

Somerset

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Comment text:

Related subject: The Bridgwater constituency area

Please find attached my submission.

Attached Documents:

- ashley-fox-boundary-submission---final.pdf



Sir Ashley Fox MP
Member of Parliament for Bridgwater

The Boundary Commission
(Uploaded)

16th January 2025

Boundary Review – Somerset Council

To whom it may concern,

I wish to write in response to the boundary review for Somerset Council that will reduce the number of Councillors from 110 to 96.

I had hoped that a unified response would have been submitted by Somerset Council however I understand that despite substantial work being completed on a cross party basis that no such response will be submitted due to a last minute decision by the ruling party. As such I am making my own submission.

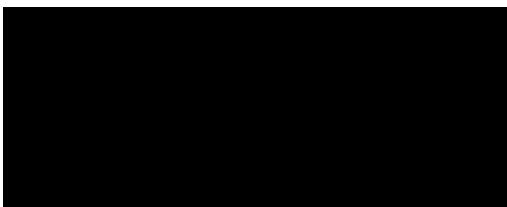
Having reviewed the criteria, that each Councillor should represent approximately 4,867 electors, I wish to support the recommendations outlined in the appendix.

I would add though that where possible I have tried to balance these proposals not just electorally but also in way that keeps natural communities, with a commonality of interest, together. Additionally where possible I have tried to respect the constituency boundaries as well.

I believe these proposals support local identities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



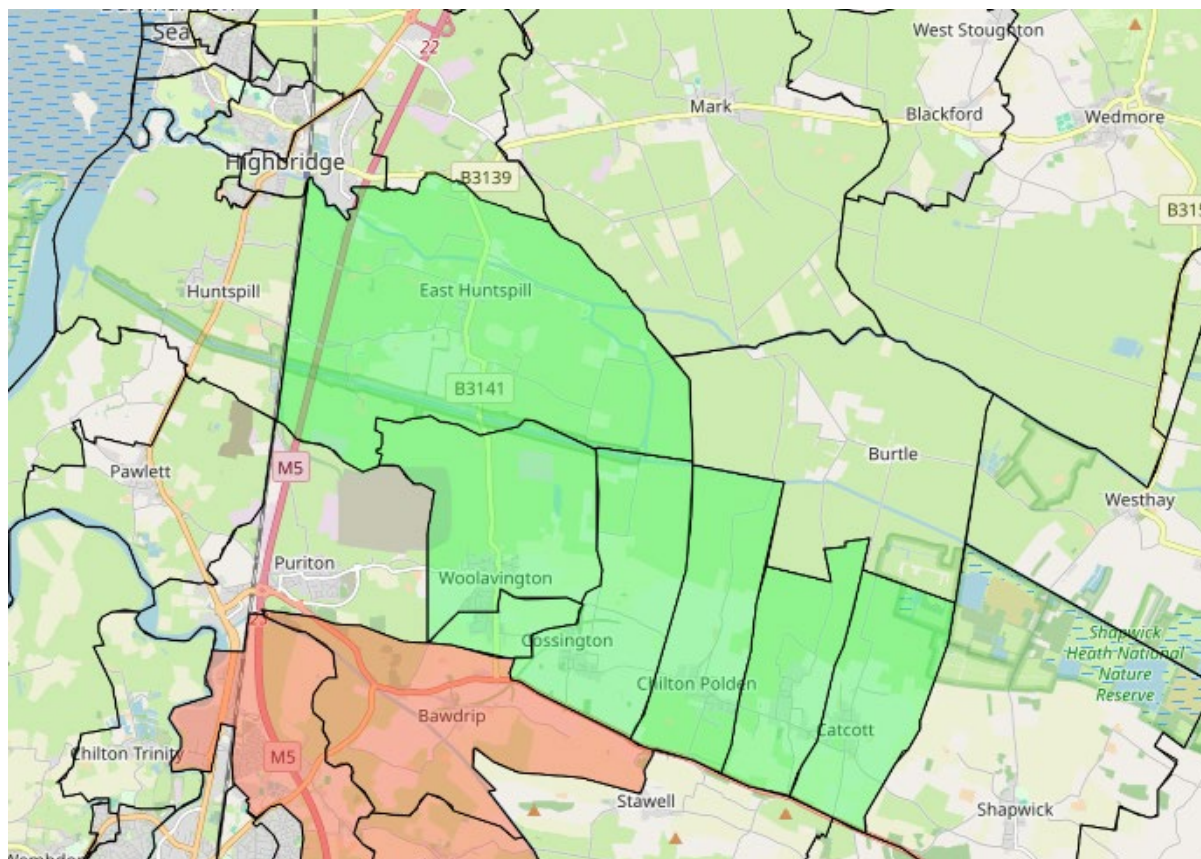
Sir Ashley Fox MP
Member of Parliament for Bridgwater

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Proposed Division: Woolavington

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BCJ, BCK, BAV, BAX, BAR, BAT, BBB, BBY*



Estimated Population: 4920

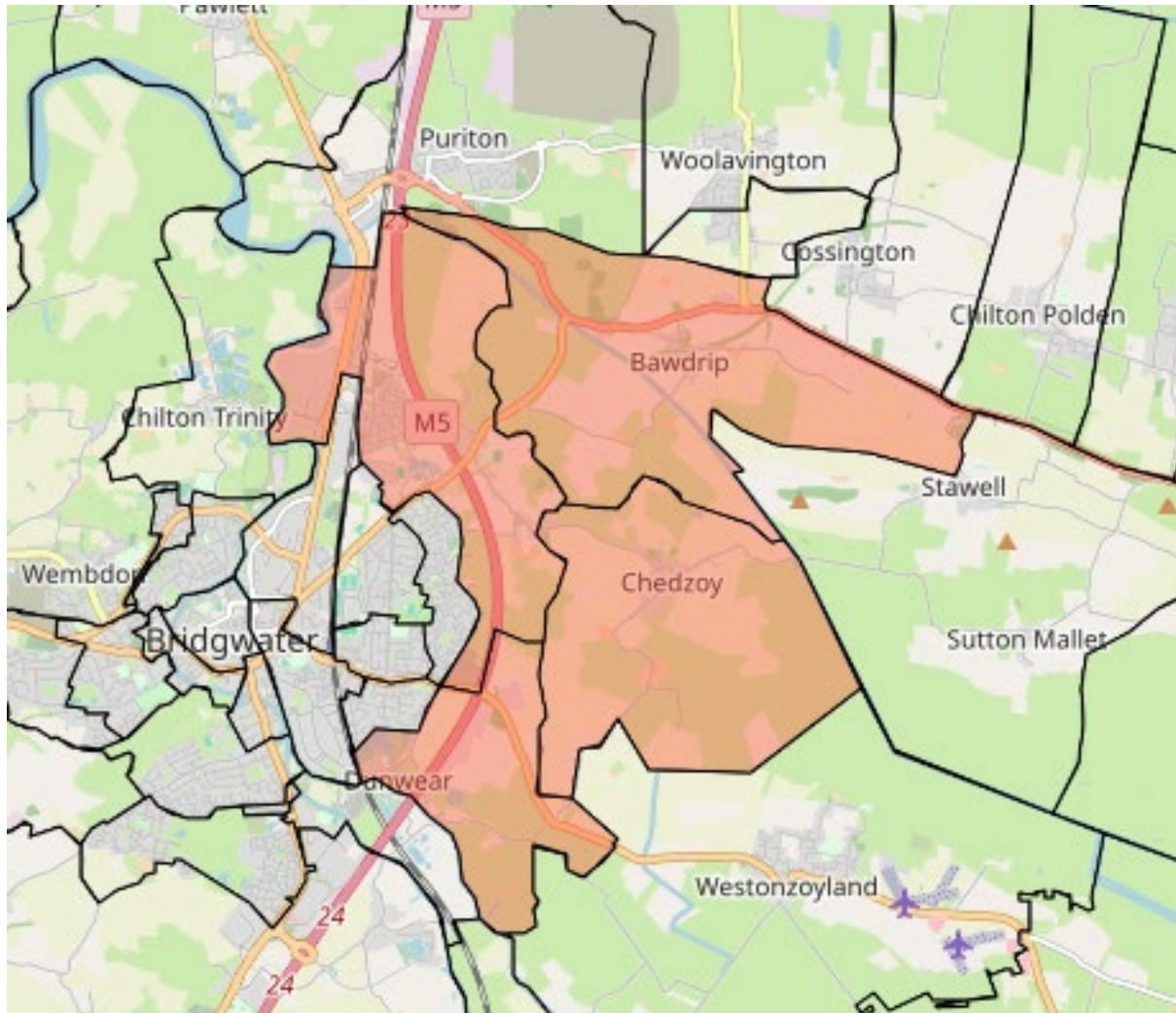
Justification:

- **Geographical proximity** - These villages are closely located within the Polden Hills and the moors, making them a natural grouping for representation. Their adjacency ensures cohesive representation for shared interests and minimizes disconnection within the ward.
- **Community ties** - The villages share strong historical and cultural connections, with overlapping social and economic networks. Local events, schools, and community initiatives often involve multiple villages, reflecting their intertwined nature. This is reflected in the local church communities who share one vicar between multiple villages with our proposal.
- **Shared rural identity** - These villages have similar rural characteristics, including agricultural economies, small-scale businesses, and a reliance on local infrastructure (i.e. the Polden Medical Practice surgeries in Woolavington and Edington, and the catchment of the local primary school). Combining them into one ward allows for governance that specifically addresses rural challenges.
- **Infrastructure and amenities** - The villages share access to common facilities, such as schools, healthcare centres, local shops, and transport routes. For example, residents often use interconnected local roads and benefit from similar public service provision; this also helps with many farmers who live within the Polden, that is subcontracted by the council to cut the hedges and clear the roads when it snows. Having one councillor, give a single point of contact and makes things a lot easier.

