

New electoral arrangements for Breckland Council Draft Recommendations

December 2024

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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.

Contents

Introduction	1
Who we are and what we do	1
What is an electoral review?	1
Why Breckland?	2
Our proposals for Breckland	2
How will the recommendations affect you?	2
Have your say	2
Review timetable	3
Analysis and draft recommendations	5
Submissions received	5
Electorate figures	5
Number of councillors	6
Ward boundaries consultation	6
Draft recommendations	7
South East	8
Thetford	11
Attleborough and Wayland	14
Swaffham and Forest	17
Watton and Ashill	20
North West	23
Mattishall, Scarning and Shipdham	25
Dereham and North East	27
Conclusions	30
Summary of electoral arrangements	30
Parish electoral arrangements	30
Have your say	33
Equalities	36
Appendices	37
Appendix A	37
Draft recommendations for Breckland District Council	37
Appendix B	40
Outline map	40
Appendix C	42

Submissions received	42
Appendix D	43
Glossary and abbreviations	43

Introduction

Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

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

What is an electoral review?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why Breckland?

7 We are conducting a review of Breckland District Council ('the Council') as 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 Breckland 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 district.

Our proposals for Breckland

9 Breckland should be represented by 51 councillors, two more than there are now.

10 Breckland should have 34 wards, seven more than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 21 wards should change; six 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, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

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

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 12-week period, from 3 December 2024 to 24 February 2025. 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 24 February 2025 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 34 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 Breckland. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the district. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
13 February 2024	Number of councillors decided
7 May 2024	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
9 September 2024	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
3 December 2024	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
24 February 2025	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
17 June 2025	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our 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.

	2023	2030
Electorate of Breckland	109,159	117,429
Number of councillors	51	51
Average number of electors per councillor	2,140	2,303

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 but one of our proposed wards for Breckland are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2030.

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

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2030, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2025. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 8% by 2030.

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.

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

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

26 Our mapping tool uses geocoded electoral registers supplied by the Council to locate electors, by associating addresses with specific geographic coordinates. It considers each elector's location to produce precise elector counts for each ward. There can be very slight differences between the electorate figures published on our website at the beginning of the review and the electorate figures published in this report. However, these are very minor and do not impact on our recommendations.

Number of councillors

27 Breckland District Council currently has 49 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that increasing by two will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

28 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 51: for example, 51 one-councillor wards or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

29 We received no significant comments about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our warding patterns. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a 51-councillor council.

Ward boundaries consultation

30 We received 25 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included two district-wide proposals from the Council and a member of the public. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

31 Both district-wide proposals provided a mixed patterns of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for Breckland. Neither proposal had very strong supporting arguments, although the Council did provide a bit more narrative to its proposals, including considerations by its cross-party steering group. In addition, the Council stated that it sought to design wards with as few parishes as possible to facilitate councillors' attendance at meetings, while also creating wards with community cohesion and good road links. The member of the public's proposals secured good electoral equality.

32 We have carefully considered both district-wide schemes, noting that while in some areas they use the same or similar boundaries, they differ significantly in others. The member of the public's proposals rely more heavily on existing boundaries but lack strong rationale to justify choices. The Council's proposal offers a slightly stronger narrative, while employing clear boundaries which generally secure electoral equality.

33 As a result, we have used the Council's proposal as the starting point for our draft recommendations. In considering the district-wide schemes, given the significant differences between them, it has proved difficult to incorporate aspects of both due to the interconnected nature of the boundaries. However, we have moved away from the Council's scheme in some areas where we did not consider its proposals provided the best balance between our statutory criteria, or to reflect evidence from other submissions including the member of the public who submitted a district-wide scheme.

34 We visited the area in order to look at the various proposals on the ground. This tour of Breckland helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

Draft recommendations

35 Our draft recommendations are for two three-councillor wards, 13 two-councillor wards and 19 one-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.

36 The tables and maps on pages 8–29 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Breckland. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

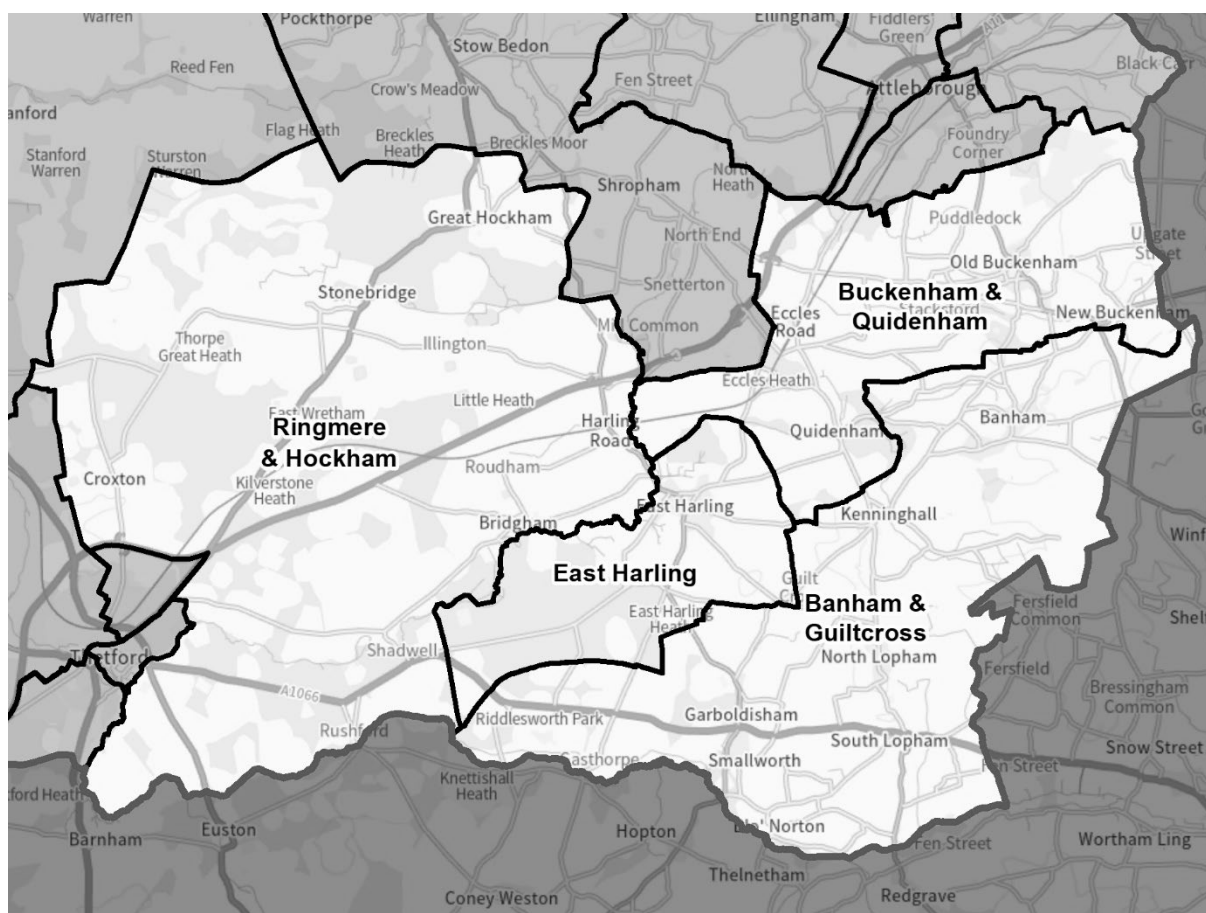
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 37 and on the large map accompanying this report.

