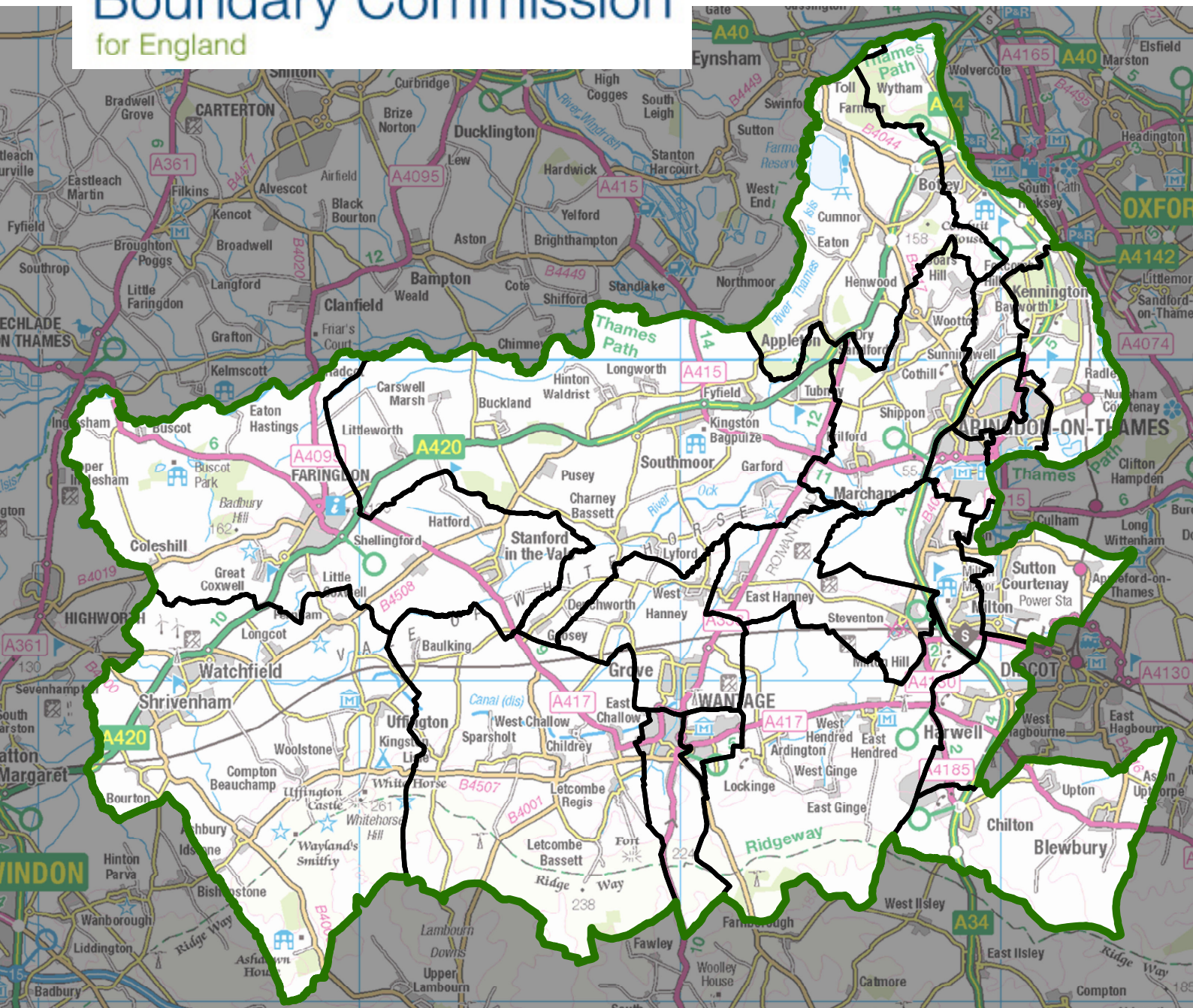


The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England



**New electoral arrangements for Vale
of White Horse District Council
Draft Recommendations**

July 2024

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Wallace Sampson OBE
- Liz Treacy
- Ailsa Irvine (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.

6 More detail on the powers that we have, as well as further guidance and information about electoral reviews and the review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Vale of White Horse?

7 We are conducting a review of Vale of White Horse District Council ('the Council') as some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Vale of White Horse are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the district.

Our proposals for Vale of White Horse

9 Vale of White Horse should be represented by 39 councillors, one more than there is now.

10 Vale of White Horse should have 20 wards, four fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 16 wards should change; four will stay the same.

How will the recommendations affect you?

12 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.

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

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 9 July 2024 to 16 September 2024. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

15 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 16 September 2024 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 26 for information on how to send us your response.

Review timetable

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

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

| Stage starts | Description |
|-------------------|---|
| 12 December 2023 | Number of councillors decided |
| 9 January 2024 | Start of consultation seeking views on new wards |
| 22 March 2024 | End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations |
| 9 July 2024 | Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation |
| 16 September 2024 | End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations |
| December 2024 | Publication of final recommendations |

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ 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.

20 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.

21 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.

| | 2023 | 2029 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Electorate of Vale of White Horse | 105,812 | 121,248 |
| Number of councillors | 39 | 39 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 2,713 | 3,109 |

22 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'. Nineteen of our proposed wards for Vale of White Horse are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029; one ward is forecast to fall outside the range of good electoral equality.

Submissions received

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

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted housing data and, in consultation with the Commission, agreed electorate forecasts for 2029, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of the final recommendations in 2024. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an electorate increase of around 15% by 2029.

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

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

25 We considered the housing information provided and are satisfied that the projected figures agreed with the Council are the best estimates currently available. We have therefore used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

26 Our mapping tool uses geocoded electoral registers supplied by the Council to locate electors, by associating addresses with specific geographic coordinates. It considers each elector's location to produce precise elector counts for each ward. There can be very slight differences between the electorate figures published on our website at the beginning of the review and the electorate figures published in this report. However, these are very minor and do not impact on our recommendations.

Number of councillors

27 Vale of White Horse District Council currently has 38 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council, which produced a submission advocating for an increase of three councillors; however, we were not persuaded by this submission and originally concluded that keeping this number the same would ensure the Council could carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

28 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 38 councillors. For example: 38 one-councillor wards, 19 two-councillor wards, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

29 We received two submissions which addressed the number of councillors in Vale of White Horse. The Council proposed a warding pattern based on 39 councillors instead of 38. We received one submission from a local resident which noted that the district was previously represented by 51 councillors before the Commission's 2013 review reduced that number to 38. They suggested that significant recent population growth, as well as projected future growth, in Vale of White Horse warranted an increase in representation. When agreeing the number of councillors to be elected to an authority, we do not assume that population growth automatically warrants more councillors. However, we have been persuaded by the Council's proposals, which used strong boundaries. We have concluded that a warding scheme based on 39 councillors will provide for an effective distribution of councillors across the district and ensure an effective balance of our statutory criteria. Our draft recommendations therefore provide for a council size of 39 – one more than we announced at the beginning of the consultation.

