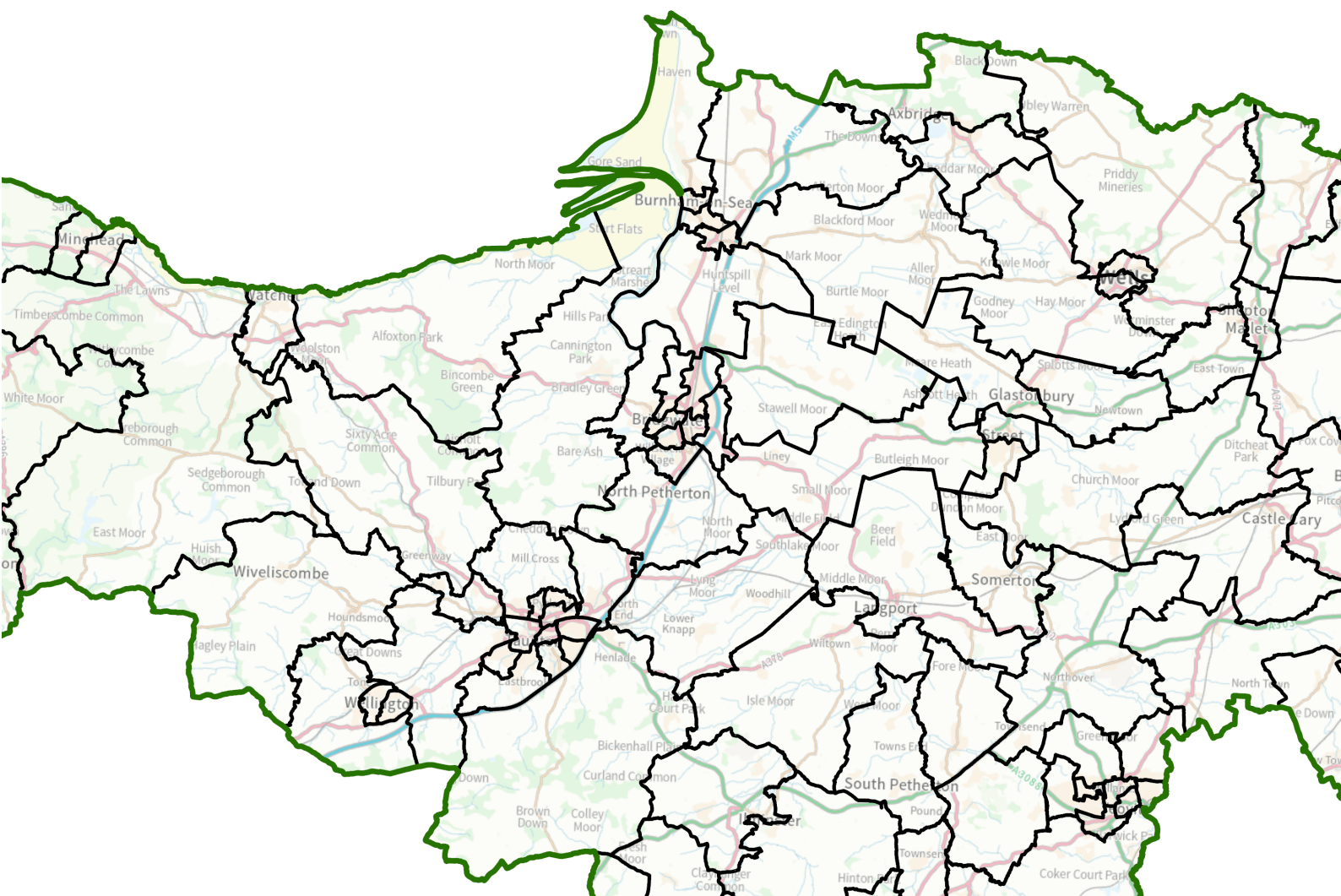


Correction:

1. When preparing the draft recommendations report below, in paragraph 32, the Commission treated Somerset Council's stated preference for predominantly single-councillor divisions as if it were a formal request under the legislation that guides our reviews, for a uniform pattern of single-member divisions. In fact, Somerset Council did not make any such formal request.
2. This correction note does not change the draft recommendations and the report remains as published. However, this correction supersedes any specific reference in that report to a formal request by Somerset Council for a uniform pattern of single-member divisions. The Council's position should be understood as a preference rather than a formal request. Therefore, all those submitting views can propose both multi-member and single-member divisions.



New electoral arrangements for Somerset Council Draft Recommendations

June 2025

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Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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A note on our mapping:

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

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

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

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More details 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 Somerset?

7 In 2021, the then Secretary of State agreed to create a new unitary local government structure for the Somerset county area. The existing Somerset County Council and the districts of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton and South Somerset were abolished, and a new single-tier unitary authority of Somerset was created.

8 A shadow authority was established towards the end of 2021 with interim electoral arrangements. The new authority held its first elections in May 2022, with the expectation that the Commission would conduct a full electoral review before the subsequent elections in 2027.

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

- The divisions in Somerset 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 Somerset.

Our proposals for Somerset

10 Somerset should be represented by 96 councillors, 14 fewer than there are now.

11 Somerset should have 96 divisions, 41 more than there are now.

12 The boundaries of all divisions should change.

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

Have your say

15 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 3 June 2025 to 11 August 2025. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed divisions as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

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

17 You have until 11 August 2025 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 79 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

18 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Somerset. We then held a period of consultation with the public on division patterns for Somerset. This consultation was due to end on 20 January 2025, but was extended by six weeks to 4 March 2025, following a request from the Council. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

19 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 October 2024	Number of councillors decided
22 October 2024	Start of consultation seeking views on new divisions
4 March 2025	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
3 June 2025	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
11 August 2025	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
2 December 2025	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

20 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 divisions.

21 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.

22 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.

	2024	2030
Electorate of Somerset	446,698	467,270
Number of councillors	96	96
Average number of electors per councillor	4,653	4,867

23 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 of our proposed divisions for Somerset are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2030.

Submissions received

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

Electorate figures

25 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2030, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2025. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 5%.

26 During the consultation on our proposed division arrangements, Rode Parish Council questioned the electoral forecasts for its area, while a local resident raised similar concerns regarding the Watchet and Williton areas, both pointing to a

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.

projected decline in electors. While we note these submissions, as we state in our technical guidance, providing electoral forecasts can be a somewhat inexact science. While local authorities are well placed to assess planning permissions and the likely trajectory of development and population growth, such trends are fluid and can result in either increases or decreases in electorate. In this case, we are satisfied that the Council's forecasts are supported by a sound evidence base and reflect a reasonable approach to predicting future electorates.

27 Both Councillor Kay and a local resident noted that significant development may take place in Selwood parish. However, in line with our guidance, local authorities are asked to include only those developments that are expected to generate a significant number of extra electors within five years of the conclusion of the review. The Council assessed that the proposed development in Selwood would not generate a substantial number of electors by 2030 and, accordingly, did not include it in its projections. We consider this approach is consistent with our guidance.

28 Having reviewed the evidence in detail, we are satisfied that the Council's electoral forecasts are based on a robust and reasonable assessment of likely electorate changes over the next five years. We therefore consider these forecasts to be the most reliable figures currently available and have used them as the basis of our draft recommendations.

29 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

30 Somerset Council ('the Council') currently has 110 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that decreasing this number by 14 to 96 will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

31 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of divisions that would be represented by 96 councillors.

32 At a Full Council meeting on 26 September 2024, the Council resolved to request that the Commission carry out this review on the basis of recommending a

uniform pattern of single-member divisions. There is a presumption in legislation⁴ that the Commission will agree to such requests and seek to provide a uniform pattern of single-member divisions across the authority. However, in all cases, this consideration will not take precedence over our other statutory criteria, and we will not recommend a uniform pattern of single-member divisions if, in our view, or as is shown in evidence provided to us, it is not compatible with our other statutory criteria.

33 In this context, we note the submission from the Yeovil Constituency Labour Party which expressed support for a pattern of single-member divisions.

34 We received several submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on division patterns. The submissions expressed a mixture of both support for and opposition to the reduction in councillors. However, none of these submissions provided compelling evidence as how an alternative number would allow the Council to discharge the councillors' roles and functions more effectively. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a pattern of divisions represented by 96 councillors.

Division boundaries consultation

35 We received 169 submissions in response to our consultation on division boundaries. Among these were four council-wide proposals – from the Council, the Somerset Council Liberal Democrat Group ('the Liberal Democrats'), a local resident (which comprised 97 councillors, rather than 96) and Kingston St Mary Parish Council ('Kingston St Mary'). An additional council-wide scheme developed by the Council's Electoral Review Working Group – though rejected by the Council's Constitution and Governance Committee – was still submitted by councillors from the working group and the Somerset Council Conservative Group (referred to in this report as the 'Working Group' submission). The remaining submissions focused on localised comments for division arrangements in specific areas of Somerset.

36 The council-wide schemes all aimed to provide for as many single-councillor divisions as possible, but all of them apart from the Kingston St Mary scheme proposed at least three two-councillor divisions.

37 The Kingston St Mary scheme was based on aligning divisions with Somerset Council's Local Community Network (LCN) structure, a principle supported by several other submissions during consultation. However, while we acknowledge that aligning division boundaries with LCNs may help to reflect local community identities and interests, and may contribute to convenient and effective local government, we are not required to adhere to them when proposing our divisions. We will therefore

⁴ Section 57 of Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

cross LCN boundaries if it results in a pattern of divisions for Somerset that we consider more effectively balances our three statutory criteria.

38 Our draft recommendations draw on elements of the various council-wide schemes; however, we have more frequently adopted those submitted by the Liberal Democrats. This is because their proposals generally aligned more closely with the evidence we received regarding community identity and locally recognised boundaries. In developing our recommendations, we also gave careful consideration to other local evidence, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some instances, we concluded that the submitted proposals did not achieve an optimal balance between our statutory criteria and we have therefore identified and proposed alternative boundaries in those areas.

39 We conducted a virtual tour of Somerset in order to look at the various proposals on the ground. This tour helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed. We plan to visit Somerset in person once the consultation on our draft recommendations has ended and before we finalise our recommendations, to allow us to focus on those areas where we receive strong evidence and feedback.

Draft recommendations

40 Our draft recommendations are for 96 single-councillor divisions. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

41 The tables and maps on pages 9–68 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Somerset. They detail how the proposed division arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

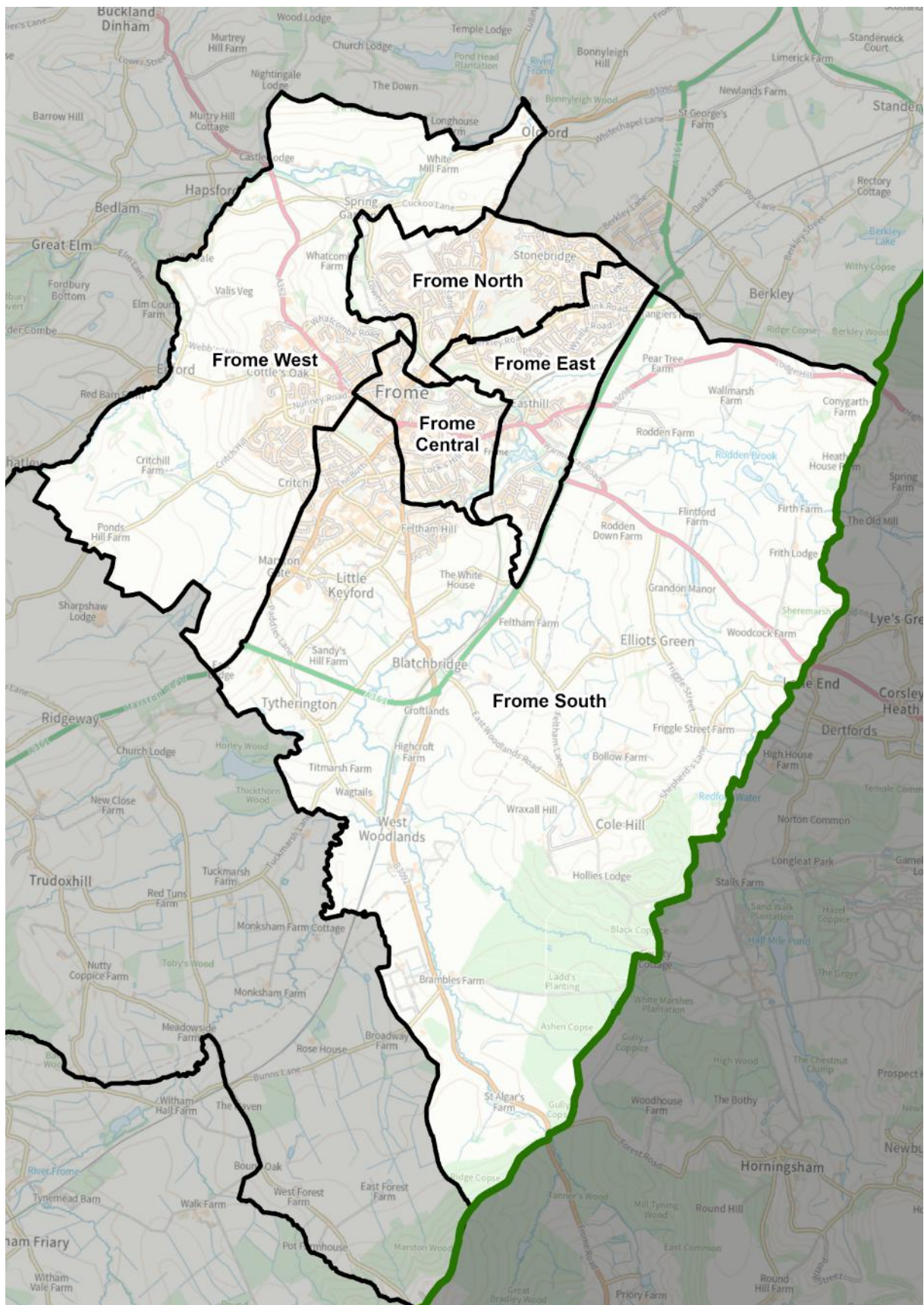
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

42 A summary of our proposed new divisions is set out in the table starting on page 85 and on the large map accompanying this report.

43 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the division boundaries, and the names of our proposed divisions.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Frome



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Frome Central	1	-4%
Frome East	1	-10%
Frome North	1	-9%
Frome South	1	2%
Frome West	1	7%

Frome Central, Frome East, Frome North, Frome South and Frome West

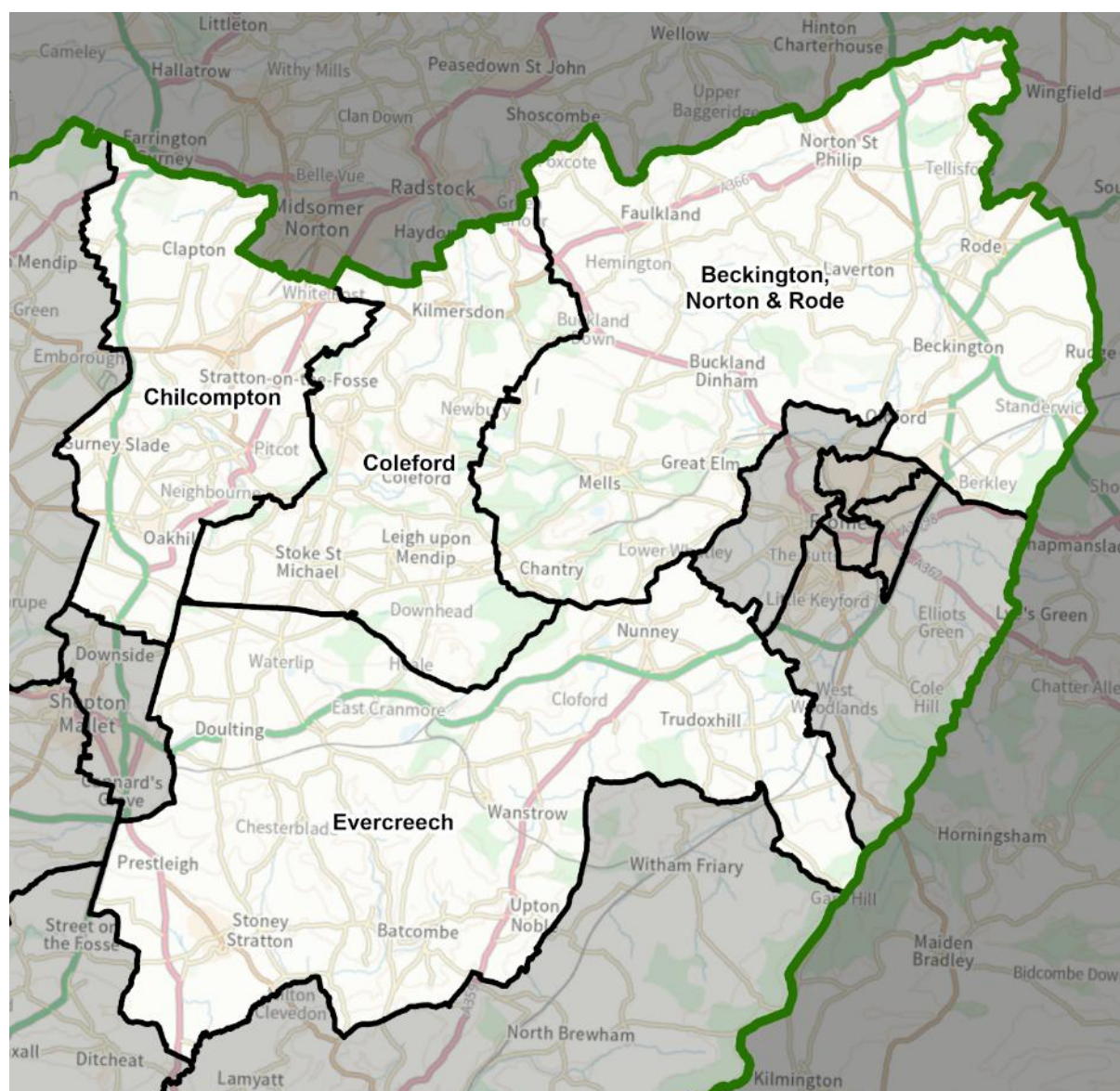
44 All five council-wide proposals suggested five divisions for the urban Frome area, each with significantly different boundaries. However, as these proposals were all primarily based on polling district boundaries, they resulted in divisions that, in our view, had unclear boundaries in places.

45 We therefore propose five Frome divisions with boundaries that use natural and man-made features such as the River Frome, railway lines and, where possible, main roads. We consider this approach will result in divisions with clear and identifiable boundaries. Additionally, our proposals seek to avoid placing rural parishes in divisions covering urban Frome. For instance, we were not persuaded by the Liberal Democrats' and the Working Group's separate proposals to include the rural parish of Nunney in a division with western Frome, nor by the Council's proposal to combine western Frome with Beckington and Berkley parishes. We also note that the inclusion of Nunney parish within an urban Frome division was opposed by both Councillor Clarke and Councillor Kay. Instead, we propose including only Selwood parish in our Frome divisions, as it largely surrounds the town and is thus closely linked to Frome in terms of community interests and shared local issues. Selwood parish will be divided between our proposed Frome South and Frome West divisions, along the existing Selwood East and Selwood West parish ward boundary.

46 We also consider that our Frome Central division reflects the submission made by Councillor Kay, who requested that Frome town centre be placed in a Frome Central division.

47 Councillor Boyden proposed a pattern of three two-councillor divisions for Frome. However, we have not adopted this proposal, as we did not find sufficient and compelling evidence to justify departing from the presumption that we provide for a uniform single-councillor division pattern across Somerset.

North East Somerset



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Beckington, Norton & Rode	1	4%
Chilcompton	1	3%
Coleford	1	0%
Evercreech	1	6%

Beckington, Norton & Rode

48 We based our draft recommendations for the north-eastern part of the authority on the proposal of the Liberal Democrats and the Working Group. We consider that their proposals best meet the statutory criteria by uniting the more rural parishes to the north and west of Frome within a single division. In our assessment, this

arrangement is preferable to the alternative proposals we received that placed some of these rural parishes in divisions that contained parts of urban Frome.

49 We propose naming this division Beckington, Norton & Rode, as this name includes the larger, more identifiable communities within this division. While most of the proposals we received for this area retained the existing division name of Mendip North East, we consider that a name that more accurately describes the key constituent communities to be more reflective of community identities and interests. We nonetheless welcome feedback on this decision during consultation.

50 Rode Parish Council expressed a preference to remain represented by two councillors, while Berkley Parish Council requested the retention of the existing Frome North division. However, we are mindful of the requirement to establish a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions across Somerset. On balance, we do not consider that the evidence presented provides sufficient justification for retaining a two-member division in this area. We are satisfied that our proposed Beckington, Norton & Rode division provides a strong reflection of our statutory criteria, uniting Berkley and Rode parishes with neighbouring rural parishes to the north of Frome in a cohesive division that achieves a good level of electoral equality.

Chilcompton and Coleford

51 We have decided to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposed Chilcompton and Coleford divisions, with some modifications. We determined that their Chilcompton division effectively connects several communities with shared community interests, bounded by the A37 and A367. Similarly, we find that their proposed Coleford division – which includes the parishes of Coleford, Downhead, Holcombe, Kilmersdon and Leigh-on-Mendip – brings together communities with strong geographic and social ties.

52 We do, however, propose adjustments to these divisions. We recommend including Stratton-on-the-Fosse parish in Chilcompton division rather than in Coleford division, while Stoke St Michael parish is incorporated into Coleford division. We consider that these changes better reflect the area's geography and the connections between local communities. These modifications also provide for a slightly better balance of electoral equality across the two divisions.

