

Review Officer (North Hertfordshire)  
LGBCE  
PO Box 133  
Blyth  
NE24 9FE

2 August 2022

For the attention of the Review Officer

**submission about the new warding arrangements in North Hertfordshire**

I am writing in my capacity as a ward councillor, resident, and Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council to provide my evidence submission for the Local Government Boundary Commission's public consultation on new warding arrangements in North Hertfordshire.

As part of its statutory responsibilities, the LGBC is undertaking a ten year review of the boundaries of wards in the district of North Hertfordshire. I view this as an opportunity to ensure that all local electoral wards reflect the communities that I councillors serve and the demographic changes that the district is experiencing.

The North Herts Labour Group has 17 members drawn from two parliamentary constituencies – Hitchin & Harpenden and North East Herts. I represent a Hitchin ward, but live in Letchworth and am therefore a constituent of North East Herts. This, along with being Leader of the Council, gives me a unique view across the district and insight into what matters to the majority of people who live here, and where community lines are, and how they might be adjusted to better enable my council to support and effectively represent the greatest possible number of our residents.

A joint administration of Labour and Liberal Democrat Councillors has led the Council since May 2019. My primary concern is to ensure that the communities of North Hertfordshire have fair, equal and effective representation. In this submission I propose my view on the best way to achieve this.

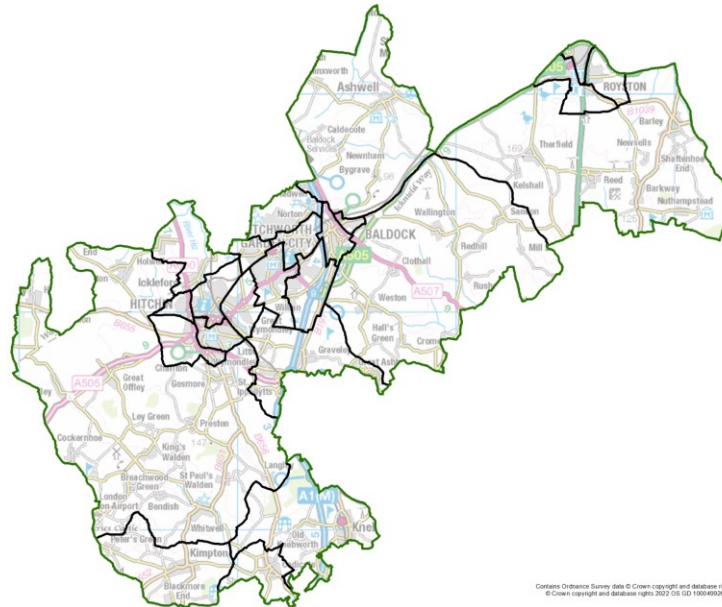
My evidence submission builds on the North Herts Council proposal which I endorse in the majority of areas: although there are some notable exceptions such as the proposed boundaries for the southern Letchworth wards.

I hope that the Commission will give this evidence submission due consideration.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg  
Leader North Herts Council  
Hitchin Walsworth, Labour

# Evidence submission on the North Herts boundary review 2022



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## North Herts and the need to review electoral boundaries

On the 1st June 2022 the Local Government Boundary Commission opened a public consultation with residents and organisations in North Hertfordshire on the revision of ward boundaries for North Hertfordshire Council as part of the Commission's 10-year boundary review process.

I llcome this review as an opportunity to:

- Reflect the demographic changes in North Hertfordshire, noting that existing population growth and future residential developments has, and will, cause an unacceptable level of electoral variance in some areas.
- Take advantage of the review process to adjust boundary lines to ensure distinct communities are not divided across ward boundaries.
- Recognise where co-location of distinct communities within single wards limits effective representation and make adjustments accordingly.

This evidence submission builds on the North Herts Council's submission which I agree with in the majority of areas but with exceptions which are noted below.

