

# New electoral arrangements for Stevenage Borough Council Draft Recommendations

May 2022



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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.<sup>1</sup> 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)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (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.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Why Stevenage?

7 We are conducting a review of Stevenage Borough Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 1998, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

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

- The wards in Stevenage are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

## Our proposals for Stevenage

9 Stevenage should be represented by 39 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Stevenage should have 13 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change; none will stay the same.

## How will the recommendations affect you?

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

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough 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.

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

## Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 31 May 2022 to 8 August 2022. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

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

16 You have until 8 August 2022 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 27 for how to send us your response.

## Review timetable

17 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Stevenage. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
16 November 2021	Number of councillors decided
23 November 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
28 February 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
31 May 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
8 August 2022	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
29 November 2022	Publication of final recommendations



## Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation<sup>3</sup> states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors<sup>4</sup> there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

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

21 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.

	2021	2027
Electorate of Stevenage	65,317	70,467
Number of councillors	39	39
Average number of electors per councillor	1,675	1,807

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Stevenage are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

## Submissions received

23 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 8% by 2027.

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

<sup>3</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

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

## Number of councillors

26 Stevenage Borough Council currently has 39 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

27 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 39 councillors. As Stevenage Borough Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation<sup>5</sup> that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

28 We did not receive any submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on ward patterns. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a 39-councillor council.

## Ward boundaries consultation

29 We received 24 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included three borough-wide proposals from the Council's Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups.

30 The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for wards arrangements in particular areas of the borough. A number of submissions were about Stevenage Borough's external boundaries with particular reference to the Great Ashby area on the boundary with North Hertfordshire District Council. This electoral review only relates to the internal ward boundaries within Stevenage. The external boundaries are outside the scope of this review and we are not able to make any recommendations for changes to them.

31 The three borough-wide schemes each provided a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards for Stevenage. We carefully considered them and were of the view that they all proposed patterns of wards which were well thought through, resulted in good levels of electoral equality in all areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

32 The Conservative Group ('the Conservatives') proposals used roads as identifiable boundaries and proposed that each ward should include some green space. They sought to keep the town centre with the new developments in a single ward. In doing so, we considered that this left some residents, particularly in their

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<sup>5</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

proposed Chells and Woodfield wards, isolated from the rest of the ward. We also considered that their proposal split communities across wards in a number of places. The Labour and Liberal Democrat groups' proposals were broadly similar to one another. We note that their proposals both separated the town centre developments into different wards, which we considered facilitated a pattern of wards to the east of the town centre, in particular, that reflected community identities better. We also considered that their schemes broadly kept existing communities together in a single ward.

33 Accordingly, we have based our draft recommendations mainly on the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups' proposals with modifications to better reflect our statutory criteria. We have also adopted specific boundaries from the Conservatives' proposals where appropriate. In Stevenage, we recognise that there are a number of roads that would form good boundaries. In order to provide good electoral equality, it has been necessary to cross some of those roads. Where we have done so, we have ensured that there are good crossings to enable access.

34 The Liberal Democrats provided a list of alternative names for all the wards. We have not adopted any of those names as part of our draft recommendations. However, we are aware that sometimes, where the boundaries of a ward have changed significantly, it might be more appropriate to change the ward name to better reflect the new make-up of the ward. Therefore, we welcome comments on each of our draft recommendation ward names.

35 Our draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas, we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

36 We conducted a detailed virtual tour of Stevenage. This helped clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the proposed boundary recommendations.

## Draft recommendations

37 Our draft recommendations are for 13 three-councillor wards. 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.

38 The tables and maps on pages 9–24 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Stevenage. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory<sup>6</sup> criteria of:

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

39 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 33 and on the large map accompanying this report.

40 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries, and the names of our proposed wards.

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<sup>6</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.



43 Under their proposals the town centre and new developments east of Lytton Way are included in Bedwell ward. Its proposed boundaries are A1155 Fairlands Way, Lytton Way, Six Hills Way and behind the properties on the eastern side of Bedwell Crescent. Residents on some roads off the eastern side of Bedwell Crescent were included in a ward east of Main and Millennium lakes. While acknowledging that these roads would not be considered part of Chells, they considered that as they were only separated from Chells by the lakes, geographical proximity to the lakes was a shared feature.

44 Under these proposals, the Rockingham Way area is excluded from Bedwell ward and included in Shephall ward. The Conservatives accept that this area does not have a 'major connect' to Shephall but point to the fact that historically this area used to be a separate ward in its own right and that it was 'detached' from the rest of Bedwell Road.

45 Labour and the Liberal Democrats submitted very similar proposals for this area. Under their proposals, Rockingham Way and the entire area west of the lakes are retained in Bedwell ward. However, the area of the town centre with the significant housing developments bordered by Lytton Way, A1155 Fairlands Way, St George's Way and Six Hills Way was split across Bedwell, Old Town and Roebuck wards for electoral equality reasons. Both groups also proposed including the few roads around Brittain Way and Aylward Drive in Shephall ward.

