

New electoral arrangements for Oxfordshire County Council Final Recommendations

July 2024

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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 regarding 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 Oxfordshire?

7 We are conducting a review of Oxfordshire County Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2012, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.² Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

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

- The divisions in Oxfordshire 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 county.

Our proposals for Oxfordshire

9 Oxfordshire County Council should be represented by 69 councillors, six more than there are now.

10 Oxfordshire should have 69 divisions, eight more than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 64 divisions should change; five will stay the same.

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

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which division you vote in, which other communities are in that division and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your division name may also change.

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the county or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local

² Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

taxes, house prices or car and house insurance premiums, and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Oxfordshire. We then held three periods of consultation with the public on division patterns for the county. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
8 February 2023	Number of councillors decided
28 February 2023	Start of consultation seeking views on new divisions
8 May 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
3 October 2023	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
11 December 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
27 February 2024	Publication of new draft recommendations and start of consultation
22 April 2024	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
30 July 2024	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ 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 divisions.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create divisions 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.

	2023	2029
Electorate of Oxfordshire	521,890	582,977
Number of councillors	69	69
Average number of electors per councillor	7,564	8,449

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a division is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the division as having 'good electoral equality'. All but three of our proposed divisions for Oxfordshire are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029.

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 2029, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2024. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 12% by 2029. The district and city councils provided information to the County Council in support of these forecasts.

23 During the division consultation we noticed several discrepancies between the Council's forecast and the mapping data provided, particularly regarding the

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

allocation of future housing developments to polling districts. This issue featured most prominently in Cherwell district but was also present to varying degrees in other Oxfordshire districts. We contacted the Council, which supplied us with an updated forecast to accurately reflect new developments in the forecast. This affected the variances for a number of divisions in the schemes submitted and we made adjustments accordingly.

24 We considered all the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

25 Oxfordshire County Council currently has 63 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that increasing this number by six would ensure that the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

26 At the beginning of the review the Council requested that this review be conducted as a 'single-member division' review.⁵ The Commission agreed to this request and we invited proposals for divisions that would each be represented by one councillor.

27 We received two submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. One objected to increasing the number of councillors during a time of financial difficulty while the other argued that 63 councillors was already too high. However, as neither provided supporting evidence relating to the Council's governance and decision-making structure, we have maintained 69 councillors for our final recommendations.

Councillor allocation and coterminosity

28 A council size of 69 provides the following allocation between the district councils in the county. When conducting reviews of two-tier county councils there are a number of rules that we must follow. Firstly, we must not recommend any divisions that cross district boundaries. Secondly, we must have regard for the district wards that exist within each district. We try to use the district wards to form the boundaries of the county divisions but, given the differing building blocks used, it is not always possible. The table below shows the percentage of district wards that are wholly contained within our proposed divisions. We refer to this as coterminosity. While the figure for Cherwell is relatively low, we note that the district will soon be the subject of an electoral review itself where these wards will be reviewed.

⁵ Section 57 of Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

District	Allocation of councillors	Coterminosity
Cherwell ⁶	16	19%
Oxford ⁷	13	64%
South Oxfordshire ⁸	15	50%
Vale of White Horse ⁹	14	42%
West Oxfordshire ¹⁰	11	70%

Division boundaries consultation

29 We received 44 submissions in response to our consultation on division boundaries. These included two county-wide proposals from the Council and the Labour & Co-operative Group ('the Labour Group'). The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for division arrangements in particular areas of the county.

30 The two county-wide schemes provided uniform patterns of one-councillor divisions for Oxfordshire. The Labour scheme supported the Council's in most respects but made several amendments with the aim of improving community representation and electoral equality while respecting natural boundaries. The Council's proposals for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts were accepted in full.

31 We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that a number of the amendments proposed by Labour better reflected community identity and improved electoral equality. However, we also made a number of our own amendments, as many of the divisions proposed in both schemes had relatively high electoral imbalances and low coterminosity in most districts.

32 Our draft recommendations were broadly based on the Council and Labour schemes. They 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. Our recommendations in this respect were informed by the evidence we received and built upon the proposals submitted to us during consultation. This was particularly the case in Cherwell district, with more minor changes made in Oxford, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire.

⁶ Coterminosity based on the district wards implemented at the 2016 elections.

⁷ Coterminosity based on the district wards implemented at the 2022 elections.

⁸ Coterminosity based on the district wards implemented at the 2015 elections.

⁹ Coterminosity based on the district wards implemented at the 2015 elections.

¹⁰ Coterminosity based on the district wards implemented at the 2014 elections.

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

Draft recommendations consultation

34 We received 41 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations, including a submission from the Council regarding our proposals in Cherwell and a county-wide submission from the Labour Group. A significant portion of these submissions were opposed to our proposals in Cherwell, particularly in Banbury, as well as our proposed Wantage and Charlton, Blewbury & Hendreds divisions in Vale of White Horse. We considered that the evidence provided to support changes in these areas was strong. Our resulting proposals for these two districts therefore departed significantly from our draft recommendations such that we decided to consult on them as further draft recommendations.

35 We received 13 submissions in response to our further draft recommendations. Seven of these concerned Cherwell district and included submissions from Cherwell District Council, three councillors and three residents. Four submissions were also received from residents concerning Vale of White Horse. One submission from a resident opposed any change to existing boundaries but did not provide supporting evidence, while another resident made a case for Rowstock to be included in East Hendred parish in its entirety. However, the power to change the external boundaries of civil parishes does not lie with the Commission and is vested in local authorities, in this case Vale of White Horse District Council.

Final recommendations

36 Our final recommendations are for 69 single-councillor divisions. 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.

37 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with modifications to all but four divisions in Cherwell district and all but six divisions in the Vale of White Horse district. We also make two minor modifications to the boundaries between Thame and Chalgrove & Thame West divisions in South Oxfordshire district, and between Jericho & Osney and Parks divisions in Oxford. These modifications were based on the submissions received.