### **priorities for the Commission's consideration**

1. **I support the Council's proposal to increase the number of Councillors from 50 to 51 in North Hertfordshire.** I recognise the district's changing electorate and the need to both increase and re-allocate Councillors to ensure the fair and effective representation of North Hertfordshire's residents.
2. **I support the North Herts Council proposals for Hitchin, Royston and the Southern Rural Communities in full.**
3. **I support the Council's proposed boundaries for Baldock and for the northern wards of Letchworth.** These are Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Wilbury and Letchworth Norton.
4. **I do not support North Hertfordshire Council's proposal for the southern Letchworth wards.** In the development of its submission North Hertfordshire Council considered two options for the boundary proposals for southern Letchworth - [Option A](#) and [Option B](#). The Council adopted Option A for its submission by a vote which was not unanimous and did not have the support of Labour members. I believe strongly that Option B best fulfils the three statutory criteria and recommend it as the most suitable option to the Commission.
5. **Rename Baldock Town 'Baldock Ist'.** On consultation with constituency party members following the Council's adoption of the submission I encourage the Commission to rename the ward 'Baldock Town' to 'Baldock Ist' in recognition that both proposed wards equally identify as Baldock Town.

#### **Hitchin wards**

#### **I support North Herts Council's evidence submission for Hitchin.**

- I support the decrease of councillors representing Hitchin from 13 to 12 recognising the impact of changing demographics across the district to the electorate.

[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].

- I support the Council's recommendations for Hitchin Walsworth, Bearton and Oughton. In particular I endorse the recommendation to keep Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Highbury as separate wards but both with 2 members. I also endorse the return of the Hitchin Priory listed building to the electoral ward which bears its name.

[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

- I note with concern earlier options considered and rejected by the Council that proposed the creation of a single ward of Oughton and Priory. Not only does this not represent a cohesive community but it would also co-locate communities that have very different needs of local government. I note similar alternatives considered that would have kept Hitchin Highbury a three member ward and reduced Hitchin Priory to a single member ward. I do not support this option and believe that the proposal below, with Highbury and Priory each being two member wards, best reflects the communities.

[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable];

Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].

### **I support the following proposal for Hitchin wards:**

The unparished town of Hitchin is currently served by 13 Councillors in total, split across 5 wards. The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review. Whilst there will be some growth in the electorate of the town, it is not as significant as in other areas, hence the number of councillors serving the community could reduce to 12. The proposal is for five wards, represented by 12 Councillors.

#### ***Hitchin Walsworth***

Hitchin Walsworth Ward should remain unchanged and within its current boundary configuration. It reflects the established communities of the old Walsworth Village and newer Purwell estate. It also allows for the likely population increase when the Highover Farm development is built.

#### ***Hitchin Bearton***

This ward is enclosed by the town boundary in the north, Walsworth ward in the east and the A600 in the west. The southern boundary follows the A505, then south along Bancroft, east along Hermitage Road, and then north along Walsworth Road. The properties to the east of Walsworth Road (in Trevor Road and surrounds) are also included.

Hitchin Bearton Ward should remain unchanged and within its current boundary configuration. It reflects well the established communities in that part of town.

### ***Hitchin Oughton***

The Hitchin Oughton ward is expanded southwards, taking into account representations, including from local Councillors. The existing ward splits a community, and the new arrangement resolves this, with Gaping Lane now included in this ward.

### ***Hitchin Priory***

The boundary between Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Highbury wards follows the B656 Queen Street; this retains the historic Priory within Priory ward, with the ward boundary following the main route through the town. At the southern end of Queen Street, the boundary follows the A602 eastwards, also including the roads of Folly Close, Traherne Close and The Maples within Hitchin Priory ward.

### ***Hitchin Highbury***

This ward is bounded on the west by the B656 Queen Street, as above.