Evercreech

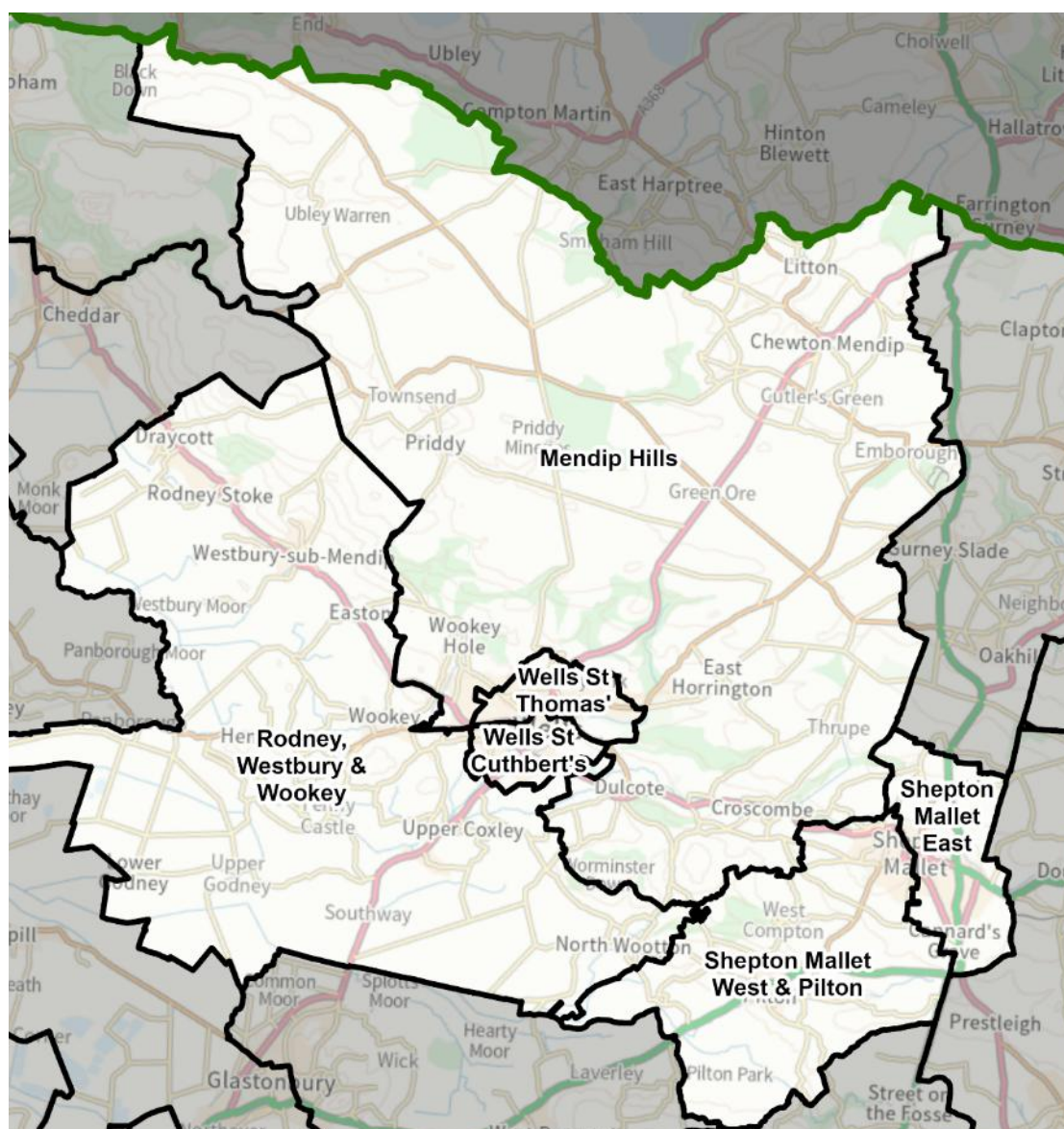
53 Our proposed Evercreech division is based on the Liberal Democrats' proposal. We determined that it best reflected the statutory criteria, by linking the rural parishes between Frome and Shepton Mallet within a cohesive division that shares geographic and community ties. We consider that the alternative division proposals we received for this area were less cohesive, combining parishes with weaker geographic, road and community connections. For instance, we were not persuaded by the identical Mendip Central & East division proposed by the Council and the

Working Group, which linked Ditchheat parish with Stoke St Michael parish, while excluding Evercreech parish.

54 The Liberal Democrats' proposed Evercreech division is projected to have an electoral variance of -12%, which would not provide for good electoral equality. To address this, we propose including the parishes of Nunney and Trudoxhill. While the Liberal Democrats had placed these parishes in divisions with urban Frome, we consider their community identities and interests would be better reflected in a more rural division. Additionally, we propose transferring Lamyatt and Milton Clevedon parishes to our recommended Bruton division. This provides for good electoral equality across divisions, and we consider both parishes to share good links with Bruton, given their geographic proximity to the town.

55 The alternative proposals we received for the area suggested a division with the name Mendip and a directional suffix. However, we have adopted the name of Evercreech, as suggested by the Liberal Democrats. We also note that the local resident's scheme proposed Evercreech as a division name, despite the boundaries of that division being significantly different to the ones we are recommending. Given Evercreech is the most populous settlement within the division, we consider this name to be more recognisable to local electors than the various Mendip-based suggestions, and therefore more reflective of community identities.

Shepton Mallet and Wells



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Mendip Hills	1	-5%
Rodney, Westbury & Wookey	1	-1%
Shepton Mallet East	1	-5%
Shepton Mallet West & Pilton	1	4%
Wells St Cuthbert's	1	-4%
Wells St Thomas'	1	0%

Mendip Hills

56 As a result of our decision to create a Chilcompton division that is centred upon communities bounded by the A37 and A367, we are unable to adopt the proposals made by the Council, the Working Group and the local resident. These proposals

linked communities in that area with those within and on the edge of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We have therefore decided to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposed Mendip Hills division as part of our draft recommendations, which we consider to provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria. We determined that it brings together several rural communities to the north of Wells that have well-established ties with one another and with the Mendip Hills AONB. We consider this division will reflect local community identities effectively, while also delivering a good forecast level of electoral equality.

57 While the Kingston St Mary scheme did not link communities near Chilcompton with those either close to or within the Mendip Hills AONB, we were not persuaded that their proposed Wells Rural division – which linked Westbury parish with communities in and around the AONB – would reflect local community identities. We consider Westbury parish to have closer ties with Rodney Stoke and Wookey, and that they should therefore be included in the same division.

58 St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council requested no changes to the existing Mendip Hills and Mendip West divisions, which are each currently represented by two councillors and encompass parts of the parish. The Council argued that this arrangement ensures effective representation for the parish. However, we are mindful of our requirement to establish a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions across Somerset. After consideration, we do not consider the evidence provided by the parish council was sufficient to justify retaining two-member divisions in this area.

Rodney, Westbury & Wookey

59 Our proposed Rodney, Westbury & Wookey division is based on the submission made by the Liberal Democrats. We concluded that their proposal to link the parishes of Rodney Stoke, Westbury and Wookey, which are geographically close and benefit from reasonable road connectivity via the A371, provides a good reflection of our statutory criteria. We also note the submission from Rodney Stoke Parish Council which indicated that the parish should be aligned with Westbury parish, and the amendment to the Council's scheme from Councillor Wyke, who proposed Rodney Stoke, Westbury and Wookey parishes be linked together in the same division.

60 In comparison, we found that the alternative proposals from the Council, Councillor Wyke and the Working Group for a Mendip West division did not meet the statutory criteria as effectively. Their proposals included Walton parish; however, we consider Walton to have stronger community ties with parishes in the Polden Hills area. Accordingly, we propose that Walton be placed in a division alongside those parishes.

61 We also chose not to adopt the proposal within the local resident's scheme. This proposal suggested a 'doughnut'-shaped division comprising Croscombe parish

and the St Cuthbert (Out) parish. While we note the latter parish encircles the city of Wells and is also doughnut shaped, we generally do not recommend such configurations without compelling supporting evidence, as we consider communication and community links between the northern and southern parts of such divisions are often weak.

62 Finally, we did not adopt the Kingston St Mary proposal, as it would result in adopting a division with a poor level of electoral equality, as their Wells Rural division is forecast to have an electoral variance of -14% by 2030.

63 We propose to name this division Rodney, Westbury & Wookey, rather than the Liberal Democrats' suggested name of Mendip West, as we consider it to better reflect the identities of the communities it comprises.

64 A local resident stated that the Rodney Stoke parish boundary should be extended. Another local resident requested changes to the Godney parish boundary. However, changing parish boundaries is the responsibility of Somerset Council via a Community Governance Review. This electoral review is solely concerned with division boundaries.

Shepton Mallet East and Shepton Mallet West & Pilton

65 The town of Shepton Mallet is marginally too small to accommodate two single-councillor divisions that are entirely within the town council boundary and provide good electoral equality. As a result, it is necessary to include an adjacent community in a division alongside part of Shepton Mallet in order to achieve electoral equality. To this end, all of the authority-wide schemes proposed linking the western part of Shepton Mallet with Pilton parish. However, the Council suggested an alternative arrangement, linking Croscombe parish with the western side of the town. Linking Croscombe parish with Shepton Mallet was supported by a local resident.

66 After careful consideration, our draft recommendations for Shepton Mallet link the western side of the town with Pilton parish. We consider that Pilton parish shares good community and geographic ties with Shepton Mallet, and that this configuration strikes an appropriate balance between the statutory criteria. We did not adopt the Council's alternative proposal, as it would result in poor electoral equality, with its proposed Shepton Mallet West division projected to have an electoral variance of -12% by 2030.

Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas'

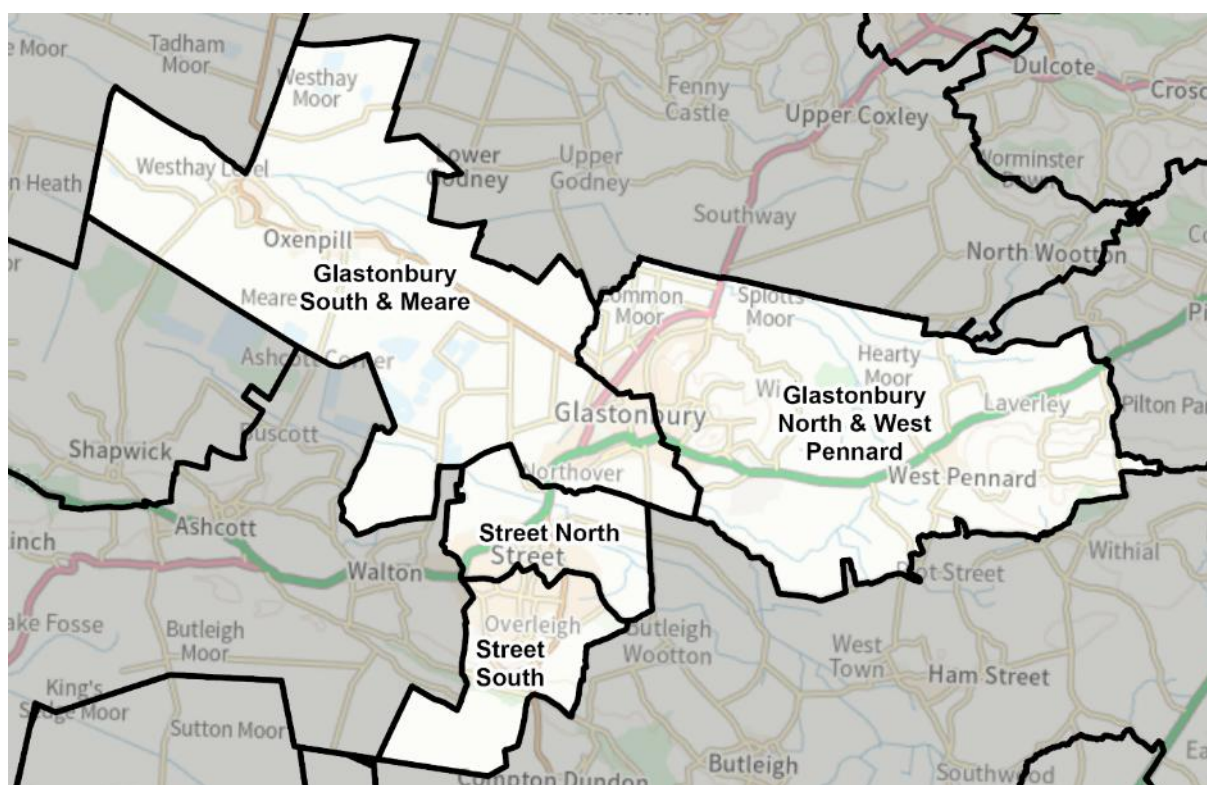
67 All of the authority-wide schemes proposed a two-councillor Wells division that followed the city council boundary, with the exception of the Kingston St Mary proposal, which divided the city across three separate divisions.

68 We are mindful of the presumption that we provide for a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions, and that a departure from this approach must be supported by compelling evidence demonstrating how a two- or three-councillor division would reflect our statutory criteria more effectively. In this instance, we did not consider that the submissions received provided sufficient justification to support a two-councillor division for Wells. Consequently, we have decided to propose two single-councillor divisions for the city.

69 While the Kingston St Mary scheme did propose single-member divisions across Wells, we considered its proposals would result in somewhat incoherent division boundaries. For instance, we resolved that their proposal of linking the centre of Wells with the more rural community of Wookey would not reflect community identities. As such, we are putting forward our own alternative arrangement. Our proposal comprises two single-member divisions, both wholly contained within the city council boundary. The boundary between the divisions would follow Portway and Mountery Road, and then continue to the north of the Cathedral and run along Tor Street.

70 We propose naming the divisions Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas'. These names draw on former ward names under the former Mendip District Council and are likely to be familiar to local communities. We also note that the Kingston St Mary scheme made use of similar wording in its proposed division names.

Glastonbury and Street



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Glastonbury North & West Pennard	1	-5%
Glastonbury South & Meare	1	2%
Street North	1	-7%
Street South	1	8%

Glastonbury North & West Pennard and Glastonbury South & Meare

71 Glastonbury town does not have a sufficiently large electorate to support two single-councillor divisions wholly contained within its town council boundaries and with good electoral equality. Therefore, it is necessary to combine parts of Glastonbury in divisions with neighbouring communities.

72 We have based our draft recommendations for the Glastonbury area on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats. These proposals link the parishes of Meare, Sharpham and West Pennard with parts of Glastonbury. We consider these parishes to have reasonable road and community links with the town and have concluded that this configuration offers the best balance of the statutory criteria. However, we propose to use the compass points of North and South in the division names, as we consider them more suitable than the suggestions of East and West.

73 We have not adopted the alternative proposals submitted for the Glastonbury
area, as each resulted in divisions with relatively high electoral variances. For

example, both the Council's and a local resident's proposals for Glastonbury Tor and Glastonbury East divisions would result in forecast electoral variances of 13% and 11% respectively by 2030. Similarly, the Working Group's proposed Glastonbury Tor division would be too small, with a variance of -12%. We also chose not to adopt the Kingston St Mary proposal, as we consider that the parishes of Baltonsborough and West Bradley share closer links with the parishes in our Avalon division, as opposed to communities in eastern Glastonbury.

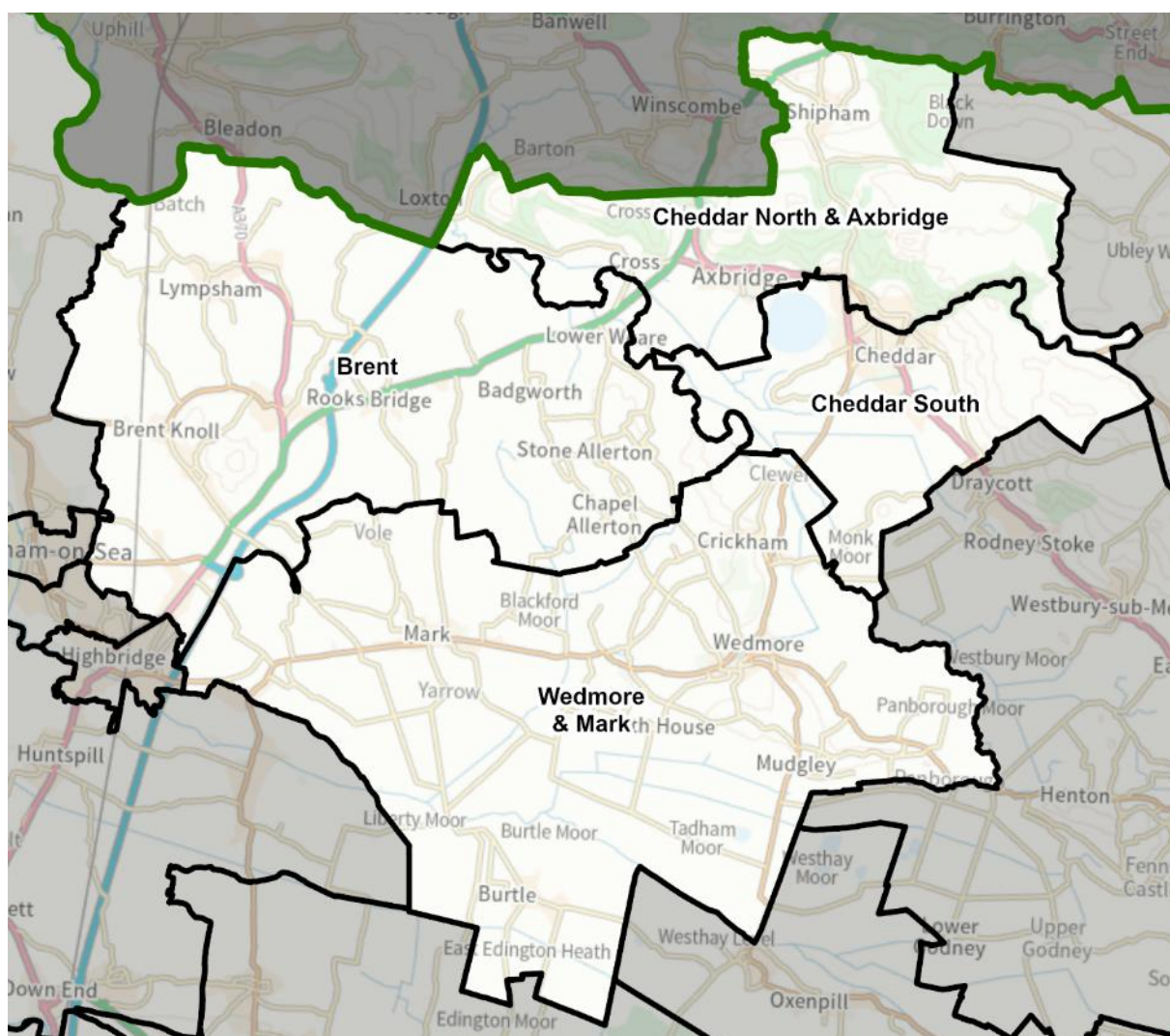
Street North and Street South

74 With the exception of the Kingston St Mary proposal, all authority-wide submissions proposed a two-member Street division that followed the existing town council boundary.

75 As outlined earlier in this report, we must aim to deliver a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions, and any proposal for multi-councillor divisions must provide strong evidence demonstrating why single-member divisions would not provide an effective balance of our statutory criteria. In the case of Street, we did not find the arguments in favour of a two-member division sufficiently persuasive. As a result, we are not recommending a two-councillor division for the town. We consider that two single-member divisions can provide for an effective balance of the statutory criteria.

76 While the Kingston St Mary proposal did include single-member divisions for Street, we were not persuaded that combining the urban town centre with outlying rural areas would best reflect the statutory criteria – particularly when electoral equality can be achieved in Street without incorporating surrounding communities. We are therefore putting forward our own proposal. Our recommended pattern comprises two single-member divisions, both entirely contained within the existing town boundary. We are proposing the names of Street North and Street South, which we consider to be clear and geographically descriptive. We also note that the Kingston St Mary scheme adopted compass-point naming for its proposed divisions.

Cheddar and Axbridge



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Brent	1	-7%
Cheddar North & Axbridge	1	-10%
Cheddar South	1	-10%
Wedmore & Mark	1	-9%

Brent

77 All of the council-wide schemes included a Brent division, although the boundaries varied between proposals. After consideration, we have based our proposed Brent division on the submission from the Liberal Democrats. This was the only proposal that excluded the parishes of Berrow and Brean. While these parishes are currently part of the existing Brent division, we received evidence during the consultation, from Brean Parish Council and Ashley Fox MP (Bridgwater), that demonstrated why the parishes should be included in a division with part of Burnham. We agree that, as coastal communities, Berrow and Brean have closer

ties with Burnham. As such, we consider that the community identity and interests of both parishes will be better reflected in a division that includes them along with the northern part of Burnham.

78 Our Brent division includes the parishes of Badgworth, Chapel Allerton and Weare. Their inclusion is necessary to achieve good electoral equality in the division, following the transfer of Berrow and Brean parishes. In addition, we consider these parishes to be a good fit for Brent division, as they share good road links, particularly via the A38, with the other communities within our proposed Brent division.

Cheddar North & Axbridge and Cheddar South

79 Three of the authority-wide schemes proposed a two-councillor division for the Cheddar area. The only exceptions were the Working Group scheme, which split the settlement across two single-councillor divisions, and the Kingston St Mary proposal, which proposed a single-councillor division with a forecast electoral variance of 19%. While the latter proposal received support from a local resident, we decided not to adopt it, as it would not provide for good electoral equality.

80 We are nonetheless mindful of the general presumption in favour of a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions and concluded that the three proposals suggesting a two-councillor division did not present sufficient justification to depart from this approach in the Cheddar area. Consequently, we are recommending two single-councillor divisions.

81 Although the Working Group scheme proposed single-member divisions, we found its proposed boundaries linked communities with apparently limited connections. For example, its proposal to combine the southern part of Cheddar with Wedmore parish did not, in our view, reflect local community identities, given the distance between the two areas. We therefore propose an alternative arrangement. Our recommended Cheddar North & Axbridge division combines the northern part of Cheddar with the nearby parishes of Axbridge, Compton Bishop and Shipham. The remainder of Cheddar parish will form our proposed Cheddar South division. Both divisions are forecast to have an electoral variance of -10%, ensuring reasonably good electoral equality by 2030.

82 A local resident suggested that Axbridge is distinct from Cheddar and the two areas should therefore be in separate divisions. However, we have not adopted this proposal, as we consider that Axbridge has strong connections with Cheddar. Including Axbridge in the Cheddar North & Axbridge division supports these community ties while also delivering electoral equality across divisions.

