

**Community Governance
Review 2022/23**

**Final Recommendations of
the Electoral Review
Committee**

August 2023

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Background Links

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

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

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

[Pre-Consultation Information Pack – Committee Meeting 21 December 2022 and 4 January 2023](#)

[Draft Recommendations](#)

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[Second Additional Draft Recommendations](#)

[Second Additional Draft Recommendations Consultation – Committee Meeting 15 August 2023](#)

Contact 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 Final 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 all the information above and other relevant information. It formed draft recommendations and consulted upon these from 7 February – 28 March 2023. The consultation included:
 - 4 public meetings - in Biddestone, Grittleton, Heywood, and Netheravon;
 - An online survey;
 - Letters to households who were proposed to be transferred from one parish to another;
 - A public briefing note sent to relevant parishes;
 - Hard copies of materials in local libraries.

Additional Draft Recommendations and Consultations

19. At its meeting held on 20 April 2023 the Committee considered an information pack compiling all relevant materials from the consultation on the draft recommendations. This included responses from parish councils and public representations received by email, post or online survey, and representations made at the meeting.
20. The Committee approved some recommendations and agreed to amend its draft recommendations for several areas and delegated preparation and approval of a detailed additional draft recommendations document for consultation to the Director, Legal and Governance. This would follow discussions with the Chairman of the Committee.
21. It was noted that extensive information gathering had already taken place. In several cases there had been a higher response to the online pre-consultation survey than the draft recommendations consultation, even though the latter involved physically providing letters to those proposed to be moved from one parish to another.
22. As the additional draft recommendations made only minor changes to the previous options consulted upon, it was agreed that the consultation on the additional draft

recommendations would be online only. In keeping with practice as demonstrated by the LGBCE among others, the additional consultation would run for a shorter period as it was refining a previously consulted option or on a limited aspect of the overall recommendations. Only those proposed to be transferred to another parish when they were previously not would be written to further.

23. The consultation on the additional draft recommendations ran from 10 May to 7 June 2023.
24. The Committee considered all the responses and relevant information at its meeting on 26 June 2023, and confirmed its Final Recommendations for all but Recommendation 4. This was subject to a consultation directly with a single affected resident and the parish councils, with opportunity for public comment online from 31 July – 14 August 2023, and a Final Recommendation was confirmed at a meeting on 15 August 2023.
25. This document forms those recommendations. Its final preparation was delegated to the Director, Legal and Governance, following consultation with the Chairman. It was published on 17 August 2023.

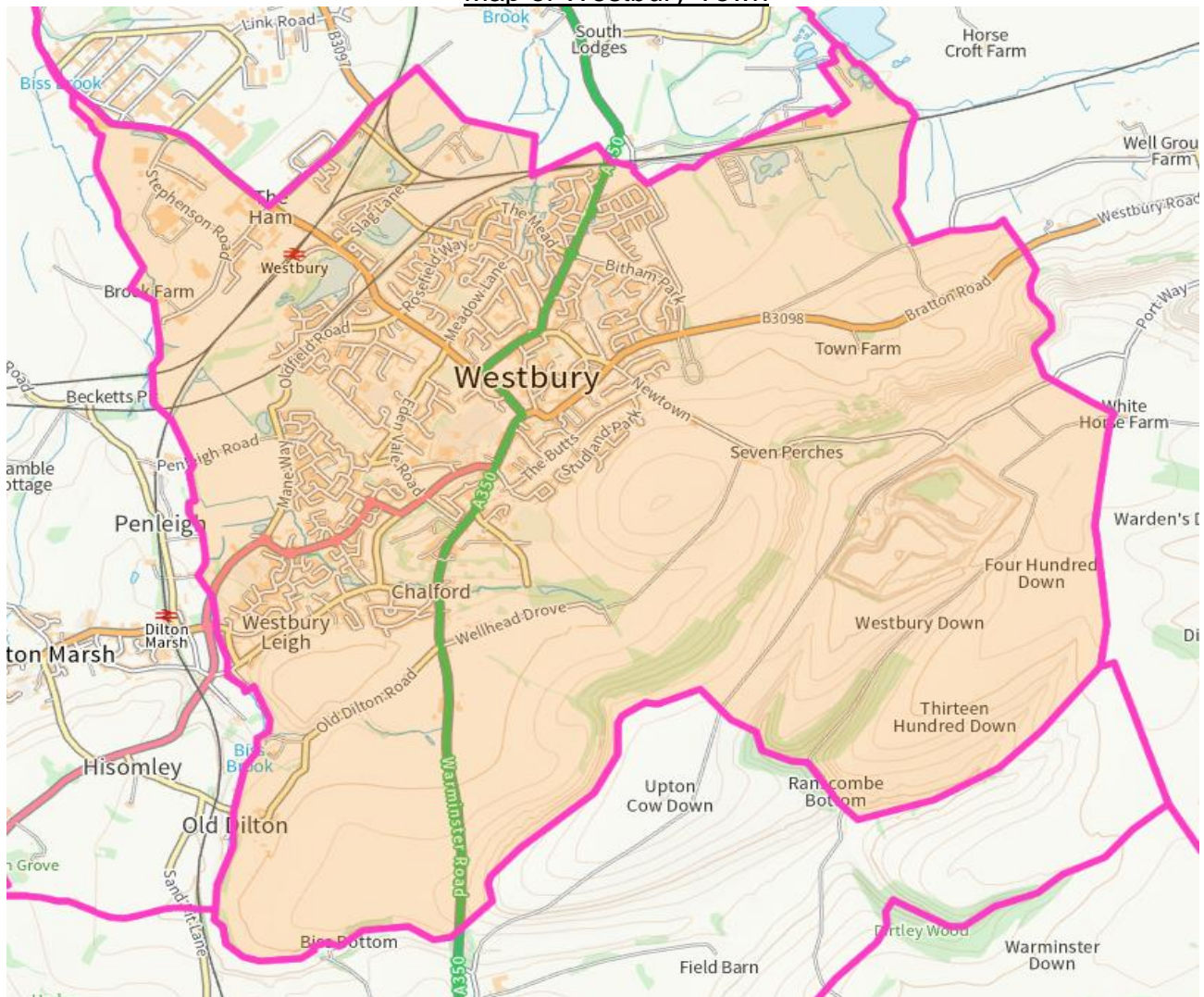
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Westbury/Heywood

Background

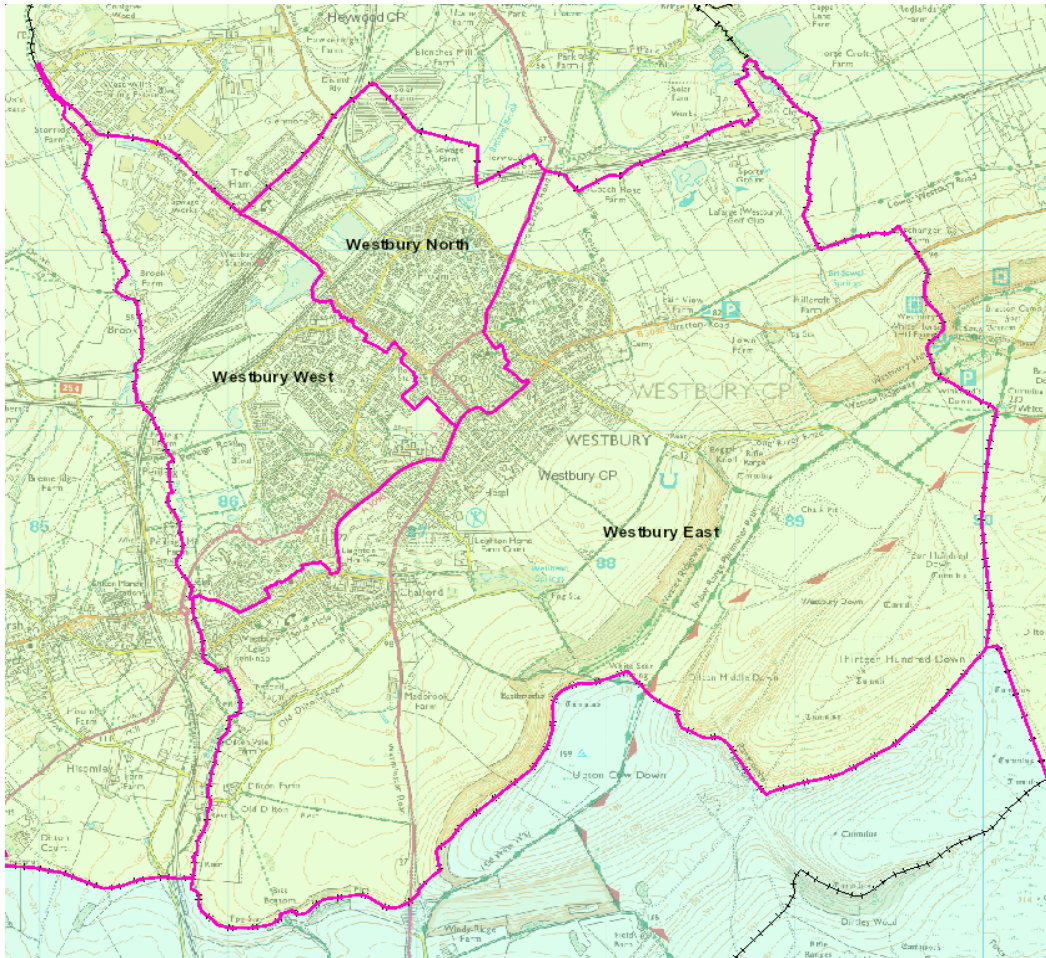
1. Westbury is an historic town south of Trowbridge and north of Warminster close to the western border of Wiltshire. It is bordered by the parish of Dilton Marsh to the West, the parish of Heywood to the North, the parish of Upton Scudamore to the South, and the parish of Bratton to the East.
2. In 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.
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.

Map of Westbury Town



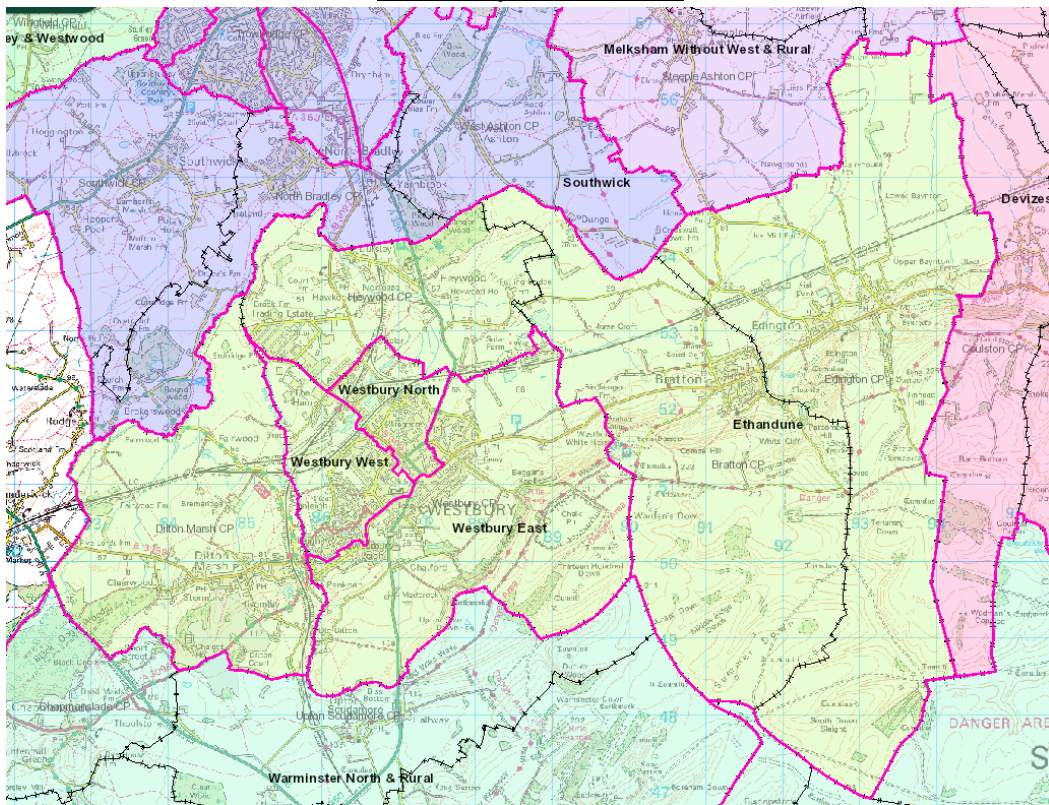
Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Westbury Town Wards/Unitary Divisions



