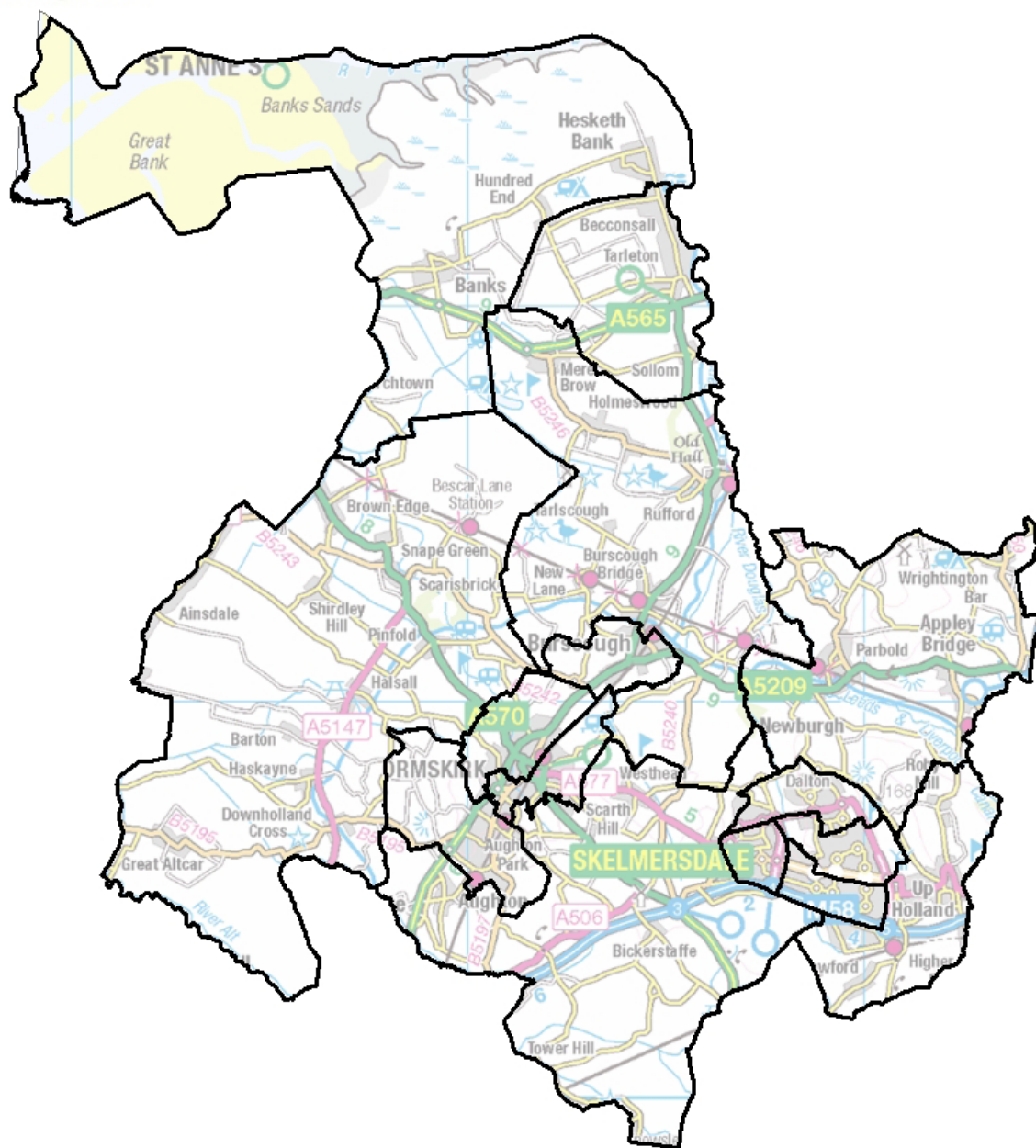


The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England



New electoral arrangements for West Lancashire Borough Council Final Recommendations

March 2022

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A note on our mapping:

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

Contents

Introduction	1
Who we are and what we do	1
What is an electoral review?	1
Why West Lancashire?	2
Our proposals for West Lancashire	2
How will the recommendations affect you?	2
Review timetable	3
Analysis and final recommendations	5
Submissions received	5
Electorate figures	5
Number of councillors	6
Ward boundaries consultation	6
Draft recommendations consultation	7
Final recommendations	8
Burscough and the North	9
Ormskirk and the South	13
Skelmersdale	19
Up Holland and the North East	22
Conclusions	25
Summary of electoral arrangements	25
Parish electoral arrangements	25
What happens next?	29
Equalities	31
Appendix A	33
Final recommendations for West Lancashire Borough Council	33
Appendix B	35
Outline map	35
Appendix C	36
Submissions received	36
Appendix D	37
Glossary and abbreviations	37

Introduction

Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

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

What is an electoral review?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why West Lancashire?

7 We conducted a review of West Lancashire Borough Council ('the Council') after the Council resolved, in October 2018, to request a review. In addition to this, it is now 21 years since the electoral arrangements for West Lancashire were last reviewed. We are obliged to review arrangements for every principal council in England 'from time to time'. In conducting this review, we noted that some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. This is 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as equal as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review was carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in West Lancashire are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

Our proposals for West Lancashire

9 West Lancashire should be represented by 45 councillors, nine fewer than there are now.

10 West Lancashire should have 15 wards, 10 fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for West Lancashire.

How will the recommendations affect you?

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

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary

constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

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

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
16 March 2021	Number of councillors decided
25 May 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
2 August 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
2 November 2021	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
10 January 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
29 March 2022	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

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

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

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

	2020	2027
Electorate of West Lancashire	87,652	90,068
Number of councillors	45	45
Average number of electors per councillor	1,948	2,002

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

Submissions received

21 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 3% by 2027.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We noted that Halsall Parish Council contested the forecast for the electorate of Halsall citing a planning

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

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

permission for housing development, and provisions in the West Lancashire Local Plan. However, we received no clear evidence that the Council's forecast in this respect is at fault. We therefore used the Council's forecast to produce our draft and final recommendations.

Number of councillors

24 West Lancashire Borough Council ('the Council') currently has 54 councillors. The Council and the Conservative Group on the Council ('the Conservatives') proposed that the number should be reduced to 45. The Our West Lancashire Group ('OWL') proposed alternatively that there should be 36 or 39 councillors. We looked at the evidence which was provided to support these proposals and concluded that decreasing by nine will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 45 councillors. As the Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years), there is a presumption in legislation⁴ that it should have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria. This presumption has been introduced into legislation since the last electoral review of West Lancashire was conducted and is intended to provide electors with the opportunity to take part in each local election in the cycle.

26 We received no submissions specifically about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore maintained 45 councillors for our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

27 We received 31 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included six borough-wide proposals. A group of West Lancashire Borough Council Officers ('the Council Officers') made a submission which included three of these. The Conservatives provided two schemes in their submission and the Council's Labour Group ('the Labour Group') submitted the sixth. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for wards in particular areas of the borough.