Ward boundaries consultation

30 We received 21 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included two district-wide proposals: one from the Council and one from a local resident. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

31 The two borough-wide schemes provided a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for Vale of White Horse. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that, in the case of the Council's submission, the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

32 We considered that the local resident's submission, which was built on the premise of not dividing parishes where possible, did not result in good levels of electoral equality in many areas of the district. The resident additionally proposed the adoption of four-member wards. Although there is no upper limit in legislation regarding the number of councillors that may be returned from each ward, we take the view that wards returning more than three councillors result in a dilution of accountability to the electorate and we will not normally recommend a number above that figure. There are currently no principal authority wards or divisions in England returning more than three councillors.

33 Our draft recommendations are therefore based on the Council's scheme, with some amendments to address areas of greater forecast electoral imbalance.

34 Our recommendations also take 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 the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

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

Draft recommendations

36 Our draft recommendations are for five three-councillor wards, nine two-councillor wards and six one-councillor wards. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

37 The tables and maps on pages 9–23 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Vale of White Horse. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.

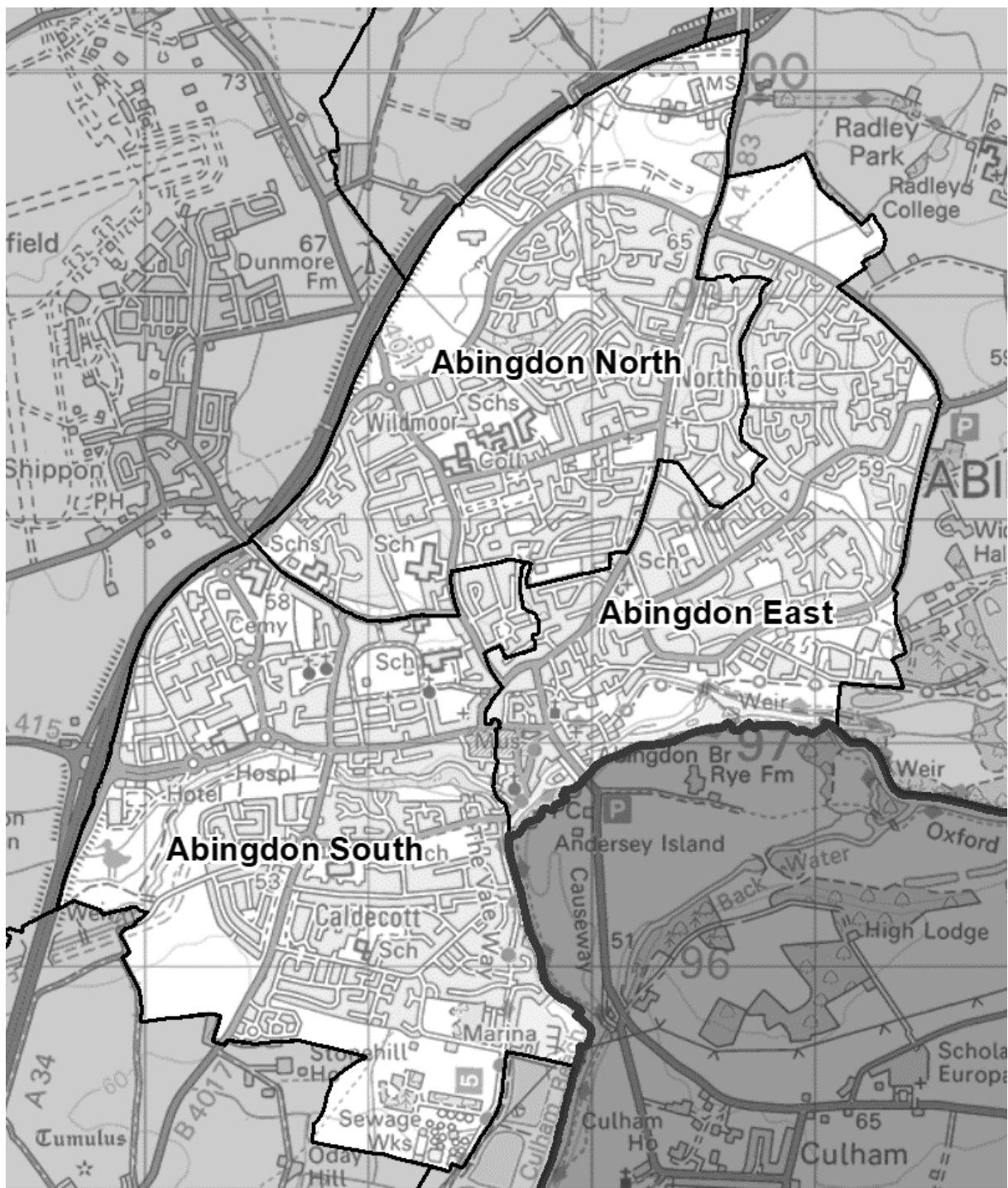
⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

38 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 32 and on the large map accompanying this report.

39 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries and the names of our proposed wards.

Abingdon



| Ward name | Number of councillors | Variance 2029 |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Abingdon East | 3 | 4% |
| Abingdon North | 3 | 2% |
| Abingdon South | 3 | 0% |

40 The Abingdon Town Council area is currently represented by five two-councillor wards. Due to changes in the forecast electorate across the Vale of White Horse area, the parish area will be entitled to nine councillors in 2029.

41 We received a submission from a local resident who identified a discrepancy in our electorate distribution in Abingdon, due to calculations being based on outdated polling district boundaries. We promptly addressed these inconsistencies within the first week of our consultation and republished our electorate proforma with the updated figures.