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

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

South East



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Banham & Guiltcross	2	-11%
Buckenham & Quidenham	1	-9%
East Harling	1	-4%
Ringmere & Hockham	1	-1%

East Harling

39 The Council and the member of the public put forward identical proposals for a single-councillor East Harling ward which would have 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2030. This ward comprises the parish of East Harling and secures good electoral equality, and we are adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

Banham & Guiltcross and Buckenham & Quidenham

40 The Council put forward proposals for single-councillor Banham & Kenninghall, Buckenham & Quidenham and Guiltcross wards, which would have 7% fewer, 1% fewer and 14% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. The member of the public put forward a two-councillor Guiltcross ward which would cover much of the area of the Council's Banham & Kenninghall and Guiltcross wards, but also included New Buckenham parish.

41 We note that the member of the public's proposal separates New Buckenham parish from Old Buckenham, which the Council stated should remain in a single ward to reflect community cohesion. We also note that these parishes currently sit in a ward together and are basing our draft recommendation for this area on the Council's proposals.

42 However, we have some concerns that the Council's Guiltcross ward has relatively poor electoral equality, with 14% fewer electors than the average. We considered combining this with East Harling ward, to create a two-councillor ward which would have 9% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, but concluded that East Harling is more urban and works well as a stand-alone ward. Therefore, we are combining the Council's single-councillor Banham & Kenninghall and Guiltcross wards to create a two-councillor Banham & Guiltcross ward. This would have 11% fewer electors by 2030. We welcome local comments on this proposal, but note that some of the parishes are already in a ward together and there are good internal road links between these and the other parishes.

43 As stated above, we note that the Council's proposed Buckenham & Quidenham ward retains both Buckenham parishes in a single ward. We also note that there are good roads links between the parishes in the proposed ward and we are basing our draft recommendations on this ward. However, we propose an amendment to address an issue in the neighbouring Wayland ward. We are transferring Snetterton parish to Wayland to improve electoral equality there, which has been affected by changes we propose to the boundary of Watton ward. Although this worsens electoral equality in Buckenham & Quidenham to 9% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, we consider that Snetterton parish has better links to neighbouring Shropham parish in Wayland ward, as the A11 effectively separates most of the residents from the Buckenham & Quidenham ward.

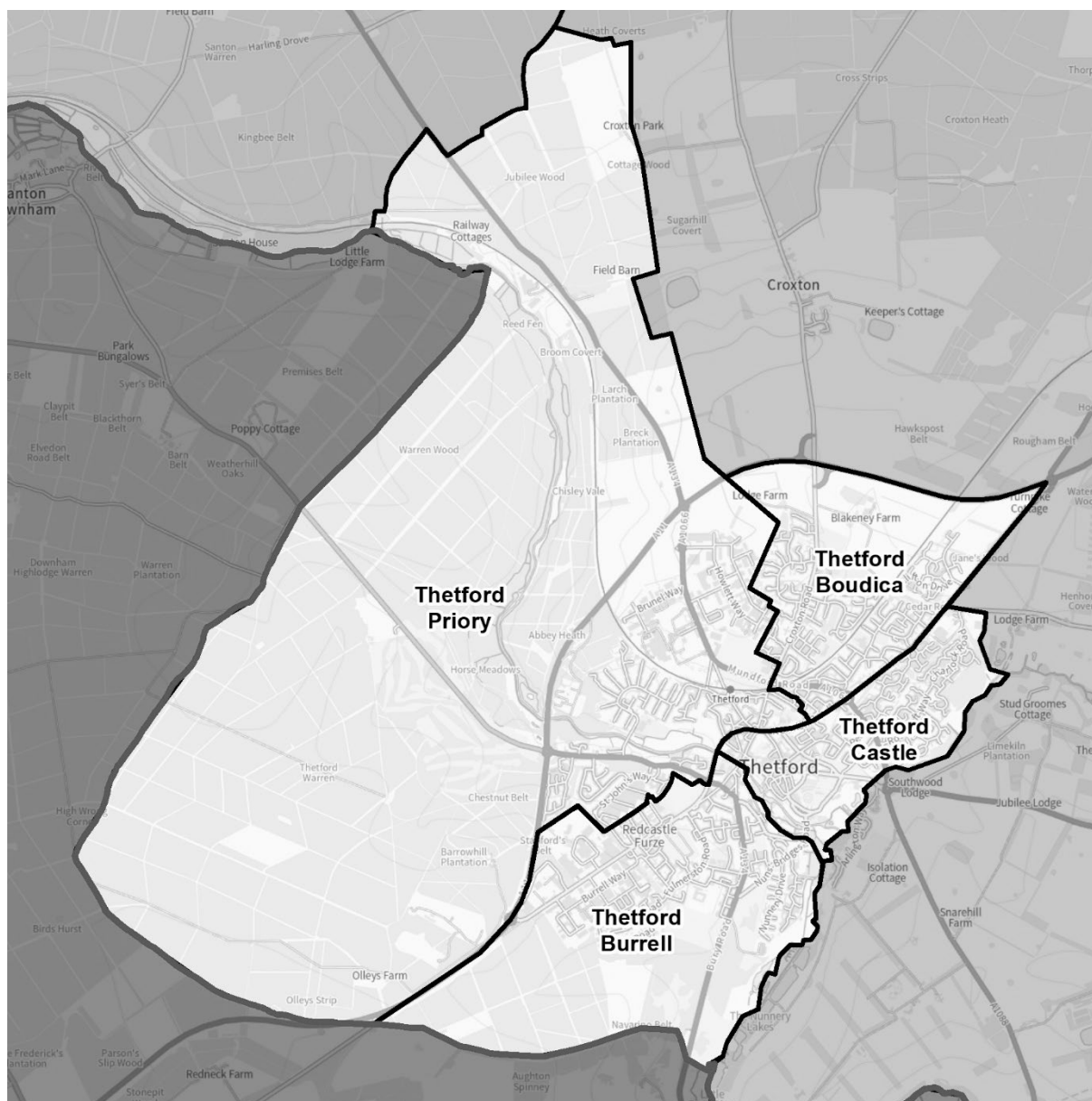
44 Our draft recommendations are for single-councillor Buckenham & Quidenham and East Harling wards and a two-councillor Banham & Guiltcross ward. These wards would have 9% fewer, 4% fewer and 11% fewer electors than the district average by 2030.

Ringmere & Hockham

45 The Council and the member of the public put forward identical proposals for a single-councillor Ringmere & Hockham ward. This ward secures good electoral equality and has good internal road links. Another member of the public suggested that the Arlington Way area of Brettenham parish should be in a Thetford ward. While we can see some logic to this, we note that it is somewhat separate from the rest of Thetford and would require the creation of a parish ward in Brettenham parish. Since we did not receive any other support for it, we are not transferring it as part of the draft recommendations, but would welcome further views during this consultation.

46 We did not receive any other comments on this area so are adopting the Council's and the member of the public's proposals for a single-councillor Ringmere & Hockham ward without amendment. This ward will have 1% fewer electors than the district average by 2030.

Thetford



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Thetford Boudica	2	6%
Thetford Burrell	2	0%
Thetford Castle	2	4%
Thetford Priory	2	4%

Thetford Boudica, Thetford Burrell, Thetford Castle and Thetford Priory

47 The Council and the member of the public put forward identical proposals for these wards, which were based on modifications to the existing wards. All proposed wards secured good electoral equality. Another member of the public put forward comments, some of which were reflected in the other proposals, including the

incorporation of the Kingsfleet development in an urban Thetford ward. However, this member of the public also argued that Arlington Way should be included in an urban ward and that rural areas of Thetford should be in a rural ward. They argued that wards should try and avoid splitting areas covered by residents' associations, noting that the Redcastle Furze Estate is divided and that the Croxton Estate would be better served in a ward with other estates on the Croxton Road. Another member of the public observed that the existing Priory ward contains too many electors.