28 Whilst one resident of the Banks area was keen to ensure that their area remained part of West Lancashire, another asked us to make boundary changes to combine West Lancashire with Southport. It was also suggested to us that Up

⁴ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

Holland and Skelmersdale should form part of the Greater Manchester area. We have no authority, however, to make recommendations which would alter the external boundaries of the borough as part of this electoral review.

29 We received submissions which requested that we recommend wards to be represented by one councillor. However, such an approach would not be consistent with the presumption for three-councillor wards, given the Council's electoral cycle. We did not consider that the representations described exceptional circumstances to justify a departure from the presumption for three-member wards. Whilst some respondents asked us to change the electoral cycle to all-out elections every four years, we have no power to do so.

30 Our draft recommendations also took into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

31 Given the travel restrictions, and the social distancing, arising from the Covid-19 outbreak, there was a detailed virtual tour of West Lancashire. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the proposed draft boundary recommendations.

32 Our draft recommendations were for 15 three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

33 We received 66 submissions in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. These included 35 general expressions of support for the draft recommendations as a whole. In addition, 10 respondents expressed support for the draft recommendations for particular wards, notably Burscough Bridge & Rufford, Rural North East and Up Holland. The draft recommendations for a Bickerstaffe & Westhead ward attracted five objections and a further three objections were made regarding the inclusion of the Eskbank and Eskdale area in Skelmersdale South ward.

34 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with a modification to the wards in north and central Skelmersdale based on the submissions received. We also make changes to the names of the Bickerstaffe & Westhead, Ribble Estuary and Tarleton wards as shown in our draft recommendations.

Final recommendations

35 Our final recommendations are for 15 three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

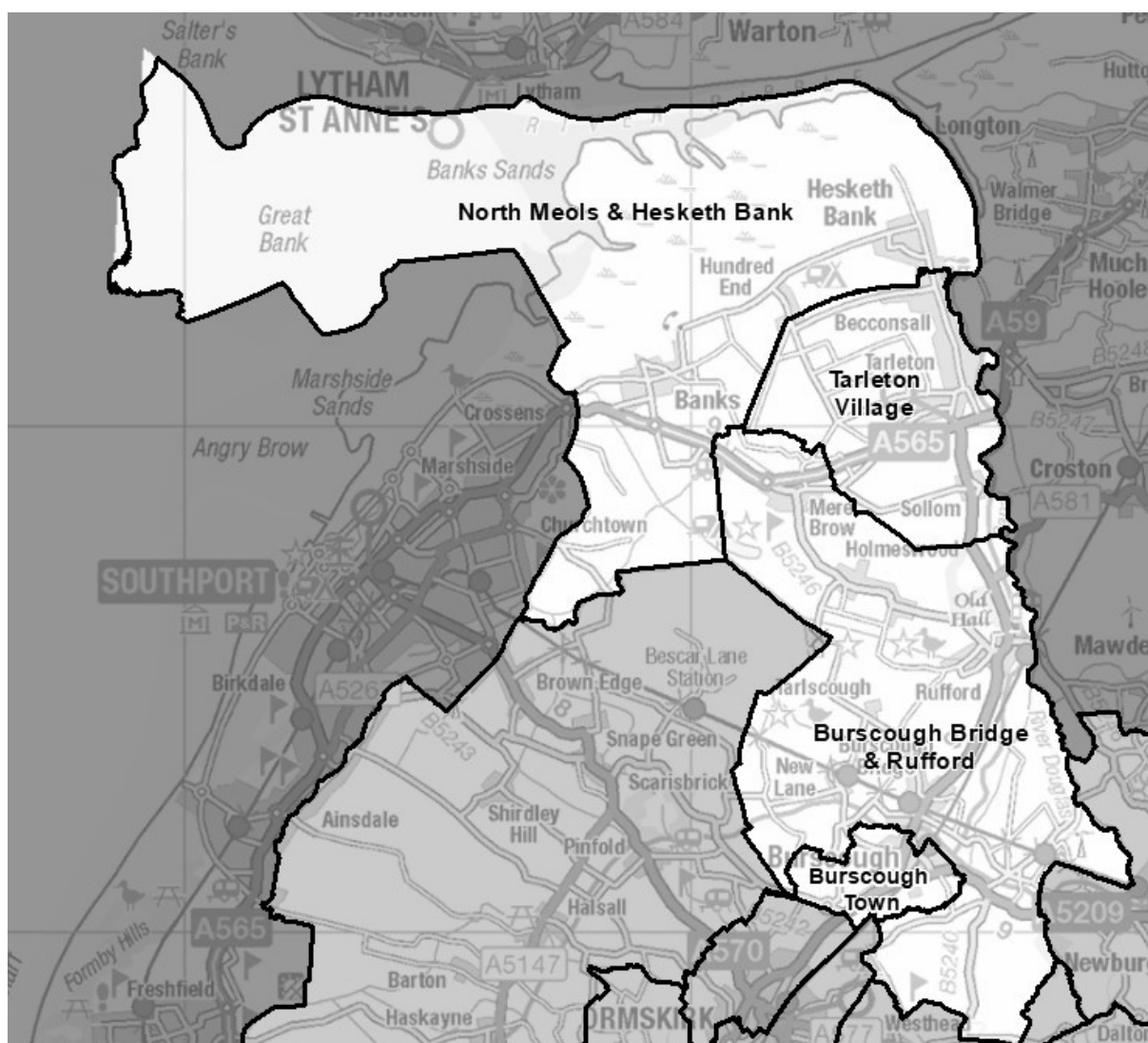
36 The tables and maps on pages 9–23 detail our final recommendations for each area of West Lancashire. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

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

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 33 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Burscough and the North



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Burscough Bridge & Rufford	3	-5%
Burscough Town	3	-8%
North Meols & Hesketh Bank	3	0%
Tarleton Village	3	-7%

Burscough Bridge & Rufford and Tarleton Village

38 The Conservatives initially proposed that Rufford parish be combined with Scarisbrick and either Halsall or the western part of Ormskirk town to form a three-member ward. The Council Officers proposed that Rufford either be combined with the part of Burscough parish which lies to the east of the A59 in a three-councillor ward or with the Burscough Bridge area in a two-councillor ward. The Council's Labour Group made a similar proposal. One resident said that splitting Burscough parish into east and west wards would be inappropriate and that a north–south split would reflect the rural nature of the north of the parish.

39 A Tarleton resident illustrated links between Tarleton, Rufford and Burscough by describing the use of services in those places. Meanwhile, a Rufford resident proposed linking Rufford with Tarleton or to the northern part of Burscough parish. One resident asked that a single ward be established to embrace the whole of Burscough parish. To achieve electoral equality, this would require a ward with four councillors. Not only would this be beyond the terms of a presumption for three-councillor wards, but we also do not consider that four-councillor wards would contribute to effective and clear representation of local residents on the Borough Council.

