, the final report of which was published on 4th April 2023. The outcomes of this review² have implications for the review of Cheltenham as part of the review of Gloucestershire County, since the new arrangements for Cheltenham will be effective from May 2024, i.e. one year before any new electoral arrangements for Gloucestershire will come into effect.

2 Projected Cheltenham electorate

Before making our proposals for the 10 divisions in Cheltenham, we wish to address the question of projected electorate for Cheltenham and for the wards which will make up the divisions.

The projected Cheltenham electorate for 2028, as published by LGBCE in its review of Cheltenham is **95,483** electors. The projected Cheltenham electorate for 2029, as published by LGBCE for its review

¹ Electoral reviews: technical guidance, LGBCE (2014) paragraph 3.7.

² 'New electoral arrangements for Cheltenham Borough Council: final recommendations', LGBCE, (April 2023)

of Gloucestershire is **92,747³**. It seems to us that it is inconceivable that both figures can be correct. We have requested an explanation for this discrepancy from LGBCE, but have not had any response. It is difficult to plan on the basis of the lower 2029 figure, since this is based on projected electorates for the current wards, and not the new wards that will in place in 2029. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that the figure of 95,483 is the correct projected figure to use.

3 Cheltenham wards and electorates

The 10 current divisions in Cheltenham are based on the current 20 wards. However, all the 20 ward boundaries in Cheltenham are about to change. One ward will have a different name: Benhall & The Reddings will become Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that these new ward boundaries will be used to determine the 10 electoral divisions in Cheltenham

The LGBCE review of Cheltenham Borough provides projected electorates for 2028 for all new 20 wards in Cheltenham, the combined total of which provides the projected overall electorate of 95,483. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that these projected ward electorates are the correct figures to use (even though they are for 2028 and not 2029. (See Table 2)

4 Target electorate per division

Projected electorate figures for Gloucestershire published by LGBCE show a total electorate in 2029 of 522,747. However, this figure includes 92,747 for Cheltenham. If the Cheltenham figure of 95,483 is to be used, the overall total for GCC should be 525,483. The increase in the number of councillors from 53 to 55, means that the target electorate per councillor should therefore be 9,554, with a maximum of 10,510 and a minimum of 8,599. For the purposes of the review of GCC we are assuming that the target electorate per division is therefore **9,554**.

5 Planning assumptions: summary

Our response is therefore based on the following planning assumptions.

- a) Cheltenham will continue to be represented by **10 County Councillors** elected from **10 electoral divisions**, each comprising a **pair of wards** within Cheltenham Borough;
- b) The **projected Cheltenham Borough electorate** for the purposes of this review will be as in the LGBCE final report for Cheltenham published on 4th April 2023 – **95,483**
- c) The **20 wards, their boundaries, and their projected electorates**, in Cheltenham, used for the purposes of this review will be those set out in the LGBCE final report for Cheltenham published on 4th April 2023 (See Table 2)
- d) The target or average electorate for each division will be **9,554**, with a maximum of **10,510** and a minimum of **8,599**.

6 Current 10 electoral divisions based on 20 new wards

Table 3 and Map 1 show the 10 current electoral divisions in Cheltenham using the new wards and ward boundaries, and the projected electorates for each ward and division. All the divisions achieve electoral equality although one (Charlton Park & College) only does so by 10 voters. Amongst the 20 new wards in Cheltenham, these two wards have the lowest projected electorates, so it is not surprising that this should be the case.

³ [Gloucestershire | LGBCE](#)

7 Charlton Park & College division

It is difficult to see how the position for Charlton Park & College division could be improved, without causing considerable disruption to existing pairings of wards in south east Cheltenham. (see Map 1)

Pairing Charlton Park with the adjoining Charlton Kings would require Battledown ward to be paired with (for example) Oakley, and in turn, All Saints (currently paired with Oakley) to be paired with College.

Alternatively, pairing Charlton Park with the adjoining Leckhampton would require Warden Hill (currently paired with Leckhampton) to be paired with Park and Lansdown (currently paired with Park) to be paired with College. So far as we are aware, there is no community benefit or popular requests for any of these potential changes.