48 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting that the proposals from the Council and the member of the public secure good electoral equality and generally used clear boundaries, including reflecting another member of the public's suggestion that the Kingsfleet development should be in an urban ward.

49 We have considered the argument about dividing areas covered by residents' associations. In the case of the Redcastle Furze Estate, it contains too many electors to be included in a single ward, without the need to redraw boundaries across Thetford. We are not persuaded to do this.

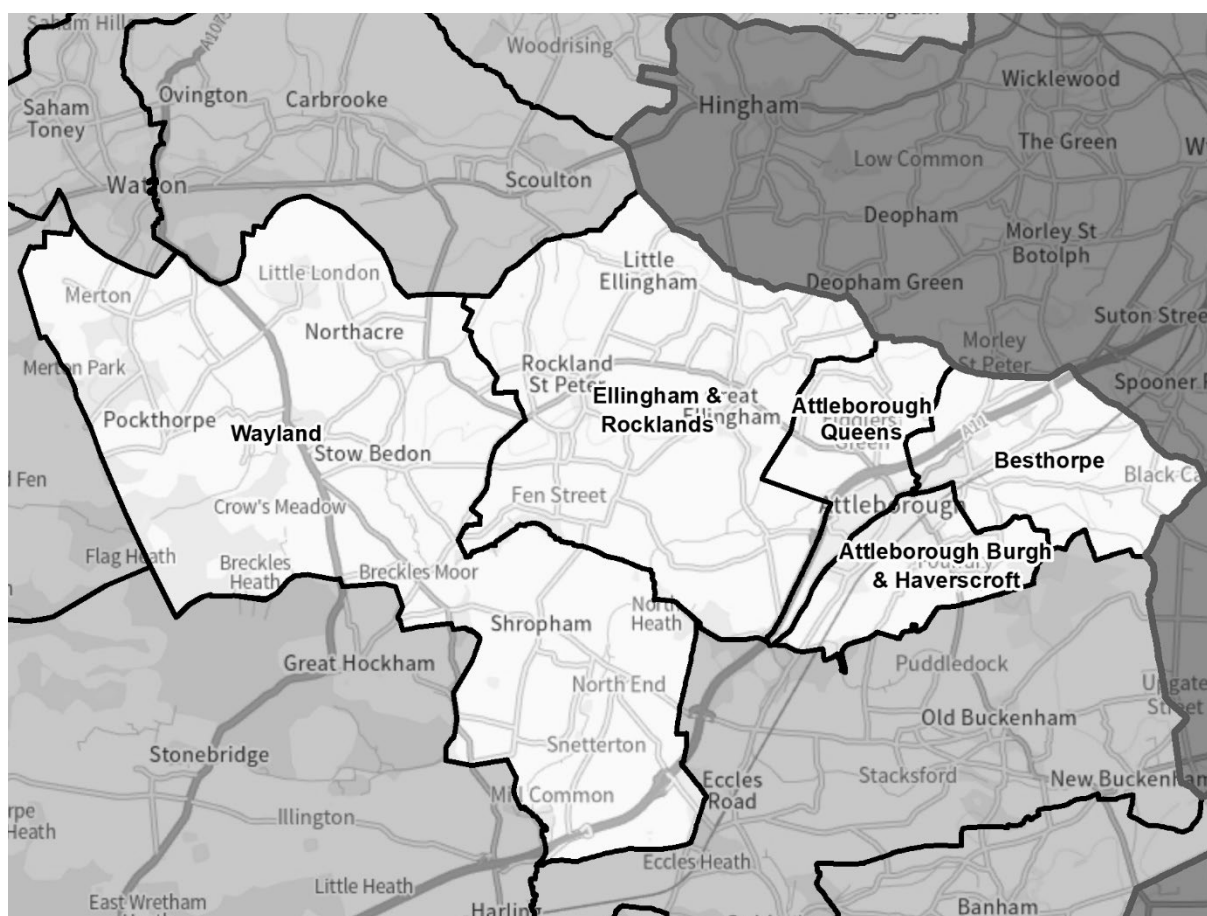
50 However, we are persuaded that the Croxton Estate would be better served in Thetford Boudica ward, noting that electors in this area have no direct access into Thetford Priory ward, as Croxton Road is blocked off where the A1066 cuts across it. However, transferring this area requires an amendment to retain good electoral equality. We are therefore retaining the area to the south of Vicarage Road in Thetford Priory ward, while putting the area to the north in Thetford Boudica ward. We acknowledge that this divides the area covered by the Vicarage Road Residents' Association and did examine retaining the whole of the area to the south of the A1066 in Thetford Priory ward. However, this would result in that ward having 12% more electors than the district average by 2030. We are not persuaded to accept this poor level of electoral equality in light of an alternative which we consider better reflects our criteria across Thetford. We are therefore using the Vicarage Road boundary.

51 Finally, we examined the argument for putting Arlington Way in a Thetford ward. While we can see some logic to this, we note that it is somewhat separate from the rest of Thetford and would require the creation of a parish ward in Brettenham parish. In addition, it would worsen electoral equality in Thetford Castle and Ringmere & Hockham wards to 8% more and 9% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. Since we have not received any other evidence to support this and the worsening of electoral equality, we are not adopting it, but would welcome further views during this consultation.

52 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Thetford Boudica, Thetford Burrell, Thetford Castle and Thetford Priory wards, which would have 6% more,

equal to the average, 4% more and 4% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Attleborough and Wayland



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft	2	-4%
Attleborough Queens	2	-8%
Besthorpe	1	-3%
Ellingham & Rocklands	1	6%
Wayland	1	-4%

Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft, Attleborough Queens and Besthorpe

53 The Council put forward proposals for single-councillor Besthorpe and two-councillor Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft and Attleborough Queens wards for this area, all of which would secure good electoral equality. Its Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft ward is the existing ward, which it argued has good electoral equality and community cohesion. Its proposals for Attleborough Queens and Besthorpe wards effectively split the existing three-councillor Attleborough Queens & Besthorpe ward, arguing that growth in this area has led to Besthorpe parish increasingly becoming part of 'greater' Attleborough and that this enables the creation of a single-councillor ward. It decided to remove a small area of Great Ellingham parish from its Attleborough Queens ward (where this area currently sits), noting that while the area

does have some links to Attleborough, it is better united with the rest of Great Ellingham parish.

54 The member of the public proposed the retention of the existing three-councillor Attleborough Queens & Besthorpe and two-councillor Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft wards. While these wards of good electoral equality the member of the public did not put forward any evidence to support their retention.

55 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received in this area. We note that with the exception of the small area of Great Ellingham parish, which the member of the public retained in their three-councillor Attleborough Queens & Besthorpe ward, either proposal for this area could be adopted as they cover the same area. On balance, given the evidence from the Council for creating a Besthorpe ward, to reflect its increasing links with Attleborough, we are persuaded to adopt the Council's proposals for this area. We also agree that the small area of Great Ellingham parish, currently in an Attleborough ward, should be reunited with the rest of the parish. However, we welcome local comments on these proposals.