		<b>Electorate</b>	
		<b>In 2021</b>	<b>In 2028</b>
<b>Ward name</b>	Hitchin Walsworth		
<b>Councillors</b>	3		
<b>Total electorate</b>		6,171	7,027
<b>Variance</b>		6.2%	6.0%

		<b>Electorate</b>	
		<b>In 2021</b>	<b>In 2028</b>
<b>Ward name</b>	Hitchin Bearton		
<b>Councillors</b>	3		
<b>Total electorate</b>		6,251	6,251
<b>Variance</b>		7.5%	-5.7%

		<b>Electorate</b>	
		<b>In 2021</b>	<b>In 2028</b>
<b>Ward name</b>	Hitchin Oughton		
<b>Councillors</b>	2		
<b>Total electorate</b>		4,098	4,177
<b>Variance</b>		5.7%	-5.5%

		<b>Electorate</b>	
		<b>In 2021</b>	<b>In 2028</b>
<b>Ward name</b>	Hitchin Priory		
<b>Councillors</b>	2		
<b>Total electorate</b>		3,978	4,325
<b>Variance</b>		-1.4%	-4.1%

		<b>Electorate</b>	
		<b>In 2021</b>	<b>In 2028</b>
<b>Ward name</b>	Hitchin Highbury		
<b>Councillors</b>	2		
<b>Total electorate</b>		4,823	4,823
<b>Variance</b>		19.6%	7.0%

See [Appendix B](#) for reference maps of the proposed Hitchin warding arrangements.

## Recommendations

### Baldock wards

**I support North Herts Council's evidence submission for Baldock with the exception of the naming of Baldock Town which I propose be renamed Baldock West.**

- I support the increase of councillors representing Baldock from 4 to 5 given the changing demographics of the town and the impact of residential development projects to the electorate.  
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].
- I advocate for the renaming of Baldock Town to Baldock West to reflect that both wards are equally integral to the town and that it is not the case of Baldock East being perceived as 'Baldock Town and the rest'.  
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

**I support the following proposal for Baldock wards:**

The unparished town of Baldock is currently served by 4 Councillors in total, split across two wards (Baldock East with 1 Councillor, and Baldock Town with 3). The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review.

Baldock is currently split into two wards along the A507. The majority of properties in Baldock East ward are geographically separated from the main road, and the communities of Baldock Town, by the schools, garden centre and fields. Despite a number of significant roads in Baldock, few can readily be identified as being a clear boundary between communities.

However, significant residential development is planned to the north-east and east of the town. As noted above, these areas will be predominantly urban in nature, and very different to the rural parish in which they reside. Therefore the proposal is that these areas become part of the urban wards serving Baldock.

I propose to adjust the boundaries of the existing wards to accommodate the new developments and increase the number of councillors to 5.

#### ***Baldock East***

This is the area to the east of the A507. The current boundary at the south is extended to the A505 and then runs north along the A505 until the junction. Here it heads north

along the new development link road, then around the major new residential development boundary to re-join the existing boundary on the A507 north of the town.

### ***Baldock West***

This is the area to the west of the A507. The current boundary at the south is extended to the A505 and then runs south to the parish boundary between Clothall and Weston, then follows this north back to the existing ward boundary.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock East		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		2,319	4,225
Variance		-42.5%	-6.3%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock West		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,654	6,147
Variance		-6.6%	-9.1%

See [Appendix A](#) for reference maps of the proposed Baldock warding arrangements.

## **Letchworth wards**

I support the [option B](#) proposal developed for consideration by North Hertfordshire Council. I note with concern the adoption of [option A](#) by the Council in its evidence submission. The differences between these options focus on the boundaries of the southern Letchworth wards.

- I support the decrease of councillors representing Letchworth from 13 to 12 recognising the impact of changing demographics across the district to the electorate.  
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].
- I note earlier proposals of 11 Councillors with concern as this would result in the residents of Letchworth having a democratic deficit. In addition to being underrepresented I have concerns that this would impact negatively on effective governance.  
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;  
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].
- I support the proposed boundaries for the wards of Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Wilbury and Letchworth Norton as presented in both [option A](#) and [option B](#). In particular I support the commitment to represent these distinct communities through separate wards.



[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;

Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

- I note with concern the adoption of [option A](#) by the Council for their proposed southern Letchworth wards. [Option A](#) offers the worst electoral variance with Letchworth West having an electoral variance over the 10% threshold and Letchworth East very close to the threshold at 9.8%. This position will be worsened should the new Garden Square owners seek to increase residential dwellings – I am informed that the current plans will likely see an increase in residential density at this location. By contrast [Option B](#) results in all wards having an acceptable level of variance below the 10% threshold.

