

**Community Governance  
Review 2022/23**

**Draft Recommendations of  
the Electoral Review  
Committee**

**February 2023**

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## **Links**

[Terms of Reference of the Electoral Review Committee](#)

[Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review 2022/23](#)

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

[Information Pack on projected electorates, submitted schemes, parish responses, public engagement and survey responses](#)

Online Draft Recommendations Survey

All documents can also be accessed from links available at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-cgr>

Contact [CGR@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:CGR@wiltshire.gov.uk) or CGR, Democratic Services, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN for questions or other details.

### **What is a Community Governance Review?**

1. A Community Governance Review is a process under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which allows for the review of Town, City, and Parish Council governance arrangements. This is to ensure that they are reflective of the identity and interests of local communities, and that they provide effective and convenient governance.

### **What can a Community Governance Review change?**

2. A Community Governance Review can make changes to parish governance when there is clear evidence to do so, including changing:
  - Parish areas: such as changes to boundaries between parishes, mergers of two or more parishes, or creating a new parish out of part of one or more existing parishes;
  - Electoral arrangements within parish areas: such as changes to the number of Parish Councillors, or introducing/changing parish warding arrangements;
  - The name of a parish;
  - The grouping together of parishes under a common Parish Council;
  - Other governance arrangements.
3. A Community Governance Review cannot change the Electoral Divisions of Wiltshire Council. However, it can request those Divisions be amended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“The LGBCE”), who are responsible for such decisions, in order to align to any changed parish boundaries.

### **The Electoral Review Committee**

4. Wiltshire Council has established the Electoral Review Committee (“The Committee”) to oversee any Community Governance Review process.
5. This is a politically proportionate committee of ten Wiltshire Councillors to oversee the process and prepare recommendations for Full Council, who make the decision.
6. The members of the Committee when setting these Draft Recommendations were as follows:

Cllr Ashley O’Neill (Chairman)	Cllr Gavin Grant (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling	Cllr Allison Bucknell
Cllr Ernie Clark	Cllr Jacqui Lay
Cllr Ian McLennan	Cllr Paul Oatway QPM
Cllr Ian Thorn	Cllr Stuart Wheeler

### **On what grounds will a Community Governance Review be decided?**

7. Any decision relating to parish arrangements must ensure that those arrangements:
  - Reflect the identity and interests of local communities;
  - Ensure effective and convenient local governance.
8. In conducting a review and making recommendations, the Committee follows the guidance issued by the relevant Secretary of State and the LGBCE.

9. Factors that are not relevant to the statutory and guidance criteria, such as council tax precept levels, cannot be taken into account.

### **Background to the 2022/23 Review**

10. From 2017-2019 the LG BCE undertook an Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council. While this retained the number of divisions at 98, the changes as approved by Parliament made consequential changes to many town and parish governance arrangements.
11. Combined with development growth across existing town and parish boundaries, or creation of new communities with their own identity within an existing parish, Wiltshire Council determined that reviews were necessary in some areas to ensure the community governance arrangements were still reflective of local identity and interests, and were effective and convenient.
12. All parishes in Wiltshire were contacted in the summer of 2019 to see if there were any changes to governance arrangements they wished the Council to consider, and a number of requests were received. Due to resourcing, these would be considered when the Council, through the Committee, determined it was practicable to do so. Parishes were recontacted in subsequent years to confirm if they still wished to proceed with a review of their area.
13. Following a committee meeting on 31 May 2022, on 19 August 2022 Wiltshire Council published terms of reference for a Community Governance Review for the following parish areas:

- Biddestone & Slaughterford
- Bratton
- Castle Combe
- Dilton Marsh
- Donhead St Mary
- Flgheldean
- Fovant
- Grimstead
- Grittleton
- Heywood
- Ludgershall
- Monkton Farleigh
- Netheravon
- Nettleton
- Tidworth
- Warminster
- Westbury
- Yatton Keynell

14. The terms of reference also specified that any parishes 'surrounding those listed' were also included within the scope of the review. This was to enable complete consideration of any options which might emerge during information gathering. Such parishes included Fittleton cum Haxton, Edington, Colerne, Chippenham Without, and others.
15. For the avoidance of doubt, the Committee is able to recommend, and the Council to approve, governance changes which were not suggested by any parishes or individuals, if it considers it appropriate to do so under the criteria and guidance. Any such proposal would need to be subject to consultation before approval.

### **Pre-consultation**

16. During the first stage of the review the Committee received additional proposals relating to the review areas and prepared background information on each area, such as electorate projections.
17. During the second stage the Committee undertook pre-consultation information gathering, including:
  - Sessions between representatives of the Committee and affected unitary councillors, and sessions with affected Parish Councils;
  - Online surveys for those areas potentially impacted by a change of parish in proposals as submitted to the Council.

### **Draft Recommendations Preparation and Consultation**

18. At its meeting held on 21 December 2022 and 4 January 2023 the Committee considered an information pack compiling all relevant materials including parish meeting session notes, proposal details, electoral projections, Parish Council responses, and public representations received by email, post or online survey.
19. The Committee agreed draft recommendations for each area and delegated preparation and approval of a draft recommendations document to the Director, Legal and Governance, to set out reasoning and additional information on the recommendations in detail. This would follow discussions with the Chairman of the Committee, and circulation to the Committee. Where relevant information was received subsequent to the committee meeting, the views of the Committee were sought electronically to determine if this impacted their views or reasoning.
20. This document forms those draft recommendations. In some cases, recommendations may require consent of the LGBCE to be confirmed, as parish boundaries will need to be amended which were subject to consequential changes in the 2017-19 Electoral Review, formally made by Parliament in March 2020.
21. The Committee is required to undertake appropriate consultation on any draft recommendations. The consultation on these draft recommendations has been scheduled to run from 7 February to 28 March 2023.
22. It was agreed by the Committee that those residing in an area where they might potentially be moved between parishes would be written to with details of the draft recommendations to seek their views. An online survey would also be prepared for general consultation. Where considered appropriate, public meetings may be held.
23. Following consideration of any responses and other relevant information, the Committee will prepare Final Recommendations for consideration of Full Council. This would currently be intended for either May or July 2023.

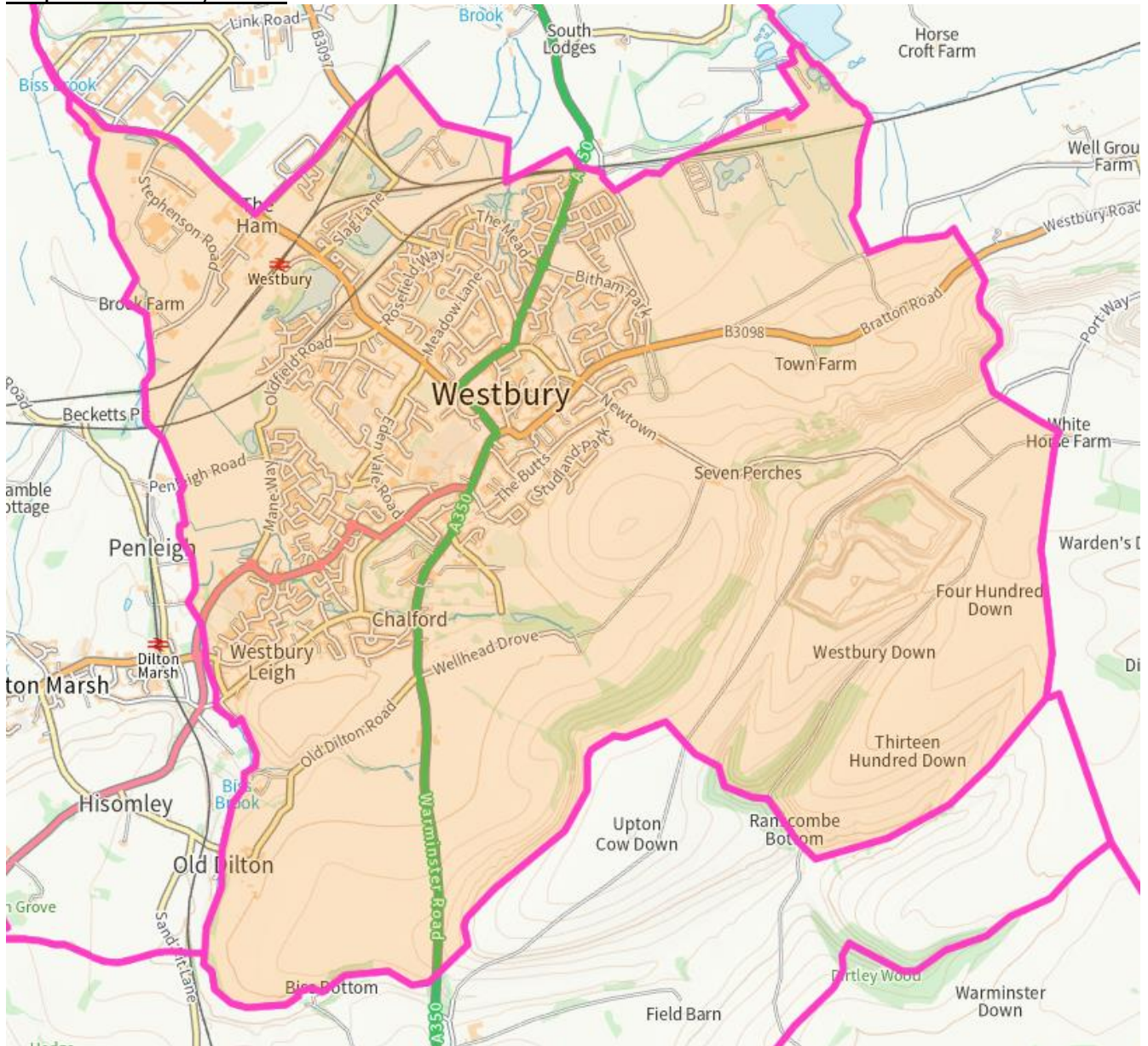
## **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Westbury/Dilton Marsh/Heywood/Bratton/Edington**

#### **Background**

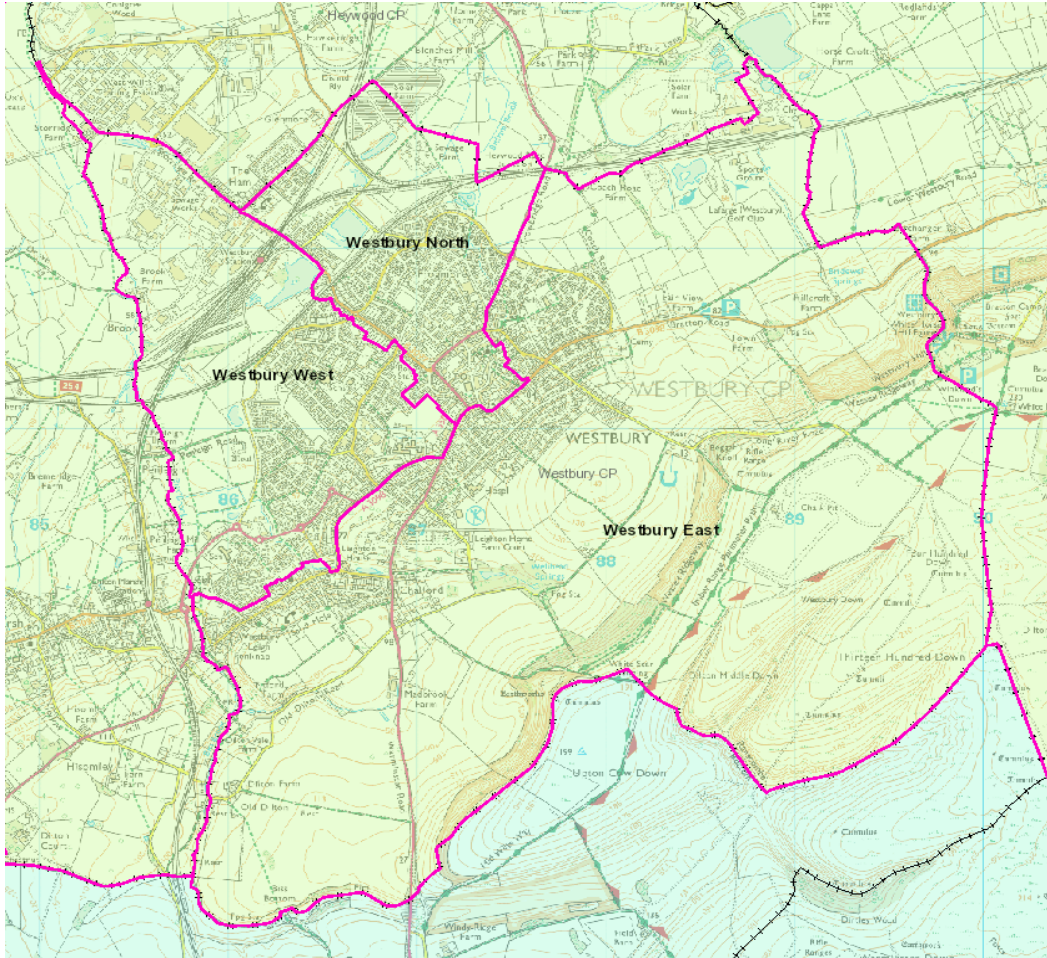
1. Westbury is an historic small town south of Trowbridge and north of Warminster close to the western border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by the parish of Dilton Marsh to the West, the parish of Heywood to the North, the parish of Upton Scudamore to the South, and the parish of Bratton to the East.
2. In August 2022 the town was estimated to contain approximately 12,073 electors. The town is served by Westbury Town Council, which contains up to fifteen councillors. There are three wards, each able to elect five councillors. The three wards are coterminous with Electoral Divisions of Wiltshire Council of the same name. Together with the Ethandune Division, the four Divisions make up the Westbury Area Board on Wiltshire Council.

#### **Map of Westbury Town**



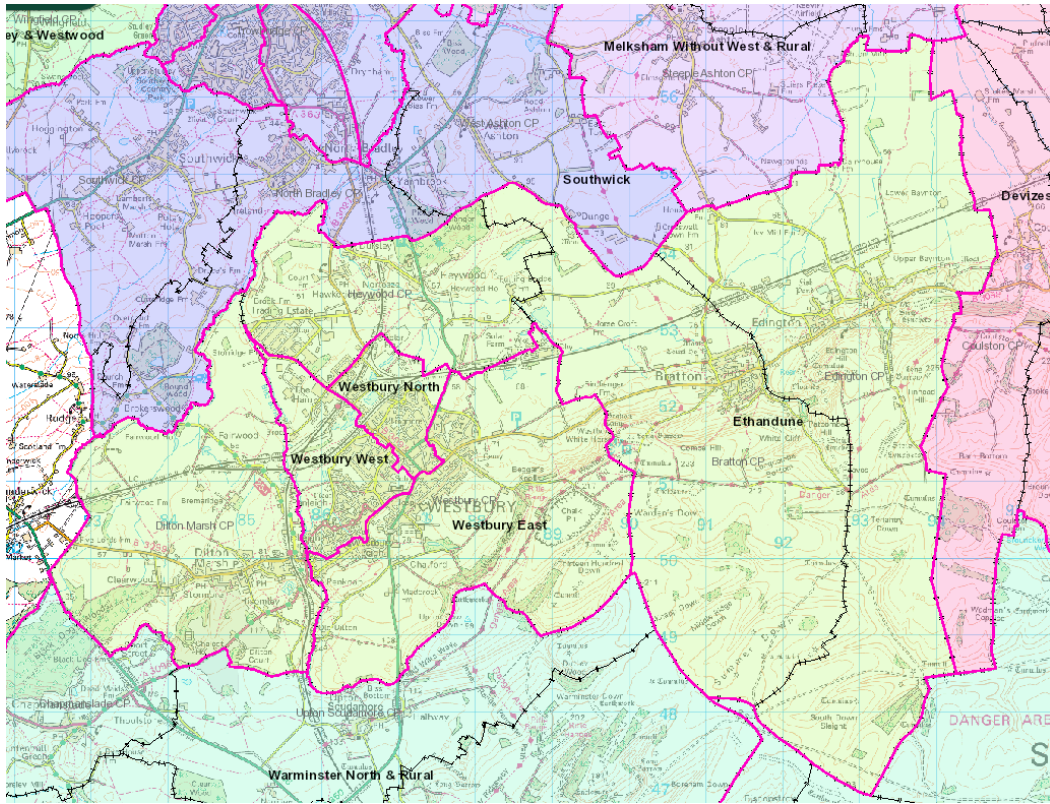
Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

### Westbury Town Wards/Unitary Divisions



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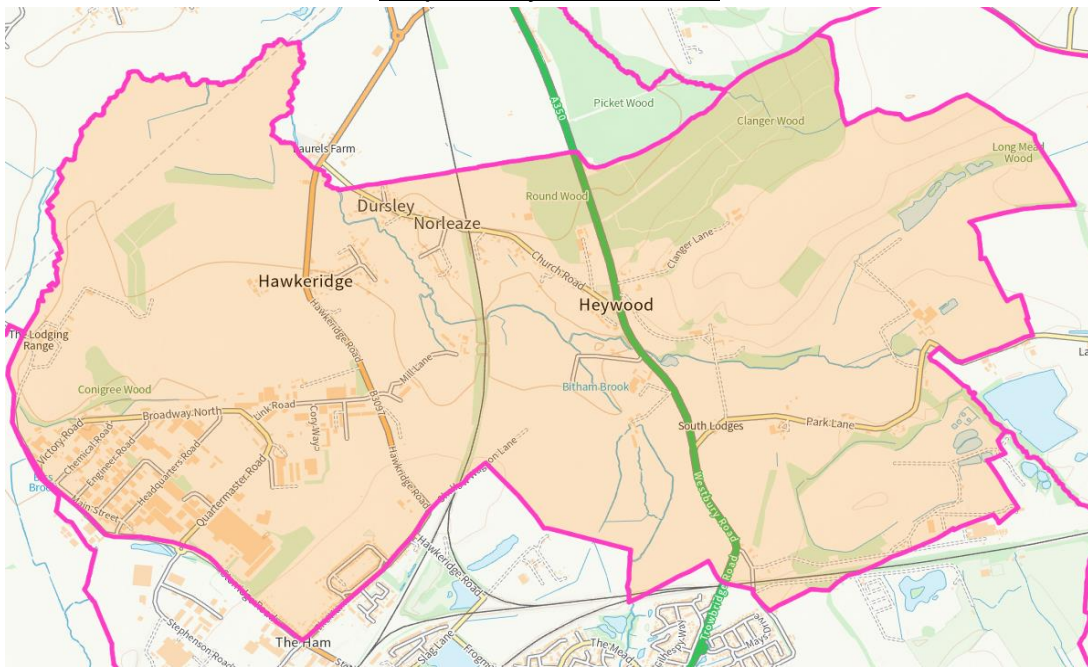
### Westbury Area Board