The only other alternative would be to place part of Leckhampton ward in the Charlton Park & College division, which would breach one of the Commission's policies, which is to use whole wards as the building blocks for electoral divisions.

We therefore propose that the Charlton Park & College division should be retained, accepting that is (just) within the limits of electoral equality.

8 St Paul's & Swindon Village division

The pairing of these two wards is one area of Cheltenham where there is notable dissatisfaction with the current arrangements, in particular from the community in St Paul's. This was most evident (in a different boundary review context) during discussions about the constituency boundary review of Cheltenham by the Boundary Commission for England. It was argued (by some) that St Paul's ward should be transferred to the Tewkesbury constituency using the rationale that it is paired with Swindon Village ward as part of the County Council electoral division, and since Swindon Village is already in the Tewkesbury constituency, it was logical to transfer St Paul's as well.

These arguments were strongly contested by representatives from St Paul's, who argued that St Paul's is an urban town centre ward, with little in common with the semi-rural Swindon Village ward, which has its own parish council. It was said on the record that when the time came to review the electoral divisions in Cheltenham it would be proposed to separate St Paul's ward from Swindon Village ward, and pair it with another more appropriate ward in the centre of Cheltenham. Presentations from representatives of St Paul's on this issue to the public hearing in Gloucester on 24/5 March 2022 can be viewed on YouTube – see Annex 1.

We agree with those sentiments and we support the separation of St Paul's from Swindon Village. The two wards are very different in character and represent different types of communities. St Paul's is an urban ward: it has the highest population density of all Cheltenham wards and encompasses the most central parts of Cheltenham. It is not parished, but it has an active Residents' Association (SPRA) – see [\(20+\) St Paul's Residents' Association | Facebook](#). Swindon Village on the other hand, whilst it covers some urban parts of Cheltenham is largely semi-rural. It has one of the lowest population densities in Cheltenham, it is parished, with its own parish council, with its own distinctive concerns which are very different from those of St Paul's – see [Village News | Swindon Parish Council](#).

9 Proposed St Paul's & Pittville division

St Paul's has more similarities with the adjoining Pittville ward. A report on research on St Paul's, undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council⁴ reported, for example, that residents of both wards:

- considered Pittville Park to be part of their community;
- had similar concerns about housing development
- shared issues related to the impact of the growth of University of Gloucestershire student residential facilities;
- shared a Neighbourhood Coordination Group (NCG)
- shared a police neighbourhood policing team

Although there are, of course, differences between the two wards, St Paul's is much more similar to Pittville than it is to Swindon Village.

We have looked at other possible pairings for St Paul's with adjacent wards. However, each of these possibilities would have knock effects on several other divisions and would be much more disruptive of current arrangements (see Map 1).

We therefore propose the creation of a new division of **St Paul's & Pittville**.

10 Proposed Prestbury & Swindon Village division

Only one other change is required as a consequence of this proposal, which is the creation of a new division of **Prestbury & Swindon Village**. The pairing of Prestbury and Swindon Village wards is appropriate since they share a number of similarities:

- Both are centred on their respective civil parishes, with part of Prestbury parish in Swindon Village ward
- Both parishes refer to themselves as a 'village', and have similar issues of concern, unlike the wards with which each is currently paired;
- Both have relatively low population density, compared with St Paul's and Pittville wards;
- Both are on the northern periphery of Cheltenham, bordering the neighbouring Borough of Tewkesbury
- Both are, for parliamentary purposes, in Tewkesbury constituency, rather than Cheltenham, (and this is unlikely to change with the forthcoming parliamentary boundary changes), however they are appropriately part of Cheltenham Borough;
- Both share a significant common boundary.

