

NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

North Hertfordshire Conservative Submission

SUPPORTED BY: Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association, North East Hertfordshire Conservative Association, Stevenage Conservative Association, Bim Afolami MP, Sir Oliver Heald MP and Stephen McPartland MP

August 2022

North Hertfordshire Conservative Submission
to the North Hertfordshire District Council Boundary Review, Stage 1

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Part I | Introduction

1.1 – Background

This submission forms part of the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Government Boundary Review. The Conservative Group is submitting our own proposals, which differ from the proposals submitted by North Hertfordshire District Council. We do not support the proposals of the Council.

1.2 – Who we are

North Hertfordshire Conservatives are the largest Group on North Hertfordshire District Council with 19 elected members and form the Official Opposition. This submission is supported by the three local Conservative & Unionist Parties – Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association, North East Hertfordshire Conservative Association and Stevenage Conservative Association. Collectively these Associations represent more than 1,000 local residents in North Hertfordshire.

The Conservative Group is led by Cllr. Claire Strong (Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo).

1.3 – Principles of our submissions

We have made recommendations based on the Commission’s principle statutory requirements to deliver wards which meet the criteria of electoral equality, reflecting community ties and identities and promoting effective local government. In order to reflect these, we have given particular weight to:

- Transport within and across the ward.
- Community links across rural and urban wards (where possible, by retaining whole Parishes in wards).
- Where possible, strong natural, urban or existing political boundaries to divide communities.
- Urban and rural divides – keeping urban and rural areas in separate wards wherever possible.

1.4 – Council numbers

With North Hertfordshire moving to all-out elections permanently, we have recommended a mixed warding pattern, with some single-member, two-member and three-member wards.

Having taken the time to consider this review at length, we did not feel that a Council size of 50 members enabled us to create a warding pattern which was conducive to the strong representation we would have liked to see.

In line with the proposal of North Hertfordshire District Council, we have therefore proposed a recommendation (Part II) with a warding pattern of **51** Councillors.

1.5 – Foreword from Cllr. Claire Strong

This submission has been prepared by the Conservative Group from North Hertfordshire District Council and is supported by our three Members of Parliament and their respective Association Officers.

The District Council's submission was not fully supported by the Conservative group as we believe it is not in the best interest of our residents as it does not reflect the growth that is expected in our District.

This proposal looks at the new settlements and whether the existing ward should expand as the growth will be similar or look at the growth as its own new ward so that rural and urban communities retain or have a new identity. Where existing wards fully reflect the community we have not sought to change them but where change is needed we have used this submission to put forward alternatives for the boundary commission to consider.

As the council is moving to all out elections the need to have three-member wards is no longer a requirement and in our opinion it makes sense to have single- or two-member wards where the elected members will be more recognisable and accountable to their electors wherever this is possible.

Cllr. Claire Strong

Leader of the Conservative Group

(August 2022)

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.1 – Summary of Proposal

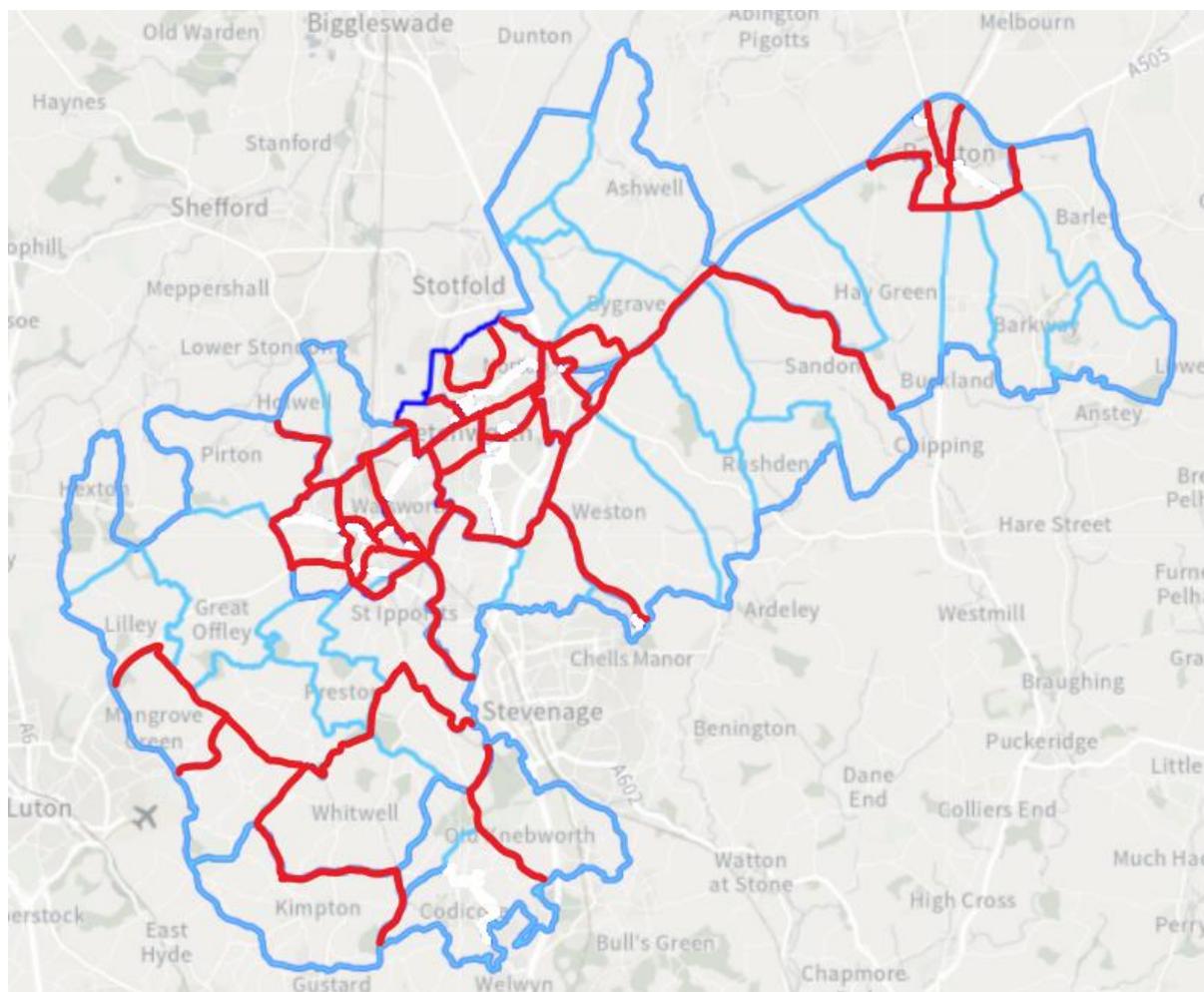


Fig. 1 – Map of the North Hertfordshire Conservative proposal with the ward boundaries in red.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Arbury	1	2,302	+4%
Baldock East	2	4,157	-6%
Baldock Town	3	6,101	-8%
Cadwell	1	2,390	+8%
Chesfield	3	6,816	+3%
Cockernhoe	1	2,041	-8%
Ermine	1	2,441	+10%
Hitchin Bearton	2	4,761	+8%
Hitchin Benslow	1	2,318	+5%
Hitchin Oughton	3	6,109	-8%
Hitchin Priory	1	2,289	+4%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	7,280	+10%
Hitchin Whitehill	2	4,536	+3%
Icknield	2	4,237	-4%

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Kimpton & Breachwood Green	1	2,429	+10%
Knebworth	2	4,155	-6%
Letchworth Grange	2	4,583	+4%
Letchworth Norton	2	4,433	0%
Letchworth Pixmore	1	2,426	+10%
Letchworth Town	2	4,878	+10%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	4,040	-9%
Letchworth Willian	3	6,301	-5%
Royston Heath	2	4,024	-9%
Royston Meridian	3	6,305	-5%
Royston Palace	2	4,546	=0%
Upper Mimram	2	4,546	+3%
Weston & Sandon	1	2,395	+8%

North Hertfordshire Conservatives have consulted extensively with relevant local stakeholders and residents to produce a recommendation which reflects community ties and delivers strong electoral equality. We feel that the submission we have produced is a much better fit for North Hertfordshire than that proposed by the District Council.

In the pages that follow, we will set out our proposed warding in detail and we will explain how our proposed wards meet the Local Government Boundary Commission's Statutory Criteria.

Our warding is as follows:

Arbury (1)

A single-member ward consisting of the current Arbury ward with the exception of the part of Bygrave Parish moving into Baldock East.

Baldock East (2)

A two-member ward centred on the majority of the current Baldock East ward, with the addition of parts of the Bygrave Parish from Arbury ward and parts of the Clothall Parish from Weston & Sandon.

Baldock Town (3)

A three-member ward consisting of the current Baldock Town ward with a small addition from Baldock East.

Cadwell (1)

A single-member ward identical to the current Cadwell ward.

Chesfield (3)

A three-member ward based on the current Chesfield ward, with the addition of the portion of Great Ashby Parish currently warded with Weston & Sandon.

Cockernhoe (1)

A single-member ward, coterminous with the Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish.

Ermine (1)

A single-member ward, identical to the current Ermine ward.

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Hitchin Bearton (2)

A two-member ward centred on the existing Hitchin Bearton ward, without the areas of Benslow, Bancroft and the Wilbury Way Industrial Estate and surrounding houses.

Hitchin Benslow (1)

A single-member ward centred on the community of Benslow and a connected part of the Poets Estate.

Hitchin Oughton (3)

A three-member ward based on the current Hitchin Oughton ward, with the addition of the West Hitchin area of the current Priory ward and a small portion of the current Highbury ward.

Hitchin Priory (1)

A single-member ward centred on Hitchin Town Centre.

Hitchin Walsworth (3)

A three-member ward based on the current Walsworth ward, with the addition of the Wilbury Way Industrial Estate and surrounding house and the loss of a small portion of Poets Estate.

Hitchin Whitehill (2)

A two-member ward made out of parts of the Hitchin Highbury and Hitchin Priory wards, centred on the communities of Whitehill, Sunnyside, Oakfield and the Parish ward of St. Ippolyts North.

Icknield (2)

A two-member ward consisting of the parishes of Pirton, Hexton, Lilley, Preston and the Offley ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish, the Kings Walden ward of Kings Walden Parish, the St. Ippolyts South ward of St. Ippolyts Parish, and the unparished village of Charlton.

Kimpton & Breachwood Green (1)

A single-member ward consisting of the Kimpton Parish and the Kings Walden Parish ward of Breachwood Green.

Knebworth (2)

A two-member ward consisting of the Knebworth Parish, excluding a small rural portion west of Hitchin Road.

Letchworth Grange (2)

A two-member ward including the entirety of the Grange Estate.

Letchworth Norton (2)

A two-member ward including the area of Letchworth north of the Railway Line and south of the Grange Estate and everything east of the Wilbury Ward.

Letchworth Pixmore (1)

A single-member ward, containing the majority of the area of Letchworth which falls within the Hertfordshire County Council Division of Baldock Town and Letchworth East.

Letchworth Town (2)

A two-member ward consisting of Letchworth Town Centre and surrounding streets.

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Letchworth Wilbury (2)

A two-member ward based on the current Wilbury ward.

Letchworth Willian (3)

A three-member ward consisting of the majority of the former Letchworth South East ward and part of Letchworth South West ward.

Royston Heath (2)

A two-member ward, centred on the current Royston Heath ward.

Royston Meridian (3)

A three-member ward, centred on the current Royston Meridian ward.

Royston Palace (2)

A two-member ward, almost identical to the current Royston Palace ward.

Upper Mimram (2)

A two-member ward consisting of the parishes of Codicote, Langley and St. Paul's Walden and a small rural portion of Knebworth Parish west of Hitchin Road.

Weston & Sandon (1)

A single member ward consisting of the current Weston & Sandon ward, including the additional development on the Weston and Great Ashby Parish Council Boundary, and excluding the part of Clothall Parish moving into Baldock East ward.

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.2– Baldock & District



Fig. 2 – Map of the proposed Baldock & District wards with the ward boundaries in red.

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Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Arbury	1	2,302	+4%
Baldock East	2	4,157	-6%
Baldock Town	3	6,101	-8%
Weston & Sandon	1	2,395	+8%

Our proposal for Baldock & District strives to keep the rural and urban areas separate. This is why we have increased the size of Baldock East to two members to accommodate for the urban expansion of Baldock into the rural wards of Arbury and Weston & Sandon.

With the exception of changes made to accommodate the new developments on the edge of Baldock, our warding remains largely the same as the existing mapping in this area. We feel that this mapping is conducive to strong representation and well represents the communities in this part of North Hertfordshire.

We are proposing a warding pattern of Arbury (1), Baldock East (2), Baldock Town (3) and Weston & Sandon (1).

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Arbury

A single-member ward consisting of the current Arbury ward, with the exception of the part of Bygrave Parish moving into Baldock East.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Arbury	1	2,302	+4%

Boundaries

Arbury Ward currently contains the parishes of Ashwell, Bygrave, Hinxworth, Radwell and Newnham, these are all the parishes within the natural boundary of everything south of the Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire County boundaries and north of the A505.

There is an extensive development proposed within the parish of Bygrave, which would be in practice an urban extension of the town of Baldock. We believe that this new community should be incorporated into the new Baldock East ward, rather than the existing Arbury ward as this new community will be an urban area and not a standalone rural settlement and therefore we have removed this area from our proposed Arbury ward.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Arbury ward is a strong match for the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of +4%, making it a strong choice for electoral equality.

By moving the new development into Baldock East, this will allow the existing Arbury ward to remain the same, due to the development in the parish of Ashwell allowing for population growth to suit the quota for a single member ward.

Removing the Bygrave development from this ward means that it primarily consists of rural communities located between Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. We feel that retaining this existing single-member ward will allow for effective local representation and ensure that similar communities are represented in a single ward.

Naming

Our Arbury ward will keep its current name as we feel as due to the fact there is little change in the boundaries, changing the name would cause unnecessary confusion.

This area contains the Roman Fort of Arbury Bank and since the creation of North Hertfordshire District Council this area has always been given the name of Arbury.

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Baldock East

A two-member ward centred on the majority of the current Baldock East ward, with the addition of parts of the Bygrave Parish from Arbury ward and parts of the Clothall Parish from Weston & Sandon.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Baldock East	2	4,157	-6%

Boundaries

Our Baldock East boundaries includes polling district ABA from the current Baldock East ward, part of Arbury ward polling district FD covering the new development in Bygrave Parish (BA1), and part of Weston & Sandon ward polling district FE covering the new development in Clothall Parish (BA2 and BA3).

We feel that moving the new developments in Bygrave Parish and Clothall Parish into our enlarged Baldock East ward would be beneficial for the new development as they will be additions to the town of Baldock and not stand-alone rural communities like the rest of the parishes.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Baldock East ward is a strong match for the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of -6%, making it a good choice for electoral equality.

The new Baldock East ward will primarily consist of new developments in the local plan and the existing Clothall Common settlement which is around 30 years old. This is different from the Baldock Town ward which is a mixture of Tudor, Georgian and Victorian housing in the town centre and then a mixture of 1940's and 50's housing build around.

The new developments at Clothall and Bygrave will be integrated into the existing Clothall Common development, however at this point we are not sure where these connections will be, though it seems likely that there will be good access via the A505 and the B656. As these areas will be extensions of Baldock of a similar character, we feel that they should be kept together in our new Baldock East ward.

