

# New electoral arrangements for Walsall Council

## Final Recommendations

July 2024

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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)
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Wallace Sampson OBE
- Liz Treacy
- Ailsa Irvine (Chief Executive)

## What is an electoral review?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Why Walsall?

7 We are conducting a review of Walsall Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2003, 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 Walsall 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 Walsall

9 Walsall should be represented by 60 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Walsall should have 20 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of most wards should change.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Walsall.

## How will the recommendations affect you?

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

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not affect local taxes, house prices or car and house insurance premiums, and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

## Review timetable

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

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Walsall. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 August 2023	Number of councillors decided
22 August 2023	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
30 October 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
30 January 2024	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
8 April 2024	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
9 July 2024	Publication of final recommendations

## Analysis and final recommendations

17 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.

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

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

	2023	2029
Electorate of Walsall	200,210	225,019
Number of councillors	60	60
Average number of electors per councillor	3,337	3,750

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Walsall are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029.

## Submissions received

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

## Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2029, a period five years from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2024. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 12%.

23 We have 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 final 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

24 Walsall Council currently has 60 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 60 councillors. As Walsall 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 it be served by a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. Therefore, in each review of local authorities that are elected by thirds, we will aim to deliver a pattern of three-member wards. However, in all cases, this consideration does not take precedence over our other statutory criteria, and we will not recommend uniform patterns in the number of councillors per ward or division if, in our view or as is shown in evidence provided to us, it is not compatible with our other statutory criteria.

26 The Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP (Walsall & Bloxwich) noted ‘the Commission’s decision to keep Walsall being elected by thirds’. Ms Vaz put forward that this ‘severely limits the flexibility of the Commission in responding to demographic changes whilst taking account of local communities and geographical boundaries’. She suggested that this precluded the option of devising different sized wards that are more reflective of local communities.

27 We acknowledge the points raised by Ms. Vaz. However, the power to alter the electoral cycle of Walsall lies with the Council, not the Commission. As the Council has not chosen to deviate from the cycle of electing by thirds, we have proceeded with recommending a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards, which we consider to effectively balance our statutory criteria, based on the evidence we have received over two rounds of consultation.

## Ward boundaries consultation

28 We received 26 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These did not include any detailed borough-wide proposals. We received representations from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP, nine borough councillors and 16 local residents.

29 Our draft recommendations were based upon the local evidence we received, which provided good evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas, we considered that the proposals did not offer the best balance between our statutory criteria, so we identified alternative boundaries.

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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).



30 We also visited the area to look at the various proposals. This tour of Walsall helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

31 Our draft recommendations were for 20 three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations provided good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

## Draft recommendations consultation

32 We received 111 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included a submission from the Council, which endorsed our draft recommendations but encouraged councillors to make their own evidence-based responses. The remaining submissions came from Valerie Vaz MP, the Walsall Labour Group ('the Labour Group'), the Walsall Independent Group ('the Independents'), 14 borough councillors, three local organisations and 90 local residents. A majority of these submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our recommendations in the Bloxwich area and our recommendations in the Willenhall and Short Heath areas.

33 On the basis of the submissions received, we have decided to adjust our draft recommendations in these areas to reflect the local evidence. We consider these changes will result in our final recommendations better reflecting our statutory criteria.

34 Valerie Vaz MP expressed concern about the limited response we received during the first round of consultation. She questioned whether the Commission had consulted fully and widely enough with electors in Walsall. As a result, she requested that we address this lack of public engagement and explain the steps we are taking to improve response rates.

35 As outlined in the draft recommendations, we sought to carry out an extensive consultation on ward boundaries. When we began the consultation on our draft recommendations, we again contacted key stakeholders and previous respondents via email and letters, in addition to sending further press releases to local media and the Council. Additionally, we utilised our social media networks to advertise the review and encouraged the Council to do the same on their channels.

36 Notably, the number of submissions increased during the consultation on our draft recommendations. This may also be because respondents had the opportunity to provide comprehensive feedback on potential changes to the existing arrangements. Indeed, many of the submissions received during the second round of consultation included high-quality evidence suggesting modifications to our draft recommendations, which we have incorporated into our final recommendations.

37 We are satisfied that we have conducted a robust consultation in Walsall. However, we always welcome feedback on our process and continuously monitor and improve the way in which we carry out our consultations to help ensure we maximise the quantity and quality of submissions we receive from those interested in our electoral reviews.

## Final recommendations

38 Our final recommendations are for 20 three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

39 The tables and maps on pages 9–23 detail our final recommendations for each area of Walsall. 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.

40 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 31 and the large map accompanying this report.

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

## Darlaston and Willenhall



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Bentley & Darlaston North	3	-3%
Darlaston South	3	9%
New Invention	3	-9%
Short Heath	3	-3%
Willenhall	3	9%



### *Bentley & Darlaston North and Darlaston South*

41 Valerie Vaz MP supported these two wards remaining unchanged from our draft recommendations. A local resident supported our decision to make no changes to Darlaston South ward.

42 We are therefore confirming our proposed Darlaston South ward as final. However, we have incorporated electors residing on Coronation Avenue (and its connected roads) into Bentley & Darlaston North ward. We have also transferred some electors residing on Poplar Avenue and Western Avenue from Bentley & Darlaston North ward into our proposed Short Heath ward. These modifications are discussed in more detail in the Short Heath and Willenhall section of this report.

### *New Invention*

43 Councillors Whitehouse, Garcha, Gill and Elson supported our decision to retain the boundary between this ward and Short Heath ward.