46 Labour used the county division boundaries, which included both lakes in Shephall ward to the south, while the Liberal Democrats included Millennium Lake in Chells and Main Lake in Shephall. There was also a minor difference between their proposals to the south-west of Lytton Way in the town centre.

47 The resident suggested that Bedwell ward should not extend south of Six Hills Way. They advocated that the area around Rockingham Way be included in a new Monkswood ward with Valley Way and its associated roads. They did not provide any community evidence to support the proposal. Such a ward would have fewer than 3,300 forecast electors. This is equivalent to a forecast of more than 25% fewer electors by 2027. We are not minded to create wards with such poor variances; therefore, we have not adopted this proposal.

48 We note the strong boundaries proposed by the Conservatives but have not been persuaded that the proposed boundary around Bedwell Crescent does not split an established community across different wards. We consider that the residents of Colestrete and Shephall View are likely to have a greater sense of community identity with Bedwell Crescent than the area east of the lakes. We considered uniting this area in Bedwell ward under these proposals. However, this produced wards with 16% more (Bedwell) and 17% fewer (Chells) electors than the average for Stevenage by 2027. Accordingly, we were not persuaded to adopt this proposal.

49 We also consider that the Rockingham Way area will have more community with neighbours to the north of Six Hills Way than with the rest of the Conservatives' proposed Shephall ward from whom they would be isolated by a substantial wooded area and green space. It is true that Six Hills Way is an identifiable boundary; however, we do not consider that it represents a barrier between residents on either side. We note the Conservatives' view that this area formed the centre of a ward over 20 years ago. However, we aim to create wards based on communities as they exist today rather than how they were in the past.

50 With regards to the town centre, we expect that the scale of development in the town centre will mean that it is likely that the communities there will change and develop their identities over the coming years. Accordingly, we recognise that while there may be some benefit if the town centre was kept in one ward, it is reasonable to split the area across different wards, especially when it facilitates a better reflection of communities in neighbouring areas. We do not consider that the A1155 should necessarily be a boundary as the commercial area extends across that road and there will therefore be some shared interests.

51 Accordingly, after careful consideration of the evidence we received, we are basing our draft recommendations on the proposals from Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

52 However, we have modified the boundaries proposed around Danestrete in the town centre so that we do not split individual developments across wards. Therefore, the area between The Forum, Danestrete, Southgate and St George's Way is included in Bedwell ward. The area between Southgate and Six Hills Way is included in Roebuck to the south. The area north and west of Danestrete forms part of our draft recommendations for Old Town. We welcome comments on our boundaries in the town centre.

53 Bedwell ward is forecast to have 9% more electors than the borough average by 2027. This is higher than any of the schemes proposed locally but it is within the range we consider to be good electoral equality and we consider it the best balance of our statutory criteria.

#### *Bandley Hill and Shephall*

54 In addition to the three borough-wide proposals, we also received a submission from Irish Network Stevenage.

55 The three borough-wide proposals all included Cromwell and Marlborough roads in Bandley Hill ward and retained the boundary at the northern end of Shephall Way. They pointed to Six Hills Way as being a natural boundary.

56 The Conservatives, however, retained the Barnham Road area to the east of Cromwell Road in Manor ward to the north, and departed from using Six Hills Way as a boundary in this area. They included the middle section of Shephall Way – from Hydean Way to immediately north of Oakwood Close – in Bandley Hill ward to ensure an acceptable level of electoral equality in the two wards. Under these proposals, Ridlins Wood is included in Bandley Hill and the southern part of the Shephall Way is in Longmeadow ward.

57 Labour and the Liberal Democrats proposed that Barnham Road be included in Bandley Hill continuing the use of Six Hills Way as a boundary in this area. They placed all of Shephall Way and Ridlins Wood in Shephall ward. There were minor differences between the two groups' proposals (e.g., Labour included Cholwell Road in Bandley Hill while the Liberal Democrats placed it in Shephall ward).

58 Irish Network Stevenage was of the view that 'Bandley Hill should be merged with Shephall' and that 'Poplars should be its own ward'. It said that they were different neighbourhoods and that Poplars had no representation. It did not provide any community evidence to support its views, nor did it propose any specific boundaries or state which area it meant for its proposed Poplars ward to cover. The Poplars area appears to be the area north of Woodcock Road, east of Harefield, Fallowfield and Kymswell Road, south of Marlborough and Barnham roads and west of Gresley Way. This area has too few electors to form a three-councillor ward on its own. Even with the inclusion of residents in the Edmonds Drive area, such a ward is forecast to have 39% fewer electors than the borough average and the resultant Shephall ward would have 39% more electors. For these reasons, we have not adopted this proposal.

59 After careful consideration of the borough-wide schemes, we have based our draft recommendations in this area mostly on the Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals. We were not persuaded to include the Rockingham Way area in Shephall ward, as explained in paragraph 49. We note that adopting the other boundaries of the Conservatives' proposals for this ward produced a Shephall ward forecast to have 20% fewer electors than the average for Stevenage. We are not minded to create a ward with such a high variance.