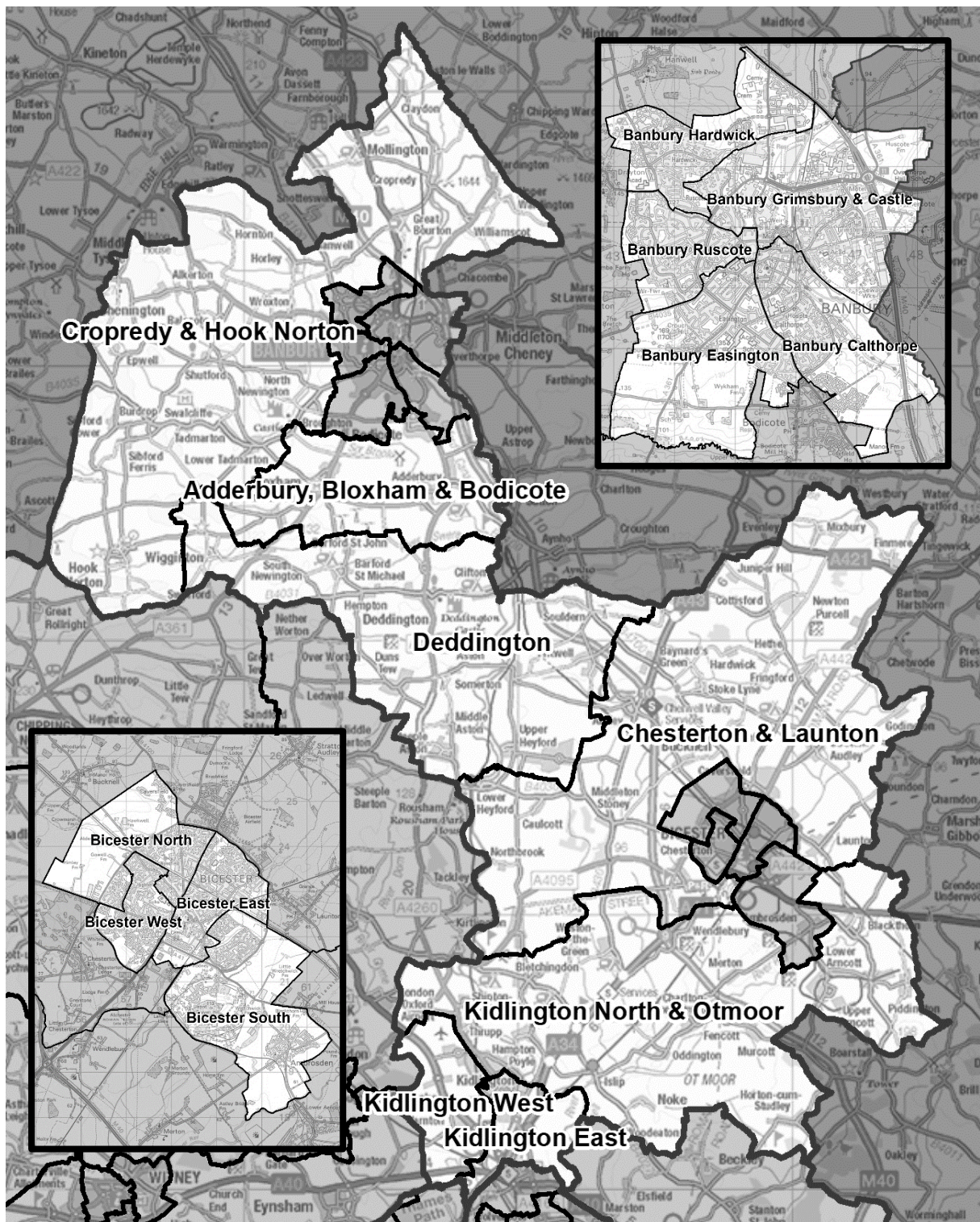
38 The tables and maps on pages 10–23 detail our final recommendations for each area of Oxfordshire. They detail how the proposed division arrangements reflect the three statutory¹¹ criteria of:

¹¹ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

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

39 A summary of our proposed new divisions is set out in the table starting on page 35 and on the large map accompanying this report.

Cherwell



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Adderbury, Bloxham & Bodicote	1	-9%
Banbury Calthorpe	1	3%
Banbury Easington	1	-5%

Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	1	8%
Banbury Hardwick	1	3%
Banbury Ruscote	1	8%
Bicester East	1	-8%
Bicester North	1	-2%
Bicester South	1	-8%
Bicester West	1	-9%
Chesterton & Launton	1	-4%
Cropredy & Hook Norton	1	0%
Deddington	1	1%
Kidlington East	1	6%
Kidlington North & Otmoor	1	-12%
Kidlington West	1	6%

40 Under a council size of 69, Cherwell District Council will have 16 councillors, with each councillor representing on average 1% fewer electors than the county average.

41 We received seven submissions in response to our further draft recommendations, four of which were supportive. Cherwell District Council praised the new division pattern, particularly in Banbury, though proposed minor amendments to the naming of some of the divisions. For Deddington & Heyfords, the Council pointed out that although Upper Heyford and Heyford Park are included in the division, Lower Heyford is not, and therefore the name of the division may be misleading. The Council suggested retaining the existing name of 'Deddington' as the largest settlement in the division. We are content to adopt this in our final recommendations.

42 The Council also suggested that the name for our proposed Chesterton, Fringford & Launton division was too long, and that 'Chesterton & Launton' would be more appropriate in reflecting the two largest settlements in the division. We are also content to adopt this proposal in our final recommendations. For Bicester Town Council, it was also suggested by the Council and by Councillor Chris Pruden of Bicester Town Council that our proposed Village parish ward be renamed 'Town', as the former references the train station and shopping village while the latter is the established name for the area which has previously been used at parish and county level. We have renamed the parish ward 'Town' in our final recommendations.

43 A resident wrote to express contentment with our proposed Banbury Ruscote division taking in part of Broughton Road, rather than half the existing Banbury Easington division, as in our draft recommendations. County Councillor Mark Hassall supported the new draft recommendations for balancing community identity and

electoral equality and urged that the forthcoming review of district wards maintain a high degree of coterminosity with these boundaries.