Naming

Our Baldock East ward will keep its current name as we feel as due to the fact there is little change in the boundaries, changing the name would cause unneeded confusion.

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Baldock Town

A three-member ward consisting of the current Baldock Town ward with a small addition from Baldock East.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Baldock Town	3	6,101	-8%

Boundaries

Our Baldock Town ward contains the entirety of the current Baldock Town ward, with the addition of polling district ABB from Baldock East ward.

We feel the polling district ABB should move back into Baldock Town as it previously had been part of Baldock Town ward from 1974 to 1999 when it was moved into Baldock East.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Baldock Town ward is a strong match for the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of -8%, making it a good choice for electoral equality.

This ward consists primarily of the existing Baldock Town ward, which is a mixture of Tudor, Georgian and Victorian housing in the town centre and then a mixture of 1940's and 50's housing build around. This retains the original heart of the town of Baldock in a single ward.

We have included the ABB polling district in this ward primarily to satisfy the Commission's electoral equality requirements. Nonetheless, we consider that this area is very suitable for inclusion in a Baldock Town ward, having previously been included in this ward until 1999. There are good transport links between this area and the bulk of the Baldock Town ward along the A507.

Naming

Our Baldock Town ward will keep its current name as we feel as due to the fact there is little change in the boundaries, changing the name would cause unneeded confusion.

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Weston & Sandon

A single member ward consisting of the current Weston & Sandon ward, including the additional development on the Weston and Great Ashby Parish Council Boundary, and excluding the part of Clothall Parish moving into Baldock East ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Weston & Sandon	1	2,395	+8%

Boundaries

The Weston & Sandon ward currently contains the parishes of Weston, Sandon, Rushden, Wallington and Clothall.

There is significant growth within the parish of Clothall from the BA2 and BA3 developments. We feel this new community should be incorporated into the new Baldock East ward, rather than the existing Weston & Sandon ward as this new community will be an urban expansion of Baldock and not a standalone rural settlement.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Weston & Sandon ward is a strong match for the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of 8%, which represents an acceptable level of electoral equality.

Moving the developments to the north of the A505 in Clothall Parish into the new Baldock East ward enables us to help retain the urban/rural divide in this ward. The GA2 development on the parish boundary of Great Ashby and Weston provides sufficient population to allow the Weston & Sandon ward to continue unchanged.

We considered whether the GA2 development ought to be warded with Great Ashby, as it acts as an effective extension of the existing Great Ashby settlement. However we felt that adding any further rural parishes into this ward to balance the electoral equality requirement if GA2 was removed would not be conducive to effective local government, with the ward becoming overly large and a mix of too many communities to be well-represented by a single Councillor.

Of the two developments, we considered that the development in Clothall Parish – separated from the rest of the Weston & Sandon ward by the A505 – was the more natural one to exclude. We feel that while GA2 is an extension of Great Ashby, it will be separated from the bulk of Great Ashby by Brooches Wood and should have reasonable ties with the remainder of Weston Parish.

Naming

Our Weston & Sandon ward will keep its current name as we feel as due to the fact there is little change in the boundaries, changing the name would cause unneeded confusion.

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.3– Hitchin

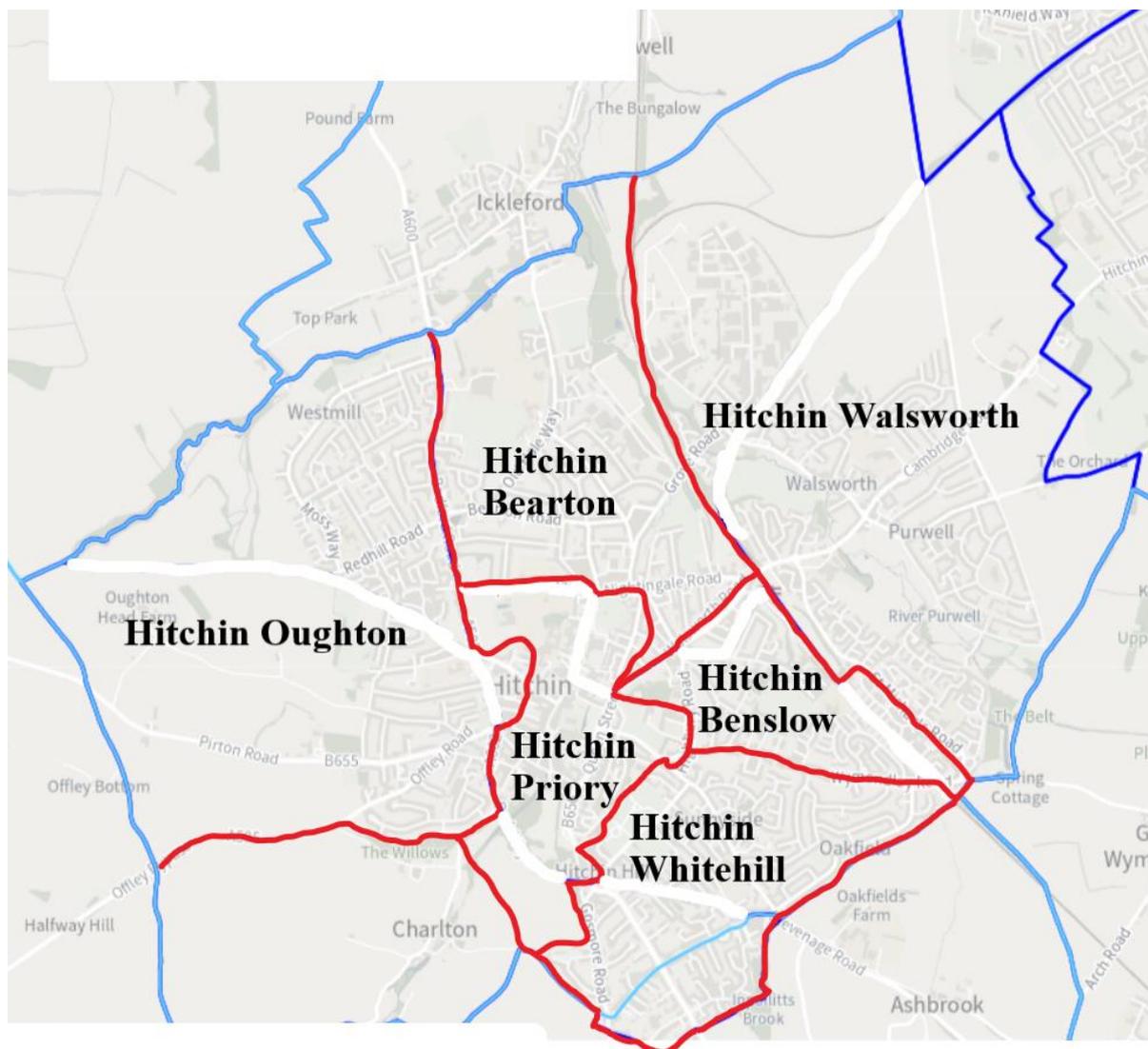


Fig. 3 – Map of the proposed Hitchin wards with the ward boundaries in red.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Bearton	2	4,761	+8%
Hitchin Benslow	1	2,318	+5%
Hitchin Oughton	3	6,109	-8%
Hitchin Priory	1	2,289	+4%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	7,280	+10%
Hitchin Whitehill	2	4,536	+3%

In Hitchin, we created our proposal with consideration of existing wards, but with a belief that a better solution could be found. We consider that the current mapping of Hitchin – with a Hitchin Priory ward made up of two unconnected halves and several large wards based on unconnected communities – is unsatisfactory even without considering the electoral equality problems.

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We approached our proposal with a number of considerations in mind:

- Hitchin is a town with a number of independent communities. Where possible, warding patterns should reflect this.
- The St. Ippolyts Parish ward of St. Ippolyts North is a continuous part of the Hitchin built-up area and should remain warded with an urban ward, rather than with the rural St. Ippolyts South ward.
- The hamlet of Charlton has a rural character which is not reflected in a warding with an urban Hitchin ward.
- Hitchin Town Centre has a distinct character from the wider town and should therefore be warded as a single-member ward if at all possible.

Having given careful thought to what would be best for Hitchin residents, we are proposing a ward pattern of Hitchin Bearton (2), Hitchin Benslow (1), Hitchin Oughton (3), Hitchin Priory (1), Hitchin Walsworth (3) and Hitchin Whitehill (2). We explain our reasoning for each ward below.

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Hitchin Bearton

A two-member ward centred on the existing Hitchin Bearton ward, without the areas of Benslow, Bancroft and the Wilbury Way Industrial Estate and surrounding houses.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Bearton	2	4,761	+8%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Bearton ward is bordered in the west along the Bedford Road, a major road which divides the Bearton community – based around the historic hamlet of Bearton – from the Westmill community constructed as a new housing estate in the 1920s.

In the south, our ward is bordered along the north of Fishponds Road – with Fishponds Road itself falling into the Hitchin Priory ward – and then along the major thoroughfare of the A505, which forms a natural boundary, down to the east of Whinbush Road, which moves into our Priory ward, and then along the Walsworth Road, excluding the BBD polling district from the ward which moves into Hitchin Benslow.

In the east, our Bearton ward is bordered along the East Coast Mainline, which provides a strong boundary between the Bearton community and our proposed Hitchin Walsworth ward. In the north, the border runs along the boundary between Ickleford Parish and the unparished area of Hitchin.

The ward is formed of the BBB and the (majority of the) BBA polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward is a good match for the Commission’s statutory requirements. The ward has a variance of 8%, which represents good electoral equality in line with what the Commission would expect.

There is a consistent community identity, with the ward made up of the historic Bearton community and houses of a similar style in the north of Hitchin, bounded by the Bedford Road and the railway line, which present strong east-west boundaries and in the south by Fishponds Road, the A505 and Walsworth Road, all of which are strong boundaries.

Finally, we consider that this ward is conducive to effective local government, with easy access across the ward. We note that this is the core of the current Hitchin Bearton ward and therefore feel that effective local government has already been demonstrated.

Naming

We feel that Hitchin Bearton is the most appropriate name for this ward, which is based on the historic Bearton hamlet and the current Bearton ward. We did not consider any alternative names for this ward.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered that Fishponds Road might be better represented in this ward, but for reasons of electoral equality included it in our Hitchin Priory ward. We feel that there is a valid case for the road to be in either ward.

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Hitchin Benslow

A single-member ward centred on the community of Benslow and a connected part of the Poets Estate.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Benslow	1	2,318	+5%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Benslow ward is bordered to the south-west along Wymondley Road, which forms a strong boundary as a major road artery of Hitchin, and then runs up Highbury Road before running down Windmill Hill at the northern boundary of Hitchin Girls' School.

In the north, the boundary follows the northern boundary of the BEA and BBD Polling Districts, with the Walsworth Road providing another strong boundary line. In the east, the ward boundary is along the railway line until it is crossed by Benslow Path, at which point the boundary follows that of the BDD polling district.

The ward is formed of the (majority of the) BEA polling district and the BBD and BDD polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Hitchin Benslow ward is a strong match for the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of just 5%, making it a good choice for electoral equality.

There is a strong community identity, with the ward uniting the Benslow community in a single ward. This area includes Benslow Nursing Home and Benslow Music Trust and is centred around Pinehill Park. Benslow Path connects the areas east and west of the railway line and the area east of the railway line shares a common community identity with the Benslow area.

We note that this area (BDD) is already included within the Hitchin South County Council ward, reflecting the shared community it has across the railway line.

In addition, Wymondley Road and Walsworth Road both represent strong boundaries and we consider that this ward is a strong community ward.

We also feel that this ward would provide strong local government. This is a distinct historic area of Hitchin and we feel that it is best represented by a single-member ward to enable that community identity to be properly represented. There are strong transport links, with good road networks linking the area including along Wymondley Road, The Avenue and Benslow Lane. The area across the railway is accessible via Benslow Path or by road via Wymondley Road.

Naming

We believe that Hitchin Benslow is the most appropriate name for this ward. The ward is broadly centred on the Benslow community and this name reflects that. We did not consider any alternative names for this ward.

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Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the area to the east of the railway line would be better served in a Hitchin Walsworth ward but we felt that there was a strong community connection between the two parts of the ward and therefore for reasons of electoral equality we felt this area was better served in the Benslow ward.

We note that this area is already represented with communities west of the railway line as part of the Hitchin South County Council Division and consider that this represents a good precedent.

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Hitchin Oughton

A three-member ward based on the current Hitchin Oughton ward, with the addition of the West Hitchin area of the current Priory ward and a small portion of the current Highbury ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Oughton	3	6,109	-8%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Oughton boundary is bordered to the west and north by the edge of the unparished area of Hitchin. In the south, the ward boundary follows the A505 and then runs along Willow Lane at the edge of the Hitchin built-up area. In the east, the ward boundary runs north along the A602, then following the eastern spur of the A505 and crossing East of the built up area of Elmside Walk and following the southern boundary of the Butts Close green space to re-join Bedford Road. The boundary then follows Bedford Road north to the edge of Hitchin.

The ward is formed of the BAA and the (majority of the) BCA polling districts, plus a small part of the BEC polling district.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward represents a good match to the Commission's requirements. There is good electoral equality, with a variance of -8%.

The ward is a combination of the West Hitchin and Westmill communities and is separated from the rest of Hitchin by the major road artery of Bedford Road. We believe that there is a strong coherent identity across this ward and a strong boundary provided by Bedford Road which makes this area distinct from the rest of the town. Residents across the ward share similar issues and the new development at Worboy's Field would benefit from a single ward on all sides to ensure that residents are fully represented.

The area around Paynes Park is well connected to the rest of the ward, with its roads being continuations of West Hill, Upper Tilehouse Street and Oughtonhead Way.

We consider that this ward would also be suitable for convenient local government, with strong east-west transport off of the Bedford Road throughout the ward.

Naming

We believe that Hitchin Oughton is the most appropriate name for this ward. The ward is centred on Oughtonhead Lane and contains Oughtonhead Common, Oughtonhead Farm and the River Oughton, as well as the entirety of the current Hitchin Oughton ward.

We considered an alternative name of Hitchin West for this ward, but felt that the Oughton name better reflected the communities in the ward.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the area to the east of the Bedford Road would be better represented in our Hitchin Priory ward. On balance we decided it was better served in the Hitchin Oughton ward for reasons of electoral equality. We note that Paynes Park served as the western edge of

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the medieval town¹ and therefore consider this to be consistent with the principles of this ward.

¹ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp3-12#h3-0003>

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Hitchin Priory

A single-member ward centred on the Town Centre.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Priory	1	2,289	+4%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Priory ward has a northern boundary which runs along the north of Fishponds Road and then along the major thoroughfare of the A505, which forms a natural boundary, down to the east of Whinbush Road. The boundary then runs up Windmill Hill to the north of Hitchin Girls School.

The ward has an eastern boundary which runs down Highbury Road and then down Hollow Lane (inclusive of the houses on the eastern side of Hollow Lane). The boundary then runs down Cemetery Path and Standhill Road, cutting down east of the houses on Standhill Road and to Hitchin Hill and the A602 roundabout. We then include Priory Park in this ward, so the southern boundary would be inclusive of that Park, bordered along Brick Kiln Lane and the River Hiz.