60 We are content to include the Barham Road area in Bandley Hill ward. The Conservatives acknowledge that there 'would be an argument' to do this. They state that they did not do so because it would affect the population distribution in the area. In creating electoral wards, we seek the best balance of our three statutory criteria. Therefore, we typically allow a tolerance level of 10% from the average number of electors per councillor. Including these electors in Bandley Hill does not produce wards that we consider to have poor electoral variances and utilises a more identifiable boundary in this area.

61 Towards the south end of Shephall Way, we are adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary, which includes Ridlins End and the Shephall Health Centre in a single ward rather than leaving them split across wards, as they are presently, and which Labour's proposed boundary retains.

62 At the very southern end, we note that access to Oakwood Close and Taywood Close is via Shephall Way and not the A602 (Broadhall Way). Therefore, without any strong community evidence linking residents of these roads to Longmeadow ward, we are content to include all of Shephall Way in Shephall ward to facilitate effective and convenient local government and to retain the use of the A602 as a strong boundary. We consider that this is the best balance of our statutory criteria. However, we welcome additional evidence and views about whether these residents should be included in Longmeadow ward instead.

63 We note that vehicular access to the Ridlins Athletic Track is via Woodcock Road in Bandle Hill. We have therefore included Ridlins Wood, Ridlins Playing Fields and the athletics track in Bandle Hill ward in line with the Conservatives' proposals. We welcome comments on this boundary.

64 Bandle Hill and Shephall wards are both forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

#### *Longmeadow and Roebuck*

65 In addition to the borough-wide proposals, we received a submission from a resident.

66 The resident suggested that the existing Longmeadow and Symonds Green wards should each be split into two, forming north and south wards. The resident did not provide any supporting community evidence or propose any specific boundaries. Also, because Stevenage elects by thirds, there is a presumption of a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We note that this proposal would create four small wards and require a very different warding pattern. For these reasons, we were unable to adopt this proposal.

67 The southern half of the existing boundary between these two wards runs east of Ashdown Road and Braemar Close. All the borough-wide proposals proposed moving it westwards, for electoral equality reasons.

68 The Conservatives proposed moving it to run behind the properties on the west side of these roads. In effect, this moves these roads from Roebuck ward to Longmeadow ward. They explain that Braemar Close is separated from the rest of the Roebuck ward section of Hertford Road by green space and a drainage feature that forms a natural boundary, which they have utilised. They also moved electors in

340-54 Broadwater Crescent into the same ward (Longmeadow) as their neighbours on the other side of the road.

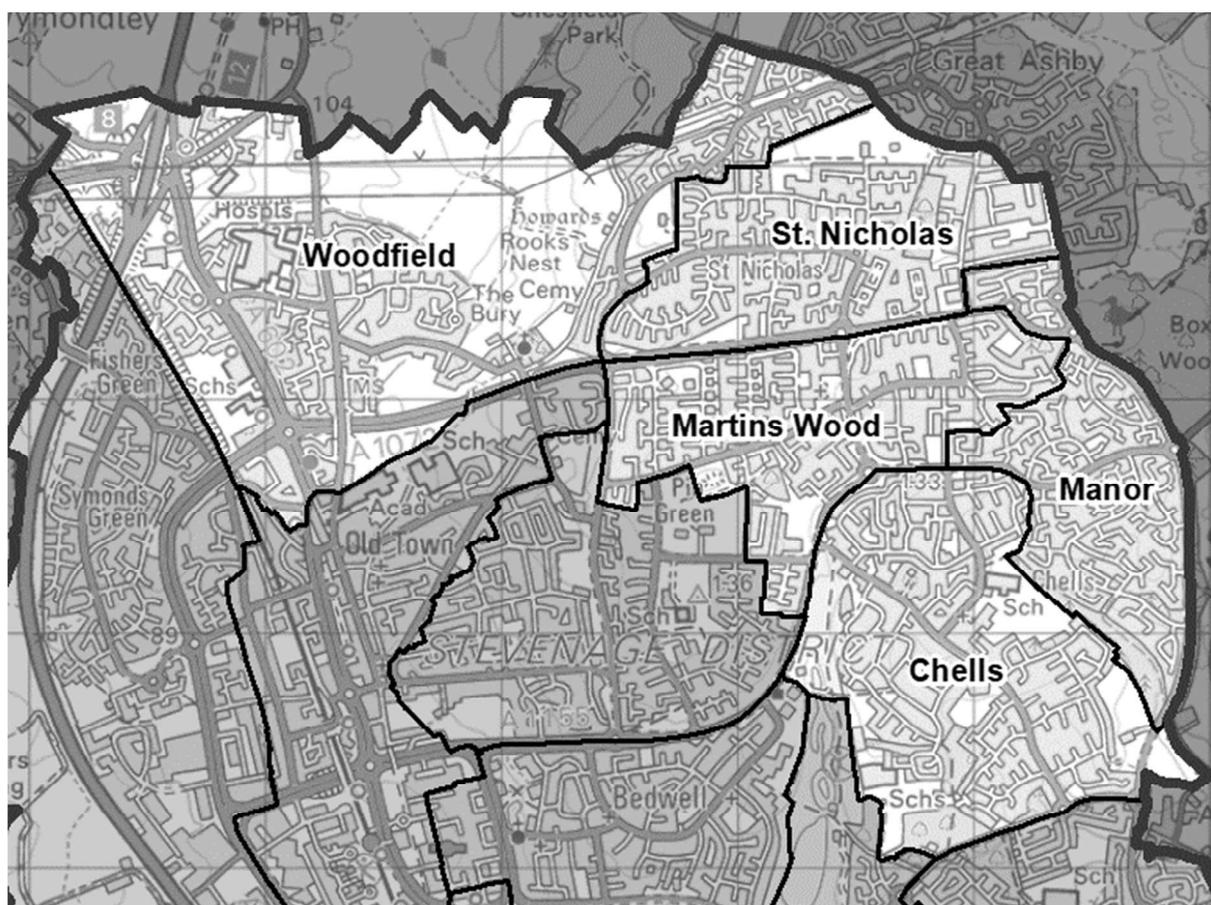
69 Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals in this area are identical to one another. As well as Braemar Close and Ashdown Road, they included a few additional roads in Longmeadow ward. Their proposed boundary runs east of Kimbolton Crescent and west of Brook Drive, Spencer Way and Tintern Close in Longmeadow ward.