40 We were not persuaded that the Conservatives' proposals demonstrated stronger links between Rufford and parishes to the west than between Rufford and Burscough Bridge. Furthermore, we were not persuaded that the Council Officers' three-member ward would provide wards for Burscough which would most strongly reflect community links in the town.

41 We did consider that linking Rufford with the Burscough Bridge area had merit but were not satisfied that the proposals for a two-councillor ward demonstrated sufficient justification to reduce the overall number of councillors to 44 or be consistent with a good pattern of wards throughout the remainder of the borough.

42 To overcome these issues, we proposed a three-councillor ward combining Rufford with Burscough Bridge and, with some small modifications, Tarleton's Mere Brow parish ward. We considered that The Marshes Lane and Holmeswood Road provide a good link between Mere Brow, Holmeswood and Rufford village. Lathom parish, the New Lane area and the Mill Lane area would also form part of this ward. We proposed to name this ward Burscough Bridge & Rufford. It would have good electoral equality and be consistent with a good pattern of wards in the surrounding areas. We also proposed that the Holmes area and Taylor's Meanygate become part of Tarleton Central parish ward.

43 In addition to the expressions of broad support for the draft recommendations, six respondents, including Councillor Gordon, supported our proposed Burscough Bridge & Rufford ward specifically, with the Mere Brow and Lathom parish provisions expressly supported. Whilst one respondent expressed regret that Tarleton parish would no longer be represented in a single borough ward, the submission did acknowledge that the draft recommendations would provide an acceptable solution to the need to provide electoral equality.

44 Given the support for our draft recommendation for Burscough Bridge & Rufford, we confirm it as final. Mere Brow will continue to be a part of Tarleton parish and electors at Mere Brow will continue to vote in elections for Tarleton Parish Council as they do now.

45 Tarleton parish currently forms a three-councillor ward. Whilst it gives good electoral equality for a borough council of 54 members, it would not do so for a council of 45. All of the warding submissions we received combined Tarleton parish with the southern part of Beconsall parish ward. We considered that combination to be a reasonable reflection of the housing along Hesketh Lane and the southern part of Station Road. Our recommendations, for the reasons given above, do not include Mere Brow in Tarleton ward. That being the case, one respondent argued that our proposed Tarleton ward be named Tarleton Village in order to emphasise the distinction between the borough ward boundary and the parish boundary. This would be particularly helpful on occasions when parish and borough council elections take place on the same day. We consider this to be a reasonable suggestion and accept it as part of our final recommendations.

Burscough Town

46 Coupled with our draft recommendation for Burscough Bridge & Rufford, we proposed a Burscough Town ward which would combine the residential areas to the south of the shops on Liverpool Road North with those to the east of the Liverpool–Preston railway line. This avoids the need to create a small parish ward at Flax Lane as implied by the Labour Group’s proposal or combine Burscough’s Ellerbrook parish ward in a borough ward with Lathom, Newburgh and Parbold parishes as proposed by the Conservatives. Councillor Clandon, who represents the current two-councillor Burscough West ward, submitted the only objection to our draft recommendations for Burscough. He commented on the significance of ease of accessibility to all of the residents in his ward. While we acknowledge these views, we are not persuaded that we have received sufficient justification to depart from the presumption that we recommend three-councillor wards for councils that elect by thirds.

North Meols & Hesketh Bank

47 All of the proposals we received for the most northern part of the borough combined Hesketh Bank with Banks, the most populous part of North Meols parish. One of those schemes proposed that Crossens parish ward be combined in a borough ward with Scarisbrick and parishes to the south whilst all others provided for North Meols parish to be coupled in a ward with Hesketh Bank.

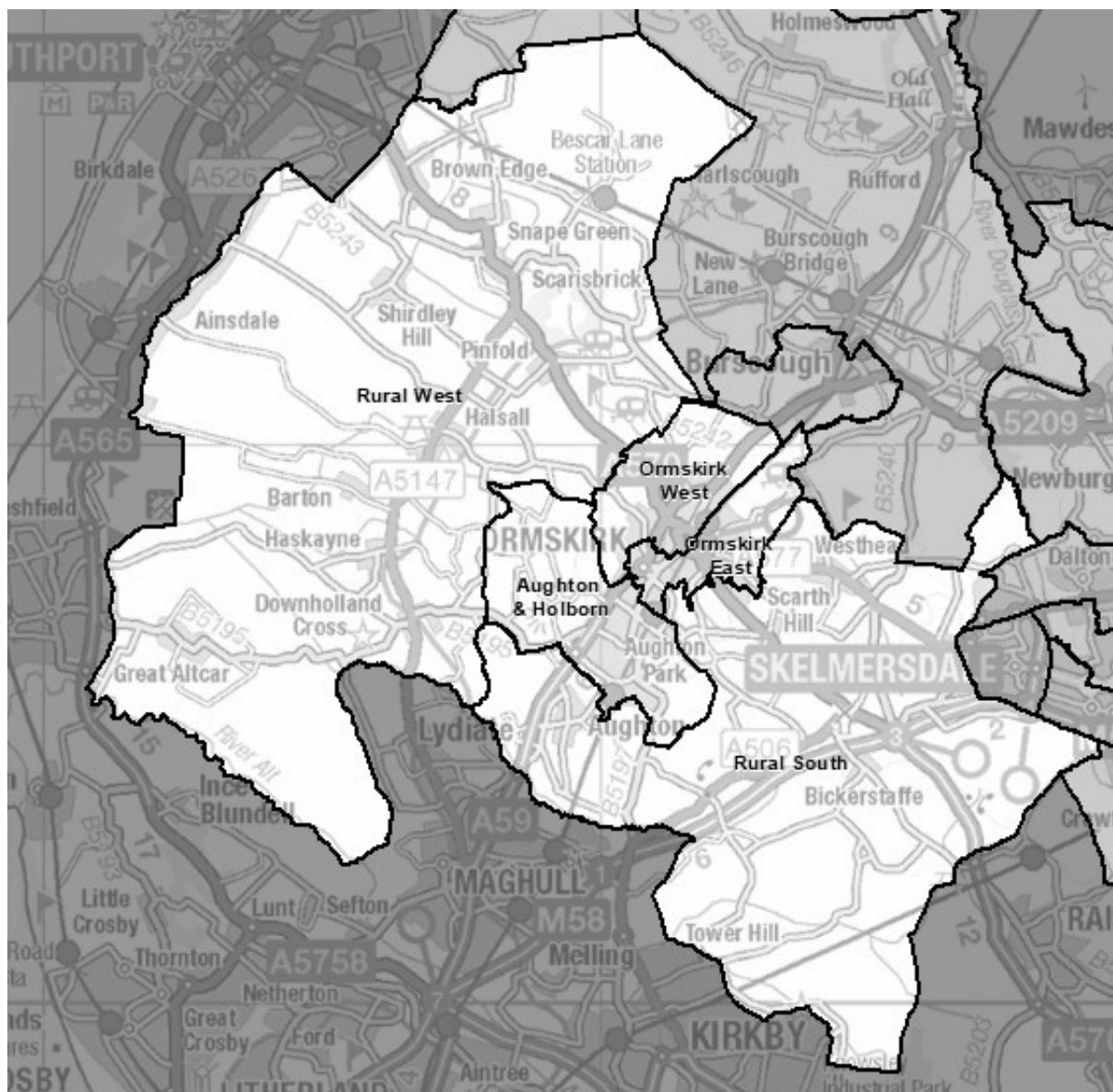
48 We noted that most of the residents of the Crossens parish ward live along New Lane with access to the Crossens area of Southport, and that the rural lanes and tracks between the parish ward and Scarisbrick offer tenuous links to Scarisbrick. We are therefore content that the whole North Meols parish continue to be included in a single borough ward.