- Cohesive development needs - Planning and development issues, such as housing, conservation of the natural environment, and maintaining infrastructure, are aligned across these areas. A single ward would ensure coordinated decision-making on these matters especially with the fast growing development with Gravity and the greater demand of housing which will come to the Polden Hills
- Effective representation - A unified ward would provide a stronger collective voice in council decisions, avoiding dilution of interests across separate wards. This ensures fairer and more efficient representation for the shared concerns of these communities.
- Administrative efficiency - Combining these villages into one ward simplifies the management of resources and public services, as many administrative concerns (such as road maintenance or community projects) already affect residents collectively and this will be more important than ever going forward with the large scale development of the Gravity Smart Campus.
- Natural boundaries - The grouping aligns with recognizable natural boundaries and avoids splitting communities artificially. This respects local identities and fosters a sense of inclusion within the council's jurisdiction which fits well with the many old farming families and work together across the Polden villages.

Proposed Division: Bower & Bawdrip

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAP1, BAP2, BAB, BAU*



Estimated population: 4738

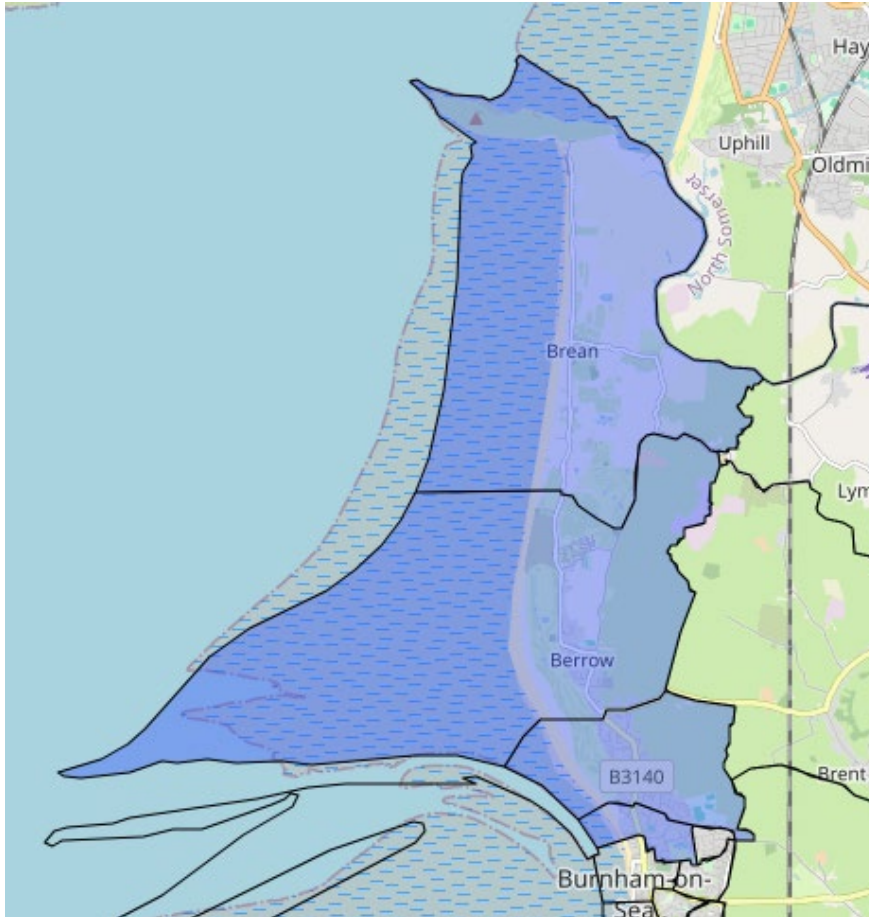
Justification:

- Geography – The ward lies on the Eastern edge of Bridgwater. It is a combination of urban and rural communities with historical ties via the former Sedgemoor District Ward boundaries and the current Somerset Division Boundary.
- Shared services – The communities use each others services such as schools (Kingsdown) as well as farm and local shops.
- Common challenges – There are numerous common challenges such as flooding (especially in Chedzoy and Bawdrip) but also urban growth and the challenges this poses to local infrastructure.

Proposed Division: Burnham North and Berrow

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: WED, WEC, WEK, WEJ (part of)*

Section of WEJ to include – Pizey Avenue, Mountbatten Close, Trinity Rise, Players Lane, The Grove, Gardenhurst, Marlborough Court, Allandale Road, Rectory Road, Parnell Way, Gardenhurst Close, Rectory Drive, Westfield Drive, Westfield Close, Westfield Lawn, Westfield Court, Rectory Lawn, Stoddens Walk, Knoll View, Rectory Place, Westmere Crescent, Marwood Close



Estimated population: 4818

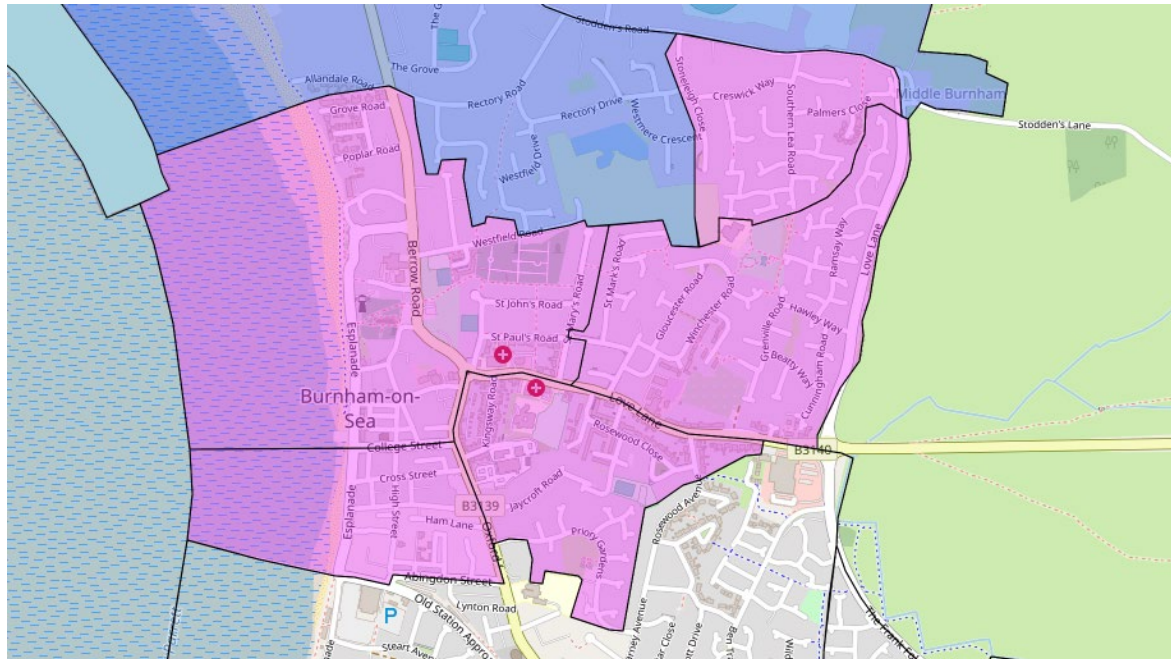
Justification:

- Geography - WED & WEC are at present part of the Brent division and yet share little common interest with that division. Were the boundaries to change as described then they would be combined with part of northern Burnham-on-Sea. These three areas' make up part of the coastal strip and share the same beach, which runs the length of all three.
- Community similarities – The three areas are coastal communities which share much in common and are seen as the seaside area of the old 'Sedgemoor' District. They face similar challenges with tourism and economic development.
- Shared services - The local GP practices operate out of Burnham-on-Sea with a Berrow campus to provide further local support. The dental practices are similarly located. The nearest town centre to these is Burnham, as is the nearest supermarket. The secondary school is the feeder school to these areas.
- Common voice - By bringing the suggested recommendation together, the residents and businesses will have a stronger, more unified voice to matters that are more important to them.