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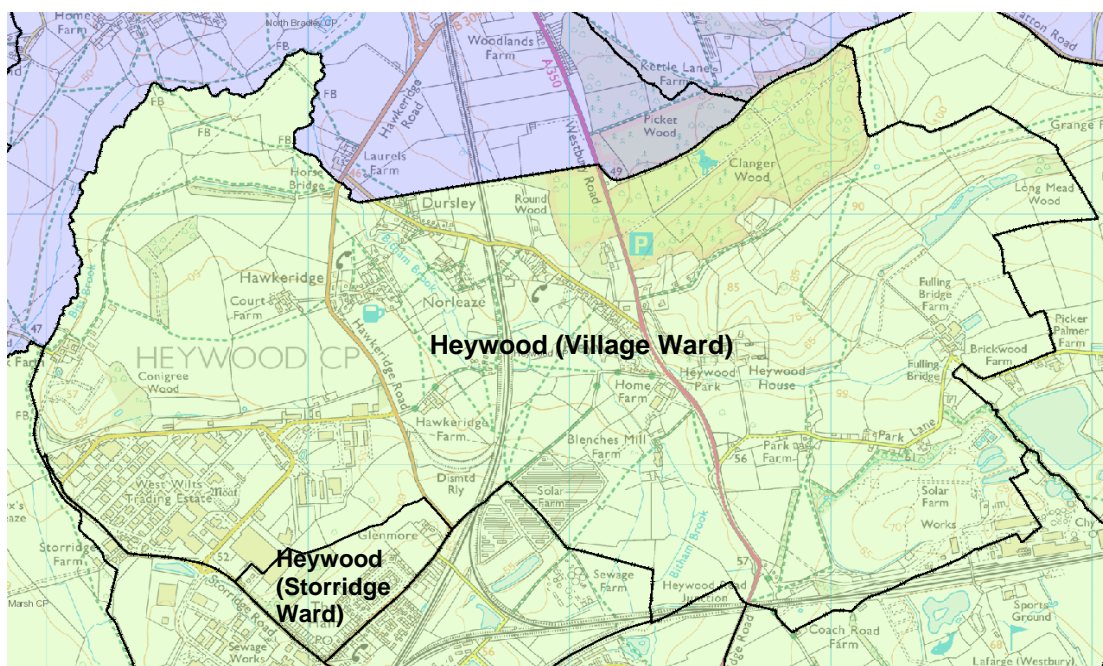
3. A review of the boundaries and governance arrangements of Westbury was requested by Westbury Town Council, including proposals for transfers of land from Dilton Marsh, Heywood, and Bratton. No requests were received relating to the boundary to the south with Upton Scudamore.
4. Heywood is a moderately sized parish to the north of Westbury. In August 2022 it was estimated to contain approximately 654 electors. The parish is served by a parish council, which contains up to 7 councillors. There are 2 wards, named Village and Storridge respectively. Together with the parishes of Dilton Marsh, Bratton and Edington, it forms part of the Ethandune Division of Wiltshire Council..

### Map of Heywood Parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

### Wards of Heywood Parish

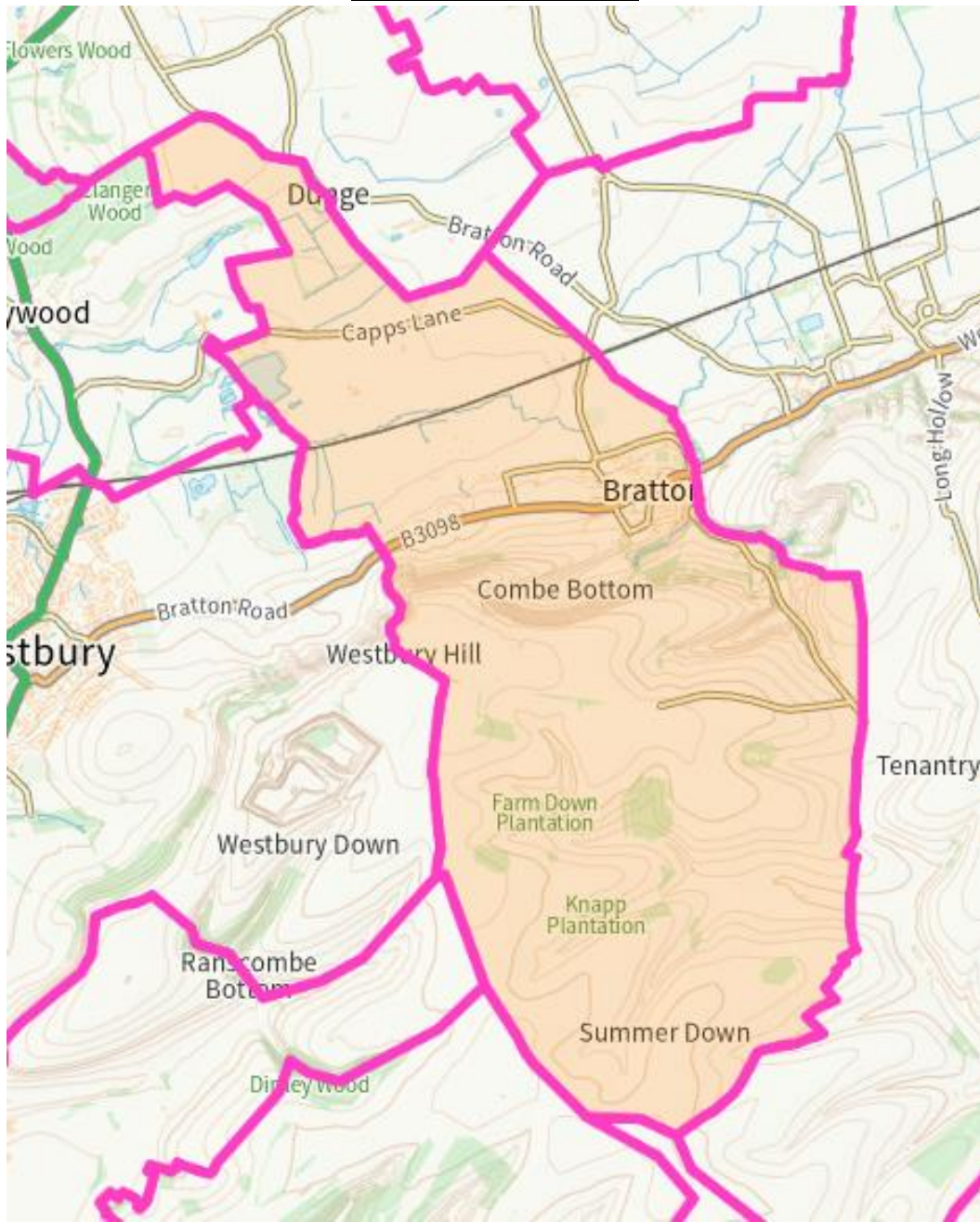


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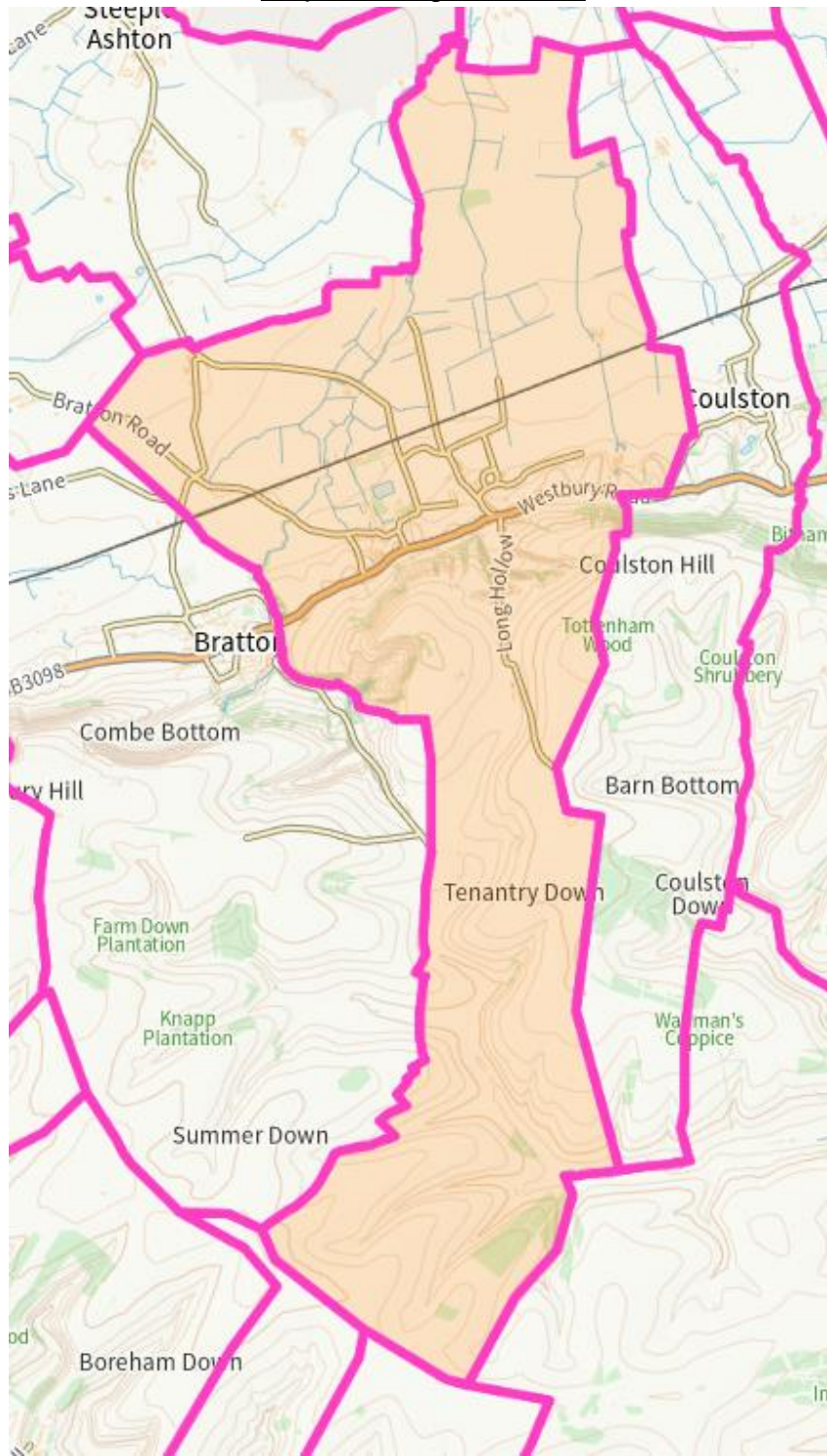
Map of Bratton Parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

7. Edington is a small rural parish to the east of Bratton. In August 2022 it was estimated to contain approximately 580 electors. The parish is served by a parish council, which contains up to 11 councillors. The parish is unwarded. Together with the parishes of Heywood, Dilton Marsh and Bratton, it forms part of the Ethandune Division of Wiltshire Council.

### Map of Edington Parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

#### Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

8. The initial request of Westbury Town Council which prompted the review stated there were several locations close to the current border of Westbury where ‘common usage and practice have given places identity that is not compatible with their current location’.
9. It was requested that the boundary with Heywood be amended so that the West Wilts Industrial estate and the area known as The Ham be included within the town, and that the

boundary also be redrawn such that the ex-cement works were entirely within the town boundary and not split in half as currently designated, as well as straightening the boundary to make more sense. It was requested the boundary on the White Horse be redrawn so that the chalk figure and recreation land on the hill be located within Westbury itself, with Bratton Fort remaining in Bratton. Further, it was requested that the boundary between Leigh Park in Westbury and Dilton Marsh be amended by using Mane Way as the boundary mark.

10. Westbury Town Council subsequently updated its request. It listed 3 options in order of preference. The first option was that the parish of Heywood be merged, in its entirety, with Westbury Town. It was argued that the majority of properties were 'physically in Westbury' as shown by the settlement boundary as defined by Wiltshire Council spatial information.
11. The second option was that the initial changes proposed as relating to Heywood be adopted, with the remaining settlements at Hawkeridge and Heywood village to be merged with another parish, for example North Bradley to the north.
12. The third option was that should the first two options not be approved, to ensure that no land within the settlement boundary of Westbury lay outside the governance boundary of the town.
13. The parish councils for the areas impacted by the Town Council requests were contacted for their views.
14. Dilton Marsh Parish Council objected to the proposal, stating that a transfer of land to Westbury as proposed would adversely affect the established rural buffer zone, and that it was advancing its plans for a Neighbourhood Plan, and the plan area had already been set. It also considered the proposal would have a very negative effect on the Ethandune Electoral Division, and stated the proposal had been considered in 2017 and the status quo upheld. The Parish Council considered there had been no changes since that time which warranted reconsideration of that decision.
15. Bratton Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer the area of the White Horse to Westbury. They stated that there were no governance reasons for such a transfer, and as such it was not justified under the criteria for a community governance review. They argued that any transfer would break the historic link with Bratton Camp, which would be split between two parishes.
16. Heywood Parish Council strongly objected to both the initial and updated proposal from the Town Council. It submitted a counter proposal to realign to what they stated were the original boundaries of Heywood when it was established in 1896. Additionally, for the boundary to run from the railway bridge on Station Road, along the railway line to the border with Bratton. They argued a transfer as proposed by the Town Council would negatively affect the administration of the parish, affect its financial viability, that Heywood was a rural parish as was the rest of Ethandune Division, that the parish formed a Neighbourhood Area, and that postal addresses referencing Westbury did not mean an

area was part of that community or of similar character. They did not support a merger with Westbury Town.

17. The Committee also met with representatives of Westbury, Heywood, and Bratton, regarding the various proposals, and sought engagement with the other parties.
18. Bratton Parish Council submitted a request for a transfer of the area around Fitzroy Farm in Edington to their parish. They considered there was a strong affinity between the area and Bratton, and noted efforts from their Parish Council to establish a paved footway to the amenities at Fitzroy Farm.
19. Edington Parish Council objected to the request from Bratton Parish Council. They considered there was a natural boundary between the villages which was the stream that formed the current border, the complex at Fitzroy was also used by a significant number of Edington villagers, and village name signs placed by Highways did not signify or justify a change.
20. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. Details and reasoning behind all comments are included with the information pack considered by the Committee and linked in this document.
21. 79 comments were received in total, 75 from residents of Heywood. No comments were received in relation to the initial Westbury Town Council requests in respect of Dilton Marsh and Bratton. 74 comments disagreed with the initial Town Council proposal relating to Heywood, 2 agreed, 2 suggested amendments, and 1 stated no opinion. 75 comments disagreed with the second Town Council proposal, including the merger, 3 agreed, and 1 proposed amendment. 63 comments stated agreement with the Heywood Parish Council counter proposal, 10 disagreed, and 6 stated no opinion.
22. In relation to the proposal from Bratton Parish Council 5 comments stated agreement, 11 disagreement, 1 suggested amendment with no detail, and 62 offered no opinion. However, none of the comments were from residents of Bratton or Edington themselves.

#### Committee Discussion

23. In relation to the proposal to merge Heywood and Westbury, it was relevant and significant that the existing Heywood Parish Council was not supportive. Many comments had been received arguing the two areas did not share identity or interests, and had distinct characters. There was no interest expressed in merging the village area with the parish of North Bradley.
24. Based on the available figures approximately 38% of the Heywood electorate was resident in the Storridge ward which included part of The Ham, not a majority, and around 9 responses had been received from that area which were not supportive of the town proposals.

25. Whilst public views in themselves are not determinative, the Committee did not consider any compelling arguments had been made or evidence submitted which under the statutory criteria would justify a merger of the two parishes. The guidance on community governance reviews was clear that effective abolishment of a parish council should not be taken unless clearly justified, and not undertaken lightly. It should include clear and sustained local support for such action. There was no indication Heywood Parish Council was unviable, and the parish was not incapable of serving its residents. Any merger would require additional warding arrangements and it was not demonstrated how this would improve effective or convenient local government. Although the area of The Ham within Heywood may have been of semi-urban or urban character, the Committee did not agree the two parishes, or the greater part of them, shared identity and interests such that the entire area should be merged as one.
26. Considering all the information and guidance, the Committee therefore did not support a merger of Heywood and Westbury.
27. In relation to the proposals to transfer land from Dilton Marsh to Westbury, the existence or intention of a Neighbourhood Plan area would not automatically mean an area could or should not be transferred. Plan areas could include multiple parishes or cross parish boundaries, and even where a plan area was in place this would remain extant even should the parish boundary subsequently be amended.
28. Nevertheless, the Committee was not persuaded there were any compelling reasons of identity or governance that the boundary between Dilton Marsh and Westbury would be improved by the proposal. Mane Way as a whole was not proposed to be the boundary between the parishes, and it was not clear why for only the small section proposed that this would better reflect the identity and interests of the area. Any change of that nature would also require requesting the Electoral Divisions be amended, as the area could not be warded due to limited population. It was not clear that this would more effective or convenient.
29. In respect of the proposal to move the area around the White Horse from Bratton to Westbury, the Committee could see no justification under the criteria for such a change. Whilst the monument was commonly referred to by many as the Westbury White Horse this did not require inclusion within the actual boundaries of the town. There was no electorate in the proposed area, and an Electoral Division change would be necessary if the request were approved, and it was not considered it would improve the identity, interests or governance of the area.
30. The Committee carefully considered the arguments and counter arguments relating to transferring a large area of Heywood parish to Westbury, including the industrial estate, The Ham, and various other land running east to west and including the entirety of the old cement works, as requested by the Town Council.
31. The key issue and debate amongst the competing interests related to the settlement at The Ham. This is a relatively dense estate accessed from the Hawkeridge Road, north of

the railway line and south of the industrial estate. The part of the area within Heywood contains approximately 253 electors, out of a total of 654 for the parish of Heywood as a whole, and serves as the Storridge ward of the parish council.