Wedmore & Mark

83 The Council proposed a division comprising the parishes of Mark and Wedmore. It acknowledged the resulting electoral variance of -17%, but argued that

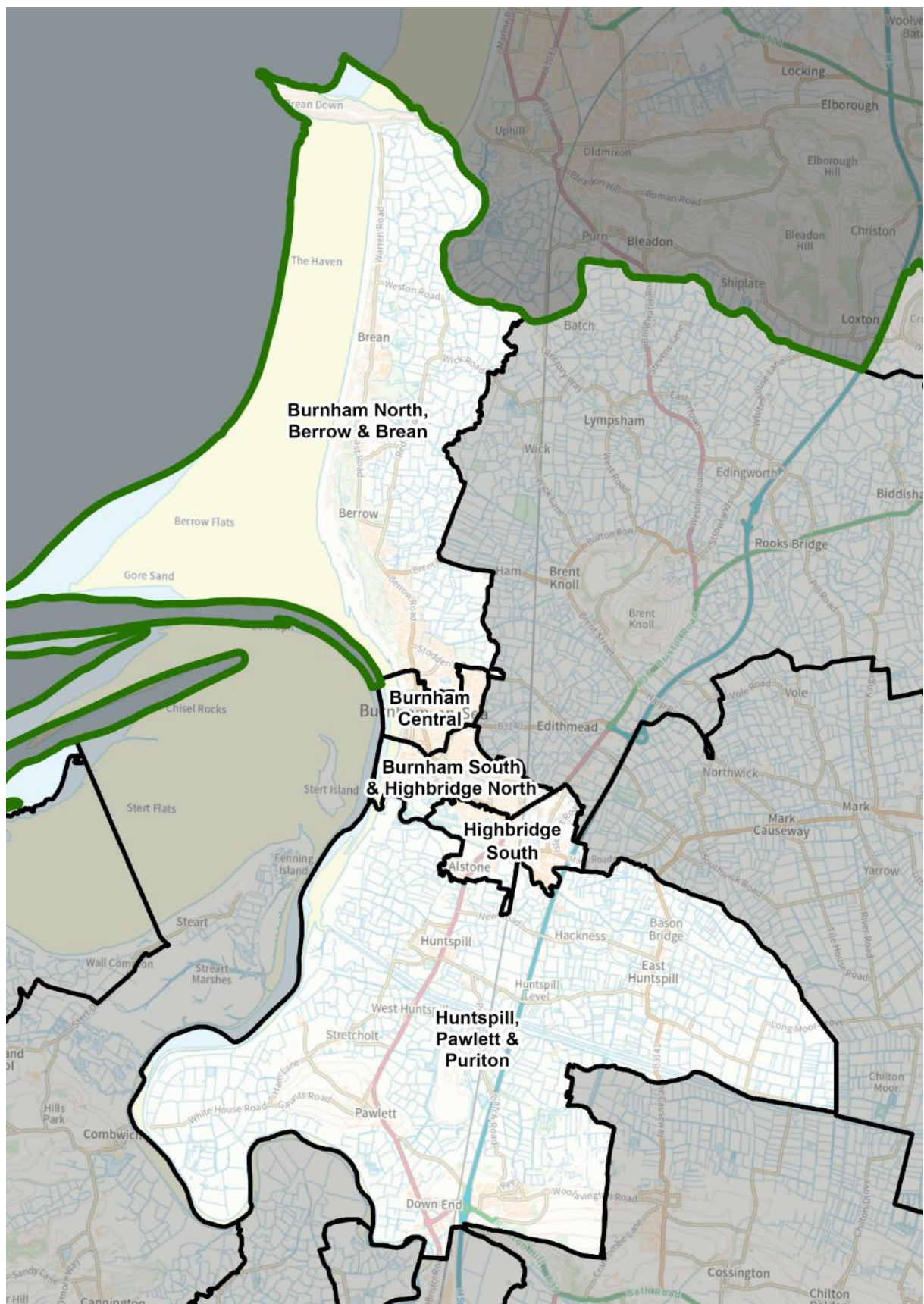
it should be accepted as the proposed division reflected local topography and community ties. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a division comprising Mark and Wedmore parishes, but included the parish of Burtle, to improve electoral equality. Their proposed division would have a forecast electoral variance of -11%.

84 Alternative proposals from the Working Group and Kingston St Mary placed the parishes of Mark and Wedmore in separate divisions. However, we were not persuaded to adopt either approach, as we consider that the two parishes share close geographical proximity and good community links and should thus be placed in the same division. The local resident's scheme kept the two parishes together but required the addition of Chapel Allerton and Weare parishes to achieve electoral equality. However, we propose to include those parishes in our Brent division, to ensure good electoral equality in that area.

85 Taking all proposals into account, our draft recommendations are based on the Liberal Democrats' proposal. We were not convinced that the Council provided sufficient justification for a division with an electoral variance as high as -17%. While the Liberal Democrats' proposal achieves a slightly better variance of -11%, it still falls just outside the range we normally consider to provide good electoral equality.

86 To address this, we propose to include in our recommended division the area of Burnham Without parish that lies east of the M5 motorway, and which includes the village of Watchfield. We consider that this area has reasonable community connections with Mark parish, and the M5 provides a clear and logical boundary. With this adjustment, our proposed Wedmore & Mark division will result in improved electoral equality, with a projected variance of -9% by 2030.

Burnham and Highbridge



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Burnham Central	1	0%
Burnham North, Berrow & Brean	1	6%
Burnham South & Highbridge North	1	4%
Highbridge South	1	9%
Huntspill, Pawlett & Puriton	1	3%

Burnham Central and Burnham North, Berrow & Brean

87 We have decided to base our recommendations for the central and northern parts of Burnham on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats, Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association. All three proposed linking the northern section of Burnham with the parishes of Berrow and Brean. We were persuaded to adopt these proposals, as we received good community evidence that demonstrated the close links Brean and Berrow parishes share with Burnham.

88 As a result of connecting the northern part of Burnham with Brean and Berrow, it is necessary for us to base our Burnham Central division on the proposals put forward by the Liberal Democrats, Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association as well. This is because the alternative proposals we received for a central Burnham division would have required the inclusion of a significant number of electors into our Burnham North, Berrow & Brean division, which would not provide for good electoral equality. Overall, including both Berrow and Brean parishes along with additional electors from central Burnham would have resulted in an oversized division.

89 We propose to adopt the name of Burnham North, Berrow & Brean, as suggested by Brean Parish Council. We consider this name best reflects the constituent communities of the proposed division. Additionally, we propose naming the division containing the commercial centre of the town as Burnham Central. Although the Liberal Democrats suggested adding the suffix ‘-on-Sea’, we have chosen to not include it, so it is consistent with the other Burnham divisions. We nonetheless welcome views as to whether the suffix should be included in this name and in the name of the other Burnham divisions.

Burnham South & Highbridge North and Highbridge South

90 Both the Council and the Working Group proposed a division that linked the eastern side of Highbridge with the more rural communities within the parishes of East Huntspill and Burnham Without. However, we are not minded to adopt this proposal as we consider that, in this instance, combining distinct urban and rural areas in such a division would not reflect local community identities or interests.

91 The local resident's scheme proposed that the eastern side of Highbridge be joined with the entirety of Burnham Without parish. We have also decided not to adopt this proposal. In our view, the area that contains electors residing on streets connected to the Frank Foley Parkway, within Burnham Without parish, shares stronger connections with the southern part of Burnham and the western side of Highbridge. Additionally, we did not adopt the alternative proposal submitted by Kingston St Mary, as their Highbridge division would have a very high electoral variance.

92 Our draft recommendations for the southern part of Burnham and the Highbridge area are based on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats, Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association. We were persuaded that their proposal to create an entirely urban division that links southern Burnham with the northern part of Highbridge best reflects community identities and interests. We also consider the use of Burnham Road and Bristol Road as the boundary between this division and Highbridge South to be clear and logical.

93 The Highbridge division proposed by Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association used the River Brue as its southern boundary. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats proposed extending the division further south to include the whole of the Alstone area, which is subject to residential development. We agree with the Liberal Democrats that this area has strong links with the wider Highbridge community and should therefore be included in our Highbridge South division.

94 We propose to adopt the division names suggested by the Liberal Democrats. While Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association referred to their divisions as Burnham South and Highbridge, we consider the names Burnham South & Highbridge North and Highbridge South to more accurately reflect the geography of the areas concerned.

95 We received several submissions highlighting the distinct identities of Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea, despite their shared governance under a single parish council. Some of these respondents proposed we create separate electoral divisions based on each area to better reflect their individual community identities and interests. However, forming divisions wholly based on each area would not achieve good electoral equality. In any case, we consider that our draft recommendations strike an appropriate balance between the statutory criteria and provide a fair reflection of the community interests of both Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge.

Huntspill, Pawlett & Puriton

96 We received a range of proposals for the division that would be situated between Burnham & Highbridge and Bridgwater parishes. After careful consideration, we have based our draft recommendations on the proposal submitted

by the Liberal Democrats. Their proposed division would include the parishes of East Huntspill, Pawlett, Puriton and West Huntspill. We consider this grouping appropriate on the basis that East Huntspill and West Huntspill share good community links.

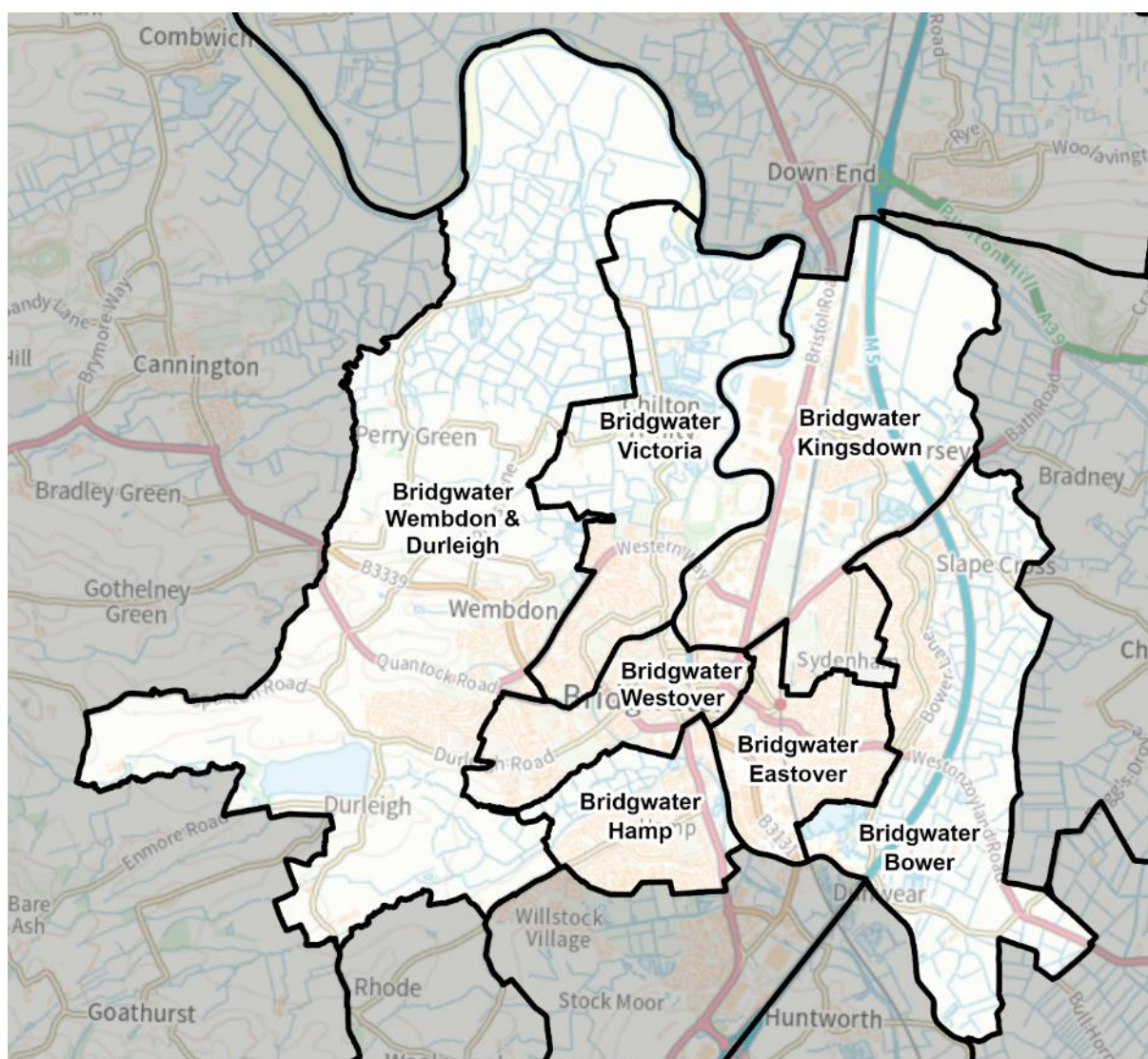
97 Consequently, we have not adopted the proposal submitted by the Council and the Working Group, which placed the rural parish of East Huntspill in a division with the more urban area of Highbridge. As outlined in the previous section, we consider that arrangement would not provide a suitable reflection of the statutory criteria. We have also not adopted the proposal of Ashley Fox MP, which grouped East Huntspill with Woolavington and the parishes along the Polden Hills. Nor were we persuaded by the proposal from Kingston St Mary, which linked south Burnham with Burnham Without, East Huntspill and West Huntspill. The section of south Burnham it proposed to be included in this division would lack direct access to those parishes, and we therefore do not consider that this would be a satisfactory arrangement.

98 The local resident scheme did include both East and West Huntspill in the same division with Pawlett parish. However, this proposal also included Cossington and Burtle parishes and excluded Puriton parish. We consider that Puriton shares stronger community ties with East Huntspill, Pawlett and West Huntspill than with Cossington and Burtle. We have therefore not adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

99 The Bridgwater Conservative Association proposed a Puriton & Pawlett division comprising the parishes of Pawlett, Puriton and West Huntspill, but did not specify where East Huntspill should be placed. In our view, we consider that our draft recommendations, which place East Huntspill in a division alongside these three parishes, provides a good reflection of the statutory criteria.

100 A number of different names were suggested for this division. We propose the name Huntspill, Pawlett & Puriton to reflect the main communities contained within the division.

Bridgwater



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Bridgwater Bower	1	-3%
Bridgwater Eastover	1	9%
Bridgwater Hamp	1	4%
Bridgwater Kingsdown	1	9%
Bridgwater Victoria	1	10%
Bridgwater Wembdon & Durleigh	1	5%
Bridgwater Westover	1	8%

101 Bridgwater Town Council proposed a pattern of multi-member divisions across the town, expressing a preference for this approach over single-councillor divisions. However, we were not persuaded to adopt such a proposal, as we are mindful of the general presumption in favour of a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions. In our view, the evidence provided by the Town Council was not sufficiently compelling

to justify departing from this presumption. Nevertheless, the Town Council also submitted an alternative proposal based on single-councillor divisions, the merits of which we have considered in full below.

Bridgwater Bower, Bridgwater Eastover and Bridgwater Kingsdown

102 We received a range of proposals concerning the configuration of divisions on the eastern side of Bridgwater. The Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Working Group and Bridgwater Town Council each submitted broadly similar suggestions. All proposed the creation of a division comprising the new residential development at Kingsdown, electors residing in between the railway line and the Castlefield Industrial Estate, and the planned large-scale development to the east of Bower Lane. In addition, they each proposed a Bridgwater Fairfax division situated in between this division.

103 Having carefully considered these submissions, we are not minded to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that any emerging communities in the development to the east of Bower Lane may only have limited community ties with electors situated between the railway line and the Castlefield Industrial Estate, whose community interests we consider are more closely associated with Bridgwater town centre. We also note Councillor Rodrigues opposed such a proposal.

104 We were also not persuaded to adopt the proposals made by the local resident or the Kingston St Mary submission, as both would result in divisions with poor levels of electoral equality.

105 Ashley Fox MP, Councillor Rodrigues and the Bridgwater Conservative Association proposed a division that linked Bridgwater Without parish with Bawdrip and Chedzoy parishes, a Bridgwater East division, a Sydenham division and a Bridgwater Central division, the last of which would straddle the River Parrett. We have not adopted these proposals, as we consider Bawdrip and Chedzoy to be distinct rural communities with different interests to Bridgwater Without parish, which is experiencing significant urban residential growth. Accordingly, we consider that Bridgwater Without parish is more appropriately placed in a division that includes areas of the more urban Bridgwater Town Council.

106 We are therefore recommending our own proposals for the east of Bridgwater which we consider best reflect our statutory criteria. While our proposed Bridgwater Eastover division generally mirrors that proposed by the Council, the Working Group, Councillor Redman and Bridgwater Town Council, we propose a Bridgwater Kingsdown division that links the relatively new Kingsdown community with the northern part of the Sydenham area. We also propose a Bridgwater Bower division that comprises that part of Bridgwater Without parish that contains the large-scale development east of Bower Lane, and the established community of East Bower

which is in Bridgwater parish. We consider it appropriate to place these two areas in the same division given their proximity to each other. We also consider that electors in East Bower are most likely to be impacted by the new development and the two areas should therefore be in the same division in order to reflect their community interests.

Bridgwater Hamp

107 All of the council-wide proposals, Bridgwater Town Council, the Bridgwater Conservative Association, Councillor Redman and Councillor Rodrigues proposed a Bridgwater Hamp division. We agree that establishing a Bridgwater Hamp division would appropriately reflect the identity and interests of the Hamp community in Bridgwater town. Our draft recommendations most closely reflect the Liberal Democrats' proposal, which includes the Hamp Bridge parish ward of North Petherton parish. We note that the parish boundary between Bridgwater and North Petherton in this area is unclear and intersects residential properties. We consider that including the Hamp Bridge parish ward within the Bridgwater Hamp division will provide for a more clearly defined and easily identifiable boundary. This amendment was also supported by the current North Petherton division councillors.

Bridgwater Victoria, Bridgwater Wembdon & Durleigh and Bridgwater Westover

108 We received varied proposals regarding the divisions on the western side of Bridgwater town. The Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Working Group submitted similar proposed divisions. Each proposed three divisions: one centred around the town centre, one containing the Newtown area and Chilton Trinity parish, and a third connecting the town's western edge with the parishes of Durleigh and Wembdon. Councillor Redman, Bridgwater Town Council and the local resident's scheme all largely mirrored these proposals, with the key difference relating to which division Durleigh parish should be situated in.

109 A contrasting approach was presented by the Kingston St Mary scheme, which placed the Newtown area and the town centre together in a Victoria division, and grouped Chilton Trinity with Durleigh and Wembdon parishes. Separately, Ashley Fox MP and the Bridgwater Conservative Association suggested placing Wembdon and Chilton Trinity in a division alongside Cannington and proposed a Bridgwater Central division which would include a significant number of electors to the east of the River Parrett. They also proposed a Bridgwater West division. The latter two divisions were also suggested by Councillor Rodrigues.

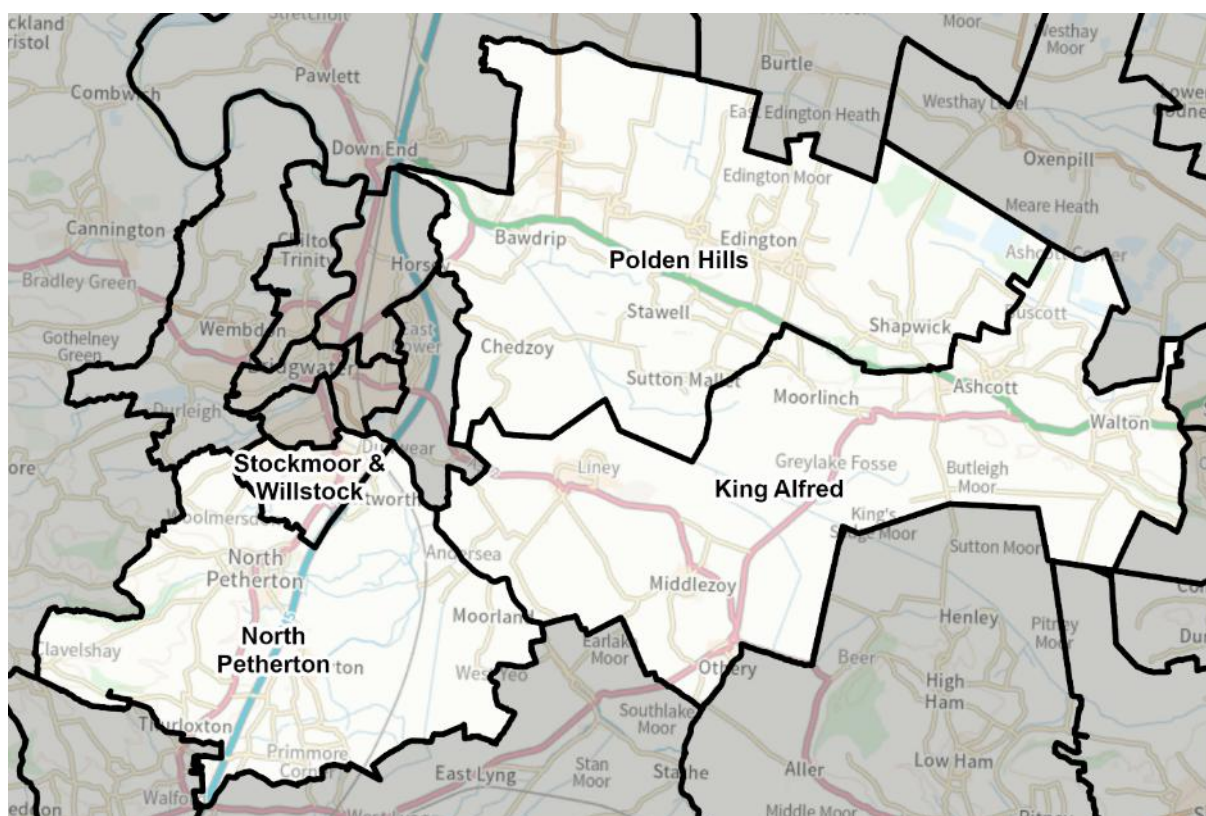
110 Our draft recommendations for this part of Bridgwater are primarily based on the submissions from the Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Working Group, Bridgwater Town Council, Councillor Redman and the local resident. During our virtual tour of the area, we observed that the parishes of Durleigh and Wembdon are closely integrated with Bridgwater, with large parts of their electorate located immediately adjacent to the town. Furthermore, given the anticipated residential

development in both parishes, we envisage that their ties to Bridgwater may strengthen further over time. We concluded that the other proposals, which linked Durleigh and Wembdon in a division with surrounding rural communities, would not reflect local community identities and interests as effectively.