The ward's western boundary runs north along the A602, then following the eastern spur of the A505 and crossing east of the built-up area of Elmside Walk and following the southern boundary of the Butts Close green space to re-join Bedford Road. The boundary then follows Bedford Road north.

The ward is formed of the (majority of the) BEC and the BED polling districts and parts of the BEA, BEB and BBA polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We strongly believe that our Hitchin Priory ward captures the character and spirit of Hitchin's historic centre within a single ward. The ward encompasses the housing and businesses of the Town Centre and the area which formed the heart of the medieval town of Hitchin, including Bancroft (historically the northern end of Hitchin Market Place²), Butts Close (the town's medieval archery site³) and Hitchin Priory (the town's historic friary).

Our Priory ward includes the Bancroft Recreation Ground which borders both Bancroft and Whinbush Road and so we believe our boundary encompassing Whinbush Road best reflects the local community and keeps it together in a single ward.

Hitchin Cemetery forms a natural boundary between the Town Centre and the rest of the current Highbury ward and Highbury Road presents a strong boundary at the top of Windmill Hill, with the Bedford Road, Paynes Park, Priory Park and Fishponds Road also presenting strong boundaries. We discuss the Paynes Park area slightly more further on.

We note that this ward also represents a strong level of electoral equality, with a variance of just 4%.

² <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp3-12#h3-0003>

³ <https://www.thecomet.net/news/history-of-butts-close-hitchin-8525404>

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Overall, we feel that this ward, which represents the medieval centre of the town and includes the vast majority of its retail outlets, is a consistent community which would be poorly represented in a warding pattern which included it as part of a wider ward. We believe that a single-member ward on these lines would have strong community ties and allow for effective representation, with a Councillor focussed on the needs of the Town Centre and its residents and businesses.

Naming

We believe that Hitchin Priory is the most appropriate name for this ward. While the ward is wholly non-coterminous with the existing Hitchin Priory ward, the Priory itself sits within the ward. This is an important Hitchin landmark and continues the tradition of having a Hitchin ward with the Priory name.

We considered alternative names of Hitchin St. Mary's and Hitchin Town for this ward, which we felt would also make strong naming choices. We believe that either of these alternative choices would be a good fit for the ward, if the Commission is minded to go for a different name.

Hitchin St. Mary's would mean that the ward is named after St. Mary's Church, which sits at the heart of the ward and is a noteworthy Hitchin landmark.

Hitchin Town would reflect the fact that this is both the Town Centre and the historic centre of Hitchin.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered that Fishponds Road might be better represented in the Bearton, but for reasons of electoral equality included it in this ward. We feel that there is a valid case for the road to be in either ward.

We also considered whether the area to the east of the Bedford Road within Hitchin Oughton would be better represented in this ward. On balance we decided it was better served in the Hitchin Oughton ward for reasons of electoral equality. We note that Paynes Park served as the Western edge of the medieval town⁴ and therefore consider this to be consistent with the principles of this ward.

⁴ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp3-12#h3-0003>

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Hitchin Walsworth

A three-member ward based on the current Walsworth ward, with the addition of the Wilbury Way Industrial Estate and surrounding house and the loss of a small portion of Poets Estate.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Walsworth	3	7,280	+10%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Walsworth ward has a northern, eastern and southern boundary along the edge of the unparished area of Hitchin. Its western boundary follows the East Coast Main Line down as far as Benslow Path, at which point it runs along the edge of the BDC polling district.

The ward is formed of the BBC, BDA, BDB and BDC Polling Districts.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our Hitchin Walsworth ward is a strong warding proposal. The ward has an acceptable level of electoral equality, with the variance of 10% being within that historically allowed by the Commission.

This ward combines the historic communities of Walsworth and Purwell with the more recent Poets Estate development. This reflects the current Walsworth warding and we believe that there are good community ties across this ward which mean that wholesale change is not required, though we do acknowledge that the River Purwell, Purwell Meadows and Walsworth Common do create a ward which seems to have two distinct areas.

We feel that our mapping improves on the current Walsworth ward by including the area of Bearton ward separated from the Bearton community by the East Coast Mainline within a Walsworth ward. This area – characterised by the Wilbury Way industrial estate but with a number of residential dwellings – was historically a part of the parish of Walsworth⁵ and we believe that it remains a part of the Walsworth community.

There is a strong transport link between the two areas either side of the railway within our proposed Walsworth ward along Woolgrove Road and we believe that this road represents a much more continuous residential community than moving along Grove Road from Bearton ward, where the industrial area, East Coast Mainline and the River Purwell create a much more solid natural and urban boundary.

We believe that this ward is convenient for effective local government, with communities of a similar character right across it. There are very suitable transport links, including Cambridge Road running east-west and a number of major north-south arteries.

Naming

This ward is made up of the historic communities of Walsworth, Purwell and the more modern Poets Estate. We believe that retaining the Hitchin Walsworth name from the existing ward on which our ward is based appropriately reflects the community character of the ward and its history.

⁵ <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10038613/boundary>

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

We considered an alternative name of Hitchin East, but we felt retaining the Walsworth name was most appropriate for this ward on balance.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the area east of the railway line within the Hitchin Benslow ward would be better served in this ward but we felt that there was a strong community connection between the two parts of our proposed ward and therefore for reasons of electoral equality we felt this area was better served in the Benslow ward.

We note that this area is already represented with communities west of the railway line as part of the Hitchin South County Council Division and consider that this represents a good precedent.

We also considered whether the communities of Poets Estate, Purwell and Walsworth might be better represented in smaller wards, but felt that retaining the bulk of the current Walsworth ward was the correct approach.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Hitchin Whitehill

A two-member ward made out of parts of the Hitchin Highbury and Hitchin Priory wards, centred on the communities of Whitehill, Sunnyside, Oakfield and the Parish ward of St. Ippolyts North.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Hitchin Whitehill	2	4,536	+3%

Boundaries

Our Hitchin Whitehill ward has a southern boundary along the southern boundary of the St. Ippolyts North ward and the boundary of the Hitchin unparished area. It has a western boundary which runs down Highbury Road and then down Hollow Lane (exclusive of the houses on the eastern side of Hollow Lane). The boundary then runs down Cemetery Path and Standhill Road, cutting down east of the houses on Standhill Road and to Hitchin Hill and the A602 roundabout. The ward's northern boundary runs along Wymondley Road.

The ward is made up of the FLB, the BCB and the (majority of the) BEB polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Whitehill ward also represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of just 3%, providing an excellent level of electoral equality.

This ward is made up of communities of a similar style – primarily residential areas built out from the centre of Hitchin as urban extensions over the past century. Currently residents in this ward are spread across the Priory and Highbury wards, but we consider that there is a continuous community across the A602 which could be well represented as part of our Whitehill ward.

We did consider at length whether the St. Ippolyts North ward should be included in this Whitehill ward or in another arrangement with the more rural part of St. Ippolyts Parish. We looked at the precedent set by the Commission in the Sandridge and Colney Heath Parishes of St. Albans City & District Council⁶, where urban areas were placed into City wards even where they shared a Parish with more rural areas, and in the 2006 Further Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire⁷, which stated:

“[St. Ippolyts] North parish ward is an extension of Hitchin town and should not be separated from it.”

We do not feel that there are sufficient community links to justify splitting this urban area from Hitchin and placing it into a more rural ward, despite a shared Parish with the wider rural St. Ippolyts area.

Our Whitehill ward represents convenient and effective local government, with a number of major roads providing easy access to all areas of the ward.

⁶ <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/hertfordshire/st-albans>

⁷ https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/6173/northhertfordshirefinalreportmay2006_21387-15833_e_.pdf

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Naming

We considered a number of possible names for this ward, including Hitchin Whitehill, Hitchin Sunnyside, Hitchin St. Johns, Hitchin Oakfield and Hitchin South.

We believe that Hitchin Whitehill is the most suitable name for this ward, with Whitehill Road, Whitehill School and the wider Whitehill community in the ward.

Hitchin Sunnyside would reflect the fact that the Sunnyside area – built as an early urban extension to Hitchin – is located in this ward; while Hitchin St. Johns would reflect that St. Johns Park is the largest public green space in the ward and have the advantage of not tying the name to a specific community, perhaps better reflecting the ward as a whole. Hitchin Oakfield would reflect the inclusion of the Oakfield area within this ward.

Hitchin South would perhaps be a good fit as it is not tied to an existing community, but given that none of our other Hitchin wards have names of this kind we did not wish to have a single ward signified by its compass direction.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether St. Ippolyts North should be warded with the rural parts of St. Ippolyts Parish, but considered that any such warding arrangement would constitute an unacceptable breach of the urban/rural divide.

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.4– Letchworth

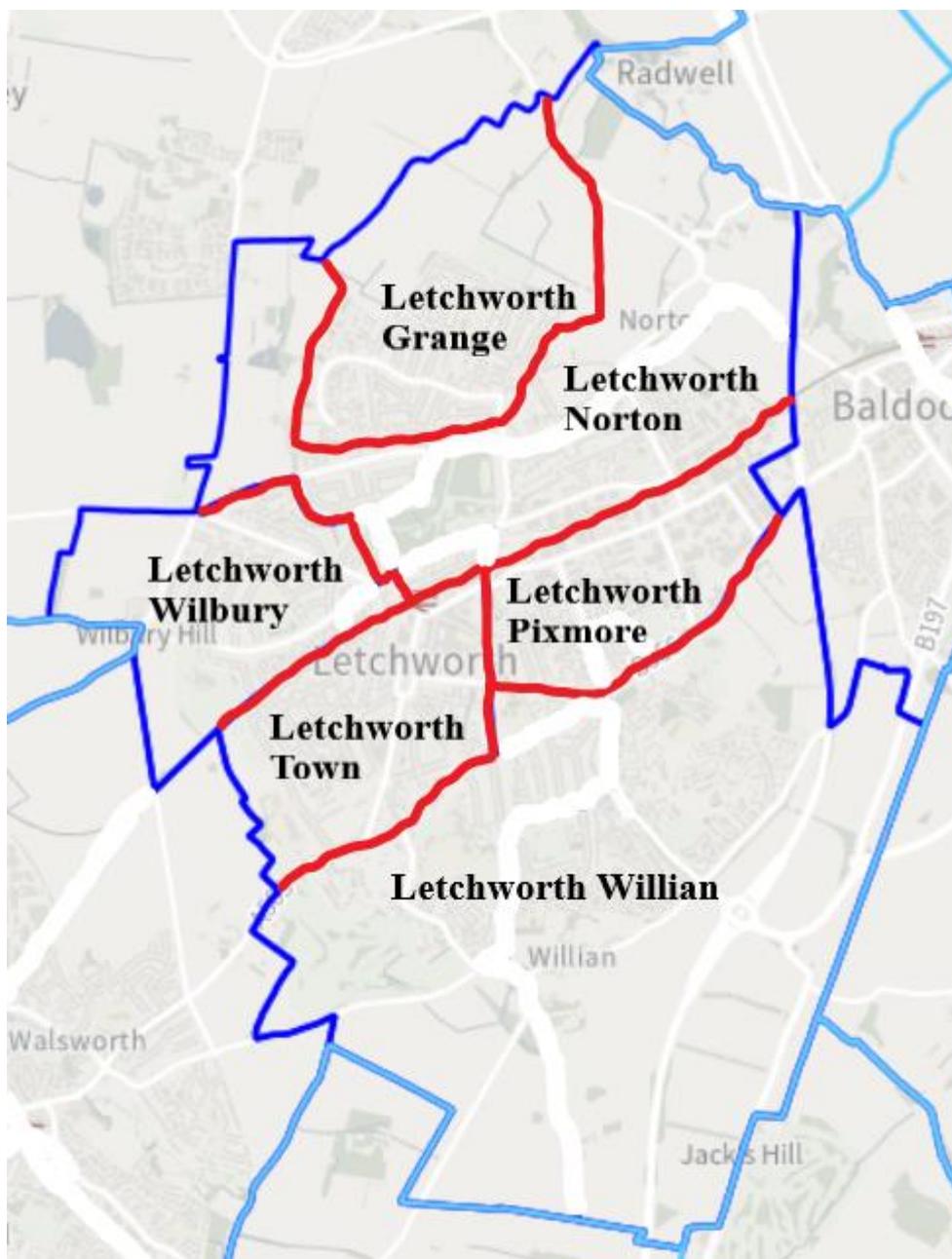


Fig. 4 – Map of the proposed Letchworth wards with the ward boundaries in red.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Grange	2	4,583	+4%
Letchworth Norton	2	4,433	0%
Letchworth Pixmore	1	2,426	+10%
Letchworth Town	2	4,878	+10%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	4,040	-9%
Letchworth Willian	3	6,301	-5%

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

For Letchworth Garden City, we created our proposal with consideration of existing wards, the natural community divides, and existing communities.

Firstly, we believe that the Railway Line which splits the town in two should be seen as a natural community boundary and wards should not be crossing over this, as they currently do in several wards. This principle was the only warding arrangement that no political group raised an objection to at the full council meeting where North Hertfordshire's submission was voted on.

Secondly, we created our boundaries to try and sit within the current Hertfordshire County Council Divisions which we believe will alleviate confusion with the electorate, especially in our new Letchworth Pixmore Ward which sits in a unique cross-town County Division with the neighbouring town of Baldock.

Finally, we have kept all individual communities together and avoided splitting up areas which have never been broken up before.

We are proposing a ward pattern of Letchworth Grange (2), Letchworth Norton (2), Letchworth Pixmore (1), Letchworth Town (2), Letchworth Wilbury (2) and Letchworth Willian (3).

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Grange

A two-member ward including the entirety of the Grange Estate.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Grange	2	4,583	+4%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Grange ward will contain the entirety of the Grange Estate plus the additional development in the draft Local Plan site LG1.

This ward will be made up solely of polling district CAB.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Grange ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of just +4% providing an excellent level of electoral equality.

This ward is made up of one self-contained community of the Grange Estate which is primarily a residential area built after the Second World War and centred around a community hub including a small supermarket, a parade of shops, a church, two schools and a community centre.

The new development at LG1 will represent an extension of the existing Grange community and is therefore rightly included in our proposed Grange ward.

We believe that this community is self-contained, and the Estate has never previously been divided up since its creation back in 1947. Therefore, this ward is a clear choice to represent existing communities and for effective local government.

Naming

We consider the name Letchworth Grange to be the only option for this ward as it covers the entirety of the Grange Estate, which is a well-used term for this settlement locally.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Norton

A two-member ward including the area north of the Railway Line and south of the Grange Estate and everything east of the Wilbury Ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Norton	2	4,433	0%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Norton ward will consist of polling district CBA which currently sits in Letchworth East ward. CBA contains everything North of the natural community boundary of the railway line in Letchworth East.

We believe that polling districts CAA and CAC from Letchworth Grange ward and CEC from Letchworth South West ward should be moved into the new Letchworth Norton ward as these areas previously were in the same ward as Letchworth East.

We also believe that polling register CDB should be moved into this new ward as it would all of the whole of Cowslip Hill to be in the same ward, unlike now when it is split across Letchworth Wilbury and Letchworth Grange.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Norton Ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of just 0% providing an excellent level of electoral equality.