56 Our draft recommendations are for single-councillor Besthorpe and two-councillor Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft and Attleborough Queens wards which would have 3% fewer, 4% fewer and 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Ellingham & Rocklands and Wayland

57 The Council put forward proposals for single-councillor Ellingham & Rocklands and Wayland wards for this area. It argued that the options for Ellingham & Rocklands were limited by its position on the edge of the district and Attleborough to the east and Carbrooke in the west. It noted that its proposals keep the Ellingham parishes in the same ward. It also noted that given the size of its electorate, it is not possible to put Hockham parish in its Wayland ward, instead putting this parish in neighbouring Ringmere & Hockham ward.

58 The member of the public proposed a two-councillor Wayland ward, highlighting the roads that link the constituent parishes.

59 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the Council's proposals for single-councillor wards reflect its desire, set out in paragraph 31, to have small wards with as few parishes as possible, whereas the member of the public creates a two-councillor ward. As discussed in the Watton and Ashill section below, we have decided to adopt the proposal from the member of the public to include an area of Griston parish located within the Blenheim Grange area of Carbrooke parish in our Watton ward, as it has no direct links to Griston parish. This decision means the Council's single-councillor Wayland ward would have 12% fewer

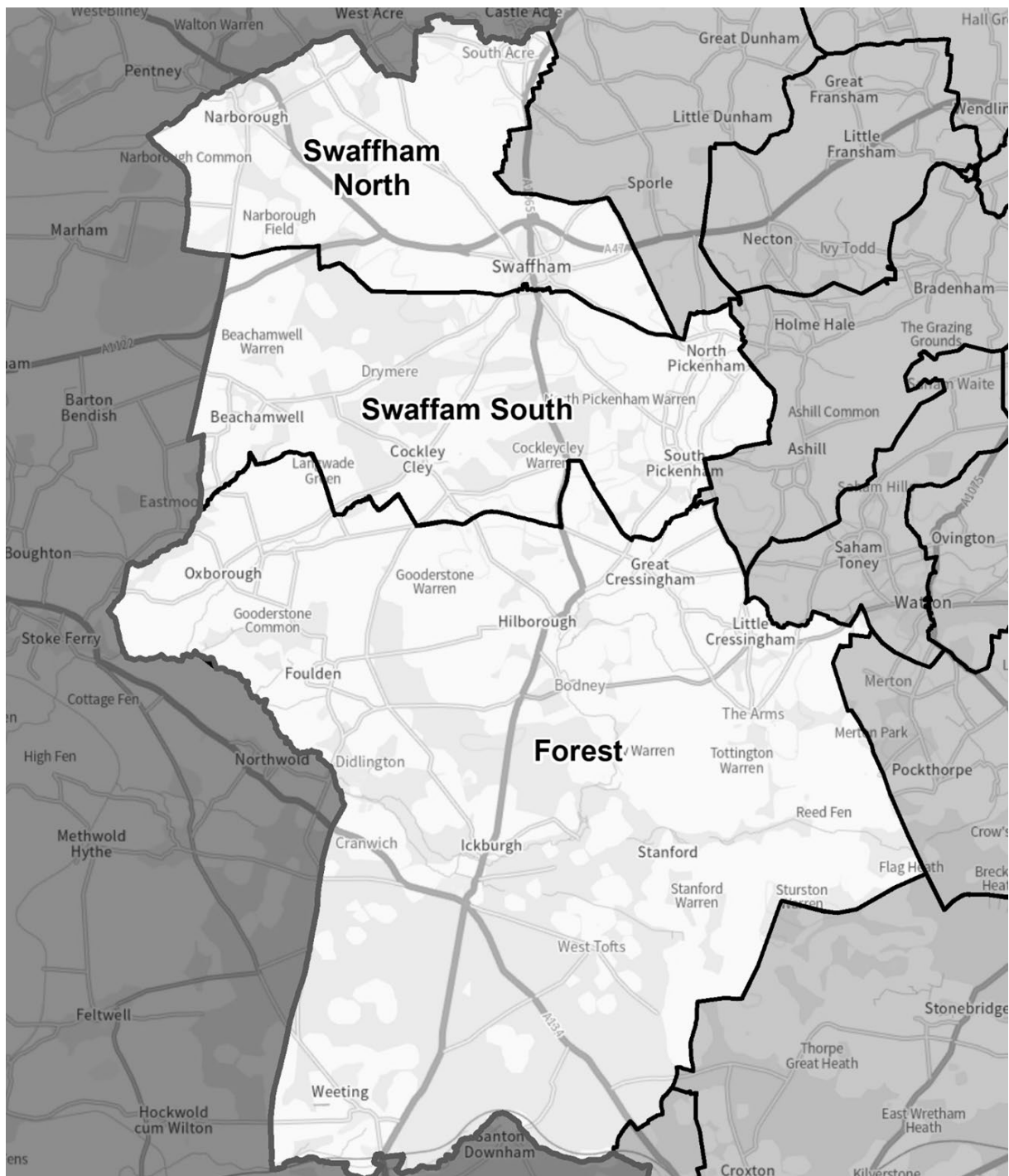
electors than the district average by 2030, while the member of the public's two-councillor Wayland ward, which incorporates the Griston parish amendment, would have 9% fewer.

60 Given our decision to adopt the Council's Buckenham & Quidenham ward (discussed in the South East section, above), we would need to add Shropham parish to the member of the public's Wayland ward, which actually improves electoral equality to equal to the average.

61 However, we also note that the 12% fewer electors in the Council's Wayland ward can be improved by adding Snetterton parish, improving electoral equality to 4% fewer electors by 2030. Having visited the area, we have concluded that Snetterton has good links to neighbouring Shropham parish, which is in the Council's Wayland ward, with most of the electors lying to the west of the A11. On balance, we are persuaded that a modified version of the Council's proposals provide compact wards, with good internal road links, while securing good electoral equality.

62 Our draft recommendations are for single-councillor Ellingham & Rocklands and Wayland wards with 6% more and 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Swaffham and Forest



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Forest	2	3%
Swaffham North	2	3%
Swaffham South	2	7%

Forest

63 The Council proposed single-councillor Weeting & Forest and Wissey & Gadder wards for this area. It argued that it had tried to reduce the area covered by the Weeting & Forest ward, much of which is sparsely populated. It also stated that given the size of the electorate, it had been unable to place Mundford and Weeting-with-Broomhill parishes in the same ward while retaining a good level of electoral equality.

64 The member of the public proposed a two-councillor Forest ward covering much of the same area, highlighting its sparse nature and roads that connected the area.

65 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We have examined the member of the public's proposals. However, as discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited having adopted elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards.

66 We have also examined the Council's proposals, but have concerns about the lack of internal road links within its Weeting & Forest ward. We note that Weeting-with-Broomhill and Lynford parishes do not have direct road access to the remainder of the ward, without going through its neighbouring Wissey & Gadder ward. However, we note that it is possible to combine the Council's Weeting & Forest and Wissey & Gadder wards to create a two-councillor ward. Although this ward covers a large area, it would have two councillors, and from our visit to the area we note that there are good road links through it. We therefore propose a two-councillor Forest ward, which would have 3% more electors than the district average by 2030.

Swaffham North and Swaffham South

67 The Council proposed a three-councillor Swaffham ward, surrounded to the north, south and west by a single-councillor Nar Valley ward. These wards would have 9% more and 3% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. The Council stated that it had considered, but rejected, dividing Swaffham into two and linking the parishes to the north and south to their nearest respective halves. The member of the public proposed retaining the existing three-councillor Swaffham and Nar Valley wards, offering no supporting evidence.