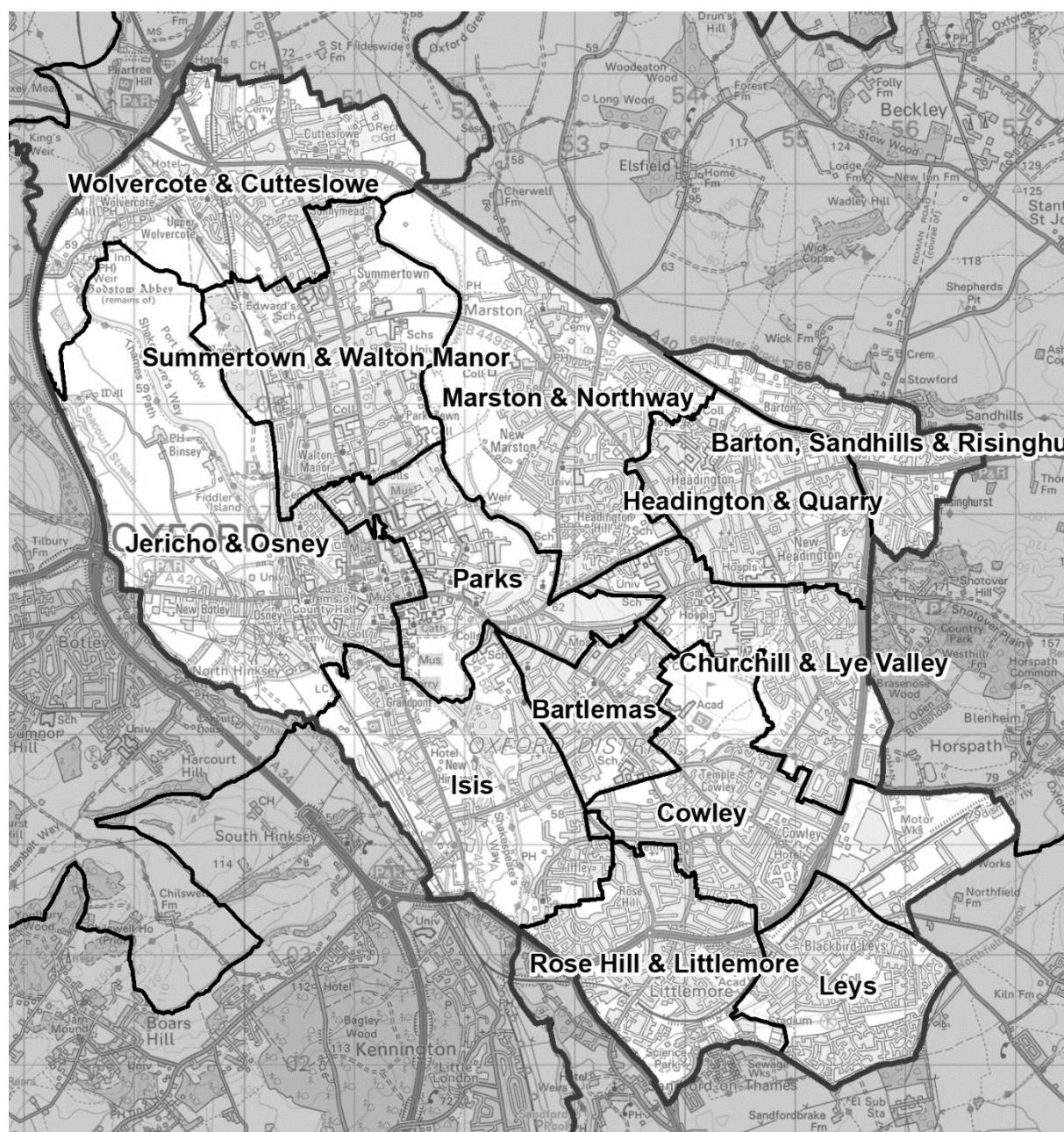
44 County Councillor Kieron Mallon wrote to express his support for the new draft recommendations, in particular those for our proposed Banbury Calthorpe division, which he praised for taking in the town centre and Calthorpe Manor. He also wrote to respond to criticism of our proposed Banbury Grimsbury & Castle division as being too large by pointing out that it is within the bounds of good electoral equality and is geographically large because it contains a reservoir, a country park and many of Banbury's industrial estates.

45 However, Councillor Mallon was critical of our Blackwell Drive parish ward for Banbury Town Council, which he argued was unnecessary and should be included within the Easington parish ward. As he pointed out, the area has recently been transferred from Bodicote parish to Banbury parish via a community governance review. This means that the district ward boundaries are no longer coterminous either with the parish boundaries or our proposed divisions. Having considered Councillor Mallon's objection, we are satisfied that we are under no obligation to create a parish ward for Blackwell Drive in these circumstances. We further note that Cherwell District Council is currently under review with consultation for a new warding pattern expected to open in January 2025. Our final recommendations consequently include the Blackwell Drive area in our proposed Easington parish ward.

46 We received two critical submissions from residents. One asserted that Launton should be in a Bicester division but did not specify why. The resident made a reference to there being a petition on the matter but this was not submitted to us at any point during the consultation. However, while we recognise that Launton is a satellite village of Bicester, we are content that our final recommendations provide the best balance of our three statutory criteria and note that Launton is presently part of the Ploughley division.

47 Another resident argued that the Brookside area more closely associates with communities in our proposed Bicester West division than Bicester North, in which it was included in our further draft recommendations. Although the area is included in the existing Bicester North division, we had included it in Bicester West in our draft recommendations, only to move it into Bicester North in our further draft recommendations. This was done because the knock-on effect of our changes in Banbury would have left Bicester North with an electoral variance of -13%. Having visited the area on our tour of the county, we noted the almost imperceptible transition over the railway line via Banbury Road and were satisfied that continuing to include the area in Bicester North division offered the best balance of our statutory criteria. Save for the division and parish ward names mentioned above, therefore, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Oxford



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Bartlemas	1	9%
Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	1	-9%
Churchill & Lye Valley	1	1%
Cowley	1	7%
Headington & Quarry	1	0%
Isis	1	-7%
Jericho & Osney	1	4%
Leys	1	8%

Marston & Northway	1	9%
Parks	1	0%
Rose Hill & Littlemore	1	6%
Summertown & Walton Manor	1	6%
Wolvercote & Cutteslowe	1	-4%