70 After careful consideration of both boundaries, we note that the green space and drainage feature creates a more identifiable boundary than the one proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats around Kimbolton Crescent. Furthermore, under the Labour/Liberal Democrat proposals, residents of Tintern Close appear isolated and will have to leave their ward (albeit for a short distance) in order to get to the rest of Longmeadow ward. We are therefore adopting the Conservatives' proposed boundaries in the south of Longmeadow and Roebuck wards. We have also adopted their proposals as they pertain to Nokeside and included it in Longmeadow ward, but we welcome comments on this. We also invite comments on whether to include Brook Drive in Longmeadow ward as proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

71 As mentioned in paragraph 52, we are extending the north-western boundary of Roebuck ward across Six Hills Way to include some developments around Towers Road, south of Southgate.

72 Longmeadow and Roebuck wards are both forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

## Chells, Manor, Martins Wood, St Nicholas and Woodfield



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Chells	3	10%
Manor	3	-6%
Martins Wood	3	-4%
St Nicholas	3	-2%
Woodfield	3	-8%

### *Chells and Manor*

73 The only submissions we received for this area were the borough-wide submissions.

74 The Conservatives indicated that their proposals for Chells were influenced by changes required in neighbouring wards, including Bedwell. Under their proposals, Barham and Christie roads on either side of Six Hills Way are included in Manor ward. The area around Admiral Drive is split across Manor and Woodfield ward to the north with residents north of Glanville Crescent placed in Woodfield ward.

75 Their plans also place Colestrete and Shephall View in Chells ward, stating that this is necessary because Bedwell has too many electors to provide for good

electoral equality and Chells 'requires extra streets' because it is 'undersized after losing neighbourhoods to surrounding wards'. The existing boundaries along Fairlands Way and around the Chells Way area are retained under the Conservatives' proposals.

76 Labour and the Liberal Democrat proposals were very different from the Conservatives, but similar to each other. The only differences between them were the boundary around the lakes (paragraph 46) and in which ward they placed Chepstow Close. Their proposals both place the area north and south of Glanville Crescent in a Manor ward. Under these proposals, Manor ward does not extend as far south as Six Hills Way. Christie Road residents are placed in Chells ward and the boundary between the two wards runs between Chells Park and Lanterns Wood. Pacatian Way is included in Manor ward. Labour indicated that this unites roads known as the 'Roman' development in a single ward.

77 Labour and Liberal Democrats also proposed that the west side of Mobbsbury Way moves into Chells ward. The Liberal Democrats expressed the view that this is 'associated as part of the Chells neighbourhood' and the proposals centre the ward around the Glebe neighbourhood centre. As mentioned in paragraph 55, all three proposals place the Cromwell Road area in Bandle Hill ward to the south.

78 We have carefully considered the proposals. We agree with all the borough-wide proposals that Cromwell and Marlborough roads should be excluded from Chells as Six Hills Way is a more identifiable boundary. We note that including Pacatian Way in Manor ward reflects their access. Similarly, including Christie Road residents in Chells ward reflects their access via Ferrier Road and any boundary south of this road, like the one proposed by the Conservatives, cuts residents off from the rest of their ward. Furthermore, including Christie and Barnham roads in Manor ward would isolate this relatively small area from the rest of the ward to the north with Chells Park and Lanterns Wood forming a natural boundary between them.