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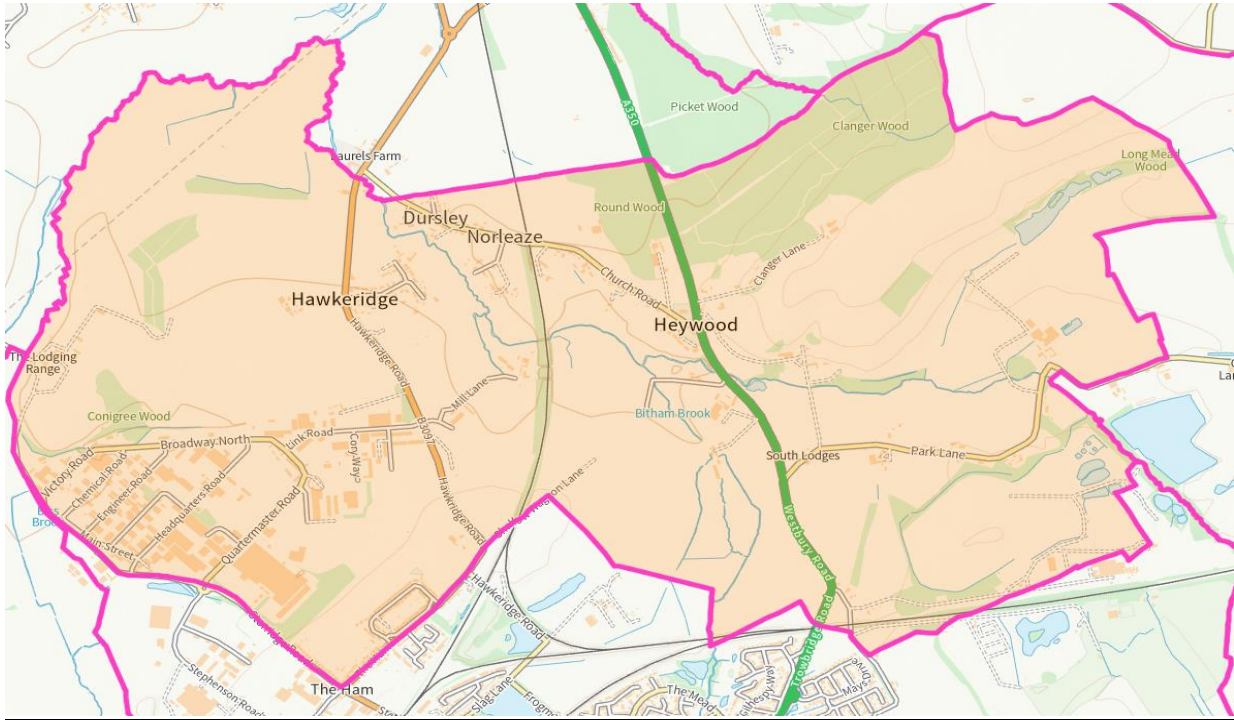
Westbury Area Board



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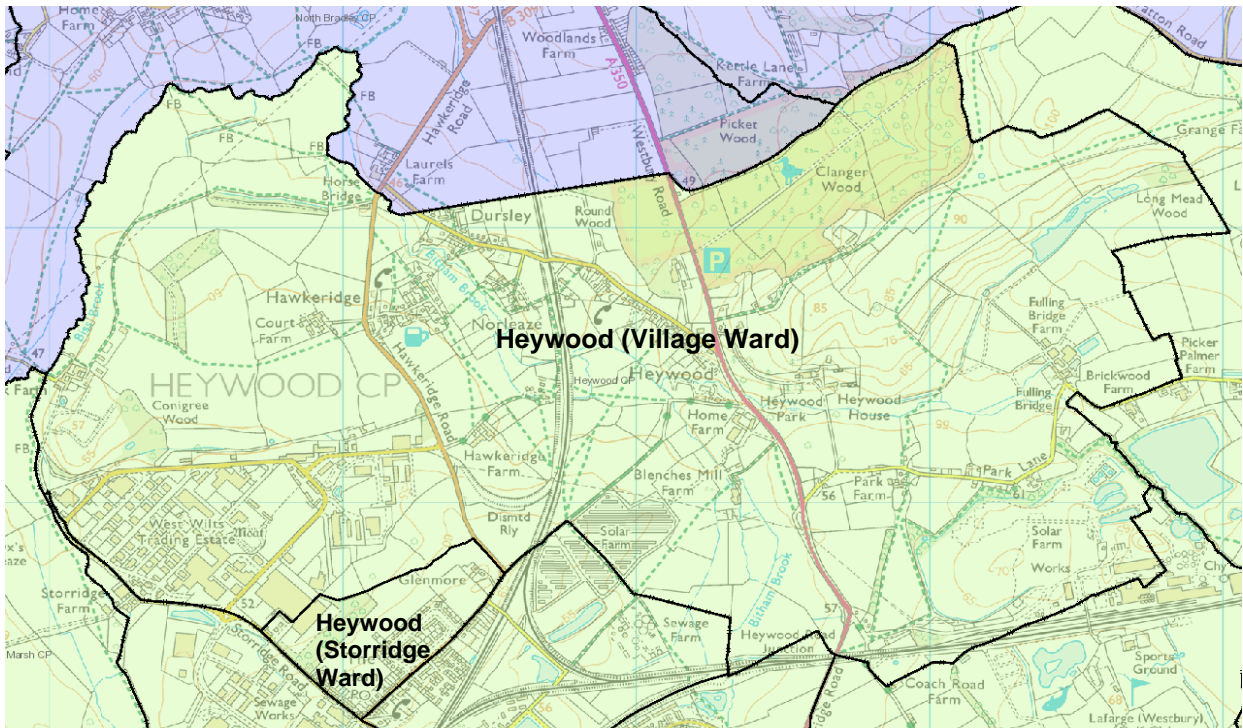
- Heywood is a moderately sized parish to the north of Westbury. In August 2022 it was estimated to contain approximately 654 electors. The parish is served by a parish council, which contains up to 7 councillors. There are 2 wards, named Village and Storridge respectively. Together with the parishes 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 from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

5. 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'.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The parish councils for the areas impacted by the Town Council requests were contacted for their views. Requests relating to Dilton Marsh, Bratton, and Edington – the latter request submitted by Bratton Parish Council once the review was initiated – were reviewed in detail and no change was recommended for these areas. The details of these are set out in the Draft Recommendations and Additional Draft Recommendations and are therefore not included within these Final Recommendations, which will focus upon the review and recommendations relating to Heywood only.
11. Heywood Parish Council strongly objected to both the initial and updated proposals from the Town Council. It submitted an alternative proposal to realign to what they stated were the original boundaries of Heywood when it was established in 1896. Additionally, they proposed 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.

12. The Committee also met with representatives of the councils for Westbury, Heywood, and others regarding the various proposals, and sought further engagement during this and subsequent stages of the review.
13. 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.
14. 79 comments were received in total, 75 from residents of Heywood. 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.

Committee Discussion

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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 abolition 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.
18. Considering all the information and guidance, the Committee therefore did not support a merger of Heywood and Westbury.
19. 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.

20. 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.
21. Whilst arguing for a broader transfer of land across Heywood, the Town Council and arguments from supporters 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.
22. 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 was 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 the existence of such an area would not in itself argue definitively against any proposal that parish boundaries should under the criteria be amended.
23. Several 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 that 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.
24. 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 LGBCE 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.
25. 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.
26. 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'.

27. 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.
28. 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. It was not suggested that those areas should therefore be transferred to more rural parishes. In some 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.
29. 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.
30. The guidance even envisages 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. That is, even if an area was of similar urban character or even contiguous with the rest of an urban area, it would be possible for it to have an individual character which would mean it should be administered separately, be it through a ward or as a parish.
31. 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

32. 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 rather than left in an ineffective and inappropriate state. It was not felt to be sustainable to justify why one side of the road was in a separate parish to the other.

33. 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.
34. 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. This was in contrast to some other areas, where 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 negatively affect governance arrangements.
35. 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 LGBC 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 LGBC, it was proposed that the parish be unwarded.
36. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed to transfer the areas as suggested by Heywood Parish Council and consulted on that Draft Recommendation.

Consultation on the Draft Recommendations

37. More than 100 letters were sent to residents of the area of The Ham which was proposed to be transferred to advise them of the Consultation. 10 comments were received to the online survey. 3 were in agreement with the recommendation, 2 were in disagreement, and 5 proposed amendments.
38. Comments in support included that the existing boundary splitting the community at The Ham was arbitrary and inconvenient, with the proposal unifying the area and providing a clear natural boundary as the dividing line between Heywood and Westbury.
39. Comments opposed to the recommendation included opposing the removal of the area of Vivash Urban Park, a major area of green space used by the town and others, and

contending that those living with the Ham identified as being a part of the town and not the parish.

40. Several amendments restated some of the proposals as put forth by Westbury Town Council, arguing variously for unifying the area of The Ham within Westbury, rather than Heywood, or that all areas contiguous with Westbury and using Westbury facilities should be included within the town including the industrial estate.
41. There were comments both in favour and against the principle of the recommendation, unifying The Ham within Heywood, which also raised the issue of Vivash Urban Park. This significant green space had been transferred to the ownership of Westbury Town Council in December 2022, after the initiation of the review, and they had invested significant effort and resources into the area.
42. Legal advice provided to the Committee advised that were the area of Vivash to be transferred from Westbury to Heywood, then the ownership of and responsibility for any liabilities relating to the park would as a matter of law be transferred to Heywood Parish Council.
43. Heywood Parish Council responded to the consultation confirming their support for the proposal, with the exception of removing the element of Vivash Urban Park from the proposal. They argued using another of the rail lines as the boundary to exclude Vivash retained a clear, separating boundary, and they did not consider it appropriate to take over ownership and management of the park.
44. Westbury Town Council provided a detailed response arguing the Committee had not followed the statutory criteria or guidance, and that its proposal would lead to anomalous boundaries separating an area of urban expansion from the town. They stated that guidance referred to redundant or moribund parishes, and argued that Heywood was 'simply a collection of houses which conjoin two small housing settlements with an industrial estate stuck on the side along with the housing north of The Ham to make up the numbers'.
45. The Town Council argued the choice of one of several railway lines was arbitrary and suggested other more appropriate boundaries, referenced development of neighbourhood plans, and stated the Committee's terms of reference indicated all residents in both Heywood and Westbury should have been written to about the Town Council's proposal to merge both parishes. They argued the Town Council would lose revenue by the proposal and this would impact economic delivery. Whilst opposing the transfer of Vivash Urban Park, they argued that transferring the houses without the park was not suitable as most users of the park would come from the housing north of the site.
46. Detailed representations were also received from a local resident and also a local councillor, setting out history of the area and arguments for and against the Committee's proposal.

Committee Discussion

47. The Committee was not persuaded by arguments that Heywood was in any way an unviable parish. Even without the element of the Ham it contained several hundred residents and had demonstrated an active parish council with significant community engagement displayed through the pre-consultation and consultation as well as other parish level actions.
48. The issue therefore remained whether the character and identity of the Ham and adjoining areas was most appropriately aligned with Heywood or with Westbury, and whether such a change was more effective and convenient.
49. The Ham was not primarily an area of new build, but an established estate community which had been divided by the existing boundary, though there was further development taking place in the area as well. There was agreement on all sides that the current situation was anomalous and ineffective as a result, and as such the Committee agreed that it was not appropriate to simply leave the current boundaries in place.
50. Comments from the pre-consultation and survey from within the area of The Ham currently within Westbury had been supportive of a transfer to Heywood. At the Committee meeting there had been examination of the access from The Ham to other areas, along Hawkeridge Road and Station Road, and the level of connectivity that was in place. The character of the area was considered, its density, and its association with the town as a whole or as a distinct entity in its own right.
51. On balance, the Committee felt that there was a stronger case for inclusion of The Ham as a whole within the parish of Heywood. The larger part of the Ham was located within Heywood and this was an established community. Although it could be seen as an estate located nearer to the built-up area of Westbury than the historic village of Heywood, guidance was that estates even within a town proper could form their own distinct community. Most of the discussion of The Ham, whether in support of it being included wholly within the town or Heywood, emphasised its identity as a particular community. Even where seen as an integral part of the town, it was still referenced as that identifiable community. In considering all the representations and evidence, the Committee continued to feel that there was a shift in the character and identity of the area heading out of the town into the semi-urban community of The Ham, and then onward to the more rural communities to the north.
52. In relation to the Vivash Urban Park, the Committee acknowledged this had not specifically been factored into the analysis when developing the initial proposal and draft recommendation. They considered carefully the Town Council argument that the park was principally to service the area to the north. However, they noted some of the history of the area including that a need for provision within the town as it then existed had been part of the rationale for development of the park. That is, whilst it was undeniably used by areas to the north which were proposed to be transferred to Heywood, these were not the only users, nor would they remain so in the future, noting the access from the south along Slag Lane and other areas.