44 The Labour Group, Councillor Hicken and a local resident supported our decision to change the name of the existing Willenhall North ward to New Invention. One local resident opposed the name change. However, after considering the evidence received during both rounds of consultation, we find the name New Invention to be suitable and we propose to confirm the name, and the boundaries, of this ward as final.

### *Short Heath and Willenhall*

45 The Labour Group, four borough councillors, the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall and 38 local residents opposed our draft recommendations for Short Heath and Willenhall wards. In particular, they opposed our decision to move the area around Honeybourne Way and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall from the existing Willenhall South ward to our proposed Short Heath ward. We had sought feedback on this decision when we published our draft recommendations, and the submissions received generally argued that this area has stronger ties to the Willenhall community, as opposed to the Short Heath community.

46 As a consequence, the Labour Group and Councillor Cheema proposed to transfer the Honeybourne Way area and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall into Willenhall ward. In addition, they proposed to relocate the Thorne Road estate into Short Heath ward. They argued that this arrangement would better reflect community identities and interests than our draft recommendations while ensuring good electoral equality across wards.

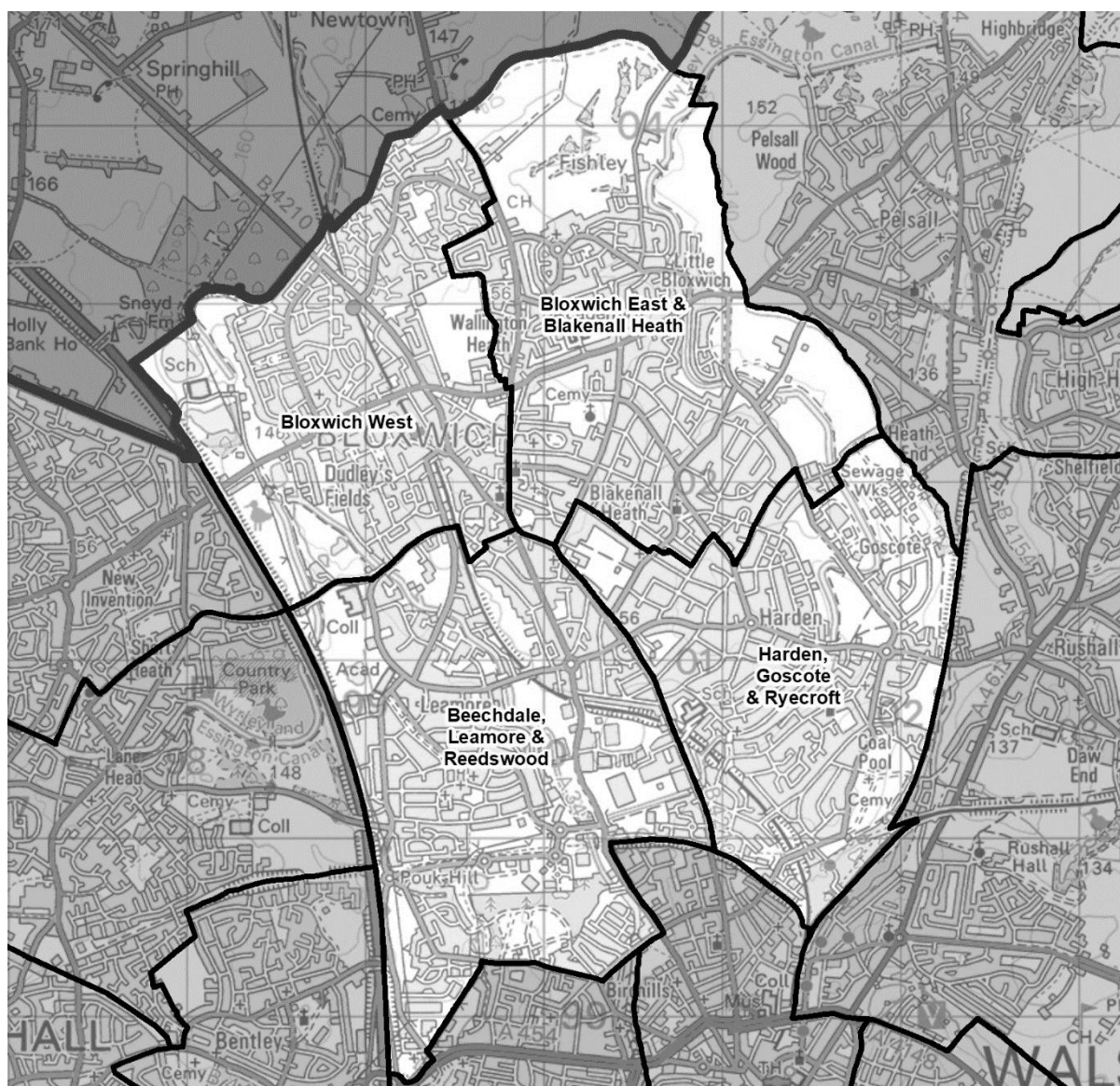
47 Councillors Whitehouse, Garcha and Gill put forward an alternative warding arrangement. In this proposal, the Honeybourne Way area would similarly be transferred into the Willenhall ward. Additionally, they also suggested aligning the boundary between Willenhall and Short Heath wards along the historical route of the Bentley Canal. Furthermore, they suggested including part of the Poplar Avenue

area and the eastern side of Western Avenue (which currently lie in the existing Bentley & Darlaston North ward) in our proposed Short Heath ward, providing evidence that this area shares close links with the Short Heath community. They stated that if a further reduction in the size of Willenhall ward was necessary to achieve electoral equality, moving electors residing on Coronation Avenue and Riverbank Road (and their connected roads) into the Bentley & Darlaston North ward would be appropriate.