11 Proposed divisions and projected electorates

We don't propose any other changes to the divisions in Cheltenham. In summary we therefore propose:

- 10 divisions in Cheltenham using the new ward boundaries;
- Other than changes in ward boundaries (and one change in ward name), eight divisions to remain as currently;
- Two new divisions (St Paul's & Pittville, Prestbury & Swindon Village) to replace two existing divisions (Pittville & Prestbury, St Paul's & Swindon Village)

Table 4 and Map 2 show our proposed 10 divisions with their projected electorates.

⁴ Cheltenham Borough, Engaging Communities Project Report, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, 2017

Mike Farmer
Secretary, Cheltenham CLP
4th May 2023

Attachments

Table 1:	Cheltenham: current electoral divisions and current wards with current electorate
Table 2	Cheltenham: new wards and projected electorates (2028)
Table 3:	Cheltenham: current electoral divisions using new wards with projected electorates
Table 4:	Cheltenham: proposed electoral divisions and projected electorates
Map 1	Cheltenham: current electoral divisions using new wards
Map 2	Cheltenham: proposed electoral divisions
Annex 1	Cheltenham: representations 24/5 March 2022 to the Boundary Commission for England on St Paul's ward (links)

Table 1: Cheltenham current electoral divisions and current wards with current electorate

Electoral Divisions	Electorate	Variance
All Saints and Oakley	8639	-6%
Battledown and Charlton Kings	9226	1%
Benhall and Up Hatherley	8092	-12%
Charlton Park and College	8361	-9%
Hesters Way and Springbank	10092	10%
Lansdown and Park	9034	-1%
Leckhampton and Warden Hill	8693	-5%
Pittville and Prestbury	9384	2%
St. Mark's and St. Peter's	10255	12%
St. Paul's and Swindon	8628	-6%

GCC average = 9166

Table 2: Cheltenham new wards and projected electorates (2028)

New wards	Electors
All Saints	4521
Battledown	4848
Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green	5098
Charlton Kings	4446
Charlton Park	4315
College	4294
Hesters Way	5034
Lansdown	4733
Leckhampton	4840
Oakley	4637
Park	4424
Pittville	4789
Prestbury	4924
Springbank	5106
St. Mark's	5002
St. Paul's	4616
St. Peter's	5166
Swindon Village	5196
Up Hatherley	5068
Warden Hill	4426
Total	95483

Table 3: current electoral divisions using new wards with projected electorates

Division	Electors	Variance
All Saints and Oakley	9158	-4%
Battledown and Charlton Kings	9294	-3%
Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green and Up Hatherley	10166	6%
Charlton Park and College	8609	-10%
Hesters Way and Springbank	10140	6%
Lansdown and Park	9157	-4%
Leckhampton and Warden Hill	9266	-3%
Pittville and Prestbury	9713	2%
St. Mark's and St. Peter's	10168	6%
St. Paul's and Swindon Village	9812	3%
	95483	