53. There was an issue whether funds set aside for the park from legal agreements would likewise transfer to Heywood in the event the area were included in a parish transfer, but the Committee determined that given the nature of the park, its history, the representations, and involvement of the councils, it was appropriate to amend their recommendation to exclude the area. They did not agree this was inappropriate without retaining the housing elements north of the site. The use of the raised northern railway line remained a clear and defined boundary, marking a distinct separation of town and parish communities.
54. The Committee did not agree that the entirety of either or both parishes should reasonably have been contacted as part of the draft recommendations consultation, noting that they had not recommended the merger proposal, and it was on their recommendations on which a consultation was based.
55. The Committee therefore retained its initial recommendation with the adjustment of leaving Vivash Urban Park within Westbury Town, and consulted on that proposal.

Consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations

56. As a minor variation to its initial proposal an online consultation was undertaken on the additional draft recommendations.
57. There were 18 responses to an online survey, 13 stating agreement, 3 stating disagreement, and 2 stating they sought amendments.
58. Comments in agreement included the boundaries making more sense and representing the sense of community identity in the areas. The comments in disagreement did not include additional details. The comments stating amendment referenced Vivash Urban Park, which was already proposed to be retained within Westbury by the recommendation.
59. A number of other comments were also received. One submission stated the recommendation was out of line with the concept of governance reviews, and that Heywood was not appropriate to provide for residents of a deprived estate as the Town Council could. It was stated that if the recommendation were approved the parish would be transformed into an urban satellite of Westbury. Detailed representations were provided on the history of the Vivash Park, the purpose of its creation, and raising queries relating to Community Infrastructure Levies relating to the site. This would be a matter for both parishes to seek advice on in the event of any transfer.
60. Westbury Town Council provided a detailed series of objections to the review process and the conclusion of the review, which will be addressed in the next section.

Committee Discussion

61. The primary point of contention from objections to the recommendation at this and earlier stages related to the character of The Ham and its interrelation with both Westbury Town and Heywood, as well as the character of Heywood parish itself.
62. Were the area of The Ham presently without housing, or only a small amount of housing, then the establishment of a significant new area of dense urban or semi-urban character

would perhaps strongly argue in favour of the entire estate area and nearby areas being associated with, looking to, and sharing interests with, the town more than any other area.

63. However, the situation as it exists, as well as how it is projected to develop, is a significant relevant factor. The larger element of The Ham in its present form had existed as part of Heywood parish for an extended period, as opposed to there being a recent intrusion of development. The existing character of Heywood parish was therefore established not simply as a rural village, but a parish of mixed rural and urban to semi-urban development. This was the case even though some regarded or referred to it as a rural parish. That is, unification of The Ham within Heywood would not transform the character of Heywood from that of a solely rural parish, though it would shift the balance towards a greater degree of urbanicity than at present.
64. In assessing the area against the statutory criteria, the Committee was required to consider whether the present situation with a divided community at The Ham was effective, convenient, and reflected the identity or interests of the area. If it did not, and compelling arguments had been presented by both sides that this was the case and accordingly that retaining the current situation was not optimal, then the Committee had to consider whether an expansion of the semi-urban to urban element of Heywood parish was a more appropriate reflection of that character. The Committee also considered whether, alternatively, it was appropriate to provide a sharper dividing line between the urban and non-urban elements of the area, by transferring the whole of the area to Westbury.
65. Guidance on Reviews to assist in interpreting the statutory criteria was not one size fits all, and the unique characteristics of any given area could lead to vastly different recommended outcomes depending on which elements of the evidence were considered to be more vital or persuasive in those particular circumstances. It is therefore the case that any decision relating to the area would ultimately be a judgment call factoring in those circumstances and applicability of the criteria.
66. In assessing the objections to the additional draft recommendation provided by Westbury Town Council or others in the following paragraphs, the Committee was not persuaded by the restated arguments that Heywood was a moribund or redundant parish. Criticisms of the operation of its parish council might or might not be true - this would not be a matter for the Committee - but a definition of moribund inclusive of simply poorly run parishes would potentially open up a great many parishes to being merged or abolished against the wishes of or in the interests of local residents.
67. The Guidance notes the government's stated expectation of a trend in creation of new parishes, and this would be difficult to reconcile with a view that a period of one or a few electoral cycles of poor management by a council would be sufficient to conclude a parish itself to be of moribund status in need of merger or abolition. Even if there were issues relating to the current operation of a council, a new election and new councillors might dramatically improve governance within a short period, which would itself demonstrate the parish itself was not moribund or redundant, terms suggestive of deeper and more

longstanding concerns.

68. On criticism by the Town Council of the process followed during the review, the Committee noted that the points raised in the latest submissions appeared more to be objections to the conclusions and reasoning of the Committee allegedly not being in accordance with the statutory criteria, rather than of the process followed. It was open to any party to submit that the Committee had reached an erroneous conclusion and present arguments as to why greater weight should have been afforded to particular factors or evidence, and it would be for Full Council to determine if it felt the arguments and reasoning of the Committee to be sufficient enough as to be supportable. However, such disagreement with a conclusion was not in itself indication of a failure to adhere to process, and no evidence had been provided to indicate this was the case other than that disagreement.
69. It was stated that a lack of consideration relating to Vivash Urban Park when making the Draft Recommendations indicated a failure of process due to lack of relevant data and facts. On the contrary, whilst the transfer of ownership of the area to the Town Council took place following the commencement of the review and after meetings with the town and parish council representatives who did not raise the issue with the Committee at that time, the very purpose of information gathering and consultation is to obtain further evidence and representations and to adjust proposals if appropriate. In this case additional information was provided, the Committee took account of that information, and adjusted its views accordingly. The responsiveness therefore reinforced that the proper processes had been followed.
70. There was some criticism by the Town Council of how the Committee had arrived at proposed boundaries between the parishes, with them stating that these should not and are not supposed to follow 'outdated' boundaries such as rivers, footpaths, or railway lines. The Committee noted that whilst drawing a precise line can be challenging, particularly in areas of increasing urbanicity, there is great flexibility in what might constitute an appropriate boundary, with paragraph 83 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews providing the following assistance:

As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable. For instance, factors to consider include parks and recreation grounds which sometimes provide natural breaks between communities but they can equally act as focal points. A single community would be unlikely to straddle a river where there are no crossing points, or a large area of moor land or marshland. Another example might be where a community appeared to be divided by a motorway (unless connected by walkways at each end). Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.

71. In this case there is a separation from the main urban area of Westbury and the urban, semi-urban and rural areas north of the railway line and up to the Station Road bridge. The

urban park also provided both a natural break between the communities and as a focal point between them, given both would make use of the park. Whilst there may be disagreement that it is preferred that the area be included as part of Heywood parish, far from prohibited it is reasonable under the Guidance in the event of such a recommendation that a railway line serve as the easily identifiable boundary, with a number of potential options available. Paragraphs 16 and 85 of the Guidance similarly outline how boundaries can be tied to firm ground features. Other industrial areas north of the railway within Westbury West Division, involving no electors and no governance issues, had not been proposed for transfer by the parties. Additionally, it was not considered that the expansion of housing into the area that was predicted resulted in an anomalous boundary, so much as there was an existing anomaly separating The Ham which a boundary adjustment could improve.

72. Westbury Town Council submitted that the recommendation included transfer of a large number of housing units which would result in a loss of revenue for the Town Council, with a reduction in the amount available for it to spend which it stated would be 'catastrophic'. The Committee notes that Westbury Town contained 12,269 electors as of December 2022. Approximately 168 current electors are proposed to be transferred to Heywood under the recommendation, amounting to under 1.5% of the town electorate. The number increases for projected electorate due to an area of new build, although the town electorate could similarly see other increases. Although the Town Council maintain the point raised was not about precept, the Committee did not accept the contention that economic delivery of the town would be severely impacted by a transfer as set out or that the financial argument overrides any other arguments against the statutory criteria.
73. As noted above there had been a mixed response to the consultations from individual respondents within the area proposed to be transferred, though only limited reasoning was provided both in support and objection at the latest survey. The Committee had taken account of the submission of the Town Council that The Ham identified strongly with Westbury. However, this had been balanced by competing views including those of other public submissions at other stages, which included more responses within the area in favour in addition to providing reasoning based on the criteria. The Town Council made reference to politicians mentioning precept, however the Committee itself had not and would not take into consideration precept considerations.
74. Toward the conclusion of the review, it was proposed by the Town Council that the situation between the parishes be left unaltered at this time. However, given the submissions throughout the review, including from the Town Council itself, the Committee was not persuaded that making no recommendations would be in accordance with the statutory criteria given the divided community which had been identified. To have identified an ineffective arrangement and then leave it unamended, when it was considered that improved alternatives existed, would not be a reasonable recommendation.
75. Lastly, given comments received during the Review suggesting preferred outcomes, the Committee would simply note that it has recommended, and Full Council has approved, significant transfers of land and population to large towns during previous reviews. When

an area is reviewed any and all options are able to be considered, and this is made clear to all parties throughout, as a review may reveal issues and options which were not apparent to the council or the individual requesters. In each review area, outcomes will depend on local circumstances and what is considered appropriate for one will not be considered appropriate for another, and sometimes no changes are recommended. Motivations of any party would not be relevant except insofar as these relate to the statutory criteria.

76. As such, the Committee follows the evidence for each area as it sees it without any initial preference for any option. Whilst a party initiating a review may be disappointed in the recommended outcome being contrary to its own preference, it is an inevitable part of the process that where parishes are in dispute, or if the evidence gathered by the Committee leads it to such a view, that an outcome may emerge which is not supported by all parties, without this being a reactive measure against any individual party.

Conclusion

77. The review in relation to Westbury and Heywood has been complex and involved. The expanding and developing area of the town and its identity has contrasted with the mixed character of the semi-rural parish to its north, with sharply opposed views on what constitutes a boundary or effective arrangement between the communities.

78. On balance, and in particular recognising the existing mixed character of Heywood, the physical separation from the main built up urban area with clear ground features in place, and the unsatisfactory present situation dividing the community at The Ham, the Committee was satisfied that its recommendation to unify the area within Heywood, and to establish the northern railway line up to the Station Road bridge as the boundary between the parishes, was appropriate under the criteria.

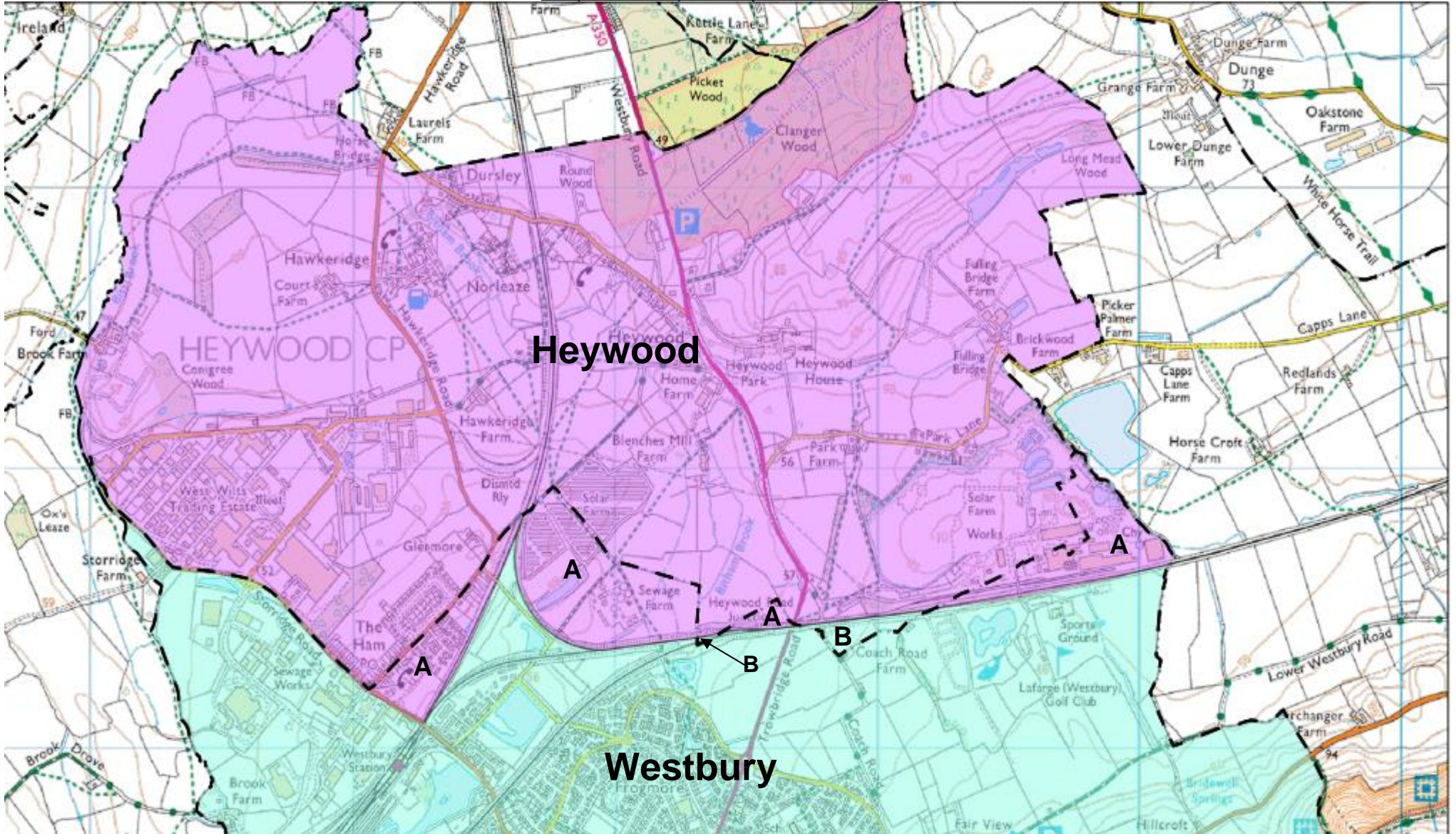
79. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, and following two formal consultation stages, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

