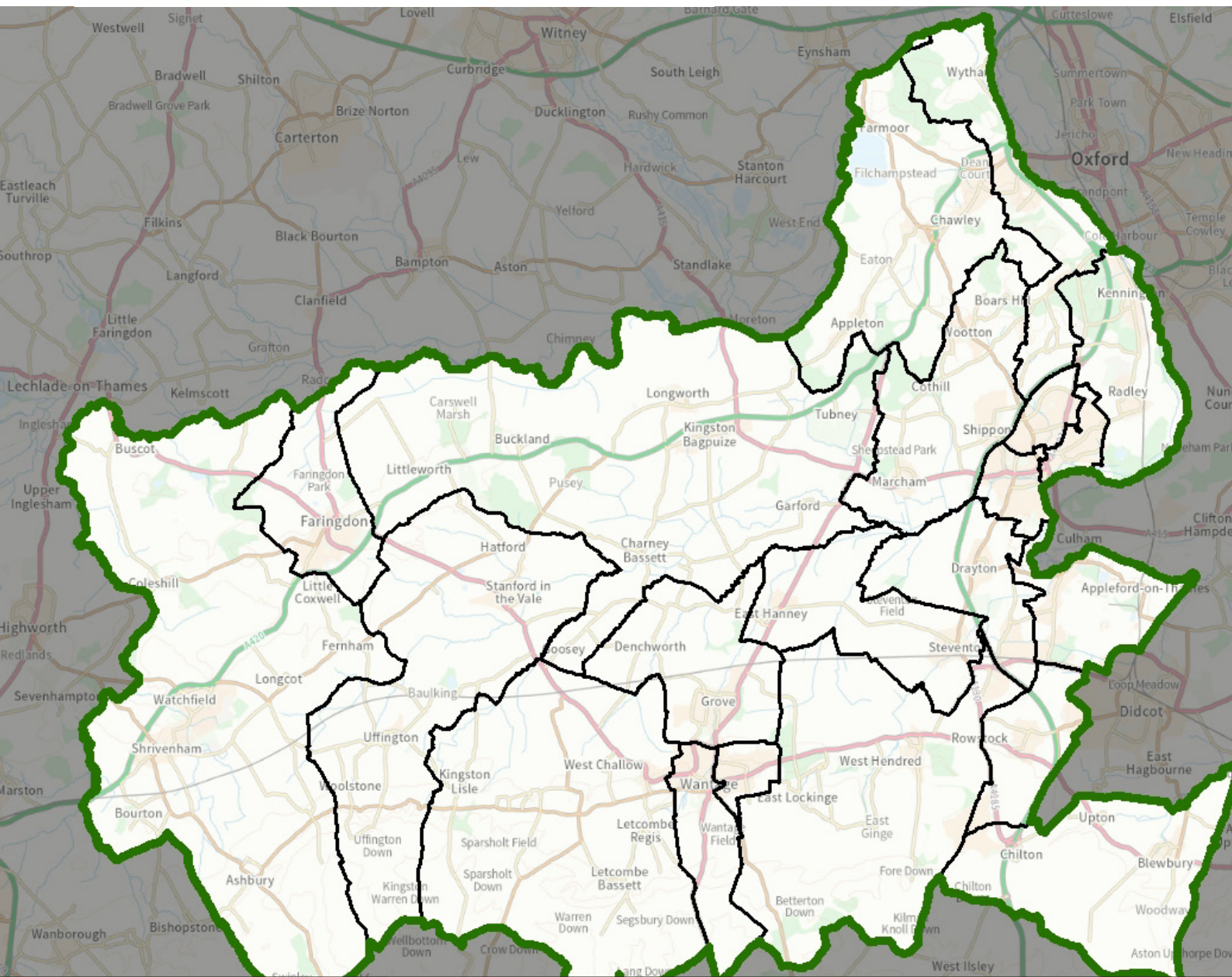


The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England



New electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council

Final Recommendations

December 2024

Translations and other formats:

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

Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Licensing:

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

Licence Number: GD 100049926 2024

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.

Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council

Electoral review

December 2024

Translations and other formats:

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

Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Licensing:

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

Licence Number: GD 100049926 2024

A note on our mapping:

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

Contents

Introduction	1
Who we are and what we do	1
What is an electoral review?	1
Why Vale of White Horse?	2
Our proposals for Vale of White Horse	2
How will the recommendations affect you?	2
Review timetable	3
Analysis and final recommendations	5
Submissions received	5
Electorate figures	5
Number of councillors	6
Ward boundaries consultation	7
Draft recommendations consultation	7
Final recommendations	8
Abingdon	9
Faringdon and Ridgeway	12
Kingston Bagpuize and Vale North East	15
Vale South East	17
Wantage and Grove	20
Conclusions	23
Summary of electoral arrangements	23
Parish electoral arrangements	23
What happens next?	25
Equalities	27
Appendices	29
Appendix A	29
Final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council	29
Appendix B	32
Outline map	32
Appendix C	34
Submissions received	34
Appendix D	35
Glossary and abbreviations	35

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 the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why 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 are now.

10 Vale of White Horse should have 21 wards, three fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 13 wards should change; eight will stay the same.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse.

How will the recommendations affect you?