Proposed Division: Burnham Central

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: WEI, WEL, WEM, WEN, WEJ (part of)*

Section of WEJ includes all roads not included in the proposed Burnham North & Berrow Division



Estimated Population: 4905

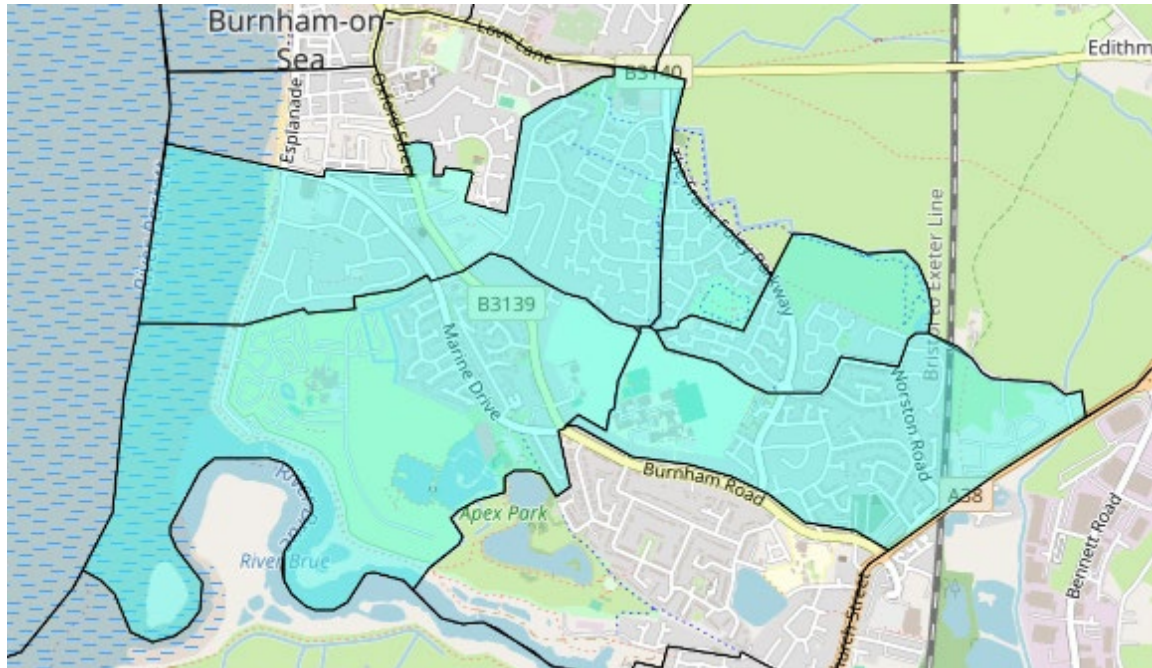
Justification:

- **Geography** – This division would be centrally based around the town centre which serves all of Burnham, Highbridge, Berrow & Brea.
- **Shared Services** – There are four primary schools with the proposed division acting as the catchment for this area. Similarly the community makes widespread use of the available shopping, play areas and community facilities.
- **Cohesion** - by grouping these areas together it creates a ward with a natural flow of roads, schools and infrastructure.

Proposed Division: Burnham South

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: WEO, WEG, WEH, WER, WEQ (Part of)*

Section of WEQ to include - Pepperall Road, Jasmine Close, Oldway Place, Field Way, Lobelia Close, Elder Close, Meadow Close, Paddock Drive, Orchard Close, Clover Way, Avalon Road, Kennedy Close, Fairford Road, Fairford Close, Fairdean Road, Worston Orchard, Worston Road, Mayflower Court, Brunels Way, Southend Gardens, Donstan Road, Hendon Close, Poples Bow, Acorn Close, Dauntton Close, Stiling Close.



Estimated Population: 4997

Justification:

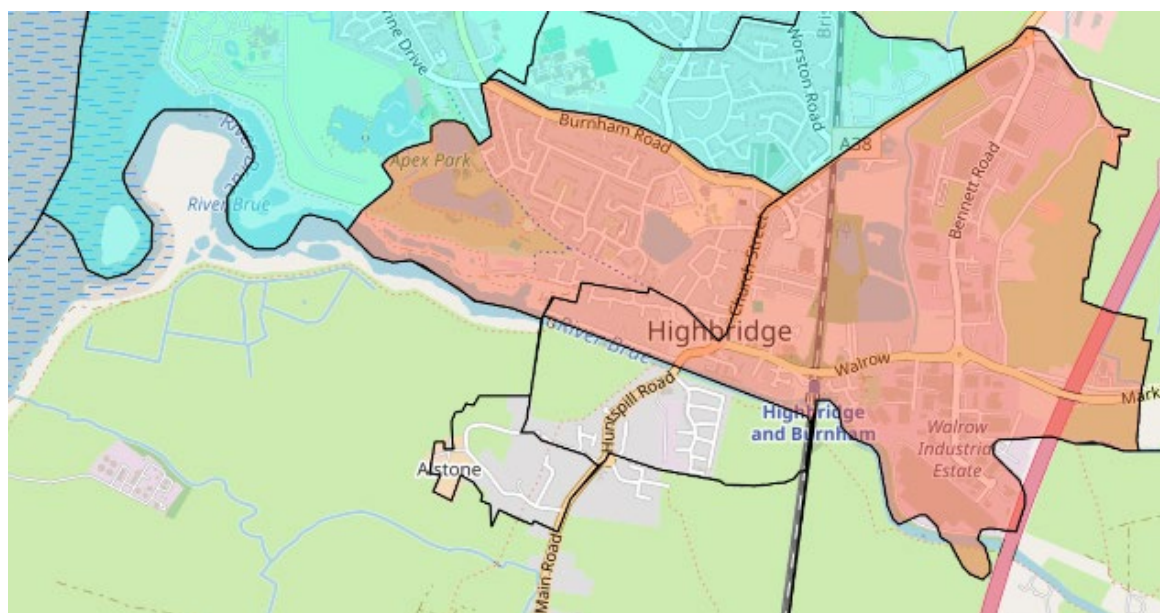
- Geography – This forms the southern portion of Burnham-on-Sea. It is centred on King Alfred School and the various community parks that are widely used by the community. It is a natural southern extension of the town.
- Shared services – Local residents use the local parks, shops, schools and community services. Of particular prominence is the King Alfred School off of the Burnham Road.

Proposed Division: Highbridge

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: WEQ (part of) and WEP (part of)*

Section of WEQ to include all roads not already placed in previously recommended division - Burnham South

Section of to include WEP all roads not already placed in recommended division - Puriton and Pawlett



Population: 4696

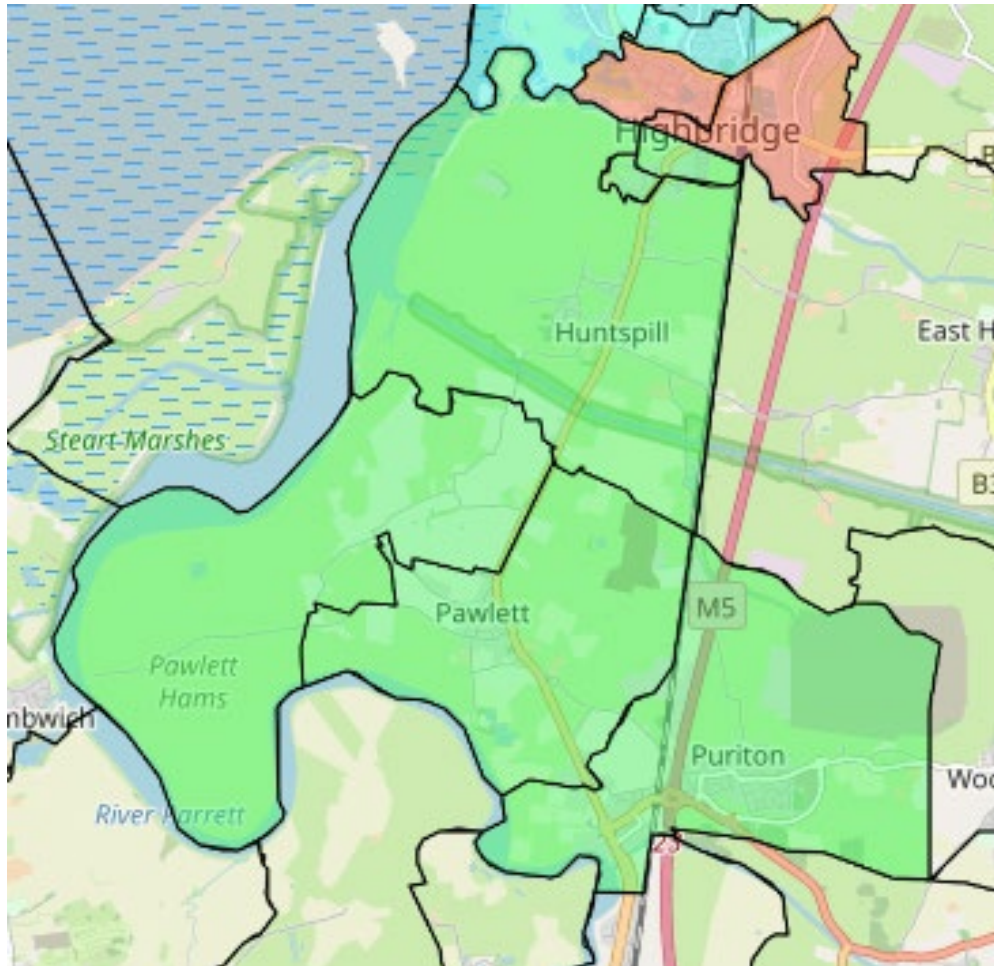
Justification:

- Geography – This would create a specific ward for Highbridge which has its own unique character and identity. The proposal would use the River Brue to make a natural boundary for the Highbridge division.
- Community – All too often Highbridge is combined with Burnham-on-Sea but it has its own community centres and infrastructure. It is a more deprived area than Burnham and has its own challenges. By allowing it to have its own division we create an opportunity for it to use its own voice in Council.