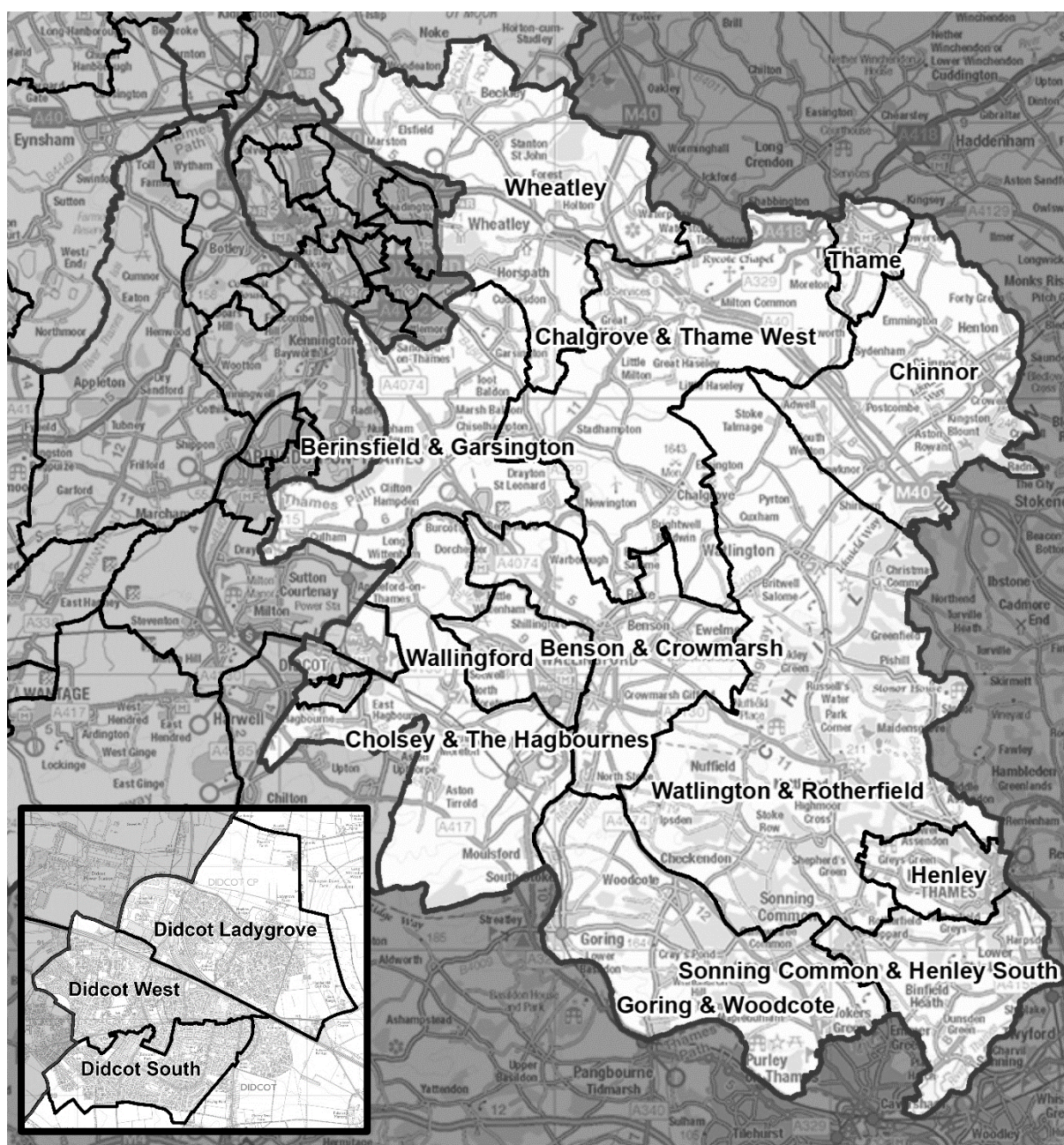
48 Under a council size of 69, Oxford City Council will have 13 councillors, with each councillor representing on average 2% more electors than the county average.

49 We received only one submission in response to our draft recommendations for the City of Oxford. This submission was from the Labour Group and concerned the boundary between Jericho & Osney and Parks divisions, specifically the boundary on Walton Street. The Labour Group argued that 96–118 Walton Street should be included in Parks division, rather than Jericho & Osney division, as in our draft recommendations, as the boundary down the centre of Walton Street was coterminous with the district boundaries and was understood by residents.

50 When we visited Oxford on our tour of the county we observed that this section of Walton Street had shops, cafés, bistros and restaurants on either side, as well as a cinema, and considered this to be a focal point for the local community. We were therefore keen to include both sides of the street in a single division. However, in the light of the request from the Labour Group, we also appreciate that the street is likely to be a focal point for residents on both sides, including those on Adelaide Street and Observatory Street in Parks division. Additionally, we acknowledge that this revised proposal will better reflect city ward boundaries, contributing to effective and convenient local government. We are therefore content to adopt the Labour Group's proposal in our final recommendations. The change concerns 35 electors and does not alter the electoral variances of either division.

51 In the remainder of the city, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

South Oxfordshire



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Benson & Crowmarsh	1	0%
Berinsfield & Garsington	1	2%
Chalgrove & Thame West	1	-7%
Chinnor	1	-7%
Cholesey & The Hagbournes	1	4%
Didcot Ladygrove	1	-1%
Didcot South	1	-5%
Didcot West	1	-8%

Goring & Woodcote	1	-3%
Henley	1	-3%
Sonning Common & Henley South	1	-2%
Thame	1	10%
Wallingford	1	6%
Watlington & Rotherfield	1	-6%
Wheatley	1	-4%

52 Under a council size of 69, South Oxfordshire District Council will have 15 councillors, with each councillor representing on average 2% fewer electors than the county average.

53 We received three submissions in response to our draft recommendations for South Oxfordshire district. Two of these, from a resident and Thame Town Council, concerned our Thame and Chalgrove & Thame West divisions, while the third, from the Labour Group, concerned our proposed parish warding pattern in Didcot.

Benson & Crowmarsh, Berinsfield & Garsington, Chinnor, Cholsey & The Hagbournes, Goring & Woodcote, Henley, Sonning Common & Henley South, Wallingford, Watlington & Rotherfield and Wheatley

54 We did not receive any response to our draft recommendations for these divisions so are confirming them as final.

Chalgrove & Thame West and Thame

55 The two submissions we received regarding Thame were strongly against the division of the Town Council area between these two divisions. Both the resident and Thame Town Council expressed the opinion that Thame and Chalgrove were different, the former being a town and the latter being a village. Both proposed that Thame should be contained within a single division, as at present, with multiple councillors if necessary.

56 However, the Thame parish is now too large to be contained within a single one-councillor division, as this would result in an electoral variance of 21%. Furthermore, as Oxfordshire County Council requested that this be a single-member review, we are not inclined to make an exception in Thame's case on the basis of the evidence received.

57 To try to address the concerns expressed, however, we have made alterations to the boundary between our proposed Thame and Chalgrove & Thame West divisions. Our draft recommendations were based on the scheme submitted by Oxfordshire County Council and used the existing polling districts as building blocks. However, we consider that a more sympathetic boundary can be drawn down Cuttle Brook, as this does reflect the degree of separation between Moreton and Oxford

Road from the rest of the town. This boundary produces a 10% variance in Thame and -7% variance in Chalgrove & Thame West.