111 We have made some modifications to the proposals received. We recommend that the boundary between Bridgwater Victoria and Bridgwater Westover divisions follow the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal and Wembdon Road, which we regard as clear and recognisable boundaries. Additionally, we recommend that the area around Haygrove Road, which includes the development accessed from it, be placed in Bridgwater Westover division rather than Bridgwater Wembdon & Durleigh, in order to achieve good electoral equality across divisions.

112 We propose naming the divisions Bridgwater Victoria, Bridgwater Wembdon & Durleigh and Bridgwater Westover. However, we invite further comments on the suitability of these names, particularly in light of the range of names submitted during consultation. These included 'Bridgwater Central' in place of Bridgwater Westover and the potential inclusion of 'Chilton' in the name of the Bridgwater Victoria division.

Polden Hills and North Petherton



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
King Alfred	1	6%
North Petherton	1	-6%
Polden Hills	1	10%
Stockmoor & Willstock	1	-1%

King Alfred

113 We propose to adopt a King Alfred division broadly based on the proposal submitted by the Council and which contains the parishes of Ashcott, part of Bridgwater Without, Burrowbridge, Greinton, Middlezoy, Moorlinch, Othry and Westonzoyland. However, in order to achieve a better balance between our statutory criteria, we are recommending some modifications. Specifically, we propose to include the parish of Walton in this division. We agree with the Liberal Democrats' and local residents' schemes that Walton parish shares stronger community ties with the above-mentioned parishes rather than with those situated between Glastonbury and Wells. As a consequence of including Walton in King Alfred division, we recommend placing Burrowbridge parish in our Creech & North Curry division. This adjustment improves electoral equality across the divisions. We also propose that Bridgwater Without parish, minus the Kingsdown area, form part of Bridgwater Bower division.

North Petherton and Stockmoor & Willstock

114 We received a number of submissions concerning North Petherton parish. These either proposed that the parish form part of a two-councillor division, or that it be divided across two single-councillor divisions. Submissions advocating for a two-councillor option included North Petherton Town Council, Councillor Revans, Councillor Bradford, Councillor Hyde and Councillor Sharman. All argued that this would provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria. Ashley Fox MP, Councillor Redman, Bridgwater Conservative Association, the Working Group and Kingston St Mary proposed two single-councillor divisions that split North Petherton parish, with the Stockmoor and Willstock areas forming the basis of one division and North Petherton town forming the other.

115 After careful consideration of the evidence, we are recommending the latter approach of dividing North Petherton parish across two single-councillor divisions. We propose the creation of North Petherton and Stockmoor & Willstock divisions. We consider that the newer communities of Stockmoor and Willstock are distinct from the older settlement of North Petherton town, and that these areas would be more effectively represented by separate single-member divisions that reflect their identities and local priorities.

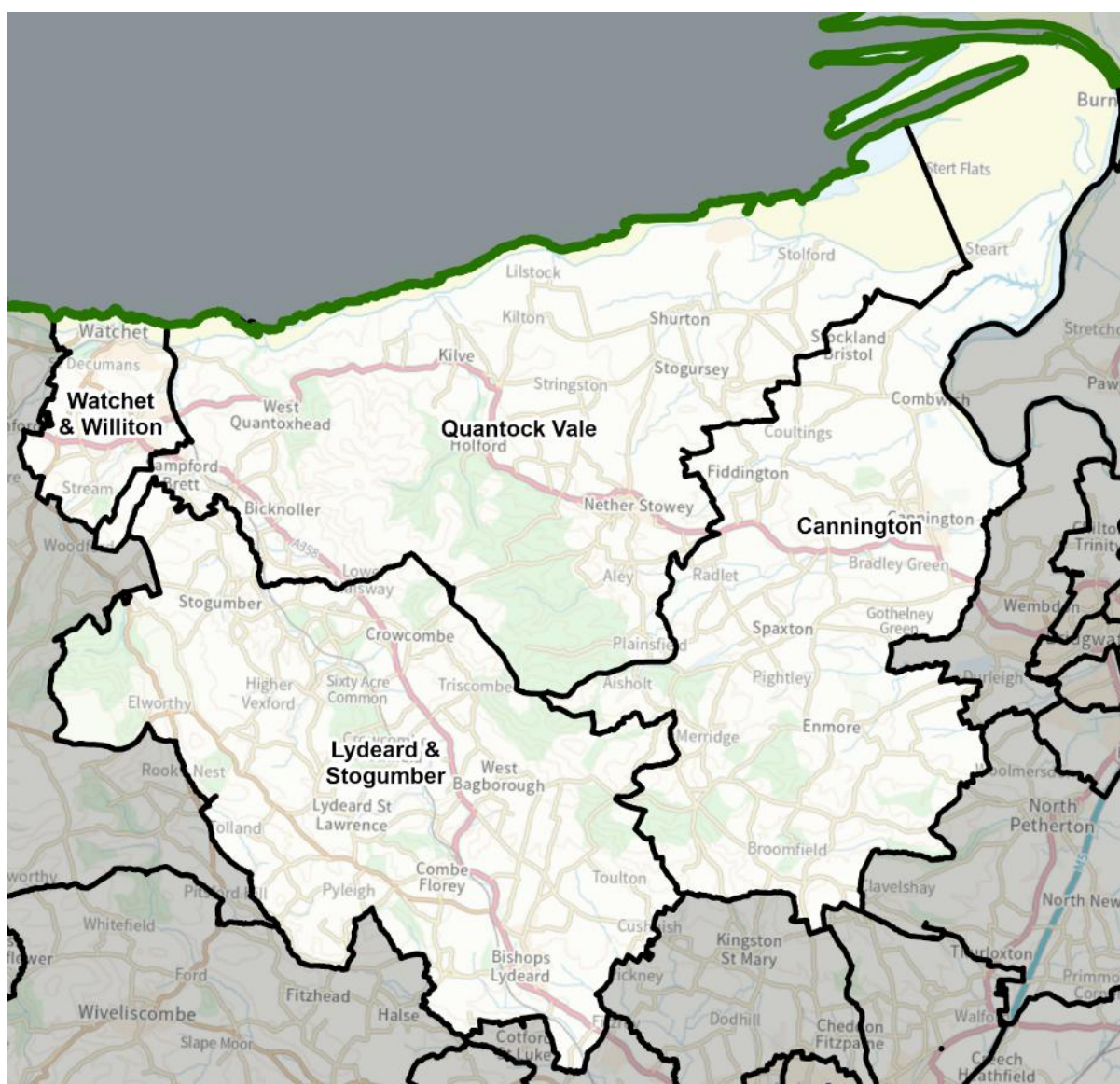
We do, however, recommend a change to the proposals submitted. Most suggested including North Newton and Moorland in a division with Stockmoor and Willstock, while the Working Group placed these communities in a King Alfred division. However, we consider that North Newton and Moorland – as communities within North Petherton parish – have strong connections with North Petherton town and are therefore better placed in North Petherton division, as put forward by Councillor Redman. To ensure good electoral equality for our Stockmoor & Willstock division, we propose it include the planned Gateway Phase Two development, located to the south of Stockmoor and Willstock villages.

Polden Hills

116 Our draft recommendations for the Polden Hills area represent a mixture of the differing proposals received for this area. Most proposed a division which linked the communities along the northern edge of Polden Hills. We consider this to be logical as doing so combines several closely-linked rural communities that share good connectivity via the A39 Bath Road. Our Polden Hills division most closely resembles the Woolavington division submitted by the Working Group. The only difference is our exclusion of Burtle parish and the inclusion of Bawdrip parish.

117 We also consider the name of Polden Hills, as suggested by the Liberal Democrats, to be a more suitable name as it better reflects the identity of the area as a whole.

Quantocks



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Cannington	1	-9%
Lydeard & Stogumber	1	0%
Quantock Vale	1	-5%
Watchet & Williton	1	8%

Cannington, Lydeard & Stogumber and Quantock Vale

119 Our draft recommendations for the area in and around the Quantock Hills are primarily based on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats. We concluded that these proposals provided the best reflection the area's topography. In contrast, other respondents proposed divisions that crossed the Quantock Hills, which would result in placing distinct communities on either side of the hills within the same

division. We consider that this would not reflect local community identities or interests or provide for effective and convenient local government.

120 Accordingly, we propose the divisions of Cannington, Lydeard & Stogumber and Quantock Vale as part of our draft recommendations. These divisions most closely align with the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, we have made some adjustments to their proposals. We recommend that Sampford Brett parish be included in Quantock Vale division and that Crowcombe parish is included in Lydeard & Stogumber division. We consider that Sampford Brett parish has stronger connections with the predominantly coastal communities in Quantock Vale division, while Crowcombe parish is more likely to be closely linked with the inland communities that form our Lydeard & Stogumber division.

121 Councillor Hughes of Broomfield Parish Council expressed the view that Broomfield parish shares community interests with the neighbouring parishes of Enmore, Goathurst and Spaxton. Our draft recommendations for Cannington division bring these four parishes together within a single division. We consider that this proposal, supported by the evidence received, will ensure a division that reflects local community identities and interests.

Watchet & Williton

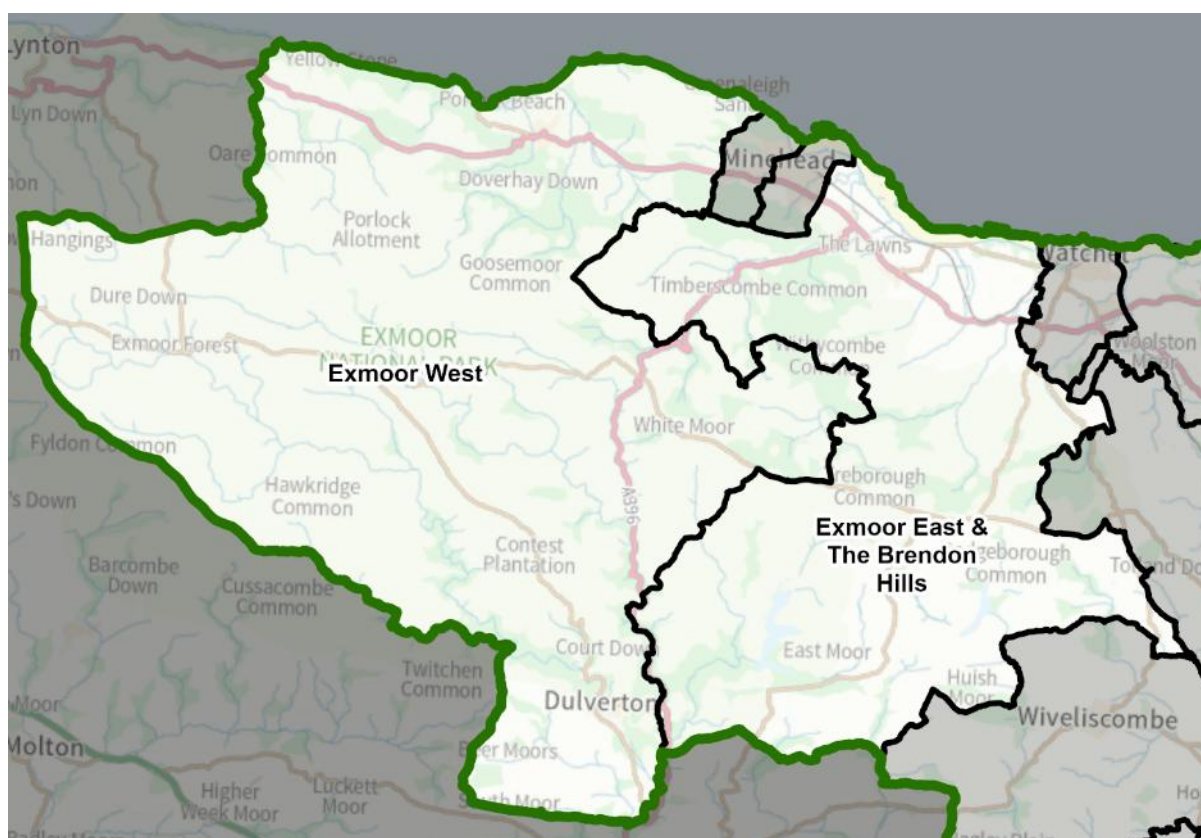
122 With the exception of the Kingston St Mary proposal, all of the council-wide submissions proposed a Watchet & Williton division that combined the two parishes after which the division is named. This arrangement was supported by a local resident. We consider this will result in a coherent division that reflects community identities and interests. However, the division is forecast to have an electoral variance of 11% by 2030, which slightly exceeds what we would normally consider to be good electoral equality. Therefore, to lower this variance we are adopting the Liberal Democrat suggestion to transfer the Doniford area into our Quantock Vale division, using the West Somerset Railway line as the division boundary. This amendment reduces the forecast variance in Watchet & Williton division to 8%.

123 We were not persuaded to adopt the Kingston St Mary proposal, which placed Watchet and Williton parishes in separate divisions, as it did not provide for good levels of electoral equality and separated two closely linked communities.

124 Councillor Woods proposed that the existing Watchet & Stogursey division be divided into two separate divisions. The first would comprise the parishes of Sampford Brett, Watchet, West Quantoxhead and Williton, while the second would include the parishes of East Quantoxhead, Holford, Kilve, Nether Stowey and Stogursey. However, we have not adopted this proposal as neither division would have good electoral equality.

125 Williton Parish Council expressed a preference for retaining two councillors to represent their electoral division, citing the rural nature of the area and the significant distances between communities. It also noted that a two-councillor division would help ensure continued representation should one councillor become unable to fulfil their duties. However, we are mindful of the presumption that we should provide for a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions across Somerset. In this instance, we do not consider the evidence provided to be sufficiently compelling to support the creation of a two-councillor division.

Exmoor



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills	1	5%
Exmoor West	1	1%

Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills and Exmoor West

127 We received a range of proposals for this area from the council-wide schemes and the many submissions from parish councils in the area. These latter submissions provided valuable evidence regarding local community identities and interests.

128 Having carefully considered all of the evidence received, we have based our draft recommendations for this part of Somerset on the proposals submitted by the Council and the Working Group, adopting the division names suggested by the Council. Accordingly, we recommend the creation of two divisions: Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills and Exmoor West. We consider these divisions best reflect the community evidence presented to us by generally aligning divisions with the Exmoor Local Community Network (LCN) area.

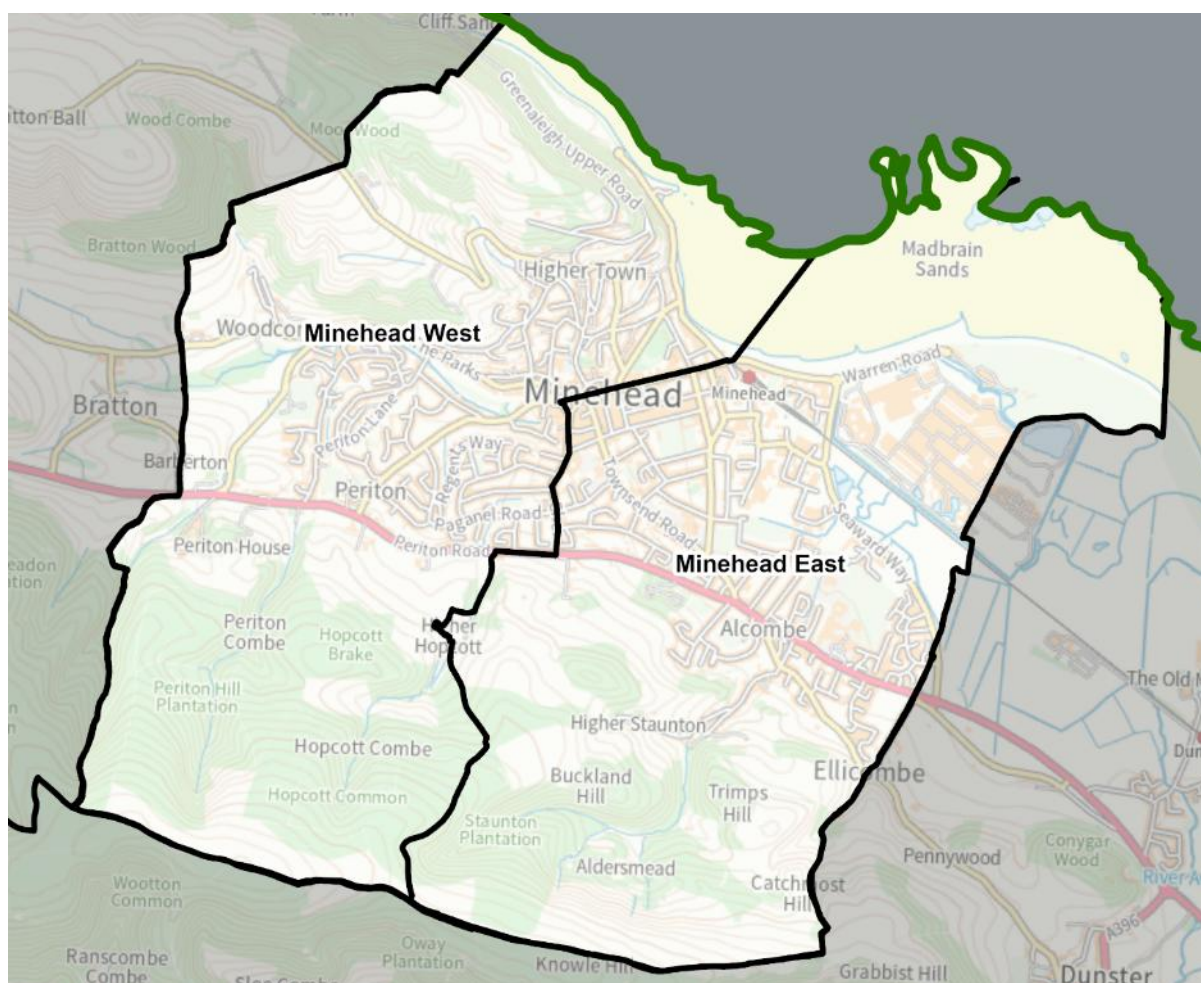
129 Based on our assessment of the evidence received, we consider that our proposed Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills division reflects the views of Brompton Ralph, Carhampton, Clatworthy, Huish Champflower, Skilgate, Wootton Courtenay

and Upton parish councils and meeting. Likewise, we consider that our proposed Exmoor West division is supported by the evidence submitted to us by Brushford, Exton, Luxborough and Winsford parish councils.

130 Brompton Regis Parish Council expressed a preference not to be included in a division with coastal parishes. However, in order to achieve electoral equality in this part of Somerset, it has been necessary to combine certain inland parishes with coastal ones. We consider our proposal to include Brompton Regis parish in Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills division to provide a reasonable reflection of community identities and interests because it places the parish alongside neighbouring communities in the Brendon Hills area. Brompton Regis Parish Council suggested that, should the parish be placed in such a division, the name West Exmoor, Brendon Hills & Coast would better reflect the area's diverse geography. However, we have decided not to adopt this division name, as we consider Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills to provide an adequate reflection of the division's geography.

131 Councillor Nicholson and Brompton Regis Parish Council both objected to Carhampton Parish Council's proposal to name the division Carhampton. Carhampton Parish Council had argued that this name was appropriate as the parish is the largest settlement within the division. However, we were not persuaded to adopt this suggestion. We consider that Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills to be a more inclusive name, as it reflects the wider identity of the area.

Minehead



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Minehead East	1	-4%
Minehead West	1	-4%

Minehead East and Minehead West

132 The Council and the Working Group both proposed that Minehead should form a two-councillor division. We also received representations from Minehead Town Council, Councillor Hadley, Councillor Nicholson, Councillor C. Palmer and Councillor M. Palmer supporting this approach. The latter submissions provided evidence explaining how a two-councillor division would reflect our statutory criteria, particularly in relation to community identity and effective local governance.

133 Alternative proposals were received from the Liberal Democrats, the local resident and from Kingston St Mary. These suggested splitting Minehead across two single-councillor divisions.

