

# New electoral arrangements for East Herts District Council Final Recommendations

August 2022

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

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# Introduction

## Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

## What is an electoral review?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Why East Hertfordshire?

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

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

- The wards in East Hertfordshire 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 East Hertfordshire

9 East Hertfordshire should be represented by 50 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 East Hertfordshire should have 26 wards, four fewer than there are now

11 The boundaries of most wards should change; three will stay the same.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for East Hertfordshire.

## How will the recommendations affect you?

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

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the district or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not affect local taxes, house

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

prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

## Review timetable

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

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
21 September 2021	Number of councillors decided
28 September 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
6 December 2021	End of the consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
1 March 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of the second consultation
9 May 2022	End of the consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
2 August 2022	Publication of final recommendations





## Analysis and final recommendations

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

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

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

	2021	2027
Electorate of East Hertfordshire	113,627	132,002
Number of councillors	50	50
Average number of electors per councillor	2,273	2,640

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

## Submissions received

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

## Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 16% by 2027. A significant reason for this increase was due to the large-scale Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development, in addition to developments surrounding Bishop's Stortford and Ware.

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

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

23 The Amwell Society queried the electoral forecasts in the less densely populated areas of the district during the first consultation on warding patterns, suggesting they did not accurately reflect the Council's Local Plan. While we noted the concerns raised, as stated in our technical guidance, providing electoral forecasts can be a difficult and somewhat inexact science. While local authorities are best placed to know about any planning permissions and the likely pattern of future development, these can be dynamic, and the Commission acknowledges that producing a near-perfect electoral forecast can be a difficult task. We considered the forecast produced by the Council to be underpinned by reasonable evidence and we used the figures agreed with the Council before the start of the review to produce our draft recommendations.

24 We received one submission about the electoral figures during the consultation on our draft recommendations. This asked whether large-scale development had been factored into the electorate forecasts, such as the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development. The forecasts we agreed with the Council account for the large-scale development anticipated across the district up to 2027. As stated in paragraph 17, we cannot consider development after this point, as we are legally obliged to only have regard to changes in the number of local government electors likely to take place within five years following the making of our recommendations.

25 We remain satisfied that the projected figures remain the best available and have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

## Number of councillors

26 East Hertfordshire District Council currently has 50 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

27 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 50 councillors: for example, 50 one-councillor wards, 25 two-councillor wards, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor wards.

28 We received two submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on warding patterns. The Hertford & Stortford Labour Party opposed the retention of 50 councillors, arguing that an increase was required because of a growing population and technological advances that have made councillors more contactable, thereby increasing their workload. While we acknowledged that population growth and technological changes can have an impact on councillor workload, we did not consider that this would automatically require more elected councillors. A local resident suggested that there were too many councillors but did not suggest an alternative number. We were satisfied that a council size of 50 would

ensure the Council could carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively in the future and based our draft recommendations on this number.

29 We received one submission from a local resident about the number of councillors in response to the consultation on our draft recommendations. They argued that our 'proposals dilute excessively representation levels' and that 'the workload and demands upon elected members will be unduly increased and access made more difficult'. However, the submission did not provide sufficiently detailed evidence as to how an alternative number would allow the Council to carry out its roles and responsibilities more effectively. We have therefore decided to confirm our decision that East Hertfordshire be represented by 50 councillors as final.

## Ward boundaries consultation

30 We received 33 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included two district-wide proposals from the East Hertfordshire Conservative Group and the East Hertfordshire & Broxbourne Liberal Democrats. We also received a near district-wide submission from the East Hertfordshire Green Party, which was also submitted by several Green Party affiliated individuals and several local residents. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

31 The district-wide schemes provided for a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-councillor wards for East Hertfordshire. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards broadly resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used identifiable boundaries.

32 Our draft recommendations were broadly based upon the district-wide proposals made by the Conservatives. However, in some areas of the district, we were persuaded to adopt parts of Liberal Democrat and Green Party proposals, in addition to other more localised submissions, which provided evidence of good community links and locally recognised boundaries. Furthermore, in certain areas, we considered that the proposals did not provide the best balance between our statutory criteria so we identified our own alternative boundaries.

33 As a result of the restrictions arising from the Covid-19 outbreak, we carried out a detailed virtual tour of East Hertfordshire. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the draft recommendations.

34 Our draft recommendations were for eight single-councillor wards, 12 two-councillor wards and six three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting

community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

## Draft recommendations consultation

35 We received 42 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These were from four political groups, Oliver Heald MP (North East Hertfordshire), six parish councils, five councillors, one local organisation and 25 local residents.

36 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with modifications to the wards in Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Ware based on the submissions received. We are also renaming our draft Datchworth & Walkern ward.

## Final recommendations

37 Our final recommendations are for eight single-councillor wards, 12 two-councillor wards and six three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

38 The tables and maps on pages 9–26 detail our final recommendations for each area of East Hertfordshire. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory<sup>5</sup> criteria:

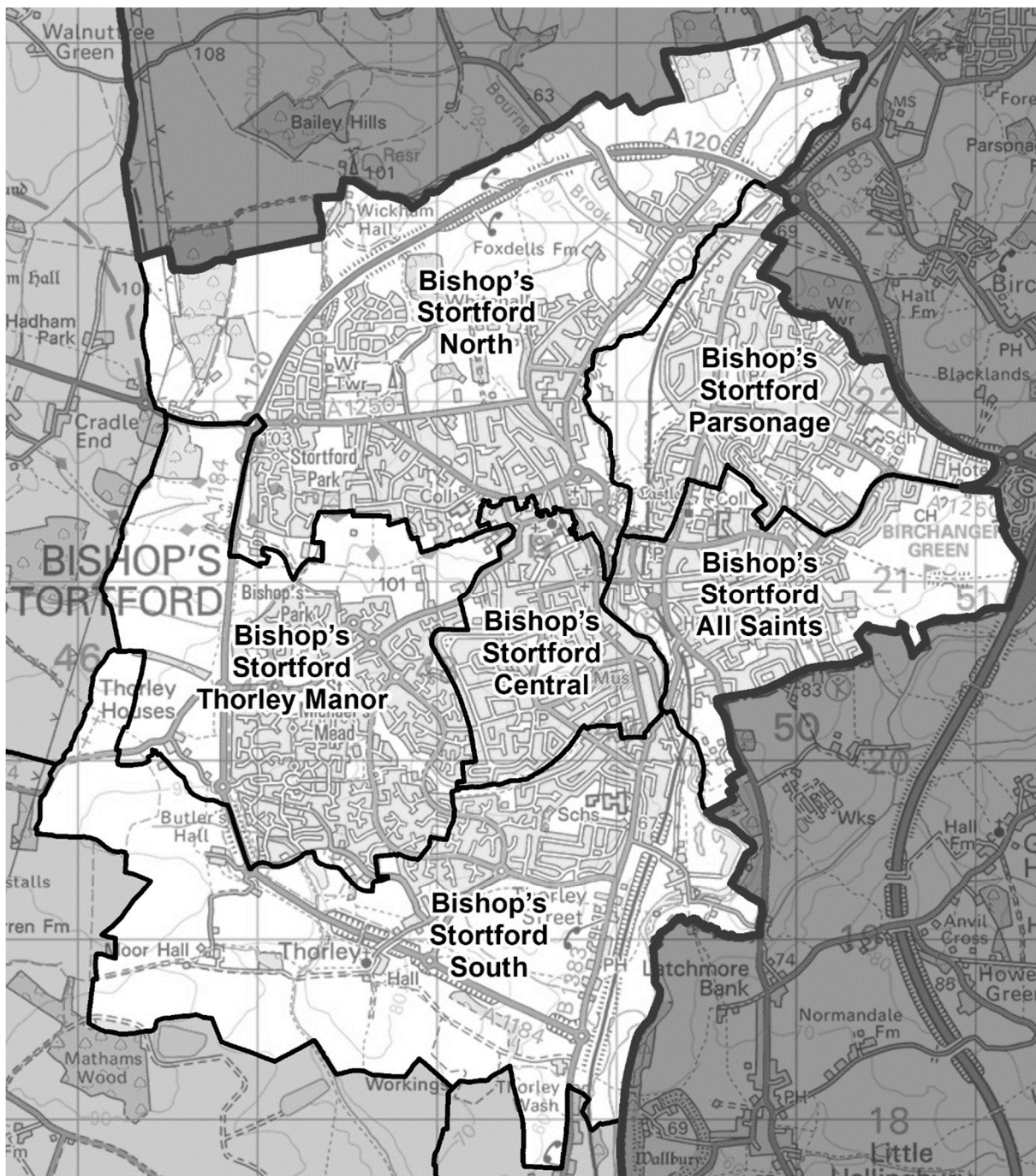
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