[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;

- [Option A](#) offers further challenges, dividing the residents of The Crescent and Pixmore Junior School from the community to which they belong in Old Pixmore - the original Letchworth Garden City community. While not perfect, [Option B](#) with two larger wards rather than three smaller ones offers a less divisive alternative and greatly improves community cohesion for the Lordship estate which is currently split down the middle and will remain so if Option A is the final outcome of this review.

[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable]

- Further [Option A](#), also continues to co-locate the distinct Lordship and Jackmans estate communities within a single ward which I see as a missed opportunity to resolve tensions on criteria 2 and 3. These communities are divided by the A505 and the Letchworth Gate “longabout” - a large structural divide between communities. While I recognise that the co-location of distinct communities is acceptable if it supports the requirements of criterion 1, I am concerned about the suitability of it in this case. In addition to the physical divide, these communities have starkly differentiated incomes and polarised needs that are reflected in their demands on Council services, the policy priorities of Councillors representing the community and the volume and nature of casework. The Jackmans community is one of the most deprived in the district, while Lordship residents are amongst the wealthiest. I firmly believe that these differences place unnecessary tension on meeting Criterion 2 and Criterion 3 in a similar way to the differences that urban and rural communities experience. Further, the Jackmans community has more in common with the adjacent community in Letchworth East – including Jackmans Place from which the Jackmans estate takes its name. Likewise, the Lordship estate has more in common with neighbouring communities in Letchworth Southwest. [Option B](#) therefore is the most appropriate way to ensure community cohesion and ensure effective representation and government.

[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable;

Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].

- I support the [option B](#) boundaries for Letchworth Southeast and Letchworth Southwest as proposed to the Council for consideration for its evidence submission. I believe this to be the only option which meets all three statutory criteria that each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors; that new wards reflect community interests, identities and boundaries and that new wards promote effective and convenient local government.

[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;

Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable;

Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].

### **I support the following proposal for Letchworth wards:**

The unparished town of Letchworth is currently served by 13 Councillors in total, split across 5 wards. The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review. Whilst there will be some growth in the electorate in the town, it is not as significant as in other areas, hence the number of councillors serving the community is necessarily reducing.

Cutting across the town is the railway. Whilst current wards straddle the railway, local Councillors have advised it does form a barrier in some places. The town can therefore effectively be divided into 'north' and 'south' using the railway as a reference point. Members of NHC have been invited to identify communities within Letchworth, and these have been accommodated within the proposed warding arrangements.

In total, Letchworth will be served by 12 members across 5 wards.

The proposed wards have been discussed by Members and a range of options considered. Two options have been presented to Members at Full Council, and the preference chosen by Councillors, which they feel best meets the three statutory criteria is:

#### ***Letchworth South East***

This comprises the south eastern part of the town, bordered on east by the town boundary. The northern boundary is the railway line. The western boundary follows Norton Way South and Willian Way, then runs to the north of Whitethorn Lane, along Howard Drive, then south along the A505.

#### ***Letchworth South West***

This is the remaining area of Letchworth, south of the railway line. The communities in the northern area here are distinct from those elsewhere in southern Letchworth.

### ***Letchworth Grange***

This is the northernmost part of Letchworth, bordered on the north and west by the town boundary. It includes the Grange estate, as identified by local Councillors.

### ***Letchworth Wilbury***

This ward is the Wilbury community, as identified by local Members, expanded slightly eastwards to ensure electoral equality. e. Letchworth Norton This ward is centred on Norton common, and includes the community of Norton village and the Longmead/Hawthorn Hill area.

### ***Letchworth Norton***

This ward is centred on Norton common, and includes the community of Norton village and the Longmead/Hawthorn Hill area.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South East		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,957	6,359
Variance		2.5%	-4.1%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South West		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		7,077	7,204
Variance		21.7%	8.6%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Grange		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,391	4,860
Variance		13.3%	9.9%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Norton		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,571	4,078
Variance		-7.9%	-7.8%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Wilbury		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4086	4086
Variance		5.4%	-7.6%

See [Appendix C](#) for reference maps of the proposed Letchworth warding arrangements.