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

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the 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 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 Vale of White Horse. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the district. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was 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 began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
3 December 2024	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 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.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

19 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2023	2029
Electorate of Vale of White Horse	105,812	121,247
Number of councillors	39	39
Average number of electors per councillor	2,713	3,109

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. Nineteen of our proposed 21 wards for Vale of White Horse 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 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.

23 We received one submission during the draft recommendations consultation that challenged the electoral figures put forward by the Council. This submission alleged that forecast electorate growth in Abingdon was too high. However, while we

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.

noted this submission, we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been provided to justify a change in the forecast. In conclusion, we remain satisfied that the housing information provided by the Council and the projected electorate forecasts agreed remain the best estimates currently available. We have therefore used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

24 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

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

26 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.

27 During the initial round of consultation, 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 also received a submission from a local resident who noted that the district was previously represented by 51 councillors before our 2013 review of the authority which reduced that number to 38. They suggested that recent and forecast population growth warranted an increase in councillor numbers.

28 When agreeing the number of councillors to be elected to an authority, we do not assume that population growth automatically warrants more councillors. However, as stated in our Guidance, we are always open to a modest change in the agreed number of councillors if it can be demonstrated that this will provide for a more effective warding pattern. We have been persuaded by the Council's proposals and agree that a warding scheme based on 39 councillors will provide for an effective distribution of members across the district.

29 Our draft recommendations were therefore based on a council size of 39 – one more than we announced at the beginning of the review. We received no submissions about the number of councillors in response to the consultation on our

draft recommendations. We have therefore confirmed a council size of 39 members as part of our final recommendations.

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, did not result in good levels of electoral equality in a number of 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.

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

34 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 consultation

35 We received 26 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included one district-wide response from the Council. The majority of the other submissions focused on specific areas, with several of these regarding our proposals for Baulking parish in the west of the district.

Final recommendations

36 Our final recommendations provide for four three-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and seven single-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

37 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with a modification to the wards in the Faringdon and Ridgeway area based on the submissions received there. We also make a minor modification to the boundaries between the wards of Abingdon.

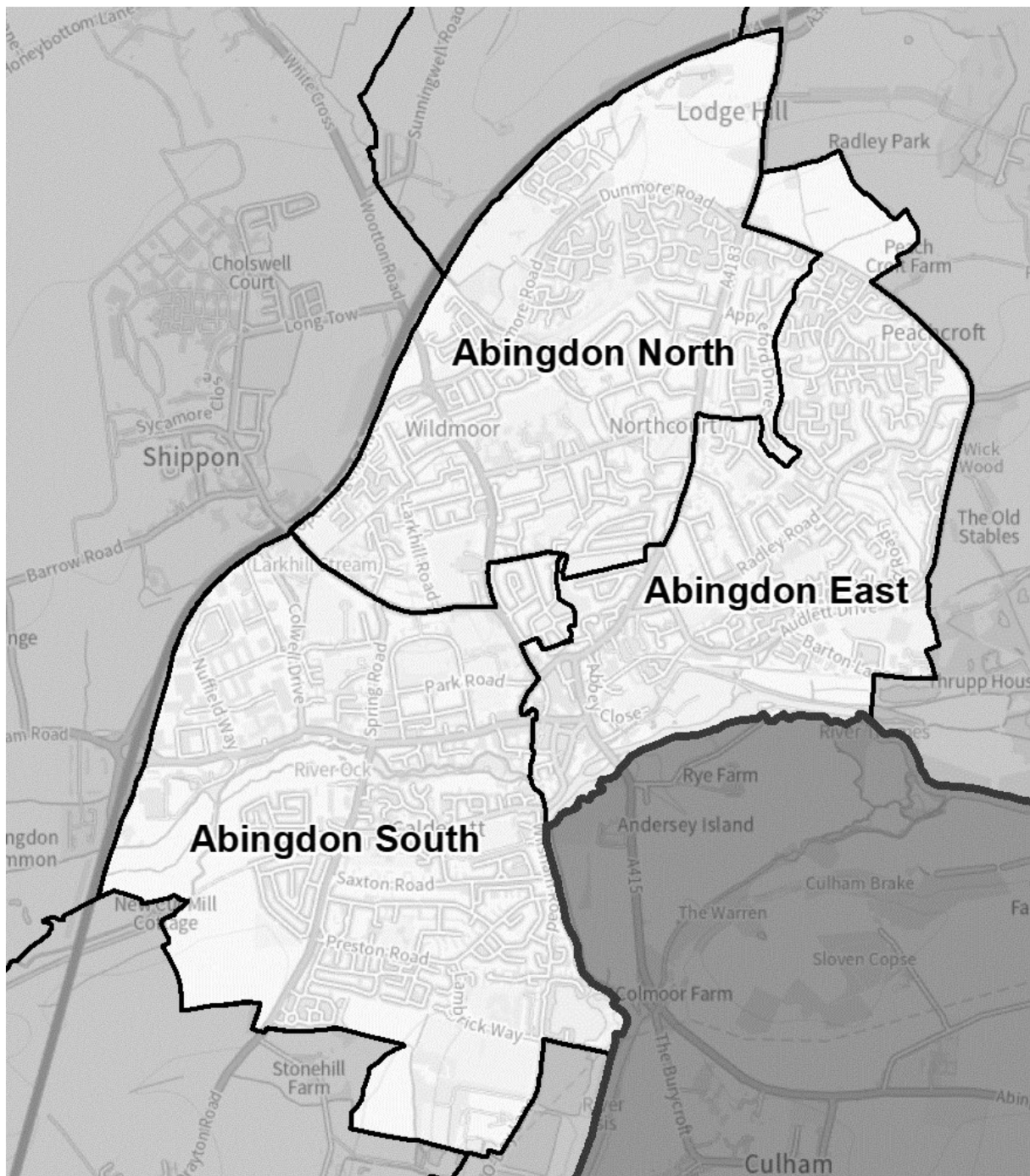
38 The tables and maps on pages 9–21 detail our final recommendations for each area of Vale of White Horse. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