We feel that this ward is a strong warding proposal. This ward is centred around the Norton community and Norton Common and contains the areas of Letchworth to the north of the railway line outside of the Grange and Wilbury estates. Norton was a historic parish which pre-dated the creation of Letchworth Garden City.

We note that there are a number of strong transport links across our proposed Norton ward, including Wilbury Road/Norton Road, which provides a convenient east-west link.

Naming

We consider the name Letchworth Norton to be the best name for this new ward as historically this area fell within the former Norton Parish which pre-dates the creation of Letchworth Garden City. The ward will also contain Norton Common, Norton Village and Norton Church.

Historically this area was covered by the Letchworth Norton Ward under the Letchworth Urban District Council (LUDC) prior to the creation of North Hertfordshire District Council.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Pixmore

A single-member ward, containing the majority of the area which falls within the Hertfordshire County Council Division of Baldock Town and Letchworth East.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Pixmore	1	2,426	+10%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Pixmore ward will consist of most of polling district CBB (excluding the Crescent, Baldock Road, Pixmore Way, parts of Rushby Mead and Norton Way South) which is in the current Letchworth East ward and CCF in the current Letchworth South East Ward. The polling district of CCF contains the self-confined settlement of Jackman's Place and half of Pixmore Avenue which both historically were in the same ward as the rest of the area north of Baldock Road.

This will mean that the majority of this ward will fall within the County Council Division of Baldock Town and Letchworth East, which will allow for better and simpler representation at County Hall due to the fact that this area currently is split between several divisions now.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Pixmore Ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a variance of 10%, providing a satisfactory level of electoral equality.

This area is made up of everything south of the natural community boundary of the Railway line, north of the Baldock Road and east of Norton Way South and Pixmore Way. This ward will contain the majority of the Town's industrial estate as well as a local shop and two schools.

Naming

We consider the name Letchworth Pixmore to be suitable as it covers most of the former area known as Pixmore before the creation of Letchworth Garden City, and had previously been a ward on Letchworth Urban District Council (LUDC).

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Town

A two-member ward consisting of the Town Centre and surrounding streets.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Town	2	4,878	+10%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Town Ward will consist of the former Letchworth South West Ward polling registers CEA and everything south of the Baldock Road in CEB.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Town Ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of 10%, providing an acceptable level of electoral equality.

This area contains the entirety of the town centre which has never been divided up in previous warding arrangements and is the core of the original Letchworth Garden City design for which Letchworth is most famous. We consider that our proposed boundaries along the railway line, the A505 and Norton Road South represent strong boundaries and allow for a coherent ward.

The ward has very convenient transport links across it, with the Broadway and surrounding roads making this an easily accessible ward (in no small part due to the fact that this area was designed by the Garden City movement to be a coherent community).

Naming

We feel the name Letchworth Town is the most appropriate for this new ward as it contains the area commonly referred to as just 'the town'. We considered the name 'Letchworth Central' as had been previously used on the Letchworth Urban District Council but felt this was not suitable.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Wilbury

A two-member ward based on the current Wilbury ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Wilbury	2	4,040	-8%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Wilbury ward will consist of the entirety of the Wilbury estate and the surrounding streets, and the polling district CED from Letchworth South West, which historically had been part of Wilbury.

Unlike the current ward, our Letchworth Wilbury ward will not include the polling register CDB, this register contains around 80 electors on one half of Cowslip Hill. We believe that this register should re-join the rest of the street in the new Letchworth Norton Ward. This ward will only include polling districts CDA and CED.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Wilbury ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of just -8%, providing an excellent level of electoral equality.

This ward is made up of one self-contained community of the Wilbury Estate which is primarily a residential area built and centred around a community hub including a parade of shops, a church, two primary schools and a secondary school.

There are convenient transport links across the ward, with a number of easy and convenient roads north-south within the Wilbury Estate and strong east-west routes, including along Bedford Road and Icknield Way.

Naming

We consider the name Letchworth Wilbury to be the best name for this new ward as this area is locally known as Wilbury and has been a ward on North Hertfordshire District Council since 1974.

The name relates to the Roman Fort known as Wilbury that is located near the ward on the Wilbury Hills.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Letchworth Willian

A three-member ward consisting of the majority of the former Letchworth South East ward and part of Letchworth South West ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Letchworth Willian	3	6,301	-5%

Boundaries

Our Letchworth Willian boundaries contain the majority the former Letchworth South East ward, including polling districts CCA, CCB, CCC and CCD. We also include parts of the Letchworth South West ward, including polling register CEB and the triangular area of the Crescent, Baldock Road, Pixmore Way, Parts of Rushby Mead and Norton Way South from Letchworth East ward polling district CBB.

Commission Criteria

We believe that our proposed Letchworth Willian ward represents a good match for the Commission's statutory criteria. This ward has a strong variance of just -5%, providing an excellent level of electoral equality.

This area will include the natural communities of the Lordship Estate, Jackman's Estate and Willian Village which currently sit in South East ward. This ward covers the majority of the former parish of Willian, which existed prior to the creation of Letchworth Garden City.

Our proposals will also eliminate the divide on Willian Way where the current boundary zigzags along the road between South East and South West, causing confusion for residents as to who represents them.

Naming

We consider the name Letchworth Willian to be suitable as it covers most of the former parish of Willian which existed before the creation of Letchworth Garden City and had previously been a ward on Letchworth Urban District Council (LUDC) and North Hertfordshire District Council.

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.5– Royston & District

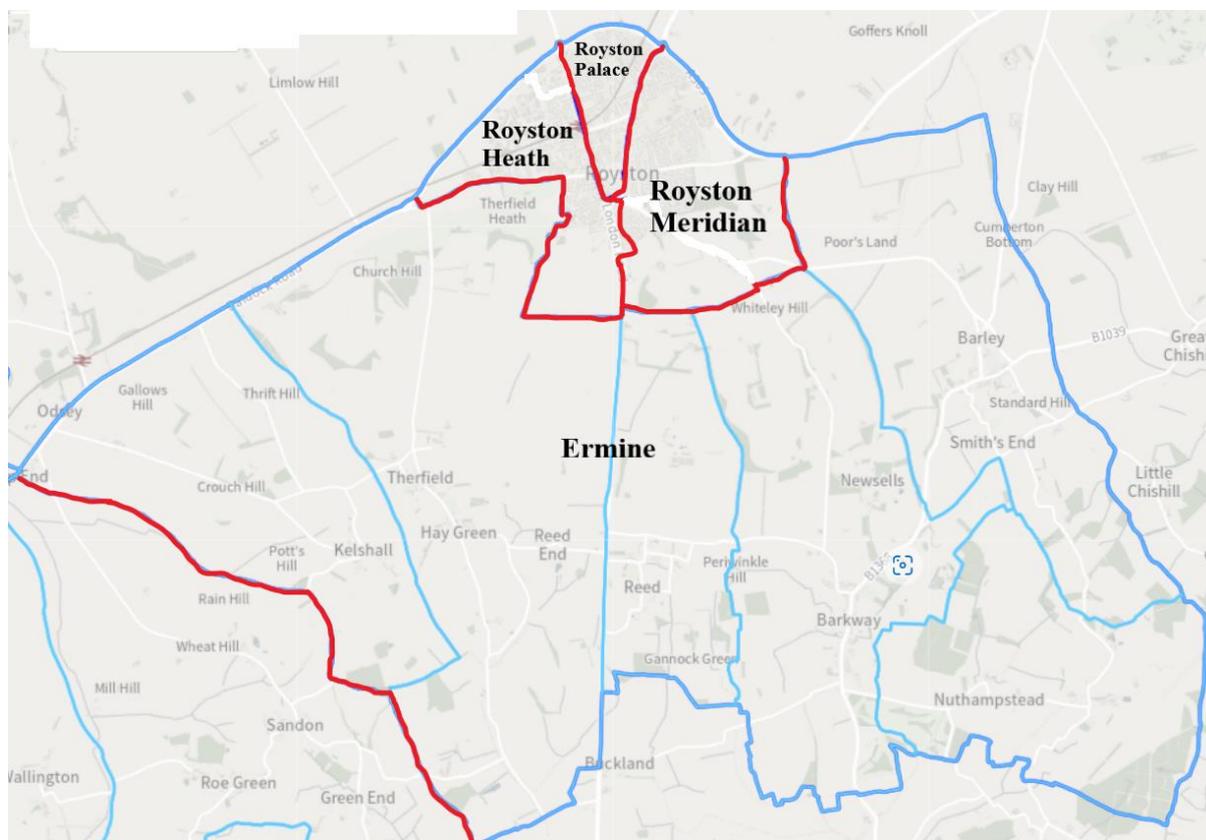


Fig. 5 – Map of the proposed Royston & District wards with the ward boundaries in red.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Ermine	1	2,441	+10%
Royston Heath	2	4,024	-9%
Royston Meridian	3	6,305	-5%
Royston Palace	2	4,546	=0%

Currently Royston is divided into three two-member wards called Heath, Palace, and Meridian. In the draft Local Plan, the main development will be within the current Meridian ward; due to the increased development and the resultant forecasted growth in the electorate, Royston should gain an additional councillor.

Currently the main ward boundaries are drawn up along the main roads within the town where possible. We believe that any future warding arrangements should follow the same pattern as it allows the existing communities to remain intact.

Our proposed wards would accommodate the growth in population with an additional councillor and would respect existing communities. Furthermore, they also accommodate for the existing Royston Town Council wards in most places. This would also mean that the new boundaries would mostly sit within the current county council divisions, with the Meridian and Palace wards falling under the Royston East and Ermine division and Royston Heath mainly within the Royston West and Rural division.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Our proposed warding consists of Ermine (1), Royston Heath (2), Royston Meridian (3) and Royston Palace (2).

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Ermine

A single-member ward, identical to the current Ermine ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Ermine	1	2,441	+10%

Boundaries

Our Ermine Ward remains the same as it is currently. This will mean that the warding arrangement for the existing communities of Barley, Barkway, Nuthampstead, Reed, Therfield and Kelsall will remain unchanged.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward is a good match for the Commission's statutory requirements. The ward has a variance of +10%, which represents good electoral equality in line with what the Commission would expect.

Ermine ward is increasing slightly in population due to the developments on the Parish of Barkway. This increase in population is not sufficient to cause the ward to need to change from its current warding arrangement.

We consider that this ward is a good single-member rural ward combining communities which face Royston for their local services and that there are reasonable transport links across the ward.

Naming

We believe that Ermine Ward should keep its existing name, as the Roman Road of Ermine Street will still pass through the middle of the ward.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Royston Heath

A two-member ward, centred on the current Royston Heath ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Royston Heath	2	4,024	-9%

Boundaries

Our Royston Heath ward will include polling districts, DBA, DBD and DBE from the current Royston Heath ward, part of polling district DCA west of Great North Road, and streets Garden Land, The Warren, and Shrubbery Grove from polling register DBB. We believe that those three streets should remain in our Royston Heath ward as they have a greater connection to the Layston Estate and Sun Hill area on the west side of the A10.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward is a good match for the Commission's statutory requirements. The ward has a variance of -9%, which represents an acceptable electoral equality in line with what the Commission would expect.

Royston Heath ward is getting substantially lower development than Royston Meridian, however there is an increase in polling district DBA, primarily from the Ivy Farm Development in the draft Local Plan. This site will be interlinked with the existing site on the Baldock Road and therefore should be in the same ward.

Royston Heath ward can remain a two-member ward by losing polling district DBB and DBC to Royston Meridian. This would mean that the remainder of the current ward can remain intact and will mean that the natural ward boundaries of the A10 and the Great North Road can remain. To improve the integrity of the boundaries, we have included the area west of the Great North Road in this ward.

Naming

Our Royston Heath ward has changed little from the current ward and still snakes around the Therfield Heath, so we feel that to save confusion it should remain the same.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Royston Meridian

A three-member ward, centred on the current Royston Meridian ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Royston Meridian	3	6,305	-5%

Boundaries

Our Royston Meridian ward include all of the current Meridian ward, which will include significant development, and the majority of polling district DBB from the current Heath Ward (with the exclusion of Garden Lane, The Warren and Shrubbery Grove) and the DBC polling district. This will give our Meridian ward enough electors to warrant it becoming a three-member ward.

The boundaries of our Meridian ward will be the natural community boundary of almost everything east of the A10.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward is a good match for the Commission's statutory requirements. The ward has a variance of -5%, which represents good electoral equality in line with what the Commission would expect.

Royston Meridian ward is gaining the majority of development within the parish of Royston, primarily in polling districts DAA and DAB. These new developments will be connected to the existing ward and will act as an extension to the existing Royston community.

Royston Meridian ward can be made into a three-member ward by moving polling districts DBB and DBC from the existing Royston Heath Ward. By moving DBB and DBC, the new natural ward boundary will include everything east of the A10 within the parish of Royston.

Naming

Our Royston Meridian ward still include the Greenwich Meridian Line which passes through the current Meridian ward, we believe that the name should not change.

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Royston Palace

A two-member ward, almost identical to the current Royston Palace ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Royston Palace	2	4,435	=0%

Boundaries

Our Royston Palace ward stays the same in our proposal, bar a small area of the DCA polling district moving into the Royston Heath ward. This means that the natural ward boundaries of the Great North Road to the west and the A10 to the east will remain.

Commission Criteria

We consider that this ward is a good match for the Commission's statutory requirements. The ward has a variance of 0%, which represents good electoral equality in line with what the Commission would expect.

Retaining the existing Palace ward ensures that this ward continues to provide strong representation to this community within Royston.

Naming

Our Palace ward will still include the historic Royston Palace, so we feel that the name should remain the same.