79 As mentioned in paragraph 48, we have also not been persuaded to include Colestrete and Shephall View in Chells ward. After our virtual tour, we were of the view that doing this would split the community around Bedwell Crescent. We are of the view that their community is to the west. We took a similar view of the area around Aylward Drive and Brittain Way whose closest neighbours are those to the south across Six Hills Way. We also considered that these two separate groups of residents are somewhat isolated from each other and if included in Chells ward, they would also be physically separated from the rest of their ward. Including Aylward Drive and Brittain Way in Shephall ward also facilitates a Chells ward with an acceptable electoral variance.

80 Furthermore, we have not been persuaded to split the area around Admiral Drive across two wards. This area located south of Cartwright Road is physically separated from the Great Ashby Way area by an industrial estate and by St Nicholas Park. We consider that the residents of those areas will not have a strong shared community interest. Including the northern half of the Admiral Drive area in Woodfield will create a ward with a number of separate communities, each separated by significant areas of green space.

81 Finally, we note that the boundary proposed by both Labour and Liberal Democrats along Mobbsbury Way is identifiable and the Liberal Democrats say that the west side 'is associated as part of the Chells Neighbourhood'. Nevertheless, we have not been persuaded by the evidence submitted that the community in this area does not extend across both sides of the road.

82 Therefore, while we are basing our draft recommendations for Chells and Manor wards on the proposals put forward by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, we are making a significant modification around Mobbsbury Way. Our draft recommendations include residents and roads on both sides of Mobbsbury Way in Chells ward, with the boundary running along Narrowbox Lane which runs behind the properties on the eastern side of Dryden Crescent. This takes the electoral variance of Chells ward to 10% but this is within our tolerance levels and provides for a better balance of our statutory criteria. Chells Park is also in Chells ward. We welcome comments and community evidence in support of our draft recommendations and the Mobbsbury Way boundary that was proposed by two of the political groups.

83 Our draft recommendations Chells and Manor wards are forecast to have 10% more and 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2027. We have adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary around Chepstow Close to facilitate a Chells ward with good electoral equality.

#### *St Nicholas and Woodfield*

84 In addition to the borough-wide schemes, we received submissions from councillors Sandra Barr and Claire Parris, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and some residents.

85 The borough-wide schemes and most respondents proposed the inclusion of Lincoln and Salisbury roads in St Nicholas ward on community identity grounds. The Conservatives explained that aside from being isolated from the rest of Woodfield ward, these roads are considered locally as part of St Nicholas and can only be accessed by driving through that ward. All the other submissions also advocated for these roads to be included in St Nicholas ward on community identity grounds.

86 The Conservatives' proposed Woodfield ward had good boundaries including the A1072 (Gunnels Wood Road/Martins Way) to the south and the railway line to the west. They retained the boundary on Great Ashby Road, which placed residents of Iona Close and Guildford Close in Woodfield ward. They proposed including the area around Admiral Drive between Cartwright Road and Glanville Crescent in Woodfield ward on electoral equality grounds. However, as mentioned in paragraph 80, we were not persuaded to do so on the grounds of community identity and physical geography. Having excluded the area around Admiral Drive from Woodfield, adopting the A1072 (Gunnels Wood Road/Martins Way) as a boundary for this ward produced a poor forecast electoral variance of -14%. Therefore, we did not adopt this boundary and considered it necessary to include an area south of the A1072 in Woodfield ward.

87 The Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals for Woodfield ward were identical north of the A1072. The proposals united the Admiral Drive area in Manor ward and did not extend as far east as the Conservatives' proposals. They included different areas south of the A1072 in Woodfield ward for electoral equality reasons. Both proposed the inclusion of the southern end of Hitchin and North roads, Julians Road, Trafford Close and Trent Close in Woodfield ward.

88 Under Labour's proposals, the eastern side of the High Street north of Walkern Road and The Thomas Alleyne Academy were also placed in Woodfield ward as were Headingley Close, Trafford Close and Trent Close to the east of Weston Road.

89 The Liberal Democrats' proposed Woodfield ward did not extend as far south as Walkern Road or The Thomas Alleyne Academy, but it included Almond Hill Junior School, Barclay Academy, Fresson Road and Weston Road.

90 Councillor Barr stated that residents of Iona Close considered themselves part of St Nicholas because of its access along Canterbury Way. Councillor Parris indicated that both Iona Close and Guildford Close were part of St Nicholas Estate even though they were a later development. Some residents also proposed this, and we note that the Labour and the Liberal Democrats included these roads in St Nicholas ward.

91 We considered the different boundaries proposed. While we note the desirability of using the A1072 as a boundary, we considered the 14% variance too high considering that the A1072 has a number of crossing points with two significant ones on Hitchin and North roads.

92 We have therefore based our draft recommendations on the proposals submitted by Labour and the Liberal Democrats. We have made modifications in that we have only included the area around Hitchin and North roads in Woodfield ward. We consider that that area has the best crossings to unite residents on either side of

the A1072. We were not persuaded to include any part of the High Street in Woodfield ward, as proposed by Labour. However, we welcome community evidence and comments on whether we should include any part of the area between Fresson Road and Trent Close either in addition to, or instead of, the Hitchin Road area.