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

39 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 29 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Abingdon



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

Abingdon East, Abingdon North and Abingdon South

40 We received four responses regarding our proposed wards in Abingdon, as well as comments from the District Council. A member of the public suggested a small

adjustment to the boundary at the corner of Ock Street and Stratton Way to allow for better access. Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council submitted comments in support of the draft recommendations, including the small adjustments that were made at Twelve Acre Drive and around Rush Common School. Councillor Giddins suggested that Abingdon North parish ward should be allocated 10 councillors due to incoming housing, rather than the six to which it is mathematically entitled according to projected electorates in 2029.

41 The Oxford & District Labour Party proposed an alternative scheme for Abingdon based around the principle of maintaining two-member wards for the town. This proposal included an Abingdon South ward similar to the existing Caldecott ward (though entirely south of the River Ock) and an Abingdon Peachcroft ward unchanged from the existing arrangements. It did not provide a complete warding pattern for the remainder of the town, describing the historic Abingdon area with a forecast electoral variance greater than 10% and leaving two polling districts unassigned to any particular ward in the northern part of the town.

42 The Council noted the logic of road access at Twelve Acre Drive and around Rush Common School where we made amendments to the wards it suggested during the initial consultation. It reiterated a preference for the warding pattern it originally proposed, arguing that greater weight should be given to achieving coterminosity with the new Oxfordshire county divisions for the purposes of effective and convenient local government.

43 We have carefully considered the submissions received and have not been persuaded by the alternative proposals from the Oxford & District Labour Party. The proposals did not take account of all electors within Abingdon so it was difficult to ascertain whether we could adopt the proposals within the context of the wider warding arrangements for the area. Furthermore the scheme, as submitted, does not achieve good electoral equality, and therefore does not effectively balance all of our statutory criteria.

44 We consider that the Council's comments regarding matching ward boundaries to new county divisions in the town to be persuasive. While we are not required to have regard to existing or new county divisions when we develop our recommendations, we consider that it will provide for effective and convenient local government in this case, and ensure that electoral variances are kept to a minimum. We therefore propose to amend our draft recommendations in Abingdon such that the boundary between Abingdon East and Abingdon North aligns with the new county division boundary there. We consider that this arrangement will provide for effective and convenient local government rather than orienting boundaries exclusively for access reasons.

45 As part of our final recommendations, we are proposing the three-councillor wards of Abingdon East, Abingdon North, and Abingdon South that will all have good electoral equality by 2029.

Faringdon and Ridgeway



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Faringdon	2	14%
Ridgeway	1	-10%
Stanford	1	7%
Watchfield & Shrivenham	2	11%

46 We received six responses regarding our draft recommendations for the west of the district, as well as comments on this area from the Council. These comments concerned the large three-member Faringdon & Stanford ward as well as the parishes of Baulking and Uffington which we proposed be included in separate wards.

Faringdon, Ridgeway, Stanford and Watchfield & Shrivenham

47 As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed a new pattern of wards in the western area of Vale of White Horse. The Council's submission during the initial consultation supported the maintenance of the existing warding arrangements in this area; however, at that time we noted the high forecast electoral variance of 14% for a Faringdon ward comprising only Great Faringdon parish. We considered that this was a relatively high electoral imbalance that was not supported by the evidence received. As part of our draft recommendations, we therefore proposed a three-member Faringdon & Stanford ward, as well as revised two-member Watchfield & Shrivenham and single-member Ridgeway wards.

48 In response to our draft recommendations we received submissions from Baulking Parish Meeting, Councillor Oldnall of Uffington parish and a resident of Baulking, who all emphasised the strong links between Baulking and Uffington. Baulking Parish Meeting described Uffington as a 'mother' village, noting that 'our shop, our main church in the benefice, our vicar, our local school, and our Community Hall are all situated there.' It added details about shared community projects, support groups, and newsletters in the area, as well as a Neighbourhood Plan which was jointly developed by the two villages. The resident mentioned the local community bus and the Uffington, Baulking and Woolstone (UBW) bus when referencing the strong links between these villages. The Uffington parish councillor further emphasised the community ties in this area, where Baulking and Woolstone rely on several services oriented around Uffington.

49 The Council supported these comments in its own submission, where it strongly opposed placing Baulking and Uffington into different district wards. It requested 'that the Commission consider alternative arrangements which provide for [Baulking and Uffington] to be included in the same ward recognising that this may result in a compromise regarding electoral equality or a ward covering a larger geographical area'.