39 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 35 and the large map accompanying this report.

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<sup>5</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## Bishop's Stortford



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Bishop's Stortford All Saints	2	-1%
Bishop's Stortford Central	2	10%
Bishop's Stortford North	3	9%
Bishop's Stortford Parsonage	2	-2%
Bishop's Stortford South	2	0%
Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor	3	0%

40 A local resident requested that Bishop's Stortford be incorporated into Essex. However, changing the external boundaries between East Hertfordshire and neighbouring local authorities falls outside the scope of the current electoral review, so no changes of this nature are being made.

*Bishop's Stortford All Saints and Bishop's Stortford Parsonage*

41 We received five submissions that directly related to these two wards during consultation. The East Hertfordshire District Council Conservative Group ('the Conservatives'), Bishop's Stortford Conservatives and Councillor Snowdon all supported our decision to follow the River Stort as the western boundary of these wards, with the three respondents broadly agreeing that it would reflect community identities more effectively than the current Bishop's Stortford Meads ward, which straddles the river.

42 The Bishop's Stortford & Sawbridgeworth Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') expressed concern that the proposed boundary between the two wards did not respect community identities in three areas. They contended that Manor Links (and its adjacent roads) and Shortcroft are more closely associated with the Parsonage Lane area. They also argued that the community around the Hockerill junction would be divided between the two wards. However, they noted that, in these two instances, 'there are grounds for the draft recommendations based on well-defined boundaries and that alternatives are not readily identifiable'. We are therefore not proposing any changes to the draft recommendations in these two areas.

43 Nonetheless, the Liberal Democrats did propose an alternative boundary in relation to the area between the junction of Dunmow Road and Raynham Road, and the Hockerill Anglo-European College. They suggested a revised boundary that avoids the division of Stortford Hall Industrial Park between wards and places all the properties on Dunmow Road and Edens Close in Bishop's Stortford All Saints ward. We are content that this relatively small modification will provide for a stronger and more identifiable boundary, so we have adopted this change as part of our final recommendations.

44 In relation to Bishop's Stortford All Saints ward, the Liberal Democrats opposed the proposed name of the Goods Yard parish ward, which is bounded by the county division boundary that follows the railway line, the River Stort and Station Road. They argued that the development on the Goods Yard site only covers part of the proposed parish ward and instead suggested that the name Riverside or Waterside would be more appropriate. They stated that 'the latter also references the Waterside Stortford walking trail, a large section of which is contained within the (parish) ward'. We have been persuaded by the evidence received and have renamed the Goods Yard parish ward as Waterside as part of our final recommendations.

45 A local resident requested that our proposed Bishop's Stortford All Saints and Bishop's Stortford Parsonage wards should be one ward. We decided not to adopt this proposal as a three-councillor ward would produce a forecast electoral variance of 31%, which we consider too high. While a four-councillor ward would provide for good electoral equality, we take the view that a ward returning more than three councillors could potentially dilute the accountability of members to the local electorate. In this case, we were not persuaded enough compelling evidence had been received for us to move away from that position.

#### *Bishop's Stortford Central and Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor*

46 Although broadly supportive of these two wards, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats both suggested, to differing extents, that electors residing on Windhill and its adjacent roads should be included in Bishop's Stortford Central ward, indicating that electors in this area look towards the town centre for local amenities and facilities. The Conservative submission, which had the support of the Bishop's Stortford Conservatives and Councillor Snowdon, included all electors along Windhill (up to the roundabout, where the road ends and then continues onto Great Hadham Road), in addition to electors residing on Bell's Hill, Regency Close, Markwell Place, Jeans Lane, Windhill Fields, Windhill Old Road, The Stewarts and Windhill Gardens. Conversely, the Liberal Democrats transferred electors residing on the eastern section of Windhill (east of St Mary's Catholic School), Bells Hill, Regency Close, Markwell Place, Jeans Lane and the section of Hadham Road between the junction with Bells Hill and Bishop's Stortford College.

47 We were persuaded by the evidence received in these submissions that electors in this area should be incorporated into our Bishop's Stortford Central ward. However, as part of our final recommendations, we have adopted the Conservatives' proposal. We agreed that electors along the entirety of Windhill should be incorporated in Bishop's Stortford Central ward.

48 Our final recommendations for Bishop's Stortford Central and Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor produce wards with forecast electoral variances of 10% and 0%, respectively, by 2027. We consider that, after careful consideration of the evidence received, these two wards provide the most effective balance between our statutory criteria.

#### *Bishop's Stortford North*

49 The Conservatives, with the support of the Bishop's Stortford Conservatives and Councillor Snowdon, suggested that 67-83 Hadham Road be included in Bishop's Stortford North ward so that the entirety of the road is in a single ward. We have adopted this suggestion as we agree that this change will better reflect community identities and promote effective and convenient local government.

50 Both the Conservatives and a local resident stated that the division of the town centre between wards was not ideal, with the local resident suggesting that the boundary between our Bishop's Stortford Central and Bishop's Stortford North wards follow Bridge Street and The Causeway instead. However, as recognised by the Conservatives, following the county division boundary here will aid effective and convenient local government, as it would avoid the creation of a small parish ward that would comprise part of the town centre. Additionally, making such a change would increase electoral inequality, given the proposed ward is already forecast to have an electoral variance of 10% by 2027, which is the upper-most limit of what we normally consider to be good electoral equality.