68 Another member of the public argued that Beachamwell parish should be in the existing Bedingfeld ward, much of which is covered by the Council's proposed Wissey & Gadder ward. They added that road links from Beachamwell to Swaffham can be flooded in winter. A different member of the public stated that Sporle with Palgrave parish should be in Swaffham ward.

69 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the existing wards that the member of the public proposed to retain secure good

electoral equality. However, as discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited because we adopted elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards, which were supported by slightly stronger evidence in the Council's overall submission.

70 While we see some logic in the argument for a three-councillor Swaffham ward based on the whole of Swaffham parish, we are concerned about the Council's Nar Valley ward, noting that some of the constituent parishes have no direct road links, with Swaffham sitting between them. We note that the Council considered, but rejected, north and south Swaffham wards taking in some of the surrounding parishes. However, we believe such an option has merit and our visit to the area confirmed that the parishes in the south link well into the south of Swaffham, while those in the north link well into the north. We also note that the existing Swaffham polling districts provide a reasonable dividing line in the parish, retaining the whole of the town centre in a single ward, while also ensuring electoral quality. Therefore, we are proposing a two-councillor Swaffham North ward, that includes Narford, Narborough and South Acre parishes and a two-councillor Swaffham South that includes Beachamwell, Cockley Cley, North Pickenham and South Pickenham parishes. These wards would have 3% more and 7% more electors than the district average by 2030.

71 We note the comment from a member of the public that Beachamwell parish should be in the existing Bedingfeld ward. However, our draft recommendations do not retain Bedingfeld ward and, although we note concerns about winter flooding on the road between Beachamwell parish and Swaffham, we consider it has generally good links to Swaffham and the other parishes in our Swaffham South ward. We also note the argument that Sporle with Palgrave should be in a Swaffham ward, but this parish contains too many electors to secure electoral equality for the area and we are including it in Launditch ward.

72 Our draft recommendations for this area are for two-councillor Swaffham North and Swaffham South wards, with 3% more and 7% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Watton and Ashill



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Ashill	1	5%
Haggard de Toni	2	0%
Watton	3	1%

Haggard de Toni and Watton

73 The Council proposed single-councillor Ashill and Carbrooke wards and two-councillor Haggard de Toni and Watton wards for this area. It argued that it was necessary to split Watton ward, but that its proposal enables Saham Toney parish to be in a ward with part of Watton parish, noting that there is a 'blurred geographical boundary' between the areas. It also argued that its Carbrooke ward creates a ward with a 'separate village identity', separating it from the more urban Watton.

74 The member of the public proposed a different split of Watton, creating two two-councillor Watton East & Blenheim Grange and Watton West wards and a single-councillor Saham Toney ward that runs across the north of Watton and includes Carbrooke, Ovington and Saham Toney parishes. Their Watton East & Blenheim Grange ward would include the more urban Blenheim Grange area of Carbrooke parish and a small area of the same development currently in Griston parish. Another member of the public argued that Saham Toney should be linked to Watton. Watton Town Council rejected the Council's proposal and argued that the west area of Carbrooke parish should be included in a Watton ward, as the member of the public suggested.

75 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting that both district-wide schemes divide Watton parish between two wards. We concur with the member of the public's argument that the Blenheim Grange area of Griston parish should be linked to the rest of Blenheim Grange. Although this requires the creation of a parish ward in Griston, we consider this can be justified given the clear links to the rest of the Blenheim Grange development.

76 We note that the member of the public's proposal to include all of Blenheim Grange in a Watton ward, supported by comments from Watton Town Council, would require the creation of a parish ward in Carbrooke parish. However, we are less persuaded by this, as it would separate a significant portion of Carbrooke parish, despite that area being more urban, like neighbouring Watton. Additionally, the proposal connects Saham Toney parish to Carbrooke rather than to the Watton ward, as the Council suggests, and while there is a direct road link in the proposed ward, Watton parish lies between them. While the Council argues that its proposals reflect Carbrooke parish's 'village identity', it's important to note that many electors in Carbrooke actually reside in the urban Blenheim Grange area on the edge of Watton.

77 In light of these considerations, we explored the option of combining the Council's Watton and Carbrooke wards, along with a small area of Griston parish proposed by the member of the public, to create a three-councillor Watton ward. Although Carbrooke is primarily rural, the Blenheim Grange development within it is more urban in nature like Watton and as with the Council's argument for Saham Toney, the geographical boundary is 'blurred'. We believe this proposal offers a better balance of the statutory criteria, allowing the Saham Toney area to link to the west of Watton. We welcome feedback both on this proposal and on the member of the public's proposal for separating the Blenheim Grange area from Carbrooke parish and linking it solely to a two-councillor Watton East & Blenheim Grange, while connecting the remainder of Carbrooke parish to Saham Toney and Ovington parishes in a single-councillor ward.

78 Our draft recommendations are for a two-councillor Haggard de Toni and three-councillor Watton ward, with equal to the average and 1% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