48 We note that both of these proposals address the opposition to our draft recommendations for these two wards by placing the Honeybourne Way area and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall in Willenhall ward. However, having carefully considered the evidence received for this area, we have decided to largely base our draft recommendations on the broader proposals submitted by Councillors Whitehouse, Garcha and Gill. By following the historical route of the Bentley Canal, we consider that this proposal uses clearer and more identifiable boundaries than the arrangement submitted by the Labour Group and Councillor Cheema, and will therefore provide for effective and convenient local government. We also found the community evidence provided by Councillors Whitehouse, Garcha and Gill to be more persuasive. However, we propose to only transfer Coronation Avenue (and its connected roads) into Bentley & Darlaston North ward, as we consider the River Tame to be a clear and identifiable boundary in this area.

49 A local resident supported our decision to change the name of this ward from Willenhall South to Willenhall. We therefore confirm this ward name as final.

## Bloxwich



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood	3	-4%
Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath	3	-8%
Bloxwich West	3	-7%
Harden, Goscote & Ryecroft	3	-3%

### *Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood*

50 In the previous consultation, we received a submission from Councillor Jukes that requested that Birchills-Leamore ward be renamed Beechdale, Birchills & Leamore. We were initially not persuaded to adopt this ward name change as we considered the community evidence provided to be insufficient. We nonetheless encouraged the submission of additional evidence to help us assess whether a change in ward name would be appropriate.

51 During the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received submissions from Valerie Vaz MP, the Labour Group and Councillor Hicken that supported a ward name change. Valerie Vaz and Councillor Hicken strongly supported the inclusion of Beechdale in the name, while the Labour Group suggested renaming the ward Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood, to recognise the three distinct communities within our proposed ward.

52 We have decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposed name of Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood. This change reflects the submissions made during both rounds of consultation, which emphasised the need to recognise the Beechdale community within the ward name and to better reflect community identities and interests.

53 We also consider the removal of 'Birchills' from the name reflects the submissions made by Councillor Hicken and Ms Vaz. They stated that, as a result of our decision to move the southernmost part of the existing Birchills-Leamore ward into St Matthews ward, the 'Birchills' area no longer forms a significant part of the ward. They therefore argued that it would be unsuitable to retain the 'Birchills' part of the ward name if we proposed no further boundary changes in this section of the ward.

54 The Labour Group supported the decision to include the area around Irvine Road, Odell Road and Nursery Road in our Bloxwich West ward. However, Councillor Hicken, Councillor Follows and two local residents stated that this area should be transferred from our proposed Bloxwich West ward. They argued that this modification would unite the Leamore community within a single ward and provide for a better balance of representation between wards.

55 We have decided to broadly adopt this proposal as part of the final recommendations, placing the northern boundary of Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood ward along Reeves Street and High Street. We have been persuaded by the evidence received that this change will better reflect community identities, and also note the reduced electoral variance that results from this change in Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood ward. This ward was forecast to have an electoral variance of -10% by 2029 under our draft proposals, but will now have an electoral variance of -4% by 2029.

#### *Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath and Bloxwich West*

56 The Labour Group supported our decision to include the new residential development at the former Elkington Works and Cerro EMS site within our proposed Bloxwich East ward but requested that we include the Dolphin Close area on the opposite side of Slacky Lane, which has also been subject to recent development. The group stated that our proposed boundary along Slacky Lane would isolate a growing community. We have decided to adopt this proposal as part of our final



recommendations as we agree that this modification will better reflect community identities and interests.

57 The Labour Group also proposed that we transfer Blakenall Lane, Blakenall Row, Dawson Street, Chapel Street and one side of Foster Street from our draft Blakenall ward into a renamed Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath ward. They argued that this would unite the Blakenall Heath community within a single ward. We have been persuaded by the evidence received – which highlighted the presence of various amenities that serve the Blakenall Heath community, such as shops, a church, a children’s centre and a charity-run community hub – that this proposal will better reflect community identities and interests. We also consider that the Labour Group’s suggested ward name is appropriate and have adopted it in our final recommendations.

58 In our draft recommendations, we transferred the roads to the west of Stafford Road, from The Bell public house to the Turnberry estate junction, from the existing Bloxwich West ward to our proposed Bloxwich East ward. Based on the evidence we received, we were persuaded that this adjustment represented a good balance of our statutory criteria. We received a mixture of support and opposition concerning this decision during the consultation on our draft recommendations.

59 The Labour Group, Councillors Flint, C. Statham and M. Statham and 22 local residents supported this boundary, with a number of these submissions stating that this alignment united electors residing on both sides of the A34 road within a single ward and helped achieve good electoral equality across wards.

60 However, Councillors Allen, Harrison, Follows and Hicken and eight local residents opposed the boundary. These submissions broadly argued that electors residing on the western side of Stafford Road have stronger community links with the remainder of Bloxwich West ward. Several of these submissions also stated that this proposal does not reflect road and pathway access routes and that we should examine alternative proposals to resolve the over-representation of Bloxwich East ward.

61 We carefully reviewed the submissions received regarding this particular boundary, given the support and opposition we received. However, including electors on the west of Stafford Road, from The Bell public house to the Turnberry estate junction, in a Bloxwich West ward, would result in a forecast electoral variance of -12% by 2029 for our reconfigured Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath ward. We consider this variance too high for us to accept, particularly given the support we also received for this boundary. Therefore, while we acknowledge there is a mixture of support and opposition concerning this proposal, we have decided not to make any changes to this particular boundary as part of our final recommendations.