51 The local resident also proposed to move the boundary from the River Stort to Adderley Road, thereby transferring electors residing at Jackson Wharf, Masterman Wharf and Riverside Wharf from Bishop's Stortford North ward into either Bishop's Stortford Central or Bishop's Stortford All Saints wards. They argued that electors here look towards the town centre and this modification would reflect community identities. However, we consider that the River Stort represents a stronger and more identifiable boundary than Adderley Road, and we were not persuaded to adopt this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

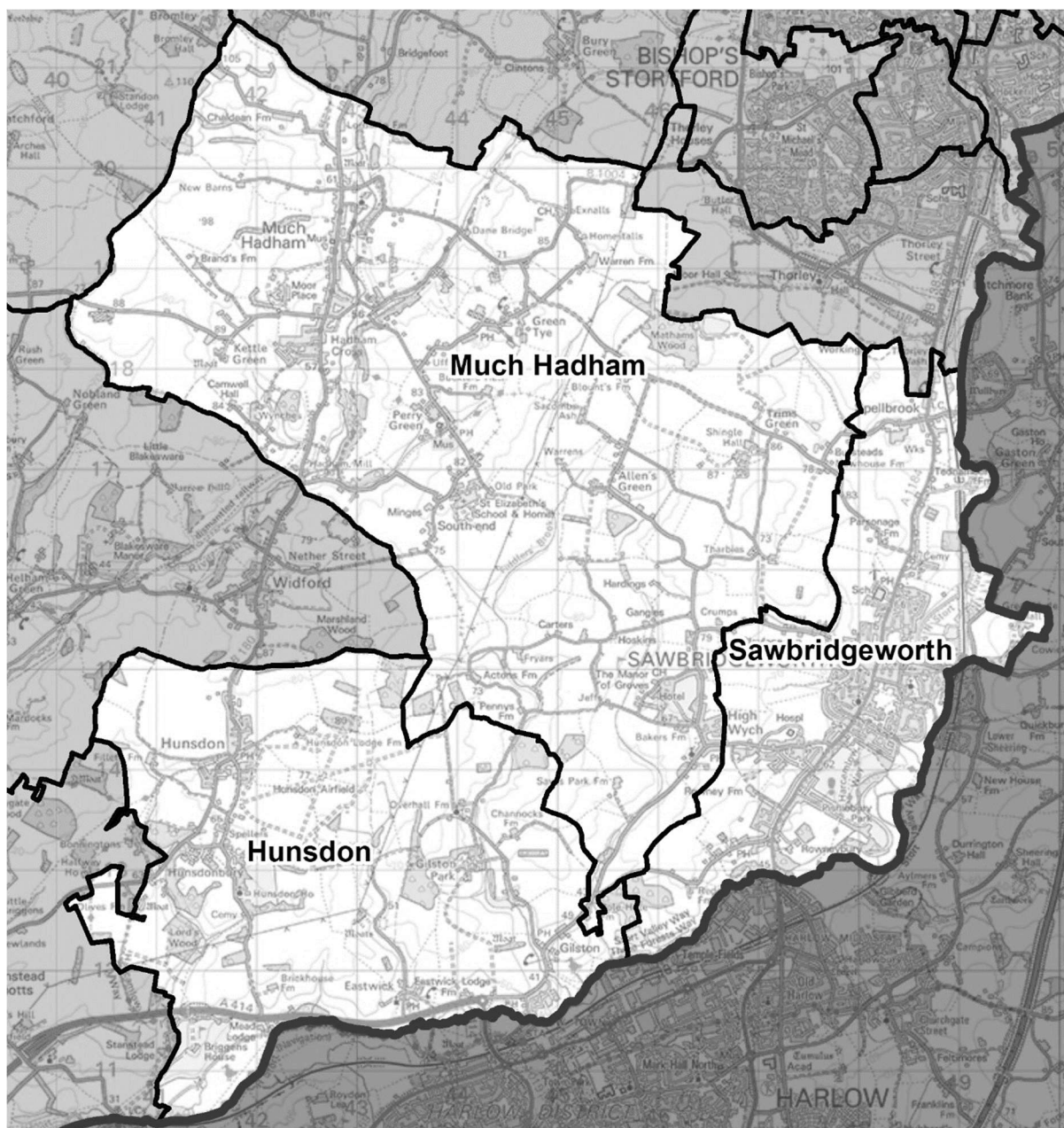
52 The Liberal Democrats requested that we rename the North East and North West parish wards to Chantry and Silverleys, respectively. They stated that Chantry would be appropriate given that the bulk of the parish ward is covered by Chantry Residents' Association. They argued that the North West parish ward should be renamed Silverleys in recognition of the sports ground that is located in the parish ward. We were persuaded that these revised parish ward names will better reflect community identities and we have renamed both as part of our final recommendations.

### *Bishop's Stortford South*

53 We received one submission in relation to this ward from a local resident, who requested that the existing ward boundaries be retained. We could not adopt this proposal as a result of our previous decision to create a Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor ward, which incorporated a substantial part of the current Bishop's Stortford South ward. Furthermore, as outlined in our draft recommendations report, we consider the inclusion of the entirety of Thorley parish in our Bishop's Stortford South ward will contribute to effective and convenient local government and better reflect community identities. We therefore recommend no changes to this ward as part of our final recommendations and confirm our Bishop's Stortford South ward as final.



## Sawbridgeworth and the surrounding parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Hunsdon	1	4%
Much Hadham	1	-9%
Sawbridgeworth	3	5%

### *Hunsdon*

54 Hunsdon Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for a single-councillor Hunsdon ward that contains the parishes of Eastwick, Gilston and Hunsdon. It also approved of our decision to transfer Wareside and Widford parishes to the adjacent Ware Rural ward. With no further submissions received relating to

this ward, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Hunsdon ward as final.