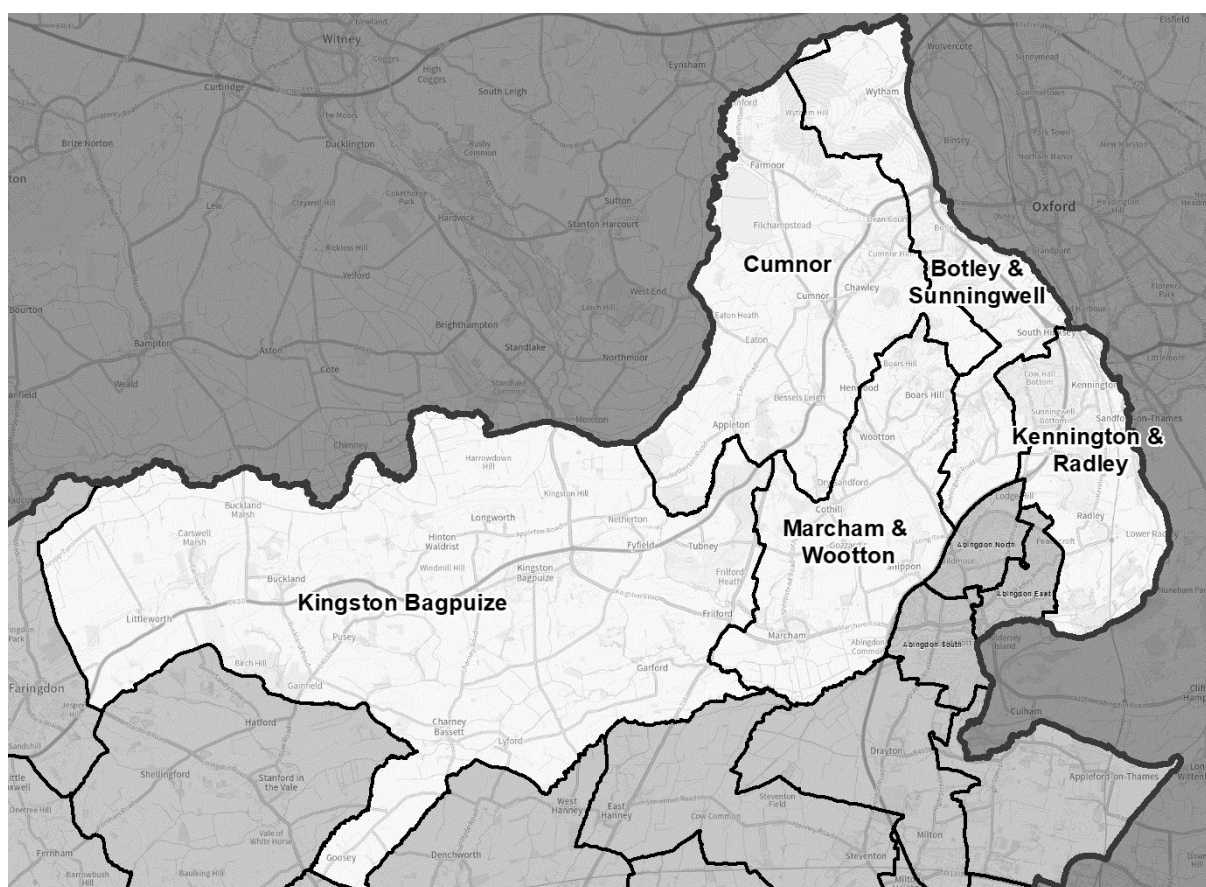
50 We additionally received submissions from a resident in Faringdon, a resident in Little Coxwell, and Stanford in the Vale Parish Council. The first resident questioned the addition of another councillor to Faringdon & Stanford ward while the second resident opposed the inclusion of Little Coxwell in a Faringdon ward, noting that 'it is part of a network of villages and it should remain part of that rural network.' Stanford in the Vale Parish Council submitted extensive comments in opposition to the proposed Faringdon & Stanford ward. It suggested that residents of Uffington and nearby villages would use Stanford for certain services (such as larger shops or the post office) rather than Watchfield or Shrivenham. It additionally raised concerns regarding the pairing of a large market town with smaller villages in one large three-member ward, noting that a Faringdon & Stanford ward as proposed would be the only one of its type in the district.

51 We have carefully considered the submissions received and are persuaded by the evidence that Baulking and Uffington parishes should be in the same ward, and ideally also in the same ward as Woolstone parish. We note that an amendment to our proposed Watchfield & Shrivenham ward where it would also include Baulking parish would result in a forecast electoral variance of 14%. An alternative amendment to the draft recommendations where both Baulking and Uffington parishes are included in Ridgeway ward would increase the electoral variance of that ward to 16%.

52 In addition to the comments regarding Baulking parish, we are persuaded by the evidence from Stanford in the Vale Parish Council that it is best represented in a single-member ward, as under the existing arrangements. Because the only shortcoming of the existing pattern is the 14% forecast electoral variance of Faringdon ward, and because any pattern which includes Baulking and Uffington parishes in the same ward results in variances of 14+% anyway, we are proposing to retain the existing Faringdon, Ridgeway, Stanford and Watchfield & Shrivenham wards as part of our final recommendations.

53 In our draft recommendations report we said that we were particularly interested to hear local perspectives in this area, recognising that a departure from the existing warding pattern might prove contentious. We consider that the evidence received for this area during the second consultation has demonstrated the strengths of this pattern and we cannot suggest any reasonable alternatives that provide a better balance between our statutory criteria here. As part of our final recommendations, we therefore propose a two-member Faringdon ward, a single-member Ridgeway ward, a single-member Stanford ward, and a two-member Watchfield & Shrivenham ward, all aligning to existing ward boundaries.