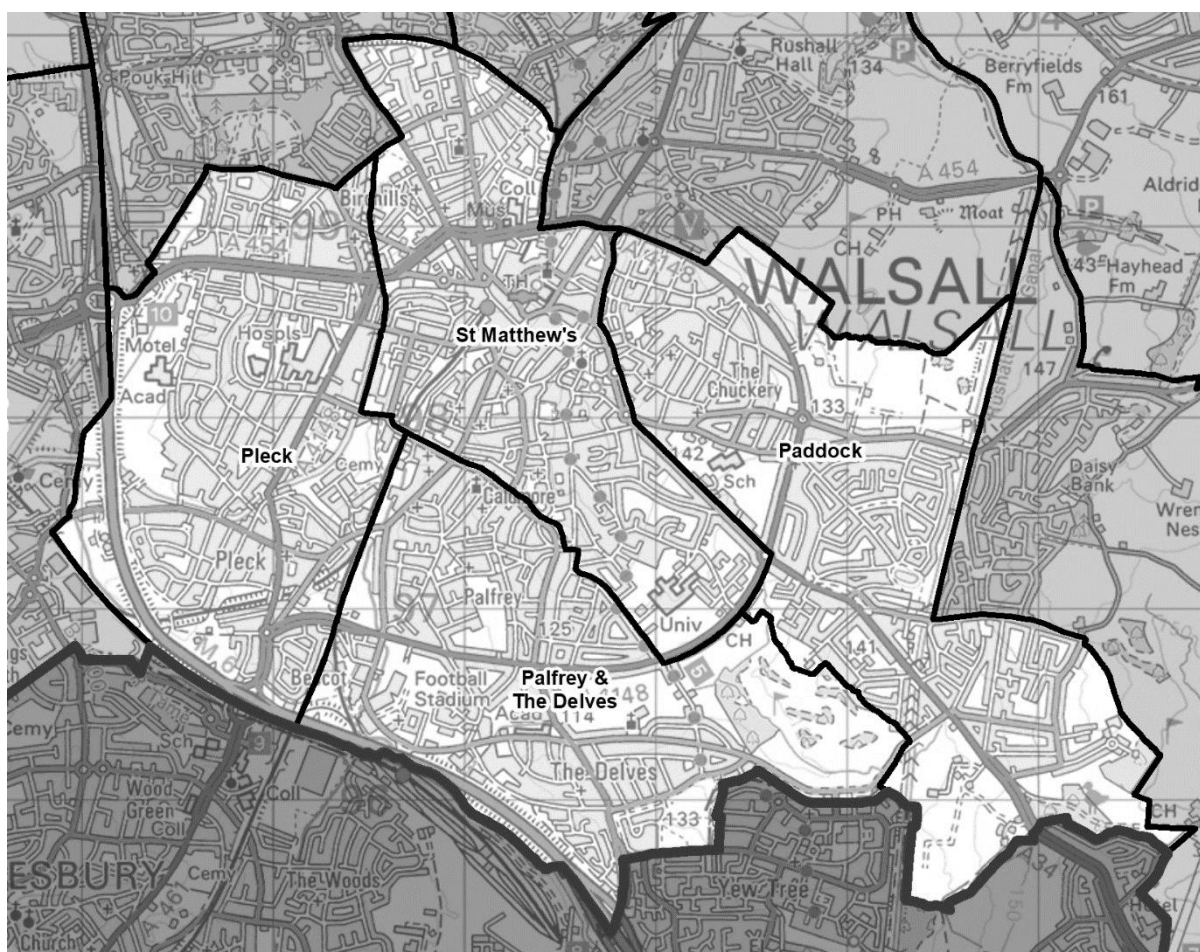
62 We were not persuaded to adopt a local resident's proposal to extend Bloxwich East ward to encompass part of Bell Lane, Stamping Way, Bealeys Lane and Broad Lane, as we consider that no evidence relating to community identities and interests was submitted in support of this proposal.

*Harden, Goscote & Ryecroft*

63 We received two submissions concerning our proposed Blakenall ward. The Labour Group requested that we consider changing the ward name to Harden, Goscote & Ryecroft to reflect the three main communities in the ward, which they stated each have their own strong, distinct identities. The group argued that this ward name change would be particularly appropriate if we were minded to adopt their proposal to transfer electors residing on Blakenall Lane, Blakenall Row, Dawson Street, Chapel Street and one side of Foster Street to a renamed Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath ward.

64 We have been persuaded by the evidence provided by the Labour Group to support this change. We agree that the current ward name should be amended to better reflect the constituent communities of the ward, and we have therefore renamed our proposed Blakenall ward as Harden, Goscote & Ryecroft as part of our final recommendations.

## Walsall town



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Paddock	3	-4%
Palfrey & The Delves	3	6%
Pleck	3	5%
St Matthew's	3	-1%

### *Paddock*

65 The Labour Group, Valerie Vaz MP, Councillor Hussain and four local residents supported our decision to unite the Chuckery community within our proposed Paddock ward. This community was previously split between wards and it was generally considered that our recommendations for Paddock ward would better reflect the community identities and interests of the Chuckery community. The Independent Group stated their preference for the area to be in St Matthew's ward, but expressed satisfaction that the community would now be entirely in a single ward. Councillor Hicken opposed our decision to place the Chuckery in Paddock ward, stating that it should be in St Matthew's ward.

66 After considering all the evidence we have received, we have determined that our decision to place the Chuckery in Paddock ward effectively balances our statutory criteria and will reflect local community identities. We therefore propose no changes to Paddock ward in our final recommendations.