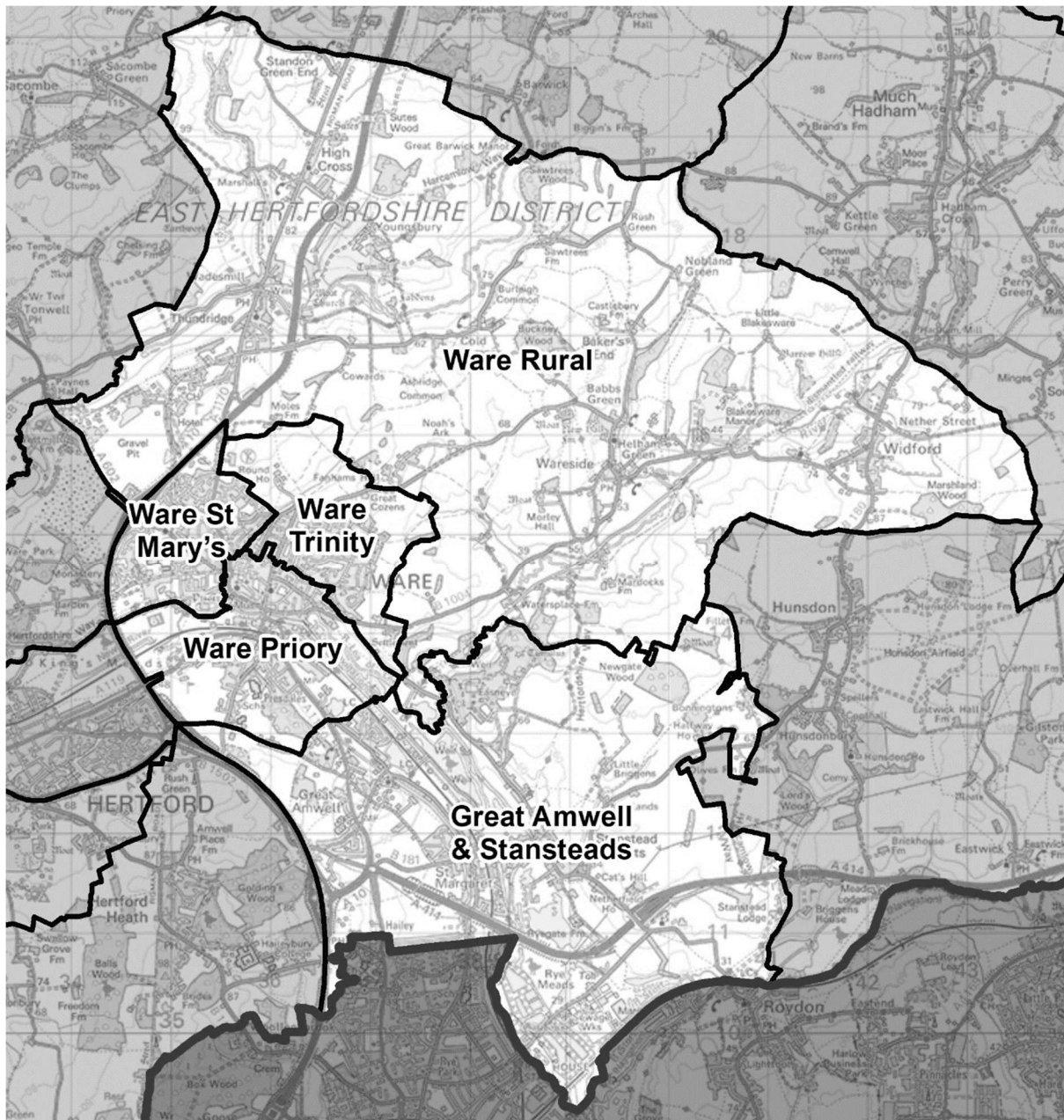
*Much Hadham*

55 We received no submissions that related directly to this ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Much Hadham ward as final.

*Sawbridgeworth*

56 The Conservatives supported our decision to retain the existing three-councillor Sawbridgeworth ward, which is forecast to have good electoral equality by 2027. With no further submissions relating to this ward, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Sawbridgeworth ward as final.

## Ware and the surrounding parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Great Amwell & Stansteads	2	-8%
Ware Priory	2	10%
Ware Rural	1	-10%
Ware St Mary's	2	1%
Ware Trinity	2	6%

### *Great Amwell & Stansteads*

57 We received six submissions that related to this ward. The Conservatives, Councillor Curtis and Councillor Kemp opposed this ward, providing community

evidence that Great Amwell parish shares closer links with the south of Ware, as opposed to the parishes of Stanstead Abbots and Stanstead St Margarets. They also noted our proposed Great Amwell & Stansteads ward has a consequential effect upon wards in Ware, causing Ware Priory and Ware Trinity to have relatively high forecast electoral variances, despite being within 10% of the average for the authority.

58 Councillor Kemp provided an alternative warding arrangement that linked the south of Ware with Great Amwell parish and the western part of Stanstead St Margarets parish, noting that these areas form part of the Ware South county division. The eastern part of Stanstead St Margarets parish could then be placed in a single-councillor ward with Stanstead Abbots parish, which forms part of the Sawbridgeworth county division.

59 However, The Amwell Society, Stanstead Abbots Parish Council and a local resident supported our Great Amwell & Stansteads ward. Given the contrasting views expressed in regard to these wards during both rounds of consultation, we carefully considered the evidence provided, to ensure our recommendations best reflected our statutory criteria.

60 We note the evidence provided by the Conservatives and Councillor Curtis, in addition to the alternative proposal submitted by Councillor Kemp. However, based on the evidence received, we have decided that our two-councillor Great Amwell & Stansteads ward provides the best balance of the statutory criteria. We were ultimately persuaded by the evidence received from Stanstead Abbots Parish Council that the ward 'reflects the situation on the ground', which strengthened our view that our recommendations for this area will effectively reflect community identities and interests. We were also similarly persuaded by The Amwell Society's submission, which noted that our Great Amwell & Stansteads ward will contribute to effective and convenient local government, given it will align parish boundaries with district ward boundaries.

61 The Conservatives suggested that the ward should be named Great Amwell and Stansteads, preferring the use of 'and' instead of an ampersand. We prefer to use ampersands when naming wards for brevity and consistency, so we did not adopt this modification as part of our final recommendations.

### *Ware Priory*

62 We received three submissions in relation to this ward – from the Conservatives, Councillor Curtis and Councillor Kemp. All three submissions expressed a preference for the south of Ware, which comprises most of our proposed Ware Priory ward, to be warded with Great Amwell parish. However, as outlined in the previous section, we were not persuaded to adopt this proposal as part of the final recommendations.

63 Nonetheless, we are proposing other changes to Ware Priory ward based on evidence supplied by Councillor Kemp. We are adopting a boundary modification that transfers electors residing on Musleigh Manor, Plaxton Way and Widbury Gardens from Ware Trinity ward. We agree with the evidence provided by Councillor Kemp that these roads look towards the town centre and that this change will better reflect community identities in the area.

64 Councillor Kemp also requested that we split the proposed Priory parish ward, which we created as a result of our warding proposals at the district ward level. Councillor Kemp stated that a four-councillor Priory parish ward would be unwieldy and suggested we split it into a two-councillor Christchurch parish ward and a two-councillor Chadwell parish ward. We were persuaded that these smaller parish wards will help contribute to effective and convenient local government for Ware Town Council and we have included these changes as part of our final recommendations.

#### *Ware Rural*

65 The Conservatives supported our proposed single-councillor Ware Rural ward, composed of the parishes of Thundridge, Widford and part of Wareside parish. However, both Councillor Kemp and a local resident noted that the boundary near Moles Farm and the A10 does not follow the entirety of the residential development on the edge of the town. We decided not to follow the perimeter of the development, instead following the parish and county division boundary, as this would be more conducive to effective and convenient local government.