Abingdon East, Abingdon North and Abingdon South

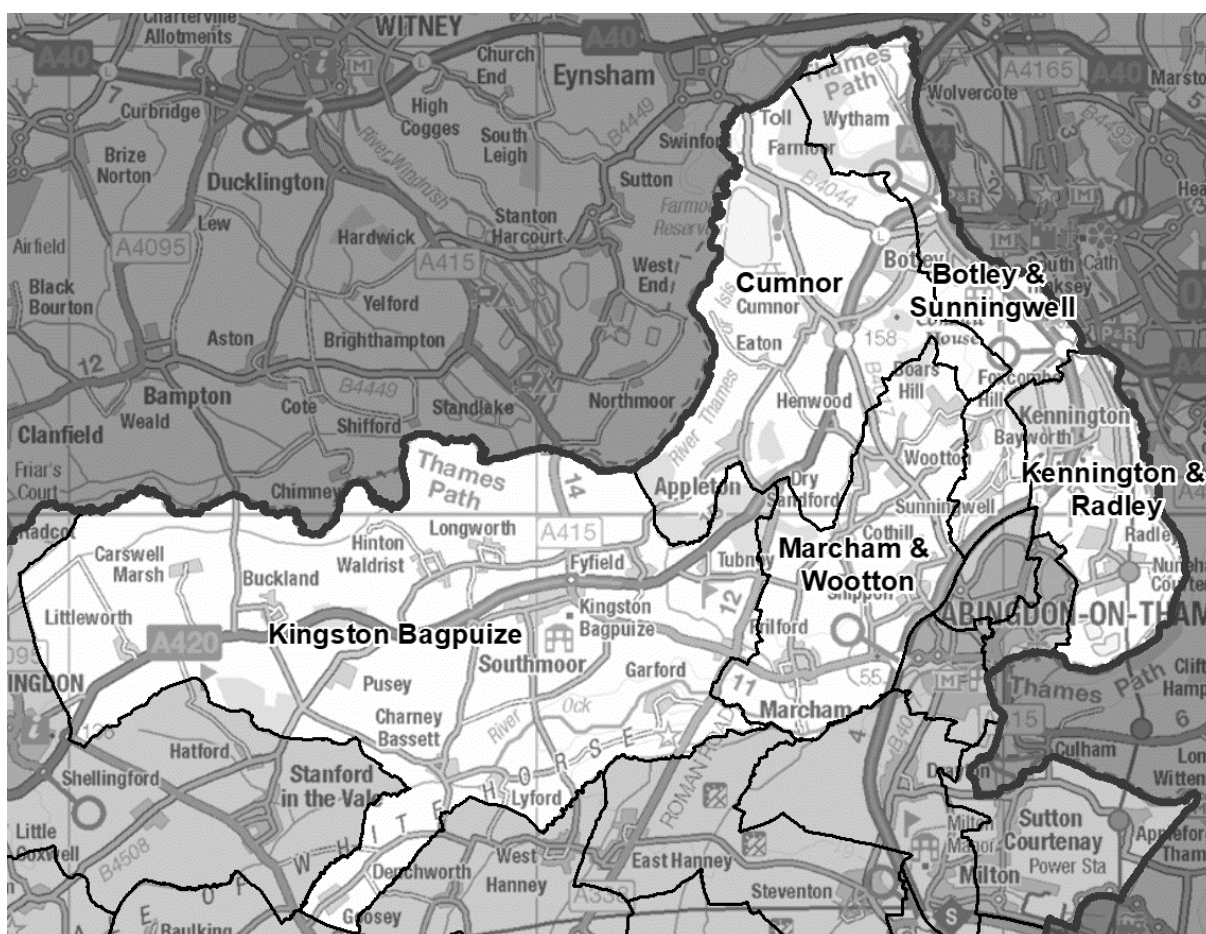
42 The Council proposed three three-member wards covering all of Abingdon. It suggested an Abingdon East ward comprising the existing Abingdon Peachcroft ward along with most of Abingdon Abbey Northcourt ward south of Boxhill Road. It suggested an Abingdon North ward comprising the existing Abingdon Dunmore ward, the remainder of Abingdon Abbey Northcourt ward north of Boxhill Road, and the area of Abingdon Fitzharris ward north of Faringdon Road. Its proposed Abingdon South ward comprised the existing Abingdon Caldecott ward and the majority of Abingdon Fitzharris ward south of Faringdon Road.

43 We consider that the Council's proposals in Abingdon result in good equality of representation for the town and generally seem to reflect local neighbourhood areas. We note that these proposals result in all the historic centre of the town being included in one district ward (Abingdon East), as well as using a logical boundary in the form of Faringdon Road between Abingdon North and Abingdon South wards.

44 We note two areas where a slight amendment to the Council's proposals would better reflect local access routes, allowing for more effective and convenient local government. The first of these is the inclusion of several small residential roads south of Twelve Acre Drive (Hunter Close, Mattock Way, Rainbow Way and Sadlers Court) in Abingdon East ward as opposed to Abingdon North ward. We note that there is a new housing development set to be built north of Twelve Acre Drive, and that the roads listed above can only access Abingdon North ward via Twelve Acre Drive. The second is the inclusion of a small area around Rush Common School (including Culham Close, Dorchester Crescent, Harwell Close, Hendred Way and Rutherford Close) in Abingdon North ward instead of Abingdon East ward. We note that this area is separated from Abingdon East ward and lacks clear access except along the A4183 (Oxford Road). These two changes still ensure good forecast electoral equality for the three Abingdon wards.

45 As part of our draft recommendations we propose a three-member Abingdon East ward, a three-member Abingdon North ward and a three-member Abingdon South ward similar to the Council's submission but with amendments as described.

Kingston Bagpuize and Vale North East



| Ward name | Number of councillors | Variance 2029 |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Botley & Sunningwell | 2 | -9% |
| Cumnor | 2 | 3% |
| Kennington & Radley | 2 | -2% |
| Kingston Bagpuize | 2 | 0% |
| Marcham & Wootton | 2 | -6% |

46 For the purposes of this report, we have included many of Vale’s northern parishes (broadly south of the River Thames and to the north and west of Abingdon) in one area, which is entitled to about 10 councillors.

Botley & Sunningwell, Cumnor and Kennington & Radley

47 The Council proposed unchanged two-member wards in Botley & Sunningwell and Kennington & Radley, as they are both forecast to have good forecast electoral equality. It additionally proposed a two-member Cumnor ward similar to the existing arrangement, but with the addition of Appleton-with-Eaton and Besselsleigh parishes which currently comprise the eastern end of the existing Thames ward.

48 The resident's submission in this area proposed a single-member Kennington ward, a single-member Radley & Sunningwell ward, a single-member Marcham & Appleton ward and a four-member Botley, Cumnor & Wootton ward. As discussed in the introductory paragraphs, we consider that wards of more than three members potentially dilute the accountability of elected members. We therefore do not consider that such a four-member ward allows for effective and convenient local government.

49 We consider that the Council's proposed wards in this area will provide the best balance of our statutory criteria and, in the absence of any additional local submissions for these wards, we propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations.

Kingston Bagpuize

50 The Council proposed a departure from the existing warding pattern around Kingston Bagpuize, where it suggested removing the current Thames ward and redistributing its component parishes to neighbouring wards. This reconfiguration is due principally to significant forecast electorate growth in Kingston Bagpuize, one of the larger settlements in this area of the district. The ward, currently electing a single member and consisting of the town and five small southern parishes, is projected to have a forecast electoral variance of 38% by 2029. The Council has therefore suggested a two-member Kingston Bagpuize ward which also includes six additional surrounding parishes to bring the ward within an acceptable electoral variance.

51 The resident's submission in this area suggested maintaining a much more geographically compact single-member Kingston Bagpuize ward consisting solely of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor parish. Although this ward does result in equality of representation, it leaves many of the smaller surrounding parishes to be included in geographically large wards.

52 While we consider that a compact single-member Kingston Bagpuize ward, as proposed by the local resident, has merit, we are not persuaded by the resulting Stanford & Villages or Faringdon & Coxwell wards, which will cover large areas and consist of many small parishes that do not appear to have a common sense of community identity. Although the Council's proposed two-member ward is also large, we consider that using the town of Kingston Bagpuize as the ward's focal point would allow for more effective and convenient local government.

53 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose a two-member Kingston Bagpuize ward comprising the parishes of: Buckland, Charney Bassett, Frilford, Fyfield & Tubney, Garford, Goosey, Hinton Waldrist, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Littleworth, Longworth, Lyford and Pusey. All of these parishes are currently in either Thames or Kingston Bagpuize wards.

Marcham & Wootton

54 The Council proposed a two-member Marcham & Wootton ward comprising the parishes of Marcham, St. Helen Without and Wootton. The local resident did not account for the electorate of St. Helen Without in their scheme, including it with unassigned electors in Abingdon, and their scheme is therefore incomplete in this area.