#### *Palfrey & The Delves*

67 The Independent Group and Valerie Vaz MP supported our decision to retain the boundaries of the existing Palfrey ward in our draft recommendations.

68 During the consultation on those recommendations, we received a submission from a local resident who requested that we rename the ward to Palfrey & The Delves. They stated that the ward is comprised of the two distinct communities of Palfrey and The Delves, and that electors to the south of the Walsall Ring Road consider themselves residents of The Delves rather than Palfrey.

69 We have been persuaded by the evidence that a ward name change would be suitable and would better represent the two main communities within the ward. We are thus renaming our proposed Palfrey ward to Palfrey & The Delves in our final recommendations.

#### *Pleck*

70 The Independent Group and Valerie Vaz MP supported our decision to retain the boundaries of the existing Pleck ward in our draft recommendations.

71 Councillor Hicken argued that our draft recommendations had placed parts of the Birchills and Reedswood areas in Pleck ward, thereby dividing these communities between wards. Consequently, they suggested transferring these areas from our proposed Pleck ward. However, we decided not to adopt this proposal, because it would result in the Pleck ward being significantly over-represented by 2029.

#### *St Matthew's*

72 Valerie Vaz MP and the Labour Group supported our decision to transfer the Proffitt Street area from the current Blakenall ward, and the Hospital Street area of the existing Birchills-Leamore ward, into our proposed St Matthew's ward. The Labour Group argued that this proposal reunited the Mirpuri community and that these two areas have strong links and share several community facilities. A local resident also supported the latter modification.

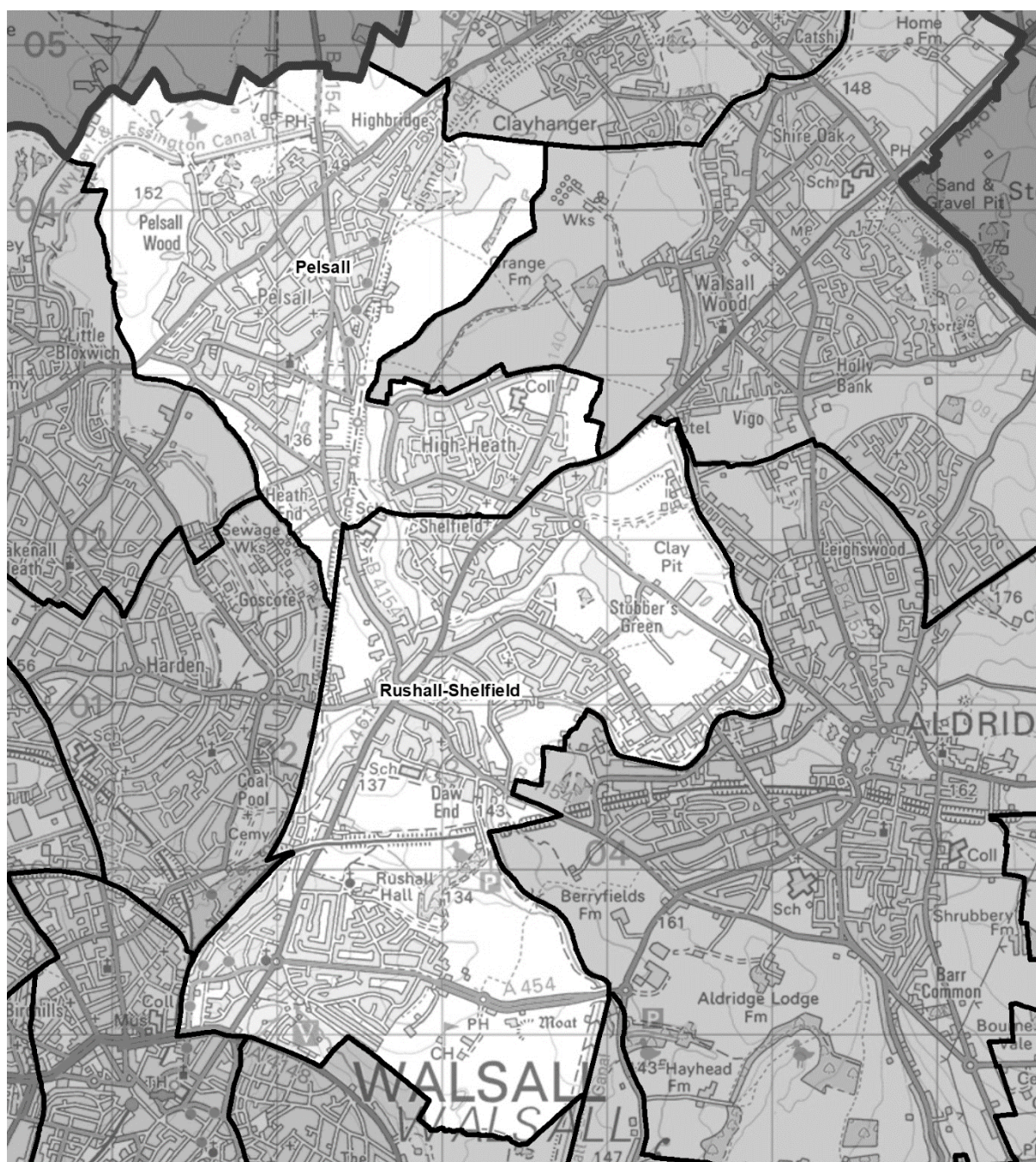
73 Conversely, Councillor Hicken opposed both of these modifications. They argued that the Walsall Ring Road represents a significant barrier between communities and that the draft recommendations divide the Birchills community across three wards. They argued that the area north of the Ring Road would be best represented by either Birchills-Leamore or Blakenall ward councillors.

