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Summary

Who we are

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament. 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.

Electoral review

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 are their boundaries and what should they be called
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division

Why Watford?

We are conducting an electoral review of Watford Borough Council as the Council currently has high levels of electoral inequality where some councillors represent many more or many fewer voters than others. This means that the value of each vote in borough council elections varies depending on where you live in Watford. Overall, 33% of wards in Watford currently have a variance of more than 10% from the average for the borough. Tudor ward currently has 20% fewer electors than the average for Watford, while Central ward has 15% more.

Our proposals for Watford

Watford Borough Council currently has 36 councillors. Based on the evidence we received during previous phases of the review, we consider that maintaining this council size will ensure the Council can discharge its roles and responsibilities effectively.

Electoral arrangements

Our final recommendations propose that Watford Borough Council's 36 councillors should represent 12 three-member wards. None of our proposed wards would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for Watford by 2020.

We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Watford.

1 Introduction

1 This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Watford Borough Council's ('the Council's') electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

What is an electoral review?

2 Our three main considerations in conducting an electoral review are set out in legislation¹ and are to:

- Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
- Reflect community identity
- Provide for effective and convenient local government

3 Our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Consultation

4 We wrote to the Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals on council size. We then held two periods of consultation: firstly on warding patterns for the Council and secondly on our draft recommendations. The submissions received during our consultation have informed our final recommendations.

This review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
12 May 2015	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
7 July 2015	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
25 August 2015	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation
20 October 2015	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations
1 December 2015	Publication of final recommendations

How will the recommendations affect you?

5 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and the name of your ward.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

6 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Jolyon Jackson CBE

2 Analysis and final recommendations

7 Legislation² states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors³ in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

8 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum.

9 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors as shown on the table below.

	2015	2020
Electorate of Watford	71,321	77,923
Number of councillors	36	36
Average number of electors per councillor	1,981	2,165

10 Under our final recommendations, none of our proposed wards will have electoral variances of greater than 10% from the average by 2020. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Watford.

11 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Watford Council or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. There is no evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Submissions received

12 See Appendix B for details of submissions received. All submissions may be inspected at our offices (by appointment). All submissions can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

13 As prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2020, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in December 2015. These forecasts were broken down to polling district levels and projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 9% to 2020. The growth will largely be driven by development within the borough, including the development of the health campus site.

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.

14 During the preliminary period of the review, the Council had expressed some concerns that its existing electorate figure of 69,255 was probably lower than it should be as a result of the impact of Individual Elector Registration (IER). It cited the fact that its February 2014 register recorded 71,313 electors, which was higher than the figure of 69,255 taken in December 2014 figure following IER. However, following discussion the Council agreed that there was no more accurate figure available so we decided to use this as the basis of consultation on warding patterns.

15 Towards the beginning of the consultation on warding patterns, the Council informed us that its most recent electoral register (June 2015) had recorded an increase to 71,321 in electors which it considered was a more accurate reflection following the establishment of IER. It expressed concern that the figures originally provided were inaccurate, which would also affect the accuracy of its forecast figures. The Council therefore requested that we consider a revised set of existing and forecast electorate figures. On balance, in light of the evidence provided by the Council, we considered that the revised figures were the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations.

16 In response to our draft recommendations we did not receive any significant comments on the electorate forecasts. We are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our final recommendations.

Council size

17 Watford Council put forward a submission supporting a council size of 36, the retention of the existing council size. We received no other submissions with alternative council sizes.

18 We carefully considered the evidence provided by the Council and considered that it had demonstrated that the authority can operate efficiently and effectively under the existing council size and ensure effective representation of local residents.

19 We therefore consulted on electoral arrangements for Watford based on a council size of 36 members. In response to this consultation we did not receive any further comments to persuade us that the council size was incorrect. We therefore based our draft recommendations on a council size of 36 elected members.

20 In response to our draft recommendations we received no significant comments on council size and have therefore decided to confirm a council size of 36 as final.

Warding patterns

21 During consultation on warding patterns, we received 15 submissions, including three borough-wide proposals. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

22 We noted that there were areas of general consensus between all three proposals, including the need to transfer parts of the health campus development to the Oxhey ward. We therefore transferred parts of this to the Oxhey ward as part of

the draft recommendations. However, we did propose a number of amendments elsewhere to improve electoral equality or strengthen boundaries.

23 Our draft recommendations were for 12 three-member wards. We considered that they provided for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations

24 We received 21 submissions during our consultation on the draft recommendations. They provided a mixture of support and objections to our draft recommendations across the borough. These are detailed in Appendix B.