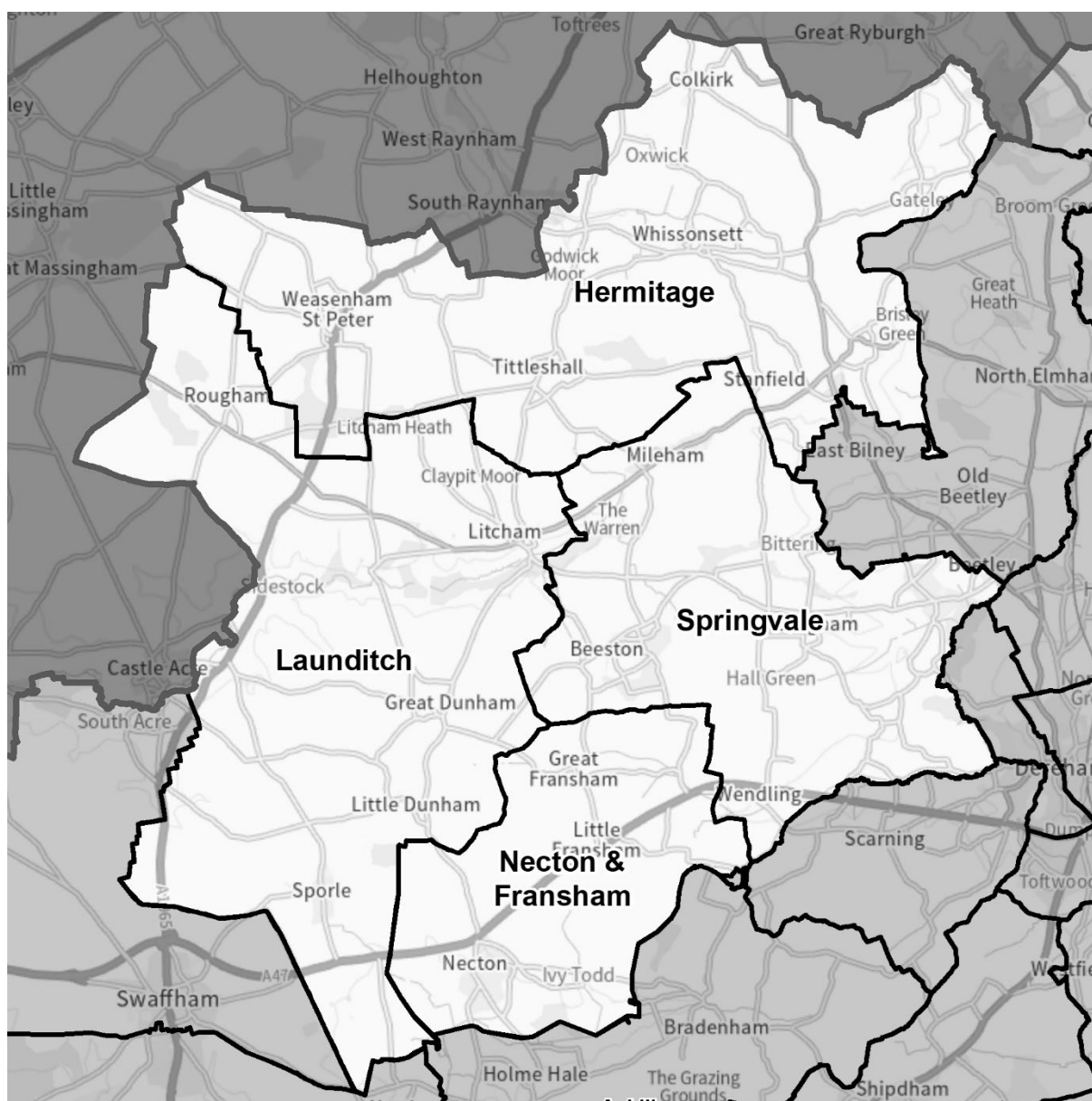
Ashill

79 The Council proposed a single-councillor Ashill ward comprising Ashill, Bradenham and Holme Hale parishes. It stated that its proposals for this ward were determined by its position between Swaffham and Watton and the wish to include Saham Toney parish in a ward with Watton.

80 The member of the public proposed a very different configuration in this area, retaining the existing Ashill ward, less Hilborough parish which they transferred to a Forest ward. They did not offer any specific information to support this ward.

81 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited because we adopted elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards, which were supported by slightly stronger evidence in its overall submission. However, we note that the Council's Ashill ward has good electoral equality, clear boundaries and good internal links, so we are adopting it as part of our draft recommendations. Our single-councillor Ashill ward would have 5% more electors than the district average by 2030.

North West



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Hermitage	1	-2%
Launditch	1	1%
Necton & Fransham	1	0%
Springvale	1	7%

Hermitage, Launditch, Necton & Fransham and Springvale

82 The Council proposed four single-member wards for this area, while the member of the public proposed the retention of the existing wards. The Council provided some limited comments on its proposals, arguing that the options in this area are limited by its position at the edge of the district and with Swaffham to the

south and Dereham to the east. It stated that its Hermitage ward broadly reflects the existing ward, but with the addition of Brisley and Gateley parishes, which it considered would sit well in the new ward. Its Launditch ward retains the links between the Dunham parishes. It originally planned to link Necton parish with Bradenham parish but noted that this resulted in an 11% variance, so instead linked it to Fransham. Its Springvale ward is focused on the parishes along the road linking Litcham and Gressenhall. Mileham parish was added to enable Litcham and Kempstone parishes to remain in Launditch ward.

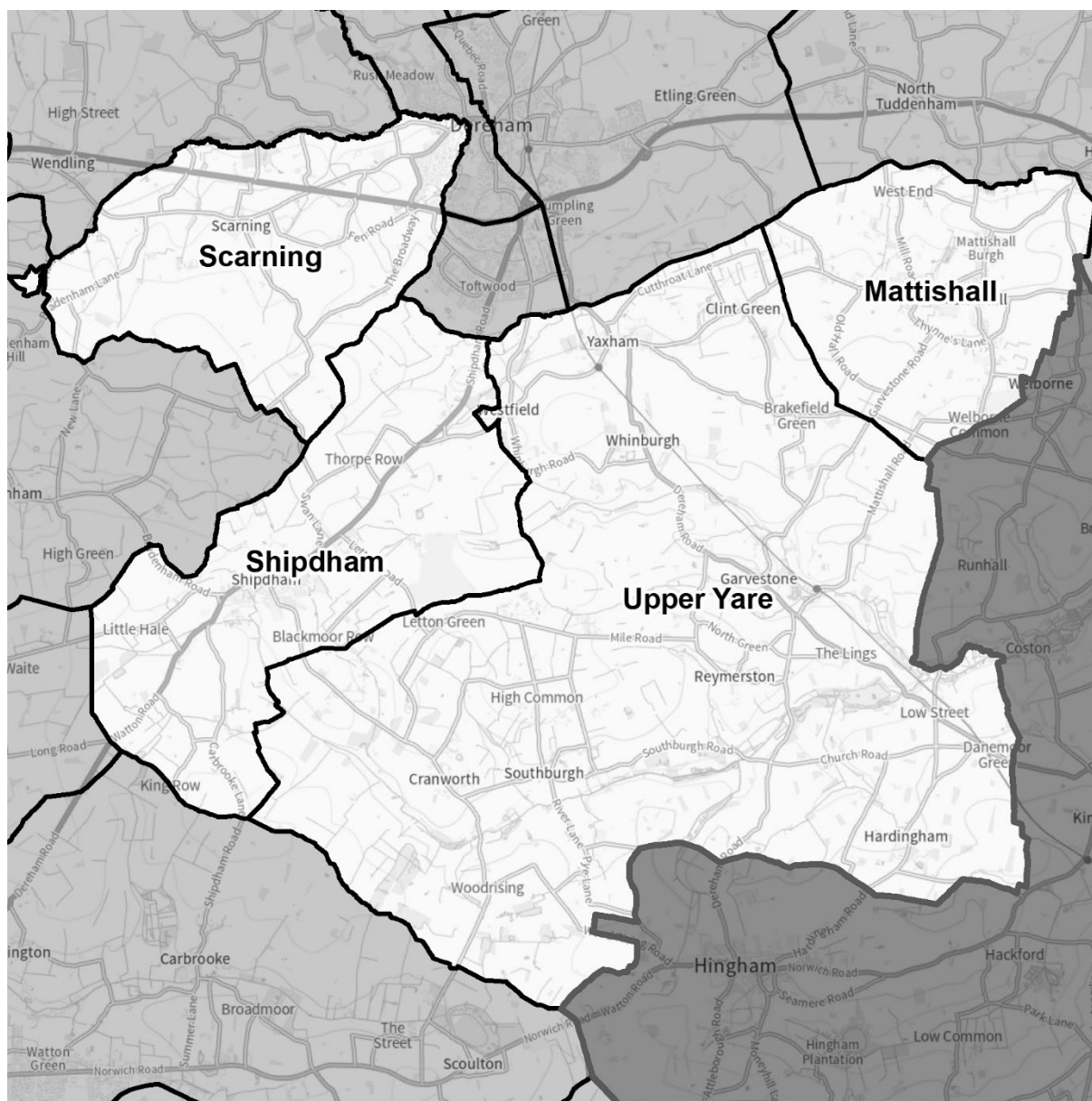
83 The member of the public did not put forward any comments on their decision to retain the existing wards, but we note that despite the change in council size, they all have good electoral equality. Necton Parish Council expressed support for single-councillor wards.

84 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting that the existing wards, as proposed by the member of the public, secure good electoral equality. However, as discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited because we adopted elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards, which were supported by slightly stronger evidence in the Council's overall submission.

85 We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for this area, noting that they secure good electoral equality and include parishes with good road links.