## Royston wards

### **I support North Herts Council's evidence submission for Royston.**

- I support the increase of councillors representing Royston from 6 to 7 through four wards. This reflects the changing demographics of the town and the impact of residential development projects to the electorate.  
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;  
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].
- I support the use of Royston Palace and Royston Meridian instead of Royston North and Royston East reflecting established community identities.  
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

### **I support the following proposal for Royston wards:**

The town of Royston is currently served by 6 Councillors in total, split across 3 wards. The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review.

In addition, some areas are expecting significant growth due to new residential development. This growth is substantially greater than in some of the other urban areas, and hence the town requires an additional district councillor to enable electoral equality.

The northern part of the town is bisected by the railway, with very few crossing points. Holver, due to the electorate within the northernmost part of the town, the new warding arrangement does need to straddle the railway. In reality, the only vehicular access across the railway within Royston is along the Kneesworth Road / Old North Road. This therefore marks a central point of the new warding arrangements.

Using major roads as markers, I propose the creation of 4 new wards served by a total of 7 councillors. These proposed wards reflect the community boundaries as far as possible.

### ***Royston Palace***

This includes all electors to the north of the railway line, as well as electors in a triangle bordered by the Kneesworth Road to the west, Queens Road to the south, and Melbourn Road to the east.

### ***Royston Meridian***

This includes all electors to the east of Kneesworth Street / Lower Kings Street, and north of Melbourn Street / Newmarket Road, and south of the new Royston Palace ward boundary. This area is clearly demarcated by the major roads, and represents distinct communities from other areas of the town.

### ***Royston Burloes***

This is the area to the east of the A10 Priory Lane, Barkway Street and the B1039 Barkway Road, below the Newmarket Road. This is a single-member ward, with distinct communities from neighbouring wards. This area has a large new development planned, representing significant growth in the electorate.

### ***Royston Heath***

The retains the name of the existing ward, due to the location of the heath itself, but has significant changes in the ward composition. This is the remainder of the town (west of the B1039, Priory Lane and Lower Kings Street, and south of the railway).

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston North		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,184	4,309
Variance		3.7%	-4.4%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston East		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,529	4,104
Variance		-12.5%	-9.0%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Burloes		
Councillors	1		
Total electorate		1,452	2,146
Variance		-28.0%	-4.8%

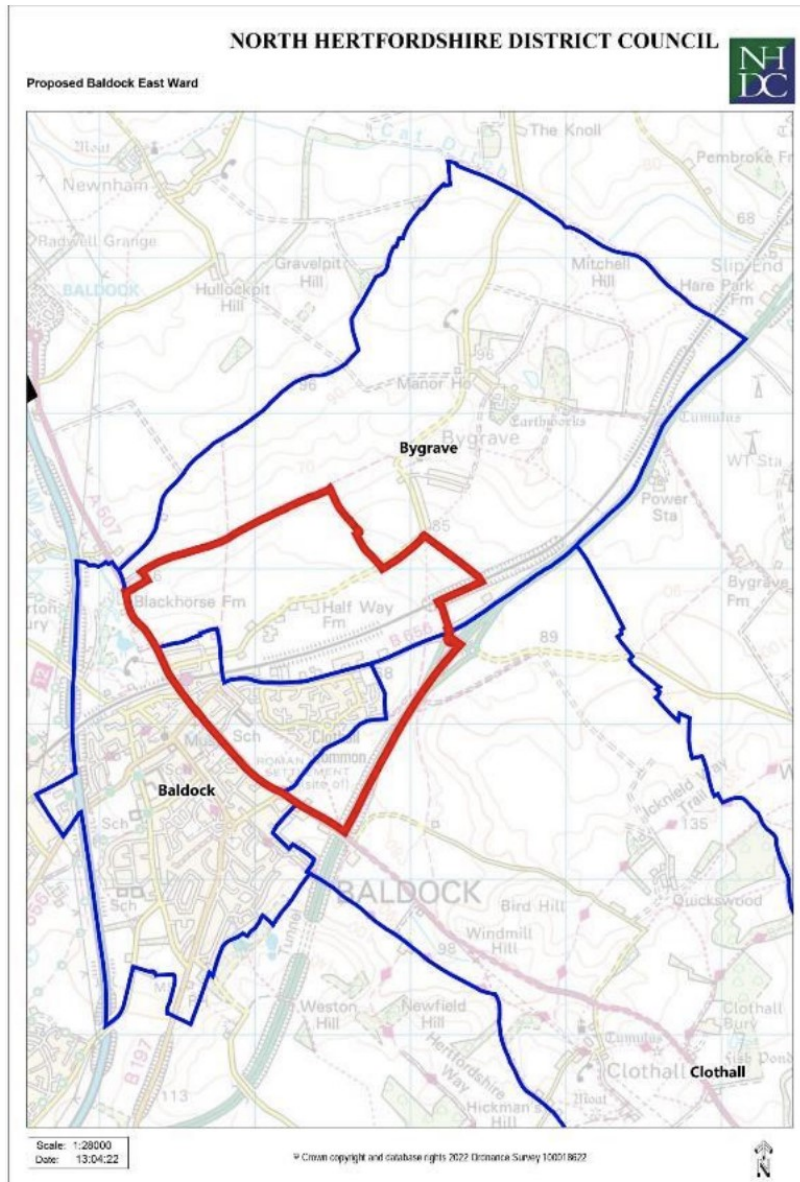
		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Heath		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,716	4,205
Variance		-7.9%	-6.7%