55 We received a submission from St. Helen Without Parish Council, which noted that the parish is currently split across two wards in the existing warding pattern and requested a configuration in which the parish can sit entirely within one ward. This submission additionally made reference to the planned Dalton Barracks housing development, which is located in St. Helen Without parish and which will be best served by the parish council if it can work within one district ward. It also indicated that the management of the new development would be best achieved in a warding pattern where the parish is in the same ward as Wootton parish.

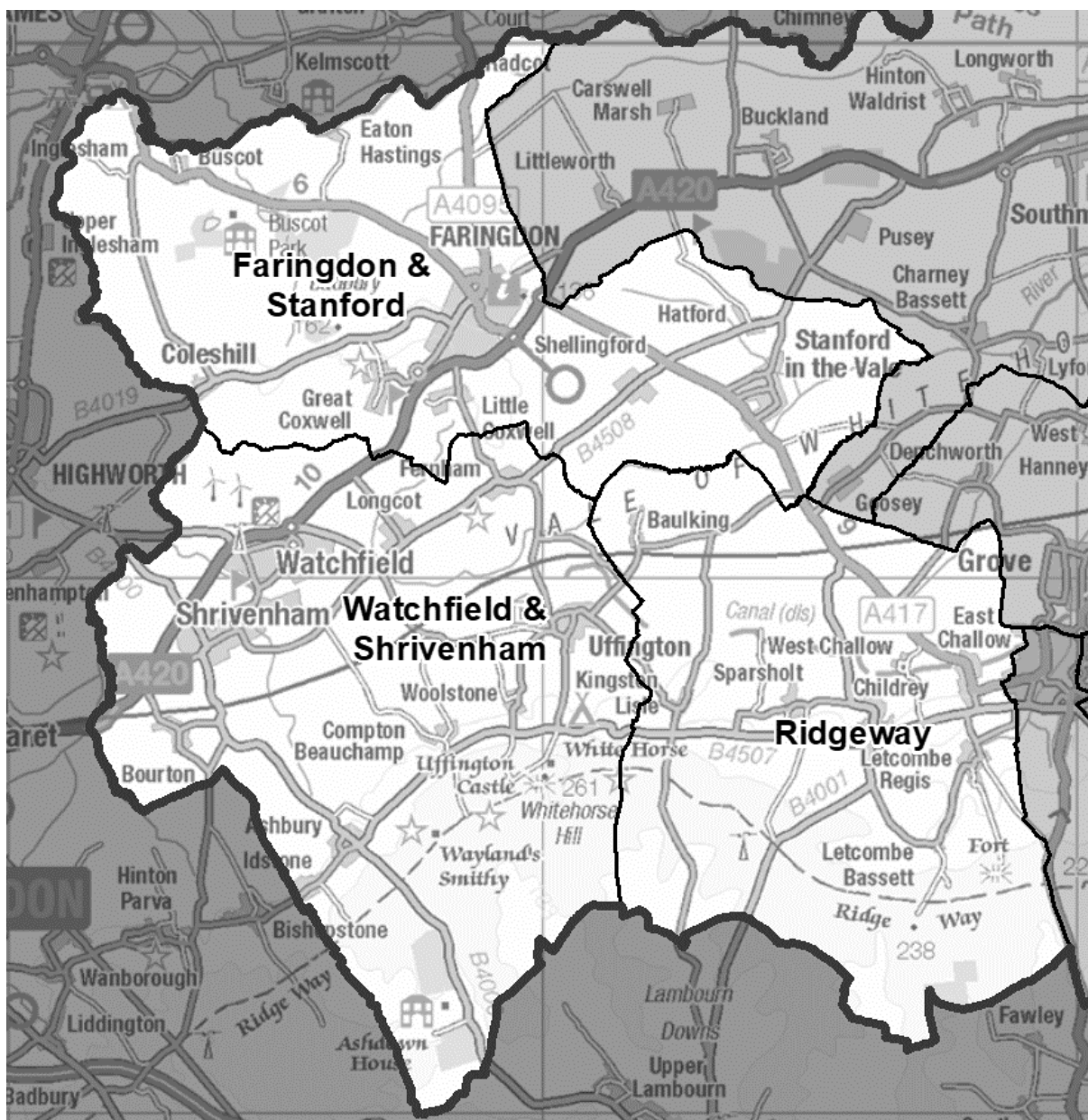
56 We received two submissions from Marcham Parish Council that also referenced the Dalton Barracks development and requested that it be taken into account by the Commission as part of this review. We note that the strategic allocation for the site features in Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031. This is outside the scope of our forecast which only considers the electorate up to and including 2029. However, we note that the proposed Marcham & Wootton ward has a forecast electorate variance of 6% less than the district average by 2029, leaving it better suited to absorbing additional electors in the years beyond the scope of this review.

57 The Council's proposed Marcham & Wootton ward, which we have adopted in our draft recommendations, includes the entirety of St. Helen Without parish, as well as Marcham and Wootton parishes. We agree with the parish council that including these parishes in the same ward would allow for the area to be more effectively represented, particularly in light of the planned development at Dalton Barracks.

58 We received a submission from Councillor Paul Foster of Wootton Parish Council, which suggested that Wootton shares mutual interests with Sunningwell parish and Henwood, and that all three areas should be represented by a single councillor. We note that some of Henwood is in Cumnor parish and consider that dividing the parish to accommodate this proposal may not reflect community interests and identities. We also note that a Wootton ward including Sunningwell would result in a less balanced forecast electorate here.

59 We are persuaded by the Council's proposal for this ward, particularly in light of how it addresses the local concerns raised in the submissions from Marcham and St. Helen Without parishes, and therefore propose a two-member Marcham & Wootton ward as part of our draft recommendations.

Faringdon and Ridgeway



| Ward name | Number of councillors | Variance 2029 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Faringdon & Stanford | 3 | 10% |
| Ridgeway | 1 | -7% |
| Watchfield & Shrivenham | 2 | 12% |

60 The westernmost area of Vale of White Horse includes a number of parishes along the Ridgeway, an ancient trackway. This area, which also includes the town of Faringdon, is entitled to about six councillors.

Faringdon & Stanford, Ridgeway and Watchfield & Shrivenham

61 The Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangement in this part of the district; this pattern features a two-member Faringdon ward, a single-member Ridgeway ward, a single-member Stanford ward and a two-member Watchfield & Shrivenham ward.

62 The local resident's submission in this area included a Faringdon & Coxwell ward covering a large northern area of the district, a Stanford & Villages ward extending eastwards as far as Frilford, as well as a Springline Villages ward resembling the existing Ridgeway ward that would have 18% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2029. We are not persuaded that we have received sufficient evidence to justify this high electoral variance.

63 We received a submission from Councillor James Brooks of Stanford in the Vale Parish Council, who suggested that Stanford's existing ward boundaries make good sense. He also suggested including Goosey parish in Stanford ward, as opposed to Kingston Bagpuize where it is currently included, as it is part of a shared community area with Hatford, Shellingford and Stanford parishes. He noted that Baulking, Uffington and Woolstone parishes reflect another community 'cluster' in the ward.

64 We received two submissions from residents of Watchfield & Shrivenham ward, which suggested that the existing ward is sensible as it consists of villages which share similar concerns, and that it is best represented by localised councillors.

65 We consider that the Council's proposals in this area, although sensible in terms of community identity and using recognisable boundaries for local people, include an unsatisfactory pattern in terms of equality of representation. Its proposed Faringdon ward, coterminous with Great Faringdon parish, has a forecast electoral variance of 14% by 2029; the proposed Watchfield & Shrivenham ward also has a forecast variance of 11% by 2029.