32. Whilst arguing for a broader transfer of land across Heywood, the Town Council and supporters' argument was that the character of the community at The Ham was most aligned with that of the town, being urban in character and interests. Although it was not the case that a majority of Heywood's population is included in the area as had been suggested, it was the case that a significant proportion was included in that estate.
33. Heywood Parish Council had raised concerns about the transfer of Storridge ward leaving them with only 4 councillors, which would be unviable. However, the legal minimum number of councillors for a parish is 5 councillors, so this was not a consideration as were the area to be transferred the area remaining would have its councillor numbers increased. It was suggested the parish council might become unviable if the area were transferred, but it should be noted that there are multiple parish councils in Wiltshire which serve a smaller electorate than that of Heywood, even if the Storridge ward were removed. The Parish Council had also raised the parish being a Neighbourhood Area, though as has been noted the existence of such an area would not in itself argue definitively against any proposal that parish boundaries should under the criteria be amended.
34. Comments had been received that at present the border between the two parishes divided a single community at The Ham. It was suggested there was no clear dividing line between the areas, and they should be included together in any electoral arrangement as it was a single community. The Committee noted this could be achieved either to include it within Westbury or Heywood.
35. Historically, the Westbury North Division of Wiltshire Council from 2009-2021 had included the Storridge Ward of Heywood Parish Council. However, on recommendation of Wiltshire Council to unify the parish within a single division, the LG BCE had introduced amended Division boundaries which placed the entirety of Heywood Parish into the Ethandune Division from 2021 onwards. There had therefore recently been a consideration of the appropriateness of retaining at least the present community of The Ham in Heywood in an electoral arrangement with Westbury, which had concluded not to do so.
36. It was suggested by Heywood Parish Council that to expand the town of Westbury northwards as proposed would change the nature of the Electoral Division of Ethandune in terms of demand for housing. However, housing allocation sites and any development would take place, or not, irrespective of administrative boundaries of parishes or divisions. Furthermore, the Committee could only take into account projected electorate from five years from the start of the review. The Ethandune Division already included the semi-urban or urban community at The Ham, and were that area unified in one parish, and Division, the character of the parish and Division would in any case be impacted.
37. The Committee reviewed the comments regarding alignment, and current lack thereof, to

the settlement boundary of Westbury and the area within its governance boundary. It was the case that the settlement boundary for Westbury as used by Wiltshire Council for spatial information purposes included the entire built up area of The Ham and also the West Wilts Industrial Estate. According to the Council's website settlement boundaries can be defined as 'the dividing line between areas of built urban development, and non-urban or rural development'.

38. However, the Committee also noted that settlement boundaries did not in most instances align precisely to town or parish boundaries. For more rural areas they might encompass the core settlement of a parish, with the vast majority of land not included, since this was not part of any 'settlement', without suggestion the non-settlement parts were not integral to the identity of the parish as a whole. For more urban areas, a developed area might cross the boundaries of multiple parishes within the same settlement boundary, yet they could still retain their own identity. For example, the entire built up area of the parish of Staverton formed part of the settlement boundary of Trowbridge, as did a significant element of the parish of Hilperton, yet each currently retained their own identities as separate parishes. Even where this was not the case, as by definition the settlement boundary was only concerned with built up development for most parishes, including Westbury, this meant that there were hinterland elements not included, much of which might never be developed as part of the settlement proper, without a suggestion that those areas should be transferred to more rural parishes. In many areas settlement boundaries were not contiguous and could not in any case be unified under a town's governance without at least some non-settlement element being included.
39. Whilst it was therefore a factor to be considered in determining the character and identity of an area, a settlement boundary would not in itself mean an area's identity and interests were best reflected as being part of that larger urban area. The statutory guidance, in relation to parish warding, suggested for example that warding may be appropriate where a parish encompasses, among other possibilities, some urban overspill into the parish. In Heywood's case The Ham area currently formed a ward as Storridge ward. The guidance even envisaged a situation where a discrete housing estate could form its own parish rather than being a part of a town within which the estate lay.
40. Each case would need to be considered on its own merits, and in many instances it might be felt that an area of clear urban overspill appropriately should be transferred within the main urban settlement, but in others a distinct character may exist which would not justify this.

#### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

41. The Committee acknowledged the arguments and evidence on both sides relating to the boundary between Heywood and Westbury not being as effective or reflective of local communities as it could be. It accepted that the boundary appeared to divide a single community, and the Committee was persuaded that this situation should be resolved.
42. On balance, the Committee agreed with the proposal of Heywood Parish Council. Whilst



speculations on future development beyond the 5 year period and financial effects were not relevant or considered, the Committee agreed that the parish of Heywood had for a lengthy period been made up of a mixture of rural and semi-urban communities. It appeared that the parish council was viable and effective, and the larger portion of The Ham community was currently already within Heywood.

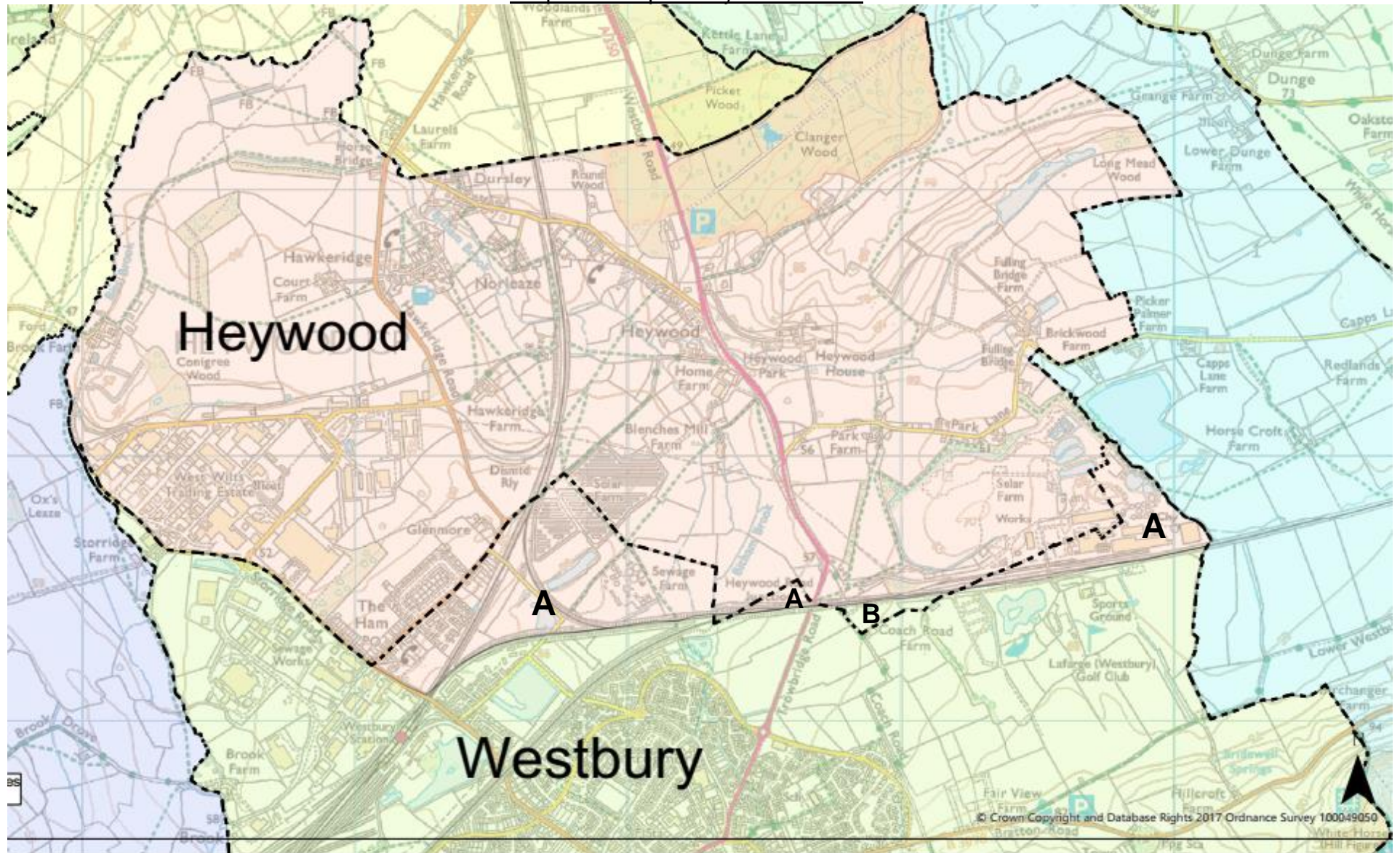
43. Accepting that in areas of increasing urbanisation it could be difficult to establish dividing lines between parishes, the Committee agreed that use of the railway line as suggested would provide a clear delineation in future between the two parishes. This would mean an increase in the proportion of the parish which was comprised of semi-urban character, but this was an established part of the parish and community as it already existed, so this would not be a fundamental change to its overall character, whereas in some other areas new housing developments formed distinct and new intrusions into the nature of the community. As such, it was not necessary or appropriate to transfer the area currently within Heywood into the town of Westbury, a change which would require more significant adjustments to parish level warding and affect governance arrangements.
44. Although the area to be transferred from Westbury could conceivably be warded, as it has sufficient electorate and sits in another Electoral Division, in the interests of more effective and convenient governance, the Committee proposed that the LGBCE be requested to amend the unitary Division boundary to align to the new parish boundary. Noting an earlier request from the Parish Council to the LGBCE, it was proposed that the parish be unwarded.
45. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

**Recommendation 1**

- 1.1 That the areas marked as A in the map below be transferred from Westbury Town to the parish of Heywood.**
- 1.2 That the area marked as B in the map below be transferred from Heywood to Westbury Town, as part of the Westbury East Ward.**
- 1.3 That the parish of Heywood be unwarded, with seven councillors.**
- 1.4 To request that the LGBCE amend the Westbury North, Westbury East, and Ethandune Electoral Divisions to be conterminous with the proposed revised parish boundaries of Westbury and Heywood.**

*Reasons: Paragraphs 54, 58, 74, 80, 81, 83 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*

Proposed Map of Heywood Parish



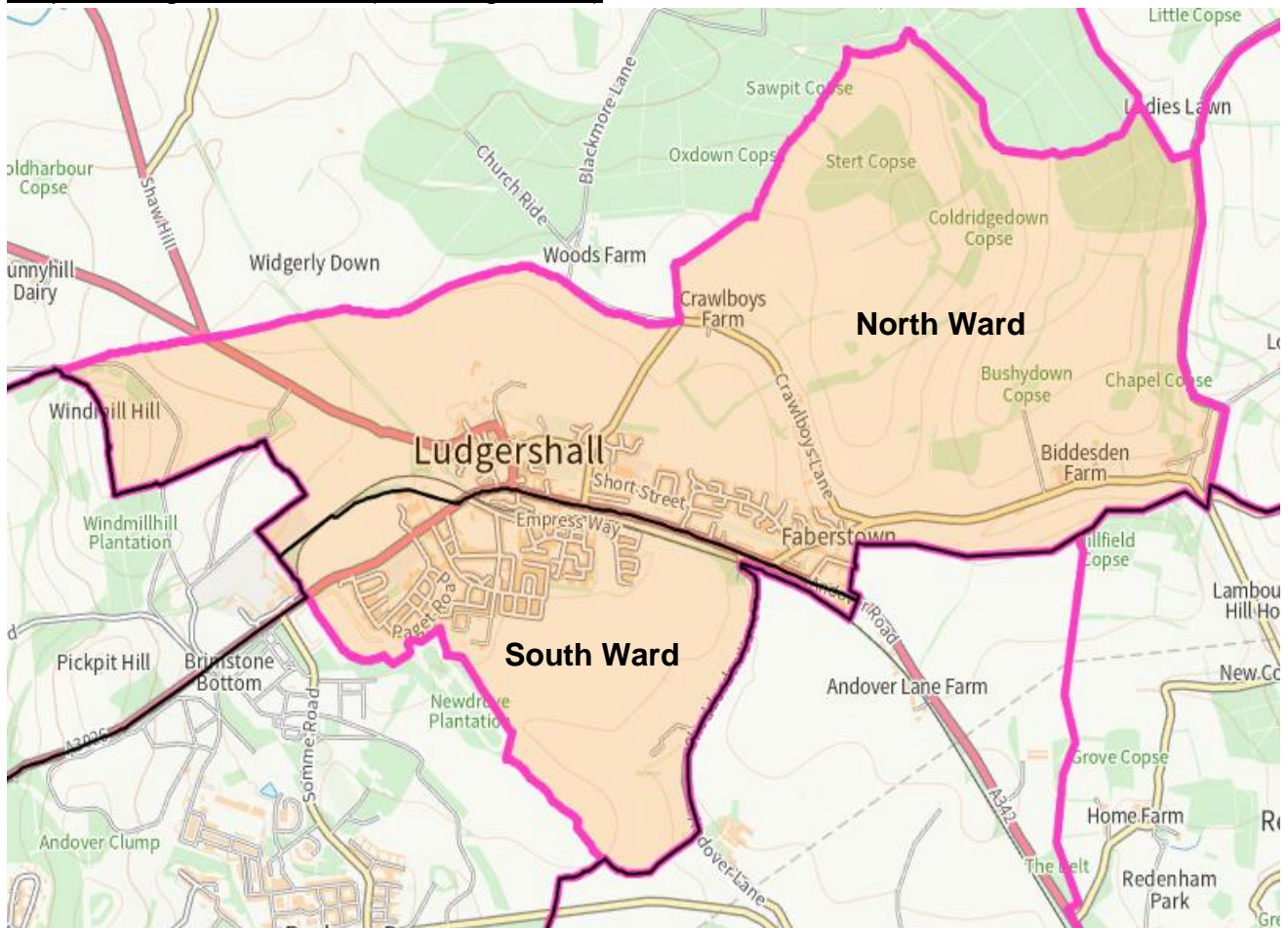
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Dotted line equals existing parish boundary. Shaded areas marked to be moved.

## Ludgershall and Tidworth

### Background

46. Ludgershall is a small town on the eastern border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by Tidworth to the West, Collingbourne Ducis to the North, and Chute and Chute Forest to the East. In August 2022 the town was estimated to contain approximately 3817 electors. The town is served by Ludgershall Town Council, which contains up to fifteen councillors. There are two wards, North and South, with eight and seven councillors respectively. The town is included within the Ludgershall North and Rural Electoral Division, and the Tidworth East and Ludgershall South Division. Together with the Tidworth North and West Division these make up Tidworth Area Board.

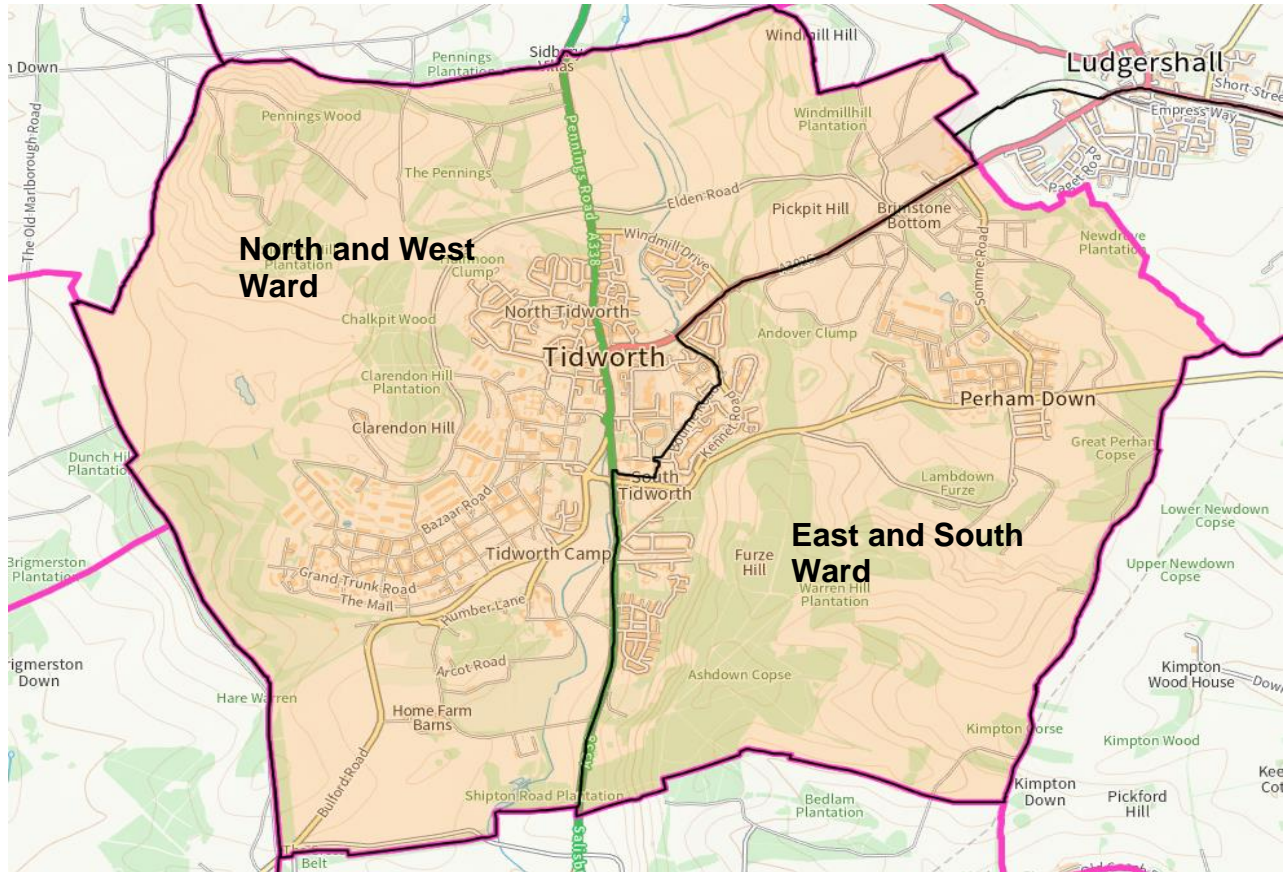
### Map of Ludgershall Town (including wards)