86 Our draft recommendations are for single-member Hermitage, Launditch, Necton & Fransham and Springvale wards which would have 2% fewer, 1% more, equal to the average and 7% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Mattishall, Scarning and Shipdham



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Mattishall	1	6%
Scarning	1	2%
Shipdham	1	-9%
Upper Yare	1	5%

Mattishall, Scarning, Shipdham and Upper Yare

87 The Council proposed single-councillor Mattishall, Scarning and Shipdham wards, all based on single parishes of the respective names. These wards would have 6% more, 2% more and 9% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. It proposed a single-councillor Upper Yare ward comprising Cranworth,

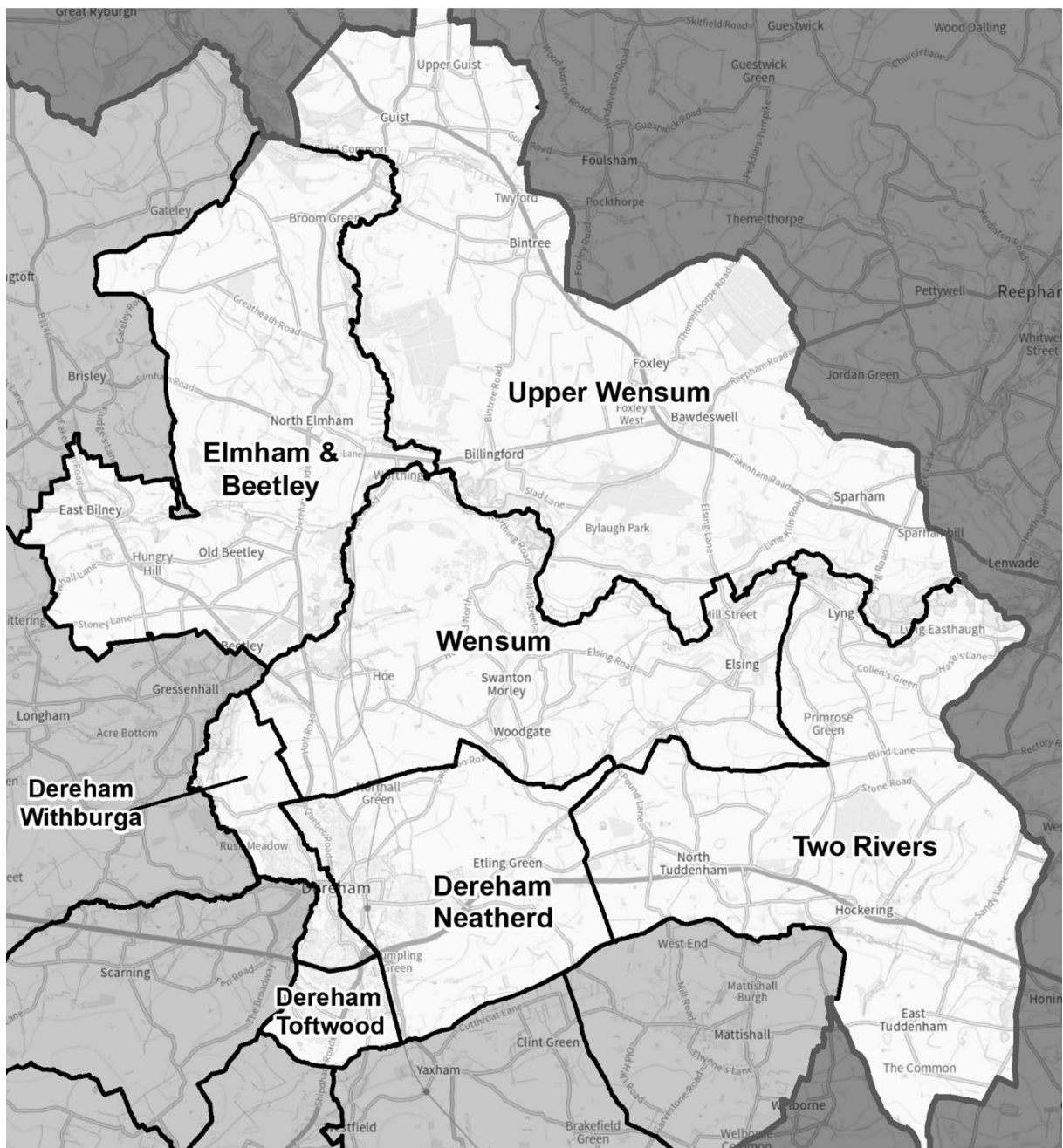
Gravestone, Reymerston & Thuxton, Hardingham, Whinburgh & Westfield and Yaxham parishes. This ward would have 5% more electors than the district average by 2030. It stated that Mattishall, Scarning and Shipdham parishes all contained sufficient electors to be single-councillor wards. It stated that its proposals for Upper Yare ward were informed by the area being bordered by the more urban Dereham, Mattishall and Scarning, with the addition of the district boundary.

88 The member of the public proposed the same single-councillor Scarning ward, but a two-councillor Mitford ward, covering the Council's Shipdham ward, part its Upper Yare ward and Bradenham parish. They also proposed a two-councillor Mattishall ward comprising the Tuddenham parishes and Hockering, Mattishall and Yaxham parishes. They stated that the Mattishall ward covered a 'similar' area to an earlier 'Two Rivers ward', while the parishes in the Mitford ward are linked by the A1075 and B1135. Another member of the public stated that Scarning parish should form a ward.

89 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the Council's proposals for four single-councillor wards, including three comprising single parishes, secure good electoral equality. The remaining Upper Yare ward secures good electoral equality and has good internal road links. As discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited because, in adopting elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards, we relied on the slightly stronger evidence presented in the Council's submission overall. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals without amendment.

90 Our draft recommendations are for single-councillor Mattishall, Scarning, Shipdham and Upper Yare wards. These wards would have 6% more, 2% more, 9% fewer and 5% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Dereham and North East



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2030
Dereham Neatherd	3	-7%
Dereham Toftwood	2	6%
Dereham Withburga	2	2%
Elmham & Beetley	1	10%
Two Rivers	1	-5%
Upper Wensum	1	-10%
Wensum	1	-2%

Dereham Neatherd, Dereham Toftwood and Dereham Withburga

91 The Council proposed a single-councillor Dereham & Hoe and two-councillor Dereham Neatherd, Dereham Toftwood and Dereham Withburga wards, which would have 6% fewer, 4% fewer, 6% more and 4% more electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. It stated that Dereham is entitled to seven councillors which it proposed dividing into three two-councillor wards and a single-councillor ward. Its two-councillor wards secure good electoral equality. However, it noted that its single-councillor Dereham & Hoe ward required additional electors to secure electoral equality, so it included Hoe & Worthing parish.

92 The member of the public proposed the retention of the existing wards for Dereham, which all secure good electoral equality. They did not put forward any evidence to support these wards. A number of members of the public put forward comments about Hoe & Worthing, expressing concerns about any changes to the parish or its boundaries. However, they were not specific about these concerns.

93 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the Council's proposal to include Hoe & Worthing parish in its Dereham & Hoe ward will secure electoral equality in this ward. However, our visit to the area suggested that the rural Hoe & Worthing parish would be better in a rural ward as it currently is. We are therefore putting Hoe & Worthing parish in Wensum ward.

94 While this worsens electoral equality in the Council's Dereham & Hoe ward to 16% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, we note that the member of the public's proposals to retain the existing wards secures good electoral equality, while leaving Hoe & Worthing in a rural ward. Their proposals result in seven councillors for Dereham, as the Council suggests, but creates two two-councillor wards and a three-councillor ward, rather than a single-councillor ward and three two-councillor wards. We consider that these wards create a good east-west split to the parish, while retaining the compact Dereham Neatherd in the south that both the Council and member of the public proposed retaining. We are therefore adopting the member of the public's proposal for retaining the existing wards in Dereham.