49 The proposals for a ward in this area included the names ‘North Meols & Hesketh Bank’, ‘Rural North’ and ‘Ribble Estuary’. Whilst our draft recommendations proposed the last of these names, we invited further comment on this matter during our consultation. Whilst we did not receive many comments on this issue, one

resident doubted that there is much of a local connection to the concept of the Ribble Estuary. Alternative names suggested were 'Marsh Villages' or 'West Lancashire Marsh Villages'. In making our final recommendations, we have decided to adopt the name 'North Meols & Hesketh Bank' which offers a clearer reflection of the composition of the ward.

50 Hesketh-with-Beaconsall Parish Council asked that the current parish boundaries be maintained. The Commission has no power to change parish boundaries and therefore does not recommend any changes to the boundaries of the parish. In order to avoid a high degree of electoral inequality, we recommend that the parish be divided between our North Meols & Hesketh Bank and Tarleton Village wards as described in paragraph 45. We also recommend that there be parish wards for Hesketh-with-Beaconsall reflecting that split. We are obliged to do this whenever a parish is split between borough wards or county electoral divisions and our recommendations fulfil that statutory obligation.

Ormskirk and the South



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Aughton & Holborn	3	7%
Ormskirk East	3	7%
Ormskirk West	3	5%
Rural South	3	-8%
Rural West	3	-10%

Aughton & Holborn and Rural South

51 Aughton parish extends from the southern boundaries of Ormskirk to the borough boundary north of Maghull. Bowker's Green, Holt Green and Town Green are currently included with Downholland and Great Altcar parishes in a three-councillor Aughton & Downholland ward. The current ward would not provide for good electoral equality under a 45-member council. The remainder of Aughton

parish currently constitutes a two-councillor Aughton Park ward. Not only is this inconsistent with the presumption for three-councillor wards but again would result in a high degree of electoral inequality.

52 The six warding schemes we received demonstrated a range of approaches for Aughton. In one of the Council Officers' schemes, Aughton parish would form a three-councillor ward with good electoral equality. Whilst this would appear to be an optimal solution for Aughton, the consequences would be two two-councillor wards in Ormskirk and a central rural ward extending from the southern boundary of the borough in Simonswood parish almost to Rufford. We were not prepared to recommend either of those proposals and so have considered other approaches for Aughton.

53 The Labour Group's proposal for Aughton was similar to the Council Officers' approach described above. It would combine the part of Aughton broadly lying to the west of the A59 with the parishes which make up the western part of the borough. The remainder of the parish would then form a three-councillor ward. Whilst the Labour Group's proposal didn't rely on two-councillor wards in Ormskirk or a long central rural ward, it did require that Bickerstaffe and Lathom South parishes be combined in a borough ward with a substantial part of Ormskirk extending almost to the town centre.

54 The Conservatives proposed that Aughton parish be divided into two using the current ward boundary. The northern part of Aughton would be linked with the southern part of Ormskirk, extending into Ormskirk town centre. The current Aughton & Downholland ward would be extended by the addition of either Bickerstaffe and Simonswood or Halsall. Those approaches would link either Halsall or the western part of Ormskirk with Scarisbrick and Rufford, which we are not persuaded to recommend.

55 A proposal put forward by the Council Officers would combine Aughton's Christ Church parish ward with south-west Ormskirk, and the remainder of Aughton with Bickerstaffe and Simonswood. Another suggestion would combine Holt Green and the rural western part of Aughton in a ward with the parishes which make up the rural western parts of the borough. Bowker's Green would be placed in their central rural ward and the remainder of Aughton parish with the southern part of Ormskirk.

56 As indicated above, proposals for Aughton have direct or indirect consequences for Bickerstaffe, Lathom South and Simonswood. Bickerstaffe Parish Council, opposing a reduction in council size, has stated that it wishes to retain a single-councillor ward for its area, does not want the parish to be divided between wards and does not want Bickerstaffe to be combined with Aughton. Bickerstaffe's current single-councillor ward includes Simonswood and Lathom South parishes. The Parish Council has said, however, that if its primary wishes are not met, then the

addition of 'Westhead and parishes out towards the south and east' to its ward would be preferable to being combined in a ward with Aughton. Councillor Rigby shared Bickerstaffe Parish Council's principal views. One resident also said that it would be appropriate to combine Westhead and Bickerstaffe in the same ward.

57 It was clear, therefore, that the proposals we initially received did not present a single view of future electoral arrangements for Aughton, Bickerstaffe, Lathom South and Simonswood and several did not reflect the legislative constraints to which we must have regard. In forming our draft recommendations, however, we endeavoured to reflect many of the points made to us about these areas.

58 We proposed a three-councillor Bickerstaffe & Westhead ward which combines the parishes of Bickerstaffe, Lathom South and Simonswood with the Westhead area, Bowker's Green and Holt Green. Bowker's Green and Holt Green, whilst part of Aughton parish, has a more rural character than the more densely developed northern part of the parish. Our ward would also include the campus of Edge Hill University and parts of the unparished area of Skelmersdale which lie to the south of the M58 motorway and to the west of Railway Road. It would avoid splitting Bickerstaffe, Lathom South and Simonswood between wards.

59 We also proposed a three-councillor Aughton & Holborn ward consisting of the built-up areas of Aughton parish, Town Green and Aughton Park with the Holborn Hill area in the south of Ormskirk.

60 Aughton Parish Council supported our draft recommendations to reduce the total number of borough councillors and to separate Aughton and Downholland parishes, which are currently warded together. However, the Parish Council's preference was that the whole parish should form a single ward. The Parish Council was supported by Councillor O'Toole. They argued that representation of people in Aughton would be compromised by placing the parish in two wards.