Recommendation 1

- 1.1 That the areas marked as A in the map provided be transferred from Westbury Town to the parish of Heywood.**
- 1.2 That the areas marked as B in the map provided be transferred from Heywood to Westbury Town, as part of the Westbury East Ward and Westbury North Ward respectively.**
- 1.3 That the parish of Heywood be unwarded, with seven councillors.**
- 1.4 To request that the LG BCE 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, 85 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews

Proposed Map of Heywood Parish



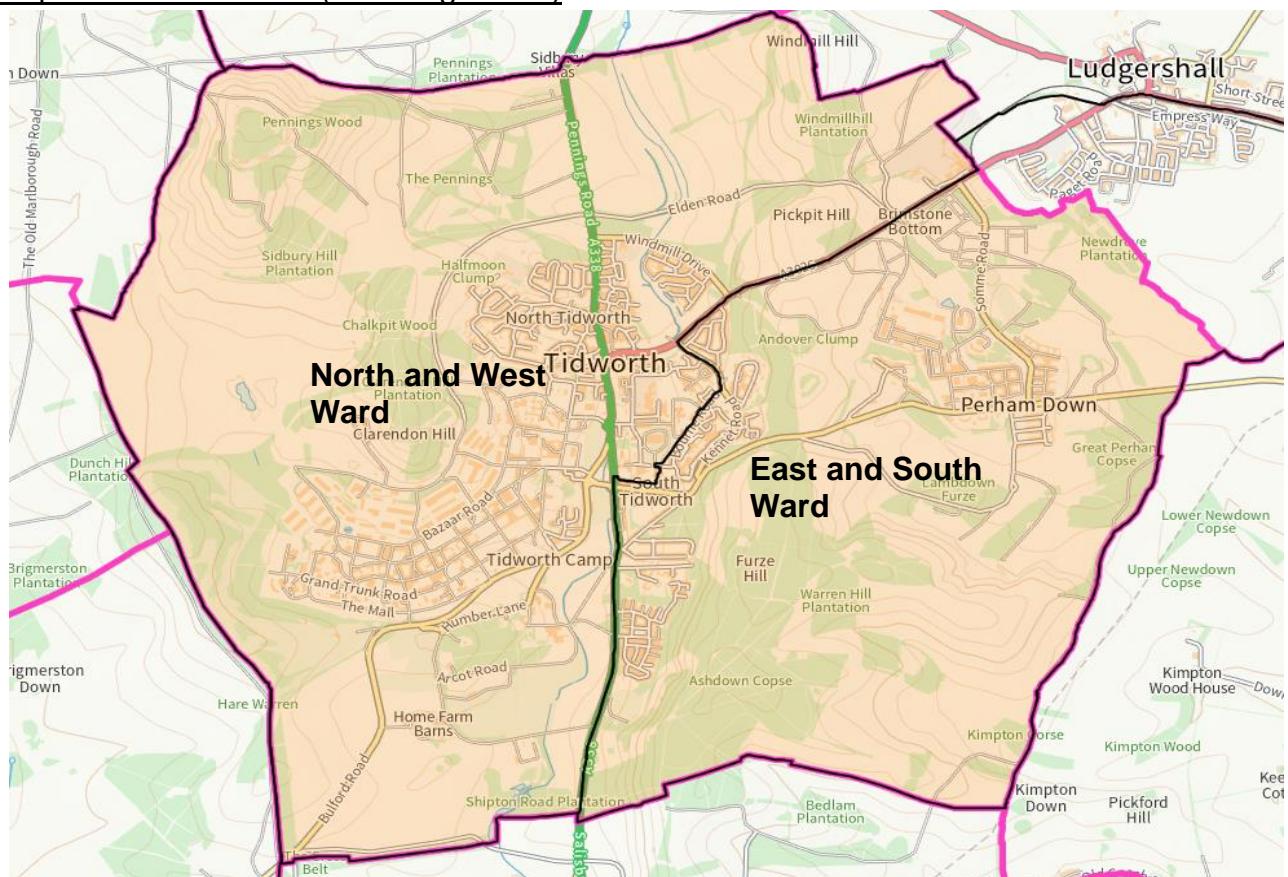
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Dotted line equals existing parish boundary. Shaded areas with letters marked to be moved.

Tidworth

Background

80. 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.
81. There are two wards for the town, 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/>

Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

82. The Review had looked at a request from Ludgershall Town Council that proposed that the Perham Down area, currently within Tidworth, be transferred to Ludgershall Town. Tidworth Town Council strongly objected to that proposal.
83. Tidworth Town Council conversely sought to reduce the number of councillors from 19 to 15.

Committee Discussion

84. 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.
85. 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.
86. 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.
87. 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.
88. 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

89. 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.
90. 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.
91. In the absence of compelling justification, the Committee therefore declined to recommend

a transfer of the area of Perham Down from Tidworth to Ludgershall.

92. The Committee accordingly considered the request of Tidworth Town Council to reduce its councillor numbers and accepted the request as appropriate on the basis of the reasoning supplied. The area was required to be warded due to being divided by unitary Divisions, and the total number proposed was not so low as to be unviable for a town of that size.

Consultation on the Draft Recommendations

93. One response was received to the draft recommendations. This was from Tidworth Town Council, supportive of the principle of the recommendations and retention of Perham Down within the Town Boundary, but requesting an alternative split of councillors between the wards. They also requested the East and South ward be renamed to include reference to Perham Down.

94. The Committee noted that electoral equality was not a requirement with town and parish wards, and also the potentially distorting presence of military electors in the area. They were satisfied that the proposal of a split of 8 and 7 councillors respectively was not unreasonable and remained in accordance with the statutory criteria as an effective and convenient arrangement.

Consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations

95. The Committee consulted upon the alternative proposal from Tidworth Town Council. No responses were received to the online survey, or otherwise.

96. However, the Committee was satisfied given the provenance of the latest proposal being the Town Council itself, and its previous assessment of the evidence in forming the draft recommendations, that it was appropriate to confirm the proposed changes.

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

Recommendation 2

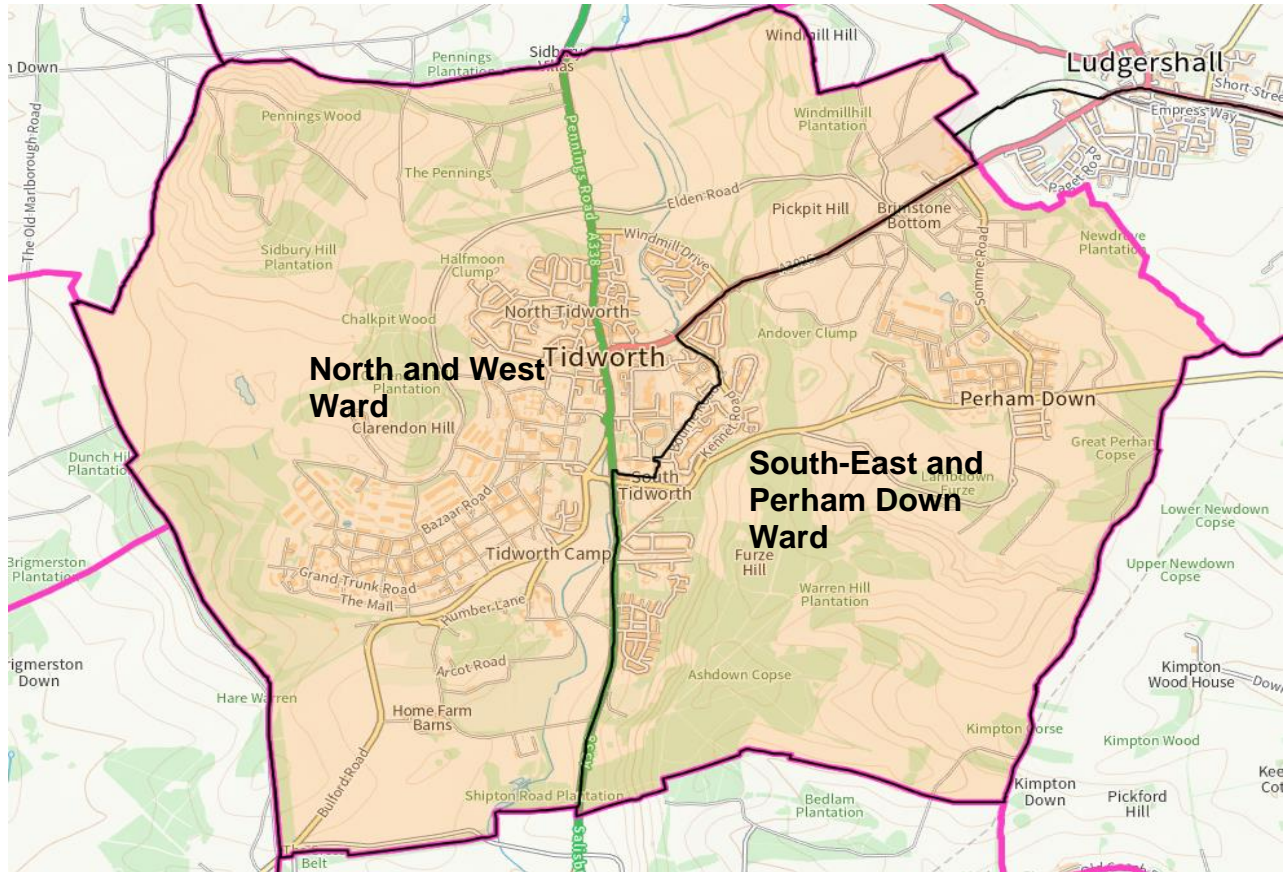
2.1 That Tidworth Town Council be reduced from nineteen councillors to fifteen.