95 Our draft recommendations are for two-councillor Dereham Toftwood and Dereham Withburga wards and a three-councillor Dereham Neatherd ward. These wards would have 6% more, 2% more and 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2023, respectively.

Elmham & Beetley, Two Rivers, Upper Wensum and Wensum

96 The Council proposed single-councillor Elmham & Beetley, Two Rivers, Upper Wensum and Wensum wards for this area. These wards would have 10% more, 5% fewer, 13% fewer and 9% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. It stated that its proposals for this area were difficult to draw up, but

concluded that it was better to join the larger parishes of Beetley and Elmham in a ward, so they did not dominate the smaller surrounding parishes. Its Two Rivers ward 'reinstates' an old name in a ward comprising smaller rural parishes. It stated that it was not possible to include Mattishall in this ward given its size; however, these wards could have been combined to create a two-councillor ward. It acknowledged that its Upper Wensum ward has relatively poor electoral equality, but that given its location in the district options were limited

97 The member of the public proposed the retention of the existing two-councillor Lincoln ward to the north and west of Dereham. They proposed a single-councillor Upper Wensum ward from the north area of the existing two-councillor ward of that name. Finally, they proposed a West Eynford ward from part of the remainder of the existing Upper Wensum ward. These wards would have 2% more, equal to the average and equal to the average electors than the district average by 2030, respectively. The member of the public offered no evidence to support the existing Lincoln ward and only a list of parishes in the Upper Wensum ward and explanation for the West Eynford ward name. As stated in the section above, a number of respondents expressed concerns about the impact on Hoe & Worthing parish, although they were not specific about these concerns.

98 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the member of the public's proposals secure better electoral equality than the Council's. However, as discussed in paragraphs 31 to 33, our options in this area are limited because, in adopting elements of the Council's proposals in surrounding wards, we relied on the slightly stronger evidence presented in the Council's submission overall. We are therefore basing our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals.

99 However, we propose two amendments. Firstly, as discussed in the Dereham section above, we are not including Hoe & Worthing parish in a Dereham ward and are instead including it in Wensum ward. Our visit to Hoe & Worthing suggested the parish would be better served in the rural Wensum ward, rather than an urban Dereham ward. This amendment improves electoral equality in Wensum ward, enabling us to transfer Bylaugh parish to Upper Wensum ward, improving electoral equality there to 10% fewer electors than the district average by 2030. Again, our visit to the area suggested that this parish has good links into the Upper Wensum ward and indeed it is linked to many of the parishes in the ward as part of the existing ward. Our revised single-councillor Upper Wensum and Wensum wards would have 10% fewer and 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

100 We are adopting the Council's single-councillor Elmham & Beetley and Two Rivers wards without amendment. These would have 10% more and 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2030, respectively.

Conclusions

101 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Breckland, referencing the 2023 and 2030 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 to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided in Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2023	2030
Number of councillors	51	51
Number of electoral wards	34	34
Average number of electors per councillor	2,140	2,303
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations

Breckland District Council should be made up of 51 councillors serving 34 wards representing 19 single-councillor wards, 13 two-councillor wards and two 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 Breckland District Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Breckland District Council on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

102 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

103 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Breckland District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

104 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Attleborough, Griston, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton.

105 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Attleborough parish.

Draft recommendations

Attleborough Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Burgh North	3
Burgh South	3
Queens Central	5
Queens North	2
Queens South	2

106 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Griston parish.

Draft recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Griston North	2
Griston South	5

107 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Swaffham parish.

Draft recommendations

Swaffham Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Swaffham North	6
Swaffham South	7

108 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Thetford parish.

Draft recommendations

Thetford Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Anne Bartholomew	1
Boudica	3
Burrell	4
Castle	4
Iceni	1
Priory	3
Stanford	1
Wheatacres	1

109 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Watton parish.

Draft recommendations

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Watton East	6
Watton West	9

Have your say

110 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 district or just a part of it.

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

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

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

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

Review Officer (Breckland)
LGBCE
7th Floor
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y

115 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Breckland 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.

116 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.

117 Electoral equality:

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

118 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?

119 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?

120 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.lqbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

121 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.

122 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.

123 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 Breckland District Council in 2027.

Equalities

124 The Commission is satisfied that it complies with its legal obligations under the Equality Act and that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Breckland District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashill	1	2,273	2,273	6%	2,428	2,428	5%
2	Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft	2	4,122	2,061	-4%	4,418	2,209	-4%
3	Attleborough Queens	2	4,040	2,020	-6%	4,257	2,129	-8%
4	Banham & Guiltcross	2	3,843	1,922	-10%	4,113	2,057	-11%
5	Besthorpe	1	2,070	2,070	-3%	2,236	2,236	-3%
6	Buckenham & Quidenham	1	1,955	1,955	-9%	2,094	2,094	-9%
7	Dereham Neatherd	3	5,983	1,994	-7%	6,450	2,150	-7%
8	Dereham Toftwood	2	4,577	2,289	7%	4,874	2,437	6%
9	Dereham Withburga	2	4,365	2,183	2%	4,683	2,342	2%
10	East Harling	1	2,044	2,044	-5%	2,211	2,211	-4%

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Ellingham & Rocklands	1	2,008	2,008	-6%	2,443	2,443	6%
12	Elmham & Beetley	1	2,343	2,343	9%	2,522	2,522	10%
13	Forest	2	4,406	2,203	3%	4,744	2,372	3%
14	Haggard de Toni	2	4,257	2,129	-1%	4,597	2,299	0%
15	Hermitage	1	2,090	2,090	-2%	2,258	2,258	-2%
16	Launditch	1	2,163	2,163	1%	2,320	2,320	1%
17	Mattishall	1	2,292	2,292	7%	2,435	2,435	6%
18	Necton & Fransham	1	2,138	2,138	0%	2,297	2,297	0%
19	Ringmere & Hockham	1	2,034	2,034	-5%	2,285	2,285	-1%
20	Scarning	1	2,148	2,148	0%	2,338	2,338	2%
21	Shipdham	1	1,859	1,859	-13%	2,091	2,091	-9%
22	Springvale	1	2,284	2,284	7%	2,470	2,470	7%
23	Swaffham North	2	4,575	2,288	7%	4,751	2,376	3%
24	Swaffham South	2	4,625	2,313	8%	4,925	2,463	7%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2030)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Thetford Boudica	2	4,509	2,254	5%	4,869	2,434	6%
26 Thetford Burrell	2	4,269	2,135	0%	4,608	2,304	0%
27 Thetford Castle	2	4,427	2,214	3%	4,772	2,386	4%
28 Thetford Priory	2	4,467	2,234	4%	4,812	2,406	4%
29 Two Rivers	1	2,033	2,033	-5%	2,194	2,194	-5%
30 Upper Wensum	1	1,942	1,942	-9%	2,077	2,077	-10%
31 Upper Yare	1	2,246	2,246	5%	2,419	2,419	5%
32 Watton	3	6,643	2,214	3%	6,963	2,321	1%
33 Wayland	1	2,073	2,073	-3%	2,220	2,220	-4%
34 Wensum	1	2,056	2,056	-4%	2,255	2,255	-2%
Totals	51	109,159	-	-	117,429	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,140	-	-	2,303	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Breckland District 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 district. 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/breckland

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/breckland

Local Authority

- Breckland District Council

Local Organisations

- Norfolk Local Flood Authority

Parish and Town Councils

- Necton Parish Council
- Watton Town Council

Local Residents

- 21 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 www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

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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