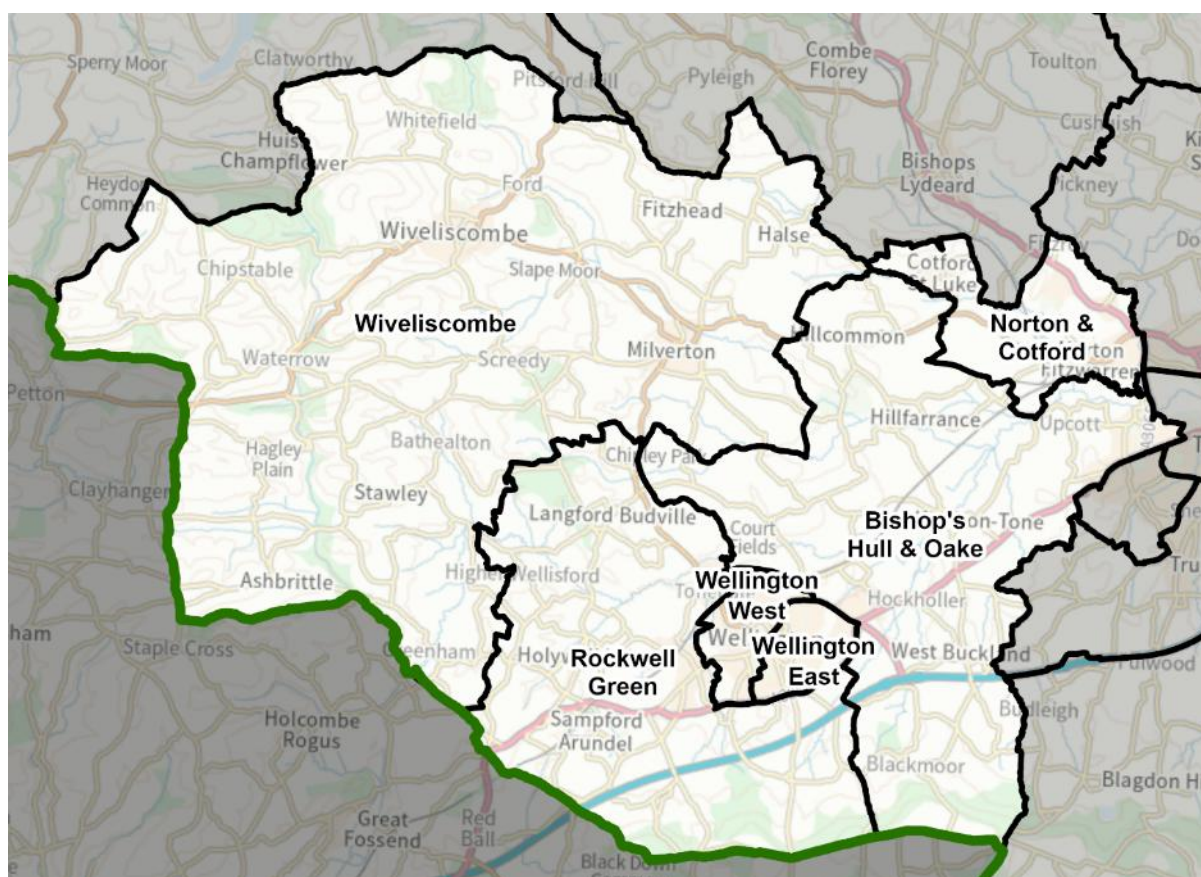
134 We have carefully considered both approaches. While we acknowledge the arguments in favour of a two-member division, we are minded to recommend two single-member divisions for Minehead. This approach is consistent with the requirement that we deliver a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions across Somerset. We are satisfied that our proposed boundaries respect community identities within the town while ensuring effective and convenient local government.

135 In particular, we consider that the proposed boundary which follows Cher, Bampton Street and The Avenue to be clear and recognisable. This configuration also provides for good levels of electoral equality, with both divisions forecast to have an electoral variance of -4% by 2030.

136 We were not persuaded to adopt the single-member divisions proposed by the Liberal Democrats, the local resident and Kingston St Mary Parish Council. We found that the boundaries in these proposals were not as clearly defined or easily identifiable. Additionally, we were not convinced that incorporating adjacent rural parishes, as suggested in the two latter submissions, would reflect community identities. We consider that these neighbouring areas, such as Dunster and Selworthy, are better placed in the more rural Exmoor divisions.

137 Minehead Town Council, Councillor C. Palmer and Councillor M. Palmer also requested changes to the Minehead parish boundary, with the division boundary aligned accordingly. However, responsibility for altering parish boundaries lies with Somerset Council. The appropriate course of action would be for Somerset Council to undertake a Community Governance Review to amend the parish boundary. Following this, the Council can request that we make consequential changes to the division boundary to ensure alignment with the revised town council boundary.

Wiveliscombe and Wellington



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Bishop's Hull & Oake	1	7%
Norton & Cotford	1	2%
Rockwell Green	1	-2%
Wellington East	1	3%
Wellington West	1	0%
Wiveliscombe	1	7%

Bishop's Hull & Oake

139 Our draft recommendations for a Bishop's Hull & Oake division are primarily based on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats and the local resident, which suggested a division comprising the parishes of Bishop's Hull, Bradford-on-Tone, Nynehead and Oake. However, this division is projected to have an electoral variance of -11% by 2030. To achieve good electoral equality, we have also included the parish of West Buckland. We note that most of the electorate in West Buckland parish resides north of the M5 and we consider that this community shares good links with other constituent parishes in this division.

140 Alternative proposals from the Working Group, Kingston St Mary and Bishop's Hull Parish Council suggested a division linking Bishop's Hull parish with the western edge of Taunton. We have not adopted this proposal as we could not accommodate it within the context of our wider recommendations for the Taunton area. Additionally, we consider using the Taunton and Bishop's Hull parish boundary for our divisions will maintain the distinction between the two areas and thus aid effective and convenient local government.

141 The Council proposed a two-member division combining Bishop's Hull parish with the Staplegrove area of Taunton. We have not adopted this proposal, as we consider these areas to be distinct and lacking in connectivity. Furthermore, we are not satisfied that adequate evidence was provided to justify the creation of a two-member division in this area.

Norton & Cotford

142 All of the council-wide submissions – except for the proposal from Kingston St Mary – proposed a division comprising the parishes of Cotford St Luke and Norton Fitzwarren. We have decided to adopt this proposal, as we consider it to provide a good balance of the statutory criteria, with a forecast electoral variance of 1% by 2030. Councillor Sully supported the linking of these two parishes in a single division.

143 In terms of naming the division, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident scheme proposed 'Norton & Cotford', while the Council and the Working Group favoured 'Norton Fitzwarren'. We propose to adopt the name 'Norton & Cotford' as it recognises both communities contained within the division.

144 The Kingston St Mary proposal suggested linking Norton Fitzwarren with the Staplegrove area. We have not adopted this arrangement, as it would not provide for a division with acceptable electoral equality. Councillor Sully also opposed such an arrangement.

Rockwell Green, Wellington East and Wellington West

145 Wellington Town Council requested that any division boundaries for Wellington and Rockwell Green align with the boundaries of the town council. However, good electoral equality cannot be achieved without including some neighbouring rural parishes in a division that also covers part of the Wellington Town Council area. Accordingly, we have decided to base our draft recommendations for the Wellington area on the submissions received from the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. These proposals divided the urban Wellington area into two separate divisions, with the areas of Rockwell Green and Tonedale forming a distinct division with nearby rural parishes.

146 We consider this arrangement to best reflect our statutory criteria, as it avoids combining the urban area of Wellington with its surrounding rural parishes, as under

the existing arrangements and within some of the alternative proposals we received. The combination of urban Wellington and the rural parishes was opposed by three local residents. Although Rockwell Green and Tonedale lie within Wellington parish, we consider they are somewhat separate from the more urban Wellington town, due to their physical separation by open space and railway lines. As such, we consider these areas to be a better fit in a division alongside adjacent rural parishes.

147 We propose naming the three divisions in this area Rockwell Green, Wellington East and Wellington West. While these names differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats and the local resident, we consider that our proposed names more accurately reflect the local geography and distinct community identities within each division.

Wiveliscombe

148 Our proposed Wiveliscombe division most closely reflects the Wiveliscombe & Milverton division put forward in the local resident's scheme. This proposal linked the larger settlement of Wiveliscombe with surrounding parishes to the south, including Ashbrittle, Bathealton, Langford Budville, Milverton and Stawley. However, we have excluded Langford Budville from this division, instead placing it in the proposed Rockwell Green division in order to achieve good electoral equality in that division. In addition, we propose to include the parishes of Fitzhead and Halse. These were included in the Wiveliscombe division by the Working Group and we consider both to have reasonable community links with other parishes in our proposed Wiveliscombe division.

149 We have not adopted the alternative proposals as we judged that they did not reflect the statutory criteria as effectively. For example, we do not consider the Council's proposal to link Wiveliscombe in a division with Wellington Without parish to be appropriate because we believe Wellington Without has stronger community connections with the Rockwell Green area. We were also not persuaded by the wider proposals of the Liberal Democrats and the councillors for the current Upper Tone division, Councillors Mansell and Wren. In particular, we noted that these proposals linked Wiveliscombe in a division with parishes such as Brompton Ralph, Clatworthy, Huish Champflower and Upton. However, we noted the evidence received from these parish councils that they should be included in an Exmoor-based division.

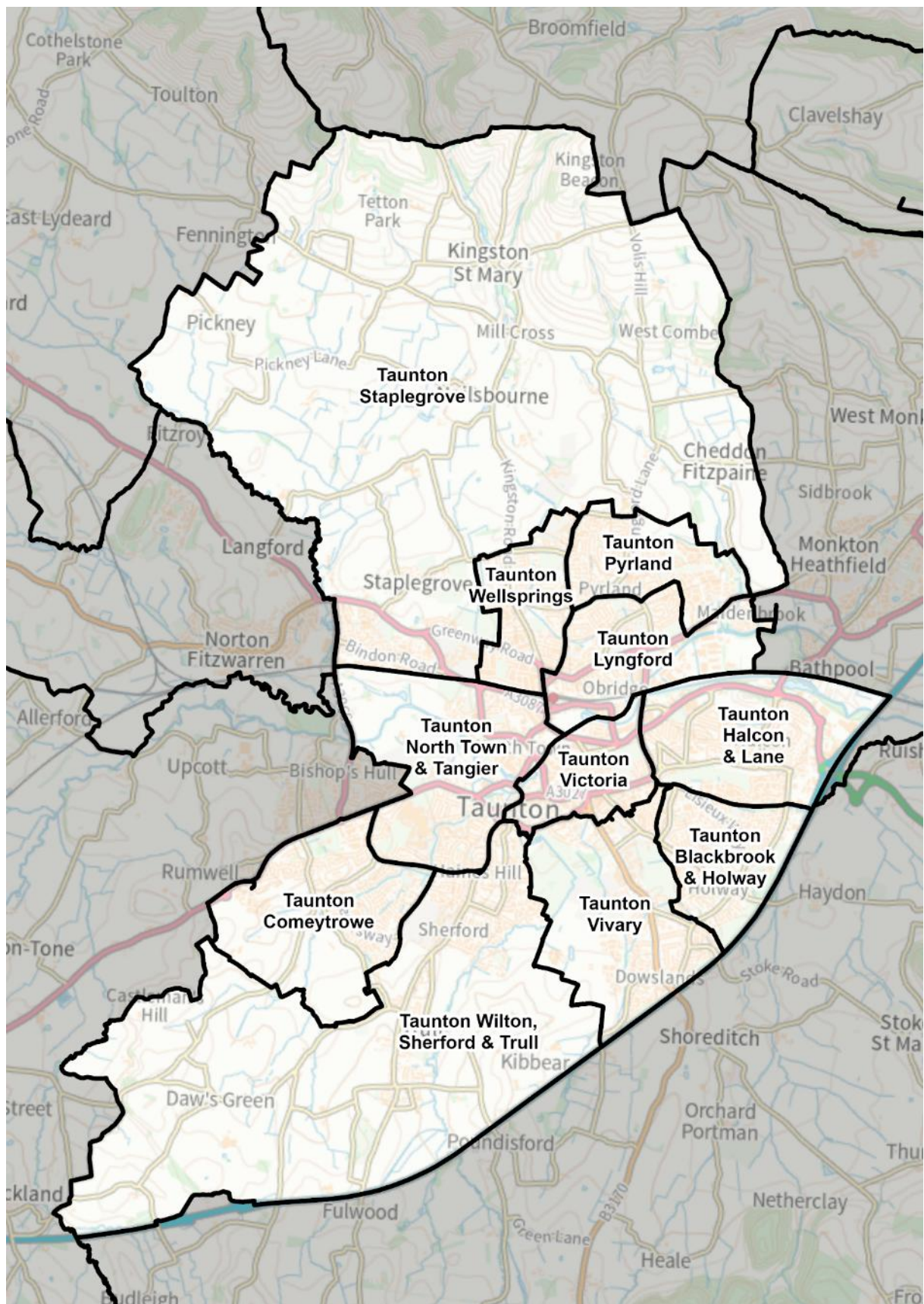
150 Furthermore, we consider the Working Group's proposal to separate the parishes of Milverton and Wiveliscombe would not reflect community identities, due to their close geographic proximity and shared links. Finally, the Kingston St Mary proposal would result in a division with the relatively high electoral variance of 11%.

151 Wiveliscombe Town Council proposed that the division include the '10 Parishes' area, comprising Ashbrittle, Bathealton, Brompton Ralph, Chipstable,

Clatworthy, Fitzhead, Huish Champflower, Milverton, Stawley and Wiveliscombe parishes. However, we have not adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. This is because, as noted above, the parish councils of Brompton Ralph, Clatworthy and Huish Champflower all indicated a preference and provided evidence to be part of an Exmoor-based division. Wiveliscombe Town Council had acknowledged this preference in its submission.

152 We propose to name the division Wiveliscombe, as it is the largest and most recognisable community within the area. However, we welcome local views on whether this name is the most appropriate during this consultation.

Taunton



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Taunton Blackbrook & Holway	1	-10%
Taunton Comeytrowe	1	3%
Taunton Halcon & Lane	1	-9%
Taunton Lyngford	1	-9%
Taunton North Town & Tangier	1	-2%
Taunton Pyrland	1	-8%
Taunton Staplegrove	1	-3%
Taunton Victoria	1	-10%
Taunton Vivary	1	-7%
Taunton Wellsprings	1	-7%
Taunton Wilton, Sherford & Trull	1	-10%

Taunton Blackbrook & Holway

153 We have based our proposed Taunton Blackbrook & Holway division on the boundaries proposed by the Council, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. Each of these proposals suggested a broadly similar division that closely aligned with the existing Blackbrook & Holway parish ward of Taunton Town Council. We consider this division provides an effective balance of our statutory criteria, with boundaries that reflect the identity and interests of the Blackbrook and Holway communities.

154 The Council, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident proposed that the boundary between this division and the neighbouring Taunton Vivary division follow the rear of properties on Eastleigh Road. However, we recommend that the boundary follow the course of the Black Brook, which is slightly to the east. We consider that the brook represents a more clearly identifiable boundary, and this modification helps to secure good electoral equality across both divisions. For similar reasons, we also propose that the boundary between our Taunton Blackbrook & Holway and Taunton Halcon & Lane divisions follow the Black Brook.

155 Although we have not adopted the proposals put forward by Kingston St Mary Parish Council or the Working Group, we have adopted their suggestion that the division name include Blackbrook and Holway. In our view, this name more clearly reflects the communities within the division than the alternative suggestions received, such as the Council's proposed name of Taunton South.

Taunton Comeytrowe

156 Our recommended Taunton Comeytrowe division is based on the Liberal Democrats' and the local resident's proposals. We consider the division suggested in their respective submissions provides a strong reflection of the statutory criteria. This is because they took account of the existing residential areas of Comeytrowe as well

as the new and developing community at Orchard Grove, which is being established along the edge of Taunton.

157 Both proposals suggested that the boundary should follow Claremont Drive. However, we have decided not to adopt this boundary. Instead, we propose aligning the boundary to College Way, which we consider to be a clearer and more easily identifiable boundary.

158 We are not recommending the Council's proposed two-member Comeytrowe & Trull division, as we did not consider that sufficient evidence had been provided to justify a departure from the presumption that we provide a uniform pattern of single-member divisions. We have also not adopted the Working Group's proposal, as it would link the Orchard Grove development with surrounding rural parishes. In our view, Orchard Grove is likely to form stronger community ties with Taunton and its inclusion in a division with parishes as distant as Milverton would not as effectively reflect local community identities. Finally, we did not adopt the Kingston St Mary proposal, as it would not achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality.

Taunton Halcon & Lane

159 Our Taunton Halcon & Lane division is based on the proposals submitted by the Council, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident, who all submitted a division which largely mirrored the existing Halcon & Lane parish ward of Taunton Town Council. We consider that this approach will provide for a division that balances the statutory criteria well because it reflects the extent of the Halcon and Lane communities and achieves good forecast electoral equality by 2030.

160 We have not adopted the proposals from the Working Group or Kingston St Mary, both of which linked the Halcon and Lane area in a division with communities located north of the River Tone and the railway line. We consider these physical features act as barriers between communities and that recommending a division that straddles these features would not be appropriate. This proposal was also opposed by a local resident for the same reason.

161 We recommend the name Taunton Halcon & Lane, as put forward in the local resident's scheme. We consider the name Taunton Halcon & Lane to be more representative of the constituent communities of this division. We also note that the former Somerset West & Taunton Council used the same name for a ward with similar boundaries.

Taunton Lyngford and Taunton Pyrland

162 We propose to base our Taunton Lyngford and Taunton Pyrland divisions on the proposals from the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. In our view, these proposals offer the most appropriate reflection of the statutory criteria amongst the council-wide schemes submitted.

163 For instance, we have not been persuaded to adopt the Council's proposal to include the Lyngford area in a two-member Taunton North division. The Council did not provide sufficient evidence to justify the creation of a two-councillor division, particularly in light of its formal request at the start of this review for single-member divisions across Somerset. We have also chosen not to adopt the proposals from either the Working Group or Kingston St Mary Parish Council, as both placed a significant part of the Pyrland/Maidenbrook area in a Taunton East division alongside the Halcon and Lane communities, with which it shares limited connectivity.

164 However, we have made some modifications to the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. Specifically, we propose that the boundary between the Taunton Lyngford and Taunton Wellsprings divisions follow Cheddon Road, rather than a polling district boundary. We consider Cheddon Road to offer a clearer and more logical boundary. However, this change would result in poor electoral equality for Taunton Lyngford division. To address this, we propose to extend the division southwards to include the area around Trenchard Way and Canal Road. This adjustment results in a projected electoral variance of -9% for Taunton Lyngford division. Furthermore, we consider electors in this area share reasonable community links with the Lyngford area, via the crossing points at Kingston Road and Winckworth Way.

165 We propose adopting the division names of Taunton Lyngford and Taunton Pyrland, in line with the Liberal Democrats' proposal. We considered the alternative suggestions submitted of Taunton Obridge, Lyngford & Maidenbrook and Taunton Pyrland & Nerrols to be overly descriptive, but we welcome comments on this decision during the current consultation.

166 Councillor Fraschini and a local resident proposed that the Maidenbrook area, transferred to Taunton Town Council from Cheddon Fitzpaine parish after a recent Community Governance Review, be included in a division with Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton parishes. We did not adopt this proposal, as we determined that it would not reflect either the recent community governance changes or community identities. We consider that placing the Maidenbrook area in a Taunton-based division will provide for good electoral equality as well as effective and convenient local government.

Taunton North Town & Tangier

167 We are basing our Taunton North Town & Tangier division on the proposals made by the Liberal Democrats and the local resident scheme. We are satisfied that their proposals offer a coherent and practical division pattern that respects the distinct identities of the North Town and Tangier communities.

168 The Working Group, Kingston St Mary Parish Council and Bishop's Hull Parish Council proposed Bishop's Hull parish be linked in a division with the western

outskirts of Taunton. However, we did not adopt this arrangement, for reasons outlined in the Bishop's Hull & Oake section of this report.

169 The Council also put forward a proposal for a two-member division that would link the Tangier area of Bishop's Hull parish with the Staplegrove area. We did not adopt this suggestion either, as we were not presented with compelling evidence to support the establishment of a two-member division in this case.

Taunton Staplegrove and Taunton Wellsprings

170 As part of our draft recommendations, we recommend the creation of Taunton Staplegrove and Taunton Wellsprings divisions. These are based on the proposals from the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. The proposed Taunton Staplegrove division combines the existing Staplegrove area with the Staplegrove urban extension development and includes the parishes of Kingston St Mary and Cheddon Fitzpaine. The proposed Taunton Wellsprings division encompasses the area between Taunton School and Cheddon Road.

171 We have carefully considered the representation from Kingston St Mary Parish Council, which opposed the inclusion of their parish in a division with parts of urban Taunton. It argued that the rural character of the parish would not be well-served under such an arrangement and proposed instead that it be included in a more rural Quantock South division. Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council also supported this proposal. However, we have not adopted this in our draft recommendations as doing so would involve dividing West Monkton parish between two divisions. This arrangement was opposed by West Monkton Parish Council, and we are not persuaded that sufficient evidence was received to divide this community between divisions.

172 Alternative proposals from the Council and the Working Group also placed Kingston St Mary parish outside of the urban Taunton divisions. However, these alternatives grouped Kingston St Mary parish with the more rural parishes of Over Stowey, Spaxton, Enmore, Goathurst and Broomfield. As stated in our discussion of the proposed Cannington division, we consider these parishes to have stronger community ties with Cannington. Consequently, we were not persuaded to adopt the alternative proposals put forward by the Council or the Working Group in this instance.

173 While we recognise that Kingston St Mary Parish Council and Cheddon Fitzpaine may not support our draft recommendations, we consider the proposed Taunton Staplegrove and Taunton Wellsprings divisions provide the most effective balance between our statutory criteria. However, we are recommending minor modifications to the proposed divisions in order to improve electoral equality.

174 As previously outlined, the boundary between the proposed Taunton Lyngford and Taunton Wellsprings divisions follows Cheddon Road, rather than a polling district boundary. Additionally, we propose that the boundary between Taunton Staplegrove and Taunton Wellsprings divisions run along the eastern perimeter of Taunton School. While the Liberal Democrats and the local resident had suggested the boundary be placed between Scott Close and Dowell Close, our proposed boundary is more clearly identifiable and delivers improved levels of electoral equality for Taunton Staplegrove division.

Taunton Wilton, Sherford & Trull

175 Our proposed Taunton Wilton, Sherford & Trull division is based on the schemes of the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. We consider their proposals to link the parish of Trull with the Wilton and Sherford areas of Taunton to be a logical arrangement, reflecting their close geographical proximity and strong transport links via Honiton Road and Trull Road. We considered the Working Group's alternative proposal to place Trull parish in an Upper Tone division. However, we do not consider that such an arrangement would balance our statutory criteria as effectively. Its Upper Tone division would have grouped Trull parish with more distant communities such as Milverton, with which it shares fewer direct links.

176 As stated previously, we are not recommending the Council's proposed two-member Comeytrowe & Trull division, as we have not received sufficient evidence to justify a departure from the presumption that we provide a uniform pattern of single-member divisions. We also note the submission from Trull Parish Council in support of a single-councillor division in this area. In addition, we are not adopting the Kingston St Mary proposal for a Vivary & Trull division, due to the significant electoral inequality that would result.

Taunton Victoria

177 Our draft recommendations for Taunton Victoria division are largely based on proposals submitted by the Working Group, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. We consider that these proposals are logical, creating a division that is based upon Taunton's commercial centre. The only substantive alteration we propose is the removal of the area around Trenchard Way and Canal Road, which we have included in our Taunton Lyngford division in order to secure good electoral equality in that division.