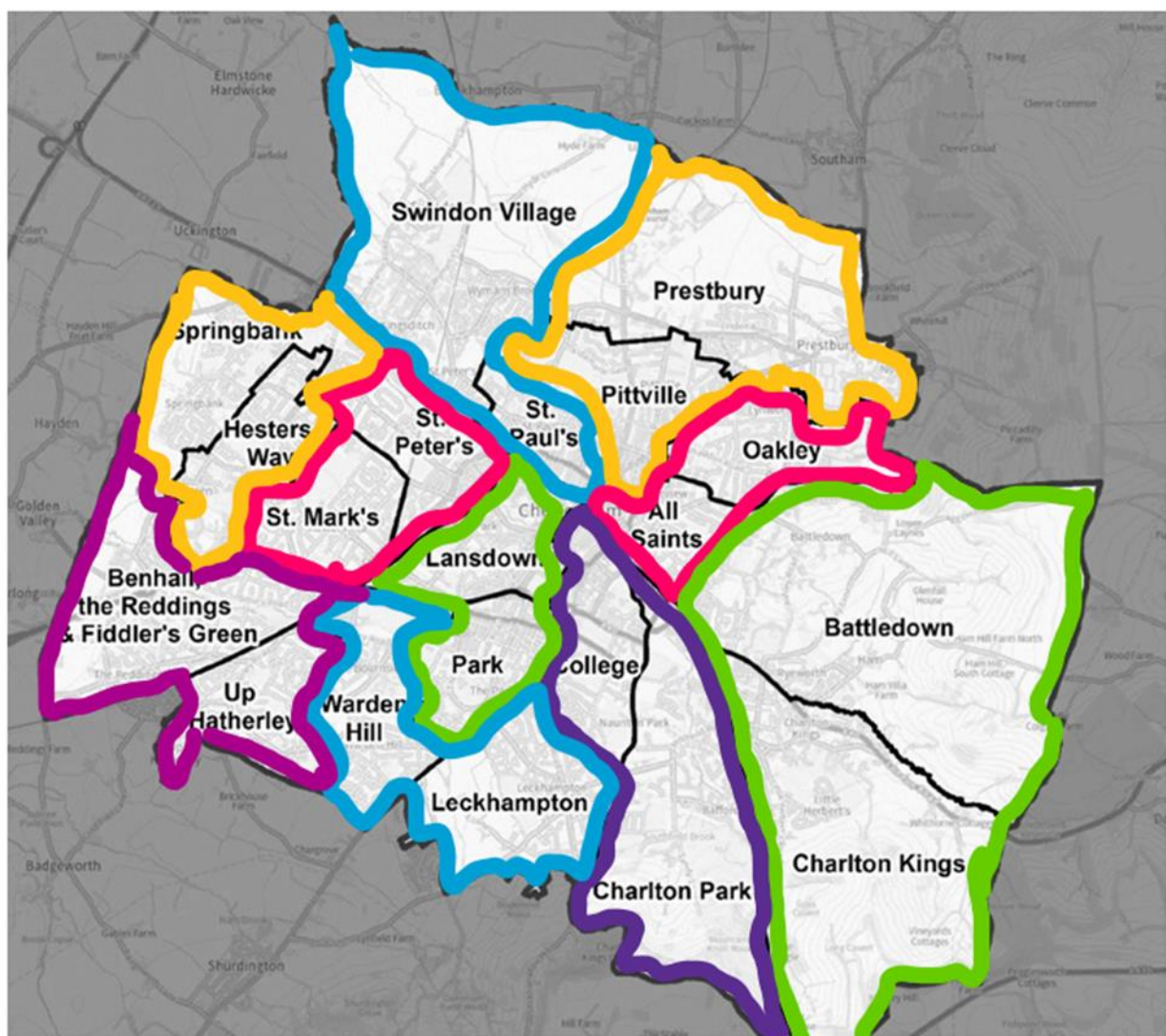
GCC average = 9554, Max 10510, Min 8599

Table 4: proposed electoral divisions and projected electorates

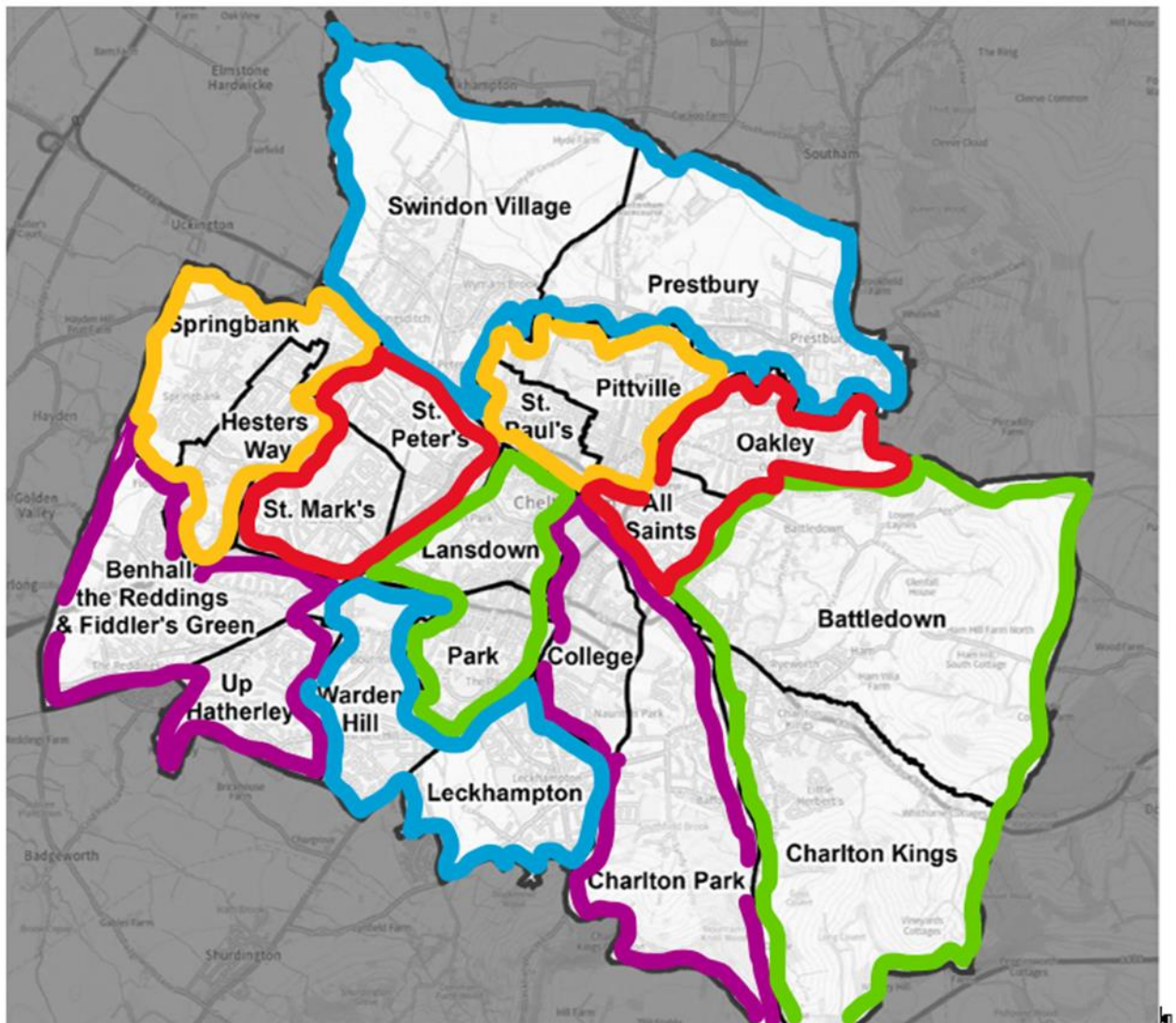
Division	Electors	Variance
All Saints and Oakley	9158	-4%
Battledown and Charlton Kings	9294	-3%
Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green and Up Hatherley	10166	6%
Charlton Park and College	8609	-10%
Hesters Way and Springbank	10140	6%
Lansdown and Park	9157	-4%
Leckhampton and Warden Hill	9266	-3%
Pittville and St Pauls	9405	-2%
St. Mark's and St. Peter's	10168	6%
Prestbury and Swindon Village	10120	6%
	95483	

GCC average = 9554, Max 10510, Min 8599

Map 1: current electoral divisions with new ward boundaries



Map 2: proposed electoral divisions incorporating two new divisions



Annex 1: representations 24/5 March 2022 to the Boundary Commission for England on St Paul's ward

David Willingham	BCE Gloucester Public Hearing Day 2: 25 March 2022 (Part 5) - YouTube	BCE-97952 BCE Consultation Portal (bcereviews.org.uk)
Alisha Lewis	BCE Gloucester Public Hearing Day 1: 24 March 2022 (Part 3) - YouTube	BCE-97920 BCE Consultation Portal (bcereviews.org.uk)
Jon Walklett	BCE Gloucester Public Hearing Day 2: 25 March 2022 (Part 4) - YouTube (starts at 33:51)	BCE-97948 BCE Consultation Portal (bcereviews.org.uk)