66 We visited this area on our tour of Vale of White Horse, and we consider that a three-member ward including both the town of Faringdon and the village of Stanford results in a more balanced forecast electorate. We consider that, although these are distinct communities, the A417 (Stanford Road) allows for strong internal access between the two areas, and that the surrounding parishes also included in this ward are as well connected to Faringdon & Stanford as they are to other nearby hubs.

67 Including the northwest parishes of the district in Faringdon & Stanford ward allows us to include the parishes of Woolstone and Uffington in Watchfield & Shrivenham ward (they currently form a spur in the existing Stanford ward). In order to achieve improved electoral equality, Ridgeway ward includes Baulking parish south of Stanford.

68 We note that this proposed three-member ward would mean a departure from the existing Stanford parish arrangements that were supported by Councillor Brooks. Although we recognise the working arrangements and relationships of local communities in this area, we have been unable to achieve a warding pattern in this area that leaves existing wards mostly unchanged without resulting in poor equality for the area.

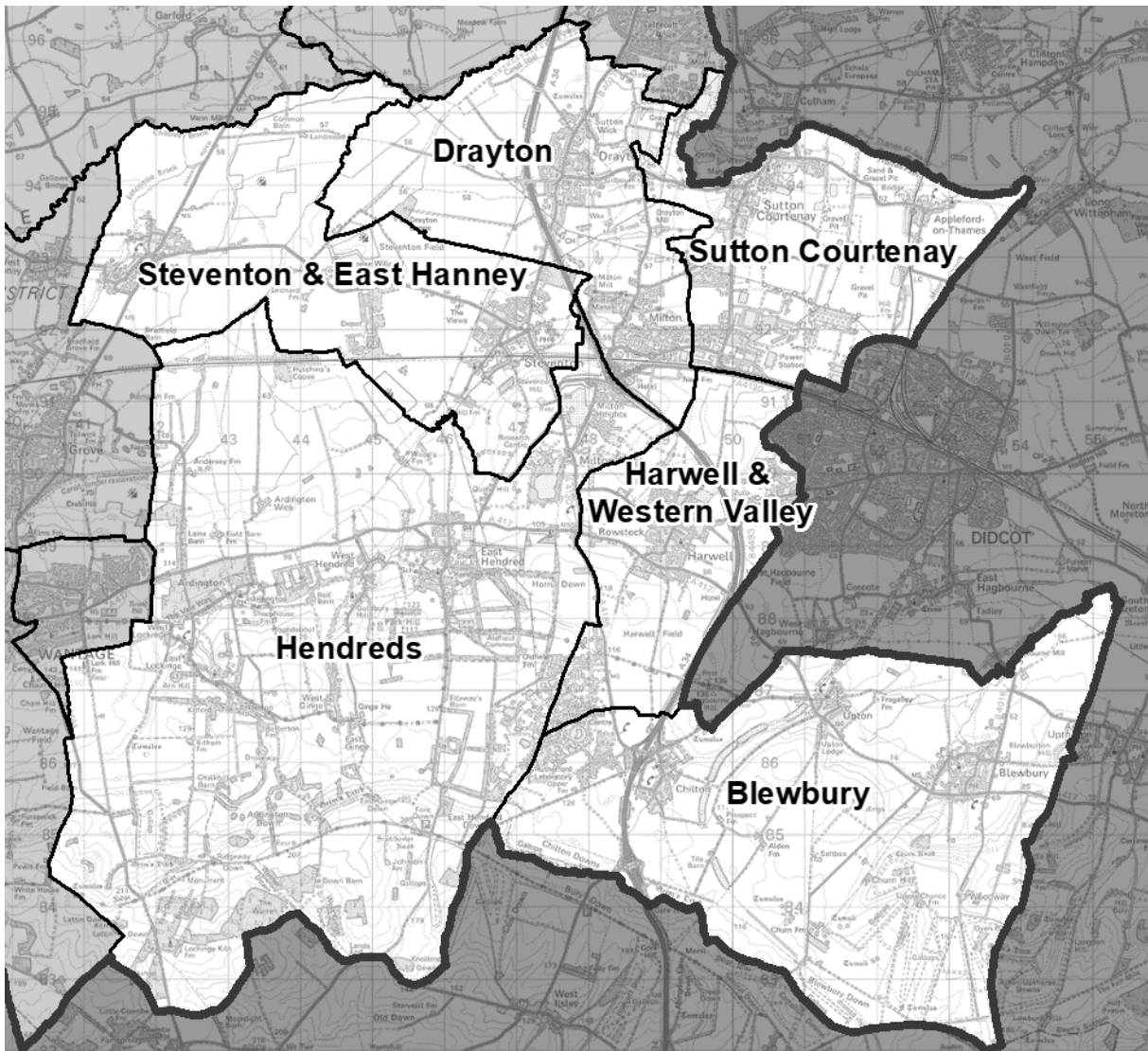
69 We note that our proposed warding pattern here results in a Watchfield & Shrivenham ward with 12% more electors than the average for the district, and a Ridgeway ward with 7% fewer electors than the average. As Uffington parish represents almost the entire boundary between the two wards here, we can find no better way to balance our criteria, as including it in Ridgeway would result in that ward having 15% more electors than average. We also consider that a three-member ward including the entire Ridgeway, along with Watchfield & Shrivenham, would cover too large a geographical area that would not allow for effective and convenient local government; we are particularly interested to hear more local perspectives on this point.

70 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose a three-member Faringdon & Stanford ward comprising Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell, Great Faringdon, Hatford, Little Coxwell, Shellingford and Stanford in the Vale parishes. This proposed ward does not include Goosey parish, as suggested by Councillor Brooks, as we note including it would result in a relatively high electoral variance.

71 We additionally propose a more compact two-member Watchfield & Shrivenham ward comprising Ashbury, Bourton, Compton Beauchamp, Fernham, Longcot, Shrivenham, Uffington, Watchfield and Woolstone parishes. Although Councillor Brooks suggested that Baulking forms part of a shared community with Uffington and Woolstone, we note that any additional electors included in a proposed Watchfield & Shrivenham ward would result in an even greater forecast electoral variance. Again, we would particularly welcome alternative patterns of wards that reflect our statutory criteria for this area.

72 Finally, we propose a single-member Ridgeway ward comprising Baulking, Childrey, East Challow, Kingston Lisle, Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis, Sparsholt and West Challow parishes. This ward bears the strongest resemblance to the existing pattern here, with only the addition of Baulking parish.

Vale South East



| Ward name | Number of councillors | Variance 2029 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Blewbury | 1 | 2% |
| Drayton | 1 | 1% |
| Harwell & Western Valley | 2 | -1% |
| Hendreds | 1 | 1% |
| Steventon & East Hanney | 1 | -9% |
| Sutton Courtenay | 1 | -7% |

73 This area includes a number of small villages, some suburban expansions west of the large town of Didcot (which itself is located in South Oxfordshire district), and more of the Ridgeway area. It is entitled to about seven councillors.