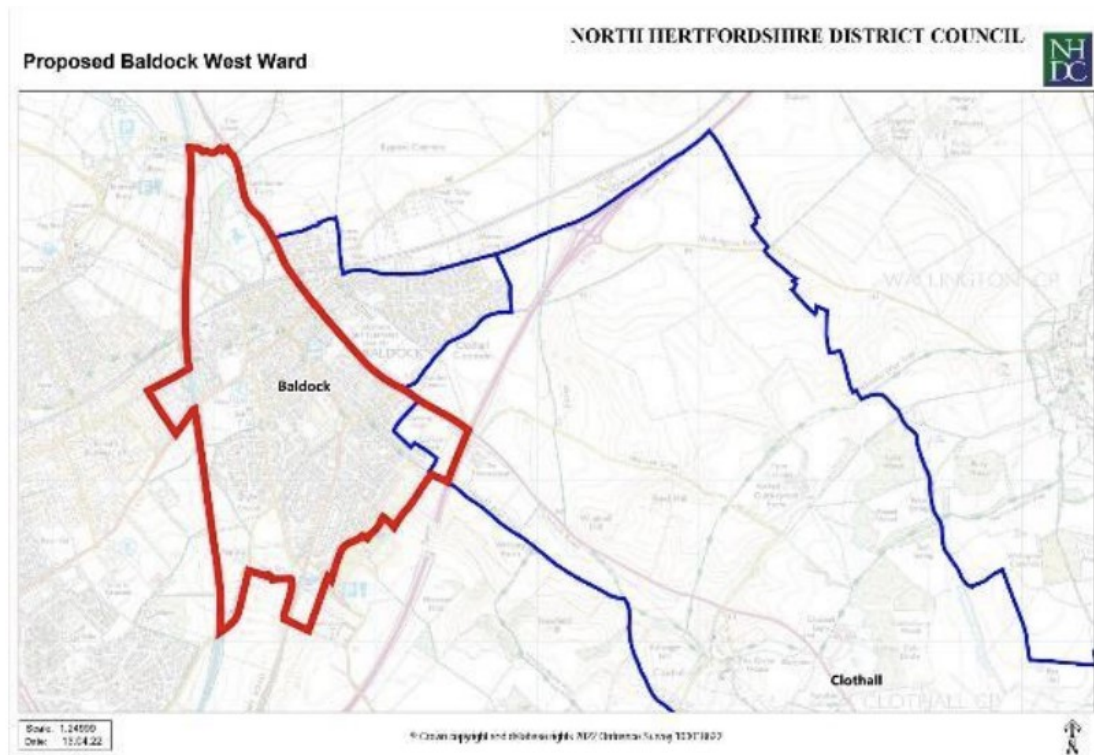
See [Appendix D](#) for reference maps of the proposed Royston warding arrangements.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Proposed ward boundaries for Baldock