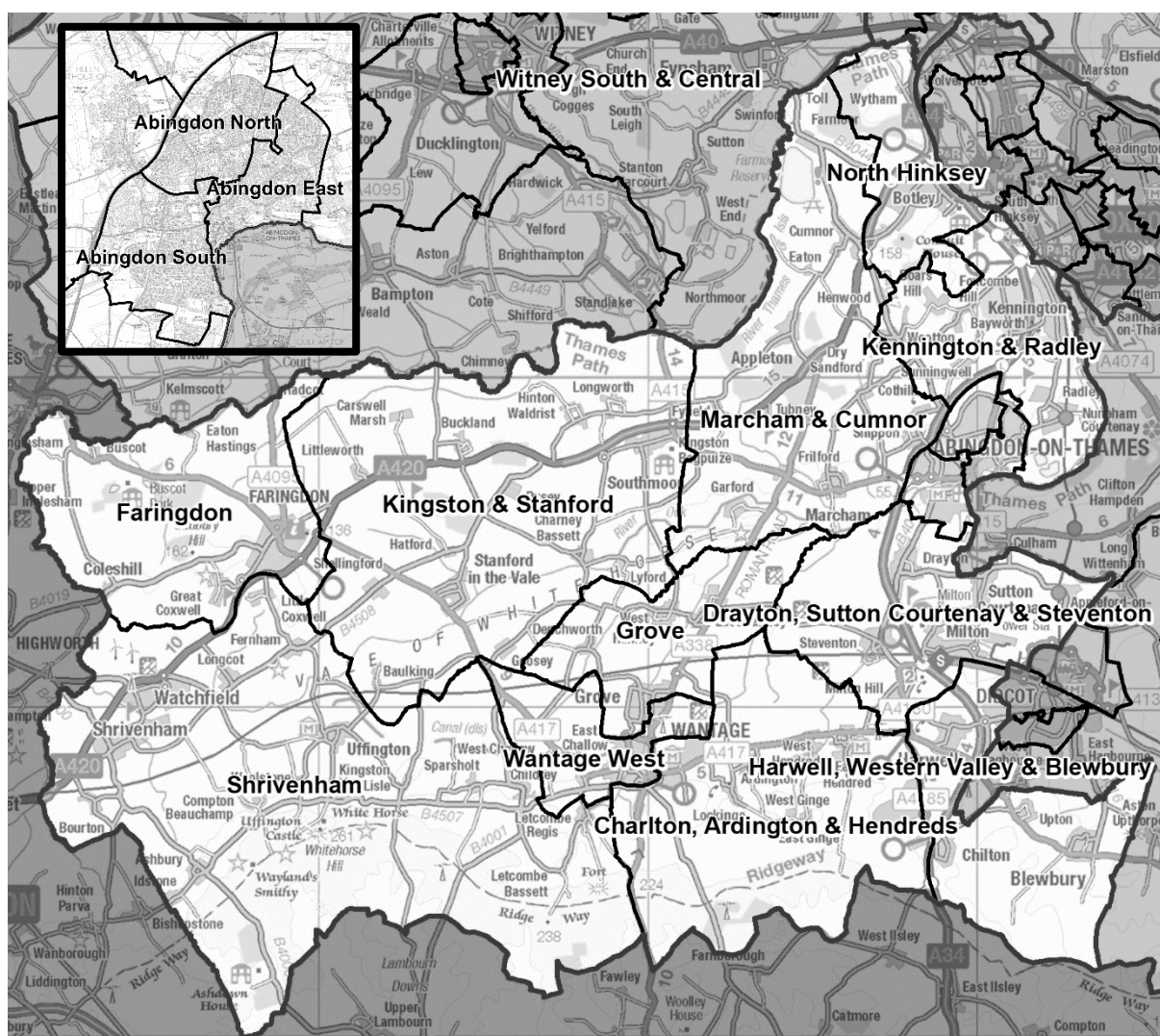
58 Thame Town Council's submission also took issue with our proposal for three parish wards in Thame. In response to this, we have instead created two parish wards – Thame East and Thame West – which are separated by our proposed division boundary, as required by law.

Didcot Ladygrove, Didcot South and Didcot West

59 The Labour Group's submission commented on the parish warding pattern we proposed for Didcot in our draft recommendations. The group reported that 'concerns have been raised' about our proposed single-member Orchard ward, as this had previously been abolished in the 2022 community governance review (CGR) as a means of improving community representation on the Town Council. The Labour Group also suggested there were similar issues with our single-member Broadway and Jubilee parish wards.

60 However, the creation of these parish wards was not a choice but a necessity, as we have a statutory duty to ensure that parish wards are wholly contained within a county division, while also being mindful of the existing district ward boundaries. We made a minor alteration to the Council's proposed division boundaries in Didcot for our draft recommendations as, under these provisions, the Council's scheme would have necessitated the creation of an unviable parish ward (that is, a parish ward with few or no electors). However, even without this amendment, it is the Council's proposals which have led to the creation of the Jubilee and Orchard parish wards. In the absence of any alternative proposals, we have carried forward our draft recommendations for the division and parish ward boundaries for Didcot into our final recommendations.

Vale of White Horse



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Abingdon East	1	2%
Abingdon North	1	9%
Abingdon South	1	2%
Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds	1	0%
Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon	1	2%
Faringdon	1	-9%
Grove	1	10%
Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury	1	10%
Kennington & Radley	1	5%
Kingston & Stanford	1	-12%
Marcham & Cumnor	1	-14%
North Hinksey	1	-9%
Shrivenham	1	0%

61 Under a council size of 69, Vale of White Horse District Council will have 14 councillors, with each councillor representing the average number of electors per councillor for the county.

62 We received five submissions from residents in response to our further draft recommendations for Vale of White Horse district. One of these, as mentioned in paragraph 35, fell outside the scope of this review as it concerned the external boundaries of East Hendred parish. However, this would be matter a matter for Vale of White Horse District Council to address via a community governance review.

63 One resident wrote to say that Abingdon South division ought to include Stone Hill House and Oday Hill Farm House which are instead included just over the border in our proposed Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon division. The properties are indeed closer to the edge of urban Abingdon than Drayton village but our division boundary follows the parish boundary. To place them in Abingdon South division would necessitate creating an unviable parish ward for Drayton Parish Council with only three electors. We have not, therefore, adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

64 Another resident objected to Grove parish being divided between Grove and Wantage West divisions, arguing that a geographically larger division, to include the entire parish and electing more than one councillor, would be preferable. However, the Commission agreed to Oxfordshire County Council's request for a single-member division review at the beginning of the review process, and we would only depart from this pattern in circumstances where exceptional community evidence was presented. We do not consider that sufficient evidence has been received in this case and have therefore not adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

65 A resident also wrote to propose that Harwell parish be included in Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury division in its entirety, and that the Harwell Campus research centre need not be included in a single division itself but could benefit from greater councillor involvement by being spread across two. We considered this proposal but did not adopt it in our final recommendations. The principal reason was that, to include the Campus area of Harwell parish in Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury division would increase its electoral variance to 12% – and we do not consider the community evidence we have received to be strong enough to justify such electoral inequality. We also note that our division boundary follows that of the district boundary for Hendreds and Blewbury & Harwell wards and that the residents in the Campus area are considerably removed from Harwell village.

66 The final submission for Vale of White Horse concerned our division of Chilton parish along the A34/A4185 dual carriageway between Charlton, Ardington &

Hendreds and Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury divisions. The resident commended the inclusion of Harwell Campus within a single division but said this should not come at the expense of dividing Chilton. However, dividing the parish was necessary to ensure good electoral equality and provide for effective and convenient local government. Indeed, the resident's proposed solutions highlight why we considered we had no choice but to divide the parish under this division pattern.

67 The resident's first proposal was to add the Chilton Fields residential development south of Harwell Campus to Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury division. This means, in effect, including the entire parish in the division as only 41 electors reside beyond it. However, we had ruled this out in our further draft recommendations as this creates poor electoral equality in Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury division with a variance of 17%.