Proposed Division: Puriton & Pawlett

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BBV, BBW, BCG, BCH, BBX and WEP (part of)*

Section of WEP to include the following roads: Alstone Road, Huntspill Road, Meadow View, Adams Close, Farm Street, Homestead Avenue, Fallow Drive, Parlour Road, Mill Close, Harvest Lane, Dairy Court, Plough Road, Ryeland Street



Estimated population: 4855

Justification:

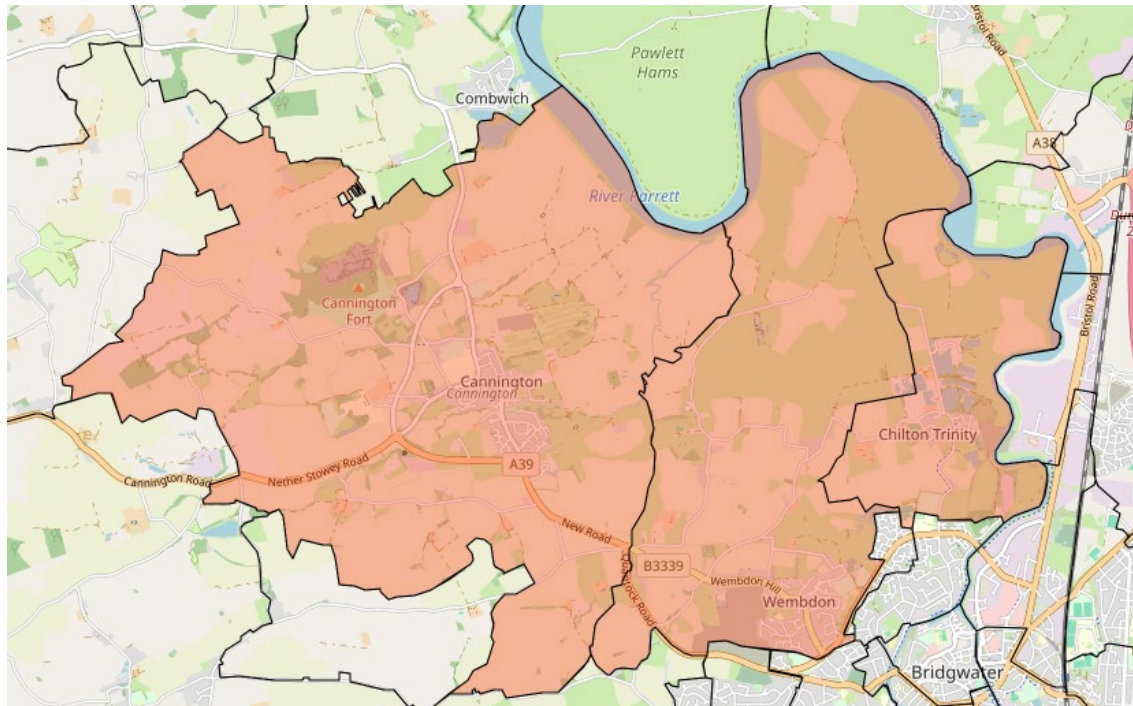
- Shared economic development focus - These areas are all directly impacted by the Gravity Enterprise Zone, which is transforming the local economy through industrial and technological expansion. Grouping them ensures cohesive representation of their shared stake in this major development.
- Transport and infrastructure integration - The new railway line and the motorway junction at Dunball will significantly impact these villages by improving connectivity and increasing traffic flows. A single ward would allow unified planning and decision-making to manage these changes effectively, ensuring benefits for all communities.
- Geographical proximity and accessibility - Puriton, Pawlett, and West Huntspill are located in close proximity to each other and to key infrastructure developments like Dunball Wharf, the motorway junction, and the new rail network. Their adjacency justifies grouping them into a single ward for seamless administration.
- Common challenges from development - The villages will face shared challenges such as managing increased traffic, housing demand, and environmental impacts due to the

Gravity expansion and associated infrastructure upgrades. Unified representation ensures these issues are addressed cohesively.

- Economic and social interdependence - Residents across these areas are likely to benefit from or contribute to the industrial and logistical opportunities at Dunball and Gravity. Grouping them acknowledges the interconnected nature of their economies and shared reliance on improved transport links.
- Cohesive planning for future growth - With significant development in progress, including Gravity, the new railway, and the new motorway junction, coordinated representation ensures aligned planning for housing, education, and public services to accommodate anticipated population and economic growth.
- Rural-urban balance - Despite economic expansion, these areas maintain a rural character. A unified ward can balance the needs of rural preservation with the demands of urban-style development, ensuring all voices are heard.
- Administrative efficiency - A single ward encompassing these areas simplifies governance, particularly in managing large-scale development projects like Gravity, which affect all villages similarly. Shared representation would streamline communication with developers and planners.
- Community ties and shared interests - These villages have a history of shared social and economic ties. Such as the older generation of the village working on the wharfs and then on the RoF and then socialising together over a game of skittles in many of the local pub and working man's clubs. Grouping them ensures representation that reflects their mutual interests, particularly in managing changes brought about by industrial and infrastructure expansion.

Proposed Division: Cannington & Wembdon

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAS, BCE, BAW*



Estimated Population: 4650

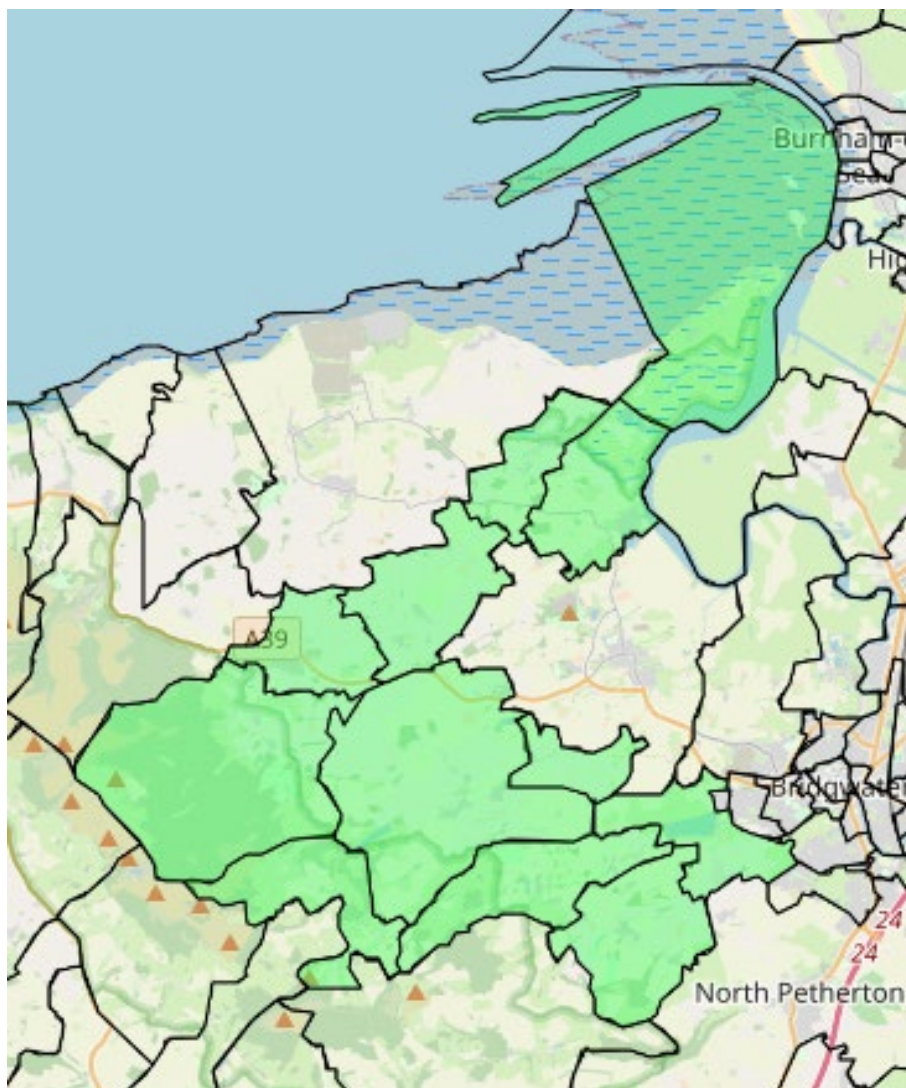
Justification

- Shared geographic and natural environment - These communities are all situated to the North and West of Bridgwater. They are a combination of rural and urban communities
- Shared challenges - These communities share similar challenges including agricultural development, access to services, and urban expansion. A single ward ensures these common concerns are addressed effectively.
- Transport and connectivity - The communities rely on interconnected roads and public transport networks. Unified representation ensures cohesive planning and maintenance of these crucial links for residents.
- Planning and development considerations - These areas face similar pressures regarding housing developments, maintaining the rural-urban balance, and ensuring infrastructure growth does not compromise the natural environment.