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%

Botley & Sunningwell, Cumnor, Kennington & Radley and Kingston Bagpuize

54 We received one submission for these wards other than the general response from the Council, which fully supported the draft recommendations. This was from a member of public who suggested that Goosey parish has more natural ties to Faringdon, Stanford and Wantage than to Kingston Bagpuize. While we acknowledge these views, we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been received to amend our draft recommendations here.

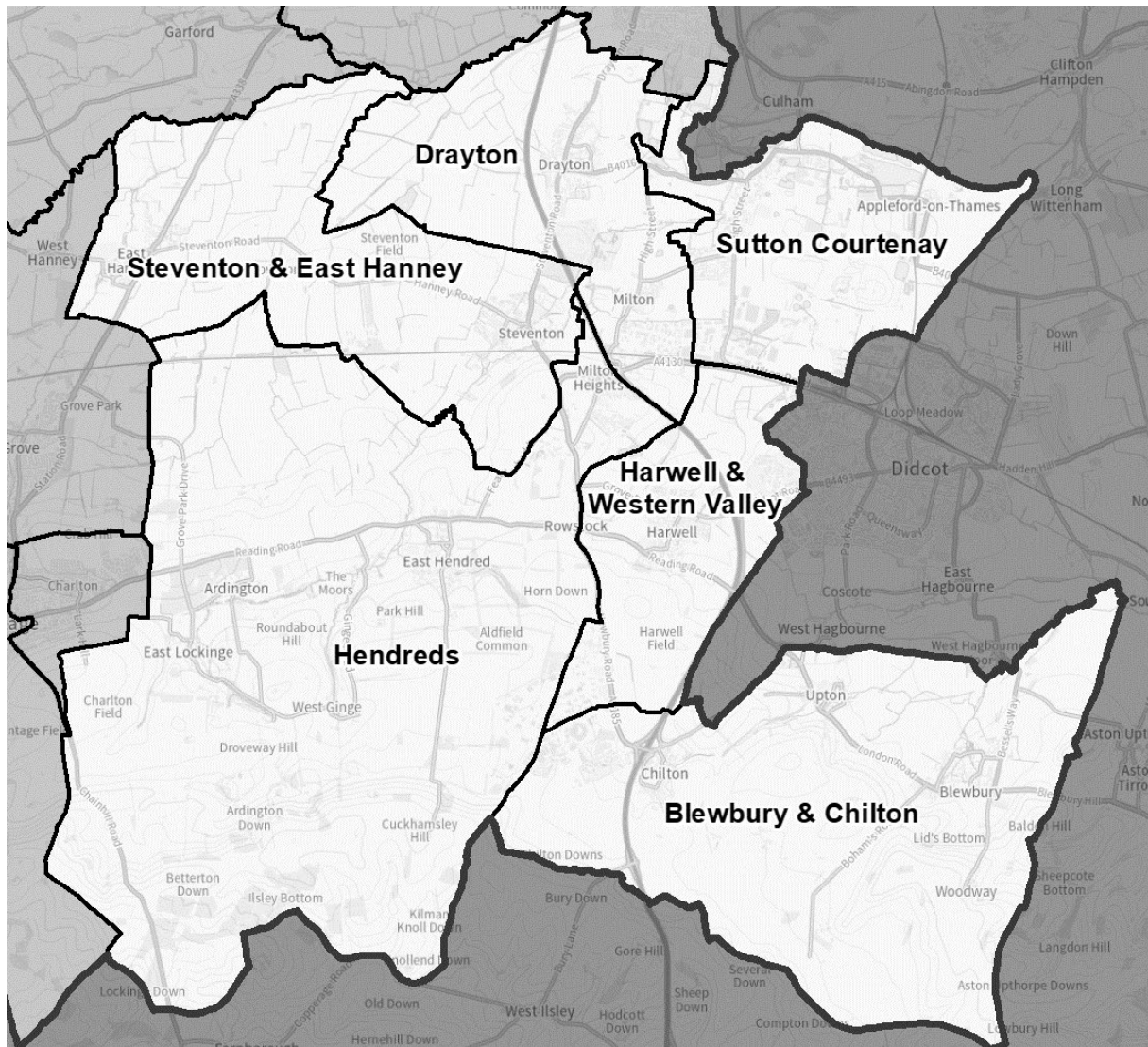
55 We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations for Botley & Sunningwell, Cumnor, Kennington & Radley and Kingston Bagpuize wards as final. All of the wards are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029.

Marcham & Wootton

56 In addition to the Council's submission noted above, we received a submission from St Helen Without Parish Council. It supported the draft recommendations for Marcham & Wootton ward, noting that this configuration keeps St Helen Without parish entirely within one ward. It suggested that, due to forecast population growth beyond the extent of this review, St Helen Without could grow larger than both Marcham and Wootton villages and that the name of the ward could be changed to reflect that shift. It suggested that Shippon, where the new housing development is situated, be included in a renamed Marcham, Shippon & Wootton ward.

57 While we note the rationale for changing the ward name here, we are not persuaded that this name would best reflect the ward and its inhabitants as it currently exists. We consider that, should future electorate shifts outside of the five-year forecasting period substantially alter the character of the ward, a review could account for any changes at that time. Indeed, the legislation provides for the process by which a district council may change a ward name at the appropriate time. We therefore propose to confirm our proposed Marcham & Wootton ward as part of our final recommendations.