66 In light of the above, Councillor Kemp questioned whether there is flexibility to realign parish, district ward and county division boundaries at a later date. A community governance review, carried out by the Council after the completion of this electoral review, would be the most effective way to make parish boundary changes in this area. A request to the Commission for related alterations following a community governance review would then provide the Council with an opportunity to propose modifications to district wards and county divisions so that they are coterminous with any revised parish boundaries. The Commission would require both supporting evidence and assurances that this would not result in high forecast electoral variances.

#### *Ware St Mary's*

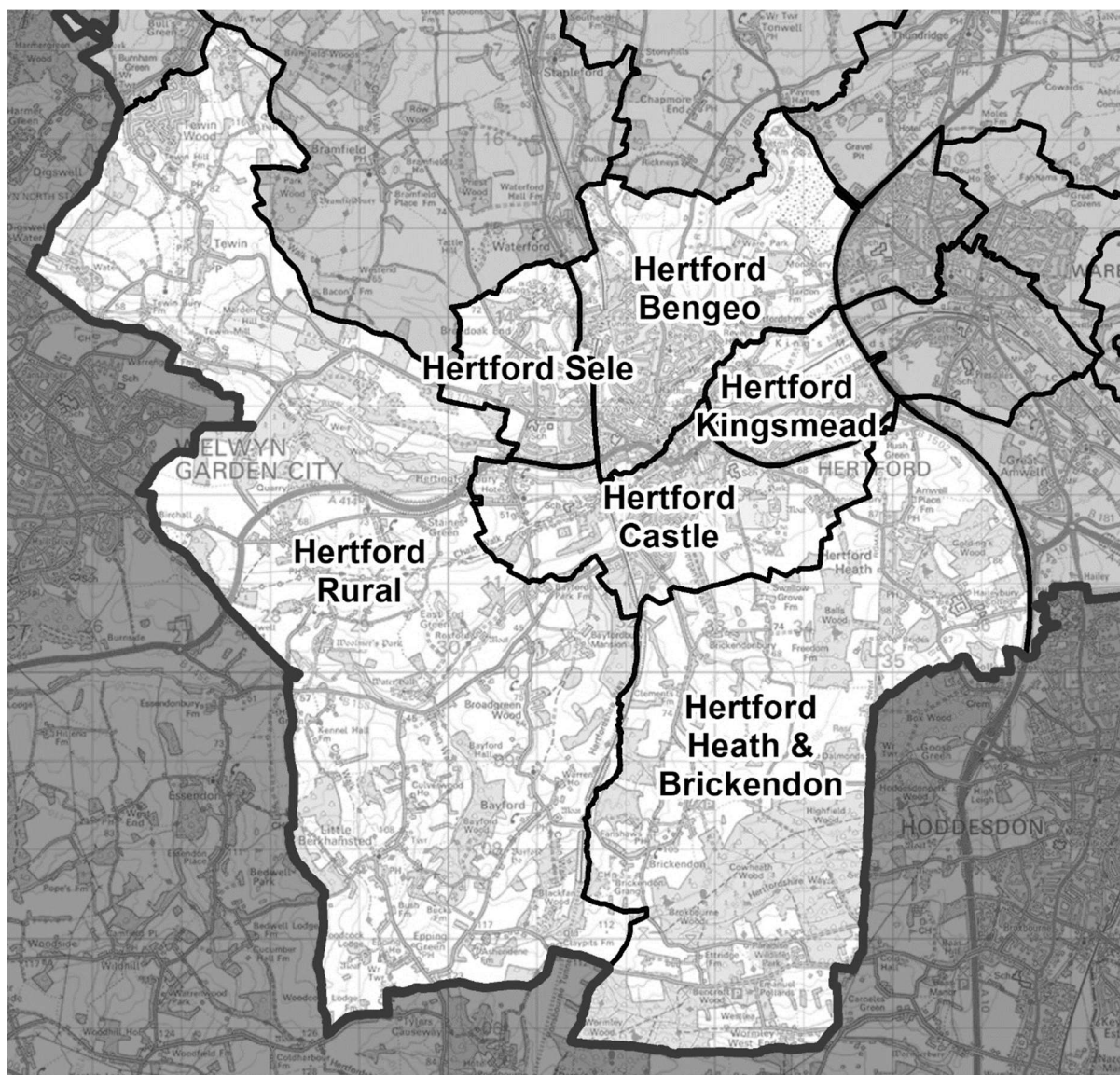
67 The Conservatives supported our proposed two-councillor Ware St Mary's ward. Councillor Kemp also supported the ward but noted that some roads are unnecessarily split between the Ware St Mary's and Ware Priory wards. This is because we decided to follow the county division boundary, which will contribute to effective and convenient local government. As outlined in the previous paragraph, a community governance review and a consequential request for related alterations would be the most appropriate process to address this issue.

### *Ware Trinity*

68 The Conservatives supported our proposed two-councillor Ware Trinity ward. Councillor Kemp also endorsed this ward, supporting the decision to include the residential development on the edge of the town within the ward. However, as detailed in paragraph 63, we have adopted their proposal to transfer Musleigh Manor, Plaxton Way and Widbury Gardens into Ware Priory ward.

69 Councillor Curtis requested that we rename the Trinity East and Trinity West parish wards, to Trinity and Widbury, respectively. Councillor Curtis stated that Widbury would be a more appropriate name, given Widbury House was a historic manor house previously located in the parish ward, with the name also reflected in the name of multiple roads across the parish ward. We were persuaded that these revised parish ward names will better reflect community identities and have renamed both as part of our final recommendations.

## Hertford and the surrounding parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Hertford Bengeo	3	-9%
Hertford Castle	2	-5%
Hertford Heath & Brickendon	1	-5%
Hertford Kingsmead	3	-3%
Hertford Rural	1	7%
Hertford Sele	2	-3%

### *Hertford Bengeo and Hertford Castle*

70 Hertford Town Council and the Conservatives supported our proposals for these two wards. However, we received three submissions from local residents which opposed the boundary between these wards.

71 One of the local residents requested that Folly Island be included within our proposed Hertford Castle ward, stating the area has more commonality with the town centre area that composes part of Hertford Castle ward. We decided not to adopt this proposal as it would result in a forecast electoral variance of -12% for Hertford Bengeo ward, which we consider too high. We nonetheless remain content that the Folly Island area has close links with communities in our proposed Hertford Bengeo ward, as evidenced in the Conservatives' submission received in the previous round of consultation.

72 Two other local residents opposed our decision to include the Hertingfordbury Road area, near the Hertford County Hospital, in Hertford Bengeo ward. They argued that this area has a closer affinity with Hertford town centre. One of the residents suggested that the River Beane would form a stronger and more natural boundary. However, we did not adopt this proposal given it would result in poor electoral equality for Hertford Castle ward, regardless of whether the ward was allocated two or three councillors (22% as a two-member ward and -19% as a three-member ward). In any case, we remain satisfied that this area also has good links with communities in our proposed Hertford Bengeo ward, as evidenced by the Green Party submission submitted during the previous round of consultation.

73 Therefore, after carefully considering evidence received relating to this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Hertford Bengeo and Hertford Castle wards as final.