2.2 That the North & West Ward contain eight councillors.

2.3 That the East & South ward be renamed as the South-East & Perham Down ward, and contain seven councillors.

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

Proposed Map of Tidworth Town (including wards)



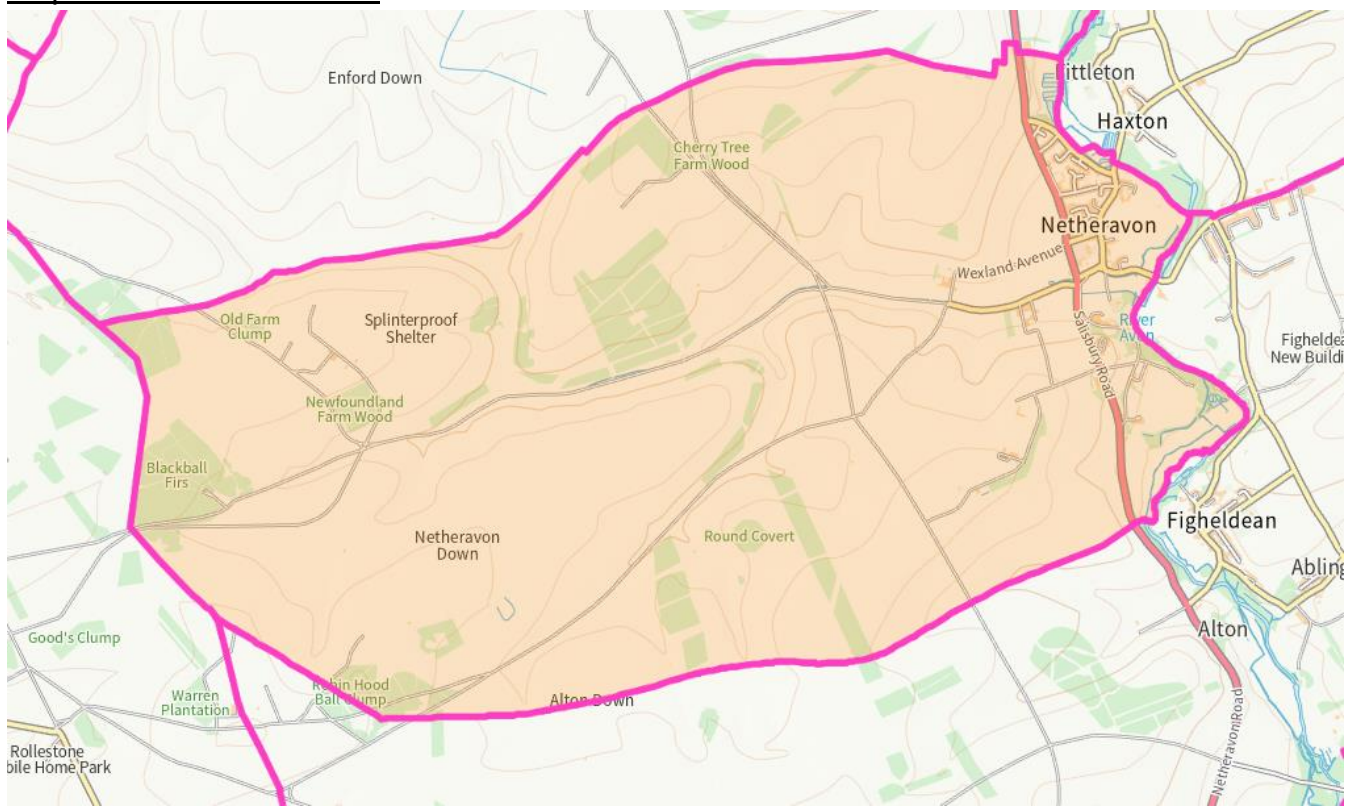
Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Netheravon, Figheldean, Fittleton cum Haxton

Background

98. 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.
99. The Parish Council requested a review of its eastern boundary with Figheldean. Subsequently the Committee received proposals which also impacted upon Fittleton cum Haxton.

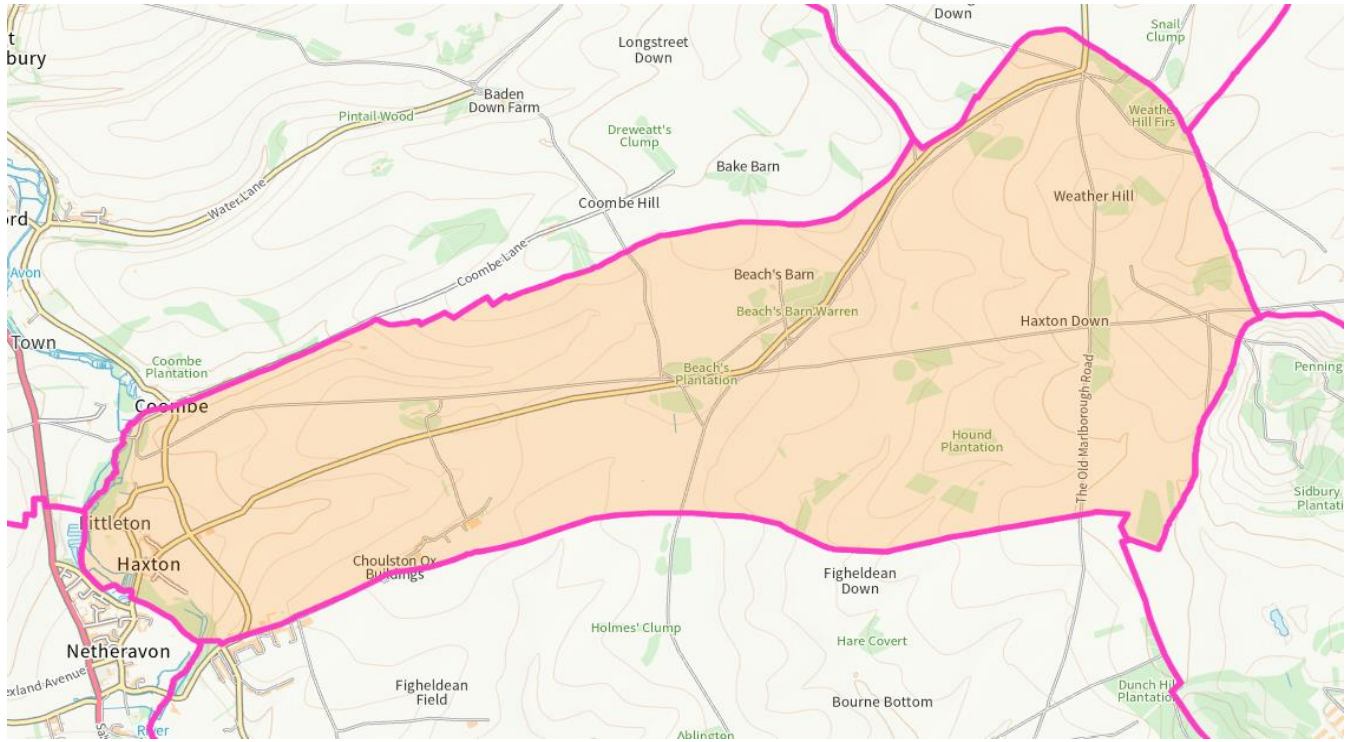
Map of Netheravon Parish



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

100. 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.

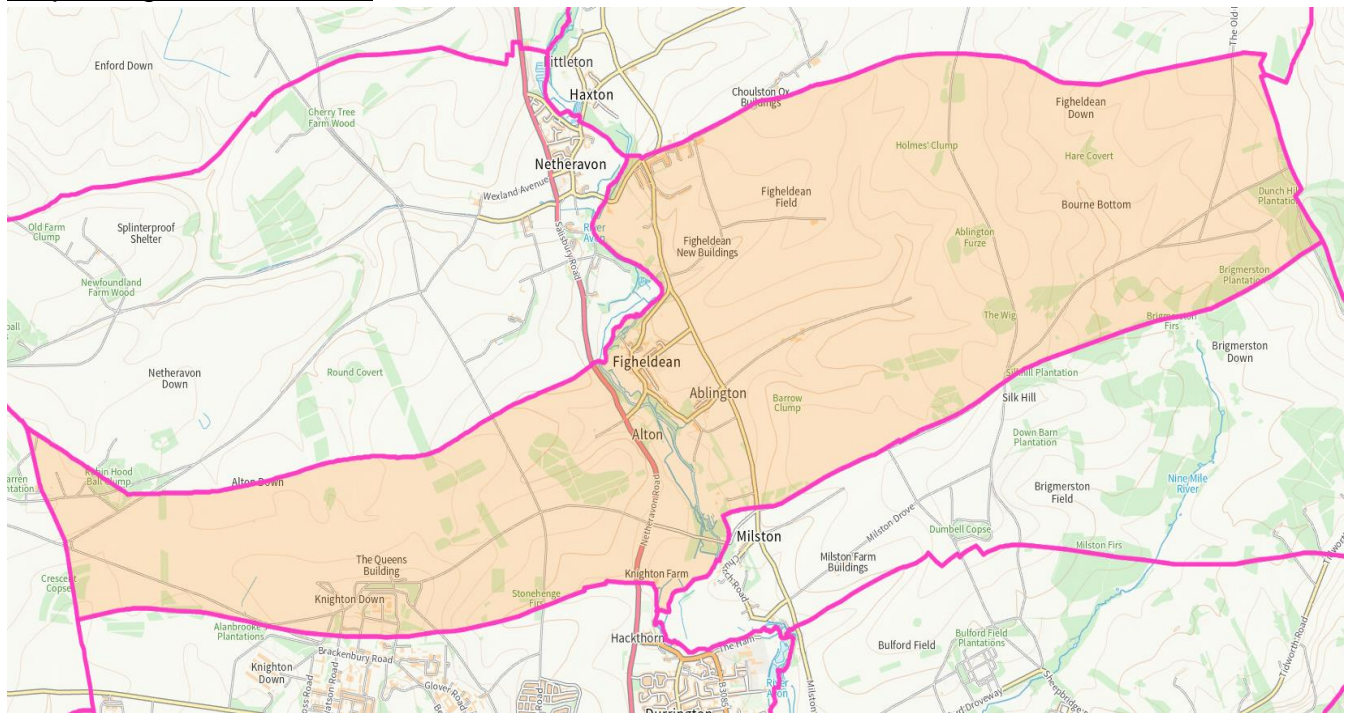
Map of Fittleton cum Haxton Parish



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

101. 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

102. 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.
103. 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.
104. 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.
105. 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

106. 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 main road south. 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.
107. 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, demonstrating a shared understanding of the communities in the area.

Committee Draft Recommendation Proposal

108. 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.
109. No changes were proposed to any other governance arrangements, and this was not considered necessary or appropriate under the criteria.

Consultation on the Draft Recommendations

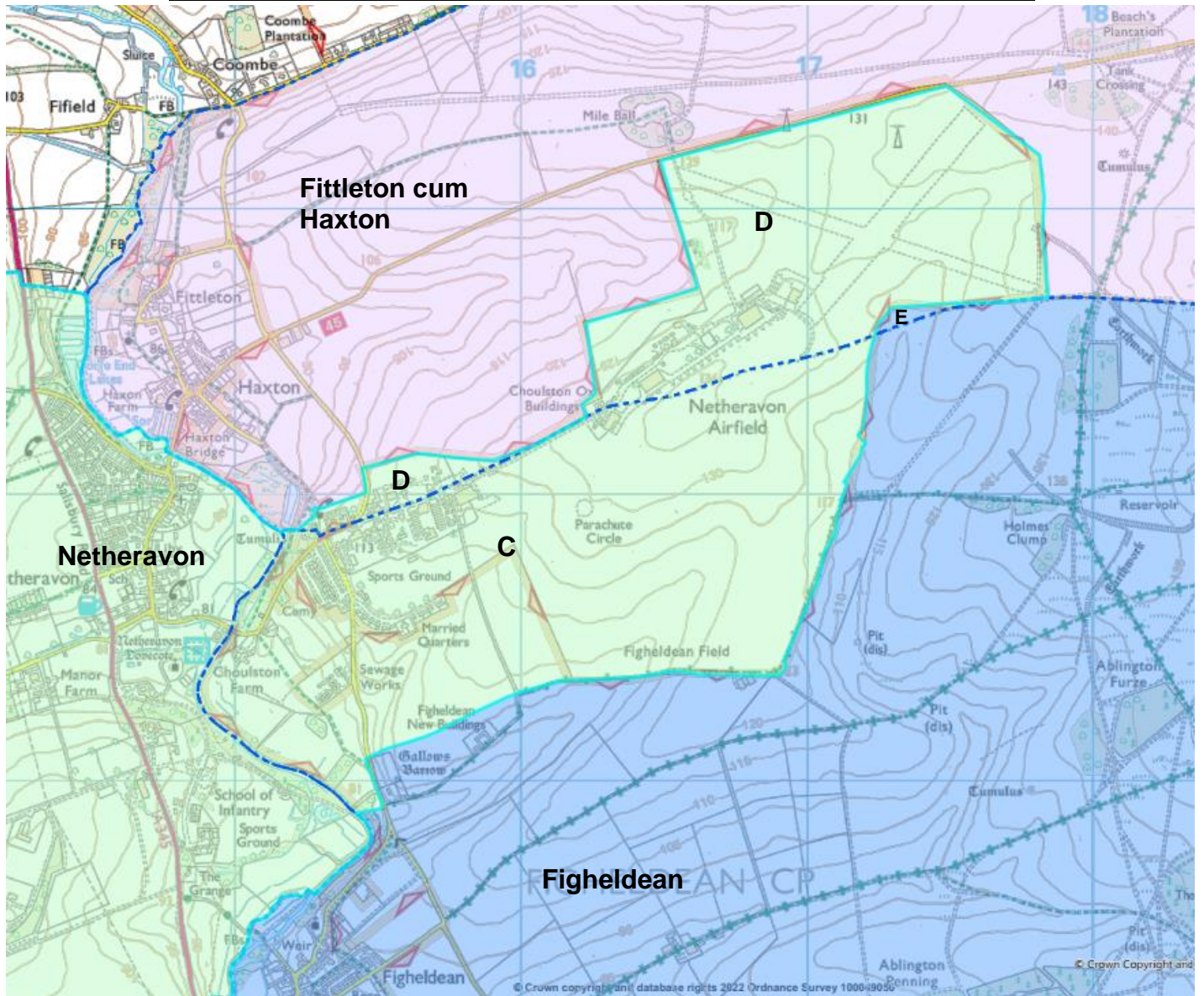
110. 10 responses were received to the online survey, with all being supportive of the draft recommendation proposal. At a public meeting held in Netheravon, representatives of all three parish councils involved reiterated their support for the proposal.
111. One comment had been received raising concerns over cost and the administration of changing the designation of rights of way in the area, which use the parish name as a signifier. The Committee did not consider this raised significant issues of community, effective governance, or identity, sufficient to argue against the demonstrable community and public support for the proposal. The proposals aligned the boundary to identifiable features and had the support of all the parish councils in the area.
112. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore confirmed its recommendation and proposed to council the following:

Recommendation 3

- 3.1 That the area shown as C in the map provided be transferred from the parish of Figheldean to the parish of Netheravon.**
- 3.2 That the areas shown as D in the map provided be transferred from the parish of Fittleton cum Haxton to the parish of Netheravon.**
- 3.3 That the area shown as E in the map provided be transferred from the parish of Fittleton cum Haxton to the parish of Figheldean.**

Reasons: Paragraphs 80, 83,84 and 85 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews

Proposed Map of Netheravon/Figheidean/Fittleton cum Haxton boundary



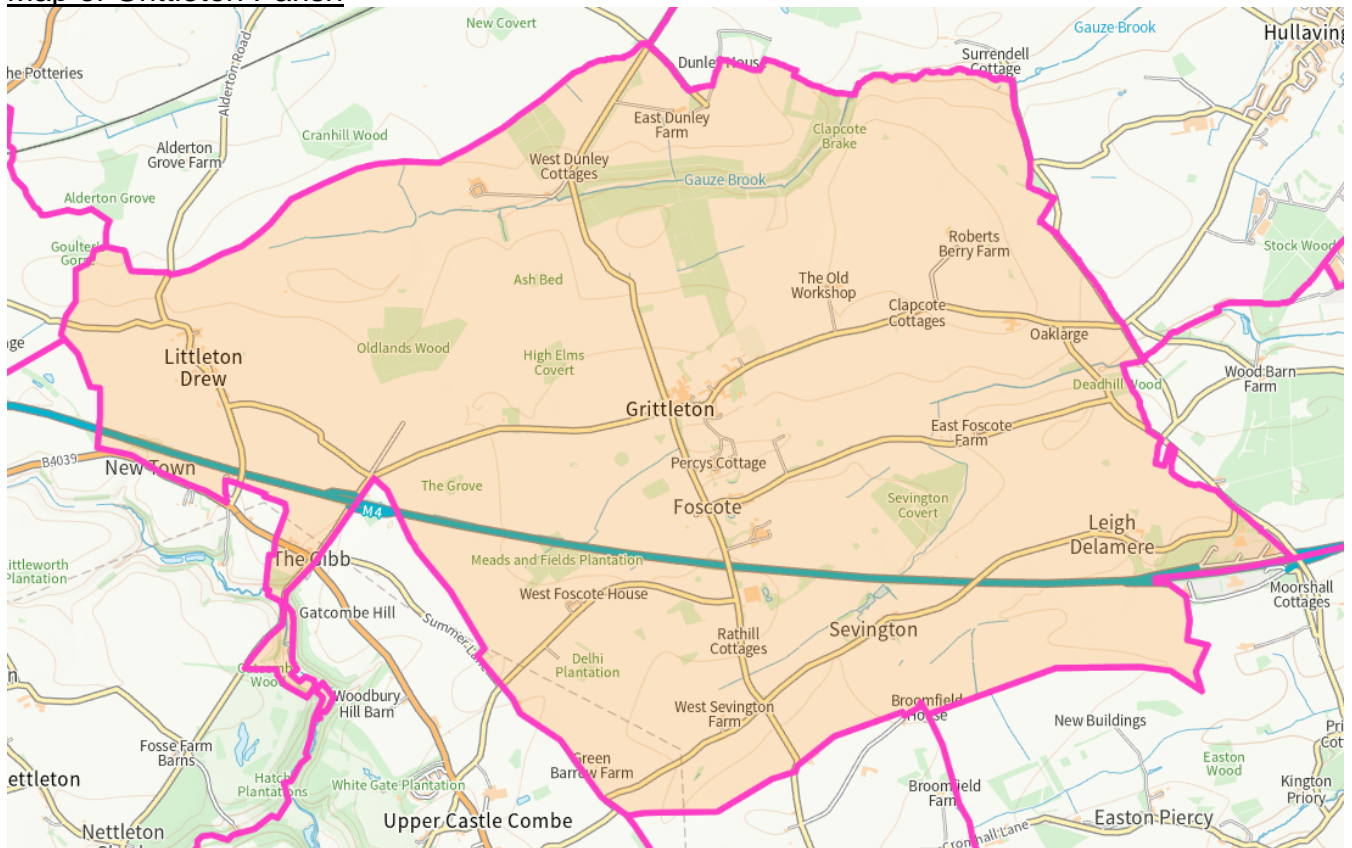
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Green shaded area to be transferred to Netheravon. Dotted line equals current parish boundary.

Grittleton, Castle Combe, and Nettleton

Background

113. Grittleton is a small parish including the communities of Grittleton, Littleton Drew, Sevington, and others, 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.

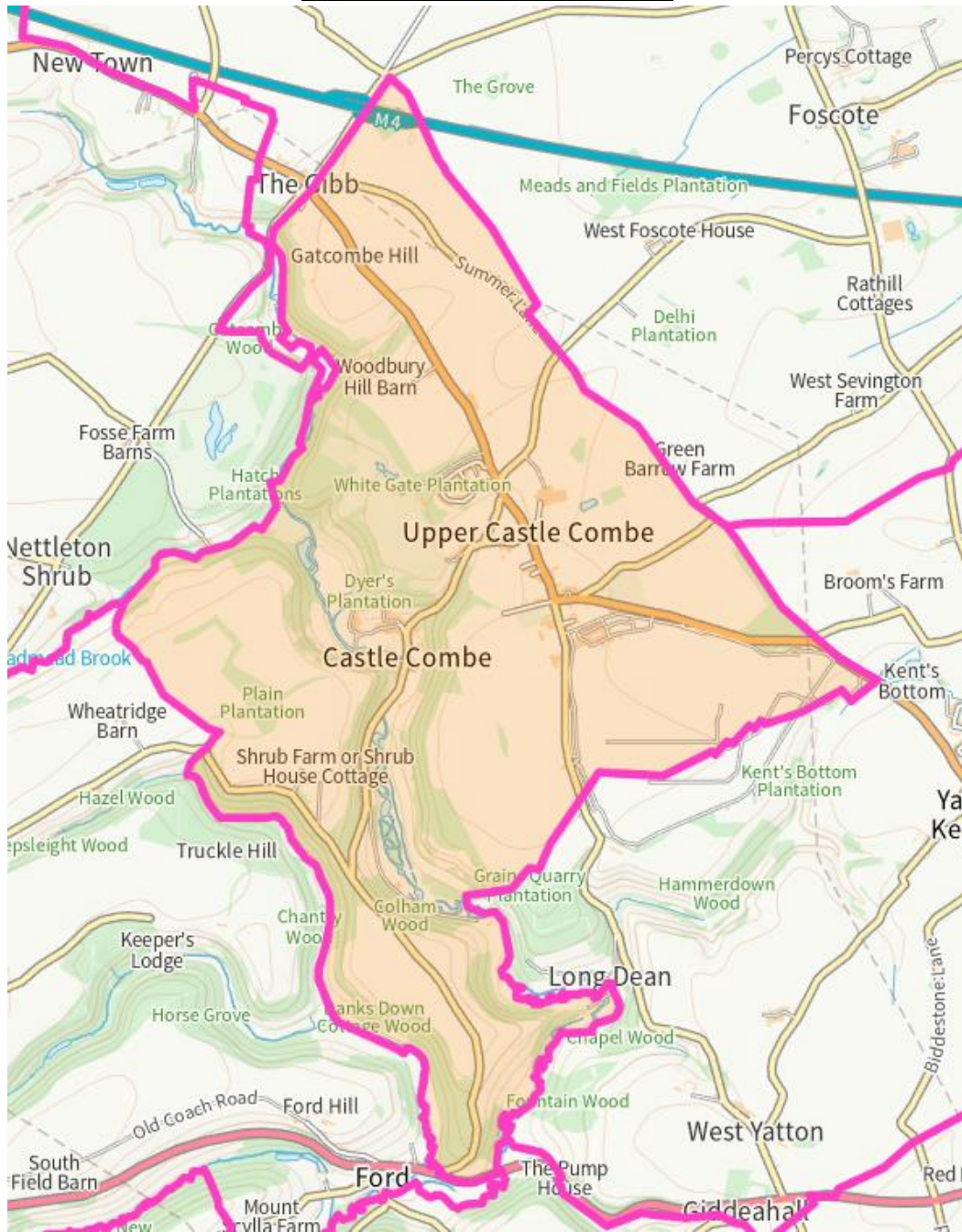
Map of Grittleton Parish



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

114. 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.
115. 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.