Final recommendations

25 We note that concern was expressed that in some areas the draft recommendations moved away from division boundaries. While we acknowledge these concerns, we have only done so where we consider they provide strong boundaries at ward level or improve electoral equality.

Meriden and Stanborough

26 We received objections to our proposal to place the Kytes Drive area in the Stanborough ward to improve electoral equality in this ward. A number of these objections put forward a similar amendment to transfer the electors on the east side of St Albans Road from Meriden ward to Stanborough ward. These proposals were broadly similar to proposals that we did not accept as part of the draft recommendations because they created wards with roads that would have no direct access into the ward or transferred too many electors creating relatively poor electoral equality. When formulating our draft recommendations we did not consider that persuasive community identity had been received to propose wards with poor levels of electoral equality. However, in light of the objections to the transfer of the Kytes Drive area we have revisited these and concluded that it is possible to transfer a smaller area of the St Albans Road area, while securing good electoral equality and boundaries. We consider that persuasive community identity has been received, particularly that the Kytes Drive area should be included in Meriden ward. We are therefore modifying the draft recommendations in this part of the borough.

Leggatts and Nascot

27 We received a number of objections to our proposals in this area, particularly the proposal to transfer part of the Greenbank Road area from Nascot ward to Leggatts ward. We acknowledge that this area has links to Nascot ward and that our proposals divide the Greenbank Road areas. We therefore propose moving away from our draft recommendations in this part of the borough and have decided to include the Greenbank Road area in Nascot ward.

28 We note that there were a number of respondents that expressed concerns about proposals where they moved away from coterminosity with county divisions. We acknowledge that the draft recommendations do this in a number of areas, but we have not been persuaded to move away from this, as we consider that these amendments provide stronger boundaries or better reflect local communities.

Detailed wards

29 The tables on pages 9–12 detail our final recommendations for each area of Watford. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory criteria of:

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

Central, Holywell, Oxhey and Vicarage

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2020	Description	Detail
Central	3	6%	This ward comprises the existing Central ward, less the housing around the Raphael Drive and Brocklesbury Close areas. This ward also does not include the new development being built on the health campus site.	<p>In response to the draft recommendations we generally received support for the proposed Central ward. One respondent argued that the ward should be named Central Watford to reflect the county division covering this area. We do not propose adopting this amendment as we consider it would actually create confusion with no other ward in the borough being prefixed with the name Watford.</p> <p>We are therefore confirming the Central ward as final.</p>
Holywell	3	8%	This ward comprises the existing Holywell ward, less an area to the south of the new health campus site and two small residential areas to the north of the ward.	We received an objection to the inclusion of the Cherrydale area in the Park ward, with a respondent arguing that the Cherrydale area shares urban problems with its existing ward, whereas Park has different issues. However, while we acknowledge these concerns, this amendment as part of our draft recommendations helps secure good electoral equality, while our tour of the area confirmed that it has good road links into Park. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.
Oxhey	3	-1%	This ward comprises the existing Oxhey ward plus areas of Central, Holywell and Vicarage wards.	We received no significant comments that have persuaded us to modify our proposed Oxhey ward. We are therefore confirming it as final.
Vicarage	3	3%	This ward comprises the existing Vicarage ward less an area to the south of the new health campus site and a small area to the north of the ward.	We received no significant comments that have persuaded us to modify our proposed Vicarage ward. We are therefore confirming it as final.

Leggatts, Nascot and Park

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2020	Description	Detail
Leggatts	3	-7%	This ward comprises existing Leggatts ward, plus part of Nascot ward and less Courtlands Close and Burrow Close.	<p>We received objections to the proposal to include the Greenbank Road area in the Leggatts ward. Respondents argued that the draft recommendations divide an area that shares a number of common concerns around parking and local schools. We acknowledge these concerns and on balance are persuaded to move away from the draft recommendations.</p> <p>As a result, we propose that the whole of the Greenbank Road area is included in the Nascot ward. The boundary of our Leggatts ward would follow the back of the houses along Goodwood Avenue which we consider would be easily identifiable.</p>
Nascot	3	9%	This ward comprises the existing Nascot ward, plus Burrow Close and The Avenue, but less Minerva Drive and part of Greenbank Road.	As described above in the Leggatts section, we are proposing an amendment from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations, we propose including the whole of the Greenbank Road area in the Nascot ward. We consider this modification would reflect the community identity evidence received.
Park	3	3%	This ward comprises the existing Park ward, less The Avenue but plus part of Holywell and Vicarage wards.	As discussed in the Holywell section above, there was an objection to the inclusion of the Cherrydale area in the Park ward. However, we are not persuaded to make this modification and are confirming the draft recommendations for Park ward as final.