Part II | Submission (51 Member Council)

2.6– Southern Rural

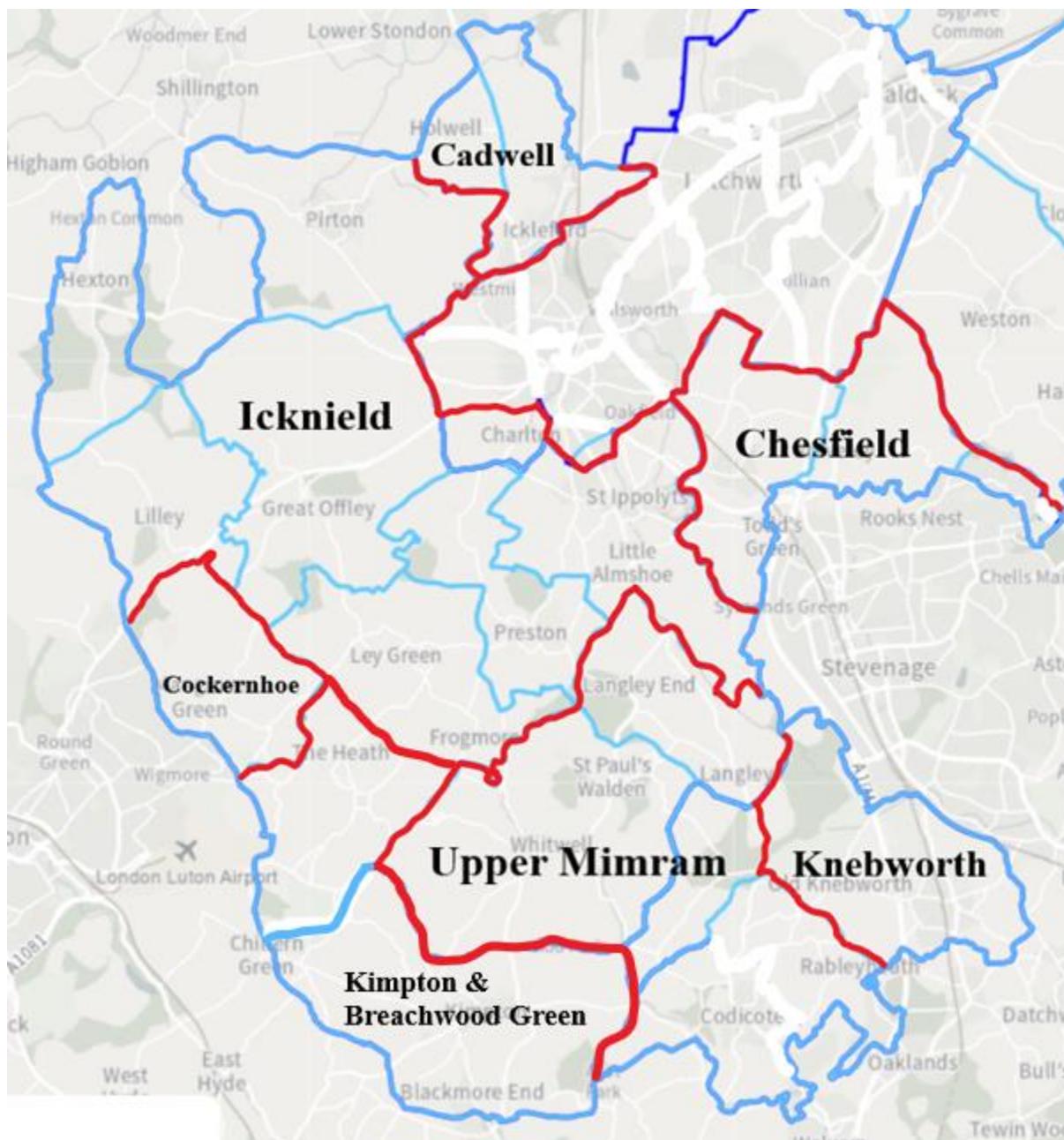


Fig. 6 – Map of the proposed Southern Rural wards with the ward boundaries in red.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Cadwell	1	2,390	+8%
Chesfield	3	6,816	+3%
Cockernhoe	1	2,041	-8%
Icknield	2	4,237	-4%
Kimpton & Breachwood Green	1	2,429	+10%
Knebworth	2	4,155	-6%
Upper Mimram	2	4,546	+3%

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

The Southern Rural area of the District comprises a wide area of predominantly rural communities, covering the parishes of Great Ashby, Graveley, Wymondley, Ickleford, Holwell, Pirton, Offley (with Cockernhoe), Lilley, Hexton, St. Ippolyts, Preston, Kings Walden, Langley, St. Paul's Walden, Kimpton, Codicote and Knebworth.

We have attempted to create wards which are similar to the existing warding arrangements for North Hertfordshire, with amendments to facilitate better community links, improved representation and to uphold urban/rural divides.

We approached our proposal with a number of considerations in mind:

- Urban and rural divides should not be breached except in very exceptional circumstances where no other warding arrangement is possible. We believe that this is reflected in the precedent set in warding arrangements in Colney Heath and Sandridge Parishes in the recent St. Albans review. With this in mind, we also considered that:
 - o The hamlet of Charlton has a rural character which is not reflected in a warding with an urban Hitchin ward. This village is much more similar to nearby rural villages St. Ippolyts and Gosmore.
 - o The St. Ippolyts Parish ward of St. Ippolyts North is of an urban character and should be warded with urban wards in Hitchin of a similar character, rather than being moved to become part of a much larger rural ward with the rest of St. Ippolyts as is proposed by the District Council.
 - o The "East of Luton" development (EL1, EL2 and EL3⁸) will be of an urban character and should, where possible, be in its own ward.
- Parishes should be retained as a whole in wards wherever doing so did not breach the urban/rural divide and provided good electoral equality.
- Rural wards should have convenient local transport links to enable effective representation to occur.
- When creating a rural ward, communities with shared interests, community links and similar characters should be grouped together where possible.

Having spent some time considering this mapping, we are proposing a warding pattern of Cadwell (1), Chesfield (3), Cockernhoe (1), Icknield (2), Kimpton & Breachwood Green (1), Knebworth (2) and Upper Mimram (2).

⁸ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/North%20Herts%20Sheet%201%20Side%20B.pdf>

North Hertfordshire Conservatives

Cadwell

A single-member ward identical to the current Cadwell ward.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Cadwell	1	2,390	+8%

Boundaries

Our Cadwell ward has boundaries coterminous with those of the existing Cadwell ward – the external boundaries of the Holwell and Ickleford Parishes when combined.

The ward consists of the FJ and FK polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We believe that this ward – which is unchanged from the existing Cadwell ward – represents a good match to the Commission’s statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of 8%, which is within the boundaries that the Commission would expect for good electoral equality.

The parishes of Holwell and Ickleford are both made up of Hitchin-facing settlements and are therefore likely to share common interests. Bedford Road connects the two villages for easy access across the ward, without the need to travel down more rural lanes that would be required for a ward which combined Holwell and/or Ickleford with other rural communities.

We feel that this is a strong existing ward which does not need to be altered.

Naming

This ward is unchanged from the current Cadwell ward and therefore we are proposed that the name is retained. If the Commission wishes to consider an alternative name, we would recommend “Ickleford & Holwell”.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the Holwell Parish might be better served with alternative warding arrangements but could not find a suitable warding pattern which balanced electoral equality and community links effectively.

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Chesfield

A three-member ward based on the current Chesfield ward, with the addition of the portion of Great Ashby Parish currently warded with Weston & Sandon.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Chesfield	3	6,816	+3%

Boundaries

Our Chesfield ward has boundaries almost coterminous with the existing Chesfield ward, with the addition of the FDD1 polling district. The boundaries are now those of the Wymondley, Graveley and Great Ashby Parishes combined.

The ward consists of the FEEA, FEED, FEED, FGA, FGB and FDD1 polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We consider our proposed Chesfield ward to be an acceptable match to the Commission's statutory criteria, retaining as it does the existing Chesfield ward (with minor amendment) and upgrading it from a two-member to a three-member to reflect population growth. Our proposed ward has good electoral equality, with a variance of just 3%.

Whilst we had some reservations about the urban/rural mix for this ward, we considered that a ward containing the Graveley and Great Ashby Parishes shares a number of community links. These are both areas which are to the north of Stevenage and look to Stevenage for their local services rather than the wider North Hertfordshire District. With new developments at GA1 and NS1, we consider that these parishes will increasingly share an urban setting and are therefore well-suited to sharing a ward.

We consider that the inclusion of a portion of some 13 voters in Great Ashby Parish within the Weston & Sandon ward to be something of a historical anomaly and we are proposing that they be represented instead in our retained Chesfield ward.

Whilst we acknowledge that Wymondley Parish might be better served by a more rural ward, due to its position in the District and our need to meet the Commission's electoral equality requirements, we considered that there was no better warding arrangement for the Wymondleys than within the existing Chesfield ward. We further note that both the Wymondleys and Graveley are Stevenage-facing (as also stated by the District Council in their submission⁹) and consider from the experience of the existing wards that there are some shared issues across the patch.

We feel that the existing ward represents convenient local government and there is relatively easy access across the ward.

Naming

This ward is unchanged from the current Chesfield ward and therefore we are proposed that the name is retained. If the Commission wishes to consider an alternative name, we would recommend "Great Ashby, Graveley and the Wymondleys".

⁹ https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s19716/Appendix%20A%20-%20Submission_MAIN_2.pdf.pdf

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Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the Wymondley Parish might be better served with alternative warding arrangements but could not find a suitable warding pattern which balanced electoral equality and community links as effectively.

We considered creating a “Graveley & Wymondley” single-member ward and a two-member “Great Ashby” ward, but on balance we considered that the NS1 development was an urban extension of Stevenage like Great Ashby and this combined with the two rural parishes’ close association with Stevenage meant that we considered the current Chesfield ward boundary to be the most appropriate.

We also considered whether the area of GA2 in Weston Parish should be included with this ward but for reasons of electoral equality as discussed in our proposed Weston & Sandon ward we did not include it.

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Cockernhoe

A single-member ward, coterminous with the Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Cockernhoe	1	2,041	-8%

Boundaries

Our Cockernhoe ward has boundaries coterminous with the Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish.

The ward consists of the FTB polling district.

Commission Criteria

We consider this Cockernhoe ward to be the only way to appropriately serve residents in the rural areas. The ward has good electoral equality, with a variance of -8% being in an acceptable range.

This ward is currently made up of the Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish and consists of a small village and assorted local settlements. However, with the proposals in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, this ward will be primarily made up of the three sites collectively known as “East of Luton”, which will adjoin both Luton and the rural communities of Cockernhoe, Tea Green and Mangrove Green.

This will create a community which is essentially of an urban character and which will look towards Luton, due to the fact that primary access to the development is proposed to be off Luton Road/Crawley Green Road, which sits across the boundary in the Borough of Luton. We expect that this development will have a mixture of self-contained amenities, but will also be part of the urban area of Luton and therefore residents within it would be much more likely to use neighbouring amenities in Luton than in the wider rural area of North Hertfordshire.

We do not therefore believe that there will be any connection between this urban development and the wider rural North Hertfordshire, making this an obvious candidate for a single-member ward. Including this area within a rural ward would present a clear breach of the urban/rural divide and create a ward which would be difficult to represent due to its differentiated outlook and nature.

Naming

This ward is coterminous with the existing Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish Council and Cockernhoe is its largest settlement. We therefore felt Cockernhoe was the most appropriate name. We did not consider any alternative names.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We did not consider any changes to this ward.

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Icknield

A two-member ward consisting of the Parishes of Pirton, Hexton, Lilley, Preston and the Offley ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish, the Kings Walden ward of Kings Walden Parish, the St. Ippolyts South ward of St. Ippolyts Parish, and the unparished village of Charlton.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Icknield	2	4,237	-4%

Boundaries

Our Icknield ward has external boundaries on the border with Bedfordshire and on the Parish boundaries of Pirton, Lilley, the Offley ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish, the Kings Walden of Kings Walden Parish, Preston, the St. Ippolyts South ward of St. Ippolyts Parish and along the A505, Willow Lane and the boundary of Priory Park in the unparished area of Hitchin.

The ward is made up of the FH, FLA, FOA, FR, FTA, FV, FW and FW1 polling districts and a small part of the BCA polling district.

Commission Criteria

We consider our proposed Icknield ward to be a good match for the Commission's statutory requirements. The ward has reasonable levels of electoral equality, with a variance of -4% within that expected by the Commission.

This ward consists of Hitchin-facing rural communities, with reasonable rural transport connections across the ward. We consider that the parishes included within this ward are likely to have a number of shared issues, reflecting their character within the setting of rural Western North Hertfordshire.

Of note within this ward is the decision to include the unparished village of Charlton, which is currently within the Hitchin Priory ward. We feel that Charlton has a rural character much more similar to that of the nearby villages of Gosmore and St. Ippolyts, than to the town of Hitchin proper. As this village lies outside of the Hitchin built-up area, we felt it was consistent with our approach to urban/rural divides to include the village in a rural ward.

We have excluded the Kings Walden Parish ward of Breachwood Green from this ward to achieve a more acceptable level of electoral equality. Whilst we consider it important to protect the integrity of our local Parishes, we feel that excluding Breachwood Green also makes this ward more practical to represent, reducing the population and overall area of the ward and ensuring that the ward is made up of villages with reasonable transport links across the patch.

We were also pleased to be able to ward this part of the District in a way that protected the integrity of many of our parishes, with the exception of Kings Walden (as discussed above), the Cockernhoe ward of Offley (with Cockernhoe) Parish which contains an urban extension of Luton and forms our new Cockernhoe ward and the St. Ippolyts North ward of St. Ippolyts Parish, which is an urban extension of Hitchin.

Naming

We considered a number of different naming options for this ward. The ward comprises a large number of villages and hamlets, across seven parishes and one unparished area. We

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settled on Icknield to reflect the fact that ward is crossed by the historic Icknield Way, an ancient trackway.

Other options that we considered included naming it the “Chilterns” ward, as this ward covers the majority of the area of North Hertfordshire within the Chiltern Hills. We also considered naming the ward “Pirton, Offley and St. Ippolyts”, to reflect the major population centres.

We are open to alternative names for this ward.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether Cockernhoe or St. Ippolyts North should be included in this ward, but felt that including either would represent an unacceptable breach of the urban/rural divide. We also considered whether there were options to split the ward into two single-member wards, but could not find a solution which satisfied electoral equality.

We considered whether the Breachwood Green ward of Kings Walden Parish would be better served in this ward, but felt that its inclusion within Kimpton & Breachwood Green allowed both wards to better meet the statutory criteria.

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Kimpton & Breachwood Green

A single-member ward consisting of the Kimpton Parish and the Kings Walden Parish ward of Breachwood Green.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Kimpton & Breachwood Green	1	2,429	+10%

Boundaries

Our Kimpton & Breachwood Green ward has boundaries coterminous with the external boundaries of the Kimpton Parish and the Kings Walden Parish ward of Breachwood Green.

The ward consists of the FN and the FOB polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We consider the Kimpton & Breachwood Green ward to be a good fit with the Commission's statutory requirements. This ward has a variance of 10%, which is at the upper end of the Commission's limit but still represents acceptable levels of electoral equality.

Kimpton and Breachwood Green are very similar rural communities with a number of shared issues and both of them tend to be Harpenden, Luton or St. Albans facing for travel, shopping, employment and socialising, rather than facing Hitchin, Stevenage or Welwyn like many surrounding villages in North Hertfordshire.

For example, both villages form part of the St. Albans and Harpenden School Priority Area¹⁰ and therefore children from both villages attend Harpenden Secondary Schools. The majority of residents in both villages are registered with GP Surgeries in Harpenden and Wheathampstead.

These are both similar rural areas, with strong rural identities and shared concerns over, for example, Luton Airport expansion, which has a strong impact on both villages. The Kimpton Parish Council has expressed to us a strong preference that Kimpton should remain part of a single-member ward, reflecting its local character and history of single-member representation. Taking this into account, we believe that this mapping is the best route forwards.

We note that this ward has largely rural road networks for transport across it, but consider that there are relatively convenient transport links between Breachwood Green and Peters Green, and from there there are convenient links across the ward. With this in mind, we think that the ward would provide for easy and convenient local government.

Naming

This ward is made up of the Parish of Kimpton and the Kings Walden ward of Breachwood Green. We therefore feel our proposed name of Kimpton & Breachwood Green reflects the community identity in this ward well. We did not consider any alternative options.

¹⁰ https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/school-admissions/secondary-and-upper-schools/admission-rules-secondary-and-upper-schools/priority-areas-secondary-and-upper-schools.aspx#DynamicJumpMenuManager_1_Anchor_2

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Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the Breachwood Green ward of Kings Walden Parish would be better served in the Icknield ward, but felt that its inclusion within this ward allowed both wards to better meet the statutory criteria.