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

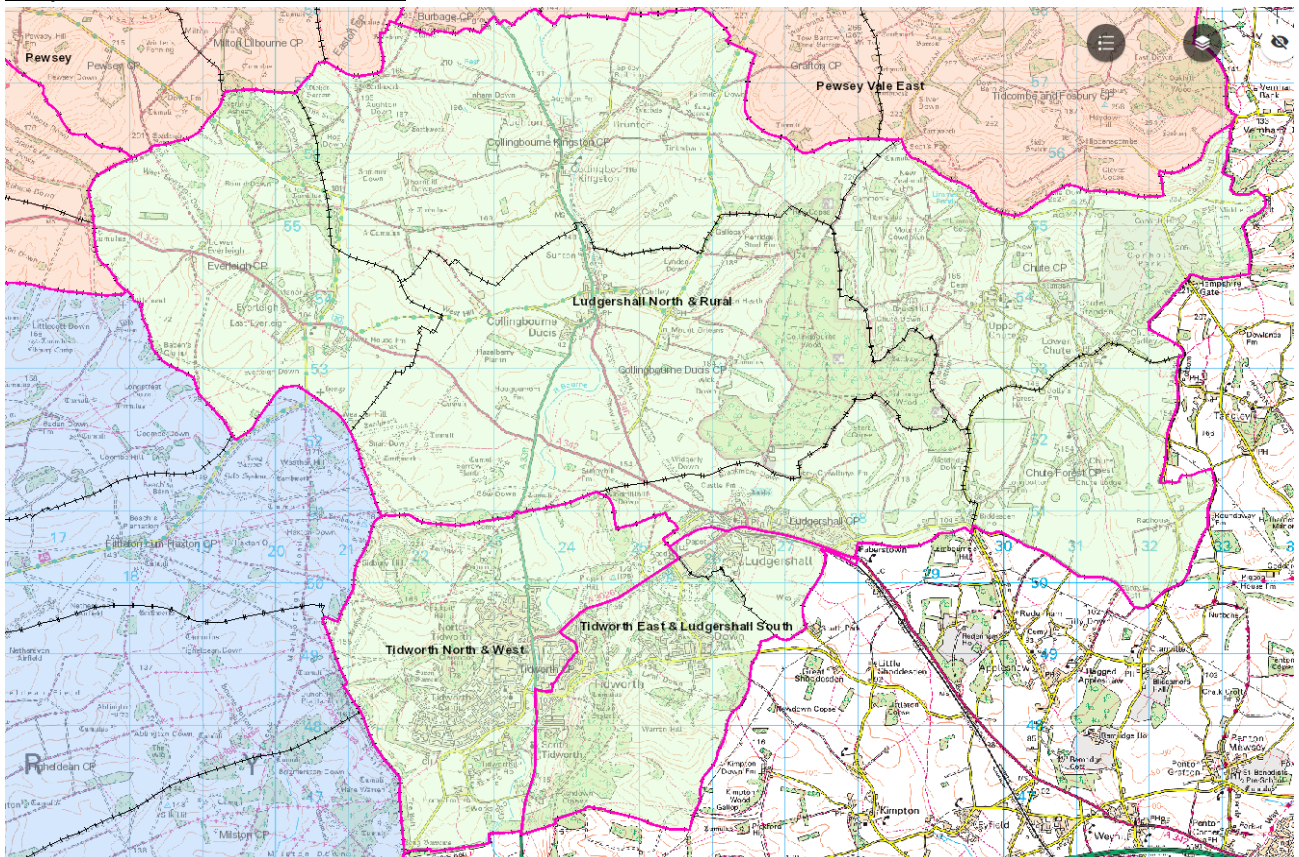
47. Tidworth is a small town on the eastern border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by Fittleton cum Haxton, Figheldean and Milston to the West, Collingbourne Ducis to the North, and Ludgershall to the East. In August 2022 the town was estimated to contain approximately 6065 electors. The town is served by Tidworth Town Council, which contains up to nineteen councillors. There are two wards, North & West, and East & South, with thirteen and six councillors respectively. The town is included within the Tidworth East and Ludgershall South Division, and the Tidworth North and West Division. Together with the Ludgershall North and Rural Division these make up Tidworth Area Board. There has been significant development in the parishes and other nearby areas due to the presence of the military camps in the region, with further expansion in Ludgershall projected.

### Map of Tidworth Town (including wards)



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/qb/>

### Map of Tidworth Area Board



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Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

48. Ludgershall Town Council proposed that the Perham Down area, currently within Tidworth, be transferred to Ludgershall Town. They stated this was because Perham Down had been historically included within Ludgershall in a number of different ways, including the current Electoral Division arrangements, church parishes, inclusion of residents in Ludgershall events, and the basing there of the 26 Engineers Regiment, who they stated have Freedom of the town of Ludgershall.
49. Tidworth Town Council strongly objected to the proposal. They stated that there are few substantive historical ties between Perham Down, currently part of the East and South Ward of Tidworth, and Ludgershall. They argued that inclusion in the unitary Electoral Division was simply a result of Tidworth being too large to be contained within a single Division, and not a reflection of community ties. They said the local parish church was in fact based in Tidworth, and that several army regiments are based in Perham Down. They stated that Perham Down itself was built as part of the Tidworth Garrison, and continues to see Tidworth as its local service centre.
50. Separate to the Ludgershall proposal, Tidworth Town Council requested that its number of councillors be reduced from nineteen to fifteen, due to difficulty filling such an amount over multiple elections.
51. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. Only one comment was received, from a resident of Ludgershall in agreement with the proposal of that Town Council.

Committee Discussion

52. The community of Perham Down was located between the main settlements of Ludgershall and Tidworth, within the current Tidworth boundary. The area as at August 2022 included over 500 electors, larger than many parishes in their own right, as a result of significant expansion in recent years. The proposal from Ludgershall Town Council would therefore represent a significant realignment of community boundaries in the area if it were enacted.
53. The two town councils seeking to represent Perham Down are similar in several ways, being small towns which have undergone significant recent expansion and enjoying close relationships with military communities in the area.
54. The key question for the Committee was what arrangement best reflected the identity and interests of Perham Down, and what governance arrangement would be most convenient and effective.
55. Although the area was in theory large enough to be a parish in its own right, no representations had suggested any desire or appetite for such an option. At this early stage of the process there had been limited public engagement for the proposal to transfer the area from Tidworth. Accordingly, the Committee was required to make a recommendation

on the basis of evidence and argument submitted in support and in objection to the proposal from the opposing town councils.

56. Ludgershall Town Council had set out a case as to why it believed administratively and in community terms it would be appropriate for Perham Down to be represented by itself. Tidworth Town Council provided counter arguments to the case of Ludgershall Town Council, arguing there was no reason to alter the representational arrangements in the area. Instead, it argued the only changes that were appropriate were internal arrangements regarding councillor numbers.

#### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

57. The Committee was not persuaded that sufficient evidence or arguments had been presented to justify under the criteria a transfer of the area at Perham Down. Each town council had submitted their opinion and evidence, and there was no compelling case made to suggest the identity and interests of Perham Down were aligned significantly more with Ludgershall as opposed to Tidworth. The community was also a physically distinct community rather than obvious urban overspill from either nearby settlement.

58. In governance terms the area was included within a ward of Tidworth Town Council, and if transferred would be within a ward of Ludgershall Town Council, making no more a convenient or effective an arrangement. In terms of Electoral Divisions it was noted that whichever parish the area was part of that arrangement would continue. The Ludgershall proposal did not include the non-Perham Down element of the Tidworth East and South Ward, and so even were Perham Down transferred, Tidworth as a result of its size would continue to be split between two divisions. There was therefore no appreciable improvement in effectiveness or convenience from the proposal.

59. In the absence of compelling justification, the Committee therefore declined to recommend a transfer of the area of Perham Down from Tidworth to Ludgershall.

60. The Committee accordingly considered the request of Tidworth Town Council to reduce its councillor numbers, and accepted the request as reasonable on the basis of the reasoning supplied. The area was required to be warded due to being divided by unitary Divisions, and the number proposed was not unviably low for the town.

61. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

#### Recommendation 2

**2.1 That Tidworth Town Council be reduced from nineteen councillors to fifteen.**

**2.2 That the North & West Ward contain ten councillors.**

**2.3 That the East and South ward contain five councillors.**

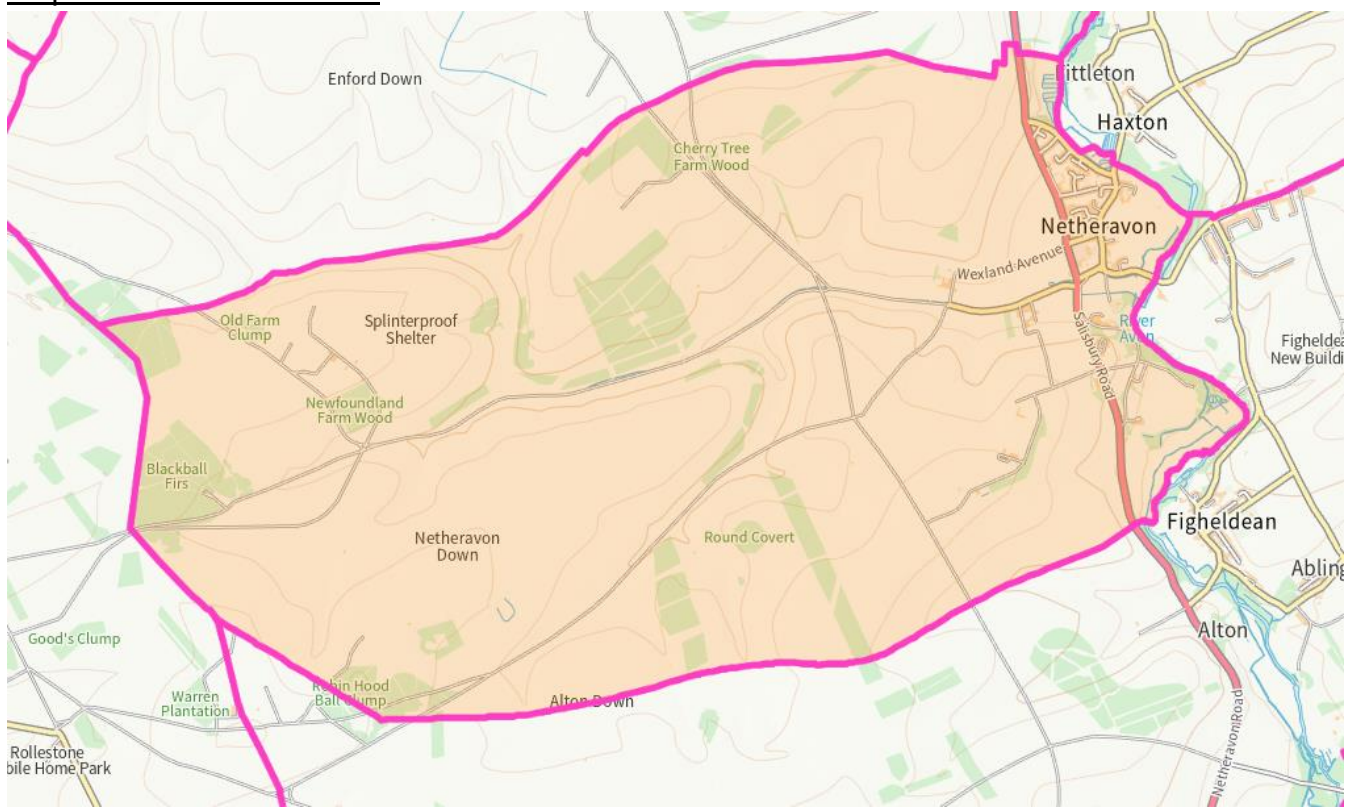
*Reasons: Paragraphs 79 and 157 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*

## **Netheravon, Figheldean, Fittleton cum Haxton**

### **Background**

62. Netheravon is a moderately sized parish laying alongside the A345 running south from Upavon to Salisbury. It is bordered by Enford to the North, Fittleton cum Haxton to the East, Figheldean to the South and East, and Shrewton to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 840 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 10 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the Avon Valley Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.
63. The Parish Council requested a review of its eastern boundary with Figheldean. Subsequently the Committee received proposals which also impacted upon Fittleton cum Haxton.

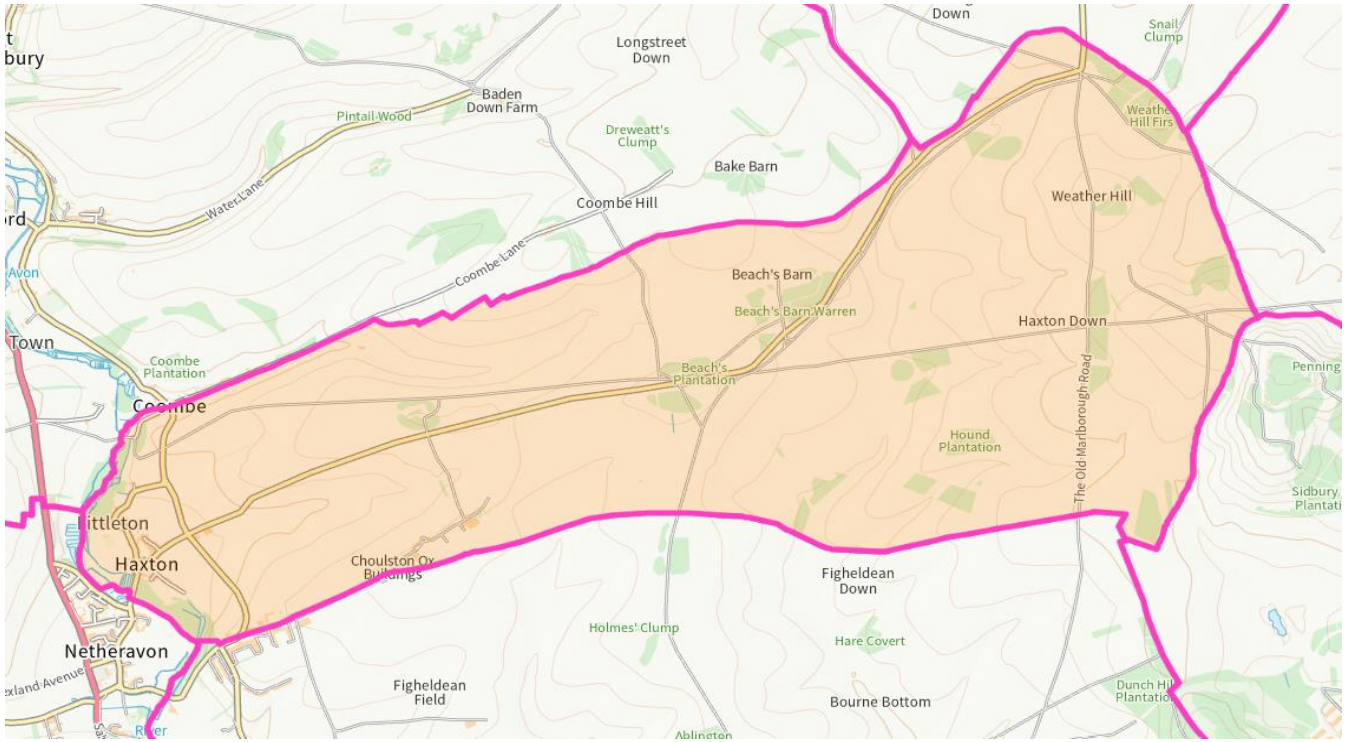
### **Map of Netheravon Parish**



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

64. Fittleton cum Haxton is a small parish also laying alongside the A345 running south from Upavon to Salisbury. It is bordered by Enford and Everleigh to the North, Collingbourne Ducis and Tidworth to the East, Figheldean to the South and East, and Netheravon to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 194 electors across its hamlets of Fittleton and Haxton. It is served by a parish council of up to 7 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the Avon Valley Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

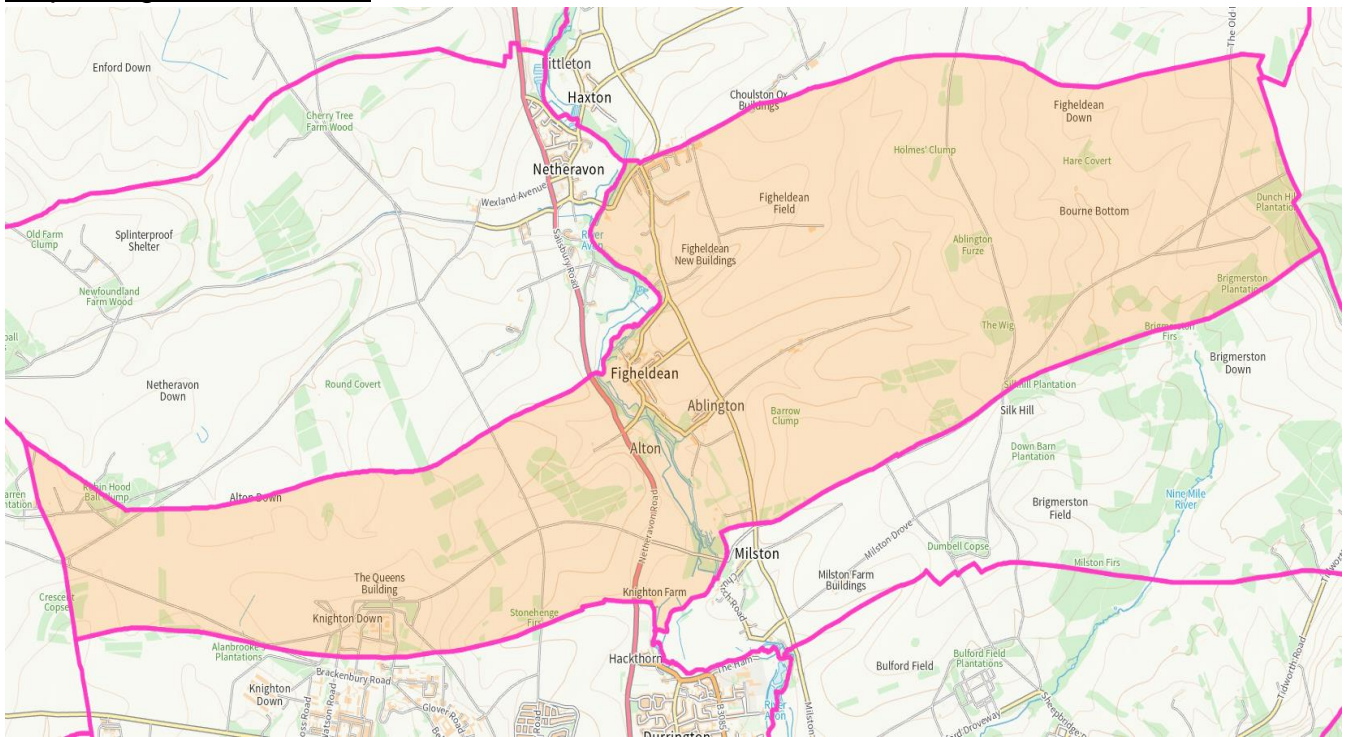
### Map of Fittleton cum Haxton Parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

65. Figheldean is a small parish also laying alongside the A345 running south from Upavon to Salisbury. It is bordered by Netheravon and Fittleton cum Haxton to the North, Tidworth to the East, Milston and Durrington to the South, and Shrewton to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 430 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 7 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the Avon Valley Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

### Map of Figheldean Parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>



Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

66. Netheravon Parish Council submitted a proposal to transfer the area of Netheravon Cemetery, the married service quarters properties, and associated Ministry of Defence grounds, currently in Figheldean, into Netheravon itself. They stated the current boundary was dictated by the flow of the river Avon, but that the actual spread of the community crossed this line. They argued the cemetery was owned and maintained by their parish council, that the married service quarters area were considered part of their village, with relationships such as schooling with Netheravon.
67. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. 8 comments were received, all from residents of Netheravon, with 6 in agreement and 2 expressing no opinion.
68. The Committee engaged with the potentially affected parish councils for their views, at which point the parish councils for Netheravon, Figheldean, and Fittleton cum Haxton, undertook further discussions and submitted an expanded proposal which had the agreement of all three councils.
69. This proposal extended the area to be transferred from Figheldean to Netheravon, and also included the entirety of Netheravon airfield and some other properties from Fittleton cum Haxton to Netheravon.