#### *Hertford Heath & Brickendon and Hertford Rural*

74 Three local residents made submissions in relation to these wards. The first local resident requested that Bayford, Brickendon Liberty and Little Berkhamsted parishes should have their own ward, while the second local resident suggested that Brickendon Liberty and Bayford could be warded together. The third local resident stated that a ward composed of Hertford Heath and Brickendon Liberty parishes represented an 'odd pairing' but acknowledged that the ward made sense when considered amongst the proposals for the rest of the district.

75 As outlined in our draft recommendations report, we found it difficult to create wards in this area that reflected the community evidence we had received unless we significantly compromised on securing good electoral equality. We are constrained by the distribution of settlements in this area as well as the proximity of the district boundary, meaning our scope for alternative warding patterns was limited. When considering our final recommendations, we remained unable to develop an alternate warding arrangement for this area that would result in a better balance of our statutory criteria. Consequently, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for these two wards as final.



### *Hertford Kingsmead*

76 Hertford Town Council, the Conservatives and a local resident supported our Hertford Kingsmead ward.

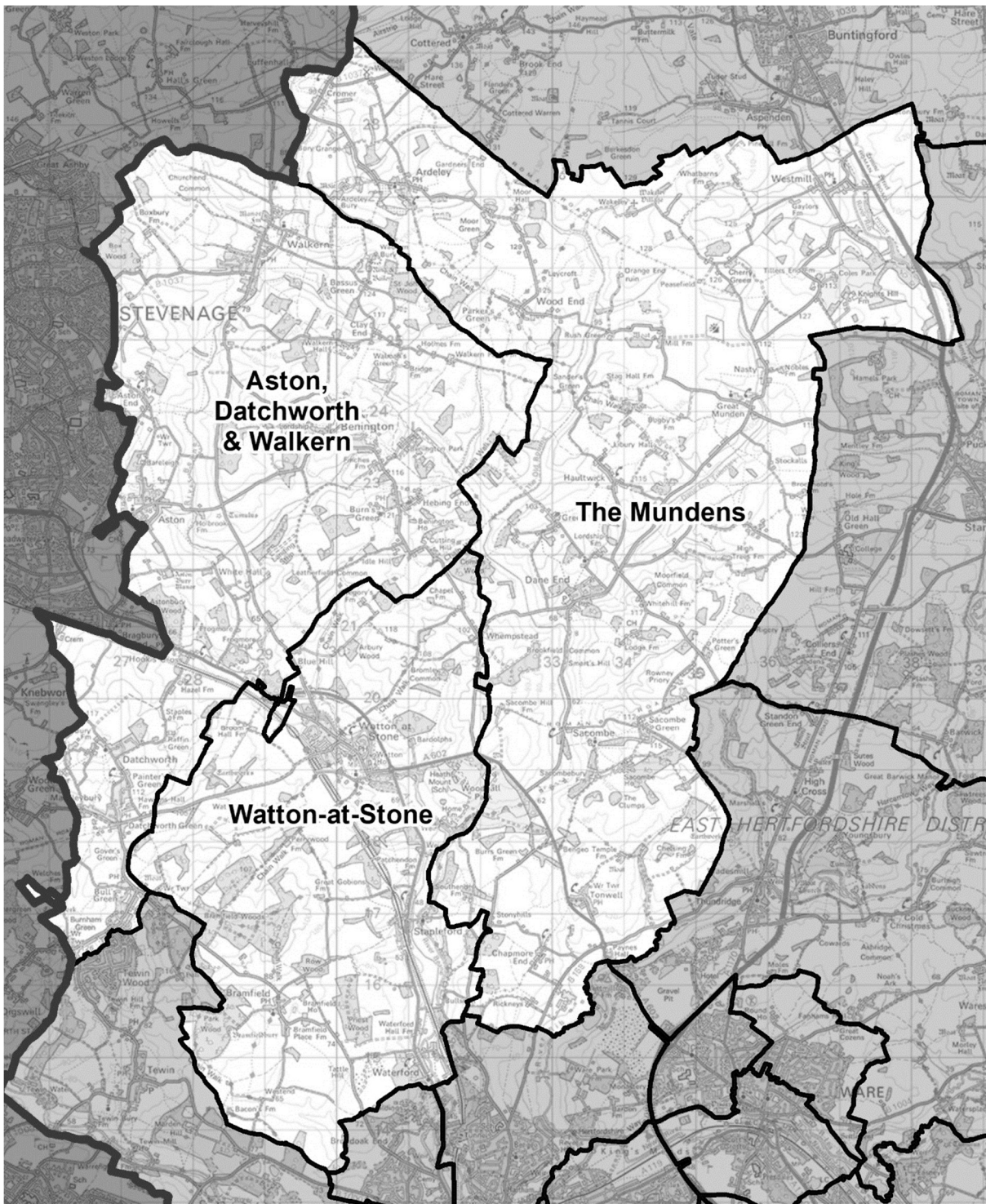
77 Two local residents requested the Rush Green roundabout be incorporated into a single ward so that issues pertaining to the roundabout can be directed to a single ward councillor. We had received the same request during the earlier round of consultation. As outlined in the draft recommendations report, placing the entirety of the roundabout in either of the four wards that we propose to split it across would require the creation of a parish ward with no electors, which would not promote effective and convenient local government. We are therefore recommending that the roundabout remain divided between four wards as part of our final recommendations. As mentioned in paragraphs 66 and 67, we consider that a community governance review would be the most appropriate process for addressing this issue, which would then provide the Council with the opportunity to request that the Commission make consequential modifications to district wards and county divisions.

78 With no further submissions relating to this ward, we are confirming our Hertford Kingsmead ward as final.

### *Hertford Sele*

79 Hertford Town Council and the Conservatives supported our Hertford Sele ward. A local resident suggested that 'Sele Road would be a good fit with Hertford Sele (ward)'. While there would appear to be some logic in including this road in the ward given its name, we were not persuaded that sufficient community-based evidence had been provided to support this proposal, so we have not adopted it as part of our final recommendations. With no further changes proposed to this ward, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Hertford Sele ward as final.

## Watton-at-Stone and the surrounding parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Aston, Datchworth & Walkern	2	-9%
The Mundens	1	-9%
Watton-at-Stone	1	9%

### *Aston, Datchworth & Walkern*

80 We received eight submissions that related to our proposed Datchworth & Walkern ward. Aston Parish Council and six local residents opposed the decision not to include Aston in the ward name, stating that this was unrepresentative of the main communities that comprise the ward. We are persuaded by the evidence received and have decided to rename this ward as Aston, Datchworth & Walkern as part of our final recommendations.

81 The East Herts Rural Branch Labour Party stated that our two-councillor ward 'though not ideal' was 'acceptable since it is all a fairly rural area... furthermore, we cannot see a viable way of splitting it back into two wards on the forecast numbers'. Therefore, with no alternative proposed, we are confirming our draft recommendations for this ward as final, subject to our proposed ward name change.