61 As stated in paragraph 51, a ward comprised solely of the whole of Aughton parish would have good electoral equality but would result in consequential wards which would impact adversely on the parishes in our proposed Bickerstaffe & Westhead ward. Whilst that ward attracted objections from both Bickerstaffe and Lathom South Parish Councils and from Councillor Rigby, we have not been persuaded that there are exceptional circumstances which would warrant a departure from a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards.

62 The creation of a ward for Aughton parish as a whole would require the addition of Lathom and part of Newburgh parish to our proposed Bickerstaffe & Westhead ward. Alternatively, we could add a substantial part of Ormskirk town or more of Skelmersdale to Bickerstaffe & Westhead. Each of those approaches would contradict the support for our draft recommendations regarding those areas and the

evidence offered by Bickerstaffe and Lathom South Parish Councils, and from Councillor Rigby. We therefore are maintaining our approach for this area in our final recommendations.

63 Councillor Rigby argued that should we include Holt Green in our Bickerstaffe & Westhead ward, it should extend westward only as far as the A59. However, we consider that Back Lane, Sudell Lane and Swan Lane are better related to Holt Green than to other parts of Aughton parish and so are retaining our draft recommendation for that area.

64 In our draft recommendations report, we particularly invited comment on ward names. Aughton Parish Council favoured the names 'Aughton' and 'Greater Aughton', while Lathom South Parish Council preferred that we use the name of the parish than 'Westhead'. Councillor Rigby suggested the name 'South East Parishes', referencing the Council's Local Plan. However, it is not clear to us that our ward would have boundaries which would match people's understanding of the Local Plan's use of the name. We do not consider that 'Greater Aughton' would effectively reflect Bickerstaffe, Lathom South and Simonswood. Nevertheless, we acknowledge dissatisfaction with the name proposed in our draft recommendations and propose that the ward which includes Bickerstaffe, Bowker's Green, Holt Green, Lathom South and Simonswood be named Rural South.

Ormskirk East and Ormskirk West

65 In one of the Conservatives' and one of the Officers' schemes, the Liverpool–Preston railway would, with the exception of a small area at Black Moss Lane, form the boundary of a ward covering the whole of Ormskirk's eastern unparished area. We recognised that the railway would represent a strong boundary, but our proposals involving Westhead and Edge Hill University meant that the remainder of the eastern part of this area cannot form a ward with good electoral equality. We therefore needed to consider proposals for wards which cross the railway.

66 We did not consider that there are exceptional reasons to provide two-councillor wards in Ormskirk and therefore did not recommend the Council Officers' approach based on such wards.

67 Whilst the second of the Conservatives' and the third of the Council Officers' schemes provided wards which did cross the railway line, we were not persuaded to accept the elements of those schemes which combined the western parts of Ormskirk's built-up area with Rufford. Furthermore, we were not persuaded to adopt a central rural ward extending from Simonswood almost to Rufford.

68 The Labour Group proposed Ormskirk North and Ormskirk South wards, both of which would cross the railway line. Their proposal would not place any part of

Ormskirk in a ward with parts of Aughton parish. In aiming to provide good electoral equality, their proposal placed Westhead, Edge Hill University and all of the housing in Ormskirk between Wigan Road and St Helens Road in their Rural South ward. We did not consider that combining such an extensive part of Ormskirk's housing with Bickerstaffe and Lathom South would reflect community interests and identities. We were not, therefore, persuaded to recommend the Labour Group's proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

69 We proposed, as part of our draft recommendations, Ormskirk East and Ormskirk West wards. Our Ormskirk West ward covered the part of Ormskirk which lies to the west of the railway line and includes Coronation Park, the Town Centre and all parts of Ormskirk lying to the north of them. Our Ormskirk East ward covers the rest of the town, except for Edge Hill University and the Holborn Hill areas.

70 We received no objections to our proposals for Ormskirk area save for those objections to our proposals for other areas which would have an impact on Ormskirk. We are not persuaded to change our recommendations for the town and therefore confirm those proposals as part of our final recommendations.

Rural West

71 The western part of the borough is made up of Downholland, Great Altcar, Halsall and Scarisbrick parishes. This is an area of low-lying and highly productive agricultural land, criss-crossed by drainage channels and narrow lanes and tracks. This is a sparsely populated area with small concentrations of housing at hamlets such as Bescar, Brown Edge, Halsall, Haskayne and Shirdley Hill. The schemes we received presented a range of warding options for this area.

72 Responding to our initial consultation, Downholland Parish Council requested that no change be made to West Lancashire's electoral arrangements. Halsall parish currently constitutes a single-councillor borough ward, and the Parish Council appeared to support the continuation of this arrangement. However, we are obliged to address both electoral inequality and the presumption for three-councillor wards, given the Council's electoral cycle. We also agreed with the Council's proposal to reduce the total number of councillors and see no reason to depart from this. One resident put forward the view that Downholland and Aughton should not be combined in a borough council ward, a view subsequently shared by Aughton Parish Council, whilst another proposed that Great Altcar and the part of Downholland parish which lies to the west of A5147 be combined with Halsall and Scarisbrick parishes.

73 All of the whole-borough schemes we received proposed three-councillor wards for the western parts of the borough. However, the only features common to the six schemes were that Downholland and Great Altcar parishes should be represented in