Committee Discussion

70. The Committee noted that the wider area involved parishes with communities straddling the river Avon and the road running to the south. In many cases the parishes were geographically large but with their main or sole settlements in close proximity by the river. In the case of Netheravon, there had been an expansion of properties which connected directly with the larger village, in part as a result of the military properties which had been constructed.
71. It was considered appropriate that the expansion of the community on the ground be recognised by adjusting the boundaries. The agreement of all three affected councils on a boundary which they considered reflected the identity and interests of the local communities was highly significant when determining a reasonable boundary.

Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

72. The Committee therefore agreed to recommend the proposal submitted by Netheravon, Figheldean, and Fittleton cum Haxton Parish Councils. The proposal aligned to a clear area of the airfield, which was connected most with Netheravon. No changes were proposed to any other governance arrangements, and this was not considered necessary or appropriate under the criteria.
73. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

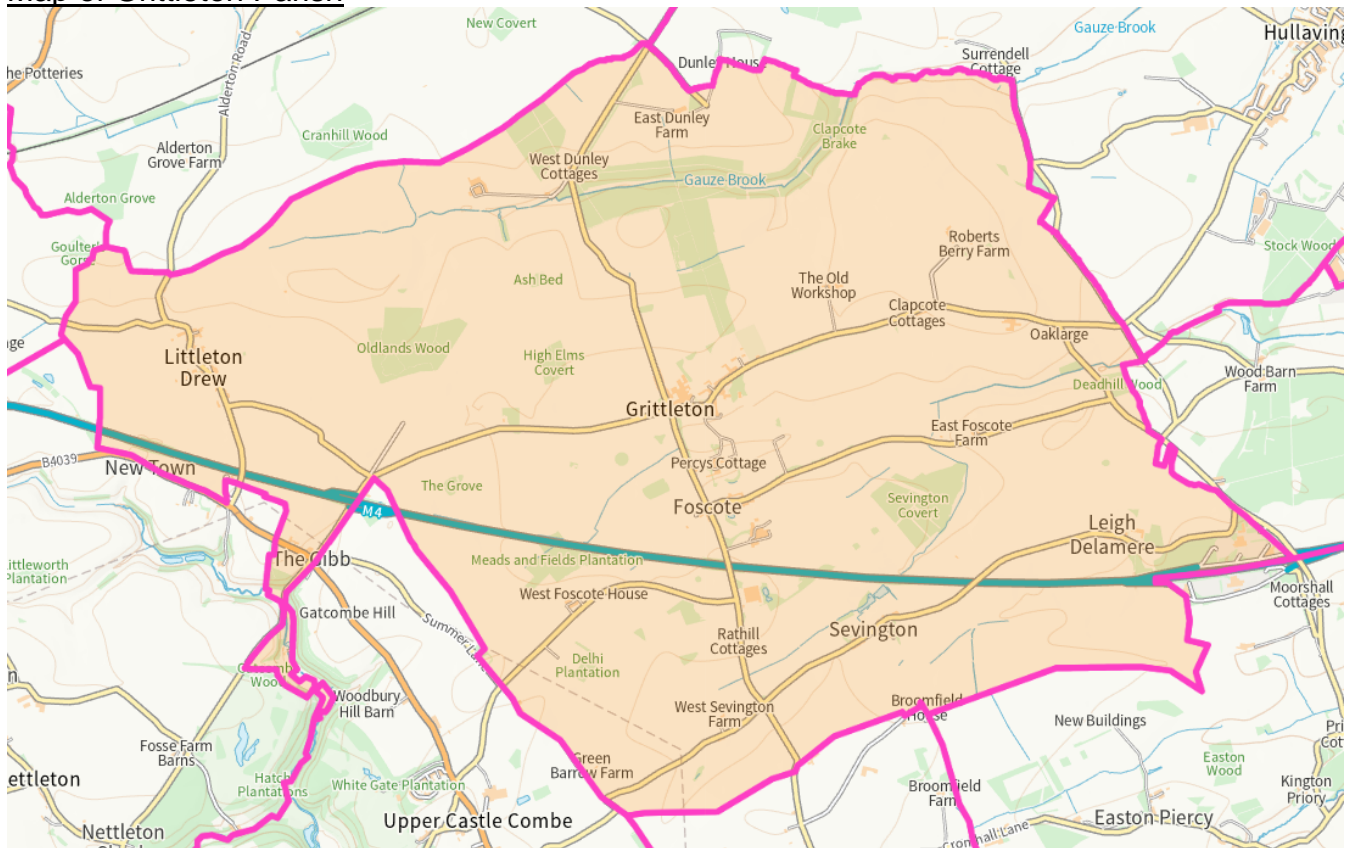


## **Grittleton, Castle Combe, and Nettleton**

### **Background**

74. Grittleton is a small parish including the communities of Grittleton, Littleton Drew, and Sevington, lying either side of the M4 on the Western border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by Luckington and Hullavington to the North, Stanton St Quintin and Kington St Michael to the East, Yatton Keynell, Castle Combe, and Nettleton to the South, and Acton Turville in South Gloucestershire to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 439 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 9 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the By Brook Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

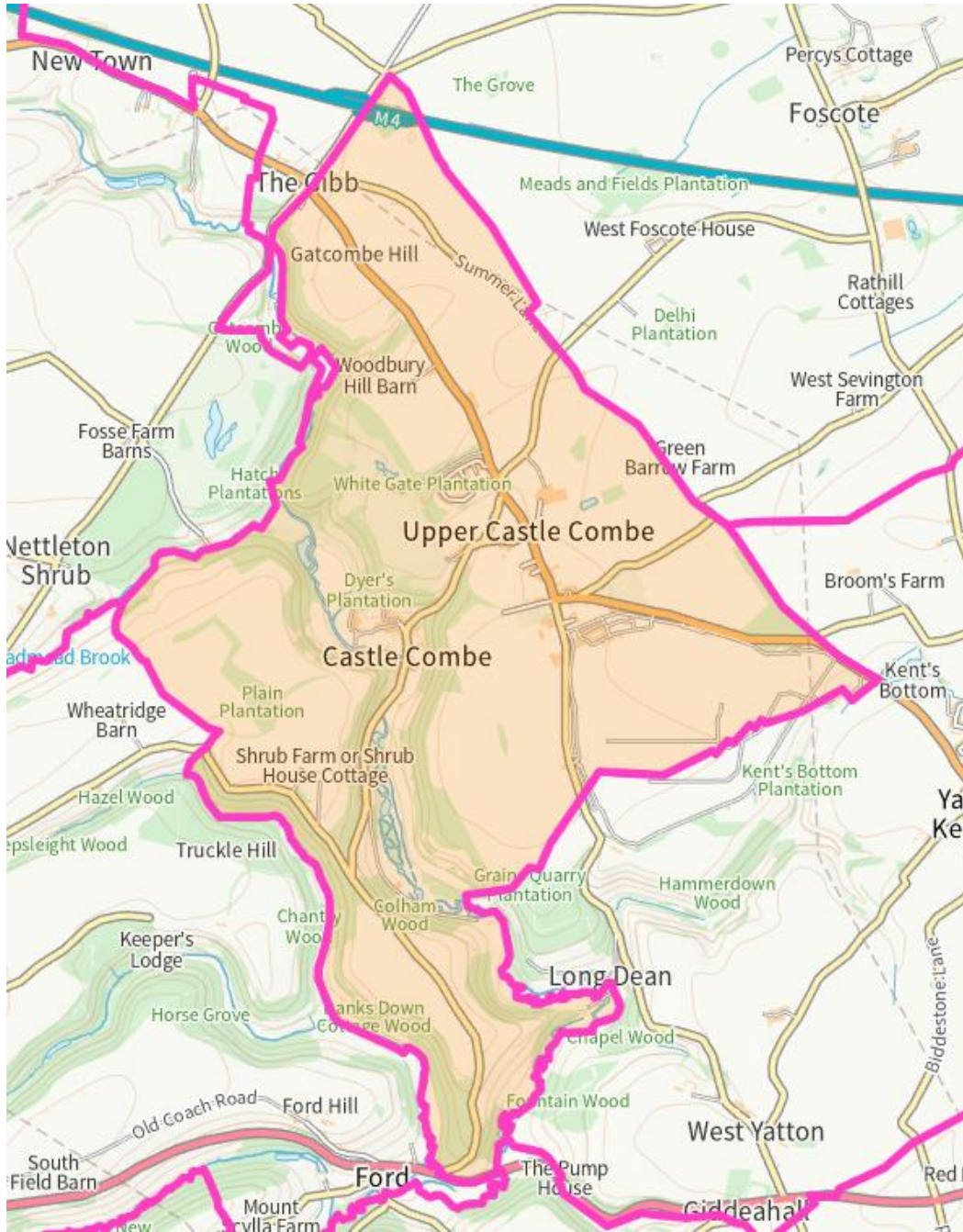
### **Map of Grittleton Parish**



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

75. Grittleton Parish Council requested a review of its southern boundary in relation to the area known as The Gibb, where a community of properties was currently split between Grittleton, Nettleton, and Castle Combe. It was suggested this community should be unified within a single parish. No specific proposal or preference was submitted.
76. Castle Combe is a small parish bordered by Grittleton to the North, Yatton Keynell to the East, Biddestone & Slaughterford to the South, and North Wraxall and Nettleton to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 268 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 7 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is also part of the By Brook Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

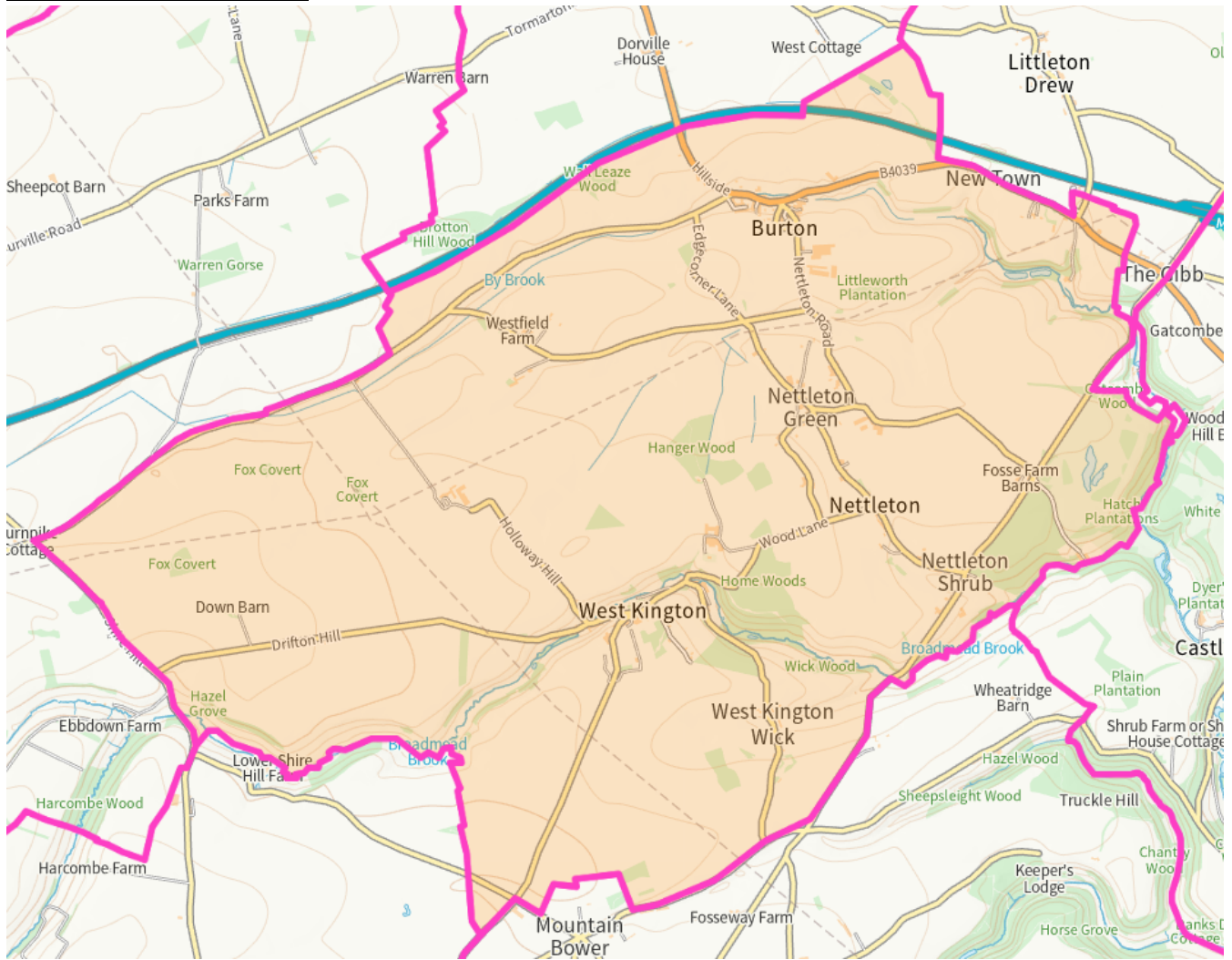
Map of Castle Combe parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

77. Nettleton is a moderately sized parish on the eastern border of Wiltshire including the settlements of West Kington, Nettleton, and Burton. It is bordered by Grittleton and Acton Turville in South Gloucestershire to the North, Castle Combe to the East, North Wraxall and Marshfield in south Gloucestershire to the South, and Tomarton in South Gloucestershire to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 570 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 9 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is also part of the By Brook Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

### Map of Nettleton parish

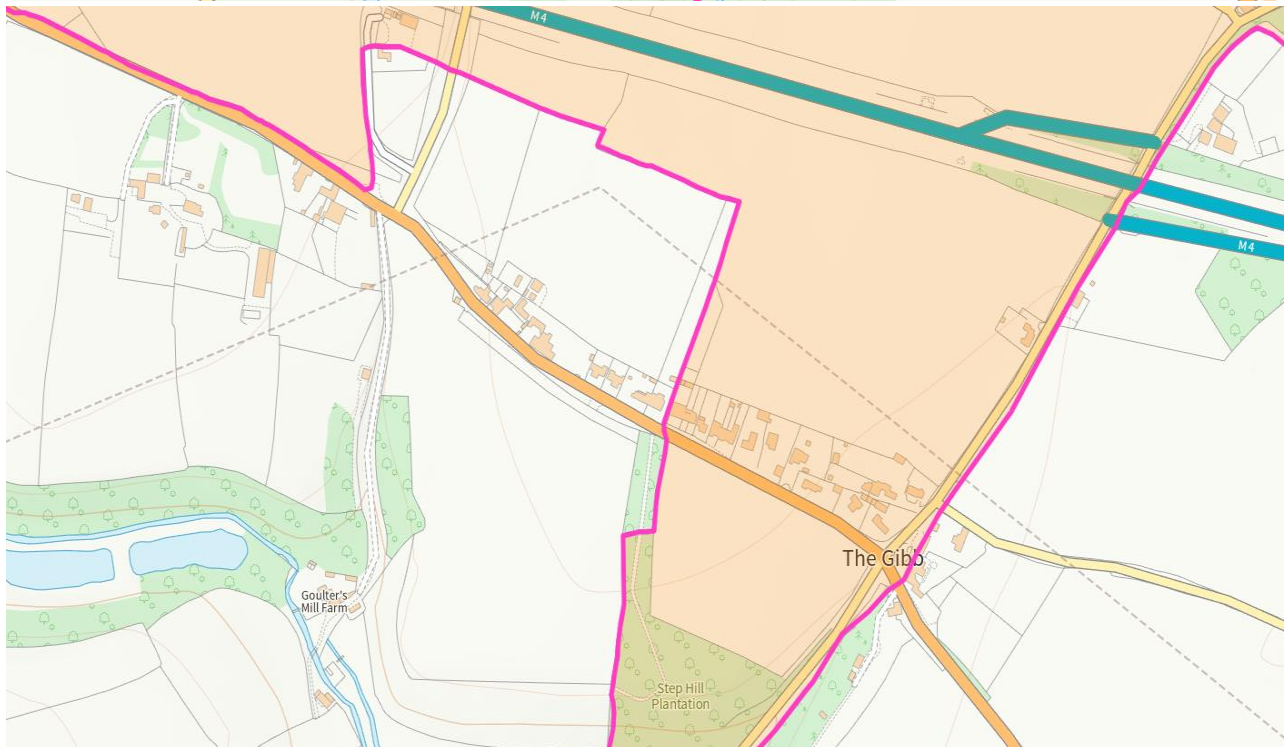
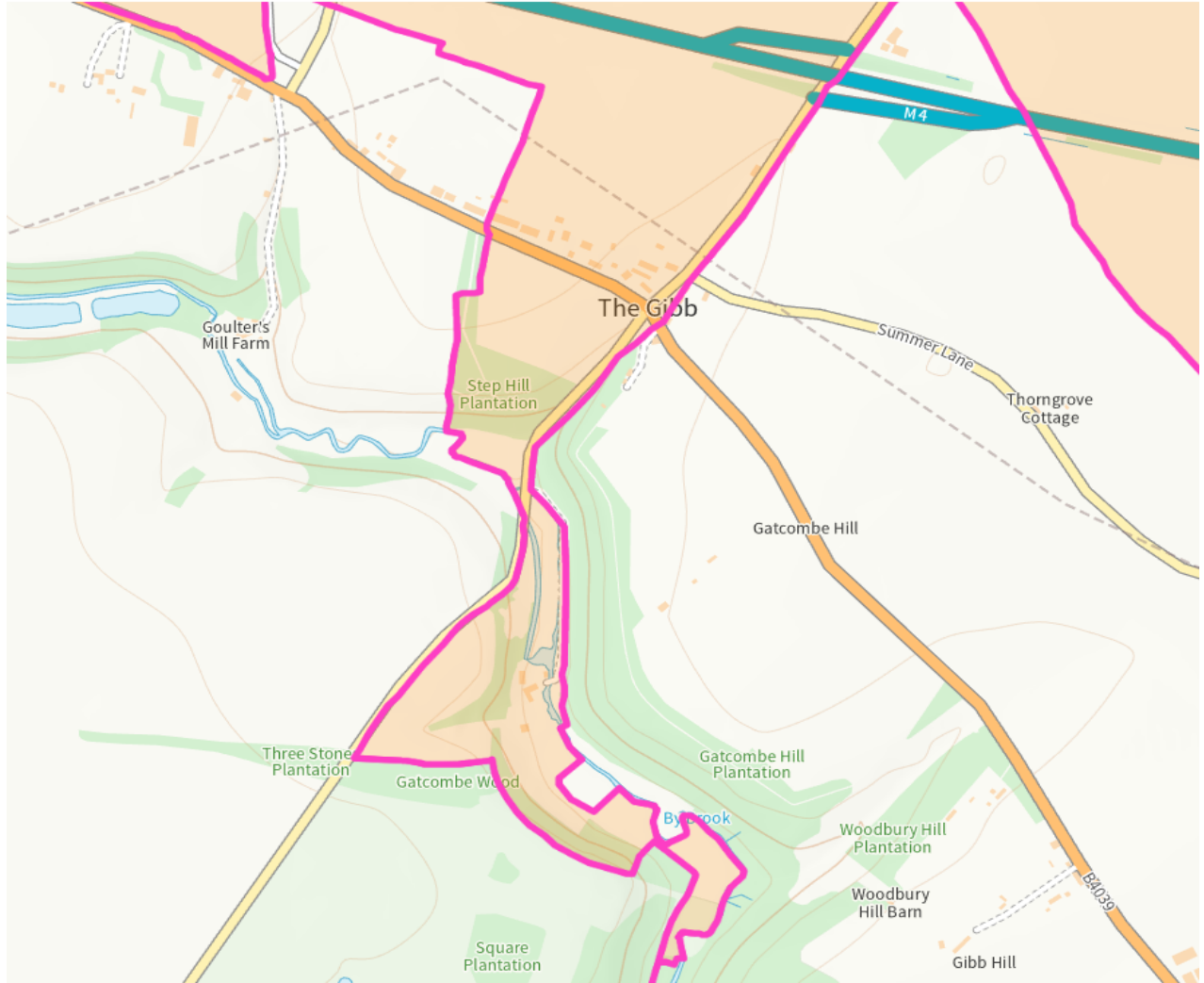


Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

### Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

78. The current parish boundary of Grittleton includes a narrow spike of land running to the south broadly following the line of the By Brook watercourse and joining the Fosse Way road toward running from the north toward Nettleton Shrub.
79. The Gibb is a small settlement within the parish of Grittleton south of the M4 along the B4039 between Burton and Castle Combe. There is a crossroads where the B4039 meets the Fosse Way, and a road connecting north to the settlement of Littleton Drew, in Grittleton.
80. The largest residential part of the settlement lies within the parish of Grittleton, with a small number of properties including the Salutation Inn within Castle Combe, and a number of other properties running along the B4039 within Nettleton.

### Maps of The Gibb



Maps from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

81. Grittleton Parish Council stated the general and historic view of the area would be that the residents would feel most aligned with Grittleton, though they stated no specific consultation had taken place. As part of the Committee's engagement with the local parish councils, it was suggested the strip of land running to the south including Gatcombe Mill could reasonably be transferred to Castle Combe, and Grittleton Parish Council agreed with that suggestion. They also agreed a very small section of Castle Combe containing only a few buildings north of the M4 would more appropriately align to the Grittleton communities.
82. Castle Combe Parish Council agreed that the area of The Gibb involving Nettleton and Grittleton should be unified under one of those councils. They considered the Salutation Inn, which was advertised as being part of Castle Combe, should remain within their parish. They proposed the narrow strip of land to the south of the settlement, alongside the Fosse Way, be transferred to their parish.
83. No response was received from Nettleton Parish Council to requests for engagement. A representation was received regarding historical ecclesiastical boundary changes involving benefices and parishes across North Wiltshire including this area, though the complexity of these did not directly relate to the simpler civil parish boundaries.
84. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. No comments were received.

#### Committee Discussion

85. The Committee was persuaded by the requests and representations from local councils that the current division of the community at The Gibb across several parishes should be addressed. It was felt that a simplification of the boundary would align to the criteria of better reflecting the identity and interests of that community, and be a more effective and convenient arrangement in governance terms.
86. The Committee noted there were a number of different options available, and whatever it ended up recommending it would be most interested in responses from residents of the area directly during consultation.
87. It was agreed that a small area to the south should be transferred to Castle Combe as suggested, noting the geographic proximity and the agreement of both impacted parish councils for this proposal. Likewise, it was agreed the small area of Castle Combe north of the M4 should be transferred to Grittleton given its separation from any settlement of Castle Combe.
88. In respect of the main area of The Gibb itself, this was some distance from the main settlements of Grittleton, Nettleton or Castle Combe parishes. The nearest significant settlement was that of Littleton Drew in Grittleton, and by road to Grittleton. Although the M4 might in isolation be seen as a natural boundary where only a few properties were involved, as suggested for a very small area of Castle Combe, there were direct connections across

it, so its construction after the designation of the parish boundaries had not negatively affected the community ties, and the parish already included significant areas of land south of the motorway, as well as outlying settlements such as Sevington and the main portion of The Gibb.

89. Therefore, when reviewing which area The Gibb naturally aligned with, the Committee considered the existing links with other communities, historic boundaries, and the geography of the region, as well as the spread of the houses and other properties in the area.

#### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

90. On balance it was considered that the larger part of the settlement lay within Grittleton, and connections to Littleton Drew and north along the Fosse Way were persuasive to arguing closer connection with that parish than either Castle Combe or Nettleton. It was determined that the road running north to Littleton Drew marked a sensible boundary with Nettleton, as the nature of properties and the geography of a natural incline toward the Gibb at that point marked a clear division between the areas, with the properties north of the road to be transferred from Nettleton.

91. In respect of the eastern boundary of the settlement, notwithstanding the representation of Castle Combe Parish Council the Committee felt that all the properties at the crossroad of the Fosse Way and B4039 were of a single character and identity. It did not appear there were reasons of community or governance which would justify why some properties at that confluence of roads would be in one parish and others in a different parish. The area was far removed from any settlements of Castle Combe itself, resulting in the Salutation Inn and other properties clearly aligning with The Gibb community.

92. It was not considered relevant in community terms where the Salutation Inn advertised its location as, especially as they could still advertise as being at or near Castle Combe, and their physical location would not be altered by an administrative reorganisation.

93. Accordingly, the Committee considered that a boundary running along Summer Lane, which already served as the boundary with Castle Combe for a part of its length, would make an appropriate dividing line between the parishes.

94. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

#### Recommendation 4

**4.1 That the area shown as F in the map below be transferred from the parish of Nettleton to the parish of Grittleton.**

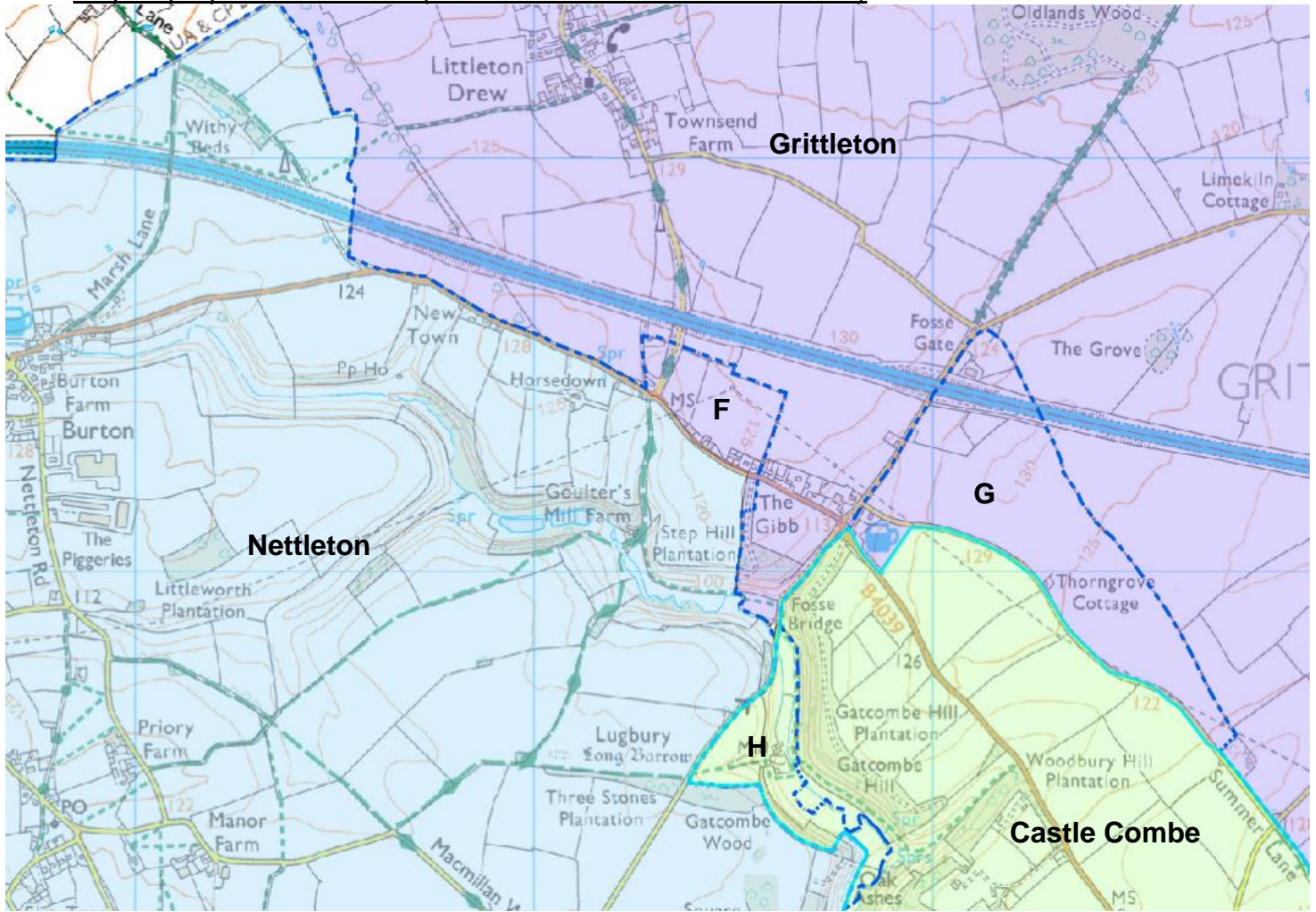
**4.2 That the area shown as G in the map below be transferred from the parish of Castle Combe to the parish of Grittleton.**



**4.3 That the area shown as H in the map below be transferred from the parish of Grittleton to the parish of Castle Combe.**

*Reasons: Paragraphs 80, 83, and 85 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*

Map of proposed The Gibb (Grittleton/Castle Combe/Nettleton)



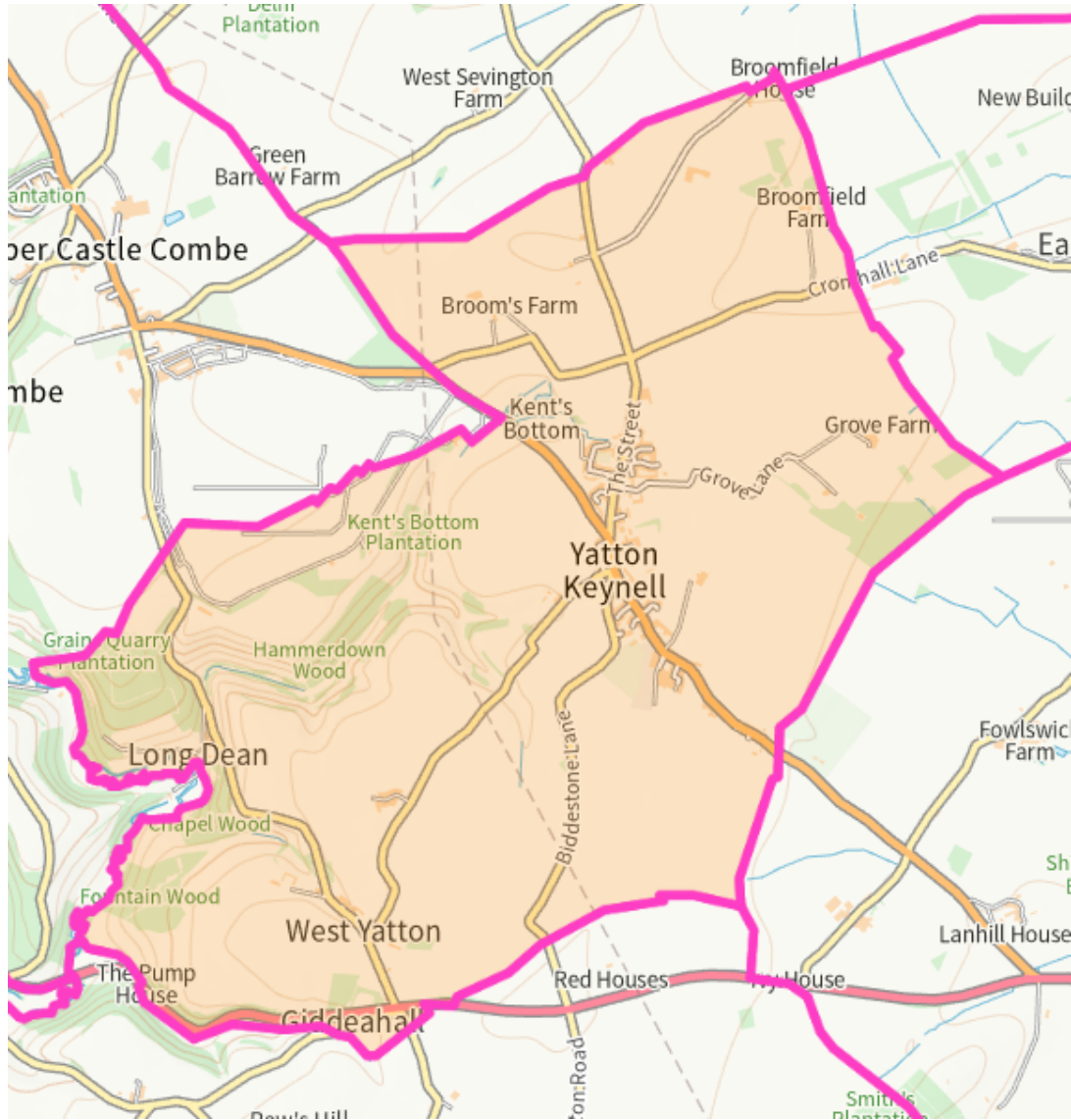
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Dotted line is existing parish boundary. Shaded areas showing new parish proposal.

## **Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughterford**

### **Background**

95. Yatton Keynell is a moderately sized parish near Chippenham. It is bordered by Grittleton to the North, Kington St Michael and Chippenham Without to the East, Biddestone & Slaughterford to the South, and Castle Combe to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 645 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 9 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the By Brook Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

**Map of Yatton Keynell parish**



Maps from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

96. Biddestone & Slaughterford is a small parish near Chippenham and Corsham. It is bordered by North Wraxall, Castle Combe, and Yatton Keynell to the North, Chippenham Without to the East, Corsham and Box to the South, and Colerne to the West. In August 2022 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 402 electors. It is served by a parish council of up to 9 councillors, and is unwarded. The parish is part of the By Brook Electoral Division of Wiltshire Council.

97. Yatton Keynell Parish Council had submitted a request to amend the boundary with Biddestone & Slaughtford, to use the main A420 road as the boundary for most of the length between the parishes, bringing some cottages north of the road into Yatton Keynell, whilst the area at Giddeahall moved into Biddestone & Slaughtford.
98. The Parish Council had also requested an area of Chippenham Without be moved into their parish. This request, which included an area with no electors but an area around a substation and gold academy, had also been made in 2019 and considered by the Committee in its 2019/2020 Community Governance Review. The Committee at that time did not consider there were sufficient grounds to support the proposal, and declined to make a recommendation to amend the governance arrangements as requested.

#### Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

99. Both Yatton Keynell Parish Council and Biddestone & Slaughtford Parish Council supported the transfers between their parishes and using the A420 as a clear boundary, arguing that this was more reflective of the communities in the area.
100. Biddestone & Slaughtford Parish Council made a request that an area of the parish of Colerne be transferred, at the former paper mill site alongside the By Brook. They argued that the area was geographically much more aligned with Slaughtford than Colerne. They did not propose a precise line of which part should be transferred.
101. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage.
102. In relation to the Yatton Keynell proposals, 30 comments were received. However, 13 expressed no opinion as they were commenting solely upon the Colerne option. 16 comments were in disagreement, however these were in relation to the proposal relating to Chippenham Without, not the A420 Giddeahall proposal.
103. In relation to the Biddestone & Slaughtford proposal for Colerne, 15 comments expressed no opinion as they were in relation to the Chippenham Without option, with 3 comments in agreement and 12 in disagreement. Comments in agreement considered the area naturally aligned more to the Slaughtford community. Comments in disagreement stated the Bybrook stream remained an appropriate boundary, that the area was well served by current arrangements and there was no benefit to a change.

#### Committee Discussion

104. Noting the agreement of the parish councils, the common use of main roads as natural and clear boundaries, and the small number of properties involved, the Committee was persuaded that the A420 would serve as a suitable boundary between Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughtford under the criteria. In particular they noted that the old road direct from Giddeahall no longer connected with West Yatton, with the crossing to via the A420 now further away, the nature of the settlement set back from the old road, and connections to the south.