### *The Mundens*

82 Both Westmill Parish Council and Councillor Partridge opposed our decision to include Westmill parish in The Mundens ward. They provided strong evidence that highlighted the community and transport links that exist between the parish and Buntingford parish.

83 In light of this, we explored whether we could include Westmill parish in our three-councillor Buntingford ward as part of our final recommendations. While a Buntingford ward could incorporate the parish and still retain good electoral equality, excluding the parish from our proposed The Mundens ward would result in a forecast electoral variance of -19% by 2027. While we recognise the strong community evidence supplied by Westmill Parish Council and Councillor Partridge, we are required to ensure that local electors have a vote of broadly equal weight. We consider that this variance is too high and would not provide the best balance of our statutory criteria.

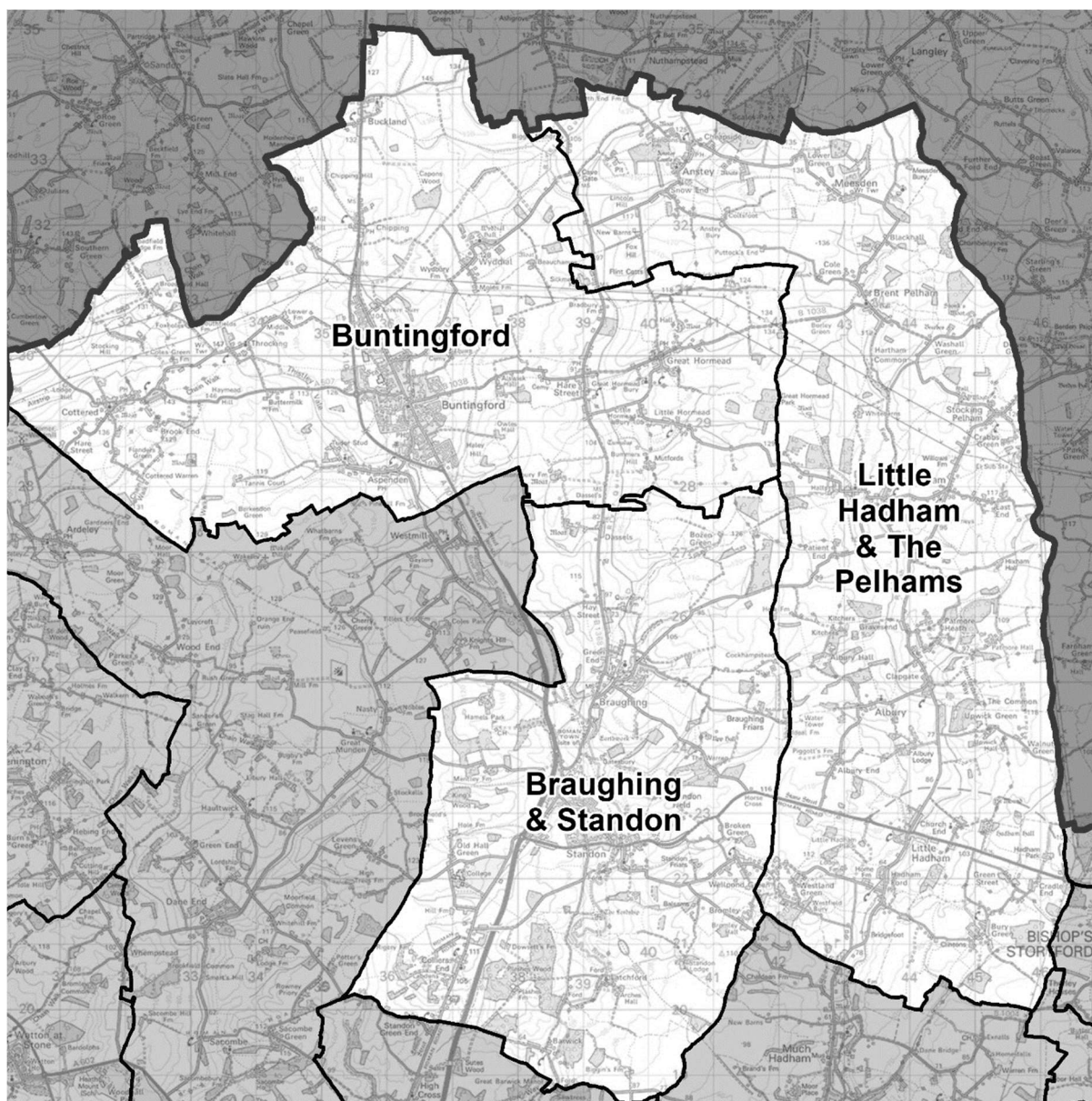
84 We did examine merging The Mundens ward with adjacent wards, thereby allowing us to create a ward with good electoral equality without needing to include Westmill parish. However, we decided not to adopt such a warding arrangement as we were concerned it would link distant rural communities in a geographically large ward. We consider that this would not be conducive to effective and convenient local government, nor reflect community identities.

85 Therefore, while accepting that our recommendations for this ward may not be supported by some locally, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

*Watton-at-Stone*

86 We received no submissions that related directly to this ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Watton-at-Stone ward as final.

## Buntingford and the surrounding parishes



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Braughing & Standon	2	-5%
Buntingford	3	5%
Little Hadham & The Pelhams	1	2%

### *Braughing & Standon*

87 The East Herts Rural Branch Labour Party opposed our Braughing & Standon ward, preferring to retain the current wards, albeit with some boundary modifications to better reflect our statutory criteria. They opposed our ward on the basis that it combined rural and urban areas within a single ward. Conversely, a local resident supported our proposed ward. They stated that placing Braughing, Puckeridge and Standon together in a ward would represent a ‘very natural grouping’. The

Conservatives also noted that placing Standon within a single ward would better reflect community identity.

88 Apart from the transfer of Hormead parish into Buntingford ward, as justified in paragraph 89, we are recommending no other changes to our proposed Braughing & Standon ward as part of the final recommendations. We agree with the local resident that placing Braughing, Puckeridge and Standon together in a ward will effectively reflect community identities in the area. We also maintain the view, as outlined in our draft recommendations report, that uniting Standon parish in a single ward will better reflect communities and promote effective and convenient local government. Our final Braughing & Standon ward is also projected to have good electoral equality by 2027, with a forecast electoral variance of -5%.

### *Buntingford*

89 The Conservatives, Oliver Heald MP, Councillor Jones and Buntingford Town Council all supported our proposed three-councillor Buntingford ward, but the latter three submissions argued that Hormead parish should be included in the ward. Strong community evidence was provided to support this request, with each submission highlighting the fact that Hormead parish forms part of the Buntingford Community Neighbourhood Plan. We have been persuaded by the evidence provided and have transferred Hormead parish into Buntingford ward as part of our final recommendations.