93 Having decided to bring Hitchin Road and the southern end of North Road into Woodfield for electoral equality purposes, we considered the comments we received about Guildford Close and Iona Close. We recognise that there was support for including both of them in St Nicholas ward. We note that Iona Close has direct access to St Nicholas via Canterbury Way whereas Guildford Close is accessed via Great Ashby Way in Woodfield. Therefore, our draft recommendations place only Iona Close in St Nicholas.

94 One resident pointed out that Great Ashby was isolated from the rest of Woodfield and wondered if this could be changed under the new warding pattern. However, they acknowledged that this could be challenging as Great Ashby was split between two local authority areas. We considered their comments carefully. Creating a ward made up of the Great Ashby area in Stevenage would only be possible with the creation of a single-councillor ward. Stevenage elects by thirds and therefore there is a presumption of a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. Furthermore, the resulting Woodfield ward would have at least 13% fewer electors than the average for Stevenage by 2027. Therefore, we did not adopt this proposal.

95 Our draft recommendations' St Nicholas and Woodfield wards are both forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

#### *Martins Wood*

96 We received a submission from a resident in addition to the borough-wide schemes.

97 All the borough-wide proposals included Vardon Road and its side roads in this ward. The Conservatives stated that this road has 'some cultural recognition to the area'.

98 The Conservatives' proposals place residents of Lonsdale Road north of the Old Walkern Road (Cycle Track) and part of Hampson Park in this ward with the boundary extending eastwards across Verity Way to take in Martin's Wood and the Pacatian Way area.

99 The Labour and the Liberal Democrat proposals for this ward shared many similarities. For instance, they do not include Lonsdale Road and Pacatian Way but extend south to include Douglas Drive and a cul-de-sac on Webb Rise.

100 However, Labour exclude Hampson Park and Kilner Close while the Liberal Democrats include them (and Larwood School) in their proposed Martins Wood ward. They also differ in their warding of Chepstow Close.

101 A resident proposed that Chrysalis Park (which we understand to be the Admiral Drive area) be included in Martins Wood ward. They were of the view that these residents in the existing St Nicholas ward considered themselves more affiliated to Martins Wood due to bus connectivity and school provision. We considered whether it was possible to do this, but it produced a Martins Wood ward with a forecast of up to 12% more electors and a Manor ward with up to 15% fewer electors than the borough average by 2027, regardless of which borough-wide scheme boundary we adopted. Therefore, we did not adopt this scheme.

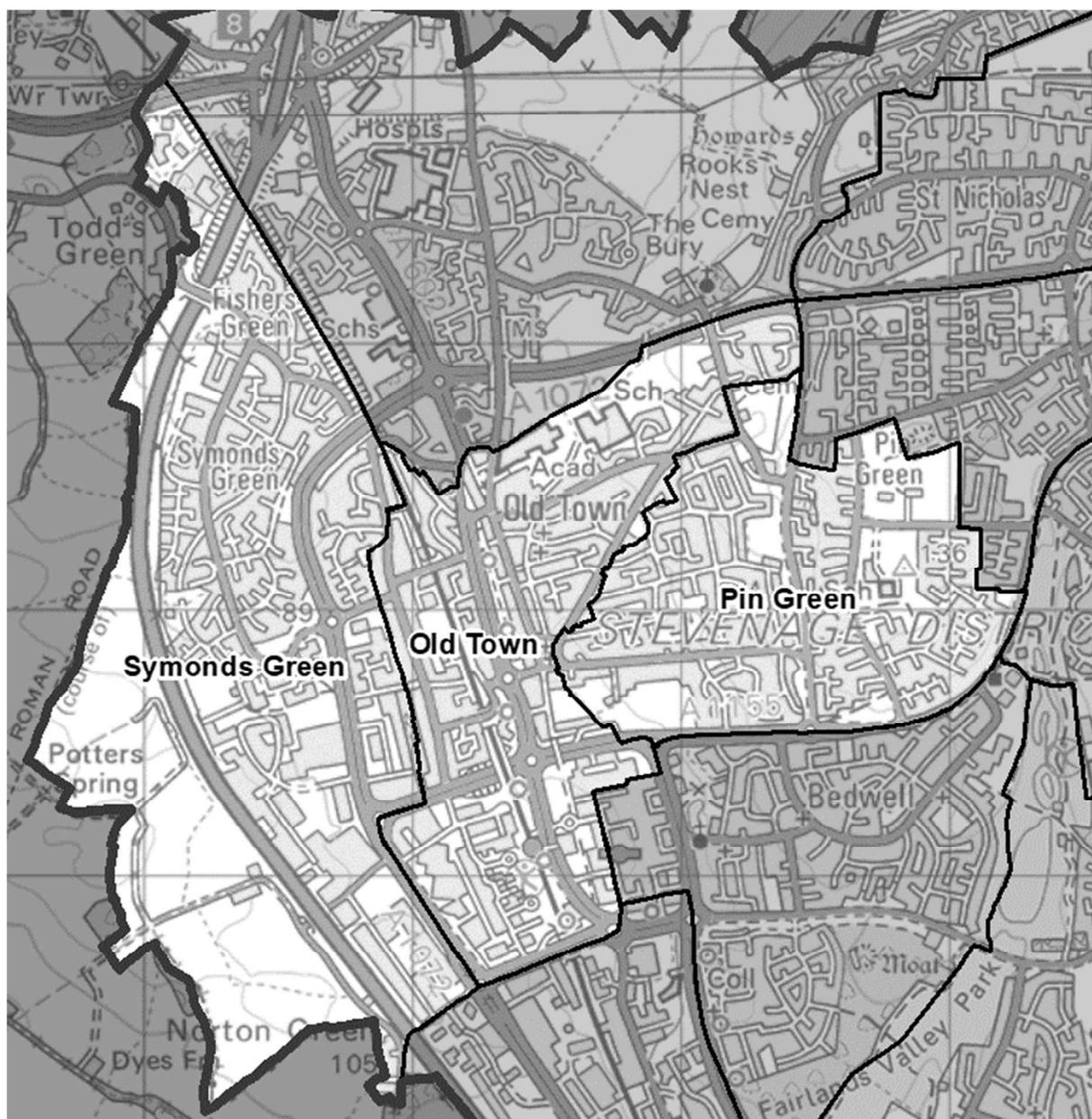
102 On careful consideration of the other proposed boundaries and in light of decisions made elsewhere (i.e. to include Pacatian Way in a ward to the east), we have based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposals with one modification. We do not include Hampson Park and Larwood School in this ward. We are of the view that the park and school should be included in the same ward as Lonsdale Road, which we have excluded from this ward.