Proposed Division: Quantocks

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts:*

BBS, BBR, BBT, BBD, BBJ, BBU, BBZ, BCB, BBC, BBE, BCA, BAZ



Estimated population: 4406

Justification:

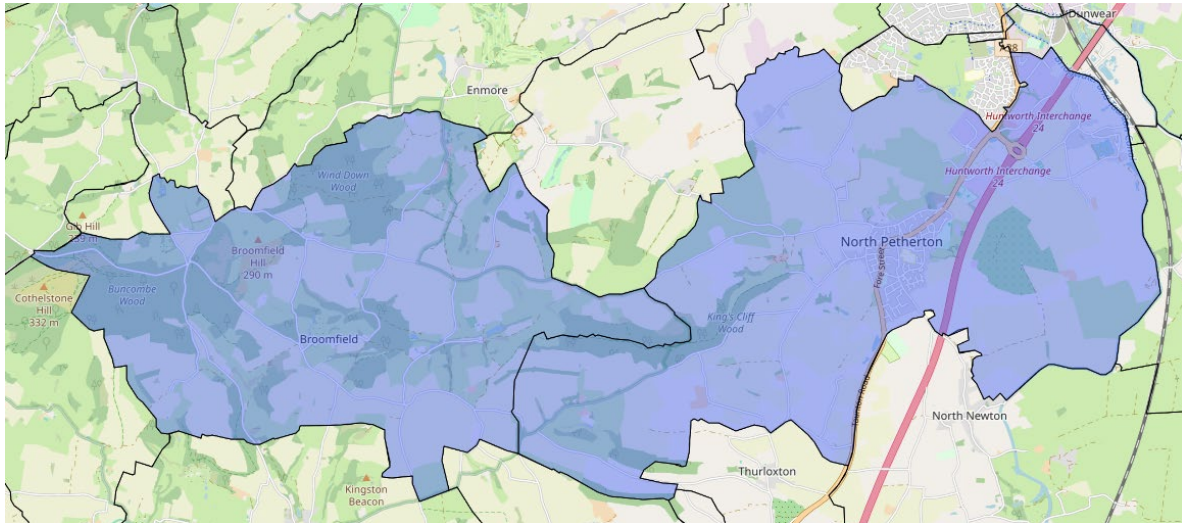
- Shared geographic and natural environment - These communities are all situated within or near the Quantock Hills and share a common interest in protecting and managing the natural environment, including preserving landscapes, biodiversity, and recreational areas.
- Cultural and Historical Connections - The villages have deep historical and cultural ties, with landmarks like Coleridge Cottage in Nether Stowey and many more heritage sites of the Quantocks uniting them. These shared histories make them a strong cohesive group with aligned community values.
- Tourism and local economy - Tourism plays a significant role in the local economy, driven by the appeal of the Quantock Hills and nearby attractions. Grouping these areas into one ward ensures representation that focuses on supporting sustainable tourism and the local businesses it benefits.
- Rural character and shared challenges - These communities share a predominantly rural character, with similar challenges including agricultural development, access to rural

services, and conservation issues. A single ward ensures these common concerns are addressed effectively.

- Transport and connectivity - The villages and hamlets rely on interconnected rural roads and public transport networks. Unified representation ensures cohesive planning and maintenance of these crucial links for residents and visitors along with these vital transport links for the HPC development it would seem logical that these areas represented by one councillor and not split across different divisions.
- Community ties - Rural communities, such as these ones are rooted in community, ties and collaboration on community initiatives, such as local events, festivals, and conservation projects. And Co-operation during challenging times, such as was seen during the Covid pandemic, snow and most recently the storms we've been facing. These shared activities highlight the interconnected nature of the communities and their mutual support systems.
- Planning and development considerations - These areas face similar pressures regarding housing developments, maintaining the rural-urban balance, and ensuring infrastructure growth does not compromise the AONB. Grouping them allows for unified and sustainable decision-making which is key given the large amount of development happens in the surrounding areas.
- Emergency and environmental management - Proximity to the Quantocks presents shared risks, such as flooding in foothill areas or fire risks in the hills during dry summer or isolation during heavy winter snows. A single ward allows for coordinated planning and resource allocation to address these concerns.
- Recreational and social use of the Quantocks - Residents of all these communities use the Quantocks for recreation, fostering a shared interest in maintaining access, trails, and facilities. Unified representation ensures these interests are well-represented in council decisions.

Proposed Division: North Petherton

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BBM and BAQ*



Estimated population: 4611

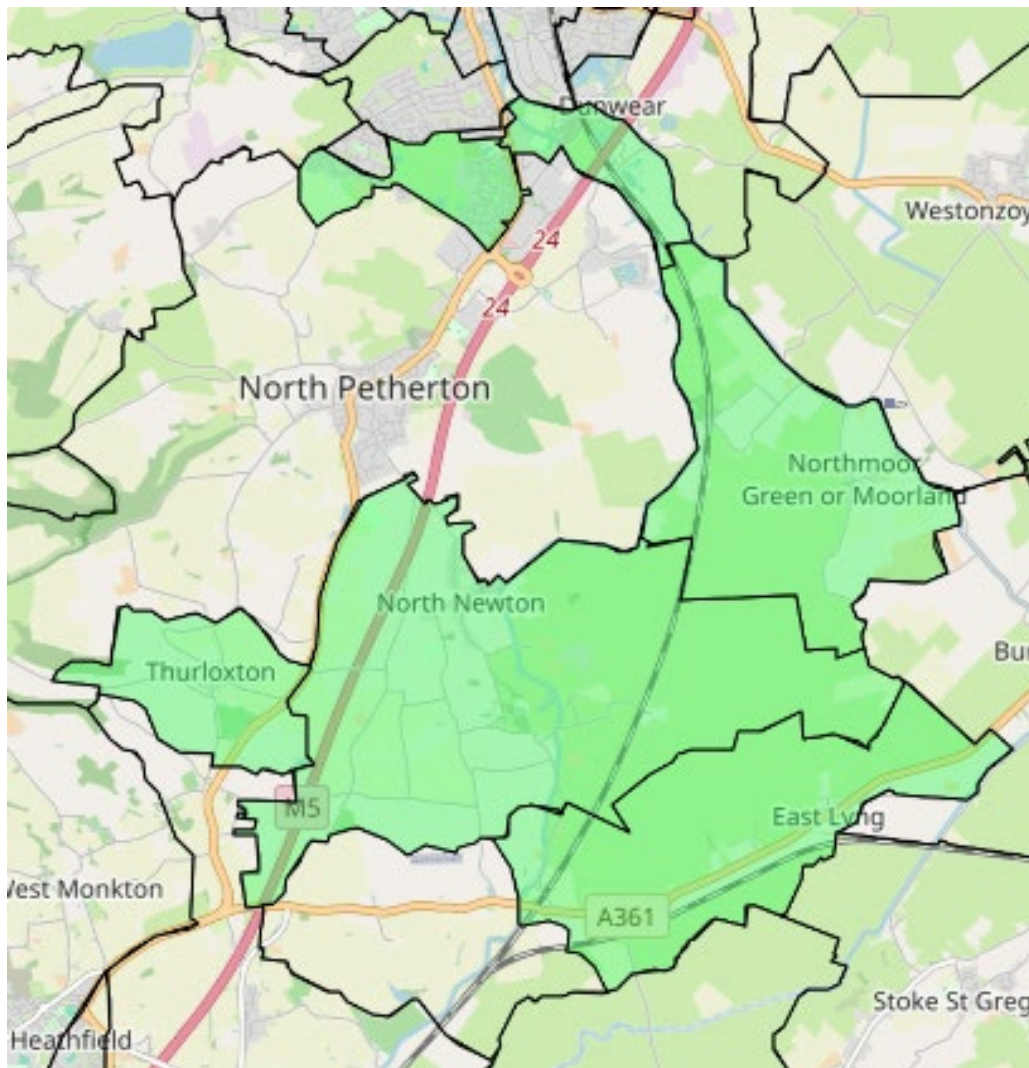
Justification:

- Geography – The proposal comprises a number of rural communities to the South and West of Bridgwater.
- Shared interest – They are predominantly rural in nature and face the same challenges together such as economic development, bus services, flooding and transport links.
- Shared services – The ward centres on North Petherton which has the majority of the local services that are widely used by the surrounding area including Broomfield.