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Knebworth

A two-member ward consisting of the Knebworth Parish, excluding a small rural portion west of Hitchin Road.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Knebworth	2	4,155	-6%

Boundaries

Our Knebworth ward has boundaries coterminous with the Knebworth Parish, with the exception of its western boundary, which follows the Hitchin Road.

The ward consists of the FPB and the (majority of the) FPA polling districts.

Commission Criteria

We consider our proposed Knebworth ward to be a good fit with the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward has a variance of -6%, which represents good electoral equality.

This ward is one with strong community ties, representing as it does the whole parish of Knebworth, with the exception of the rural communities west of the Hitchin Road, which are separated in any case from the rest of the parish by that road. Whilst we do have some concerns about whether Old Knebworth and Knebworth are a mixture of urban and rural communities, we felt that the village of Old Knebworth has close community links to Knebworth which outweigh these concerns.

There are good transport links across the ward, despite the A1(M) running through the middle of it, and we therefore consider that it is conducive to effective local government.

Naming

This ward is wholly made up of Knebworth Parish and therefore we consider Knebworth to be the most appropriate name. We did not consider any alternative options.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We considered whether the FPA polling district (consisting of the rural area West of the A1(M), including the village of Old Knebworth) would be more effectively represented in a more rural ward, with a boundary along the A1(M), given the urban nature of the main town of Knebworth which makes up the majority of the populated part of this ward, but we did not think that breaking up the Knebworth Parish in this way would be conducive to retaining good community ties or to electoral equality.

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Upper Mimram

A two-member ward consisting of the parishes of Codicote, Langley and St. Paul's Walden and a small rural portion of Knebworth Parish west of Hitchin Road.

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Upper Mimram	2	4,546	+3%

Boundaries

Our Upper Mimram ward has boundaries along the external boundaries of the St. Paul's Walden, Langley and Codicote Parishes and a Western boundary along the Hitchin Road in Knebworth Parish.

The ward is made up of the FU, FU1, FQ, FFA and FFB polling districts and a small part of the FPA polling district.

Commission Criteria

We consider that our Upper Mimram ward is a strong fit with the Commission's statutory criteria. The ward represents a very good level of electoral equality, with a variance of just 3%.

This warding enables us to unite the parish of Codicote in a single ward, fixing the anomalous position that currently stands where the Codicote East parish ward is represented in a separate warding arrangement to Codicote village.

The boundary line in Knebworth Parish splits off the most rural part of that Parish West of the Hitchin Road and enables those residents to be represented at the centre of a rural ward. As well as providing strong representation and facilitating a strong boundary, this ensures that the ward has strong internal transport links, with Codicote and Langley connected along Hitchin Road, Codicote and Whitwell connected along Whitwell Road/Codicote Road and good rural road links connecting across the patch.

We believe that this ward represents a strong choice for effective local government and enables us to promote community ties by reuniting the parish of Codicote in a single District ward.

Naming

This ward contains the source of the River Mimram near Whitwell, which then flows through Codicote Parish, with the valley at Codicote Bottom caused by the Mimram. We therefore feel that this significant local feature across the communities in this ward makes Upper Mimram the most appropriate name for the ward.

We also considered "Codicote & St. Paul's Walden", which we felt could be an equally strong choice.

Alternative Warding Considerations

We did not consider any changes to this ward.

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2.7– Implications for Parish Boundaries

Ashwell

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Ashwell.

Barley

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Barley.

Barkway

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Barkway.

Bygrave

Our proposal would require the creation of a parish warding arrangement in Bygrave to encompass the area warded with Baldock East.

Caldecote

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Caldecote.

Clothall

Our proposal would require the creation of a parish warding arrangement in Clothall to encompass the area north of the A505, warded with Baldock East.

Codicote

Our proposal would enable the abolition of the Codicote East ward and a return to an unwarded Parish Council.

Graveley

We would recommend that a warding arrangement be considered for Graveley to place the new NS1 development into a distinct parish ward.

Great Ashby

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Great Ashby.

Hexton

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Hexton.

Hinxworth

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Hinxworth.

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Holwell

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Holwell.

Ickleford

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Ickleford.

Kelshall

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Kelshall.

Kimpton

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Kimpton.

Kings Walden

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Kings Walden.

Knebworth

Our proposal requires the creation of a small parish ward in the West of Knebworth Parish. We recommend a name of "Rusling End".

Langley

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Langley.

Lilley

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Lilley.

Newnham

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Newnham.

Nuthampstead

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Nuthampstead.

Offley (with Cockernhoe)

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Offley (with Cockernhoe).

Pirton

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Pirton.

Preston

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Preston.

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Radwell

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Radwell.

Reed

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Reed.

Royston

Our proposal has some minor implications for warding in Royston. The Commission may wish to consider how best to draw parish wards which accommodate our proposals and the existing parish ward boundaries.

Rushden

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Rushden.

Sandon

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Sandon.

St. Ippolyts

Our proposal has no implications for warding in St. Ippolyts.

St. Paul's Walden

Our proposal has no implications for warding in St. Paul's Walden.

Therfield

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Therfield.

Wallington

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Wallington.

Weston

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Weston, though the Commission may consider warding the new GA2 development as a separate parish ward.

Wymondley

Our proposal has no implications for warding in Wymondley.

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2.8– Conclusions

The North Hertfordshire Conservative proposal, if adopted by the Commission, would create a warding pattern for North Hertfordshire which carefully balances community interests, electoral equality, the need for clear and identifiable boundaries and effective local government.

We have been consistent in our approach to urban/rural divides, seeking wherever possible to exclude urban communities from rural ones.

We have sought to protect existing communities, keeping whole parishes together except in circumstances where this is not possible for electoral equality or where this no longer reflects the urban and rural divide because of previous or forthcoming urban extensions.

We have used strong urban or community divides to create our warding patterns, ensuring that residents are able to clearly identify the ward they are represented in.

Our proposed **Arbury** ward retains the character of the current rural ward, with only a minor amendment to exclude the urban extension of Baldock planned for Bygrave Parish.

Baldock East will consist of the majority of the current urban Baldock East ward, with the proposed urban extensions of Baldock bordering the current ward in Bygrave and Clothall Parishes included to unite this new community together.

Our **Baldock Town** ward is almost completely unchanged, with other a minor amendment to place a small area historically in this ward back into it for the purposes of electoral equality.

The **Cadwell** ward will remain unchanged, consisting as it does of two similar Hitchin-facing rural communities.

Our proposal to retain the current **Chesfield** ward as a three-member ward, with only a minor amendment to unite the Great Ashby community, will ensure that the Stevenage-facing villages in Graveley and the Wymondleys and the Stevenage extensions of Great Ashby and NS1 are united in a single ward.

Cockernhoe will become a single-member ward coterminous with the existing Cockernhoe parish ward. This will ensure that the new urban extension of Luton is represented in its own ward and prevent the mixing of urban and rural communities in this largely rural, Hitchin-facing part of North Hertfordshire.

We retain **Ermine** unchanged, as this is a strong ward representing Royston-facing rural communities.

Our proposed two-member **Hitchin Bearton** ward unites the Bearton community, removing parts of the existing ward which actually fall into different Hitchin communities. This ward has strong boundaries and a clearly identifiable local identity.

We propose a new **Hitchin Benslow** centred on the Benslow community in Hitchin. This is a distinct historic community within Hitchin and currently sits across two wards. Giving the community its own ward more accurately reflects the local character of the area.

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Our **Hitchin Oughton** ward extends the current Oughton ward to include the neighbouring community of West Hitchin, which is of a similar character to the current Oughton ward. This is a strong ward of residential communities on the west of Hitchin.

The new **Hitchin Priory** ward covers Hitchin's Town Centre, ensuring that the community in the centre of Hitchin and the retail and business heart of this historic market town is represented by a dedicated local Councillor.

Our extended **Hitchin Walsworth** ward includes the Wilbury Way Industrial Estate and the surrounding residential area, ensuring that the historic Walsworth community is united in a single ward.

Hitchin Whitehill combines a number of communities in the south of Hitchin and includes the urban St. Ippolyts North ward of St. Ippolyts Parish, which is an urban extension of the town of Hitchin and therefore needs to be warded as part of a Hitchin ward.

The new **Icknield** ward is made up of a number of Hitchin-facing rural villages and hamlets, currently in the Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo and Hitchin Priory wards.

Our proposed **Kimpton & Breachwood Green** combines Kimpton Parish with the Breachwood Green ward of Kings Walden. This ward unites rural communities which primarily Harpenden-, Luton- or St. Albans-facing.

The **Knebworth** ward is based on all but a small part of the Knebworth Parish, keeping this historic community together.

Letchworth Grange ward includes the entirety of the Grange Estate and the new development connected to it which will act as an extension of the Grange community.

Our **Letchworth Norton** ward is centred on the historic Norton community which pre-dated Letchworth Garden City. This is the area north of the railway line which is not in the Grange or Wilbury estates.

The **Letchworth Pixmore** ward contains the majority of the Letchworth part of the Baldock Town and Letchworth East County Council Division, helping to simplify the electoral arrangements in this part of Letchworth.

Our new proposed **Letchworth Town** ward compromises Letchworth Town Centre and surrounding streets, uniting the bulk of the originally planned Letchworth Garden City within a single ward.

We make only minor changes to the **Letchworth Wilbury** ward to better reflect the boundaries of the Wilbury Estate.

Our **Letchworth Willian** ward is mostly made up of the historic parish of Willian, which predates Letchworth Garden City, and consists of most of the south of the town on much stronger boundaries than current warding arrangements.

Our **Royston Heath** ward is based on the current Heath ward, with changes to make a stronger boundary on the A10 and the Great North Road.

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The **Royston Meridian** ward is largely based on the existing Meridian ward, with a stronger boundary on the A10.

Our **Royston Palace** ward is also based on the existing Palace ward, with stronger boundaries on the A10 and the Great North Road.

The new **Upper Mimram** ward combines the whole parish of Codicote together, correcting a historically anomaly where the parish has been separated between two wards. The ward also includes similar rural communities in the south-eastern part of the District.

Weston & Sandon remains largely the same as the current Weston & Sandon ward, with a small change to move the urban expansion of Baldock in Clothall Parish into a Baldock ward.

In the next section of this submission, we discuss the District Council's proposals and why we feel that they are not in the best interests of North Hertfordshire residents.

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2.9– Warding Tables

Ward Name	No. of Cllrs	Population	Variance
Arbury	1	2,302	+4%
Baldock East	2	4,157	-6%
Baldock Town	3	6,101	-8%
Cadwell	1	2,390	+8%
Chesfield	3	6,816	+3%
Cockernhoe	1	2,041	-8%
Ermine	1	2,441	+10%
Hitchin Bearton	2	4,761	+8%
Hitchin Benslow	1	2,318	+5%
Hitchin Oughton	3	6,109	-8%
Hitchin Priory	1	2,289	+4%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	7,280	+10%
Hitchin Whitehill	2	4,536	+3%
Icknield	2	4,237	-4%
Kimpton & Breachwood Green	1	2,429	+10%
Knebworth	2	4,155	-6%
Letchworth Grange	2	4,583	+4%
Letchworth Norton	2	4,433	0%
Letchworth Pixmore	1	2,426	+10%
Letchworth Town	2	4,878	+10%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	4,040	-9%
Letchworth Willian	3	6,301	-5%
Royston Heath	2	4,024	-9%
Royston Meridian	3	6,305	-5%
Royston Palace	2	4,546	=0%
Upper Mimram	2	4,546	+3%
Weston & Sandon	1	2,395	+8%

Part III | Arguments against North Herts Council Submission

3.1 – Summary

The Conservative Group do not support the proposal of North Hertfordshire District Council for the new boundaries. We believe that their submission fails in a number of areas to take into account the best interests of local communities and the nature of urban and rural communities in North Hertfordshire.

In this section, we set out the main differences between our submissions and, where these differences are substantial, argue why the North Hertfordshire submission is not suitable for local residents.

3.2 – Baldock & District

Our proposal is broadly similar to the North Hertfordshire District Council proposal for Baldock & District and we therefore do not offer any comments on their submission in this area.

3.3 – Hitchin

We believe that North Hertfordshire District Council’s submission for Hitchin is fundamentally undermined by the failure to include the part of Hitchin’s urban area which is parished with St. Ippolyts as St. Ippolyts North ward in an urban ward.

St. Ippolyts North is an extension of the town of Hitchin, which is reflected by its existing warding arrangement within a Hitchin ward. We believe that the Commission’s previous views¹¹ in the 2006 Electoral Review still reflect the current situation in this Review:

“[St. Ippolyts] North parish ward is an extension of Hitchin town and should not be separated from it.”

Given this significant part of Hitchin and the Hitchin community is excluded from the District Council’s warding proposal, it is difficult to provide comment on their wider mapping. Nonetheless, we offer some comments below.

Hitchin Bearton (3)

The District Council’s Hitchin Bearton ward is identical to the current Bearton ward. We believe that our mapping of Hitchin Bearton, which excludes the area of the historic Walsworth community east of the East Coast Mainline, the small part of the Benslow community currently warded in Bearton, and the area of the Town Centre in the Bearton ward, better reflects the Bearton community.

¹¹ https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/6173/northhertfordshirefinalreportmay2006_21387-15833_e_.pdf

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Hitchin Highbury (2)

We consider that the District Council's two-member Highbury ward is an incongruous mixture of communities. This ward's boundaries splits off part of the Town Centre and the Benslow community, which we feel would be better served as part of a ward which united their whole communities.

Hitchin Oughton (2)

Whilst we have no objections to the District Council's Oughton ward in principle, we feel that the West Hitchin area of Priory ward would be better served by being combined with Oughton in a three-member ward. This area of Priory has a similar character to the rest of the Oughton ward; whereas it has always been an odd fit with the remainder of the Priory ward.

Hitchin Priory (2)

We do not believe that the District Council's Hitchin Priory ward would be an effective match to the Commission's statutory criteria. We believe that there are limited links between the existing parts of the Priory ward either side of Priory Park and the addition of a significant portion of the Town Centre adds further complication to this ward.

For the reasons given in our proposal, we feel that the Town Centre would be best served by a single-member ward which includes it in its entirety and that the two halves of the Priory ward would be better served by being combined with neighbouring residential communities with which they are likely to share interests. We consider it unlikely that residents from one half of the Priory ward would visit the other half of the ward and vice versa.

We also consider that the village of Charlton – a rural community outside of the Hitchin built-up area – would be better served by a ward of rural, Hitchin-facing communities. Charlton shares many similarities with nearby villages St. Ippolyts and Gosmore and we consider that it would be best warded with these villages.

Hitchin Walsworth (3)

Whilst we have no objection in principle to the District Council's Walsworth ward, we feel that our proposed Walsworth ward better reflects the Walsworth community.

3.4– Letchworth

Our proposal is broadly similar to the North Hertfordshire District Council proposal for Letchworth and we therefore do not offer any comments on their submission in this area.

3.5– Royston & District

We believe that it would be irresponsible for Royston to be split into four wards for several reasons.

Firstly, by creating the ward of Royston Burloes, the current Meridian ward would be divided in two, with the new ward having a significantly smaller electorate given that none of these houses have yet been built. By incorporating the new development in an enlarged Meridian ward, this would allow for the new councillor to represent more than the few hundred electors currently in the Burloes ward.