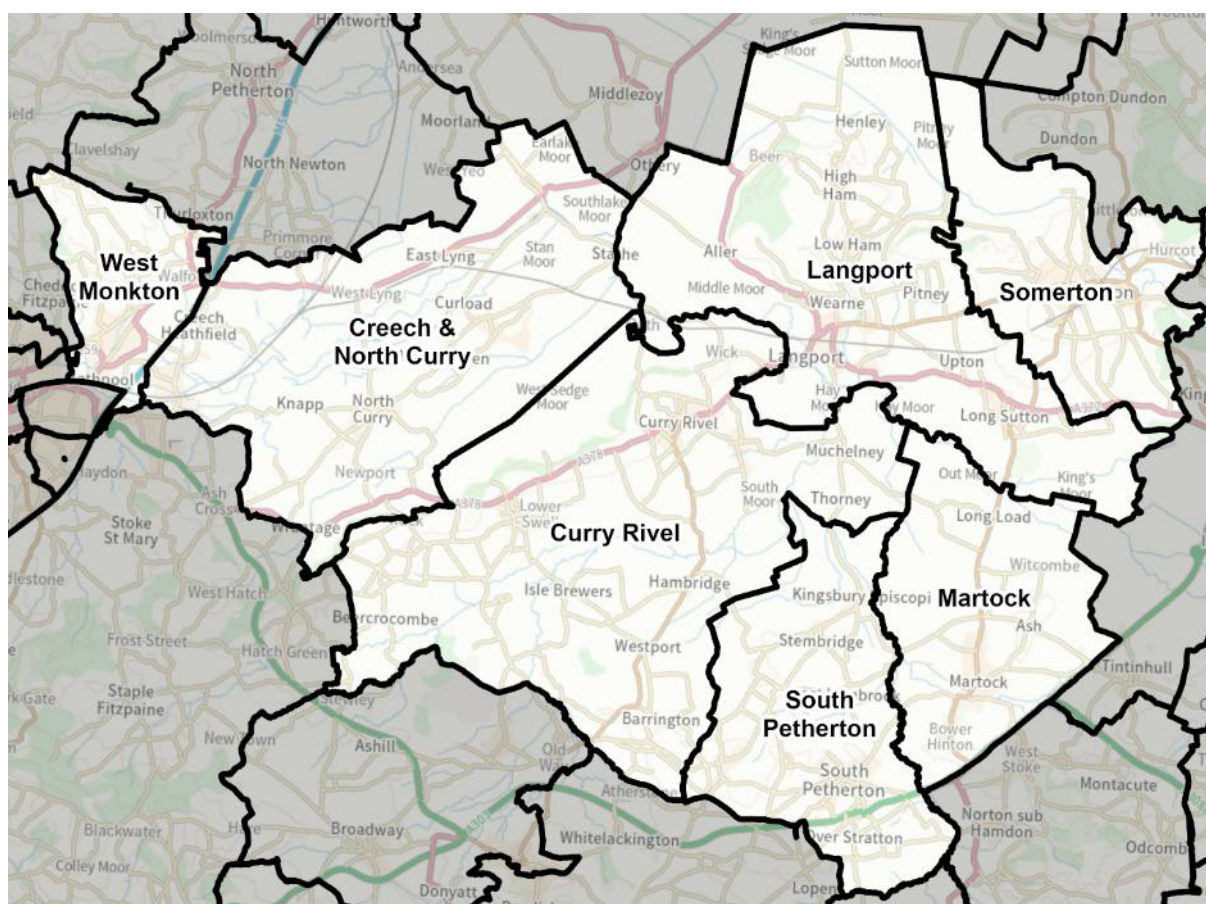
178 We have decided not to adopt the Council's proposed two-member Taunton Victoria & Vivary division, as we do not consider that sufficient evidence was provided to justify the creation of a two-councillor division. Furthermore, we are not adopting the Kingston St Mary proposal for a Victoria & Obridge division, as it would result in an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality.

Taunton Vivary

179 Our proposed Taunton Vivary division is largely based on the submissions received from the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. However, their proposed boundaries would result in a division with an electoral variance of -16% by 2030. To address this, we recommend extending the division to include the area bounded by properties on Eastleigh Road and the Black Brook. We consider the brook to be a clearly identifiable boundary, and this amendment reduces the projected variance to -7%, thereby delivering improved electoral equality for this division.

180 As previously stated, we have not been persuaded to adopt the Council's proposed two-councillor Taunton Victoria & Vivary division, due to a lack of compelling evidence to justify a two-member division in this area. Furthermore, we do not support the Kingston St Mary proposal for a Vivary & Trull division, as it would result in significant electoral inequality.

Langport and Somerton



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Creech & North Curry	1	7%
Curry Rivel	1	-3%
Langport	1	5%
Martock	1	2%
Somerton	1	-4%
South Petherton	1	0%
West Monkton	1	5%

Creech & North Curry

181 We have decided to base our Creech & North Curry division on the submissions from the Council and the Working Group. These proposals reflect the local evidence received during consultation, which strongly opposed any configuration that would place North Curry and Stoke St Gregory parishes in different divisions. Respondents, which included North Curry Parish Council and Stoke St Gregory Parish Council, emphasised the close community ties between these parishes and indicated that dividing them would be detrimental to community identities and interests. Alternative proposals – from the Liberal Democrats, the local resident and from Kingston St Mary – placed these parishes in separate divisions.

We have not adopted those proposals, as they do not reflect the strength of community evidence provided and would not meet our statutory criteria.

182 While both the Council and the Working Group proposed that Lyng parish be included in a North Petherton division, we have decided to place Lyng parish in our proposed Creech & North Curry division. We received evidence from North Curry Parish Council that the Athelney Benefice encompasses the churches of North Curry, Stoke St Gregory, Burrowbridge and East Lyng. We consider this to be persuasive in demonstrating the community and ecclesiastical links between Lyng and the other parishes within this division.

183 We propose the name Creech & North Curry for this division, as suggested in the Council's submission. We consider this to be the most appropriate name, reflecting the key settlements within the division.

Curry Rivel

184 All of the council-wide submissions put forward slightly different proposals for a Curry Rivel division. After assessing the evidence presented, we recommend a division that draws on elements from each proposal. Notably, every submission included the parishes of Beercrocombe, Curry Mallet, Curry Rivel and Fivehead in this division and we agree that these parishes should form part of the division.

185 We propose that the division include the parishes of Barrington, Drayton, Hambridge & Westport, Isle Abbots, Isle Brewers, Muchelney, Puckington and Stocklinch. As the majority of these 12 parishes lie within the Levels & Moors Local Community Network, we consider this division pattern to reflect established community ties and shared local interests, ensuring effective and convenient local government.

Langport

186 All of the council-wide proposals put forward a division that included both Langport and Huish Episcopi parishes. These proposals reflected the strong local support for keeping these two parishes together, as evidenced by multiple submissions during consultation. Respondents highlighted their shared services, infrastructure and community identity as reasons for maintaining this connection.

187 In light of the evidence received, we are recommending a Langport division that comprises the parishes of Aller, High Ham, Huish Episcopi, Langport, Pitney and Long Sutton. We consider that these parishes are linked by strong community ties and good road connections. This division will also have good forecast electoral equality.

188 We propose the name of Langport, in line with the Liberal Democrat scheme, but welcome views as to whether Huish Episcopi, or any other constituent parish, should be included in the division name.

Martock

189 The council-wide schemes, with the exception of the Working Group's proposal, suggested a Martock division comprising Ash, Long Load and Martock parishes. We have adopted this division as part of our draft recommendations as we are content that it will reflect community identities, with the two former parishes sharing close geographic links with Martock parish. We were not persuaded to adopt the Working Group's proposal because it divided Martock parish across divisions, which we determined would not contribute to effective and convenient local government or reflect community interests.

Somerton

190 We received two proposed configurations for the division covering the Somerton area. The Council, the Working Group and the Kingston St Mary proposals suggested a division containing Somerton and Compton Dundon parishes, whereas the Liberal Democrats and the local resident proposed a division solely comprising Somerton parish.

191 We have decided to adopt the latter proposal as part of our draft recommendations. This decision reflects our view that Compton Dundon, as a smaller and predominantly rural parish, may share stronger community ties with the rural settlements in our Avalon division. Nonetheless, good electoral equality can be maintained under either proposal. As such, we welcome further feedback on whether the residents of Compton Dundon feel a stronger community connection with Somerton or with the more rural areas included in our Avalon division.

192 In respect of the name of the proposed division, the Council and the Working Group suggested Wessex. While we acknowledge the cultural and historical resonance of this name, we consider that Somerton is a more recognisable and relevant name for this division.

193 Councillor Page and two local residents supported retaining the current two-councillor Somerton division. However, in line with the Council's request for single-councillor divisions and given the lack of compelling evidence to justify the existing arrangement, we do not recommend its retention as part of our draft recommendations.

South Petherton

194 All the authority-wide submissions presented different configurations for the South Petherton area. Following careful evaluation of the evidence received, we are recommending a South Petherton division that most closely reflects the proposal

submitted by the Liberal Democrats. We consider that this proposal effectively links communities with strong local ties, with South Petherton functioning as a key focal point for services and amenities for the surrounding villages.

195 However, we have made a modification to this proposal in order to enhance electoral equality across the divisions. Specifically, we propose including the parishes of Barrington and Stocklinch in our proposed Curry Rivel division. This adjustment improves electoral equality, bringing our proposed South Petherton division closer to the authority average.

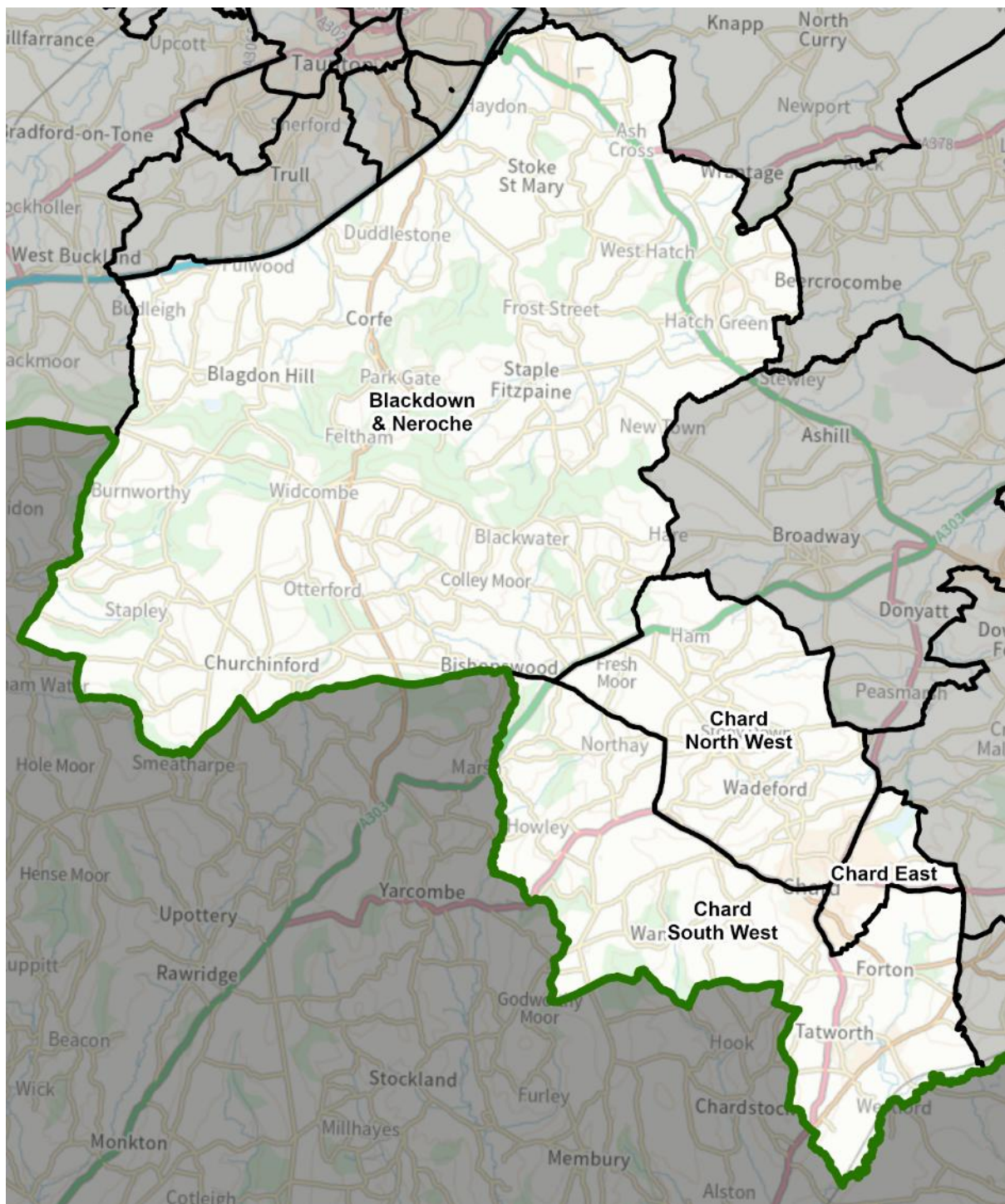
West Monkton

196 With the exception of the proposal from Kingston St Mary, all the authority-wide submissions included a West Monkton division that was entirely coterminous with the boundary of West Monkton parish. The Kingston St Mary proposal suggested dividing the parish between the Quantock South and Monkton divisions. However, we did not adopt this proposal as we were persuaded by the evidence provided by West Monkton Parish Council that this would divide a cohesive community.

197 Our recommended West Monkton division wholly comprises West Monkton parish. However, we have accepted one of the two alternative proposals submitted by West Monkton Parish Council and Councillor Cavill, which is to include the Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 development by following the M5 as the boundary between divisions. Although part of this development falls within the parish boundary of Creech St Michael, we agree that it is likely have a stronger connection with the communities in West Monkton parish than with those in Creech St Michael. We also consider that the M5 motorway provides a clear and identifiable division boundary.

198 West Monkton Parish Council's and Councillor Cavill's preferred option involved maintaining a link between West Monkton and Creech St Michael parishes, which would have necessitated the creation of a two-councillor division. Again, we do not consider the evidence presented to be sufficient to justify departing from the presumption in favour of single-councillor divisions across Somerset.

Chard and the Blackdown Hills



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Blackdown & Neroche	1	10%
Chard East	1	4%
Chard North West	1	7%
Chard South West	1	-6%

Blackdown & Neroche

199 The Council, the Working Group and Kingston St Mary all submitted proposals for the Blackdown Hills area that were broadly aligned and closely reflected the existing division arrangements. The main change they suggested was the removal of West Buckland parish from the current division.

200 An alternative division arrangement was submitted jointly by the Liberal Democrats and the local resident, proposing the transfer of Ruishton and Thornfalcon parishes into a division comprising Creech St Michael and North Curry parishes. This proposal was supported by Creech St Michael Parish Council, which also reported the support of Ruishton, Thornfalcon & Henlade Parish Council. However, while we recognise the local support for this arrangement, we have not adopted this proposal, as it would result in our Creech & North Curry division being too large and therefore exceeding the acceptable threshold for electoral equality.

201 Accordingly, our draft recommendations for Blackdown & Neroche division are based on the proposal submitted by the Council, the Working Group and Kingston St Mary Parish Council. However, we have amended this proposal to include Buckland St Mary parish, which we consider to have community ties with neighbouring rural parishes in the Blackdown Hills. The Council, the Working Group and Kingston St Mary had instead linked Buckland St Mary in a division with Chard, a connection we consider to be less appropriate due to weaker community links.

202 The Council proposed that the division be renamed Ruishton & Blackdown Hills. However, we are recommending that the existing name be retained, as we are satisfied that it appropriately reflects the geography and communities within our recommended division.

Chard East, Chard North West and Chard South West

203 The authority-wide proposals – except for the Council's scheme – recommended three electoral divisions for the Chard area. However, each put forward significantly different configurations, all of which included surrounding rural parishes because Chard parish is too large to be allocated two councillors. Most of the submissions, including Councillor Barker's proposed amendments to the Council's scheme, relied on existing polling district boundaries that, in our view, produced divisions with unclear boundaries.

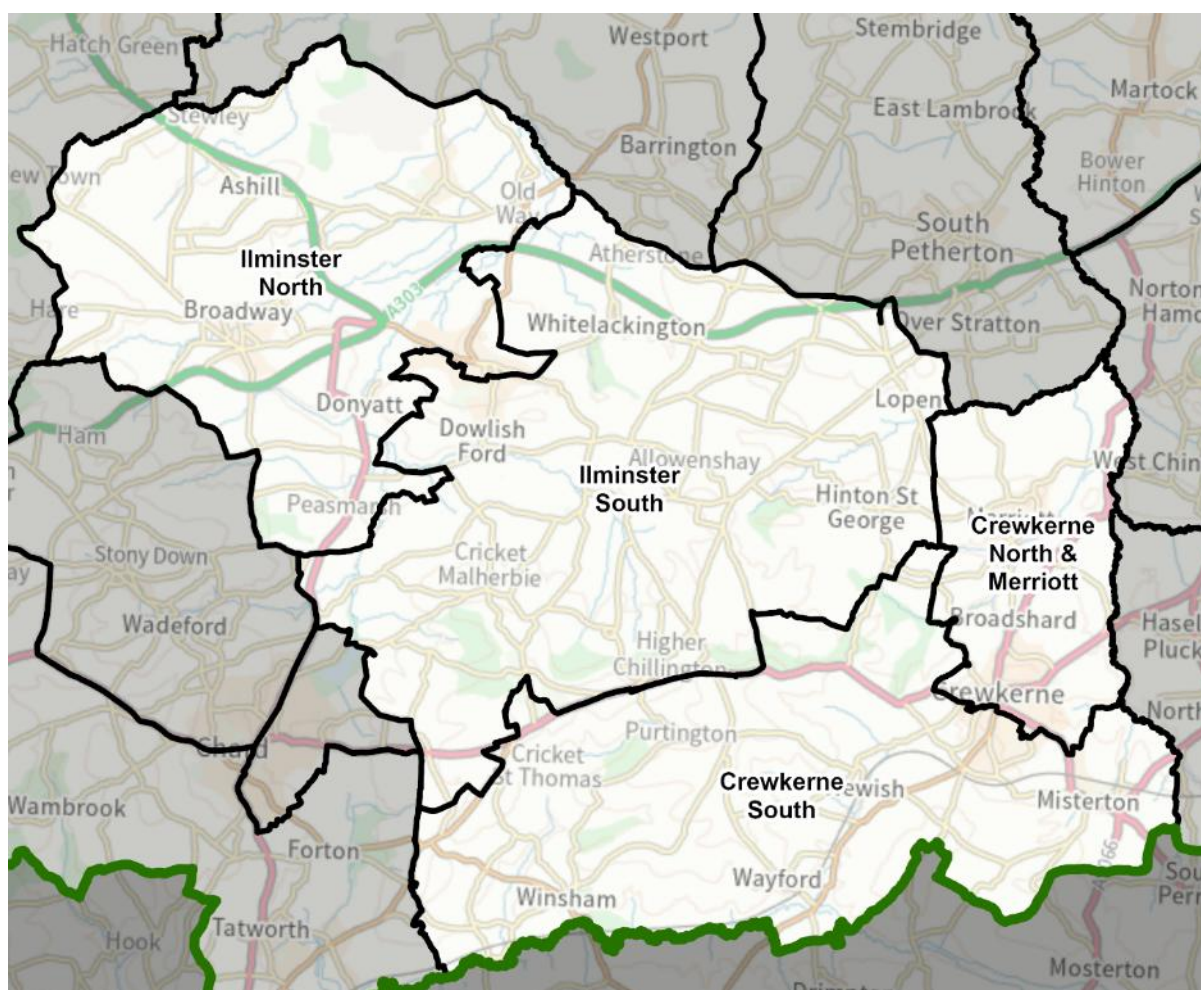
204 We are therefore proposing three divisions for Chard that are defined by clear and easily identifiable boundaries, such as the major roads running through the town. Our proposed Chard East division comprises the area of Chard that lies to the east of the A358. The western part of the town is divided across two divisions: Chard North West, which includes the area north of the A30 and west of the A358, as well as the adjacent parish of Combe St Nicholas; and Chard South West, covering the

area south of the A30 and west of the A358, along with the parishes of Tatworth & Forton, Wambrook and Whitestaunton.

205 We consider these proposals will provide a good balance between our statutory criteria. They provide for good levels of electoral equality and are based on clear and well-defined boundaries. Furthermore, we consider that the inclusion of adjacent parishes in each division reflects logical and reasonable links with the respective parts of Chard to which they are joined.

206 The Council had proposed a two-councillor Chard North division. We decided not to adopt this proposal as, again, we consider insufficient evidence had been supplied to support moving away from the presumption that we provide for a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions.

Crewkerne and Iminster



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Crewkerne North & Merriott	1	2%
Crewkerne South	1	9%
Iminster North	1	5%
Iminster South	1	-3%

Crewkerne North & Merriott and Crewkerne South

207 The parish of Crewkerne is too small to be represented by two single-councillor divisions within its boundaries. It is also too large to be represented by a single-councillor division that both aligns with the parish boundary and has good electoral equality. Consequently, it is necessary to link parts of Crewkerne with neighbouring communities to ensure that electoral equality is achieved in this area. As such, we are unable to accommodate the requests made by Crewkerne Town Council, which were that we avoid dividing the town across single-councillor divisions, and a local resident, who proposed that Crewkerne form a single-councillor division.

208 All of the authority-wide submissions proposed splitting Crewkerne into north and south divisions. With the exception of the Liberal Democrats, all of them suggested the northern part of Crewkerne be linked with Merriott parish in a single division. We consider this to be a logical proposal, given the reasonable road connections between the two areas. Therefore, we recommend the establishment of a single-member Crewkerne North & Merriott division as part of our draft recommendations.

209 Our proposed Crewkerne South division is based on the proposals made by the Council and the Working Group. This is because it links southern Crewkerne with adjacent communities that share good links into the south of Crewkerne, such as Misterton, West Crewkerne and Wayford. We consider that the alternative proposals link those communities with more distant settlements that do not share strong links to Crewkerne. We determined that this would not reflect our statutory criteria as effectively.