Proposed Division: North Newton & Stockmoor

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BBL, BBP, BBO, BBF, BCD, BBN (part of)*

Section of BBN to include all roads not already placed other division - Hamp



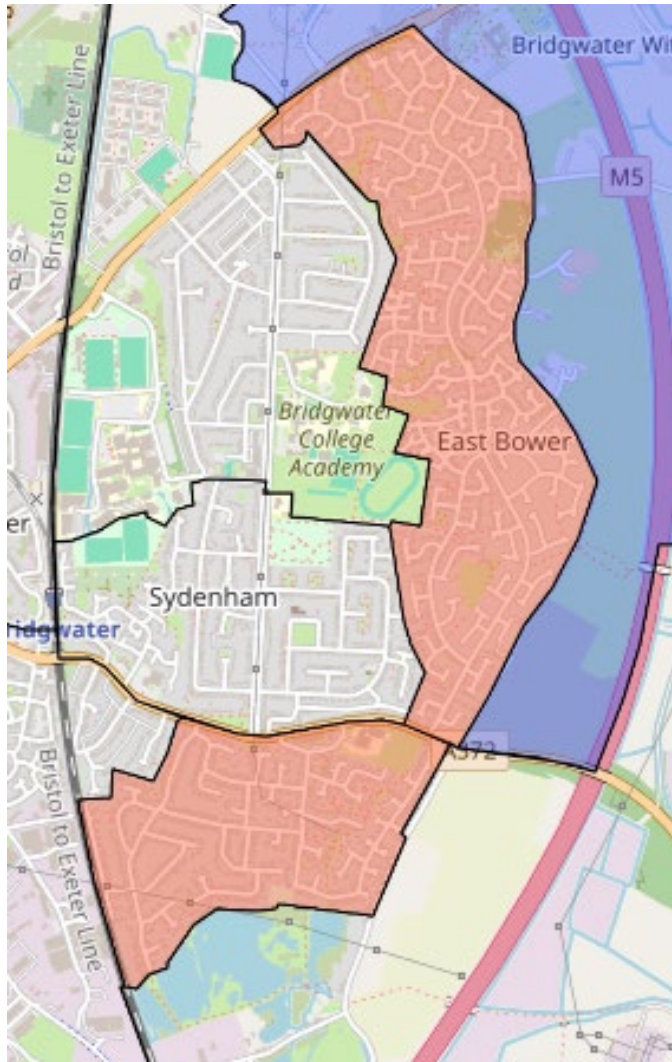
Estimated population: 4366

Justification:

- Geography – the proposed division lies to the south of Bridgwater with most of the area falling within the North Pertheron Town Council Boundary.
- Shared interest / history – The areas share many key interests and have deep historical ties in dealing with adversity. For example Newton, Moorland & Lyng have common history in dealing with flooding.
- Shared services – the proposed division would share key facilities such as schools in Stockmoor and Newton.
- Community links

Proposed Division: East Bridgwater

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAC and BAH.*



Estimated population: 5040

Justification:

- **Geography** - These two polling districts are currently part of the Bridgwater East & Bawdrip electoral division. The electorate in these areas already share an understanding and a sense of connection with each other's communities. Therefore, it is recommended that these two polling districts be combined to form a new electoral division.
- **Shared interest** - Both polling districts share similarities as exclusively residential areas located on the eastern outskirts of Bridgwater. Suburban in character, they rely heavily on car transportation. As the two easternmost polling districts of Bridgwater, they are both experiencing new housing developments expanding beyond their boundaries. Over the next 5-10 years, they are likely to face similar pressures and challenges resulting from this ongoing development.
- **Shared services** - Both polling districts are well-served by local shops within their boundaries, catering effectively to the needs of both electorates. Each district also has its

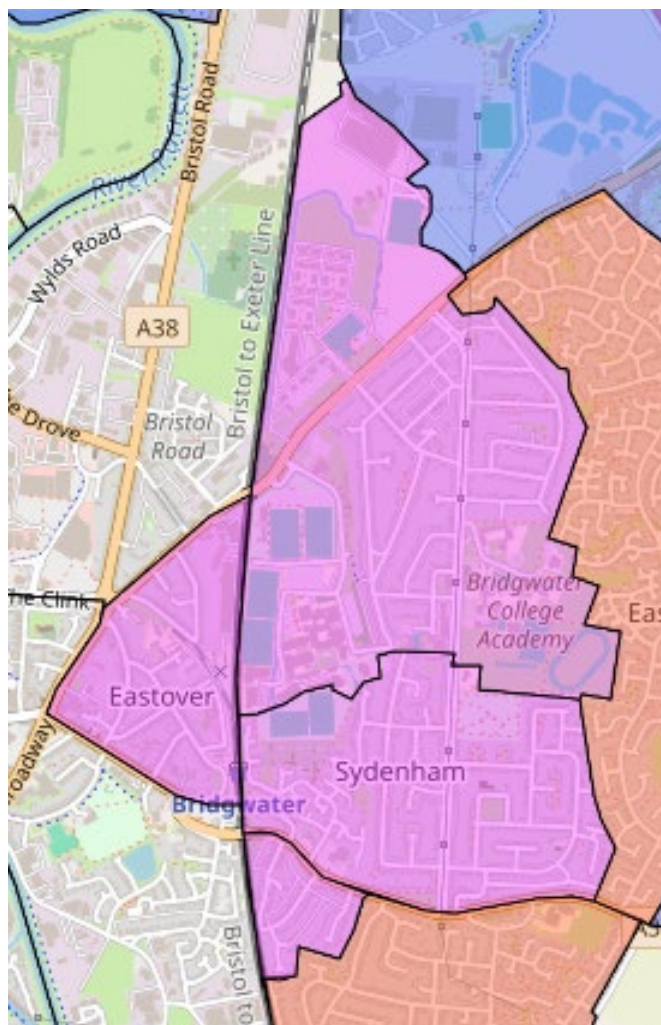
own play areas and parks, which are equally beneficial to residents in both areas. These districts are relatively self-sufficient, with existing facilities meeting the needs of their communities effectively.

Division: Sydenham

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAD, BAG, BAE (part of) and BAF (part of)*

Section of BAE to be added including the following roads: Bath Road, Devonshire Street, Wellington Road, Edward Street, Polden Street, Mariners Close, Cornborough Place, Cannon Close, Rosebery Avenue, Albion Close, Bailey Street, Branksome Avenue.

Section of BAF to be added including the following roads: Linden Close, Loxleigh Avenue, Loxleigh Gardens, Penzoy Avenue.



Estimated population: 4838

Justification:

- **Geography** - The areas designated as BAD and BAG are historically recognized as the "Sydenham Estate" in Bridgwater. They are connected by Parkway, the main through road. Residents commonly identify themselves as living in "Sydenham."

- **Shared interest** -

- **Shared services** - A row of shops is situated along Parkway within BAG, but these serve as the closest shopping area for residents of both BAG and BAD. The café located here is the only one in the Sydenham Estate and is frequented by residents from both districts. The Sydenham Community Centre, also located in BAG, serves as the primary community hub for the entire Sydenham Estate, catering to both BAD and BAG residents.

Coronation Park, located in BAD, functions as the local park and play area for the residents of both districts. Bridgwater College Academy, though located in BAG, is the nearest school and serves as the main educational institution for families living in both BAD

and BAG.

- **Community links** - BAD and BAG are areas with high levels of deprivation, and as such they share very similar challenges.

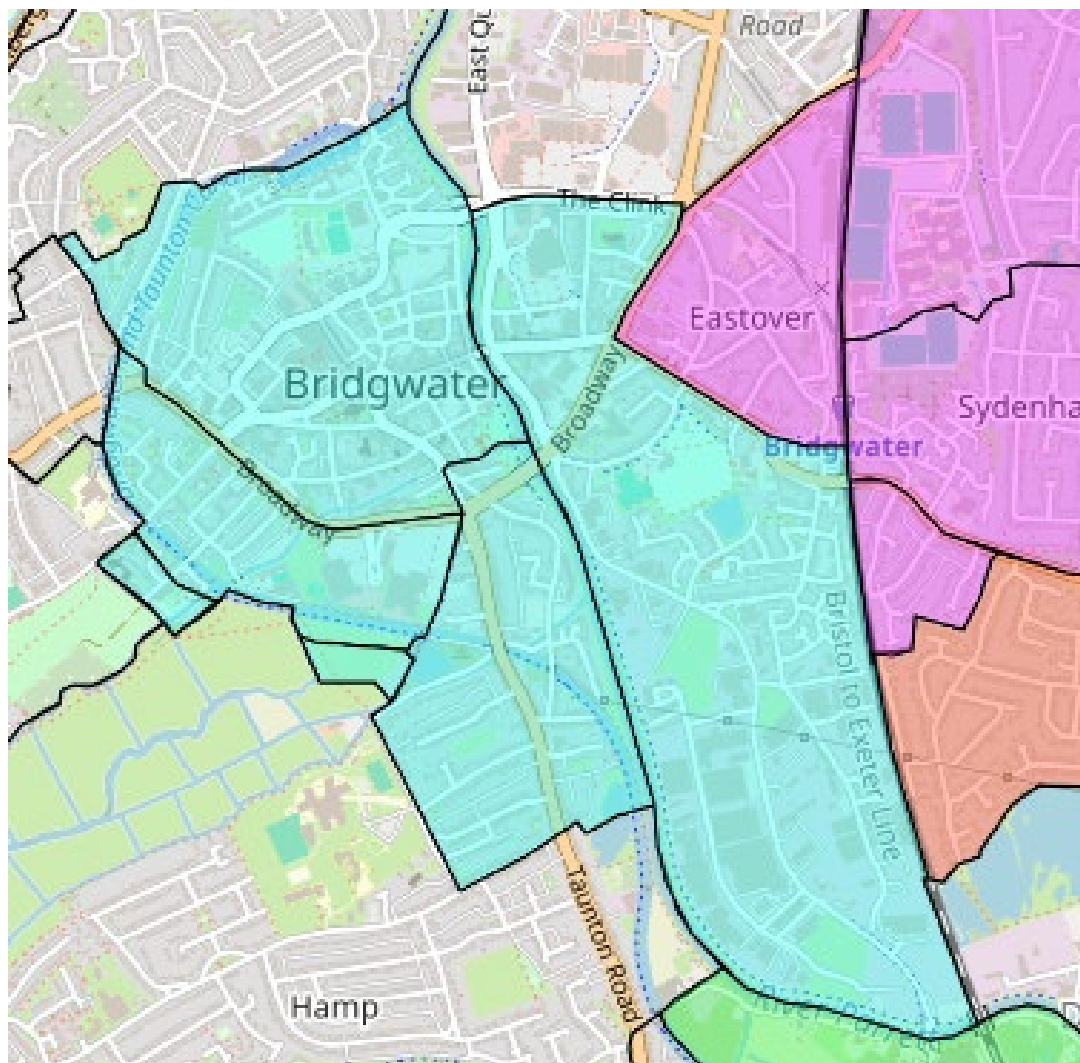
Proposed Division: Bridgwater Central

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts:*

BAK, BAM, BAL (part of) and BAF (part of)

Section of BAF to include all roads not already placed other division - Sydenham

Section of BAL to be added including the following roads: West Street, Milton Place, St. Matthews Green, Westfield Close, Albert Street, Friarn Avenue, Halswell Close.