103 However, we invite comments and community evidence on whether Hampson Park should be split across wards, with the northern section immediately west of the reservoir by Kilner Close being included in Martins Wood ward and the rest of the park and play area in a ward to the south, along the lines of the Conservatives' proposals. We have also included Martin's Wood in its entirety in this ward in line with the Conservative and Labour proposals. We welcome comments on whether it should be split across Manor and Martins Wood wards as proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

104 We also invite community identity evidence around where the cul-de-sac at the end of Webb Rise should be.

105 Martins Wood ward is forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

## Old Town, Pin Green and Symonds Green



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Old Town	3	5%
Pin Green	3	3%
Symonds Green	3	2%

### *Old Town and Pin Green*

106 In addition to the borough-wide schemes, we received submissions from the High Street Methodist Church and five residents.

107 The three borough-wide proposals all acknowledge the need for significant change in this area for electoral equality reasons given the high electoral variance of

the existing Old Town ward. The Conservatives proposed removing an area east of the existing Old Town ward into Pin Green ward. They proposed retaining Fairlands Way as the southern boundary of their proposed Old Town ward. Labour and the Liberal Democrats both proposed moving a larger area (i.e., the entire area east of Letchmore Road) into Pin Green ward to take account of their proposals in the town centre (see paragraph 45).

108 The Minister of the High Street Methodist Church indicated to us that most of those who attended the church resided in the east of the existing Pin Green ward. He therefore suggested extending Pin Green as far north as Haycroft Road, as a way of improving the electoral equality of Old Town. Adopting this proposal produces a Pin Green ward forecast to have at least 18% more electors than the average for Stevenage. Therefore, we did not adopt this proposal.

109 Two residents proposed that the boundary between Old Town and Pin Green should run down Grace Way to include all of Sish Lane, King George V Playing Fields and Popple Way in Old Town. This would increase the size of Old Town ward. However, before any changes are made, Old Town is already forecast to have 23% more electors than the borough average by 2027 and needs to be reduced. Therefore, we did not adopt this proposal.

110 A resident of Angotts Mead proposed that this area should form part of Old Town as residents identified more with this ward than Symonds Green. They pointed out that their neighbours on Fairview Road, who back onto their gardens, are in the existing Old Town ward. However, we note that Angotts Mead is separate from much of Old Town and can only be accessed via the A1072 (Gunnels Wood Road) and not Fairview Road. Therefore, we have not been persuaded to adopt this proposal. We consider that Angotts Mead residents are likely to have some shared community interest with Torquay Crescent residents and we have therefore warded them in Symonds Green as at present.

111 Another resident expressed a desire for Fairview Road to remain part of Old Town ward. They did not provide any evidence.

112 We agree with the Conservatives that some roads east of Letchmore Road have a 'geographical connect' to Pin Green ward and we have reflected this in our draft recommendations. However, we have chosen the specific boundaries proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats. This is because we consider that their proposed boundary is better as it unites residents to the east of Letchmore Road in a single ward. Those to the west of this road are also united in a single ward. It avoids splitting Haycroft and Whitesmead roads and Sish Lane across wards, without any supporting community evidence, which the Conservatives' boundary does. In addition, the Conservatives' boundary runs along a path between Fairlands Primary School & Nursery, splitting the school across two wards.