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Whilst we acknowledge that initial variances are sometimes required in exceptional circumstances to reflect new communities resulting from development (for example in our proposed Cockernhoe ward), we feel that our proposal demonstrates that such an exceptional circumstance does not apply in this case.

Secondly, the naming of the wards is not coherent with the rest of the district. Most wards in NHDC take their names from something significant in the wards. Neither of the District Council's proposed Royston Palace or Royston Meridian wards include the landmark for which they are named. The Royston Palace in the NHDC submission is in Heath Ward and the Greenwich Meridian Line is in Burloes Ward.

Finally, prior to 1999 Royston was represented by three-member wards and this was no issue, so we feel that it would be right to allow for the retention of existing wards where possible with a return to a three-member ward in Royston.

3.6 – Southern Rural

We do not believe that the North Hertfordshire District Council submission for the Southern Rural Parishes reflects the Commission's statutory criteria or the best interests of local residents.

The Council have arbitrarily placed communities together and in a number of places combined urban and rural areas, linking:

- An urban area of the town of Hitchin in St. Ippolyts North AND the NS1 development which will be an urban area of the town of Stevenage with rural Hitchin-facing villages in St. Ippolyts Parish and Stevenage-facing villages in Wymondley and Graveley.
- An urban extension of Luton (the "East of Luton" developments) with rural Hitchin-facing villages.

We believe that our warding arrangement is a significant improvement on the District Council's, better reflecting the character of our rural villages and retaining the urban/rural divide which is important to ensure that communities are represented in wards that are suited to their needs and that councillors can provide effective local government.

We explain our arguments against each ward below:

Cadwell (1)

We endorse the District Council's proposed Cadwell ward, as this is identical to our proposed ward.

Codicote & Kimpton (2)

We spent some time considering the District Council's proposed Codicote & Kimpton ward. On balance, we do not feel that this ward would represent the best possible warding arrangement for these communities for a number of reasons.

The District Council's ward continues to arbitrarily divide the Codicote Parish between Codicote Village and the Codicote East Parish ward – an area which has far more in common with rural Codicote than it does with Knebworth and which constitutes an integral part of the

wider Codicote community. We note that it would not be possible to create a Codicote & Kimpton warding arrangement which included Codicote East and met the Commission's electoral equality criteria.

Given that this area is made up of strong, independent Parishes it is difficult to create a mapping which meets electoral equality and does not create some divides. However, we believe that our proposal for Codicote village, which unites the Codicote ward in a single Parish along with electors from St. Paul's Walden and Langley Parishes and a small number of hamlets within Knebworth Parish, is a much stronger warding arrangement than the Council's (which places rural electors from Codicote in a ward dominated by the urban town of Knebworth on the other side of the A1(M)).

Whilst we have had to divide rural voters out of Knebworth to achieve this mapping, we consider that given the wider urban character of the Knebworth ward discussed previously, it is a much more acceptable community divide to remove a small number of rural voters from an urban ward to go into a rural ward than to remove a large number of them from a rural ward to go into an urban one.

We also consider that our warding pattern, which splits Kings Walden rather than Codicote, makes significantly more sense in terms of community linkages. Whilst Codicote East is made up of a set of rural hamlets rather arbitrarily divided from Codicote in a previous review for purposes of electoral equality, Breachwood Green is already warded separately from Kings Walden for Parish elections based on the communities in each part of Kings Walden Parish. We believe that this reflects the fact that these are two independent settlements, with similar interests but which can be effectively represented in different wards.

Therefore, we consider that warding Breachwood Green with Kimpton and warding Codicote as a whole Parish with neighbouring Parishes of a rural feel is a significantly better warding arrangement than the District Council's proposal.

We also note that the points made in the 2006 Electoral Review about the differences between Codicote and Kimpton as independent communities still stand¹². The District Council itself also acknowledges that Kimpton and Codicote are independent communities in their argument¹³:

"It is recognised that these two parishes have different identities, however the priority is to ensure communities are not split between wards; grouping different communities together is acceptable and appropriate provided the statutory criteria are met. This ward meets those criteria."

We feel that our proposed warding arrangements better meet these criteria for the reasons given.

¹² https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/6173/northhertfordshirefinalreportmay2006_21387-15833_e_.pdf

¹³ https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s19716/Appendix%20A%20-%20Submission_MAIN_2.pdf.pdf

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Great Ashby (2)

Whilst we do not have any objection to the District Council's Great Ashby ward in principle, we feel that our warding arrangement more accurately reflects the Commission's statutory criteria, by combining Great Ashby Parish with other Stevenage-facing communities.

Knebworth (2)

We also cannot endorse the District Council's proposed Knebworth ward and in particular its inclusion of a large rural part of Codicote Parish within it. Whilst we acknowledge that this reflects the current warding arrangement, we consider it highly anomalous that this rural community which looks to Codicote and Welwyn is included within the Knebworth ward, which is centred on the Stevenage-facing urban town of Knebworth, on the other side of the A1(M).

We feel that our proposed Knebworth (2) and Upper Mimram (2) wards much better reflect this area's rural character and the urban and historic character of the Knebworth community.

Langley, Preston & Walden (1)

Whilst we do not have any objections to the principle of this ward, we do not endorse the District Council's proposal due to the fact that we have placed these Parishes into alternative warding arrangements. We do not consider the District Council's arguments for grouping these Parishes together to be more compelling than our own proposal.

Offley & Pirton (2)

We cannot endorse the District Council's proposed Offley & Pirton ward. This ward would contain the East of Luton development on the boundary of the Luton built-up area. As we discuss in our proposal for our Cockernhoe ward, this development is an urban extension of Luton, which will look to Luton (rather than Hitchin or local villages) for its local services and amenities.

We feel that including this development within an Offley & Pirton ward which consists primarily of rural, Hitchin-facing villages is an unacceptable breach of the urban/rural divide and creates a ward which will not have coherent community links across it. Due to the disparate nature of the communities that a Councillor here would end up representing because of the inclusion of this urban extension of Luton, we feel that this ward would also not be conducive to effective local government.

We note that where electoral equality is satisfied (as it would be by our proposed Cockernhoe and Icknield wards), there is significant precedent for the Commission to separate urban and rural areas, including in the Sandridge and Colney Heath Parishes in the recent St. Albans review.

Wymondley, Graveley & St. Ippolyts (2)

The Conservative Group considers this warding to be extremely anomalous and counter to the Commission's statutory criteria.

The ward links an urban extension of Hitchin (the St. Ippolyts North Parish ward) with several Hitchin-facing village communities of a rural character, Stevenage-facing villages of a rural character, and an urban extension of Stevenage (the NS1 development in Graveley Parish).

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We do not consider there to be any community links across this ward and feel that the warding proposal has been made purely to satisfy electoral equality, with no consideration given to local electors, communities or representation.

St. Ippolyts North Parish ward is in effect an urban extension of Hitchin. The area is of a distinct urban character and is currently well represented as part of a Hitchin ward. In the 2006 Review, we note that the Commission agreed with our assessment, stating that¹⁴:

“[St. Ippolyts] North parish ward is an extension of Hitchin town and should not be separated from it.”

St. Ippolyts South Parish ward is a significantly more rural area, with close ties to Hitchin where local residents will get most of their services and which serves as the main town for the ward’s main settlements of Gosmore and St. Ippolyts. These villages are themselves geographically and culturally close to being extensions of Hitchin.

The Wymondleys and Graveley village are of a notably different character to that of St. Ippolyts. These are rural villages, which look to Stevenage for their local services and local amenities. The village of Little Wymondley is separated from the village of St. Ippolyts by the A602 dual carriageway and residents from the St. Ippolyts Parish are unlikely to visit the Wymondleys or share services with them.

The NS1 development in Graveley will essentially act as an urban extension of Stevenage, abutting as it will the forthcoming HO3 development in the Stevenage Borough¹⁵. We consider that residents in this ward will, like those in Graveley and the Wymondleys, look to Stevenage for their local services.

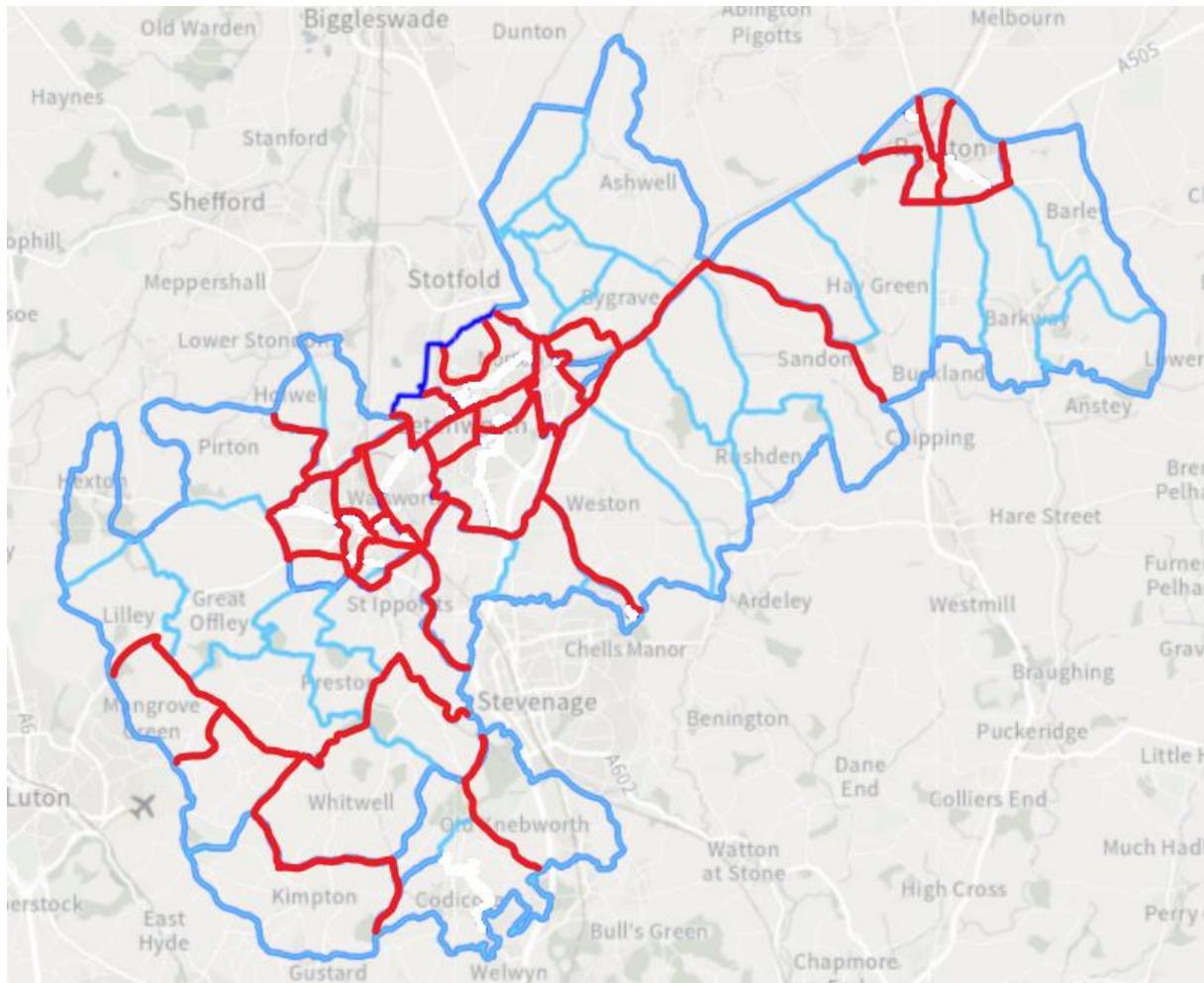
Overall, we consider this to be a deeply incongruous ward, connecting parts of Hitchin and Stevenage and uniting rural communities which look to Hitchin (in St. Ippolyts) and to Stevenage (in Graveley and Wymondley). We feel that our proposal to unite the two Stevenage-facing Parishes with the Great Ashby Parish (itself an urban extension of Stevenage), the Hitchin urban area of St. Ippolyts North with an urban Hitchin seat, and the Hitchin-facing villages in St. Ippolyts South with a wider Hitchin-facing rural ward to be a much better fit for the Commission’s statutory criteria.

¹⁴ https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/6173/northhertfordshirefinalreportmay2006_21387-15833_e_.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-borough-local-plan/policies-map.pdf>