Vale South East



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

Blewbury & Chilton

58 One response we received suggested that Blewbury & Chilton would be a better name for the ward we originally proposed as Blewbury. This suggestion was supported by the Council, which noted that this name included both of the two largest settlements within the ward.

59 We received a submission from Chilton Parish Council, which argued that the Harwell Campus area of Harwell parish should be included in the Blewbury & Chilton ward. It suggested that Chilton has strong links with the Harwell Campus area (including Severn Road) and that they should fall within the same district ward.

60 We visited this area when preparing our draft recommendations for Vale of White Horse and noted that the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus is divided between parish boundaries. We consider that, as the campus contains no electors, it is still best to use parish boundaries as ward boundaries in this area. We consider the electors near the campus, namely those in the Chilton Field Way area and on North Drive, are better oriented to the parishes of Chilton and Harwell, respectively. We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final here.

61 We propose a Blewbury & Chilton ward comprising the parishes of Blewbury, Chilton and Upton, as in the draft recommendations. We are persuaded that the name of Blewbury & Chilton is more reflective of local communities in the ward and have adopted it as part of our final recommendations.

Drayton, Hendreds, Steventon & East Hanney and Sutton Courtenay

62 We received relatively few submissions for these four wards. Sutton Courtenay Parish Council submitted comments supporting the draft recommendations. A member of the public argued that Milton Heights represents a poorly connected spur of Hendreds ward, and that the area would be better included in a neighbouring ward.

63 We note the comments regarding Milton Heights but are not persuaded that excluding Milton Heights from Hendreds ward would provide for a good balance of the statutory criteria. Without electors from the Milton Heights area, the forecast electoral variance in Hendreds ward would be 36% below the average for the district. This would result in very high electoral inequality which is not supported by the evidence received.

64 We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations for Drayton, Hendreds, Steventon & East Hanney and Sutton Courtenay wards as final.

Harwell & Western Valley

65 We received several responses regarding our proposed Harwell & Western Valley ward, including comments from the Council in support of the draft recommendations. Councillor Pearson, of Harwell Parish Council, suggested that Harwell is a village (rather than a Didcot town extension like Western Valley) and that it has greater affinity with parishes to the south than with Western Valley.

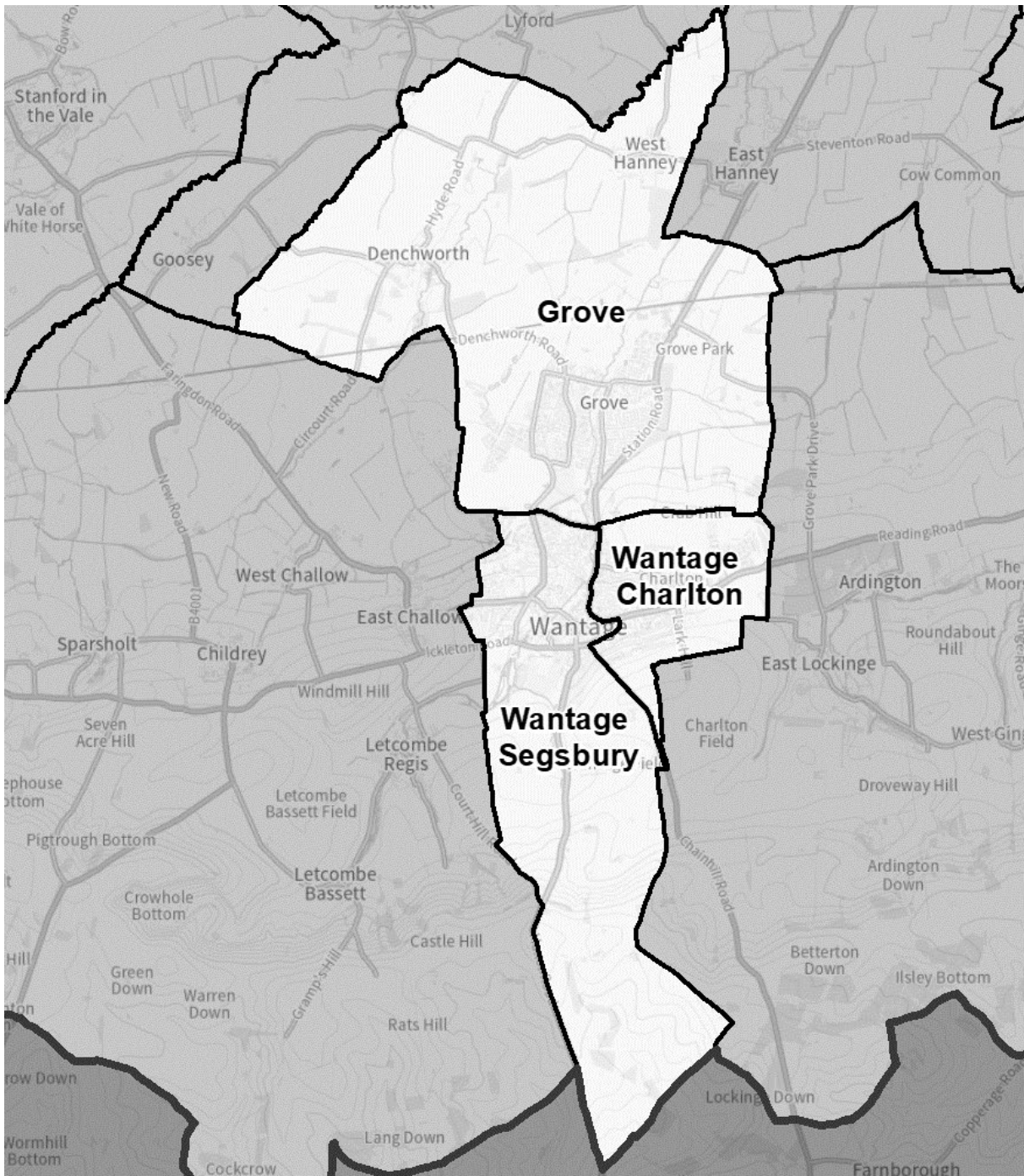
66 Western Valley Parish Council submitted comments in favour of the proposed two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward.