105. However, given this left a few small, anomalous areas still lying on either side of the main road, the Committee considered that this should be the case all the way to the boundary with Chippenham Without and North Wraxall, in the interests of consistency. This would result in a very clear boundary for community and governance.
106. The mixed response to the proposal relating to Colerne was considered. On balance, the Committee did not feel sufficient evidence or reasoning had been provided to justify the proposal to move the former paper mill site from Colerne, and noted strong arguments had been made in objection to any need for change. It was noted that if the change were made, a request would need to be made to the LGBCE to amend the Electoral Divisions, as the parishes were in separate divisions of By Brook and Box & Colerne.
107. In respect of the proposal to move an area of Chippenham Without to Yatton Keynell, it was noted that if the change were made, a request would need to be made to the LGBCE to amend the Electoral Divisions, as the parishes were in separate divisions of By Brook and Kington.
108. At its meeting the Committee did not consider there had been justification provided under the statutory criteria which would support such a change. From provisional discussions with the Parish Council it had been noted they might withdraw their request due to the requirement of a Division change.
109. Following that meeting but before the beginning of the Draft Recommendations consultation Yatton Keynell Parish Council indicated they did in fact wish to proceed with their request relating to Chippenham Without.
110. Committee Members were updated as to the position of the Parish Council. However, this did not alter their view not to recommend a change as requested. No further reasoning, evidence or situation change had been proposed to justify a change from when it had previously been considered and rejected in the 2019/20 review. No residents would be impacted, there were negative administrative governance impacts in relation to the Division boundary, and they were not persuaded any reasons of community identity or interests existed which would justify recommending such a change. The strong and clear views of residents of the existing parish in opposition was also a considering factor.

#### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

111. The Committee therefore agreed to recommend a transfer between Biddestone & Slaughterford, and Yatton Keynell. No other changes to governance arrangements were considered necessary or appropriate.
112. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

#### **Recommendation 5**

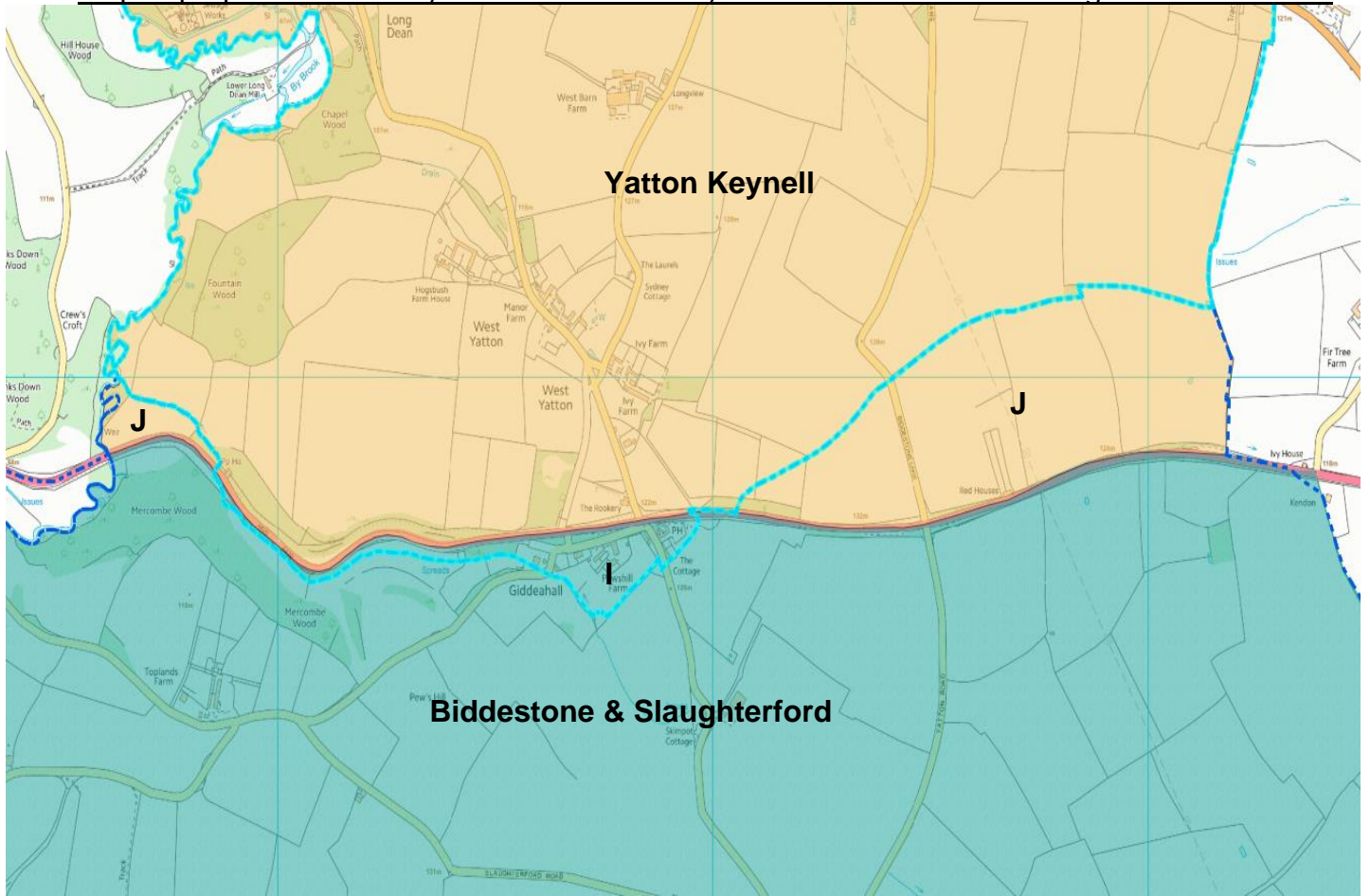
##### **5.1 That the area shown as I in the map below be transferred from the parish of Yatton**

**Keynell to the parish of Biddestone & Slaughterford.**

**5.2 That the areas shown as J in the map below be transferred from the parish of Biddestone & Slaughterford to the parish of Yatton Keynell.**

*Reasons: Paragraphs 80, 83, and 85 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*

Map of proposed boundary between Yatton Keynell and Biddestone & Slaughterford Parishes

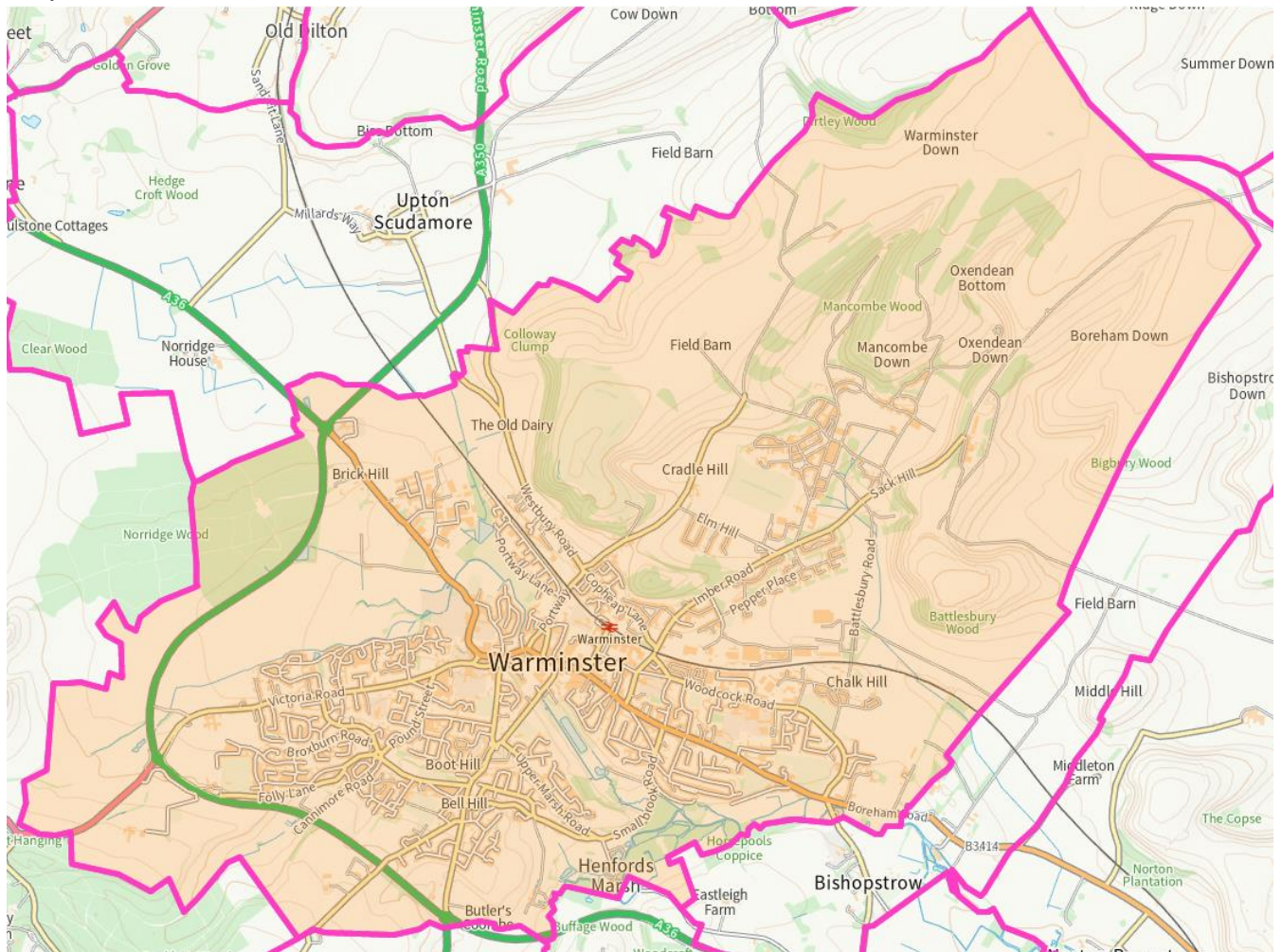


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Dotted line is existing parish boundary. Shaded areas showing new parish proposal.

**Warminster**  
**Background**

113. Warminster is a medium sized town south of Westbury at the connection of the A350 and A36 roads close to the western boundary of Wiltshire and Frome. It is bordered by Upton Scudamore and Bratton to the North, Bishopstrow and Sutton Veny to the East, Longbridge Deverill to the South, and Corsley to the West. As of August 2022 it was estimated to contain approximately 13,852 electors. There is a Town Council of up to 13 councillors across four wards.

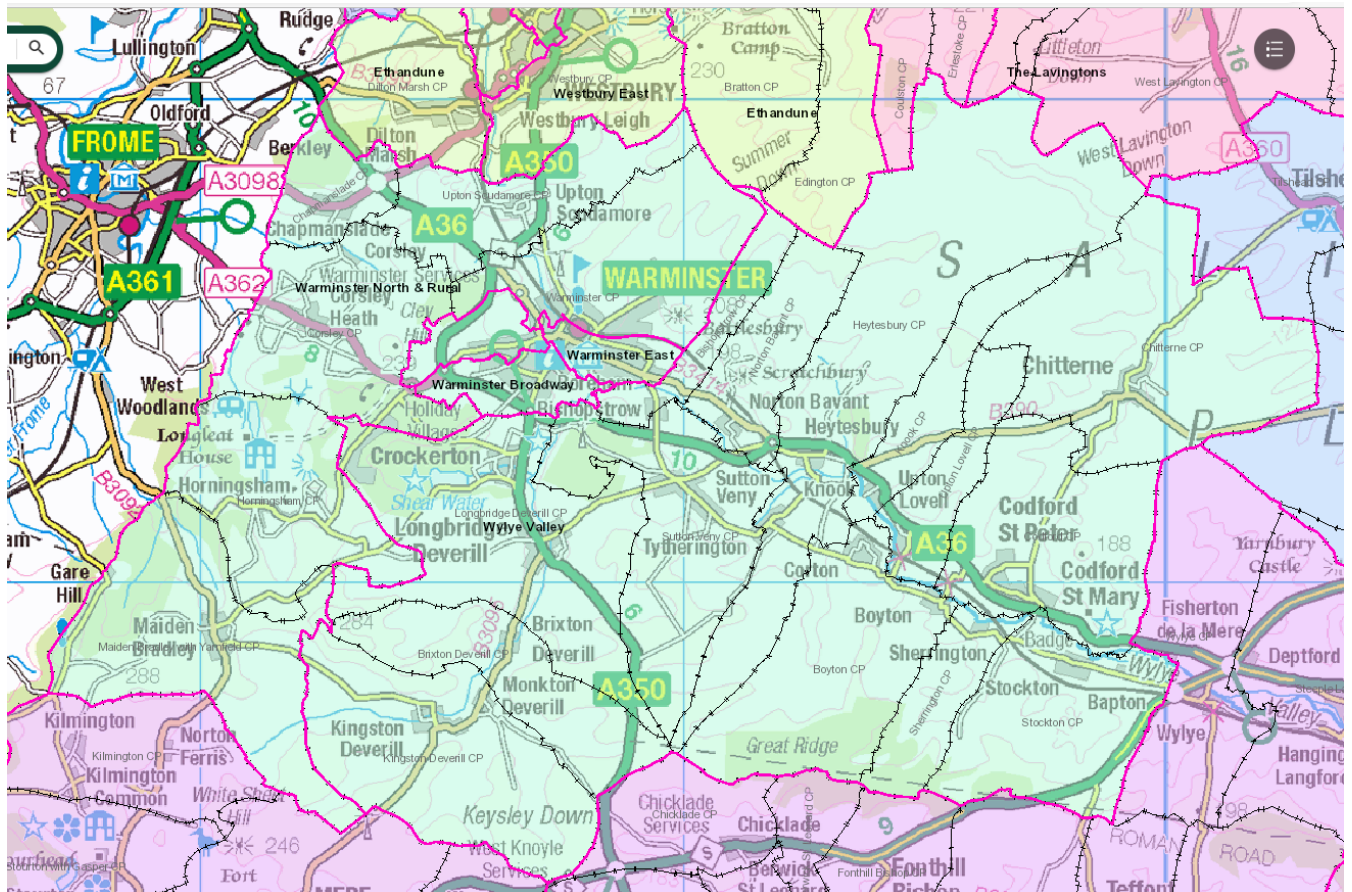
**Map of Warminster town**



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/qb/>

114. Three of the wards are coterminous with Wiltshire Council Electoral Divisions of the same name, whilst a fourth town ward is included with a number of rural parishes as part of the Warminster North & Rural Division. Together with the Wylde Valley Division these make up the Warminster Area Board on Wiltshire Council.

### Map of Warminster Area Board



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### Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

115. Warminster Town Council requested an increase in the overall number of town councillors from 13 to 14. These would be distributed 2,4,4,4 amongst the wards of North, East, West, and Broadway. At present the distribution was 2,4,4,3.
116. The Town Council requested the increase as they considered Warminster had an insufficient number of councillors to ensure effective governance. They provided comparisons with other town councils in Wiltshire who either had a greater number of councillors, or proportionate to their populations
117. The Committee noted the comments in the original submission that even at 14 councillors Warminster would have fewer than most other comparator towns in Wiltshire. During further information gathering the Town Council was asked if it still considered 14 to be an appropriate number, or if more councillors would be reasonable. The Town Council confirmed it was satisfied 14 would be appropriate.
118. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. One comment was received, in agreement with the proposal.

### Committee Discussion

119. The Committee reviewed the wider area and did not believe there were any issues of boundaries or other governance arrangements which needed to be addressed, and therefore focused solely upon the request of the Town Council to increase its councillor numbers.
120. No official guidance or rules set out how many councillors a council should have or how these should be distributed. As the statutory guidance set out parishes ranged in size from those with a handful of electors to those with over 40,000. Five councillors was a minimum, but there were councils in Wiltshire with as many as 24 councillors. There were councils with the same number of councillors as others which were ten times their size. Accordingly, the Committee would need to consider the specific situation and needs of Warminster, taking account of its current arrangements.
121. It was correct to note that, at 13 councillors, Warminster Town Council was smaller than any similarly sized councils in Wiltshire. Although electoral equality, the number of electors per councillor, was not a requirement with town or parish wards, it was the case that at present the Broadway Ward represented significantly more electors per councillor than the other wards. West Ward represented the fewest, however this would increase due to incoming development.
122. A comment was received stating there was no evidence of a demand for more councillors beyond the proposed 14, noting there were 17 candidates for 13 seats at the last election. It argued wards 5 or above could be confusing to the electorate.

### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

123. The Committee determined that Warminster had, comparatively, a low number of councillors for the scale of the town. The request from the Town Council was only a marginal increase, aligned with current wards and so did not negatively impact effective or convenient governance, and the proposal would provide a more effective spread of councillors across the town. The Committee therefore agreed with the request.
124. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

### Recommendation 6

**6.1 That Warminster Town Council be increased from thirteen councillors to fourteen.**

**6.2 That Warminster Town Council continue to comprise four wards, with councillor numbers as follows:**

- i) Warminster North – 2 Councillors**
- ii) Warminster West – 4 Councillors**
- iii) Warminster East – 4 Councillors**
- iv) Warminster Broadway – 4 Councillors**

*Reasons: Paragraphs 79 and 157 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*

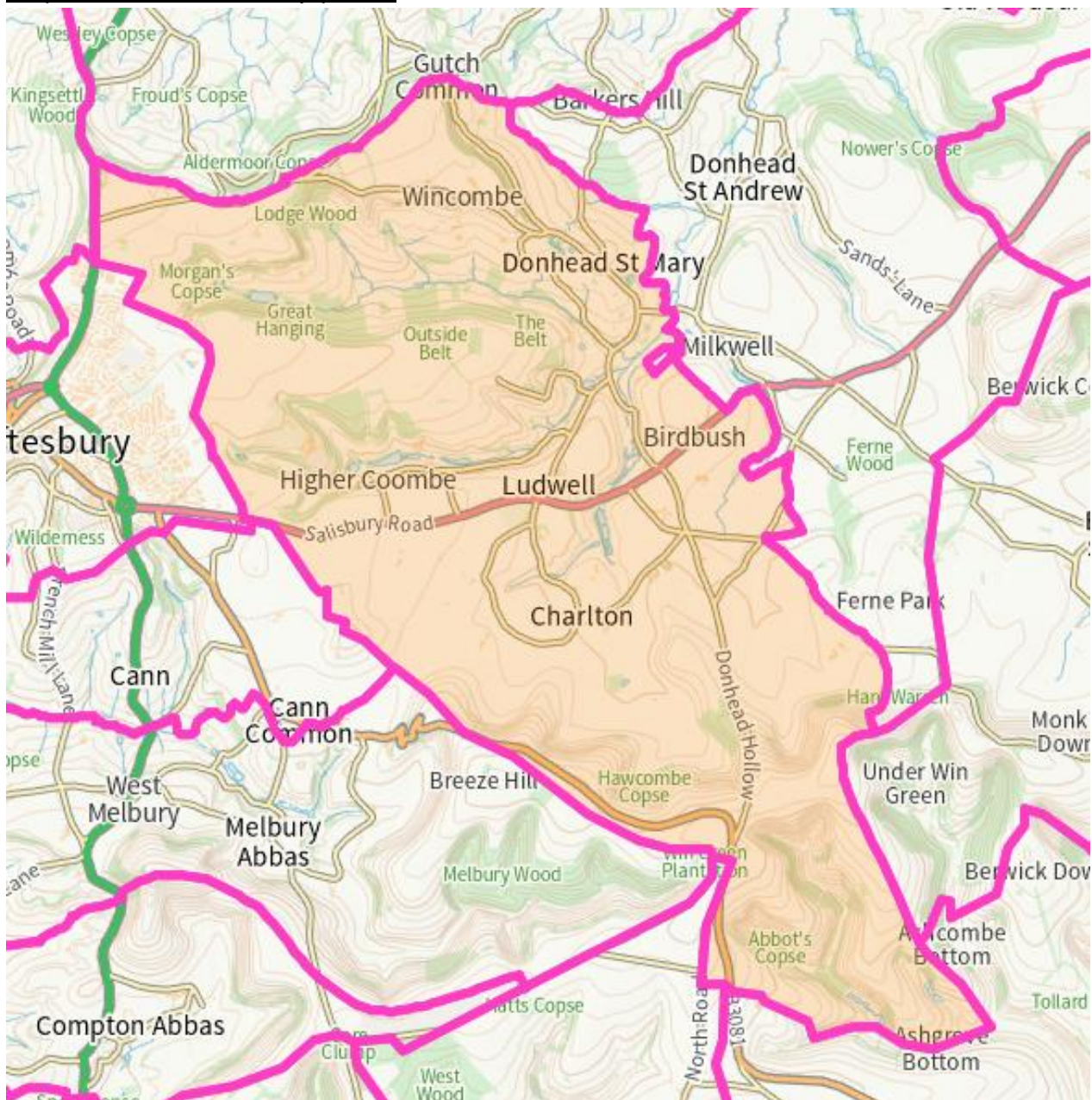


## **Donhead St Mary, Fovant, Monkton Farleigh, Grimstead**

### **Background**

125. Several rural parish councils submitted similar, limited requests relating to their governance arrangements only. These are set out together, though geographically they are in different areas.
126. Donhead St Mary is a moderately sized parish near Tisbury, on the southern border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by Sedgemoor and Semley to the North, Donhead St Andrew and Berwick St John to the East, Tollard Royal and Ashmore in Dorset to the South, and Motcombe, Shaftesbury, Melbury Abbas, and Cann, all of Dorset, to the West. As of August 2022 the parish had an approximate electorate of 851. It is served by a parish council of up to 13 councillors, and is unwarded.