Part IV | Appendices

Appendix 1 – Map of our Proposal



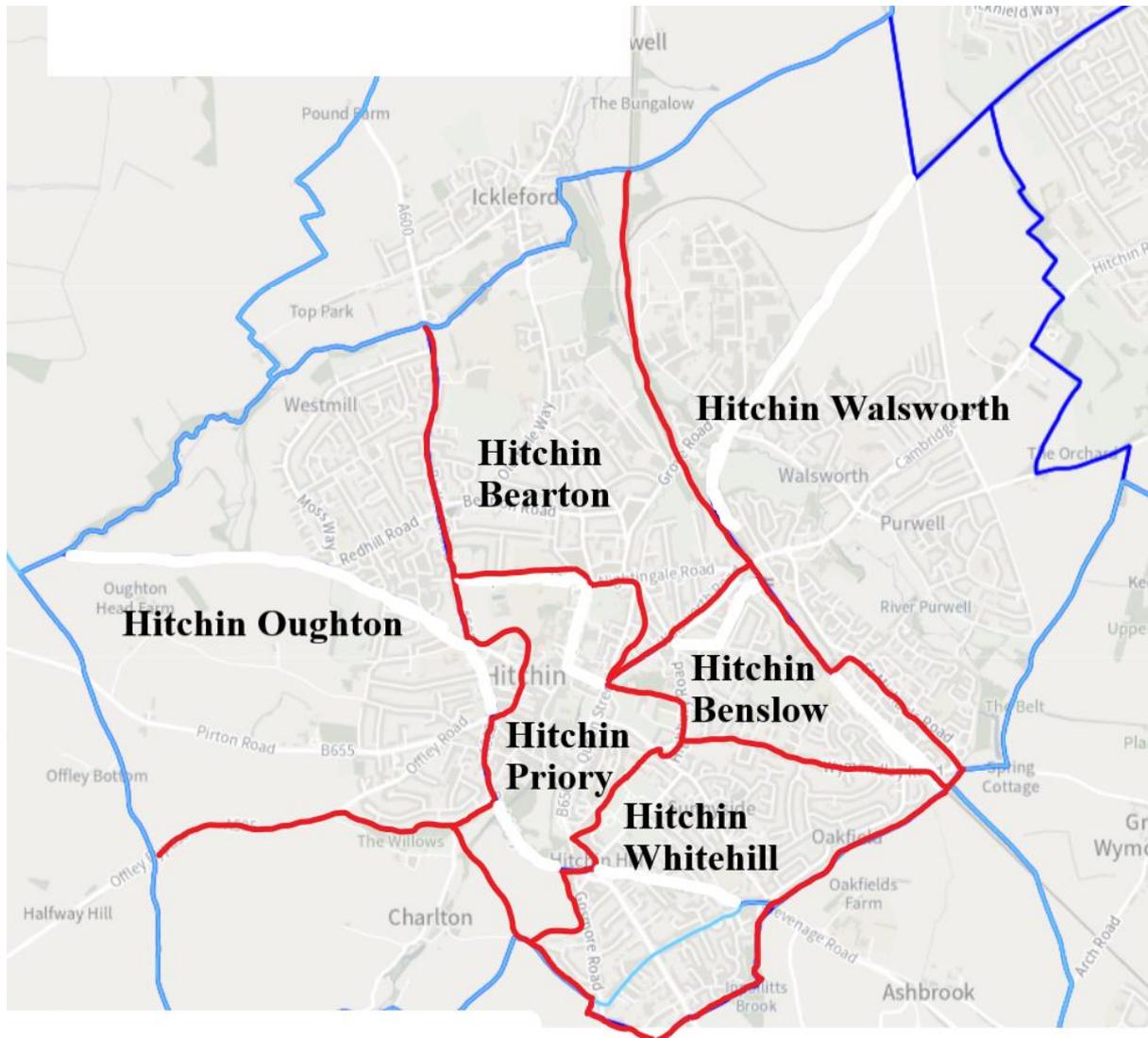
Part IV | Appendices

Appendix 2 – Map of our proposal for Baldock & District



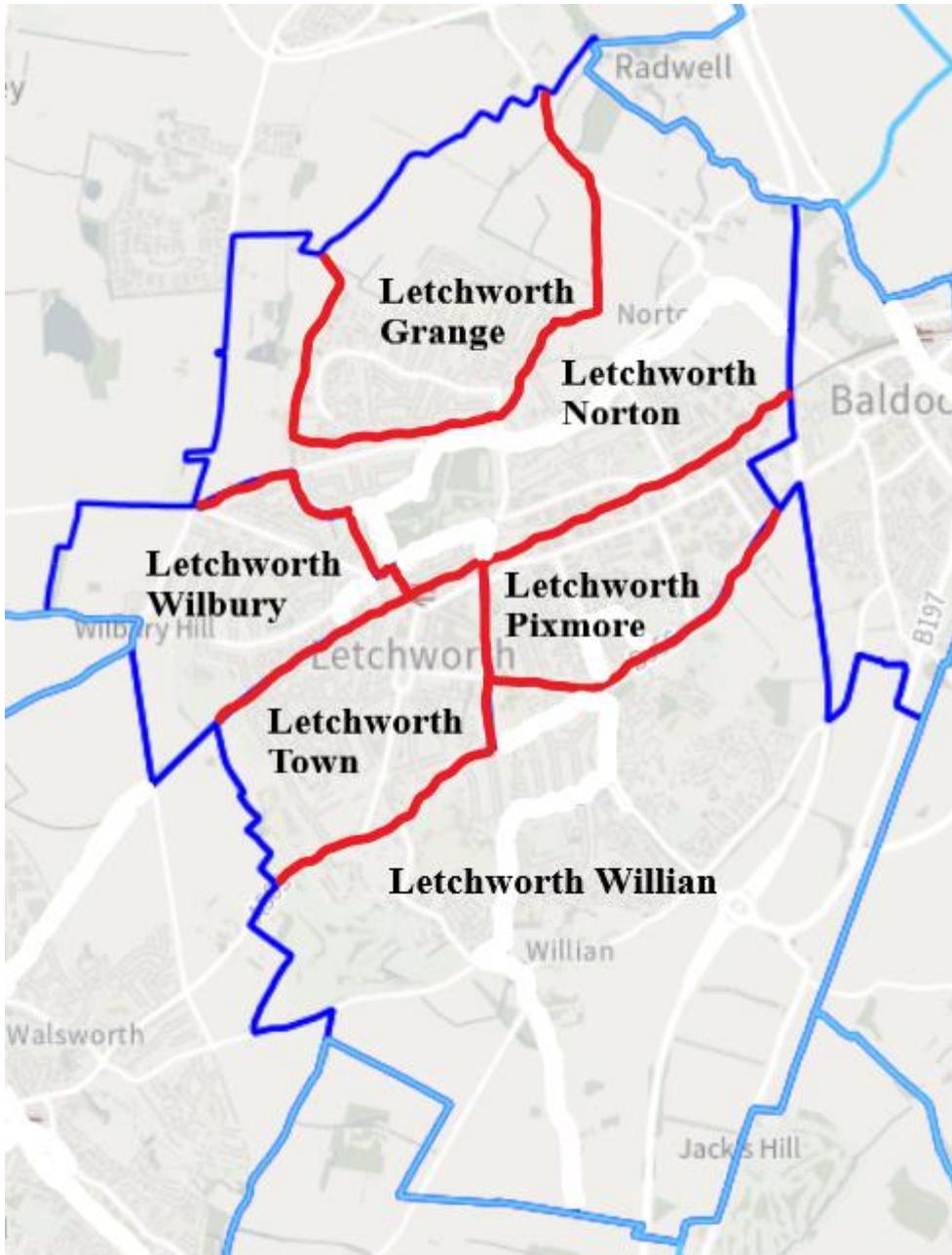
Part IV | Appendices

Appendix 3 – Map of our proposal for Hitchin



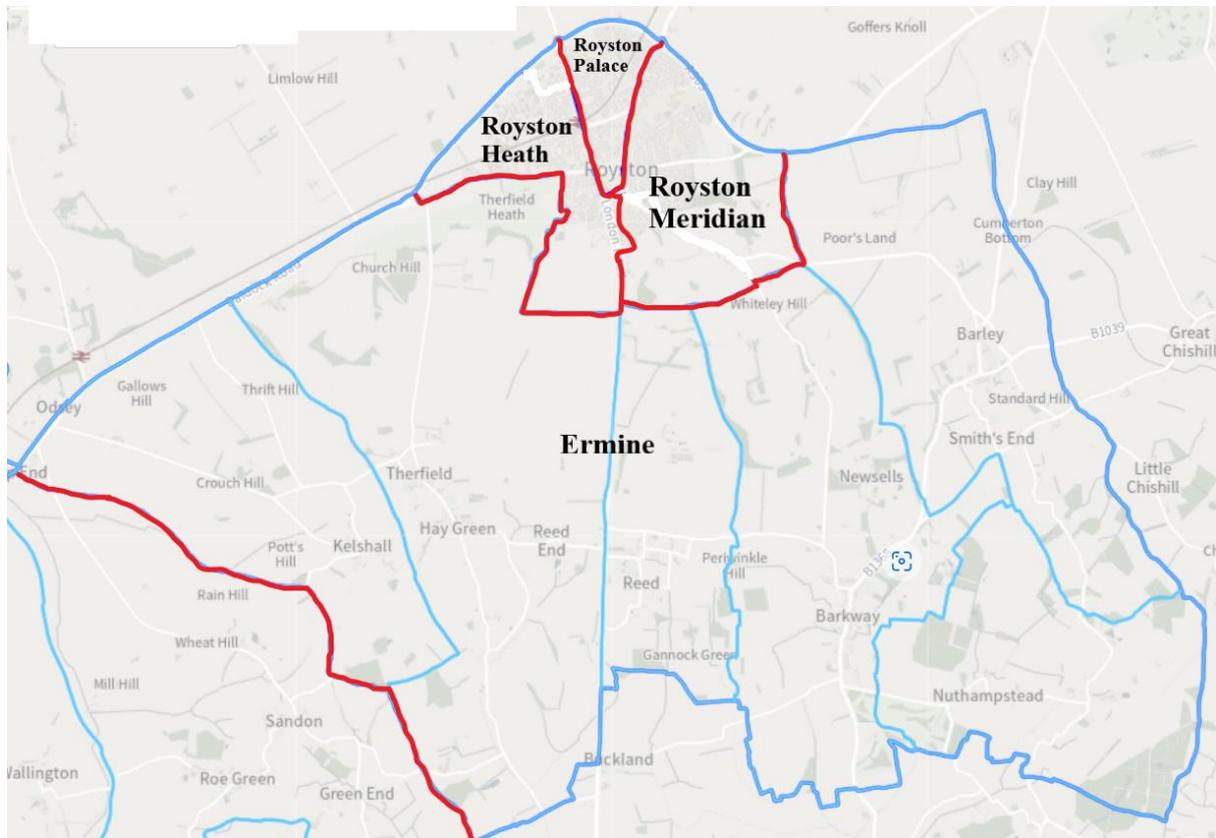
Part IV | Appendices

Appendix 4 – Map of our proposal for Letchworth



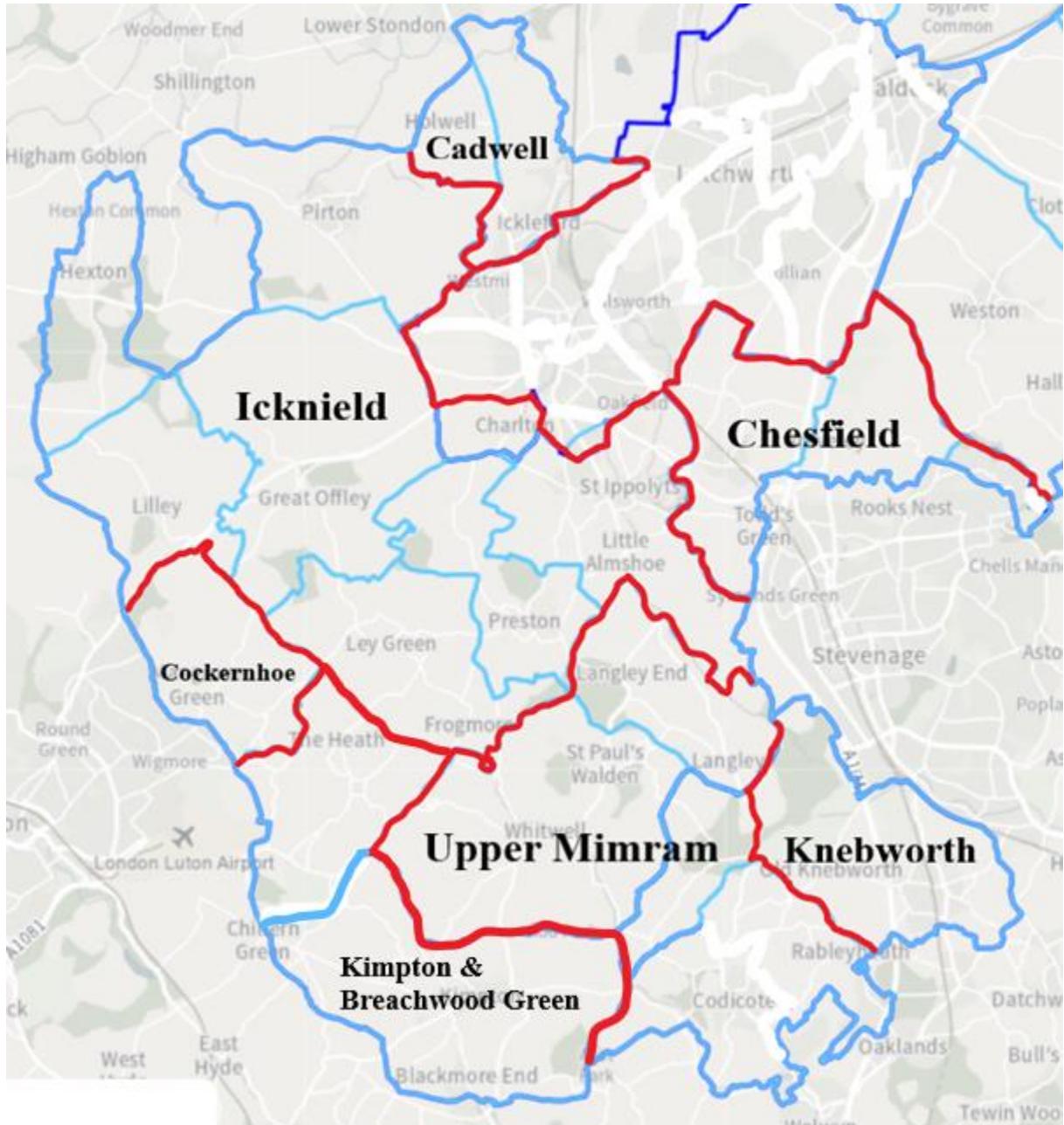
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Appendix 5 – Map of our proposal for Royston & District



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Appendix 6 – Map of our proposal for Southern Rural



Part IV | Appendices

Appendix 7 – Proposed Warding Arrangements by Polling District for Hitchin and Southern Rural

Ward Name (Cllrs)	Polling District	Parish (Ward)	Population
Cadwell (1)	FJ	Holwell	354
	FK	Ickleford	2036
Chesfield (3)	FDD1	Great Ashby	13
	FEEA	Wymondley (Great Wymondley)	129
	FEEB	Wymondley (Little Wymondley)	1031
	FEEC	Wymondley (Todds Green)	115
	FGA	Graveley	1014
	FGB	Great Ashby	4514
Cockernhoe (1)	FTB	Offley with Cockernhoe (Cockernhoe)	2041
Hitchin Bearton (2)	BBA*	None	2358
	BBB	None	2403
Hitchin Benslow (1)	BBD	None	324
	BDD	None	457
	BEA*	None	1537
Hitchin Oughton (3)	BAA	None	3637
	BCA*	None	2286
	BEC*	None	186
Hitchin Priory (1)	BBA*	None	583
	BEA*	None	125
	BEB*	None	509
	BEC*	None	1012
	BED	None	60
Hitchin Walsworth (3)	BBC	None	710
	BDA	None	3323
	BDB	None	1905
	BDC	None	1342
Hitchin Whitehill (2)	BCB	None	904
	BEB*	None	2891
	FLB	St. Ippolyts (St. Ippolyts North)	741
Icknield (2)	BCA*	None	51
	FH	Hexton	102
	FLA	St. Ippolyts (St. Ippolyts South)	1105
	FOA	Kings Walden (Kings Walden)	180
	FR	Lilley	308
	FTA	Offley with Cockernhoe	864

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		(Offley)	
	FV	Pirton	1262
	FW	Preston	363
	FW1	Preston	2
Kimpton & Breachwood Green (1)	FN	Kimpton	1810
	FOB	Kings Walden (Breachwood Green)	619
Knebworth (2)	FPA*	Knebworth	288
	FPB	Knebworth	3867
Upper Mimram (2)	FFA	Codicote (Codicote Village)	2612
	FFB	Codicote (Codicote East)	660
	FPA*	Knebworth	20
	FQ	Langley	138
	FU	St Paul's Walden	1116

*Partial Polling District

Mansfield, Simon

From: Matt Cowley [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 August 2022 17:00
To: reviews
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: North Hertfordshire: North Hertfordshire Conservatives' Submission
Attachments: North Hertfordshire Conservatives Submission.pdf
Categories: Submissions, Simon

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached the submission of the North Hertfordshire Conservative Group to the North Hertfordshire boundary review.

This submission is supported by the Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association, the North East Hertfordshire Conservative Association, the Stevenage Conservative Association, Bim Afolami MP, Stephen McPartland MP and Sir Oliver Heald MP.

If you have any queries about this submission, please direct them to myself or the Group Leadership (Cllrs Strong and Derbyshire, copied into this email).

I would be grateful to receive confirmation that this has been safely received.

Kind regards,

Matt

--

Matt Cowley
Deputy Chair Political
Hitchin & Harpenden Conservatives