Estimated population: 5142

Justification:

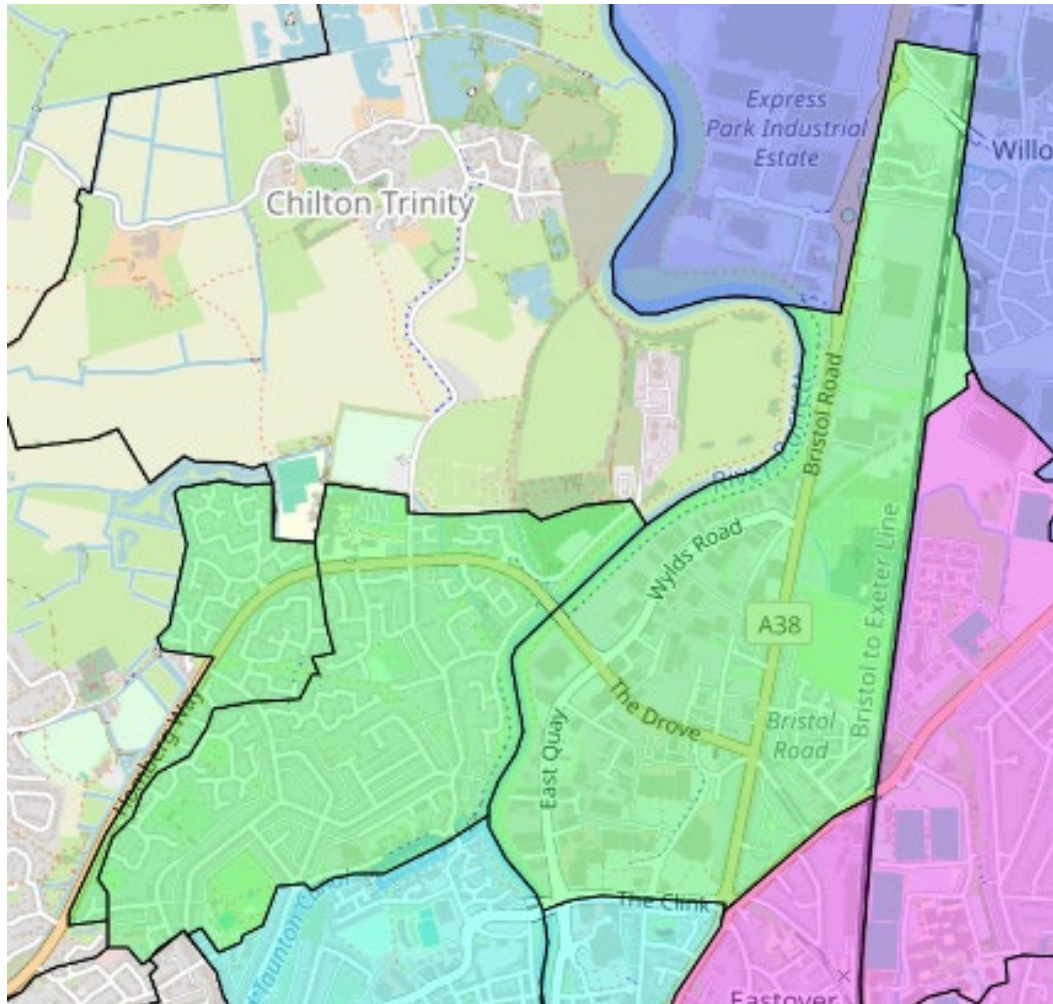
- Geography – BAK and BAM are currently part of the Bridgwater South division. It is recommended that these two remain grouped as they share the central location with shared challenges.
- Shared interest – the ward shares the challenges of ASB, transport pressure and housing demands. Allowing a single political representative will ensure a clear voice to represent the neighbourhoods.
- Shared services – the communities share the local green spaces such as Blake Gardens and additionally make use of the central town facilities located along the Taunton Road.

Proposed Division: Victoria

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAJ, BCF and BAE (part of)*

Section of BAE to include all roads not already placed other division - Sydenham

Section of BAL to be added including the following roads: West Street, Milton Place, St. Matthews Green, Westfield Close, Albert Street, Friarn Avenue, Halswell Close.



Estimated population: 5058

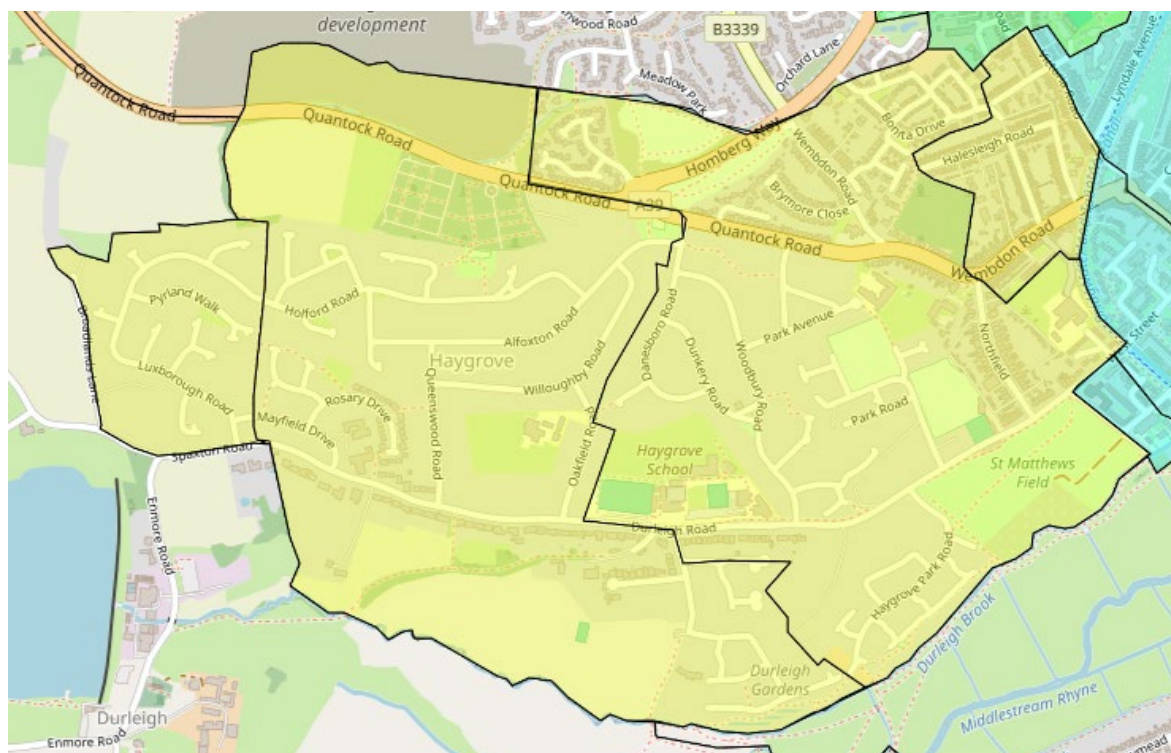
Justification:

- Geography - BAJ and BCF are currently part of the Bridgwater West Division. BAJ and BCF have historically been known as the 'Victoria' area of Bridgwater. BAE is connected to BAJ through Western Way. Most of the remaining geographical area of BAE is industrial/retail. This is a centre of employment for the electorate in both BAE and BAJ.
- Shared interest – The communities face similar pressures and challenges from traffic and transport.
- Shared services - Chilton Trinity School in BAJ serves the electorate in BCF. BCF access and use the green spaces in BAJ, including Victoria Park. Victoria Park Community Centre is in BAJ, and also serves the electorate in BCF. It is also the central shopping area for both districts. The East Quay Medical centre in BAE serves the electorate in both BAE and BAJ.