68 The resident's second proposal was to include all Chilton electors in Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds division, but to draw the boundary in such a way so that Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury does not become a non-contiguous division. This would produce good electoral equality, with a variance of 2% for Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury and 8% for Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds. However, this proposal is not possible, because we would be obliged to create a parish ward for Chilton – made up of the area of the parish in Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury – in which there would be no electors.

69 The resident's final proposal, should we confirm our further draft recommendations as final, was to rename our proposed Chilton parish wards. The resident proposed that Upper Farm and Village parish wards be renamed 'West Chilton' and 'East Chilton', respectively, or that Upper Farm be renamed 'Chilton Fields' or 'Campus'. The reason given was that 'Upper Farm' is not a name which would be easily recognised by Chilton residents. We remain of the view that our further draft recommendations offer the best balance of our statutory criteria in this area. We have adopted the proposed parish ward names of 'West Chilton' and 'East Chilton' and have otherwise confirmed our further draft recommendations for this area as final.

West Oxfordshire



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Bampton & Carterton South	1	9%
Brize Norton & Carterton East	1	-8%
Burford & Carterton West	1	5%
Charlbury & Wychwood	1	7%
Chipping Norton	1	8%
Eynsham	1	-2%

Hanborough & Hailey	1	-6%
Witney North & East	1	6%
Witney South & Central	1	1%
Witney West & Ducklington	1	-6%
Woodstock	1	7%

70 Under a council size of 69, West Oxfordshire District Council will have 11 councillors, with each councillor representing on average 2% more electors than the county average.

71 We received five submissions in response to our draft recommendations in West Oxfordshire. These were from a resident, the Labour Group on Witney Town Council ('Witney Labour Group'), Oxfordshire Green Party, the Labour Group and Witney Town Council. The submission from the Labour Group was supportive of our draft recommendations.

Witney North & East, Witney South & Central, Witney West & Ducklington

72 The submissions from Witney Town Council and the Witney Labour Group were opposed to our parish warding pattern in Witney and, in particular, the inclusion of three small, single-member, parish wards, which they considered would be better placed within larger, multi-member, wards. In some cases, as explained in our discussion of Didcot (paragraphs 53–54), these are necessary outcomes of our statutory duty to take account of both county divisions and district wards in our allocation of parish wards.

73 However, while the single-member parish ward of Witney Windrush is necessary because it lies within the boundaries of county divisions and district wards, this is not the case for Witney Burwell. We have therefore taken the opportunity to remove this parish ward from our final recommendations and include it in a three-councillor Witney South parish ward.

74 Furthermore, Witney Labour Group, while recognising that the creation of the Witney Leys parish ward is currently necessary due to these factors, has nonetheless suggested that this be made contiguous with Witney West parish ward and Witney West & Ducklington division via one side of the A40. We do not consider this to be conducive to effective and convenient local government and consider that such an arrangement would remain a de facto non-contiguous ward. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

75 Witney Town Council suggested that an alternative name be considered for Witney Windrush parish ward, as the river Windrush flows through several areas of the town, and Windrush Place is the name of a housing development elsewhere. We have therefore renamed the parish ward 'Windrush Quay', which is sited in the ward.

Bampton & Carterton South, Brize Norton & Carterton East, Burford & Carterton West, Charlbury & Wychwood, Chipping Norton, Eynsham, Hanborough & Hailey and Woodstock

76 We received a submission from Oxfordshire Green Party regarding several of our proposed divisions in West Oxfordshire. The submission mentioned that Ramsden parish has no connection with Burford and that it would be better placed in the Charlbury & Wychwood division, rather than Burford & Carterton West, as in our draft recommendations. We noted that Ramsden did not appear to have a strong road connection to the rest of Burford & Carterton West division but that Witney Road ran through the parish and into Charlbury & Wychwood division. We were therefore content to adopt this proposal in our final recommendations. This results in electoral variances of 5% for Burford & Carterton West and 7% in Charlbury & Wychwood.

77 The Green Party submission also argued for the creation of a 'Carterton North' division composed of the district wards of Carterton North East and Carterton North West, with Brize Norton parish being moved into Burford & Carterton West. The reasoning given was that Carterton was not well served by being grouped with rural parishes, while Brize Norton was keen to be distinct from Carterton. However, while the proposed division would have an electoral variance of 2%, Burford & Carterton West's would be -23%. This could be reduced to -5% by incorporating the area of South Carterton district ward east of Black Bourton Road, but that would continue to pair part of Carterton with Brize Norton. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

78 The Green Party submission also recommended including the forecast 1,039 electors from planned development in the south of Hailey parish in the Witney North & East division. However, this would increase the electoral variance of the latter to 19% and that of Hanborough & Hailey division to -19%. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

79 A further submission from a resident argued that the parishes of Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney, Standlake, Hardwick-with-Yelford, Northmoor and Stanton Harcourt should be grouped together, as at present, due to strong community ties. However, doing so would result in electoral variances of 26% for Eynsham and -20% for Burford & Carterton South. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in our final recommendations.

Conclusions

80 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Oxfordshire, referencing the 2023 and 2029 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and divisions. 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	
	2023	2029
Number of councillors	69	69
Number of electoral divisions	69	69
Average number of electors per councillor	7,564	8,449
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	25	3
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	4	0

Final recommendations

Oxfordshire County Council should be made up of 69 councillors serving 69 divisions. 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 divisions for the Oxfordshire County Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Oxfordshire County Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

81 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 divisions it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

82 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, Oxfordshire County 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.

83 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, Banbury, Bicester, Chilton, Didcot, Grove, Henley-on-Thames, Thame, Wantage and Witney.

84 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council.

Final recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Abbey	2
Caldecott	4
Dunmore	4
Fitzharris Ock	2
Fitzharris Wildmoor	1
Northcourt	1
Peachcroft	4
Rush Common	1

85 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Banbury Town Council.

Final recommendations

Banbury Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing 11 wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Broughton Road	1
Calthorpe North	1
Calthorpe South	2
Easington	4
Grimsbury	3
Hardwick	4
Neithrop North	1

Neithrop South	1
Park Road	1
Ruscote	3
Town Centre	1

86 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bicester Town Council.

Final recommendations

Bicester Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Brookside	1
East	5
Greenwood	1
North	4
South East	4
South West	3
Town	1
West	3

87 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Chilton Parish Council.

Final recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
East Chilton	4
West Chilton	4

88 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Didcot Town Council.

Final recommendations

Didcot Town Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
All Saints	5
Broadway	1
Jubilee	1
Ladygrove	6

Millbrook	1
Northbourne	3
Orchard	1
Park	3

89 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Grove Parish Council.

Final recommendations

Grove Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Grove North	13
Grove South	3

90 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Henley-on-Thames Town Council.

Final recommendations

Henley-on-Thames Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Henley North	8
Henley South	5
Newtown	3

91 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Thame Town Council.

Final recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Thame East	15
Thame West	1

92 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wantage Town Council.

Final recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Charlton	6
Segsbury	6
Wantage	4

93 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Witney Town Council.