67 A member of the public suggested that a single-member Western Valley ward would better reflect local ties, noting that the A34 acts as a boundary between Harwell and Didcot; this submission additionally advocated for a review of the external district boundary between Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire.

68 We still consider that a two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward represents the best balance of our statutory criteria in this area. We consider that a large three-member Blewbury & Harwell ward (comprising four different parishes) would not provide for effective and convenient local government. Additionally, the resulting imbalance in electoral equality of a single-member Western Valley ward (with a forecast variance of 13%) is not supported by the evidence received for this specific area. Additionally, this review cannot change the external boundaries between Vale of White Horse and adjoining authorities. This can only be done via a Principal Area Boundary Review, which is a separate process to the current electoral review.

69 We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for a two-member Harwell & Western Valley ward as final. This ward will have very good electoral equality by 2029.

Wantage and Grove



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

Grove

70 In addition to the Council's response covering the entire district, we received four comments on our draft recommendations, specifically with reference to Grove ward. Three of these comments objected to the division of East Hanney and West Hanney between wards, suggesting that the two parishes share common services including a church, a school, a shop, and sporting facilities. They noted that there are relatively weak links from West Hanney to Grove, and that the village character of West Hanney does not align with the expanding town of Grove. The fourth submission here was in favour of Grove ward but did not provide specific evidence.

71 We appreciate the feedback received here and acknowledge the points raised regarding community ties and effective and convenient local government. We had reservations in respect of pairing Denchworth and West Hanney in a ward with Grove in our draft recommendations. However, we are still not persuaded that there is a pattern of wards in this area which provides a more effective balance between our three statutory criteria. The submissions here have confirmed our observations when we visited this area; however, they do not account for achieving satisfactory electoral equality for Grove ward and make no alternative suggestions as to how this ward could be configured differently while still maintaining reasonable electoral equality. On balance, we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Grove ward as final.

Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury

72 We received one submission regarding this area from Wantage Town Council. It supported the draft recommendations for Wantage, noting that "the proposed boundary between the two wards follows a natural divide provided by the main roads though the town and does not significantly divide communities within the town." It additionally supported the ward names of Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury.

73 Wantage Town Council requested clarity regarding the parish warding of Wantage, noting that the parish wards as suggested in the Vale of White Horse District Draft Recommendations Report do not align with parish warding as proposed in the Oxfordshire County Council Final Recommendations Report. It expressed a strong preference for the parish warding arrangement put forward in the Vale of White Horse paper (two parish wards with eight members each, with boundaries corresponding to the proposed Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury wards). Given the timing of when the two electoral changes orders are made, the parish warding put forward as part of these recommendations will supersede the parish warding arrangements as described in the Oxfordshire paper when the new wards come into effect at the May 2027 local elections.

74 We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury wards as final.

Conclusions

75 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final 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 in Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided in Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2023	2029
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	21	21
Average number of electors per councillor	2,713	3,109
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Final recommendations

Vale of White Horse District Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 21 wards representing seven single-councillor wards, 10 two-councillor wards and four 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

76 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.

77 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.

78 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.

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

Final 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

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

Final recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Charlton	8
Segsbury	8

What happens next?

81 We have now completed our review of Vale of White Horse District 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 2027.

Equalities

82 The Commission is satisfied that it complies with its legal obligations under the Equality Act and that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Final 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	8,415	2,805	3%	9,743	3,248	4%
2	Abingdon North	3	7,946	2,649	-2%	9,526	3,175	2%
3	Abingdon South	3	8,626	2,875	6%	9,371	3,124	0%
4	Blewbury & Chilton	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	2	6,571	3,286	21%	7,117	3,559	14%
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%
12	Kennington & Radley	2	5,302	2,651	-2%	6,083	3,042	-2%