74 After careful deliberation, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for St Matthew's ward as final. We remain of the view that based on our visit to the area – in addition to the evidence provided by Valerie Vaz MP, the Labour Group and the local resident – electors residing to the south of the former Walsall and Wolverhampton railway line have good links to the town centre and should thus be placed in a St Matthew's ward.

75 Another local resident stated that St Matthew's ward should be renamed Central Walsall. We decided not to adopt this amendment as no supporting evidence was submitted to support this name change.



## Pelsall and Rushall-Shelfield



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Pelsall	3	7%
Rushall-Shelfield	3	5%

### *Pelsall*

76 We received two submissions regarding Pelsall ward. The Labour Group supported the ward, stating it reunited the Pelsall community. The other submission came from the Autumn Close Residents' Forum, expressing concern that our proposed extension of Pelsall ward, which incorporated Autumn Close, could

negatively impact community identities and interests. This concern arose from potential changes in the local councillors who had historically served the Rushall-Shelfield ward, where the cul-de-sac is currently located. Additionally, they requested that the ward's name incorporate 'High Heath', regardless of which ward Autumn Close and the broader area was placed.

77 We have retained the draft boundaries for Pelsall ward, without any alterations. Our decision is based on the absence of compelling community evidence that would justify modifying the proposed boundaries. Additionally, we are unconvinced that the evidence presented adequately demonstrates the distinctiveness of the High Heath area as a community warranting its inclusion in the ward name.

### *Rushall-Shelfield*

78 We received a mix of support and opposition regarding our proposed Rushall-Shelfield ward. The Labour Group endorsed the ward, highlighting its similarities to the former Hatherton-Rushall ward that existed prior to the previous electoral review. Additionally, Rushall Parish Church and three local residents expressed support for this ward. The church and one of the residents favoured our Rushall-Shelfield ward because it would unite the entire Church of England Parish of Rushall within a single ward. The other two local residents supported the ward on the basis that they felt the community identity and interests of the Hatherton/Butts area would be best served in a Rushall-Shelfield ward.

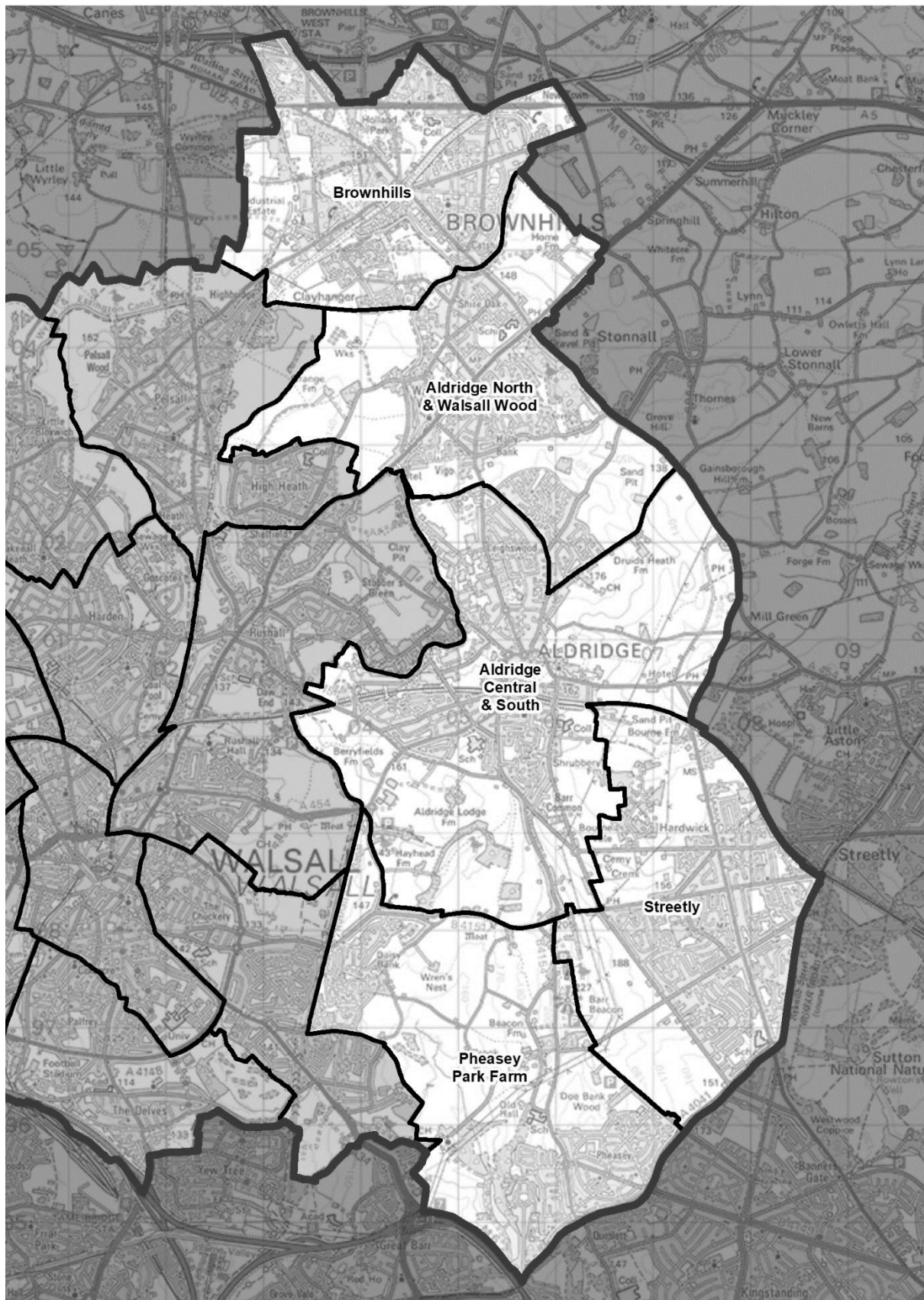
79 However, Councillor Andrew and two local residents held an opposing view, broadly arguing that the Butts area shares closer links to Walsall town centre than to the Rushall area. Councillor Andrew proposed that we transfer the Butts area to either the St Matthew's ward or the Blakenall ward, while placing the Hatherton area within Rushall-Shelfield ward, with Lichfield Road serving as the boundary. We chose not to adopt this proposal because it would result in our Rushall-Shelfield ward being over-represented and our St Matthew's ward being under-represented. Overall, these changes would not provide for good electoral equality between the two wards.