210 We also propose the inclusion of Cricket St Thomas and Winsham parishes in our Crewkerne South division. This recommendation is supported by evidence submitted by Councillor Rich of Winsham Parish Council, who indicated that Winsham parish has closer community ties with Crewkerne than with other neighbouring towns, such as Chard or Ilminster. Councillor Osborne also stated that Cricket St Thomas parish shares close links with Winsham parish. We therefore consider it appropriate to keep them in the same division.

Ilminster North and Ilminster South

211 We received a range of proposals concerning Ilminster and the surrounding rural parishes. The Council proposed dividing the town between two divisions – Ilminster North and Ilminster South – each incorporating adjacent rural parishes. In contrast, the Working Group, the Liberal Democrats and the local resident proposed a single Ilminster division, which also included Whitelackington parish. The Liberal Democrats and the local resident suggested placing the rural parishes to the west in a Combe St Nicolas & Ilton division, while the Working Group proposed allocating them to divisions containing either South Petherton or Chard. For the parishes east of Ilminster, the Liberal Democrats proposed their inclusion in a division with north Crewkerne, whereas the local resident suggested including them in a division with South Petherton parish. The Working Group proposed linking these parishes to the east of Chard in a division. A markedly different proposal came from Kingston St Mary, which suggested creating a standalone Ilminster division, with surrounding rural parishes forming a separate, doughnut-shaped Ilminster Rural division.

212 We carefully considered all the proposals, particularly noting the differing ways in which the rural parishes were grouped in divisions with nearby towns. However, we have decided to base our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals. We consider that its proposal best reflects the community identities and interests of the

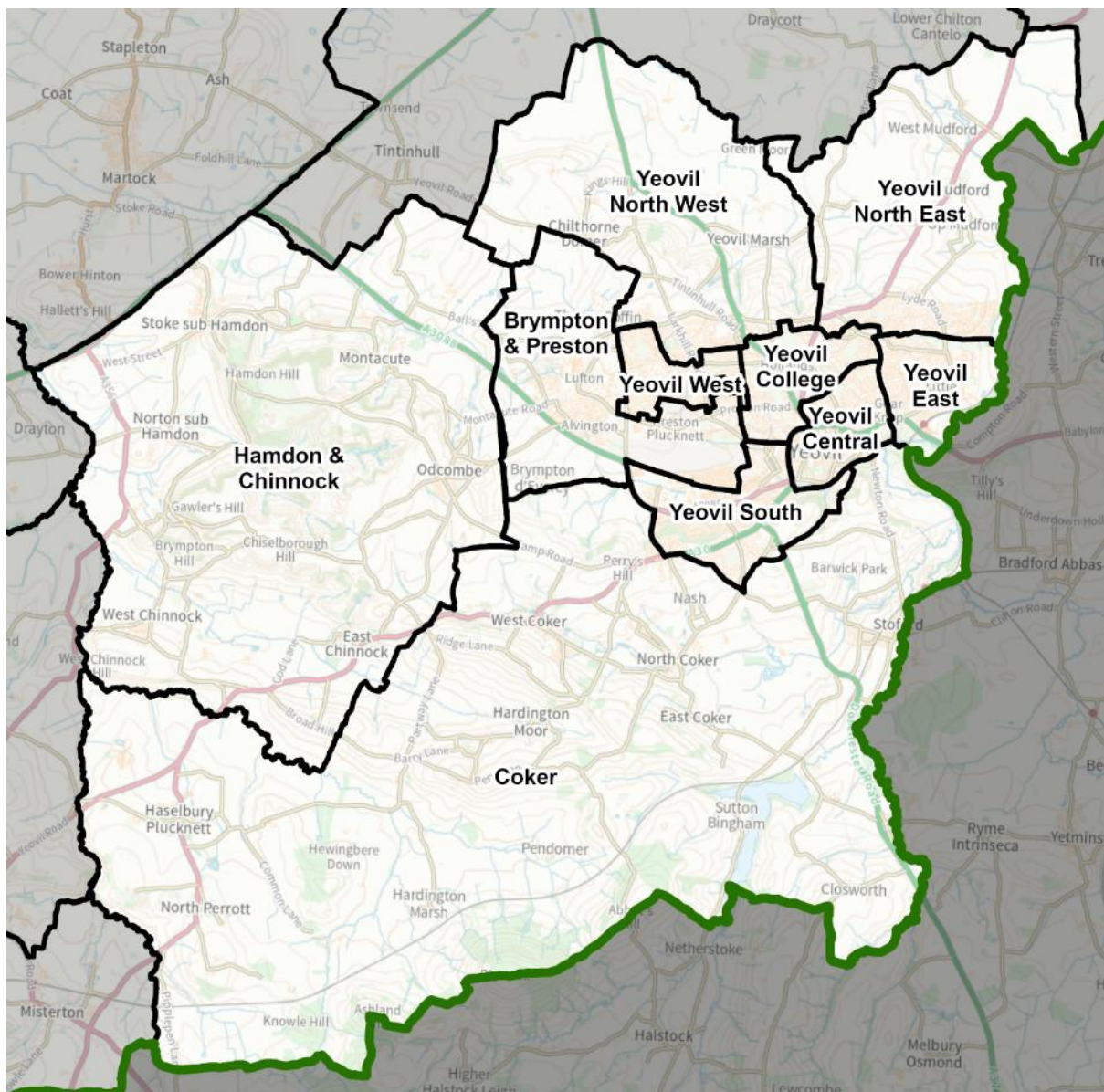
rural parishes that surround Ilminster. We consider that these parishes share stronger community links with Ilminster than with other nearby towns, such as Chard, Crewkerne and South Petherton. We also note that this proposal received support from Councillor Osborne, the current councillor for the existing Ilminster division.

213 However, we have switched the urban areas between the two Ilminster divisions proposed by the Council. We determined that this would better reflect their connections with the surrounding rural parishes. We consider that the changes will result in divisions that better align with the local geography and road networks.

214 We acknowledge that the proposal from Kingston St Mary sought to avoid combining urban and rural areas within the same division. However, we were not persuaded to adopt its proposals due to concerns over the coherence and connectivity of the suggested doughnut-shaped division. Nonetheless, we welcome feedback during the consultation on whether this arrangement – or any of the other proposals previously outlined – might offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations.

215 Seavington St Mary and Seavington St Michael parishes together form the grouped parish council of Seavington Parish Council. In line with the parish council's request and to reflect established local governance arrangements and community identity, we propose that these two parishes remain together within our proposed Ilminster South division.

Yeovil



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Brympton & Preston	1	-1%
Coker	1	-4%
Hamdon & Chinnock	1	-3%
Yeovil Central	1	7%
Yeovil College	1	2%
Yeovil East	1	-8%
Yeovil North East	1	0%
Yeovil North West	1	-7%
Yeovil South	1	0%
Yeovil West	1	4%

Brympton & Preston and Yeovil West

217 All of the authority-wide schemes proposed identical divisions for the Brympton area, comprising the Lufton, Houndstone and Alvington areas along with the majority of the Abbey Manor estate. However, this division is forecast to have an electoral variance of 11%. Additionally, the proposed division aligned with the Brympton parish boundary in locations where the boundary intersects several residential streets and properties, especially around Pound Close, Long Mead and Plover Court. We considered that a division which both exhibits poor electoral equality and follows unclear boundaries would not provide for an effective reflection of our statutory criteria. We have therefore decided not to adopt this proposed Brympton division.

218 Councillor Seib provided community evidence highlighting the distinct identities within the Brympton parish area, noting that the Lufton, Houndstone and Alvington areas are somewhat isolated, while the Abbey Manor estate is more closely integrated with Yeovil town. They further argued that a single-councillor division that reflects the statutory criteria effectively could not be achieved in this area and therefore requested we adopt a two-councillor division encompassing the entirety of Brympton parish instead.

219 We carefully considered Councillor Seib's submission. However, we are not persuaded that a two-councillor division is necessary in this instance to achieve an effective balance between the statutory criteria. Instead, we recommend an alternative proposal for this area that, in our view, can provide a good balance of the criteria, while maintaining a consistent pattern of single-councillor divisions across Somerset.

220 Our draft recommendations are for a Brympton & Preston division, linking the Lufton, Houndstone and Alvington areas with the Preston Plucknett area. While we acknowledge these are distinct communities, we consider they are reasonably connected via the Preston Road roundabout. We also propose a Yeovil West division, which links the entire Abbey Manor estate with the western edge of Yeovil. Although this division also brings together distinct communities, we are content that they can be effectively represented within this division. However, as these arrangements were not locally proposed, we particularly welcome local views and evidence on these divisions during the current consultation.

221 A local resident requested that Brympton Parish Council be dissolved. However, we have no role in changing, creating or dissolving parish councils. This is the responsibility of Somerset Council via a Community Governance Review.

Coker and Hamdon & Chinnock

222 We have based our proposed Coker and Hamdon & Chinnock divisions on those submitted by the Liberal Democrats. We consider that linking East Chinnock

parish in a division with West and Middle Chinnock parish will reflect local community identities and interests. Other authority-wide schemes placed these parishes in different divisions which we concluded would not reflect community ties as effectively.

223 Our proposed Coker and Hamdon & Chinnock divisions broadly reflect the Coker and Merriott divisions submitted by the Liberal Democrats. However, we propose excluding Merriott parish from the latter division and including Stoke sub Hamdon parish instead. While the Liberal Democrats proposed that Stoke sub Hamdon be part of an Ilchester division, we consider that its community identity and interests are better aligned with those of the neighbouring Norton sub Hamdon parish. This arrangement brings together the two 'sub Hamdon' parishes in a single division, a proposal that received support from a local resident.

224 As our proposals do not include Merriott parish, we are unable to adopt the name Merriott as suggested by the Liberal Democrats. We therefore propose the name Hamdon & Chinnock to reflect the inclusion of East Chinnock, Norton sub Hamdon, Stoke sub Hamdon and West & Middle Chinnock – four of the seven parishes within the division. We nonetheless welcome views on whether an alternative name would be more appropriate.

Yeovil Central, Yeovil College and Yeovil South

225 Our proposals for these three divisions are largely based on the proposals from the Liberal Democrats. We consider their proposal for a Yeovil Central division focused on Yeovil's commercial centre, to be a logical and appropriate arrangement. We also find that their proposed Yeovil South division provides the most cohesive configuration of those we received for the southern part of Yeovil. In particular, we support the inclusion of the Sampson's Wood parish ward of West Coker parish in this division.

226 We were not persuaded by alternative proposals to link the Sampson's Wood area in a division with Preston Plucknett, as put forward by the Council, the Working Group and Kingston St Mary, given that the two areas are separated by the Yeovil Aerodrome. We consider the airfield to represent a clear and significant barrier between communities. Additionally, we were not persuaded to include the Sampson's Wood area within a Coker division, as proposed in the local resident's scheme. While this proposal was supported by West Coker Parish Council and three other local residents, we consider Sampson's Wood to form part of urban Yeovil and therefore consider it is more appropriately placed within our Yeovil South division.

227 For similar reasons, we have decided to include Wraxhill parish ward, part of East Coker parish, within our Yeovil South division. Although one local resident requested that Wraxhill form part of a Coker division, we consider that this area forms part of the Yeovil urban area.

Yeovil East

228 All of the authority-wide schemes proposed an identical division for the eastern part of Yeovil which broadly aligns with the existing Yeovil Lyde parish ward. We consider this to be a logical and coherent division that reflects communities in the east of Yeovil. Accordingly, our draft recommendation for a Yeovil East division is based on these proposals.

229 We note that the local resident's scheme proposed naming this division 'Yeovil Lyde', in contrast to the 'Yeovil East' name suggested by others. We invite views during the current consultation on whether 'Yeovil Lyde' would provide a more appropriate and locally recognisable name for this division.

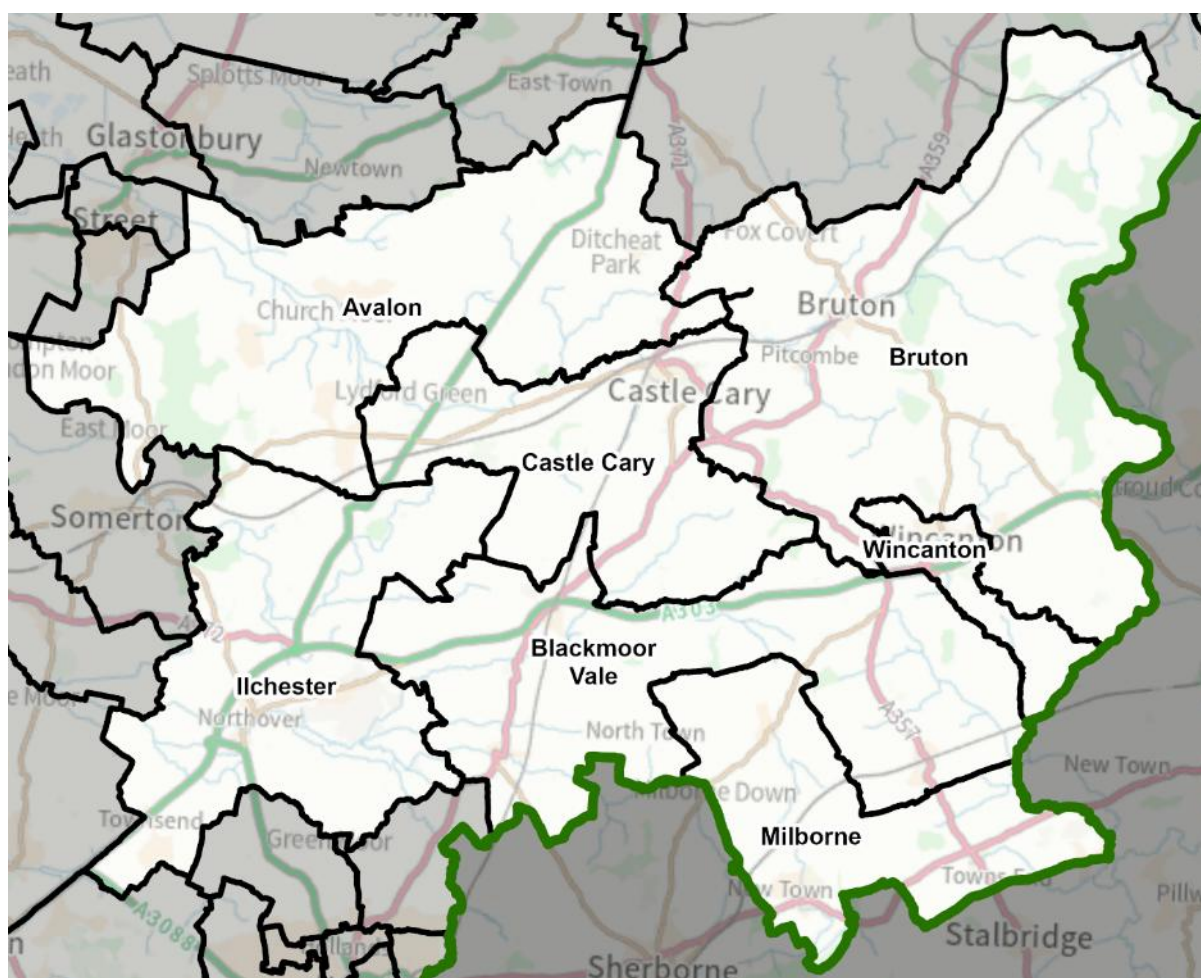
Yeovil North East and Yeovil North West

230 We have based our proposed Yeovil North East and Yeovil North West divisions primarily on the submissions received from the Liberal Democrats and the local resident. We consider that these proposals provide the clearest reflection of local community identities and reflect local transport connections. Under these arrangements, the western part of Yeovil Without parish is grouped with Chilthorne Domer parish within a Yeovil North West division, while the eastern part of Yeovil Without parish is combined with Mudford parish to form a Yeovil North East division.

231 Alternative proposals included Yeovilton & District parish in a division with the western part of Yeovil Without parish and Chilthorne Domer parish, and included Chilton Cantelo parish in a division with the eastern part of Yeovil Without parish and Mudford parish. We consider that Yeovilton & District and Chilton Cantelo parishes have relatively weak community and transport links with the northern edge of Yeovil. In our view, both parishes have stronger connections, in terms of access and local identity, with Ilchester. We have therefore included them in our proposed Ilchester division.

232 We have not adopted the proposal put forward by Kingston St Mary, as we consider that the inclusion of a suburban area of Brympton parish within a predominantly rural Limington division would not reflect community identities or interests.

Wincanton and Castle Cary



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Avalon	1	8%
Blackmoor Vale	1	8%
Bruton	1	-4%
Castle Cary	1	5%
Ilchester	1	-5%
Milborne	1	-2%
Wincanton	1	9%

Avalon

233 We received a range of division proposals for the area currently covered by the existing Mendip South division. Our draft recommendations most closely align with those submitted by the Liberal Democrats, who proposed a division comprising the parishes of Baltonsborough, Butleigh, Compton Dundon, Ditchat, East Pennard, Lydford-on-Fosse, Pylle and West Bradley. However, this would result in a forecast electoral variance of -13% by 2030. To address this, we recommend the division also include the parishes of Barton St David, Keinton Mandeville and Kingsdon, in

addition to removing Lydford-on-Fosse parish. This revised configuration achieves a forecast electoral variance of 8% by 2030, thereby achieving a division with good electoral equality.

234 We have decided not to adopt the proposals put forward by the Council, the Working Group and the local resident who suggested including Evercreech parish in a division with parishes to its west, such as East Pennard and Pylle. We are not persuaded that this arrangement would best reflect the statutory criteria. Instead, we consider that Evercreech parish should be placed in a division bearing its name, alongside neighbouring rural parishes located to its east between Frome and Shepton Mallet.

235 We did not adopt the Kingston St Mary proposal for a Mendip South division, as this proposed division would have a forecast electoral variance of -14%.

236 We recommend naming this division Avalon, which we consider more appropriate than the suggested name Mendip South. Several of the parishes within the division are part of the Avalon & Poldens Local Community Network and the name Avalon also carries notable historical significance. However, we welcome comments on this proposed name and invite suggestions for any alternative that may better reflect the identity or characteristics of the area today.

Blackmoor Vale

237 Our recommended Blackmoor Vale division is based on the identical proposals submitted by the Council and the Working Group. We consider that this arrangement reflects the statutory criteria well, as it links several parishes connected by the A303. The only modification we propose is the transfer of Bratton Seymour parish to our Bruton division. This adjustment improves electoral equality in Blackmoor Vale division.

238 We have not adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed Templecombe division as it would result in an electoral variance of -12%. This variance does not provide for acceptable electoral equality based on the evidence received.

239 We did not adopt the local resident scheme's proposed Templecombe & Cadbury division, which excluded the parishes of Queen Camel, West Camel, Marston Magna and Rimpton. To ensure acceptable levels of electoral equality for both this division and the neighbouring Ilchester division, these parishes must be included in our Blackmoor Vale division.

240 We also rejected the Kingston St Mary proposal for a Cadbury division, as it would divide the grouped parish council of North Cadbury and Yarlinton across two divisions. We consider that such an arrangement would undermine effective and convenient local government.

241 A local resident requested that Abbas & Templecombe Parish Council be renamed. However, we have no role in renaming parish councils. This is the responsibility of Somerset Council via a Community Governance Review.

Bruton

242 All of the authority-wide schemes proposed broadly similar Bruton divisions, each linking Bruton town with nearby rural parishes. These included the parishes of Brewham, Charlton Musgrove, Cucklington, Pen Selwood, Pitcombe, Shepton Montague and Stoke Trister.

243 We recommend that all of these parishes be incorporated into a Bruton division. In order to improve electoral equality in neighbouring divisions, we also propose including the parishes of Bratton Seymour, Lamyatt, Milton Clevedon and Witham Friary.

244 In addition to contributing to improved electoral equality, which results in a forecast electoral variance of -4% for the division, we consider that these additional parishes have good community links with Bruton and the other constituent parishes within this division. We therefore consider our proposed Bruton division to represent a good balance of the statutory criteria. We also welcome the engagement of Bruton Town Council, who indicated they would share their views following the publication of our draft recommendations.

Castle Cary

245 The council-wide schemes all proposed a Castle Cary division comprising the parishes of Castle Cary, Ansford, Alford, Lovington, North Barrow and South Barrow. The latter four parishes form the grouped parish council of Cary Moor. Cary Moor Parish Council specifically requested that the four parishes remain within the same electoral division alongside Castle Cary parish. In response to this local preference and to ensure effective representation of this established grouping, we propose that the Castle Cary division include all six of these parishes.

246 We also propose that the grouped parish council of North Cadbury & Yarlington be included within Castle Cary division. While the Council and its Working Group proposed placing these parishes in a Bruton division, and the local resident's scheme proposed their inclusion in a Templecombe & Cadbury division, we consider these alternatives to be less reflective of our statutory criteria. We consider that North Cadbury and Yarlington share strong community and geographic ties with Castle Cary and have determined that their inclusion in Castle Cary division better aligns with local community identities and interests.

247 Councillor Frampton of Lydford on Fosse Parish Council requested that their parish boundary be amended. However, changing parish boundaries are the

responsibility of Somerset Council. This electoral review is solely concerned with division boundaries.

Ilchester

248 We have decided not to base our proposed Ilchester division on any of the authority-wide schemes submitted. Instead, we are proposing an alternative arrangement that we consider better reflects our statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identities, and effective and convenient local government. Our proposed Ilchester division comprises the parishes of Babcary, Chilton Cantelo, Ilchester, Kingsdon, The Charltons, Tintinhull and Yeovilton & District.

249 We consider that these parishes are well connected by major transport routes including the A303 and A37. The proposed division is forecast to have an electoral variance of -5% by 2030, ensuring a division that has good electoral equality alongside coherent geographic and community ties.