### *Baldock East*



**Baldock West**



**Proposed Hitchin Wards**

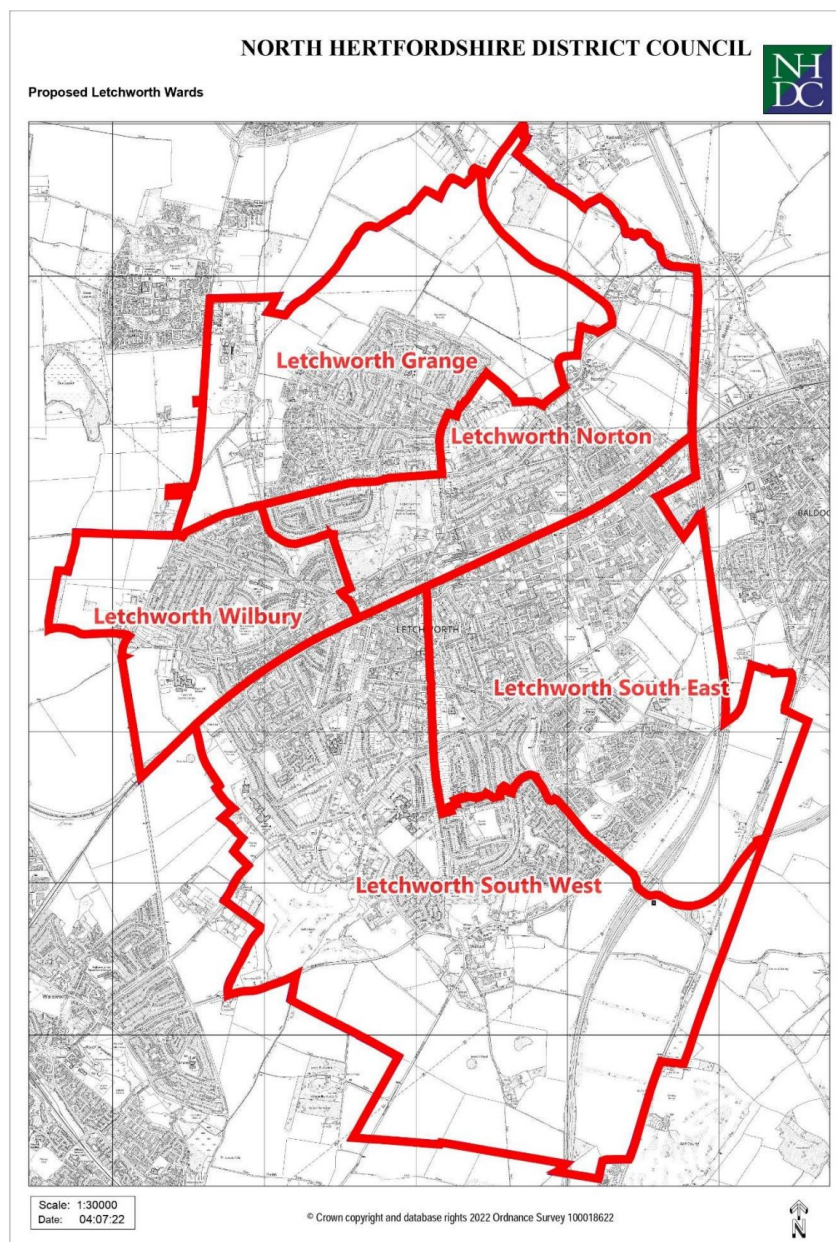
**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Date: 18/07/22