80 Valerie Vaz MP expressed dissatisfaction with our Rushall-Shelfield ward, citing it as a negative consequence of the legal requirement to maintain a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. However, on the basis that we are unable to deviate from a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards, Ms Vaz did not oppose our recommendations here, acknowledging that community links do somewhat exist within the ward. Ms Vaz did suggest renaming the ward to Arboretum in recognition of Walsall Arboretum, which was argued to be a shared geographical and cultural feature for communities within the ward. We carefully considered this proposed name change but have chosen not to adopt it in our final recommendations. Our concern lies in the fact that the Arboretum is situated in the southernmost part of the ward, making it less central and therefore, in our view, not fully representative of the constituent communities in the ward.



81     Consequently, we confirm our draft Rushall-Shelfield ward as final.

## Aldridge, Brownhills, Pheasey and Streetly



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Aldridge Central & South	3	1%
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	3	-2%
Brownhills	3	-3%
Pheasey Park Farm	3	-1%
Streetly	3	6%

*Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills and Streetly*

82 We received no submissions concerning these wards during consultation. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for all four wards as final.

*Pheasey Park Farm*

83 To maintain a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards while ensuring good electoral equality for Pheasey Park Farm ward, our draft recommendations extended the ward by incorporating the residential area with roads named after places in Cornwall, adjacent to the Orchard Hills area. The Labour Group and Valerie Vaz supported this decision, recognising it as the best approach to balance electoral representation between Paddock and Pheasey Park Farm wards, and was in line with the presumption of a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. Councillor Andrew also supported the inclusion of the Orchard Hills area in Pheasey Park Farm ward.

84 However, Councillor Andrew opposed adding the Cornwall roads to Pheasey Park Farm ward, citing poor community and direct physical links between this area and Pheasey. They argued that this would also divide the Park Hall community. However, transferring these roads between our Pheasey Park Farm and Paddock wards would result in significant electoral inequality. We were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been provided to justify such a level of electoral inequality. We also considered that the community evidence provided was not strong enough to justify a departure from a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards for the borough. Consequently, we have decided not to adopt Councillor Andrew's additional proposals for Walsall town centre.

85 Councillor Andrew requested that a Pheasey Park Farm & Barr Beacon ward include more Green Belt areas around Pheasey and the Barr Beacon, arguing that this would address Green Belt issues more effectively. However, we chose not to adopt this proposal, as we were not convinced that the evidence provided adequately demonstrated how this arrangement would better align with our statutory criteria.

## Conclusions

86 The table below provides a summary of the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Walsall, referencing the 2023 and 2029 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found in Appendix A at the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided in Appendix B.

### Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2023	2029
Number of councillors	60	60
Number of electoral wards	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	3,337	3,750
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	2	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	0	0

#### Final recommendations

Walsall Council should be made up of 60 councillors serving 20 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

#### Mapping

You can also view our final recommendations for Walsall Council on our interactive maps at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)



## What happens next?

87 We have now completed our review of Walsall Council. Parliament must now approve the recommendations. 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 2026.





## Equalities

88 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

### Final recommendations for Walsall Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aldridge Central & South	3	10,408	3,469	4%	11,364	3,788	1%
2	Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	3	10,076	3,359	1%	11,000	3,667	-2%
3	Beechdale, Leamore & Reedswood	3	9,393	3,131	-6%	10,767	3,589	-4%
4	Bentley & Darlaston North	3	9,771	3,257	-2%	10,887	3,629	-3%
5	Bloxwich East & Blakenall Heath	3	9,306	3,102	-7%	10,385	3,462	-8%
6	Bloxwich West	3	9,378	3,126	-6%	10,496	3,499	-7%
7	Brownhills	3	9,727	3,242	-3%	10,891	3,630	-3%
8	Darlaston South	3	10,888	3,629	9%	12,271	4,090	9%
9	Harden, Goscote & Ryecroft	3	9,034	3,011	-10%	10,882	3,627	-3%
10	New Invention	3	9,236	3,079	-8%	10,258	3,419	-9%
11	Paddock	3	9,605	3,202	-4%	10,850	3,617	-4%
12	Palfrey & The Delves	3	11,042	3,681	10%	11,905	3,968	6%