Blewbury and Harwell & Western Valley

74 The Council proposed changes to the existing Blewbury & Harwell ward. Electorate growth and incoming housing in this area mean that the parishes of Blewbury, Chilton and Upton can be represented in one single-member Blewbury ward with a more compact shape than the existing ward. The Council additionally proposed a two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward comprised of the two parishes; this results in all of Harwell parish being included in the same ward, as opposed to the current warding arrangement where it is split across two wards.

75 The local resident's submission for this area featured an identical Blewbury, Chilton & Upton ward (with a different name including all component parishes), along with single-member Harwell & Milton Heights and Western Valley wards.

76 We received a submission from Western Valley Parish Council, which suggested a number of potential options to address the growth in the electorate in its area. It proposed either a three-member Blewbury & Harwell ward resembling the existing arrangements, a two-member Sutton Courtenay & Western Valley ward, or a single-member Western Valley ward with its own district councillor; the third option was the parish council's preference. It also requested that the Commission consider an adjustment to the boundary between Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire districts, to unite the community which currently spans both district areas.

77 We received a submission from Councillor Martin Ricketts, of Harwell Parish Council, who was responding in an individual capacity rather than on behalf of the parish council. He suggested a two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward comprising both parishes and a single-member Blewbury & Chilton ward comprising the remaining parishes of the existing Blewbury & Harwell ward (this is the same arrangement as the Council's submission). He noted that there is sense in reuniting the elements of Harwell parish around the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, allowing the parish to be included in the ward in its entirety.

78 We received a submission from a local resident who suggested that electorate growth in Western Valley, due to local housing development, would be sufficient for the parish to have its own ward.

79 We visited this area on our tour of Vale of White Horse, and we agree that the A34 represents a significant boundary between Harwell and Western Valley, and that the Western Valley area has a unique character more in line with Didcot town. We appreciate the points raised by Western Valley Parish Council regarding the external district boundary. However, such amendments are out of the scope of this ward boundary review.

80 Despite these observations, we note that a single-member Western Valley ward would have a forecast electoral variance of 13% in 2029, and that a resulting single-

member Harwell ward would have a -16% variance. We also note that a two-member Sutton Courtenay & Western Valley ward would have a variance of -16%. Although a three-member Blewbury & Harwell ward, following similar boundaries to the existing ward, would have good electoral equality by 2029, we are not persuaded that the ward would reflect community identities and interests, or provide for effective and convenient local government.

81 We are persuaded by the warding pattern suggested by the Council and Councillor Ricketts, and consider that it provides an effective balance of our three statutory criteria. As part of our draft recommendations, we therefore propose a single-member Blewbury ward and a two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward in line with the proposals described above. We would welcome views on the suggested name of Blewbury & Chilton during the current consultation.

Drayton, Hendreds, Steventon & East Hanney and Sutton Courtenay

82 The Council proposed unchanged single-member wards in Drayton and Sutton Courtenay, and a single-member Hendreds ward with a minor amendment at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus to reflect parish boundaries in that area. It proposed a single-member Steventon & East Hanney ward similar to the existing Steventon & the Hanneys ward, although without the parishes of Denchworth and West Hanney, which it proposed to be included in a three-member Grove ward; this ward is discussed in more detail in the Wantage and Grove section of this report.

83 The local resident's submission proposed a single-member Steventon & The Hanneys ward more similar to the existing configuration, as well as a two-member Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Milton Village ward and a single-member Ardington & Hendreds ward with a projected electorate variance of -33% by 2029.

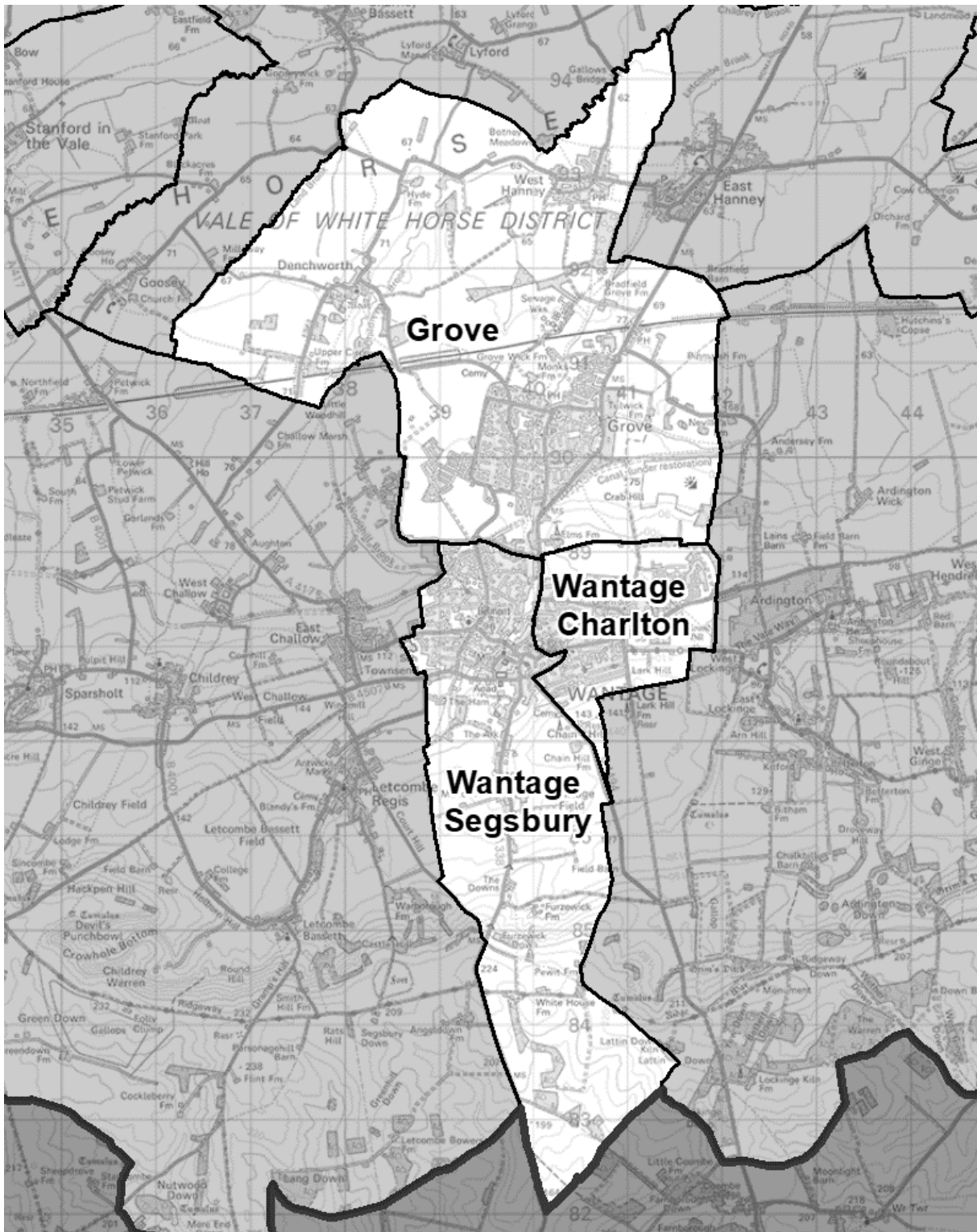
84 We received a submission from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council which requested that the entire parish remain within a single ward.