Milborne

250 With the exception of the scheme proposed by Kingston St Mary, all of the council-wide submissions proposed an identical division that grouped the parishes of Charlton Horethorne, Henstridge and Milborne Port in the same division. This proposed division would have a forecast electoral variance of -2% and was supported by Milborne Port Parish Council, which provided evidence of community links between the three parishes. While Kingston St Mary's proposed division also included these three parishes, it additionally incorporated the parish of Corton Denham. However, given the strong consensus across four of the five schemes in favour of grouping Charlton Horethorne, Henstridge and Milborne Port together, we have adopted their proposed arrangements as part of our draft recommendations. However, we welcome views on whether Corton Denham should be included in this division during the current consultation. We note that acceptable levels of electoral equality can be maintained both with and without its inclusion in this division.

251 We also invite comments on the proposed name of the division. Both the Liberal Democrat submission and the local resident scheme suggested the name Milborne Port, in contrast to Milborne, as proposed in other submissions.

Wincanton

252 All of the council-wide schemes proposed a Wincanton division that is fully coterminous with Wincanton parish. We have decided to adopt this proposal as it creates a division with good forecast electoral equality, with an electoral variance of 9% by 2030. In addition, we consider aligning the division boundaries with the parish boundary here is likely to support effective and convenient local government and reflect established community identities and interests.

Conclusions

253 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Somerset, referencing the 2024 and 2030 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and divisions. 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

	Draft recommendations	
	2024	2030
Number of councillors	96	96
Number of electoral divisions	96	96
Average number of electors per councillor	4,653	4,867
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	24	0
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	6	0

Draft recommendations

Somerset Council should be made up of 96 councillors serving 96 single-councillor 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 Somerset Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Somerset Council on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

254 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.

255 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, Somerset 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.

256 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 Bridgwater, Bridgwater Without, Brympton, Burnham Without, Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge, Chard, Creech St Michael, Cheddar, Crewkerne, Frome, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Minehead, North Petherton, St Cuthbert (Out), Shepton Mallet, Street, Taunton, Wellington, Wells, Wembdon, West Huntspill, Williton, Yeovil and Yeovil Without.

257 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bridgwater parish.

Draft recommendations

Bridgwater Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing 10 wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Dunwear North	1
Dunwear South	1
Eastover	1
Fairfax East	2
Fairfax West	2
Hamp	3
Northfield	1
Victoria	2
Westover	2
Wyndham	1

258 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bridgwater Without parish.

Draft recommendations

Bridgwater Without Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bower	2
Kingsdown	5

259 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Brympton parish.

Draft recommendations

Brympton Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Abbey Manor	5
Brympton	5
Merlin Woods	2

260 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Burnham Without parish.

Draft recommendations

Burnham Without Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Brue	2
Edithmead	1
Marine	3
Watchfield	1

261 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge parish. In formulating our recommendations, we considered the request from Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council for a more even distribution of parish councillors between the parish wards. Our draft recommendations propose separate parish wards for Burnham South and Highbridge North, in recognition of their distinct community identities. However, we acknowledge that merging these wards may achieve a better balance of parish councillors, and we would particularly welcome the Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council's views on this aspect of our recommendations.

Draft recommendations

Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Burnham Central	5
Burnham North	4
Burnham South	3
Highbridge North	1
Highbridge South	5

262 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Chard parish.

Draft recommendations

Chard Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Avishayes	3
Combe	3
Crimchard	3
Holyrood	3
Jocelyn	3

263 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Cheddar parish.

Draft recommendations

Cheddar Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
North	4
Nyland	1
South	10

264 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Creech St Michael parish.

Draft recommendations

Creech St Michael Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Creech St Michael	9
Monkton Heathfield	2

265 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Crewkerne parish.

Draft recommendations

Crewkerne Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
North	6
South	6

266 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Frome parish.

Draft recommendations

Frome Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Berkley Down	3
College	3
Critchill	1
Innox	1
Keyford	1
Market	3
Oakfield	3
Park	2

267 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Glastonbury parish.

Draft recommendations

Glastonbury Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
St Benedict's	4
St Edmund's	4
St John's	4
St Mary's	4

268 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Ilminster parish.

Draft recommendations

Ilminster Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
North	7
South	8

269 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Minehead parish.

Draft recommendations

Minehead Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Alcombe	4
Central	4
North	3
Periton & Woodcombe	5

270 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for North Petherton parish.

Draft recommendations

North Petherton Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Hamp Bridge	1
North Newton	1
North Petherton	5
Northmoor Green	1
Stockmoor & Willstock	6

271 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for St Cuthbert (Out) parish.

Draft recommendations

St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Coxley	5
Dinder & Dulcote	1
Easton	1
Horrington	4
Wookey Hole	6

272 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Shepton Mallet parish.

Draft recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
East	9
West	7

273 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Street parish.

Draft recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
North	7
South	6
West	3

274 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Taunton parish.

Draft recommendations

Taunton Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing 14 wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Blackbrook & Holway	2
Comeytrowe	2
Halcon & Lane	2
Lyngford	1
Maidenbrook	1
Manor & Tangier	1
North Town	1
Obridge	1
Pyrland	1
Staplegrove	1
Victoria	2
Vivary	2
Wellsprings & Rowbarton	2
Wilton & Sherford	1

275 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wellington parish.

Draft recommendations

Wellington Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
East	6
Rockwell Green	4
West	5

276 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wells parish.

Draft recommendations

Wells City Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Central	2
St Cuthbert's	6
St Thomas'	8

277 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wembdon parish.

Draft recommendations

Wembdon Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Victoria	3
Wembdon	7

278 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for West Huntspill parish.

Draft recommendations

West Huntspill Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Alstone	2
West Huntspill	5

279 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Williton parish.

Draft recommendations

Williton Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Doniford	1
Williton	11

280 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Yeovil parish.

Draft recommendations

Yeovil Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Central	6
College	5
Lyde	5
Preston Plucknett	2
Summerlands	2
Westland	4

281 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Yeovil Without parish.

Draft recommendations

Yeovil Without Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Brimsmore	2
Combe	1
Lyde	9
Summerlands	3

Have your say

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

283 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for Somerset, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of divisions.

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

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

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

Review Officer (Somerset)
LGBCE
7th Floor
3 Bunhill Row
London
EC1Y 8YZ

287 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of divisions for Somerset which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

288 A good pattern of divisions should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

289 Electoral equality:

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

290 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents the area?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

291 Effective local government:

- Are any of the proposed divisions too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the divisions appropriate?
- Are there good links across your proposed divisions? Is there any form of public transport?

292 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

293 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

294 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

295 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The Order

will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for Somerset Council in 2027.

Equalities

296 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

Draft recommendations for Somerset Council

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Avalon	1	5,097	5,097	5%	5,266	5,266	8%
2	Beckington, Norton & Rode	1	5,046	5,046	4%	5,050	5,050	4%
3	Bishop's Hull & Oake	1	5,150	5,150	6%	5,208	5,208	7%
4	Blackdown & Neroche	1	5,403	5,403	11%	5,362	5,362	10%
5	Blackmoor Vale	1	5,253	5,253	8%	5,256	5,256	8%
6	Brent	1	4,523	4,523	-7%	4,539	4,539	-7%
7	Bridgwater Bower	1	3,814	3,814	-22%	4,730	4,730	-3%
8	Bridgwater Eastover	1	5,466	5,466	12%	5,311	5,311	9%
9	Bridgwater Hamp	1	5,102	5,102	5%	5,050	5,050	4%
10	Bridgwater Kingsdown	1	4,572	4,572	-6%	5,327	5,327	9%
11	Bridgwater Victoria	1	5,532	5,532	14%	5,336	5,336	10%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Bridgwater Wembdon & Durleigh	1	3,633	3,633	-25%	5,123	5,123	5%
13	Bridgwater Westover	1	4,862	4,862	0%	5,242	5,242	8%
14	Bruton	1	4,564	4,564	-6%	4,679	4,679	-4%
15	Brympton & Preston	1	4,578	4,578	-6%	4,817	4,817	-1%
16	Burnham Central	1	5,016	5,016	3%	4,868	4,868	0%
17	Burnham North, Berrow & Brean	1	5,274	5,274	8%	5,151	5,151	6%
18	Burnham South & Highbridge North	1	5,230	5,230	7%	5,085	5,085	4%
19	Cannington	1	4,203	4,203	-14%	4,426	4,426	-9%
20	Castle Cary	1	4,932	4,932	1%	5,118	5,118	5%
21	Chard East	1	5,039	5,039	4%	5,044	5,044	4%
22	Chard North West	1	5,096	5,096	5%	5,214	5,214	7%
23	Chard South West	1	4,567	4,567	-6%	4,569	4,569	-6%
24	Cheddar North & Axbridge	1	4,071	4,071	-16%	4,358	4,358	-10%
25	Cheddar South	1	4,032	4,032	-17%	4,358	4,358	-10%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26	Chilcompton	1	4,314	4,314	-11%	5,001	5,001	3%
27	Coker	1	4,685	4,685	-4%	4,659	4,659	-4%
28	Coleford	1	4,477	4,477	-8%	4,858	4,858	0%
29	Creech & North Curry	1	5,179	5,179	6%	5,196	5,196	7%
30	Crewkerne North & Merriott	1	4,182	4,182	-14%	4,968	4,968	2%
31	Crewkerne South	1	5,286	5,286	9%	5,314	5,314	9%
32	Curry Rivel	1	4,697	4,697	-3%	4,725	4,725	-3%
33	Evercreech	1	4,956	4,956	2%	5,182	5,182	6%
34	Exmoor East & The Brendon Hills	1	5,132	5,132	5%	5,107	5,107	5%
35	Exmoor West	1	4,872	4,872	0%	4,901	4,901	1%
36	Frome Central	1	4,295	4,295	-12%	4,693	4,693	-4%
37	Frome East	1	4,336	4,336	-11%	4,394	4,394	-10%
38	Frome North	1	4,430	4,430	-9%	4,447	4,447	-9%
39	Frome South	1	4,280	4,280	-12%	4,963	4,963	2%
40	Frome West	1	5,069	5,069	4%	5,231	5,231	7%
41	Glastonbury North & West Pennard	1	4,374	4,374	-10%	4,609	4,609	-5%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
42	Glastonbury South & Meare	1	4,836	4,836	-1%	4,959	4,959	2%
43	Hamdon & Chinnock	1	4,723	4,723	-3%	4,698	4,698	-3%
44	Highbridge South	1	3,829	3,829	-21%	5,297	5,297	9%
45	Huntspill, Pawlett & Puriton	1	4,797	4,797	-1%	5,006	5,006	3%
46	Ilchester	1	4,497	4,497	-8%	4,607	4,607	-5%
47	Ilminster North	1	5,047	5,047	4%	5,113	5,113	5%
48	Ilminster South	1	4,667	4,667	-4%	4,707	4,707	-3%
49	King Alfred	1	4,956	4,956	2%	5,135	5,135	6%
50	Langport	1	5,137	5,137	6%	5,100	5,100	5%
51	Lydeard & Stogumber	1	4,764	4,764	-2%	4,854	4,854	0%
52	Martock	1	4,708	4,708	-3%	4,949	4,949	2%
53	Mendip Hills	1	4,722	4,722	-3%	4,611	4,611	-5%
54	Milborne	1	4,525	4,525	-7%	4,781	4,781	-2%
55	Minehead East	1	4,643	4,643	-5%	4,669	4,669	-4%
56	Minehead West	1	4,555	4,555	-6%	4,672	4,672	-4%
57	North Petherton	1	4,324	4,324	-11%	4,560	4,560	-6%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
58	Norton & Cotford	1	4,743	4,743	-3%	4,943	4,943	2%
59	Polden Hills	1	5,288	5,288	9%	5,342	5,342	10%
60	Quantock Vale	1	4,368	4,368	-10%	4,628	4,628	-5%
61	Rockwell Green	1	4,491	4,491	-8%	4,779	4,779	-2%
62	Rodney, Westbury & Wookey	1	4,610	4,610	-5%	4,808	4,808	-1%
63	Shepton Mallet East	1	4,163	4,163	-14%	4,616	4,616	-5%
64	Shepton Mallet West & Pilton	1	4,943	4,943	2%	5,034	5,034	4%
65	Somerton	1	4,561	4,561	-6%	4,678	4,678	-4%
66	South Petherton	1	4,854	4,854	0%	4,855	4,855	0%
67	Stockmoor & Willstock	1	3,441	3,441	-29%	4,796	4,796	-1%
68	Street North	1	4,456	4,456	-8%	4,538	4,538	-7%
69	Street South	1	4,763	4,763	-2%	5,238	5,238	8%
70	Taunton Blackbrook & Holway	1	4,373	4,373	-10%	4,363	4,363	-10%
71	Taunton Comeytrowe	1	3,986	3,986	-18%	5,013	5,013	3%

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
72	Taunton Halcon & Lane	1	4,399	4,399	-10%	4,414	4,414	-9%
73	Taunton Lyngford	1	4,269	4,269	-12%	4,406	4,406	-9%
74	Taunton North Town & Tangier	1	4,646	4,646	-5%	4,759	4,759	-2%
75	Taunton Pyrland	1	4,186	4,186	-14%	4,475	4,475	-8%
76	Taunton Staplegrove	1	3,157	3,157	-35%	4,710	4,710	-3%
77	Taunton Victoria	1	3,724	3,724	-23%	4,372	4,372	-10%
78	Taunton Vivary	1	4,402	4,402	-10%	4,510	4,510	-7%
79	Taunton Wellsprings	1	4,606	4,606	-5%	4,526	4,526	-7%
80	Taunton Wilton, Sherford & Trull	1	4,375	4,375	-10%	4,373	4,373	-10%
81	Watchet & Williton	1	5,271	5,271	8%	5,247	5,247	8%
82	Wedmore & Mark	1	4,553	4,553	-6%	4,452	4,452	-9%
83	Wellington East	1	4,858	4,858	0%	5,019	5,019	3%
84	Wellington West	1	4,733	4,733	-3%	4,872	4,872	0%
85	Wells St Cuthbert's	1	4,286	4,286	-12%	4,658	4,658	-4%
86	Wells St Thomas'	1	4,647	4,647	-5%	4,847	4,847	0%

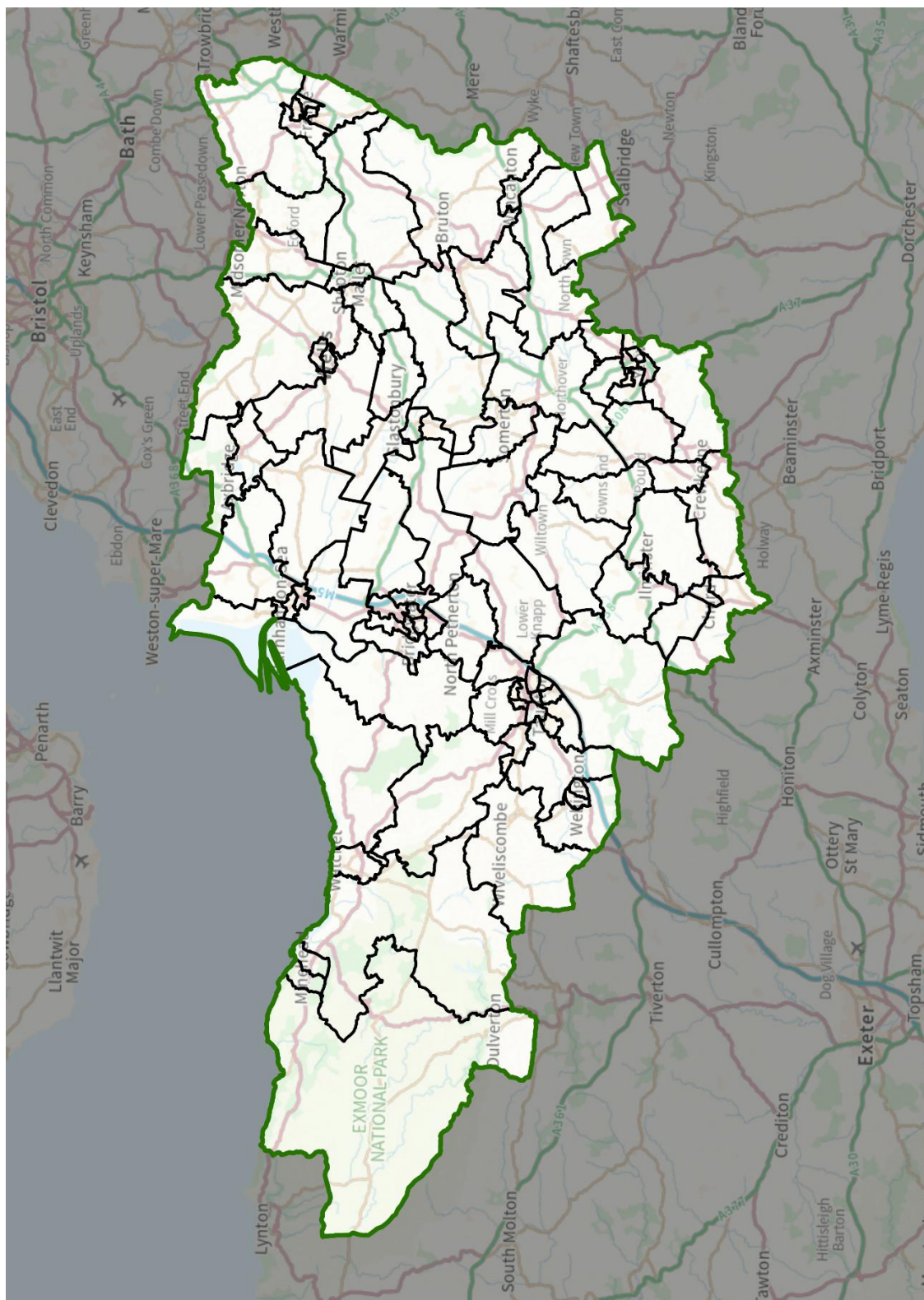
Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2024)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
87 West Monkton	1	4,625	4,625	-5%	5,110	5,110	5%
88 Wincanton	1	4,883	4,883	0%	5,300	5,300	9%
89 Wiveliscombe	1	4,983	4,983	2%	5,197	5,197	7%
90 Yeovil Central	1	5,301	5,301	9%	5,204	5,204	7%
91 Yeovil College	1	4,976	4,976	2%	4,961	4,961	2%
92 Yeovil East	1	4,501	4,501	-8%	4,471	4,471	-8%
93 Yeovil North East	1	4,783	4,783	-2%	4,861	4,861	0%
94 Yeovil North West	1	4,123	4,123	-15%	4,511	4,511	-7%
95 Yeovil South	1	4,900	4,900	1%	4,871	4,871	0%
96 Yeovil West	1	5,122	5,122	5%	5,066	5,066	4%
Totals	96	446,698	–	–	467,270	–	–
Averages	–	–	4,653	–	–	4,867	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Somerset 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 Somerset. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

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

Local Authority

- Somerset Council
- Somerset Council's Constitution and Governance Committee Electoral Review Working Group

Political Groups

- Bridgwater Conservative Association
- Somerset Council Conservative Group
- Somerset Council Liberal Democrats Group
- Yeovil Constituency Labour Party

Councillors

- Councillor S. Ashton (Somerset Council)
- Councillor K. Attwater (Timberscombe Parish Council)
- Councillor A. Bradford (Somerset Council)
- Councillor A. Boyden (Somerset Council)
- Councillor N. Cavill (Somerset Council)
- Councillor B. Clarke (Somerset Council)
- Councillor G. Dibble (Dunster Parish Council)
- Councillor S. Dromgoole (Langport Town Council and Chair of the Levels & Moors LCN)
- Councillor A. Flowers (Muchelney Parish Meeting)
- Councillor J. Frampton (Lydford on Fosse Parish Council)
- Councillor G. Fraschini (Taunton Town Council)
- Councillor A. Hadley (Somerset Council)
- Councillor L. Hyde (North Petherton Town Council)
- Councillor S. Hughes (Broomfield Parish Council)
- Councillor H. Kay (Somerset Council)
- Councillor S. Kimsey (Huish Champflower Parish Council)
- Councillor D. Mansell (Somerset Council)
- Councillor R. Meecham (Hambridge & Westport Parish Council)
- Councillor F. Nicholson (Somerset Council)
- Councillor S. Osborne (Somerset Council)

- Councillor M. Palmer (Minehead Town Council)
- Councillor C. Palmer (Minehead Town Council)
- Councillor S. Page (Somerset Council)
- Councillor L. Redman (Somerset Council)
- Councillor B. Revans and Councillor A. Bradford (Somerset Council)
- Councillor C. Rich (Winsham Parish Council)
- Councillor D. Rodrigues (Bridgwater Town Council and Somerset Council)
- Councillor W. Roberts (Nether Stowey Parish Council)
- Councillor P. Seib (Somerset Council)
- Councillor S. Sharman (North Petherton Town Council)
- Councillor S. Stretton (Spaxton Parish Council)
- Councillor A. Sully (Somerset Council)
- Councillor S. Terrett (Watchet Town Council)
- Councillor C. Thornton (Curry Rivel Parish Council)
- Councillor R. Woods (Somerset Council)
- Councillor G. Wren (Somerset Council)

Members of Parliament

- Ashley Fox MP (Bridgwater)

Parish and Town Councils

- Berkley Parish Council
- Bishop's Hull Parish Council
- Brean Parish Council
- Bridgwater Town Council
- Bridgwater Without Parish Council
- Brompton Ralph Parish Council
- Brompton Regis Parish Council
- Brushford Parish Council
- Bruton Town Council
- Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council
- Carhampton Parish Council
- Cary Moor Parish Council
- Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council
- Clatworthy Parish Council
- Creech St Michael Parish Council
- Crewkerne Town Council
- Emborough Parish Meeting
- Exton Parish Council
- Huish Champflower Parish Council

- Kingston St Mary Parish Council
- Luxborough Parish Council
- Milborne Port Parish Council
- Minehead Town Council
- North Curry Parish Council
- North Petherton Town Council
- Rode Parish Council
- Rodney Stoke Parish Council
- Seavington Parish Council
- Skilgate Parish Meeting
- St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council
- Stoke St Gregory Parish Council
- Timberscombe Parish Council
- Trull Parish Council
- Upton Parish Council
- Wellington Town Council
- West Coker Parish Council
- West Monkton Parish Council
- Williton Parish Council
- Winsford Parish Council
- Wiveliscombe Town Council
- Wootton Courtenay Parish Council

Local residents

- 85 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
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