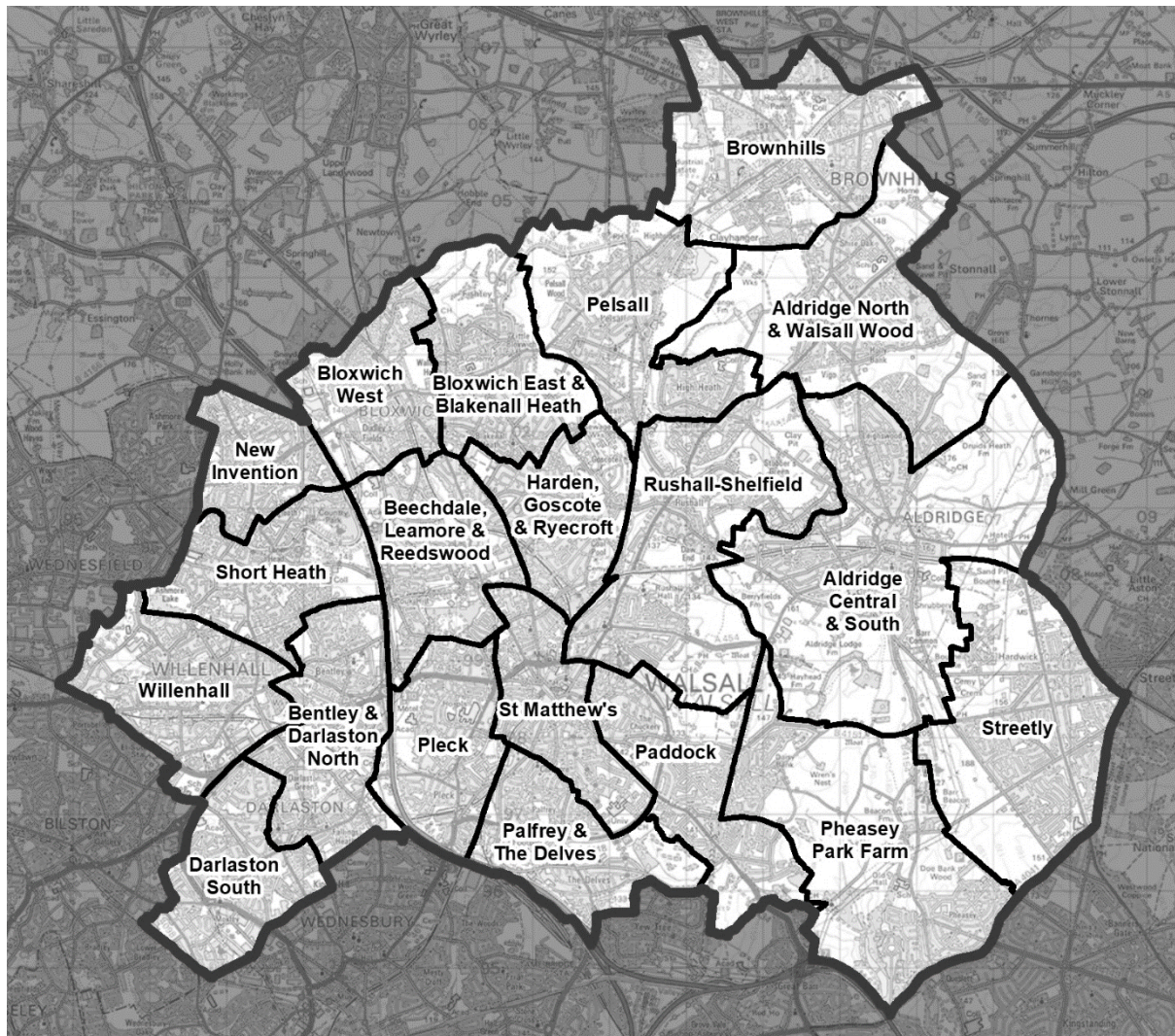
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13	Pelsall	3	11,105	3,702	11%	12,085	4,028	7%
14	Pheasey Park Farm	3	10,310	3,437	3%	11,155	3,718	-1%
15	Pleck	3	10,367	3,456	4%	11,855	3,952	5%
16	Rushall-Shelfield	3	10,728	3,576	7%	11,787	3,929	5%
17	Short Heath	3	10,030	3,343	0%	10,915	3,638	-3%
18	St Matthew's	3	8,433	2,811	-16%	11,091	3,697	-1%
19	Streetly	3	10,998	3,666	10%	11,892	3,964	6%
20	Willenhall	3	10,375	3,458	4%	12,283	4,094	9%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>200,210</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>225,019</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>3,337</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>–</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Walsall 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/walsall](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/walsall)

## Appendix C

### Submissions received

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

[www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/walsall](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/walsall)

#### *Local authority*

- Walsall Council

#### *Political groups*

- Walsall Labour Group
- Walsall Independent Group

#### *Councillors*

- Councillor A. Andrew (Walsall Council)
- Councillor B. Allen (Walsall Council)
- Councillor S.K. Cheema (Walsall Council)
- Councillor A. Garcha (Walsall Council)
- Councillor S. Elson (Walsall Council)
- Councillor M. Follows (Walsall Council)
- Councillor G. Flint (Walsall Council)
- Councillor P. Gill (Walsall Council)
- Councillor L. Harrison (Walsall Council)
- Councillor A. Hicken (Walsall Council)
- Councillor K. Hussain (Walsall Council)
- Councillor C. Statham (Walsall Council)
- Councillor M. Statham (Walsall Council)
- Councillor J. Whitehouse (Walsall Council)

#### *Members of Parliament*

- Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP (Walsall & Bloxwich)

#### *Local organisations*

- Autumn Close Residents' Forum
- Guru Nanak Gurdwara Willenhall
- Rushall Parish Church

#### *Local residents*

- 90 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

## **Translations and other formats:**

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

Tel: 0330 500 1525

Email: [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

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## **A note on our mapping:**

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

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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