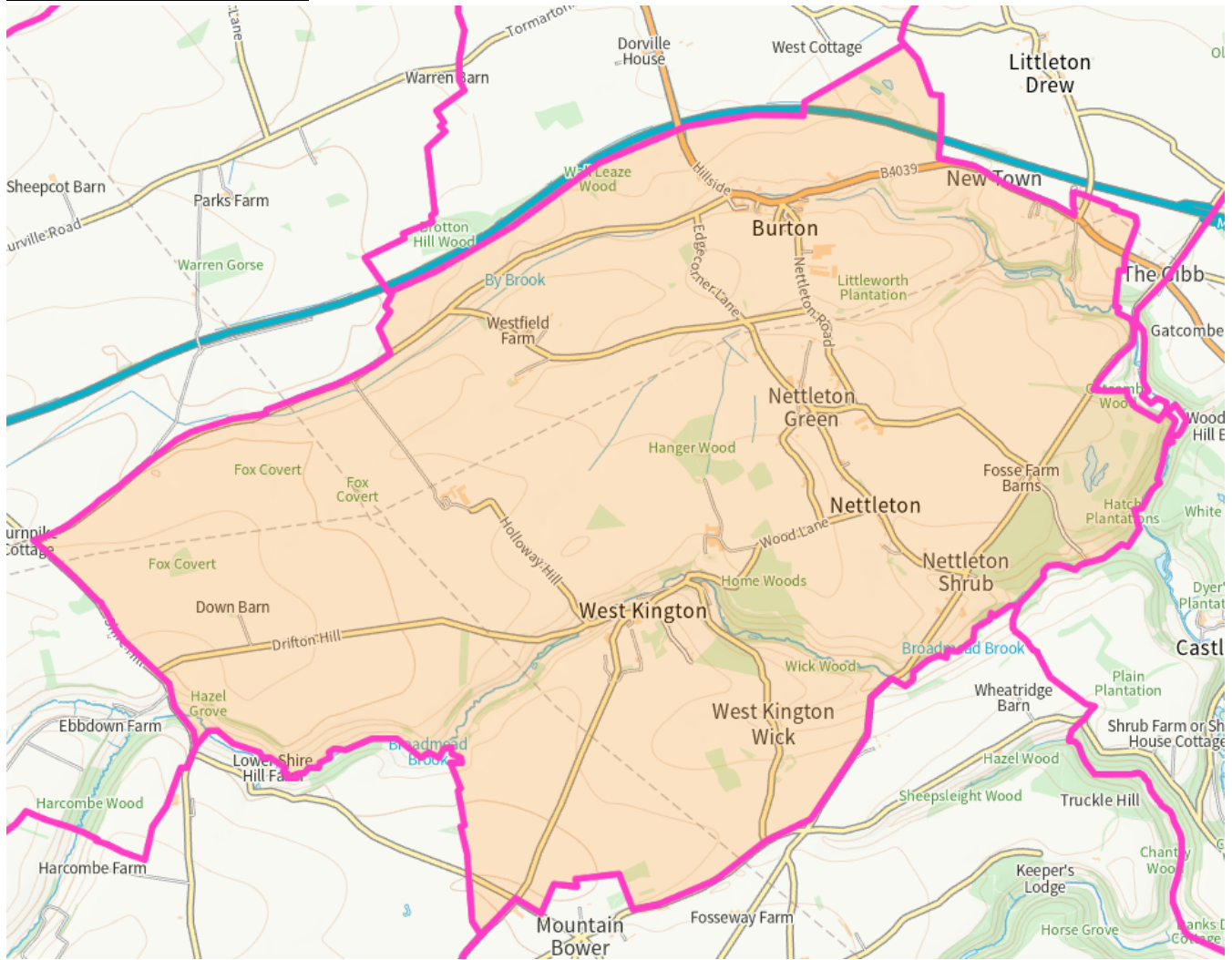
Map of Castle Combe parish



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

116. 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

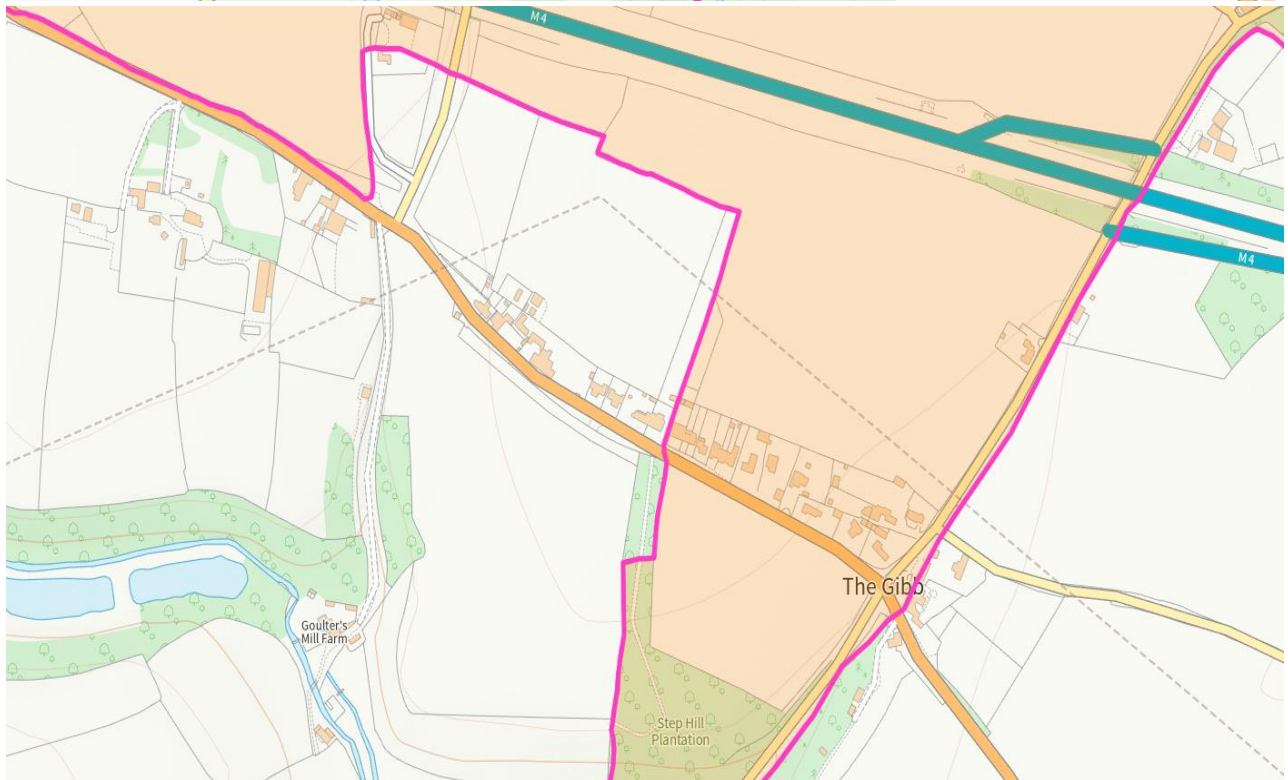
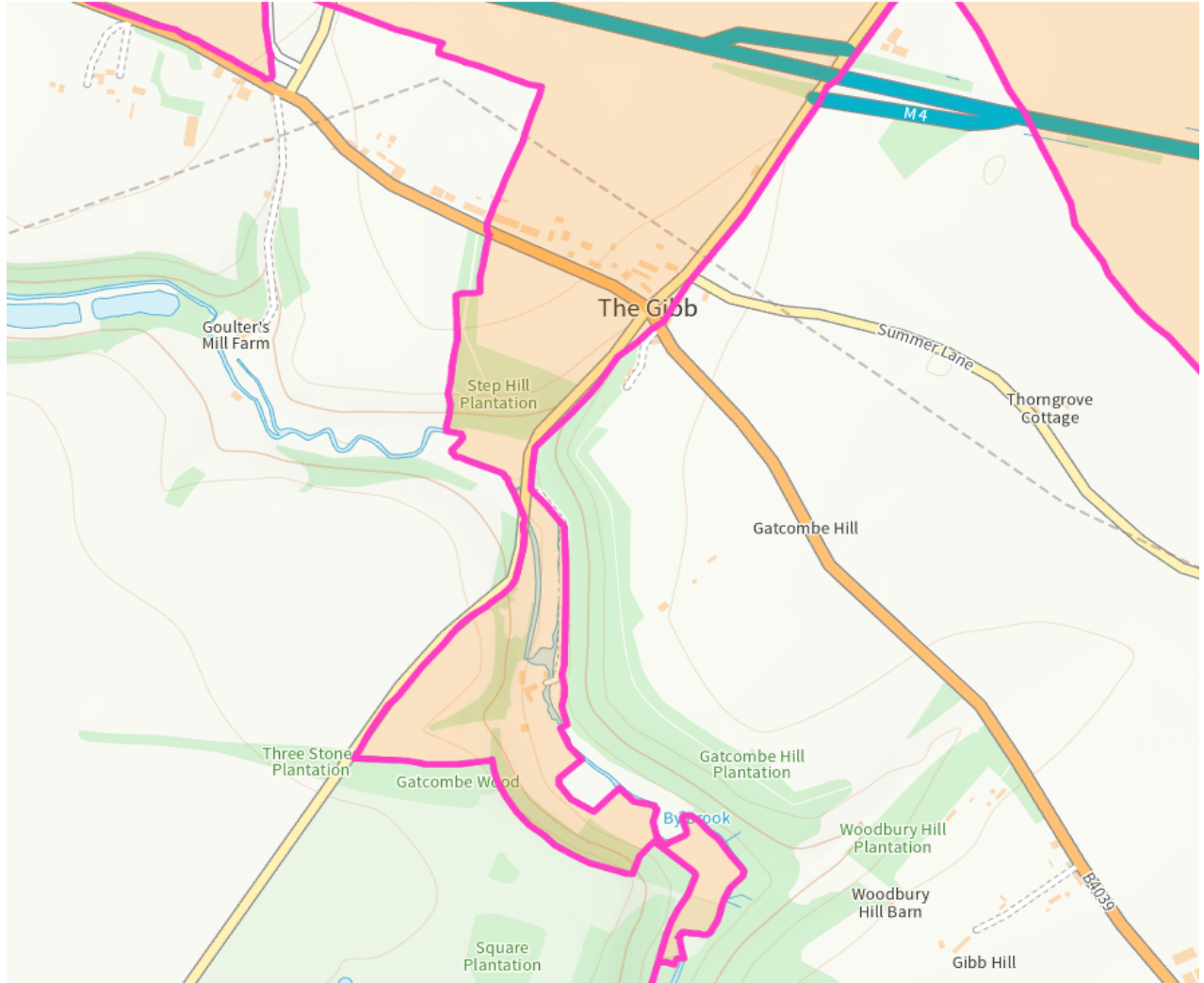


Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

117. The current parish boundary of Grittleton includes a narrow spike of land running to the south broadly following the line of the ByBrook watercourse and joining the Fosse Way road running from the north toward Nettleton Shrub.
118. 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.
119. 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/>

120. 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.
121. 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.
122. 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.
123. 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

124. 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.
125. 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.
126. 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.
127. 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.

128. 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

129. 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.
130. 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.
131. 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.
132. 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.

Consultation on the Draft Recommendations

133. 2 responses were received to the online survey, for the approximately 20 properties proposed to be transferred under the draft recommendations. Both responses were in support, with one being from Grittleton Parish Council. Comments were supportive of unifying the area in one parish rather than split across three different parishes.
134. The Committee was satisfied the proposals represented more effective and convenient arrangements for the parish, and more reflective of the Gibb being a single community. No additional objections had been received.
135. At a public meeting which was attended by Grittleton Parish Council there was discussion of a further property at the crossroads of the Gibb which had not been included within the proposal, and that this too was a part of the local community.

136. The Committee agreed to amend its proposal to include the property and consult with the resident to determine if it was appropriate to transfer with the rest of the properties.

Consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations

137. One response was received to the proposal, from the resident whose property had been added to the area proposed to be transferred to Grittleton. It stated that the proposed line included the house and part of the grounds but did not include outbuildings and the whole of the property. It stated that they were the only property on that side of the road, and that they felt the property, which they said was previously known as Castle Combe estate gatehouse, should remain in Castle Combe.
138. The Committee noted the response from the resident. It continued to consider that in terms of community identity there did not appear to be any distinction between the property in question and the other properties at The Gibb which would justify their being located in separate parishes. It considered whether it was an effective or convenient arrangement for a single property removed from any settlement of Castle Combe to be retained within the parish and separated from the rest of the nearby Gibb community.
139. Castle Combe Parish Council raised no specific objections to the inclusion of the property along with the other areas previously consulted upon.
140. The Committee agreed to further communicate and consult directly with the sole impacted resident. Given the position of the Parish Council no other parties were impacted. Officers contacted the resident seeking clarity over the property line, and the view of the resident if the area were transferred to Grittleton in its entirety. An online survey was also placed on the council's website in the event any other party wished to make a representation.
141. The resident confirmed the property line and continued to state they felt it more appropriate to remain within Castle Combe. They stated that the area known as The Gibb comprised two distinct areas, their property area had connections with the Castle Combe estate, and noted the proximity to Gatcombe Mill, which the Committee was proposing to move from Grittleton into Castle Combe.

Committee Decision

142. No additional responses were received to the consultation on transferring the one property south of the B4039 into Grittleton, encompassing the entire property line, which extended a large distance south and east toward Castle Combe.
143. Neither Parish Council responded further to the latest option. Their previous positions relating to the original and first additional consultation was noted, in that Castle Combe Parish Council had supported the inclusion of the property.
144. The Committee debated whether it was reasonable to leave one property in the general area of The Gibb within Castle Combe, and carefully considered the reasoning provided by the resident as well as the past responses of the councils involved. It could also move the residence but not the entire property line into Grittleton.