85 We also received a submission from a local resident who suggested a single-member Steventon ward and a single-member Milton ward, proposing an increase to the overall number of district councillors to accommodate this pattern.

86 We visited this area on our tour of Vale of White Horse and consider that the Council's submission most persuasively meets the equality of representation criteria for proposed wards. We note that its proposals also match the existing pattern where possible and divide only one parish (Milton) between wards. This parish is divided by the A34, a significant boundary between Milton Village and Milton Heights.

87 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose single-member Drayton, Hendreds, Steventon & East Hanney and Sutton Courtenay wards in line with the Council's proposals.

Wantage and Grove



| Ward name | Number of councillors | Variance 2029 |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Grove | 3 | -7% |
| Wantage Charlton | 2 | -6% |
| Wantage Segsbury | 2 | 3% |

88 Grove and Wantage are two adjacent settlements in the centre of Vale of White Horse district and are also two of the district's largest parishes by electorate. In the current warding pattern, the two areas are represented by six councillors distributed across three two-member wards; there is one existing ward, Wantage & Grove Brook, which includes elements of both areas. Based on the forecast electorate, Wantage is statistically entitled to four councillors and Grove is entitled to 2.6 councillors. The warding pattern therefore requires the inclusion of additional adjacent parishes to provide wards with good electoral equality.

Grove

89 The Council proposed a three-member Grove ward which included Grove parish as well as the adjacent northern parishes of Denchworth and West Hanney. It noted that this arrangement was suggested to achieve greater electoral equality.

90 The local resident proposed a three-member Grove & Challow ward including Grove parish as well as the adjacent western parishes of East Challow, Denchworth, Goosey and West Challow.

91 We received a submission from Grove Parish Council which expressed a strong preference not to split the parish across two district wards, as it is in the current warding arrangements. It suggested a two-member Grove ward; however, we note such a ward would have a forecast electoral variance of 28% by 2029.

92 We received a submission from a resident of Grove who also expressed dissatisfaction with the current boundary which divides Grove into separate wards.

93 We visited this area on our tour of Vale of White Horse and recognise that the pairing of Grove, a relatively dense and built-up village, with the nearby smaller villages of Denchworth and West Hanney, would be a contentious decision. We acknowledge that direct internal access between these areas is relatively limited and that it would place East Hanney and West Hanney in different wards despite the proximity of those two settlements.

94 However, we are not persuaded that there is any other warding pattern here which provides a better balance of our statutory criteria. Simply put, Grove alone is too large to be served by two councillors and too small to be served by three, and it therefore needs to include adjacent areas in order to achieve satisfactory electoral equality. Including either Lockinge parish to the east, or East and West Challow parishes to the west (as suggested by the local resident), subsequently leaves the Hendreds and Ridgeway wards, respectively, with insufficient electors for one councillor. Including East Hanney, directly north of Grove and with the strongest access of any adjacent parish along the A338, would leave any Steventon ward with insufficient electors. Furthermore, as Denchworth parish is too small to bring a three-member Grove ward within acceptable variance on its own, the parish of West

Hanney must also be included. An arrangement including Goosey parish instead of West Hanney is also too small to achieve good electoral equality.

95 Therefore, on balance and having carefully considered the evidence received, we propose a three-member Grove ward in line with the Council's proposals here as part of our draft recommendations; that is, including Grove parish together with the parishes of Denchworth and West Hanney.

Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury

96 As noted above, Wantage parish is entitled to four councillors on its own. The Council suggested that the parish could best be represented by four members split into two two-member wards, specifically one ward aligning to the east and one aligning to the west. It did not propose a specific boundary between these two wards.

97 The local resident proposed a four-member Wantage ward. We have already described the Commission's policy regarding four-member wards in paragraph 31.

98 We received a submission from a resident who suggested that ward boundaries in Wantage should align with Oxfordshire County Council divisions. It should be noted that the existing divisions are scheduled to change at the next election in 2025 following the completion of our review of the county. Our final recommendations for the County Council are due to be published in July 2024. Our approach is that county division boundaries should have regard for the district warding pattern but not vice versa. In practice, when reviewing county areas we seek to ensure that divisions are made up of whole district wards but, given that we are dealing with different authorities and units of different size, this is not always possible.

99 We visited Wantage on our tour of Vale of White Horse and consider that a boundary which follows the A338 (Grove Street), Seesen Way, Wallingford Street, the B4057 and B4494 (Chain Hill) best reflects our statutory criteria. Using these roads as a boundary results in two two-member Wantage wards which both have a satisfactory forecast variance and follow clearly defined boundaries. We consider that these roads represent a fairly significant boundary, with limited crossing points and relatively few residential areas which would be divided along its route.

100 We propose the names of Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury for the eastern and western wards respectively. We note that Wantage Charlton is currently a ward name, and that our proposed ward includes all of the Charlton community. We note that Segsbury is currently used as a parish ward name, referencing both Segsbury Road (included in our proposed ward) and the Segsbury Camp hillfort (which falls within Letcombe Regis parish). We would welcome submissions regarding the boundaries and names of these proposed wards.

101 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose a two-member Wantage Charlton ward and a two-member Wantage Segsbury ward, with boundaries as described above.

Conclusions

102 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Vale of White Horse, referencing the 2023 and 2029 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

| | Draft recommendations | |
|--|-----------------------|-------|
| | 2023 | 2029 |
| Number of councillors | 39 | 39 |
| Number of electoral wards | 20 | 20 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 2,713 | 3,109 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average | 5 | 1 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average | 1 | 0 |

Draft recommendations

Vale of White Horse District Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 20 wards: six single-councillor wards, nine two-councillor wards and five 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 Vale of White Horse.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Vale of White Horse on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

103 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.

104 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, Vale of White Horse District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

105 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 Abingdon-on-Thames and Wantage.

106 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Abingdon-on-Thames parish.

Draft recommendations

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council should comprise 19 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

| Parish ward | Number of parish councillors |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| East | 7 |
| North | 6 |
| South | 6 |

107 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wantage parish.

Draft recommendations

Wantage Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

| Parish ward | Number of parish councillors |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| Charlton | 8 |
| Segsbury | 8 |

Have your say

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

109 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for Vale of White Horse, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

110 Our website is the best way to keep up to date with progress on the review and to have your say www.lgbce.org.uk

111 Each review has its own page with details of the timetable for the review, information about its different stages and interactive mapping.

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

Review Officer (Vale of White Horse)
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

113 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Vale of White Horse District Council 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.

114 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.

115 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in Vale of White Horse?

116 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?

117 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?

118 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 and on our website at www.lqbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

119 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, 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.

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

121 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 Vale of White Horse District Council in 2027.