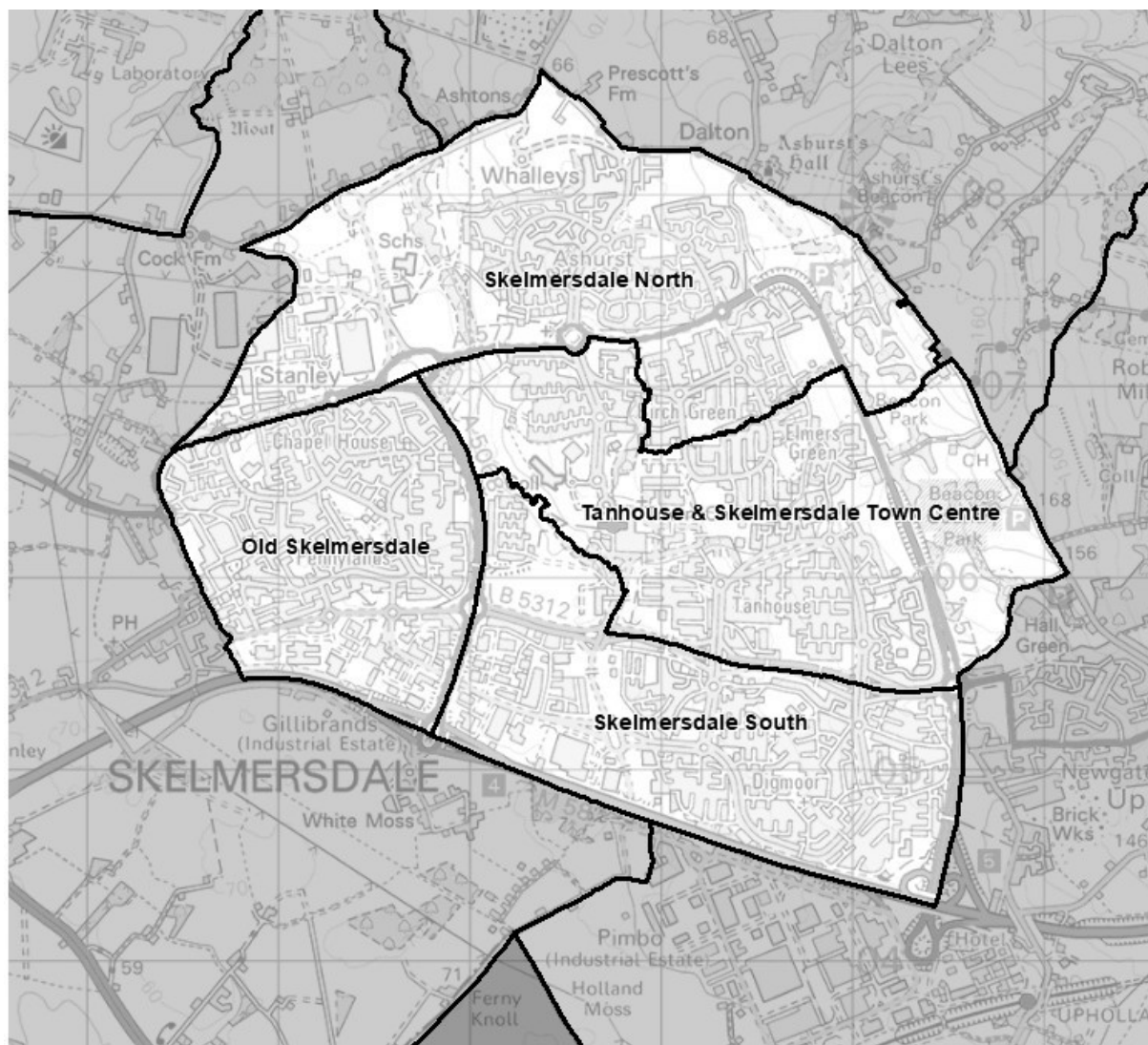
the same ward. The schemes proposed by the Labour Group and the Council Officers would add parts of Aughton, Burscough or Ormskirk to the parishes which make up the western part of the borough.

74 Our draft recommendations were for a Rural West ward consisting of Downholland, Great Altcar, Halsall and Scarisbrick parishes in their entirety and without the addition of parts of neighbouring parishes. This would mean that for the Rural West ward, there are 10% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2027. Whilst this is a relatively high electoral variance, we considered that our recommendations better reflected community identities by avoiding the need to split parishes between wards in this part of the borough.

75 We have not received any submission which persuades us to depart from the presumption for three-councillor wards in this area. We consider that the 'A' and 'B' roads provide effective links between the parishes, fed by a network of minor roads, narrow lanes and tracks.

76 The support for our draft recommendations for a Rural West ward persuades us to confirm that ward as final.

Skelmersdale



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Old Skelmersdale	3	8%
Skelmersdale North	3	4%
Skelmersdale South	3	-4%
Tanhouse & Skelmersdale Town Centre	3	6%

Old Skelmersdale, Skelmersdale North, Skelmersdale South and Tanhouse & Skelmersdale Town Centre

77 One local resident commented that, given population increases in Skelmersdale North and Skelmersdale South wards, the creation of east and west wards as well as a north and south was arguably beneficial. In acknowledging that a range of considerations must be made, this respondent also said that the review may involve surrounding wards.

78 The six borough-wide schemes we received all proposed three-councillor wards for Skelmersdale and all the proposals provided for good electoral equality. Whilst only one of the whole-borough schemes we received retained the current boundaries of Ashurst ward, the remaining five added Fawcett and Fairburn from Birch Green. The Labour Group proposed extending Ashurst ward westwards as far as Glenburn Road, encompassing the high schools there, whilst the Council Officers' schemes included that area north of Neverstitch Road, principally an employment area and a single dwelling at Spa Lane.

79 The Conservatives proposed a straight merging of the current Birch Green and Tanhouse wards in one of their schemes, whilst in the other, they would exclude Fawcett and Fairburn. Whilst broadly agreeing with the proposal to combine Birch Green with Tanhouse in a ward, the Labour Group excluded Eskbank, Eskbrook and Eskdale.

80 The Conservatives proposed a ward which combined Lathom South parish with the current Skelmersdale South ward, and a further ward combining Moorside ward in Skelmersdale with Hall Green and the area broadly to the south of Ormskirk Road. We were not persuaded to combine parts of Up Holland parish with Skelmersdale. The parish can form a three-councillor ward with good electoral equality and as shown below, this contributes to the wider pattern of wards for the eastern parts of the borough.

81 The Labour Group proposed an Old Skelmersdale ward, combining the area between Glenburn Road and Railway Road with the Stanley Way and Gillibrands employment areas, as well as the White Moss area to the south of the M58. The Council Officers' Old Skelmersdale ward would be bounded by Neverstitch Road, Glenburn Road, the M58 and Railway Road.

82 Our draft recommendations took on board elements of all the proposals received. We proposed a Skelmersdale North ward based on the current Ashurst ward, but extended it to include the Stanley Way employment area. We recommended a Skelmersdale Central ward which would combine the Birch Green and Tanhouse wards with the exception of the Eskdale area described in paragraph 79. We also included the Council Officers' proposals for Skelmersdale South and Old Skelmersdale wards with one exception. We proposed that the housing at Yewdale be included in our Skelmersdale South ward.

83 In response to our draft recommendations, Councillor Cooper and one resident argued that the Eskdale area should form part of the Tanhouse ward. Making this change would require an amendment to our proposed Skelmersdale North ward in order to maintain acceptable electoral variances in Skelmersdale. Including Heathgate, Helmsdale and Heversham in Skelmersdale North ward would achieve this. Having carefully considered the evidence received, we are persuaded to make