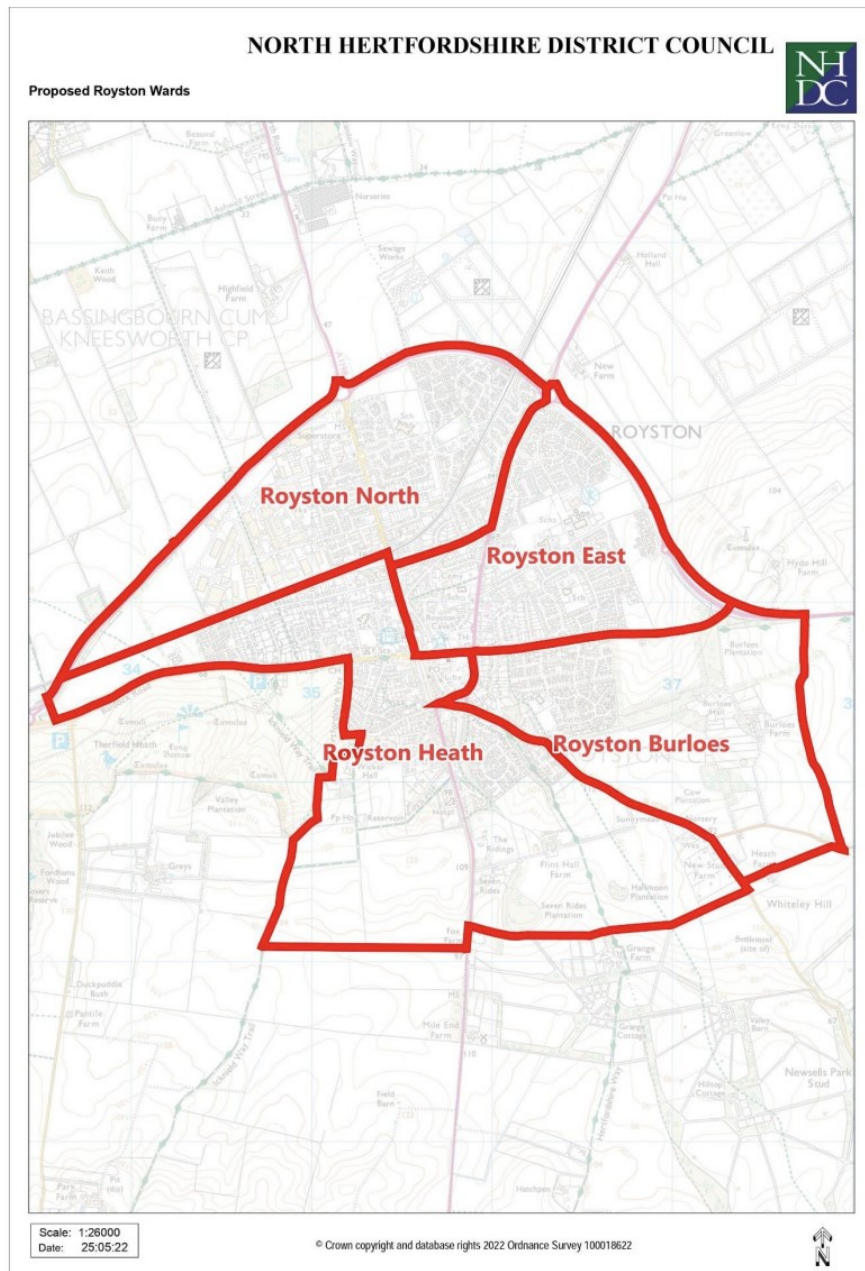
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## Appendix C: Proposed ward boundaries for Letchworth



## Appendix D: Proposed ward boundaries for Royston



**END OF SUBMISSION**

## Mansfield, Simon

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**From:** Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg <Elizabeth.Dennis-Harburg@north-herts.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 09 August 2022 12:58  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** North Hertfordshire Boundary Review  
**Attachments:** EDH Boundary Review submission 2022 final.pdf  
**Categories:** Submissions, Simon

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached my submission in respect of the warding aspect of the North Hertfordshire boundary review.

I have consulted with my group members, Hitchin & Harpenden, and North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Parties as well as ordinary residents who have contacted me to express their views on the review and submissions presented by the Council.

Yours faithfully



**Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg**  
Leader  
Hitchin Walsworth, Labour

[www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk)

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