Equalities

122 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

Draft recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2023) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2029) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Abingdon East | 3 | 8,411 | 2,804 | 3% | 9,743 | 3,248 | 4% |
| 2 | Abingdon North | 3 | 7,950 | 2,650 | -2% | 9,527 | 3,176 | 2% |
| 3 | Abingdon South | 3 | 8,626 | 2,875 | 6% | 9,371 | 3,124 | 0% |
| 4 | Blewbury | 1 | 2,934 | 2,934 | 8% | 3,159 | 3,159 | 2% |
| 5 | Botley & Sunningwell | 2 | 5,132 | 2,566 | -5% | 5,679 | 2,840 | -9% |
| 6 | Cumnor | 2 | 5,906 | 2,953 | 9% | 6,404 | 3,202 | 3% |
| 7 | Drayton | 1 | 2,825 | 2,825 | 4% | 3,140 | 3,140 | 1% |
| 8 | Faringdon & Stanford | 3 | 9,430 | 3,143 | 16% | 10,259 | 3,420 | 10% |
| 9 | Grove | 3 | 7,249 | 2,416 | -11% | 8,641 | 2,880 | -7% |
| 10 | Harwell & Western Valley | 2 | 3,906 | 1,953 | -28% | 6,143 | 3,072 | -1% |
| 11 | Hendreds | 1 | 2,564 | 2,564 | -5% | 3,155 | 3,155 | 1% |

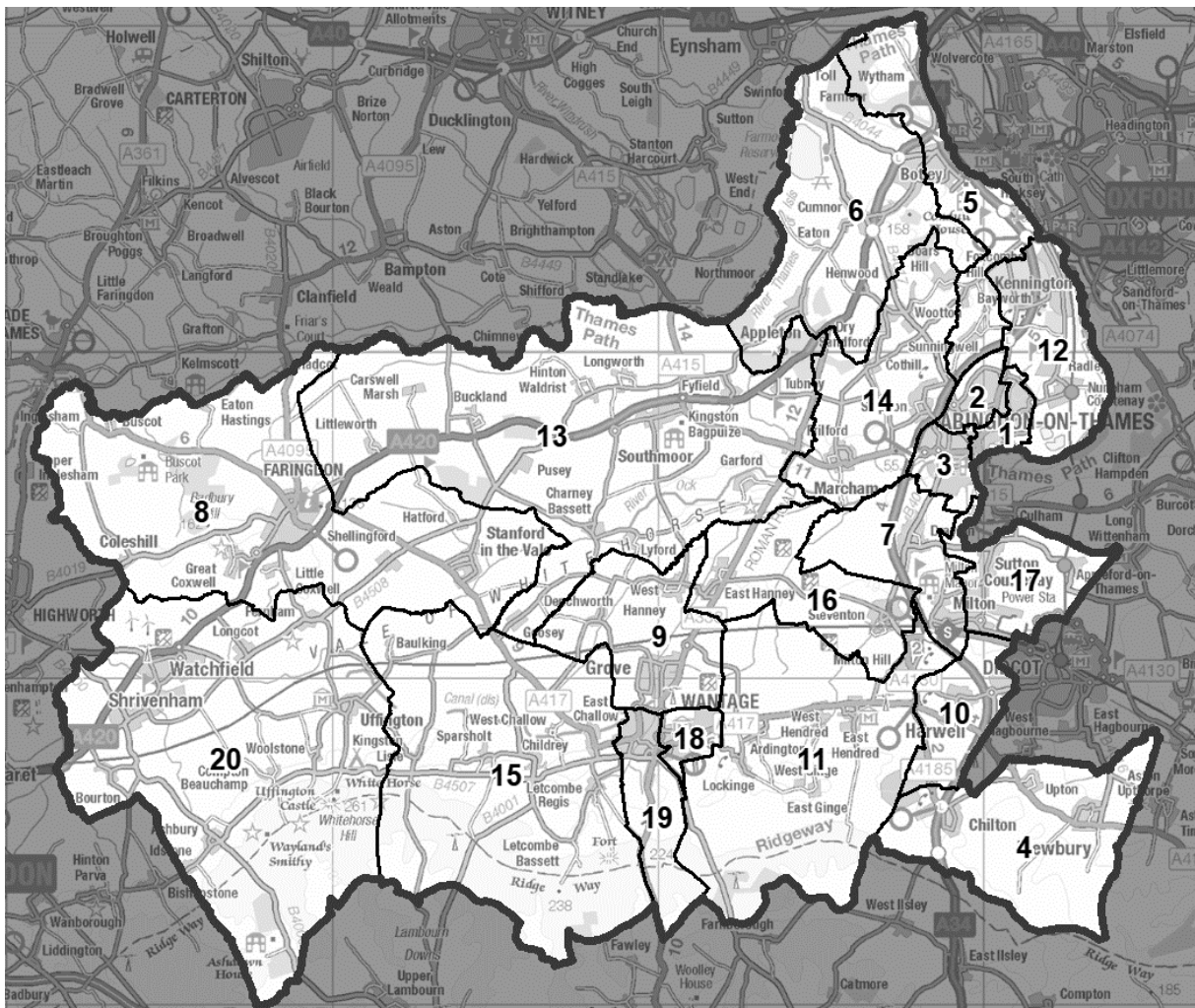
| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2023) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2029) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 12 | Kennington & Radley | 2 | 5,302 | 2,651 | -2% | 6,083 | 3,042 | -2% |
| 13 | Kingston Bagpuize | 2 | 5,745 | 2,873 | 6% | 6,207 | 3,104 | 0% |
| 14 | Marcham & Wootton | 2 | 5,262 | 2,631 | -3% | 5,866 | 2,933 | -6% |
| 15 | Ridgeway | 1 | 2,751 | 2,751 | 1% | 2,885 | 2,885 | -7% |
| 16 | Steventon & East Hanney | 1 | 2,661 | 2,661 | -2% | 2,836 | 2,836 | -9% |
| 17 | Sutton Courtenay | 1 | 2,573 | 2,573 | -5% | 2,887 | 2,887 | -7% |
| 18 | Wantage Charlton | 2 | 4,467 | 2,234 | -18% | 5,849 | 2,925 | -6% |
| 19 | Wantage Segsbury | 2 | 5,893 | 2,947 | 9% | 6,423 | 3,212 | 3% |
| 20 | Watchfield & Shrivenham | 2 | 6,225 | 3,113 | 15% | 6,991 | 3,496 | 12% |
| Totals | | 39 | 105,812 | - | - | 121,248 | - | - |
| Averages | | - | - | 2,713 | - | - | 3,109 | - |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Vale of White Horse District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



| Number | Ward name |
|--------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Abingdon East |
| 2 | Abingdon North |
| 3 | Abingdon South |
| 4 | Blewbury |
| 5 | Botley & Sunningwell |
| 6 | Cumnor |
| 7 | Drayton |
| 8 | Faringdon & Stanford |
| 9 | Grove |
| 10 | Harwell & Western Valley |
| 11 | Hendreds |
| 12 | Kennington & Radley |
| 13 | Kingston Bagpuize |
| 14 | Marcham & Wootton |

| | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 15 | Ridgeway |
| 16 | Steventon & East Hanney |
| 17 | Sutton Courtenay |
| 18 | Wantage Charlton |
| 19 | Wantage Segsbury |
| 20 | Watchfield & Shrivenham |

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/vale-white-horse

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/vale-white-horse

Local Authority

- Vale of White Horse District Council

Councillors

- Councillor J. Brooks (Stanford in the Vale Parish Council)
- Councillor P. Foster (Wootton Parish Council)
- Councillor M. Ricketts (Harwell Parish Council)

Parish and Town Councils

- Grove Parish Council
- Marcham Parish Council (x2)
- St. Helen Without Parish Council
- Sutton Courtenay Parish Council
- Western Valley Parish Council

Local Residents

- 11 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

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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