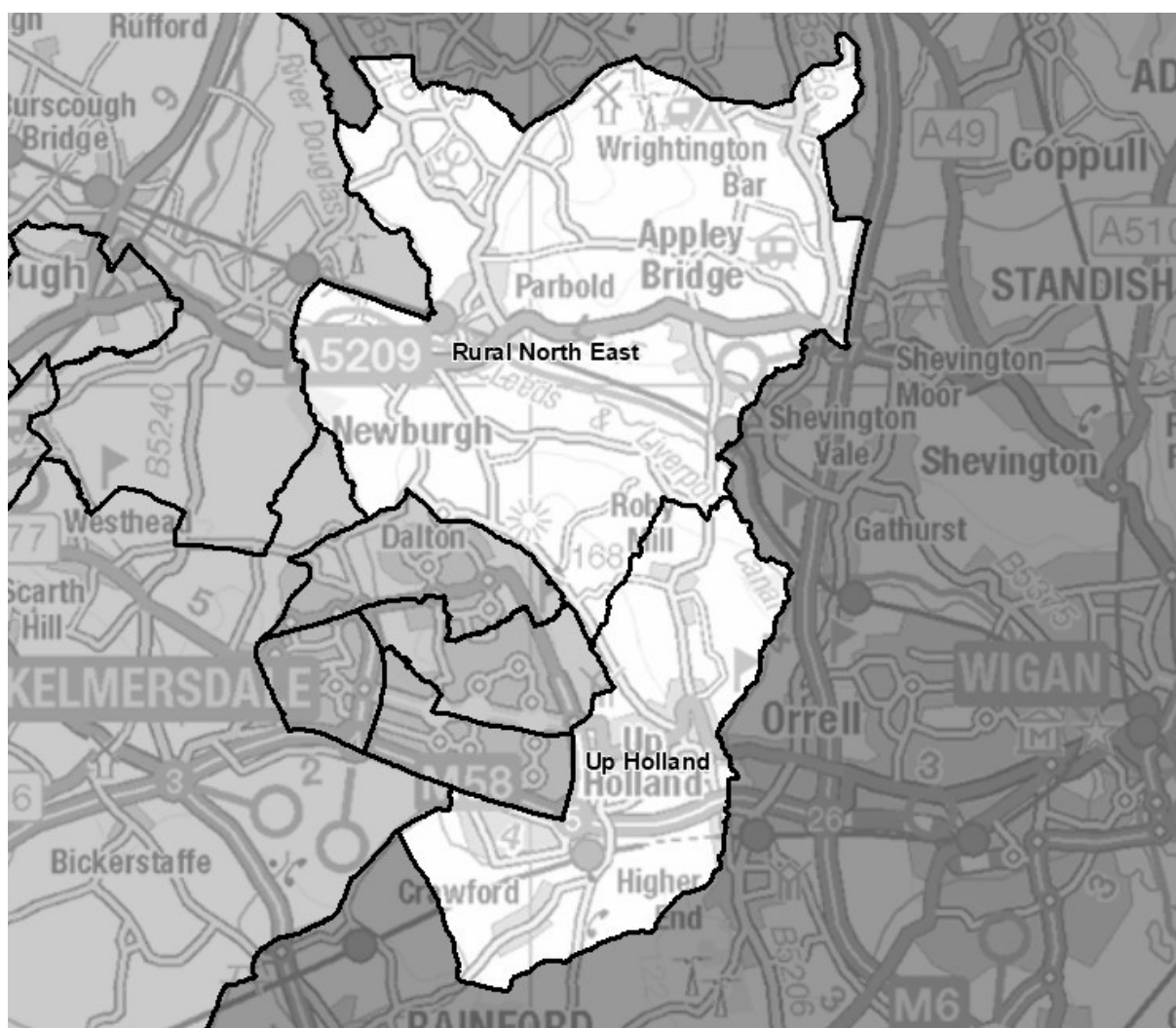
the change suggested by Councillor Cooper and the consequential change to Skelmersdale North ward.

84 We received a number of comments regarding our proposed use of the name Skelmersdale Central. It was pointed out that, as our proposed ward does not equate to the Lancashire County electoral division of that name, our proposed name would cause confusion amongst the electorate about the representation of people in this part of Skelmersdale. We accept that the concerns raised are valid and therefore recommend the name Tanhouse & Skelmersdale Town Centre.

85 Whilst we noted that the area to the south of the M58 includes a modern employment area, we also note that it is a substantial area of well-farmed agricultural land and that housing at Moss Lane and Holland Moss is of a rural character.

86 Whilst we have considered requests to include the West Gillibrands area and other unparished areas in the vicinity in Skelmersdale wards, doing so would result in the Old Skelmersdale ward having an electoral variance of 20% by 2027. In addition, our Rural South ward would have 20% fewer electors than the average, meaning that we would then have to include more built-up areas at Aughton or Ormskirk in that ward. We therefore are confirming, as final, our recommendations for Old Skelmersdale and Skelmersdale South wards.

Up Holland and the North East



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Rural North East	3	3%
Up Holland	3	2%

Rural North East and Up Holland

87 Currently, the two-councillor Parbold ward comprises the parishes of Bispham, Dalton, Hilldale and Parbold. Dalton Parish Council expressed a wish to remain in a ward with neighbouring Parbold and its adjacent parishes. One resident argued that the inclusion of part of Up Holland parish in the current Wrightington ward 'makes no sense' and proposed that the Roby Mill area be warded with the rest of Up Holland parish.

88 The Conservatives put forward an alternative view, proposing a ward in which Parbold parish would join Newburgh, Lathom and part of Burscough. That would mean that Dalton, Wrightington, Bispham and Hilldale would join the larger part of Up Holland parish in the Conservatives' proposed Wrightington ward. The Labour

Group proposed that the current Parbold ward be augmented by the addition of Newburgh and Wrightington parishes to form a three-councillor ward having good electoral equality. The Council Officers made the same proposal in one of their schemes but in two others, would replace Newburgh with the Roby Mill area in that grouping.

89 We considered it preferable to recommend a ward using Up Holland's parish boundaries than to combine parts of it in wards with either Skelmersdale or Parbold. Furthermore, we were not persuaded that Wrightington parish relates better to the Roby Mill area or the most southerly parts of Up Holland parish than to the parishes of Parbold, Bispham and Hillside. We therefore based our draft recommendations on the Labour Group's proposed Rural East ward but, noting that Up Holland also forms a substantial part of the borough's eastern area, proposed the name Rural North East.

90 In addition to the general support for our draft recommendations, we received support for these wards from Up Holland Parish Council and three residents. We received no objections to our proposals and therefore confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final.

Conclusions

91 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in West Lancashire, referencing the 2020 and 2027 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2020	2027
Number of councillors	45	45
Number of electoral wards	15	15
Average number of electors per councillor	1,948	2,002
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	1	0

Final recommendations

West Lancashire Borough Council should be made up of 45 councillors serving 15 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for West Lancashire Borough Council. You can also view our final recommendations for West Lancashire on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

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

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

94 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Aughton, Burscough, Hesketh-with-Beaconsall and Tarleton.

95 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Aughton parish.

Final recommendations

Aughton Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Christ Church	4
Delph	3
Holt Green	1
North East	2
Town Green	2

96 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Burscough parish.

Final recommendations

Burscough Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Burscough Manor	2
Ellerbrook	4
New Lane	1
Red Cat	2
Richmond Park	2
St Johns	2
Stanley	1

97 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Hesketh-with-Beaconsall parish.