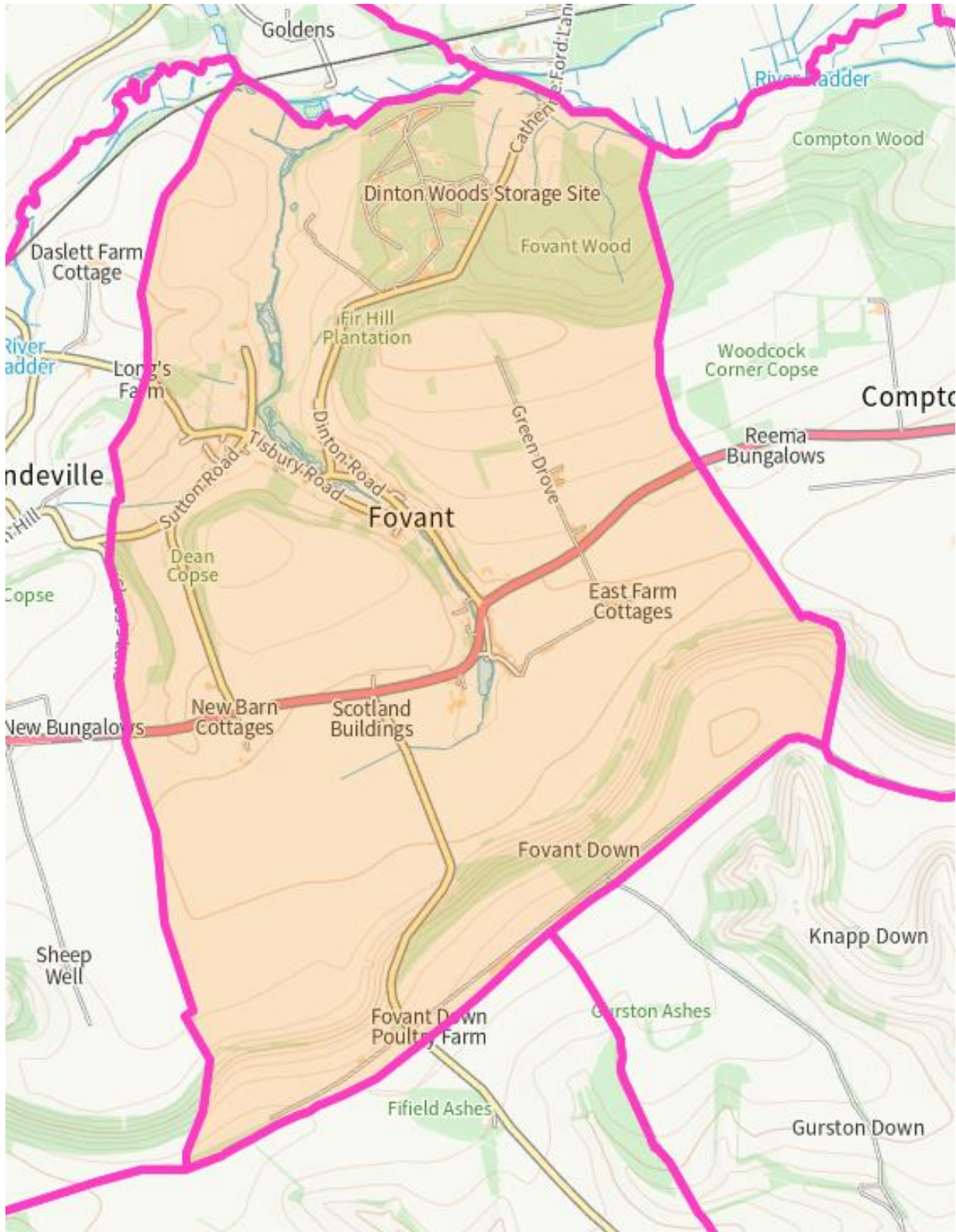
### **Map of Donhead St Mary parish**



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

127. Fovant is a moderately sized parish near Salisbury. It is bordered by Teffont and Dinton to the North, Compton Chamberlayne to the East, Boradchalke and Ebbesborne Wake to the South, and Sutton Mandeville to the West. As of August 2022, it had an electorate of approximately 572. It is served by a parish council of up to 9 councillors, and is unwarded.

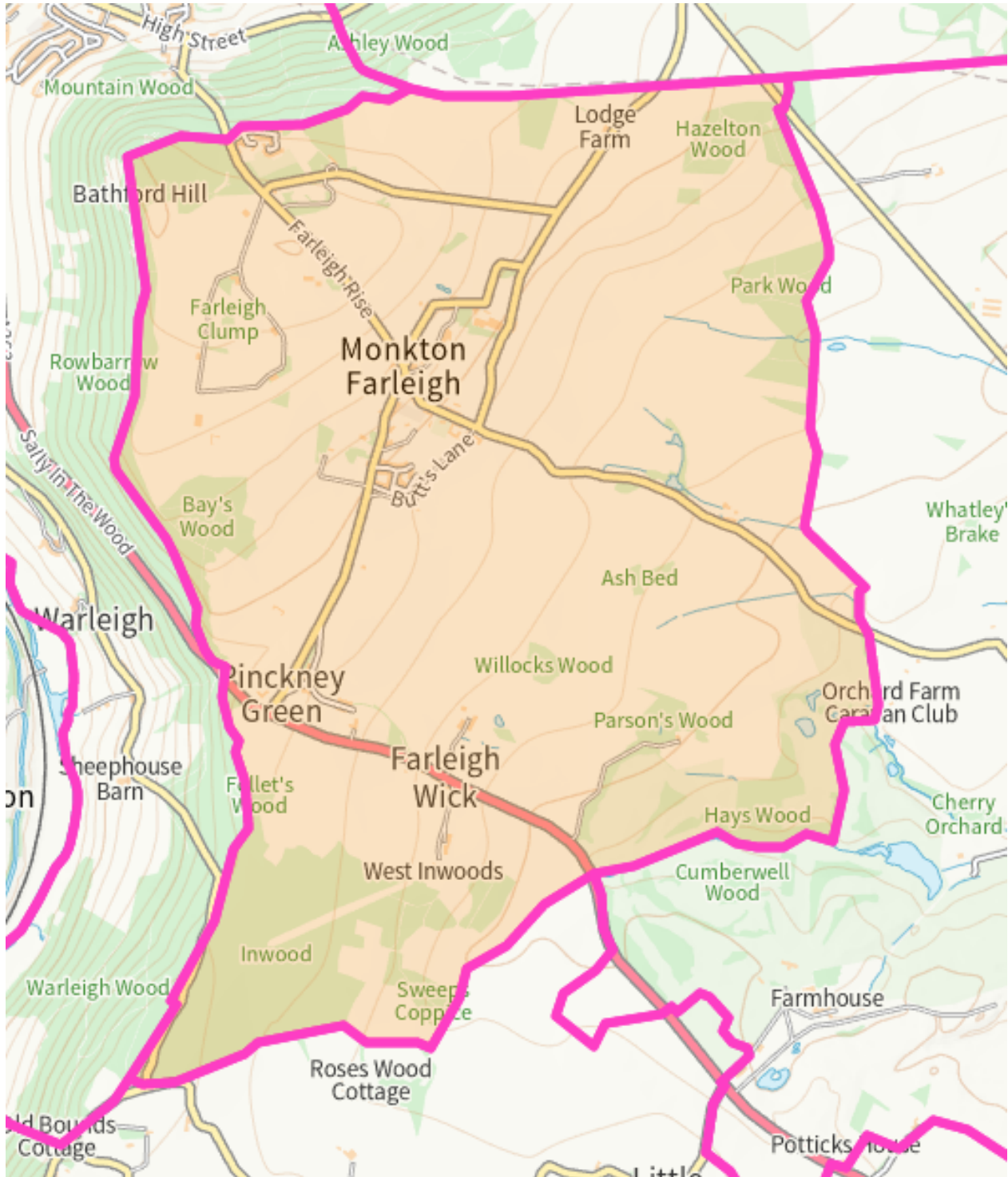
Map of Fovant parish



Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

128. Monkton Farleigh is a small parish on the western border of Wiltshire, north of Bradford-on-Avon and east of Bath. It is bordered by Box to the North, South Wraxall to the East, Winsley to the South, and Bathford in Somerset to the West. As of August 2022, it had an electorate of approximately 358. It is served by a parish council of up to 7 councillors, and is unwarded.

Map of Monkton Farleigh parish

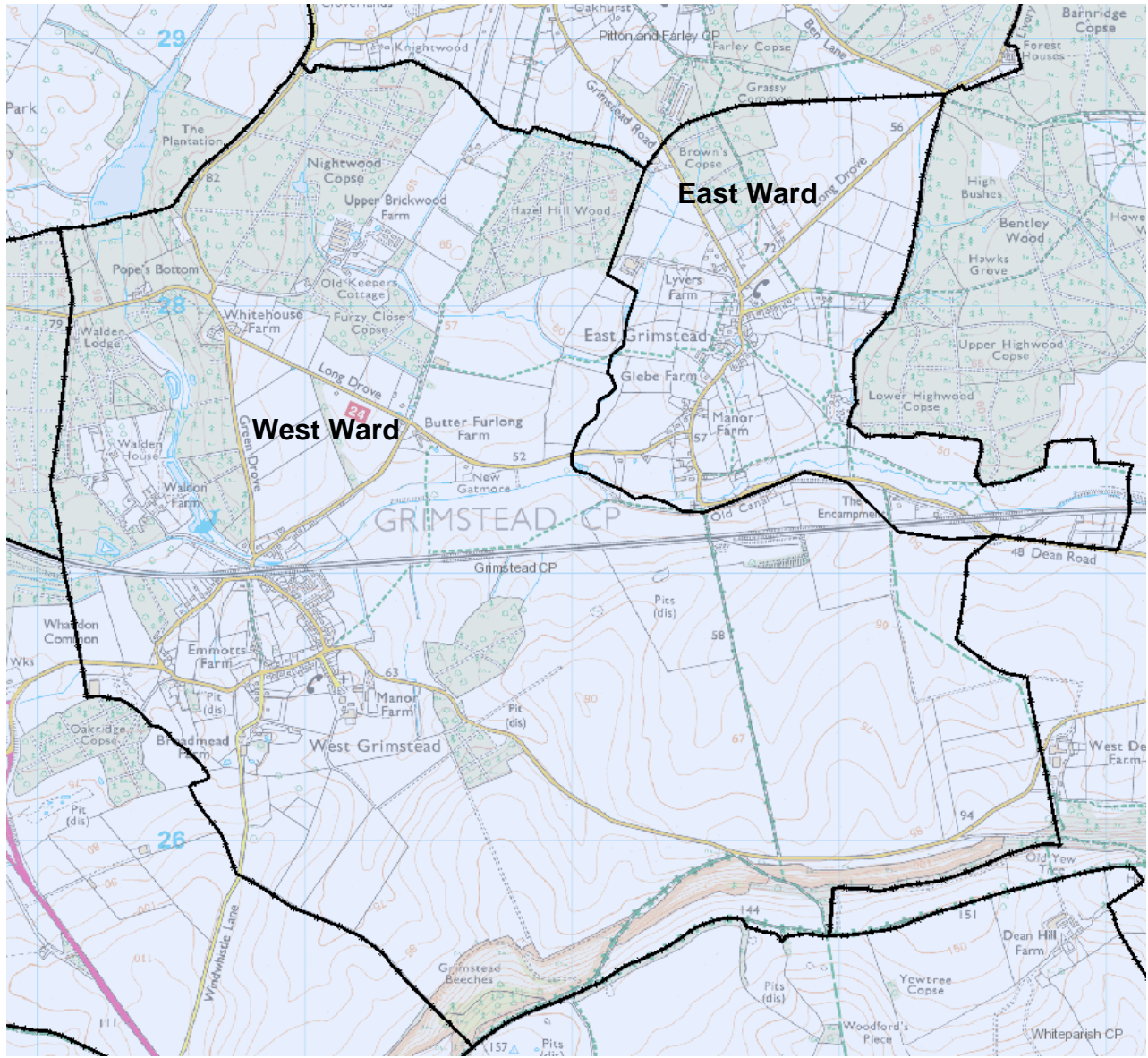


Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

129. Grimstead is a moderately sized parish south east of Salisbury. It is bordered by Clarendon

Park and Pitton & Farley to the North, West Dean to the East, Whiteparish to the South, and Alderbury to the West. As of August 2022, it had an electorate of approximately 475. It is served by a parish council of up to 7 councillors. It has two wards, East and West.

Map of Grimstead parish (including wards)



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Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

- 130. Donhead St Mary Parish Council requested the total number of councillors be reduced from 13 to 11. They stated this was because there had been long periods of vacancies on the council.
- 131. Fovant Parish Council requested the total number of councillors be reduced from 9 to 7. They stated they had difficulty filling the existing seats, and that similar sized parishes operated effectively with only 7 councillors.
- 132. Monkton Farleigh Parish Council requested the total number of councillors be increased

from 7 to 8. They stated that they had occasions of difficulty being quorate, and that an extra councillor would reduce that risk.

133. Grimstead Parish Council had requested that the total number of councillors be increased from 7 to 8. They had also requested that the warding arrangements be removed. They had stated the wards were not necessary, and there was interest in more people serving on the council.
134. The Committee sought to engage with each of the councils as part of its information gathering. Donhead St Mary, Fovant, and Monkton Farleigh, all confirmed they still supported their requests and wished to proceed.
135. Grimstead Parish Council reconsidered its initial request, made some years prior, and withdrew its support for the proposed reduction and unwarding of the parish council.
136. An online survey was set up for November 2022 to allow comments on the submitted proposals. The councils in the area were asked to promote this, to assist the committee with any local views at this stage. Only one comment was received, expressing support for the proposal to reduce the councillors for Donhead St Mary.

#### Committee Discussion

137. The Committee was not obliged to recommend specific governance arrangements as requested from councils, or any other party. Nor was it obliged to cease a review simply because a request was withdrawn. In reviewing the areas, however, it did not consider there were any issues relating to boundaries or other governance arrangements that needed to be resolved. It therefore needed to consider each area on their local characteristics and circumstances against the statutory criteria.
138. There was no statutory or other guidance on appropriate councillor numbers for councils, which in Wiltshire ranged from the minimum of 5, to 24. Even small councils could operate effectively with a large number of councillors, if it was appropriate for their community and led to effective and convenient governance.
139. Accordingly, the Committee needed to determine if the requests, or other options, would lead to more effective and convenient governance, or better reflect the identity and interests of the areas in question.

#### Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

140. The Committee accepted that 13 was a high number of councillors for a rural parish such as Donhead St Mary. Whilst it had a reasonable population, the Committee was persuaded that a reduction would be a more effective arrangement, and increase the possibility of future elections being contested for the parish.
141. In relation to the request from Fovant Parish Council, at its meeting the Committee was minded to accept the proposal from the Parish Council. It considered that given the scale

and compact nature of the community and parish, it was not unreasonable to reduce the number of councillors if the Parish Council felt this to be the most appropriate figure. They therefore recommended consultation to that effect.

142. Notwithstanding previous requests for information and confirmation, subsequent to the meeting Fovant Parish Council informed the Committee that they wished to withdraw their request. Committee members were updated to see if this impacted their initial view and recommendation. Whilst not obliged to adhere to a request once a review had been launched, the Committee did not feel there were compelling reasons for changing the governance arrangements, in the absence of support from the Parish council. Accordingly, the recommendation would be withdrawn and no changes proposed for Fovant.
143. In respect of Monkton Farleigh, the Committee considered the electoral situation, the scale of the parish, and whether it was necessary or appropriate to make even the minor change requested. On balance, the Committee was persuaded to recommend the increase as requested by the parish council.
144. Noting the withdrawal of the request from Grimstead Parish Council, the Committee did not consider there was any other reason or justification to make changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish.
145. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

**Recommendation 7**

**7.1 That Donhead St Mary Parish Council be decreased from thirteen councillors to eleven councillors.**

**7.2 That Monkton Farleigh Parish Council be increased from seven councillors to eight councillors.**

*Reasons: Paragraphs 79 and 157 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*