90 The East Herts Rural Branch Labour Party opposed our Buntingford ward, instead proposing a two-councillor ward comprised of the majority of the town. The Party also proposed a single-councillor Buntingford Rural ward, which would comprise the recent development in the north of the town and the surrounding rural parishes. This proposal was suggested to avoid the combination of rural and urban areas within a single ward. We carefully considered this alternative but decided not to adopt it as we determined that dividing Buntingford parish between wards would not provide an effective balance of our statutory criteria. Good electoral equality can be achieved by keeping the parish in a single ward, and we consider that the division of Buntingford parish between district wards would not promote effective and convenient local government.

### *Little Hadham & The Pelhams*

91 We received no submissions that related directly to this ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Little Hadham & The Pelhams ward as final.

## Conclusions

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

### Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2021	2027
Number of councillors	50	50
Number of electoral wards	26	26
Average number of electors per councillor	2,273	2,640
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	11	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	4	0

#### Final recommendations

East Hertfordshire District Council should be made up of 50 councillors serving 26 wards representing eight single-councillor wards, 12 two-councillor wards and six 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 East Hertfordshire. You can also view our final recommendations for East Hertfordshire on our interactive maps at [www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk)

### Parish electoral arrangements

93 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.

94 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, East Hertfordshire 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.

95 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 Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Wareside.

96 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bishop's Stortford parish.

#### Final recommendations

Bishop's Stortford Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
All Saints	2
Central	2
Chantry	2
Parsonage	2
Silverleys	2
South	2
Thorley Manor North	2
Thorley Manor South	2
Waterside	1

97 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Hertford parish.

#### Final recommendations

Hertford Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bengeo North	4
Bengeo South	1
Castle	3
Kingsmead East	3
Kingsmead West	2
Sele	3



98 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Ware parish.

**Final recommendations**

Ware Town Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Chadwell	2
Christchurch	2
St Mary's	4
Trinity	2
Widbury	1

99 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wareside parish.

**Final recommendations**

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

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Rural	3
Urban	4

100 The Conservatives expressed concern that the parish electoral arrangements proposed in our draft recommendation were not optimal. They noted that the number of Bishop's Stortford parish wards had increased from five to nine, with some parish wards possessing electoral inequality. They also observed that the number of parish wards in Hertford increased from four to six, stating that the Bengoe South parish ward was undersized.

101 The reason for increasing the parish wards in Bishop's Stortford and Hertford parishes is due to county division boundaries. In recommending revised parish warding arrangements, in addition to our proposed district wards, we are also required to reflect existing county division boundaries.

102 Additionally, as far is practical, we do consider the number and distribution of electors within a parish ward when providing for revised parish electoral arrangements.



## What happens next?

103 We have now completed our review of East Hertfordshire. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2023



## Equalities

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



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Final recommendations for East Hertfordshire District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aston, Datchworth & Walkern	2	3,840	1,920	-16%	4,785	2,393	-9%
2	Bishop's Stortford All Saints	2	3,842	1,921	-15%	5,242	2,621	-1%
3	Bishop's Stortford Central	2	5,597	2,799	23%	5,822	2,911	10%
4	Bishop's Stortford North	3	4,813	1,604	-29%	8,601	2,867	9%
5	Bishop's Stortford Parsonage	2	4,784	2,392	5%	5,152	2,576	-2%
6	Bishop's Stortford South	2	3,641	1,821	-20%	5,293	2,647	0%
7	Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor	3	7,411	2,470	9%	7,932	2,644	0%
8	Braughing & Standon	2	4,637	2,319	2%	5,029	2,515	-5%
9	Buntingford	3	7,405	2,468	9%	8,287	2,762	5%
10	Great Amwell & Stansteads	2	4,530	2,265	0%	4,866	2,433	-8%
11	Hertford Bengoe	3	6,714	2,238	-2%	7,214	2,405	-9%
12	Hertford Castle	2	4,691	2,346	3%	4,995	2,498	-5%

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13	Hertford Heath & Brickendon	1	2,415	2,415	6%	2,512	2,512	-5%
14	Hertford Kingsmead	3	6,771	2,257	-1%	7,717	2,572	-3%
15	Hertford Rural	1	2,638	2,638	16%	2,813	2,813	7%
16	Hertford Sele	2	4,258	2,129	-6%	5,146	2,573	-3%
17	Hunsdon	1	1,618	1,618	-29%	2,756	2,756	4%
18	Little Hadham & The Pelhams	1	2,529	2,529	11%	2,704	2,704	2%
19	Much Hadham	1	2,271	2,271	0%	2,400	2,400	-9%
20	Sawbridgeworth	3	6,930	2,310	2%	8,323	2,774	5%
21	The Mundens	1	2,246	2,246	-1%	2,403	2,403	-9%
22	Ware Priory	2	5,541	2,771	22%	5,831	2,916	10%
23	Ware Rural	1	2,277	2,277	0%	2,375	2,375	-10%
24	Ware St Mary's	2	5,027	2,514	11%	5,330	2,665	1%
25	Ware Trinity	2	4,485	2,243	-1%	5,586	2,793	6%
26	Watton-at-Stone	1	2,716	2,716	20%	2,888	2,888	9%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>113,627</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>132,002</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,273</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,640</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Hertfordshire 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



Number	Ward name
1	Aston, Datchworth & Walkern
2	Bishop's Stortford All Saints
3	Bishop's Stortford Central
4	Bishop's Stortford North
5	Bishop's Stortford Parsonage
6	Bishop's Stortford South
7	Bishop's Stortford Thorley Manor
8	Braughing & Standon

9	Buntingford
10	Great Amwell & Stansteads
11	Hertford Bengo
12	Hertford Castle
13	Hertford Heath & Brickendon
14	Hertford Kingsmead
15	Hertford Rural
16	Hertford Sele
17	Hunsdon
18	Little Hadham & The Pelhams
19	Much Hadham
20	Sawbridgeworth
21	The Mundens
22	Ware Priory
23	Ware Rural
24	Ware St Mary's
25	Ware Trinity
26	Watton-at-Stone

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: [www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/east-hertfordshire](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/east-hertfordshire)

## Appendix C

### Submissions received

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

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

#### *Political Groups*

- Bishop's Stortford & Sawbridgeworth Liberal Democrats
- Bishop's Stortford Conservatives
- East Herts District Council Conservative Group
- East Herts Rural Branch Labour Party

#### *Councillors*

- Councillor A. Curtis (East Hertfordshire District Council and Ware Town Council)
- Councillor J. Jones (East Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council)
- Councillor I. Kemp (East Hertfordshire District Council and Ware Town Council)
- Councillor R. Partridge (Westmill Parish Council)
- Councillor D. Snowdon (East Hertfordshire District Council and Bishop's Stortford Town Council)

#### *Members of Parliament*

- Rt Hon Oliver Heald QC MP (North East Hertfordshire)

#### *Local Organisations*

- The Amwell Society

#### *Parish and Town Councils*

- Aston Parish Council
- Buntingford Town Council
- Hertford Town Council
- Hunsdon Parish Council
- Stanstead Abbots Parish Council
- Westmill Parish Council

### *Local Residents*

- 25 local residents

## Appendix D

### Glossary and abbreviations

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

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (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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