Final recommendations

Witney Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Windrush Quay	1
Witney Central	3
Witney East	4
Witney Leys	1
Witney North	2
Witney South	3
Witney West	3

What happens next?

94 We have now completed our review of Oxfordshire County 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 2025.

Equalities

95 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 Oxfordshire County Council

Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
CHERWELL							
1	Adderbury, Bloxham & Bodicote	8,053	8,053	6%	7,684	7,684	-9%
2	Banbury Calthorpe	7,101	7,101	-6%	8,740	8,740	3%
3	Banbury Easington	6,254	6,254	-17%	8,030	8,030	-5%
4	Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	8,606	8,606	14%	9,128	9,128	8%
5	Banbury Hardwick	7,996	7,996	6%	8,713	8,713	3%
6	Banbury Ruscote	8,670	8,670	15%	9,105	9,105	8%
7	Bicester East	7,349	7,349	-3%	7,801	7,801	-8%
8	Bicester North	7,830	7,830	4%	8,322	8,322	-2%
9	Bicester South	5,909	5,909	-22%	7,757	7,757	-8%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
10	Bicester West	1	7,109	7,109	-6%	7,715	7,715	-9%
11	Chesterton & Launton	1	7,449	7,449	-2%	8,071	8,071	-4%
12	Cropredy & Hook Norton	1	8,364	8,364	11%	8,411	8,411	0%
13	Deddington	1	7,229	7,229	-4%	8,530	8,530	1%
14	Kidlington East	1	7,043	7,043	-7%	8,953	8,953	6%
15	Kidlington North & Otmoor	1	7,365	7,365	-3%	7,442	7,442	-12%
16	Kidlington West	1	4,829	4,829	-36%	8,966	8,966	6%
OXFORD								
17	Bartlemas	1	8,213	8,213	9%	9,172	9,172	9%
18	Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	1	6,163	6,163	-19%	7,717	7,717	-9%
19	Churchill & Lye Valley	1	7,765	7,765	3%	8,502	8,502	1%
20	Cowley	1	8,404	8,404	11%	9,055	9,055	7%
21	Headington & Quarry	1	8,009	8,009	6%	8,460	8,460	0%

Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Isis	1	7,530	7,530	0%	7,874	7,874	-7%
23 Jericho & Osney	1	7,758	7,758	3%	8,754	8,754	4%
24 Leys	1	8,272	8,272	9%	9,147	9,147	8%
25 Marston & Northway	1	7,956	7,956	5%	9,212	9,212	9%
26 Parks	1	6,145	6,145	-19%	8,466	8,466	0%
27 Rose Hill & Littlemore	1	8,297	8,297	10%	8,975	8,975	6%
28 Summertown & Walton Manor	1	8,217	8,217	9%	8,958	8,958	6%
29 Wolvercote & Cutteslowe	1	7,065	7,065	-7%	8,129	8,129	-4%
SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE							
30 Benson & Crowmarsh	1	7,380	7,380	-2%	8,449	8,449	0%
31 Berinsfield & Garsington	1	5,862	5,862	-22%	8,646	8,646	2%
32 Chalgrove & Thame West	1	6,832	6,832	-10%	7,864	7,864	-7%
33 Chinnor	1	7,690	7,690	2%	7,880	7,880	-7%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
34	Cholsey & The Hagbournes	1	8,616	8,616	14%	8,779	8,779	4%
35	Didcot Ladygrove	1	6,192	6,192	-18%	8,373	8,373	-1%
36	Didcot South	1	8,012	8,012	6%	8,025	8,025	-5%
37	Didcot West	1	7,071	7,071	-7%	7,782	7,782	-8%
38	Goring & Woodcote	1	7,975	7,975	5%	8,169	8,169	-3%
39	Henley	1	7,806	7,806	3%	8,170	8,170	-3%
40	Sonning Common & Henley South	1	7,799	7,799	3%	8,298	8,298	-2%
41	Thame	1	9,207	9,207	22%	9,281	9,281	10%
42	Wallingford	1	7,711	7,711	2%	8,976	8,976	6%
43	Watlington & Rotherfield	1	7,539	7,539	0%	7,971	7,971	-6%
44	Wheatley	1	7,021	7,021	-7%	8,131	8,131	-4%
VALE OF WHITE HORSE								
45	Abingdon East	1	8,398	8,398	11%	8,614	8,614	2%
46	Abingdon North	1	7,896	7,896	4%	9,186	9,186	9%

Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
47 Abingdon South	1	8,587	8,587	14%	8,598	8,598	2%
48 Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds	1	6,939	6,939	-8%	8,420	8,420	0%
49 Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon	1	7,724	7,724	2%	8,603	8,603	2%
50 Faringdon	1	7,086	7,086	-6%	7,701	7,701	-9%
51 Grove	1	6,686	6,686	-12%	9,313	9,313	10%
52 Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury	1	6,134	6,134	-19%	9,308	9,308	10%
53 Kennington & Radley	1	8,448	8,448	12%	8,851	8,851	5%
54 Kingston & Stanford	1	7,211	7,211	-5%	7,402	7,402	-12%
55 Marcham & Cumnor	1	6,156	6,156	-19%	7,275	7,275	-14%
56 North Hinksey	1	7,578	7,578	0%	7,703	7,703	-9%
57 Shrivenham	1	7,799	7,799	3%	8,436	8,436	0%
58 Wantage West	1	8,280	8,280	9%	8,313	8,313	-2%