Proposed Division: Bridgwater West

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BAN, BAO, BAY and BAL (part of)*

Section of BAL to include all roads not already placed other division – Bristol Central



Estimated population: 5290

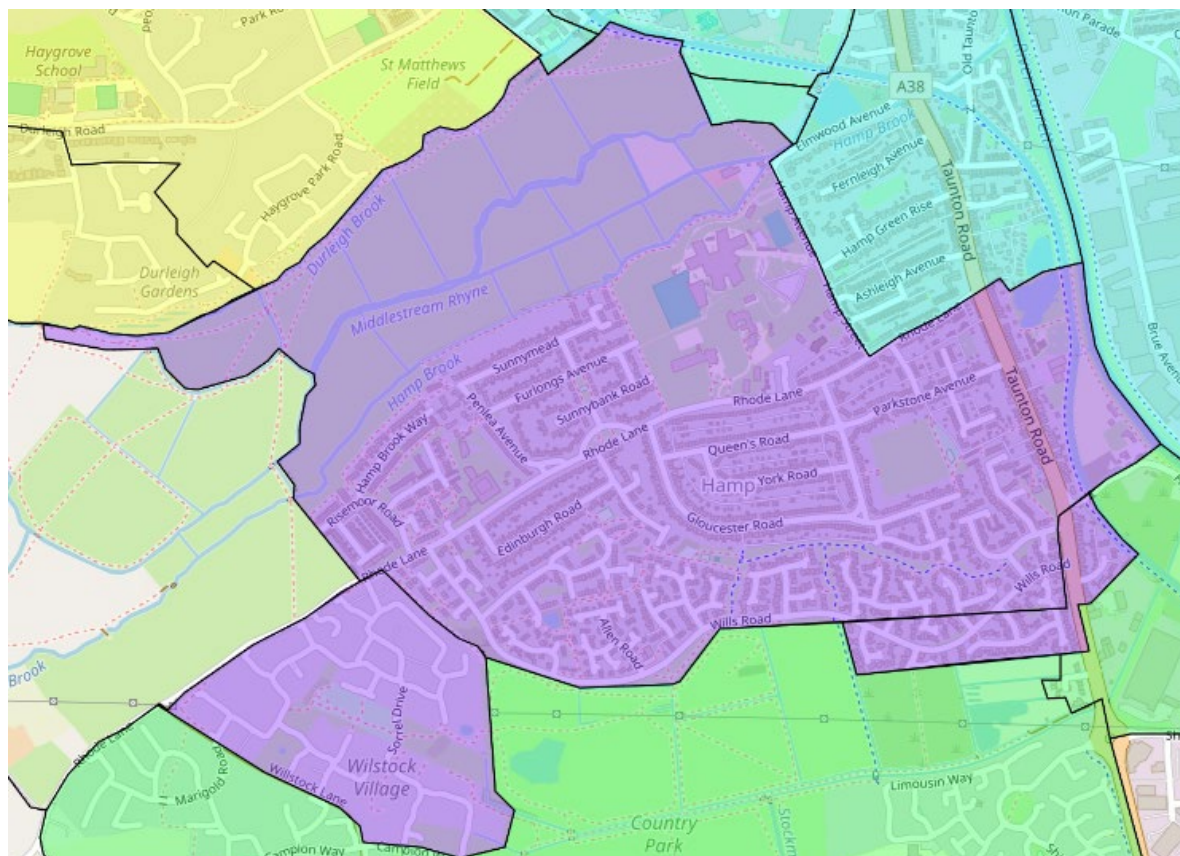
Justification:

- Geography – these communities are currently part of the Bridgwater West division. They are the western suburban fringe of the town with the same challenges and pressures.
- Shared services – the communities share numerous services such as schools (Haygrove School and St Marys & St Joseph's School). St Matthews field in BAN remains the main green space for the electorate in the area.
- Community links - The communities function as a cohesive whole, with strong interconnections. The BAN electorate identifies as being part of Durleigh (BAY), reflecting their integration into a unified community. Parents, schools, and children are all closely linked within a single division, which is vital for maintaining local connections and fostering a sense of community.

Proposed Division: Hamp

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts:* BAI, BBK, BBN (part of)

Section of BBN to be added including the following roads: Octavia Close, Snowberry Close, Lilliana Way, Bilberry Lane, Angelica Drive, Rosa Way, Verbena Walk, Gardenia Walk, Hollyhock Close, Roberta Walk, Acacia Walk, Korresia Walk, Cristata Way, Barberry Drive, Forsythia Way, Cornflower Close, Jasmine Close, Lotus Drive, Southlea Gardens, Bramble Road, Primrose Walk, Lucerne Crescent, Bugle Way, Sorrel Drive, Cowslip Walk, Foxglove Walk, Violet Path, Tansey Court, Teasel Path, Clover Way, Buttercup Walk, Bluebell Drive, Orchid Way.



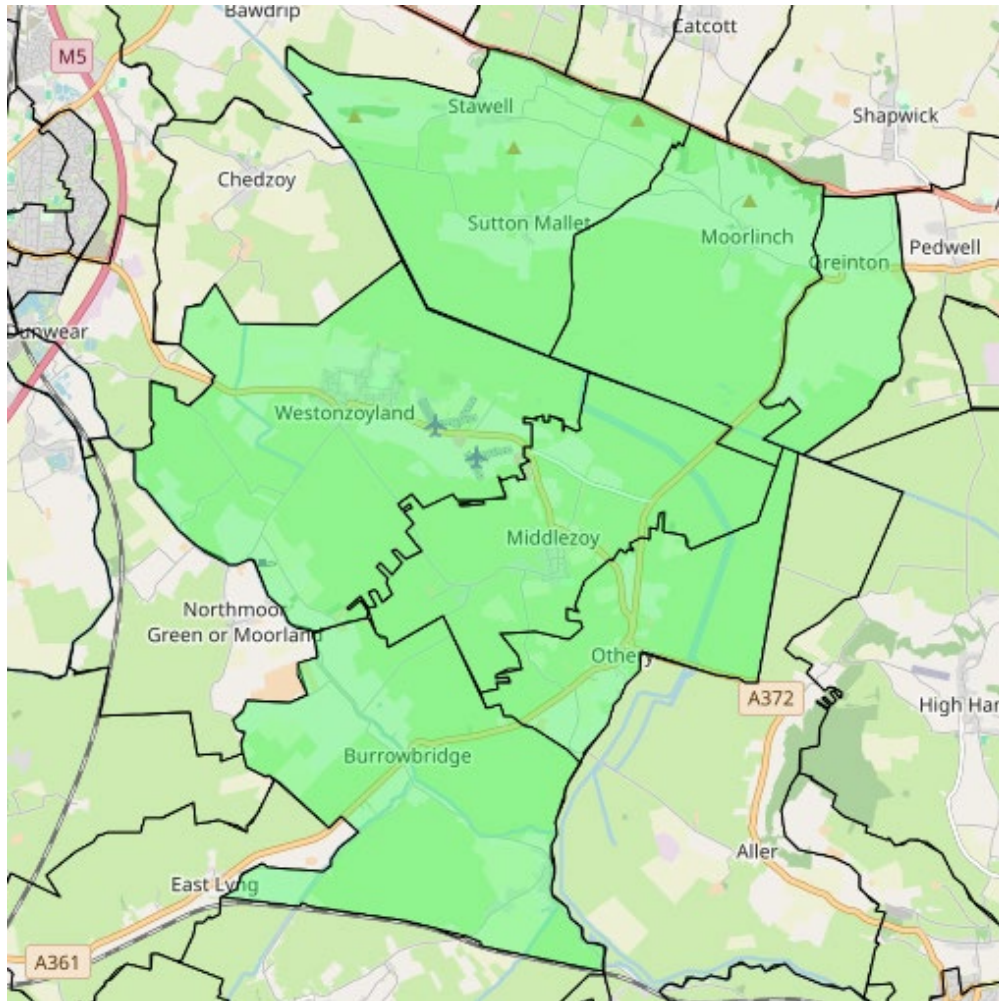
Estimated population: 4610

Justification:

- Geography - BAI and BBK are both part of the current Bridgwater South division. Although BAI and BBK are part of two different parishes, BBK is seen to be in the same estate of BAI known as 'Hamp'. It is recommended that this remains. It is recommended to include part of BBN. Though this is known as 'Wilstock' it is seen by many as an extension of the Hamp estate.
- Shared services The communities use the principle shopping area around Morrisons in BAI as well as the post office and One Stop located near by. Similarly the local community hub is located in BAI and used by all residents in the vicinity. The Robert Blake School is the principle education centre
- The challenge of growth - The BBN part of this recommended division is a growing development and so may include more than the 4610 electorates. This is hard to model with the data available. This growth creates a shared challenge for the wider communities in this division.

Proposed Division: Westonzoyland

Boundaries: *Proposed division comprised of the following existing Polling Districts: BCI, BBG, BBQ, BCC, BBI, BBH, BAA and W-DAN*



Estimated population: 4690

Justification:

- Geography – these interconnected villages lie to the South East of Bridgwater and share a common history such as their links to the Battle of Sedgemoor.
- Shared interest – The communities are interconnected, in fact the villages of Middlezoy, Othry, Moorlinch, Stawell, Sutton Mallet & Greinton even share the same Benefice. They are rural communities dealing with the shared challenges of agricultural development, poor public transport links, flooding and supporting local services.
- Shared services – The villages share key local amenities. For example Middlezoy and Othry Schools are now combined. Middlezoy has a active community Shop and Post Office which the neighbouring communities all support. Similarly Westonzoyland has a shop & butchers which is again used by the wider village network.