113 Our draft recommendations keep most of Fairview Road in Old Town. However, we unite residents north of Hilton Close in a ward with those across the road from them (paragraph 118).

114 Old Town ward's southern boundary is discussed in paragraphs 45 and 50. As mentioned earlier, we considered that extending its boundary across the A1155 facilitated a pattern of wards to the east of the town centre that better reflected community identities. Its boundary to the north is discussed in paragraph 92 and Pin Green ward's boundary (to the north-east) with Martins Wood is discussed in paragraph 102.

115 Old Town and Pin Green wards are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027. We welcome comments on whether Old Town ward should be renamed. We note that in their submission the Liberal Democrats suggest Central, Grange or Lytton.

### *Symonds Green*

116 The three borough-wide proposals for Symonds Green were similar in a lot of respects. They mostly retained the boundaries of the existing ward with minor modifications. There were three minor differences between the proposals.

117 The Conservatives retained the north-eastern boundary along the railway line to the borough boundary. The other political parties proposed including the few electors in Todd's Green, west of the A1(M) in Woodfield ward. We note that neither Labour nor the Liberal Democrats provided any community identity reasons for moving Todd's Green into Woodfield ward. These electors are at the edge of the borough and isolated from both wards. However, most of the electors in question are closer to the rest of Symonds Green than Woodfield. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt this change. Here we have retained the railway line as a strong boundary as proposed by the Conservatives.

118 The Conservatives and Labour included the northern section of Fairview Road between Hilton Close and Julians Road in Old Town while the Liberal Democrats placed them in Symonds Green, utilising a section of the railway line as a boundary. Here we consider that residents of Mayles Close and the northern section of Fairview Road are more likely to have a shared sense of community with their neighbours across the road to the west than those to the east of the railway line behind the back of their properties. We have therefore adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary here but welcome comments on it, including whether we should include Hilton Close in Symonds Green.

119 To the south, the Conservatives include Norton Green and Pigeonswick Close in Roebuck ward, while Labour and the Liberal Democrats retained the existing boundary which placed them in Symonds Green. We note that there is a substantial

development planned around Chadwell Road and Dyers Lane, very close to Norton Green and Pigeonswick Close. We consider that these few existing electors are more likely to share a community with those in the new developments right beside them and have adopted the boundary proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

120 Symonds Green ward is forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027.

## Conclusions

121 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Stevenage, referencing the 2021 and 2027 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

### Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2021	2027
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,675	1,807
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

#### Draft recommendations

Stevenage Borough Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 13 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

#### Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for the Stevenage Borough Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Stevenage on our interactive maps at [www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk)



## Have your say

122 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 borough or just a part of it.

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

124 Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps. You can find it at [www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk)

125 Submissions can also be made by emailing [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk) or by writing to:

**Review Officer (Stevenage)**  
**The Local Government Boundary Commission for England**  
**PO Box 133**  
**Blyth BE24 9FE**

126 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Stevenage Borough Council 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.

127 A good pattern of wards 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.

128 Electoral equality:

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

129 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?

130 Effective local government:

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

131 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](http://www.lgbce.org.uk) A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

132 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.

133 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.

134 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 draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for Stevenage in 2024.



## Equalities

135 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Draft recommendations for Stevenage Borough Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bandle Hill	3	5,562	1,854	11%	5,562	1,854	3%
2 Bedwell	3	5,262	1,754	5%	5,903	1,968	9%
3 Chells	3	5,921	1,974	18%	5,982	1,994	10%
4 Longmeadow	3	4,680	1,560	-7%	4,950	1,650	-9%
5 Manor	3	5,084	1,695	1%	5,084	1,695	-6%
6 Martins Wood	3	5,102	1,701	2%	5,177	1,726	-4%
7 Old Town	3	4,131	1,377	-18%	5,679	1,893	5%
8 Pin Green	3	5,407	1,802	8%	5,577	1,859	3%
9 Roebuck	3	5,109	1,703	2%	5,592	1,864	3%
10 Shephall	3	5,079	1,693	1%	5,179	1,726	-4%
11 St Nicholas	3	5,296	1,765	5%	5,296	1,765	-2%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Symonds Green	3	4,615	1,538	-8%	5,525	1,842	2%
13 Woodfield	3	4,069	1,356	-19%	4,961	1,654	-8%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>65,317</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>70,467</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,675</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,807</b>	<b>—</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stevenage 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

### 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/eastern/hertfordshire/stevenage](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/stevenage)

## Appendix C

### Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:  
[www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/stevenage](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/stevenage)

#### *Political Groups*

- Stevenage Council Conservative Group
- Stevenage Council Labour Group
- Stevenage Council Liberal Democrat Group

#### *Councillors*

- Councillor S. Barr (Stevenage Borough Council)
- Councillor C. Parris (Stevenage Borough Council)

#### *Local Organisations*

- Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
- High Street Methodist Church
- Irish Network Stevenage

#### *Local Residents*

- 16 local residents

## Appendix D

### Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
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

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.

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