WEST OXFORDSHIRE

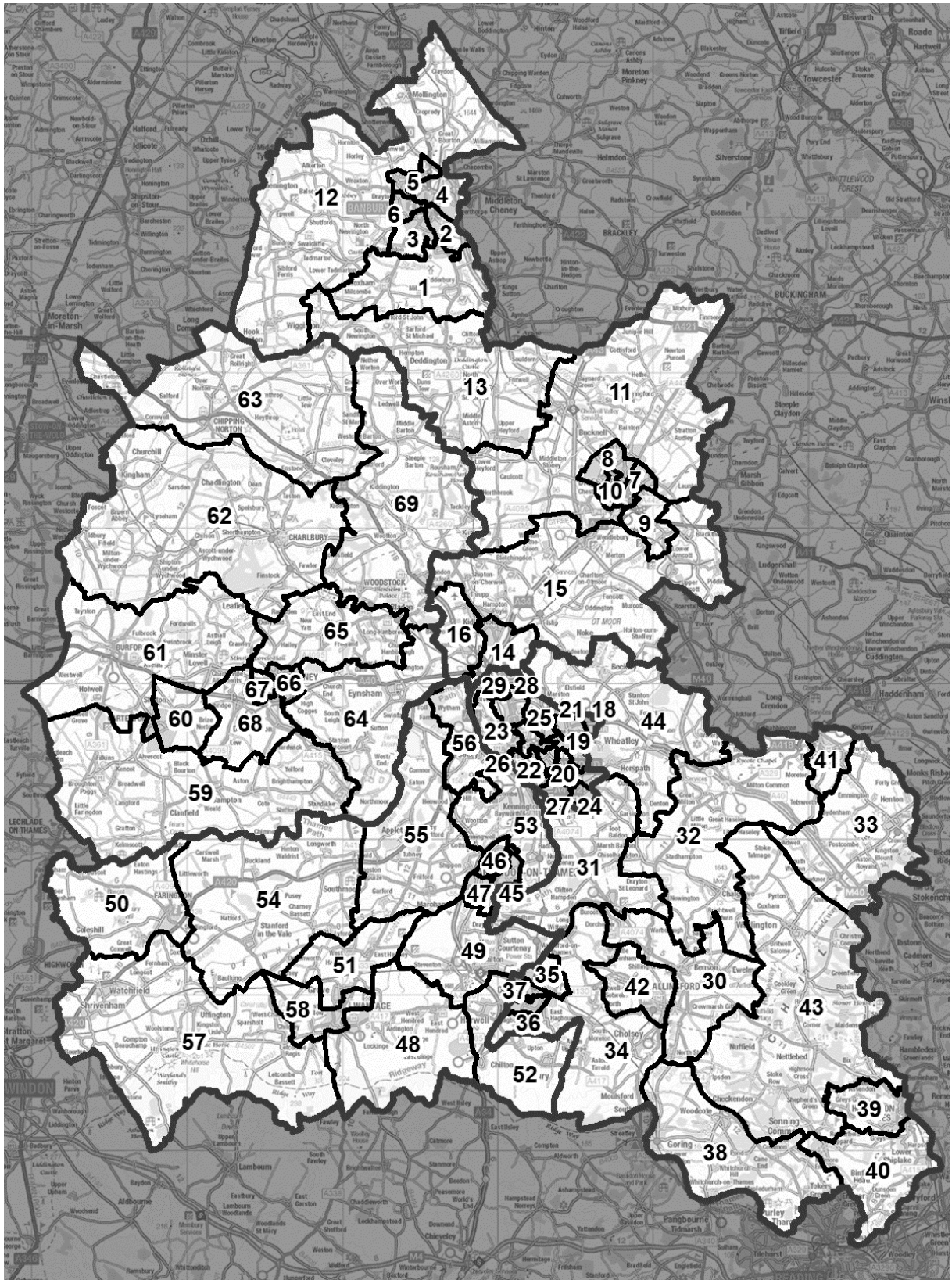
59	Bampton & Carterton South	1	8,868	8,868	17%	9,169	9,169	9%
60	Brize Norton & Carterton East	1	6,776	6,776	-10%	7,805	7,805	-8%
61	Burford & Carterton West	1	8,597	8,597	14%	8,887	8,887	5%
62	Charlbury & Wychwood	1	9,043	9,043	20%	9,056	9,056	7%
63	Chipping Norton	1	8,208	8,208	9%	9,091	9,091	8%
64	Eynsham	1	6,297	6,297	-17%	8,287	8,287	-2%
65	Hanborough & Hailey	1	6,785	6,785	-10%	7,901	7,901	-6%
66	Witney North & East	1	8,335	8,335	10%	8,976	8,976	6%
67	Witney South & Central	1	8,468	8,468	12%	8,569	8,569	1%
68	Witney West & Ducklington	1	7,524	7,524	-1%	7,922	7,922	-6%
69	Woodstock	1	8,404	8,404	11%	9,008	9,008	7%
Totals		69	521,890	-	-	582,977	-	-
Averages		-	-	7,564	-	-	8,449	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Oxfordshire County Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral division varies from the average for the county. 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	Division name	Number	Division name
1	Adderbury, Bloxham & Bodicote	36	Didcot South
2	Banbury Calthorpe	37	Didcot West
3	Banbury Easington	38	Goring & Woodcote
4	Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	39	Henley
5	Banbury Hardwick	40	Sonning Common & Henley South
6	Banbury Ruscote	41	Thame
7	Bicester East	42	Wallingford
8	Bicester North	43	Watlington & Rotherfield
9	Bicester South	44	Wheatley
10	Bicester West	45	Abingdon East
11	Chesterton & Launton	46	Abingdon North
12	Cropredy & Hook Norton	47	Abingdon South
13	Deddington	48	Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds
14	Kidlington East	49	Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon
15	Kidlington North & Otmoor	50	Faringdon
16	Kidlington West	51	Grove
17	Bartlemas	52	Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury
18	Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	53	Kennington & Radley
19	Churchill & Lye Valley	54	Kingston & Stanford
20	Cowley	55	Marcham & Cumnor
21	Headington & Quarry	56	North Hinksey
22	Isis	57	Shrivenham
23	Jericho & Osney	58	Wantage West
24	Leys	59	Bampton & Carterton South
25	Marston & Northway	60	Brize Norton & Carterton East
26	Parks	61	Burford & Carterton West
27	Rose Hill & Littlemore	62	Charlbury & Wychwood
28	Summertown & Walton Manor	63	Chipping Norton
29	Wolvercote & Cutteslowe	64	Eynsham
30	Benson & Crowmarsh	65	Hanborough & Hailey
31	Berinsfield & Garsington	66	Witney North & East
32	Chalgrove & Thame West	67	Witney South & Central

33	Chinnor	68	Witney West & Ducklington
34	Cholsey & The Hagbournes	69	Woodstock
35	Didcot Ladygrove		

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/oxfordshire

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/oxfordshire

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS CONSULTATION

Local Authority

- Oxfordshire County Council
- Cherwell District Council

Political groups

- The Labour Group on Witney Town Council
- The Labour & Co-operative Group on Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxfordshire Green Party

Councillors

- Councillor A. Beere (Cherwell District Council)
- Councillor M. Cherry (Oxfordshire County Council)**
- Councillor A. Crawford (Vale of White Horse District Council and Wantage Town Council)**
- Councillor A. Crichton (Cherwell District Council)
- Councillor D. Ford (Oxfordshire County Council)*
- Councillor D. Green (East Hanney Parish Council)
- Councillor D. Hingley (Cherwell District Council)
- Councillor K. Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council)
- Councillor L. Sibley (Oxfordshire County Council)*
- Councillor M. Waine (Oxfordshire County Council)*

* Contributed to a single submission

** Made two submissions

Parish and Town Councils

- Banbury Town Council
- Bicester Town Council
- Thame Town Council
- Wantage Town Council

- Witney Town Council

Local residents

21 local residents

FURTHER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS CONSULTATION

Local Authority

- Cherwell District Council

Councillors

- Councillor M. Hassall (Banbury Town Council)
- Councillor K. Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council)
- Councillor C. Pruden (Bicester Town Council)

Local residents

Nine 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
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www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

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