Meriden, Stanborough and Woodside

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2020	Description	Detail
Meriden	3	-5%	This ward comprises the existing Meriden ward less part of the St Albans Road area.	<p>We received a number of objections to the inclusion of the Kytes Drive area in the Stanborough ward. A number of respondents argued that it would be geographically isolated and was a different type of housing to the rest of the Stanborough. In addition, they argued that the boundary created an 'incongruous'-shaped ward. They also argued that the Kytes Drive area has a strong interest in Garston Park which it bounds and that areas on both sides of the park were part of the same area of the Watford Community Housing Trust.</p> <p>Respondents put forward alternative options modifying proposals to transfer the east side of St Albans Road and a number of other roads to Stanborough in order that the Kytes Drive area could be included in the Meriden ward.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the draft recommendations transferred an area somewhat separated from the Stanborough ward, but we considered that it has good road access across St Albans Road. We are not persuaded by arguments about the shape of the ward, particularly given the reasonable road links between the two areas. We do, however, acknowledge the concerns about issues around Garston Park and the housing association area.</p> <p>As stated in the draft recommendations, we did not adopt amendments to transfer properties from St Albans Road as this left a number of roads without internal road access and we considered that at that time persuasive community</p>

				<p>identity evidence had not been received. We note that in response to the draft recommendations a number of respondents reiterated these proposals or put forward modified versions.</p> <p>Having considered the evidence, we do propose transferring part of St Albans Road and roads that are connected via it to Stanborough, while keeping the Kytes Drive area in Meriden ward. We consider this modification would reflect the evidence received. This would improve electoral equality in Meriden and Stanborough to 5% fewer and 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2020.</p>
Stanborough	3	-6%	This ward comprises the existing Stanborough ward plus part of the St Albans Road area.	As discussed in detail in the Meriden section (above), in response to the draft recommendations we are proposing modifications to the Stanborough ward.
Woodside	3	-5%	This ward comprises the existing Woodside ward plus the Courtlands Close area.	We received no significant comments on the Woodside ward and are confirming it as final.

Callowland and Tudor

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2020	Description	Detail
Callowland	3	-2%	This ward comprises the existing Callowland ward, with no changes.	We received no significant comments regarding this ward. We are therefore confirming the Callowland ward as final.
Tudor	3	-4%	This ward comprises the existing Tudor ward plus housing around the Raphael Drive and Brocklesbury Close areas.	We received some submissions supporting our proposed Tudor ward. We received no other significant comments regarding this ward and are therefore confirming it as final.

Conclusions

30 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2015 and 2020 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2015	2020
Number of councillors	36	36
Number of electoral wards	12	12
Average number of electors per councillor	1,981	2,165
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation
 Watford Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 12 three-member wards. The details and names are shown in Table A1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping
Sheet 1, Map 1 illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Watford. You can also view our final recommendations for Watford on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

3 What happens next?

31 We have now completed our review of Watford Borough Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2016.

Equalities

32 This report has been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

Appendix A

Table A1: Final recommendations for Watford Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Callowland	3	5,728	1,909	-4%	6,388	2,129	-2%
2	Central	3	6,126	2,042	3%	6,910	2,303	6%
3	Holywell	3	6,280	2,093	6%	7,038	2,346	8%
4	Leggatts	3	5765	1,922	-3%	6,059	2,020	-7%
5	Meriden	3	5,881	1,960	-1%	6,169	2,056	-5%
6	Nascot	3	6,690	2,230	13%	7,079	2,360	9%
7	Oxhey	3	5,459	1,820	-8%	6,423	2,141	-1%
8	Park	3	6,381	2,127	7%	6,682	2,227	3%
9	Stanborough	3	5,812	1,937	-2%	6,089	2,030	-6%
10	Tudor	3	5,465	1,822	-8%	6,252	2,084	-4%
11	Vicarage	3	5,856	1,952	-1%	6,693	2,231	3%

Table A1 (cont): Final recommendations for Watford Borough Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Woodside	3	5,878	1,959	-1%	6,139	2,046	-5%
Totals	36	71,321	–	–	77,923	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,981	–	–	2,165	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Watford Borough Council.

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

Appendix B

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/watford>

Local authority

- Watford Borough Council

Political parties

- Nascot Liberal Democrats
- Watford Labour Party
- Watford Liberal Democrats

Councillors

- Councillor M. Watkin (Nascot ward)
- Councillor K. Hastrick (Meriden Tudor division)
- Councillor S. Giles-Medhurst (Watford Central division)

Residents

- 14 local residents

Appendix C

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
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. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
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 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