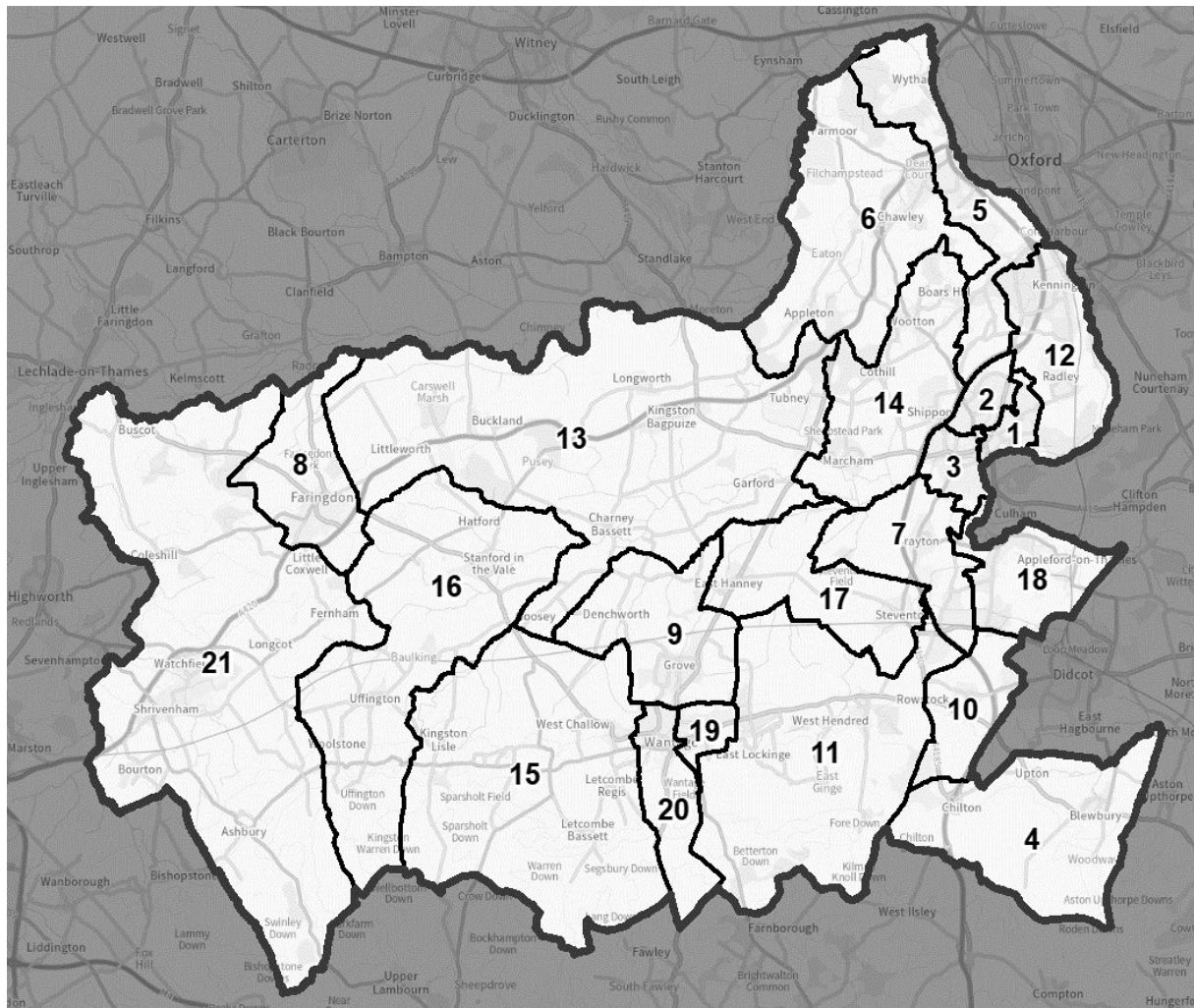
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13	Kingston Bagpuize	2	5,745	2,873	6%	6,207	3,104	0%
14	Marcham & Wootton	2	5,262	2,631	-3%	5,866	2,933	-6%
15	Ridgeway	1	2,656	2,656	-2%	2,784	2,784	-10%
16	Stanford	1	3,051	3,051	12%	3,336	3,336	7%
17	Steventon & East Hanney	1	2,661	2,661	-2%	2,836	2,836	-9%
18	Sutton Courtenay	1	2,573	2,573	-5%	2,887	2,887	-7%
19	Wantage Charlton	2	4,458	2,229	-18%	5,839	2,920	-6%
20	Wantage Segsbury	2	5,902	2,951	9%	6,433	3,217	3%
21	Watchfield & Shrivenham	2	6,128	3,064	13%	6,898	3,449	11%
Totals		39	105,812	-	-	121,247	-	-
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 & Chilton
5	Botley & Sunningwell
6	Cumnor
7	Drayton
8	Faringdon
9	Grove
10	Harwell & Western Valley
11	Hendreds
12	Kennington & Radley
13	Kingston Bagpuize
14	Marcham & Wootton

15	Ridgeway
16	Stanford
17	Steventon & East Hanney
18	Sutton Courtenay
19	Wantage Charlton
20	Wantage Segsbury
21	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

Political Groups

- Oxford & District Labour Party

Councillors

- Councillor T. Pearson (Harwell Parish Council)
- Councillor M. Giddins (Abingdon Town Council)
- Councillor M. Oldhall (Uffington Parish Council)

Parish and Town Councils

- Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
- Baulking Parish Meeting
- Chilton Parish Council
- St Helen Without Parish Council
- Stanford in the Vale Parish Council
- Sutton Courtenay Parish Council
- Wantage Town Council
- Western Valley Parish Council

Local Residents

- 13 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Changes 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
7th Floor, 3 Bunhill Row,
London,
EC1Y 8YZ

Telephone: 0330 500 1525
Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk
Online: www.lgbce.org.uk
www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk
X: @LGBCE