Final recommendations

Hesketh-with-Beaconsall Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Beaconsall	4
Hesketh Bank	7

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

Final recommendations

Tarleton Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Central	7
Hesketh Lane	4
Mere Brow	1

What happens next?

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

Equalities

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

Appendix A

Final recommendations for West Lancashire Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aughton & Holborn	3	6,668	2,223	14%	6,417	2,139	7%
2	Burscough Bridge & Rufford	3	5,762	1,921	-1%	5,694	1,898	-5%
3	Burscough Town	3	4,994	1,665	-15%	5,550	1,850	-8%
4	North Meols & Hesketh Bank	3	5,743	1,914	-2%	5,977	1,992	0%
5	Old Skelmersdale	3	6,524	2,175	12%	6,463	2,154	8%
6	Ormskirk East	3	6,325	2,108	8%	6,429	2,143	7%
7	Ormskirk West	3	6,066	2,022	4%	6,298	2,099	5%
8	Rural North East	3	6,375	2,125	9%	6,212	2,071	3%
9	Rural South	3	4,380	1,460	-25%	5,538	1,846	-8%
10	Rural West	3	5,574	1,858	-5%	5,385	1,795	-10%
11	Skelmersdale North	3	5,528	1,843	-5%	6,247	2,082	4%

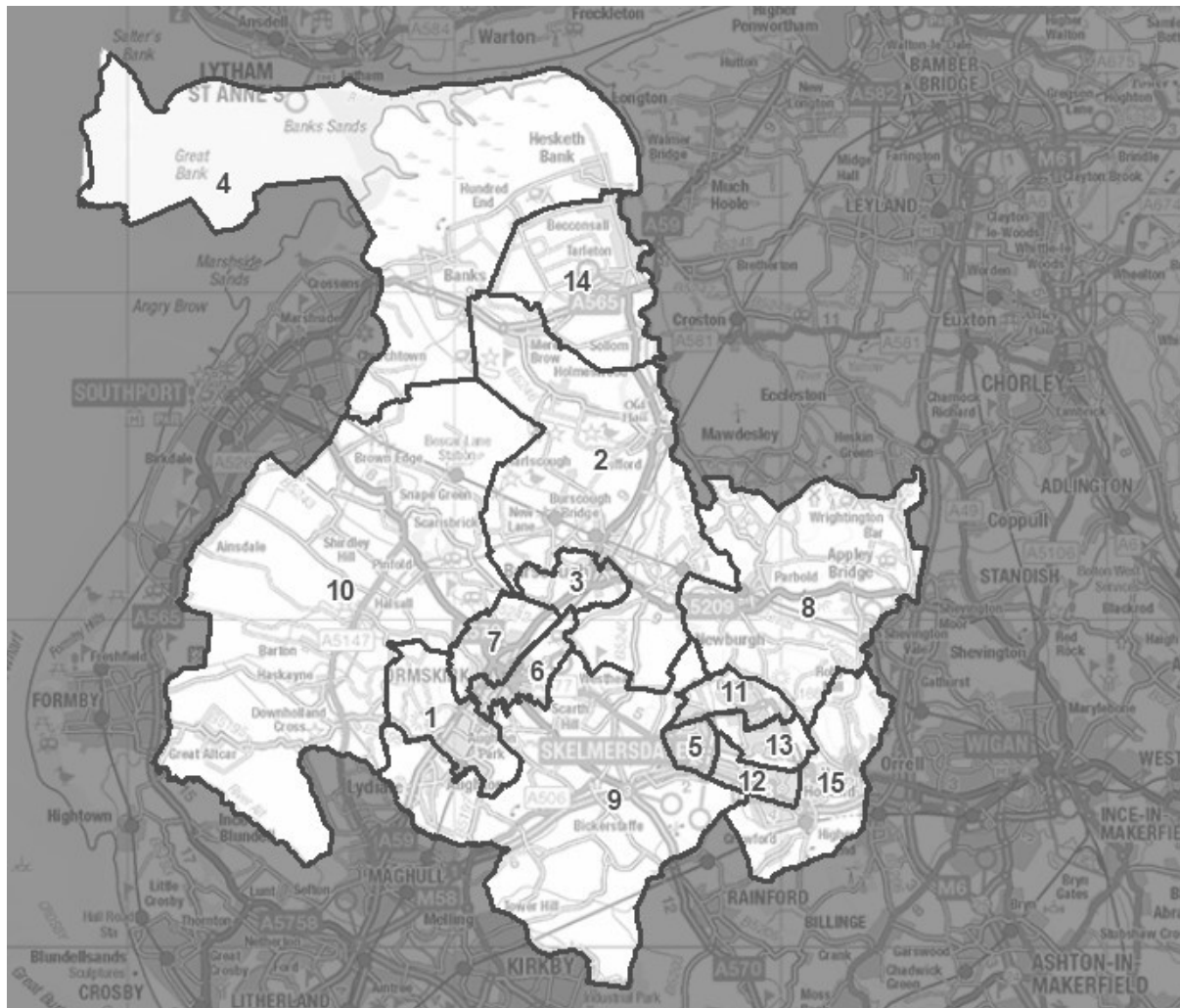
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Skelmersdale South	3	5,852	1,951	0%	5,774	1,925	-4%
13	Tanhouse & Skelmersdale Town Centre	3	6,352	2,117	9%	6,384	2,128	6%
14	Tarleton Village	3	5,479	1,826	-6%	5,588	1,863	-7%
15	Up Holland	3	6,030	2,010	3%	6,112	2,037	2%
	Totals	45	87,652	-	-	90,068	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,948	-	-	2,002	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by West Lancashire Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name	Number	Ward name
1	Aughton & Holborn	9	Rural South
2	Burscough Bridge & Rufford	10	Rural West
3	Burscough Town	11	Skelmersdale North
4	North Meols & Hesketh Bank	12	Skelmersdale South
5	Old Skelmersdale	13	Tanhouse & Skelmersdale Town Centre
6	Ormskirk East	14	Tarleton Village
7	Ormskirk West	15	Up Holland
8	Rural North East		

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website:

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/north-west/lancashire/west-lancashire

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/north-west/lancashire/west-lancashire

Local Authority

- West Lancashire Borough Council Officers

Political Groups

- West Lancashire Borough Council Conservative Group

Councillors

- Councillor G. Clandon (West Lancashire Borough Council)
- Councillor R. Cooper (West Lancashire Borough Council)
- Councillor J. Gordon (West Lancashire Borough Council)
- Councillor D. O'Toole (Lancashire County Council)
- Councillor I. Rigby (West Lancashire Borough Council)
- Councillor P. Turpin (West Lancashire Borough Council)
- Councillor J. Witter (West Lancashire Borough Council)

Parish and Town Councils

- Aughton Parish Council
- Bickerstaffe Parish Council
- Hesketh-with-Becconsall Parish Council
- Lathom South Parish Council
- Up Holland Parish Council

Local Residents

- 52 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

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

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

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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