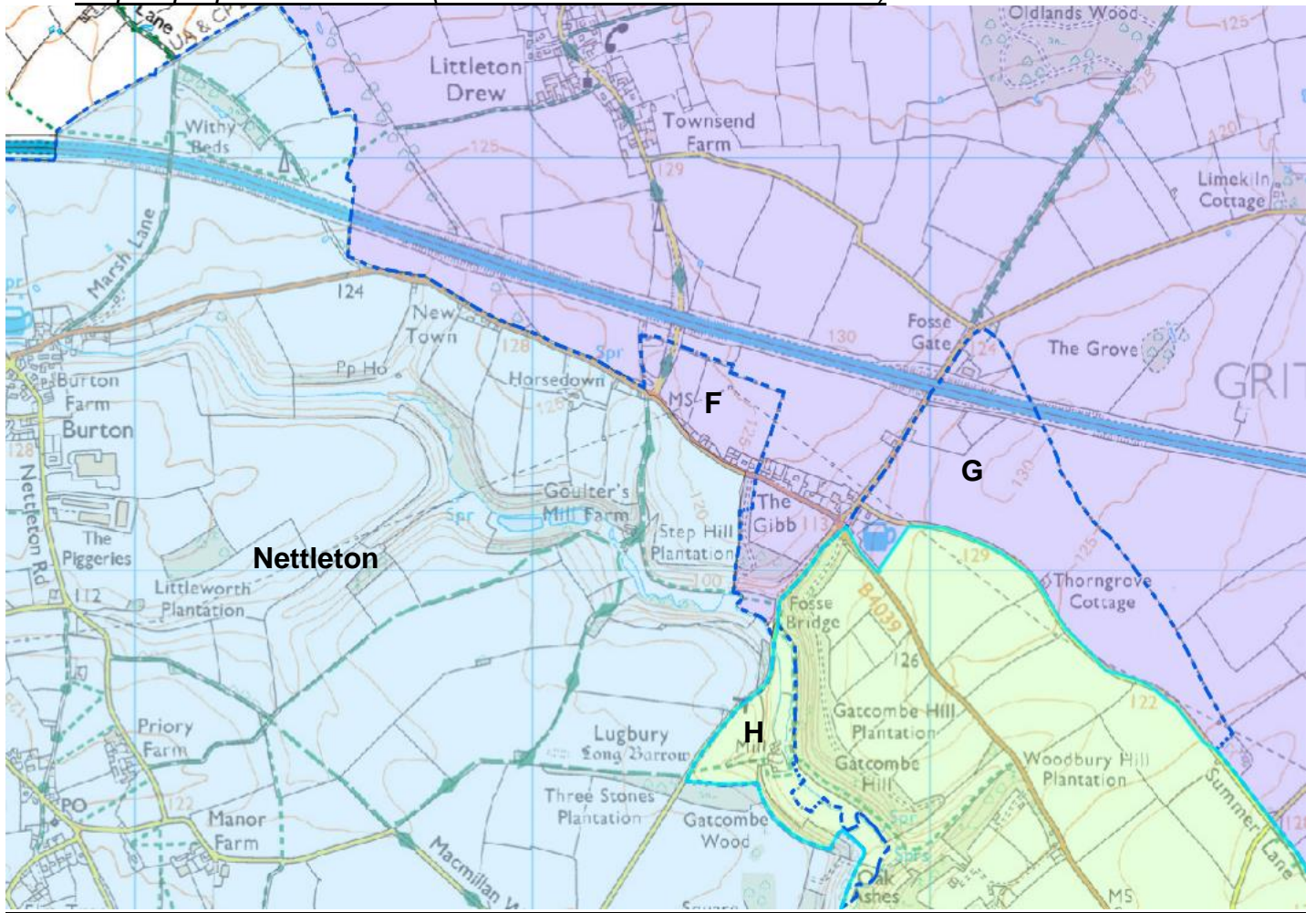
145. On balance, the Committee was satisfied there was sufficient distinction from the properties on the other side of the main road, and accordingly its original proposal was the most appropriate of those consulted upon. This would ensure a clear boundary along the road up to the Fosse Way, reflecting the specifics of the community identity within the area.
146. 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 provided be transferred from the parish of Nettleton to the parish of Grittleton.**
- 4.2 That the area shown as G in the map provided be transferred from the parish of Castle Combe to the parish of Grittleton.**
- 4.3 That the area shown as H in the map provided 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)



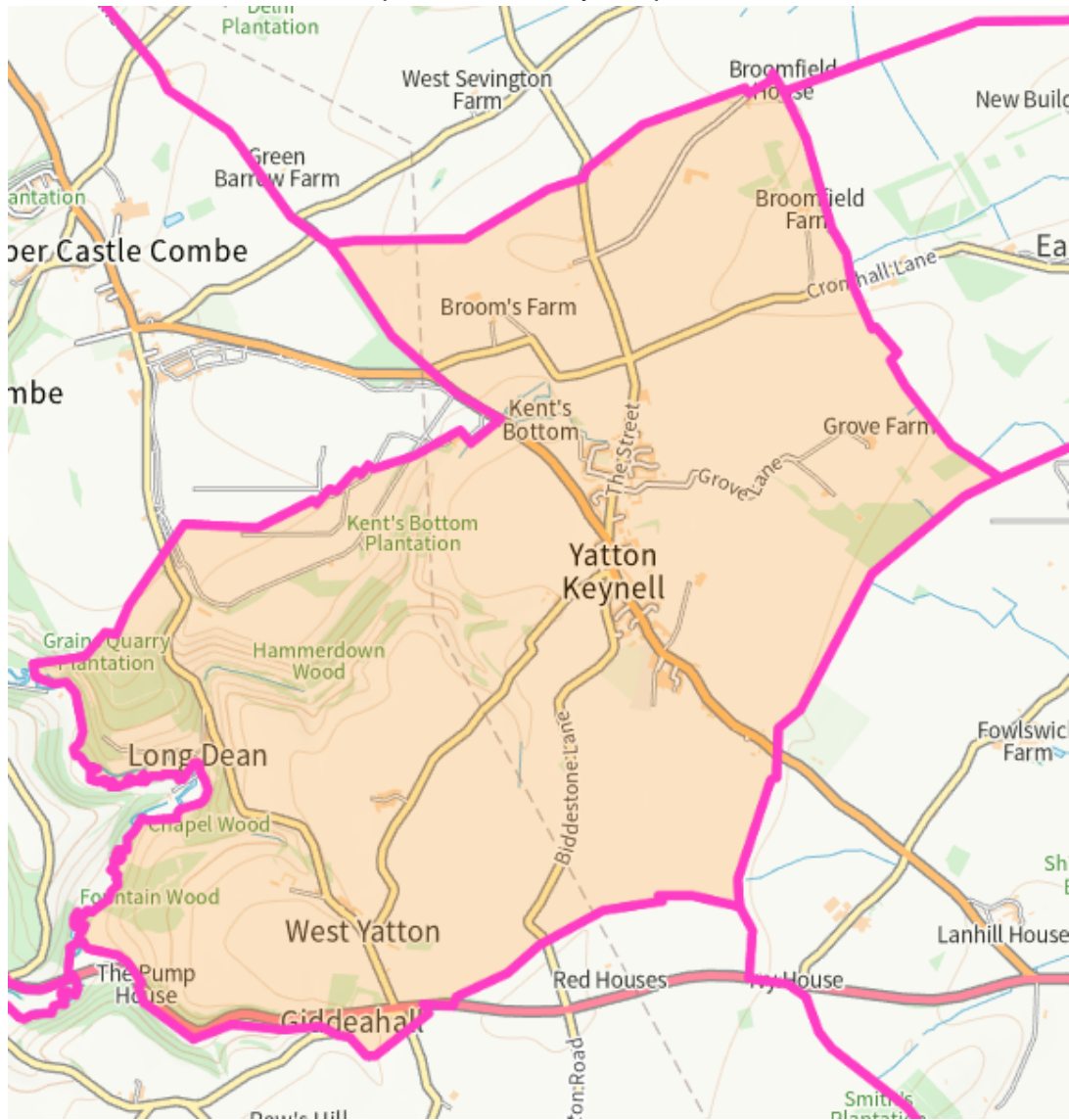
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Dotted line is existing parish boundary. Shaded areas showing new parish proposal.

Yatton Keynell, Castle Combe, and Biddestone & Slaughterford

Background

147. 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/>

148. 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.

149. Yatton Keynell Parish Council had submitted a request to amend the boundary with Biddestone & Slaughterford, 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 & Slaughterford.
150. 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

151. Both Yatton Keynell Parish Council and Biddestone & Slaughterford 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.
152. Biddestone & Slaughterford 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 Slaughterford than Colerne. They did not propose a precise line of which part should be transferred.
153. 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.
154. 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.
155. In relation to the Biddestone & Slaughterford 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 Slaughterford 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

156. 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 & Slaughterford 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.

157. 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.
158. 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.
159. 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.
160. 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.
161. 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.
162. 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.
163. The Committee therefore agreed to recommend a transfer between Biddestone & Slaughterford, and Yatton Keynell only.

Consultation on the Draft Recommendations

164. 4 responses were received to the online survey, with 2 from residents in disagreement. One referenced the level of council tax, which was not a relevant consideration, and the other stated it did not have any affiliation with Yatton Keynell. 2 responses proposed amendments.
165. Yatton Keynell Parish Council confirmed their support for the Committee proposal in respect of the boundary with Biddestone & Slaughterford, but sought amendments to include the area at Lower Long Dean Mill in Castle Combe, which they considered to be more

associated with the community at Long Dean in Yatton Keynell. They also reiterated their support for the proposal regarding the Golf academy area which the committee had not recommended.

166. The Committee reconsidered the proposals relating to the golf academy but confirmed they had received no additional information or evidence which persuaded them that they area, which contained no electors, was more appropriate under the criteria to be included within the parish of Yatton Keynell.
167. The Committee agreed to consult on the proposal involving Lower Long Dean Mill, to determine the views of Castle Combe Parish Council and any residents. It confirmed its other proposals for recommendation to council, so would not reconsult on those elements, as it was satisfied these provided a more coherent boundary supported by both parish councils.

Consultation on the Additional Draft Recommendations

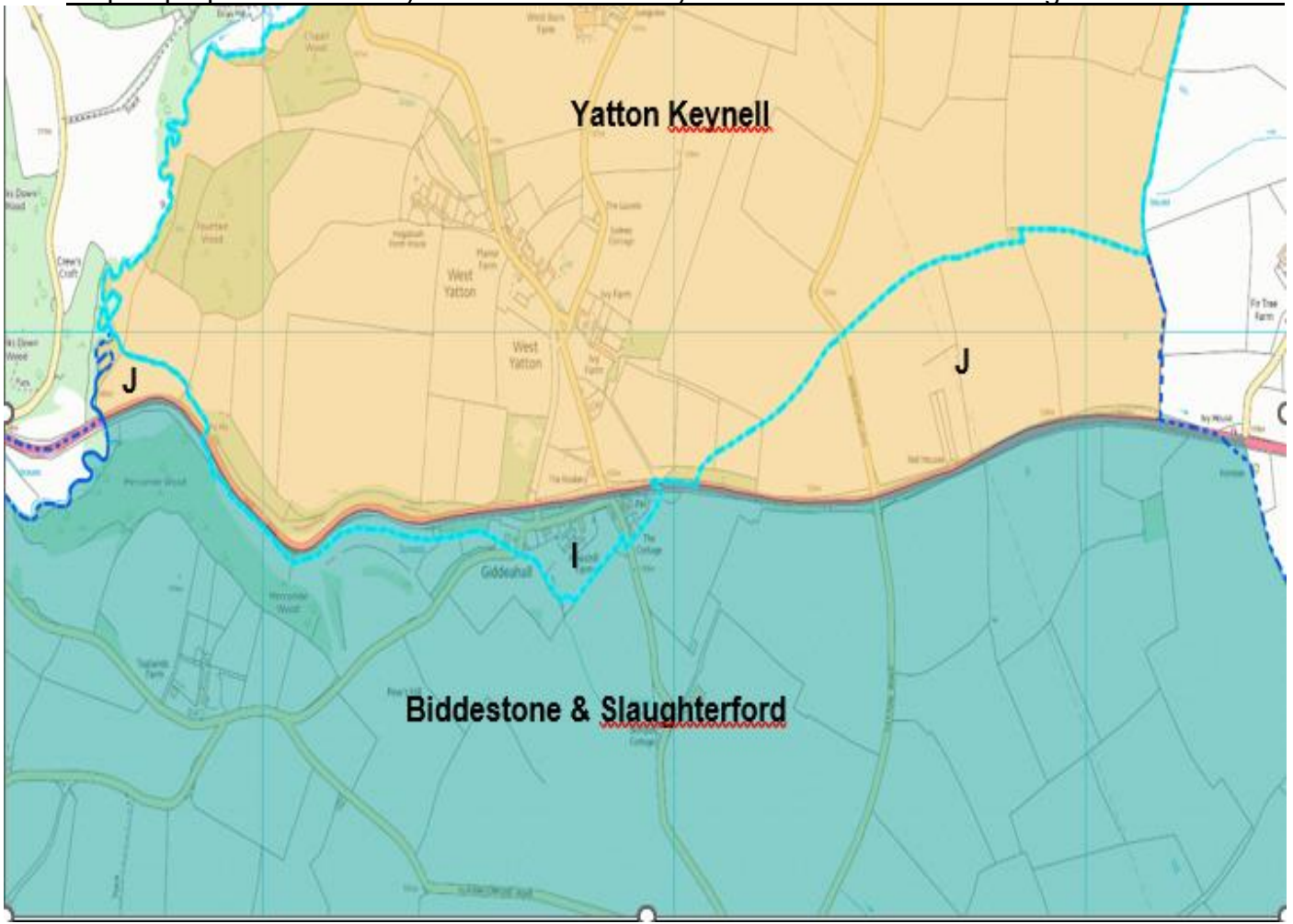
168. One response was received to the online survey, however this was in relation to the previously confirmed recommendations around Giddeahall, as well as being based around not wishing to pay additional council tax. Castle Combe Parish Council had responded and provided no objections to the proposal.
169. As such, the Committee was satisfied that the proposal was reasonable and appropriate, and so agreed to include the area at Long Dean Mill within its Final Recommendations.
170. 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 maps provided be transferred from the parish of Yatton Keynell to the parish of Biddestone & Slaughterford.**
- 5.2 That the areas shown as J in the maps provided be transferred from the parish of Biddestone & Slaughterford to the parish of Yatton Keynell.**
- 5.3 That the area shown as K in the maps provided be transferred from the parish of Castle Combe to the parish of Yatton Keynell.**

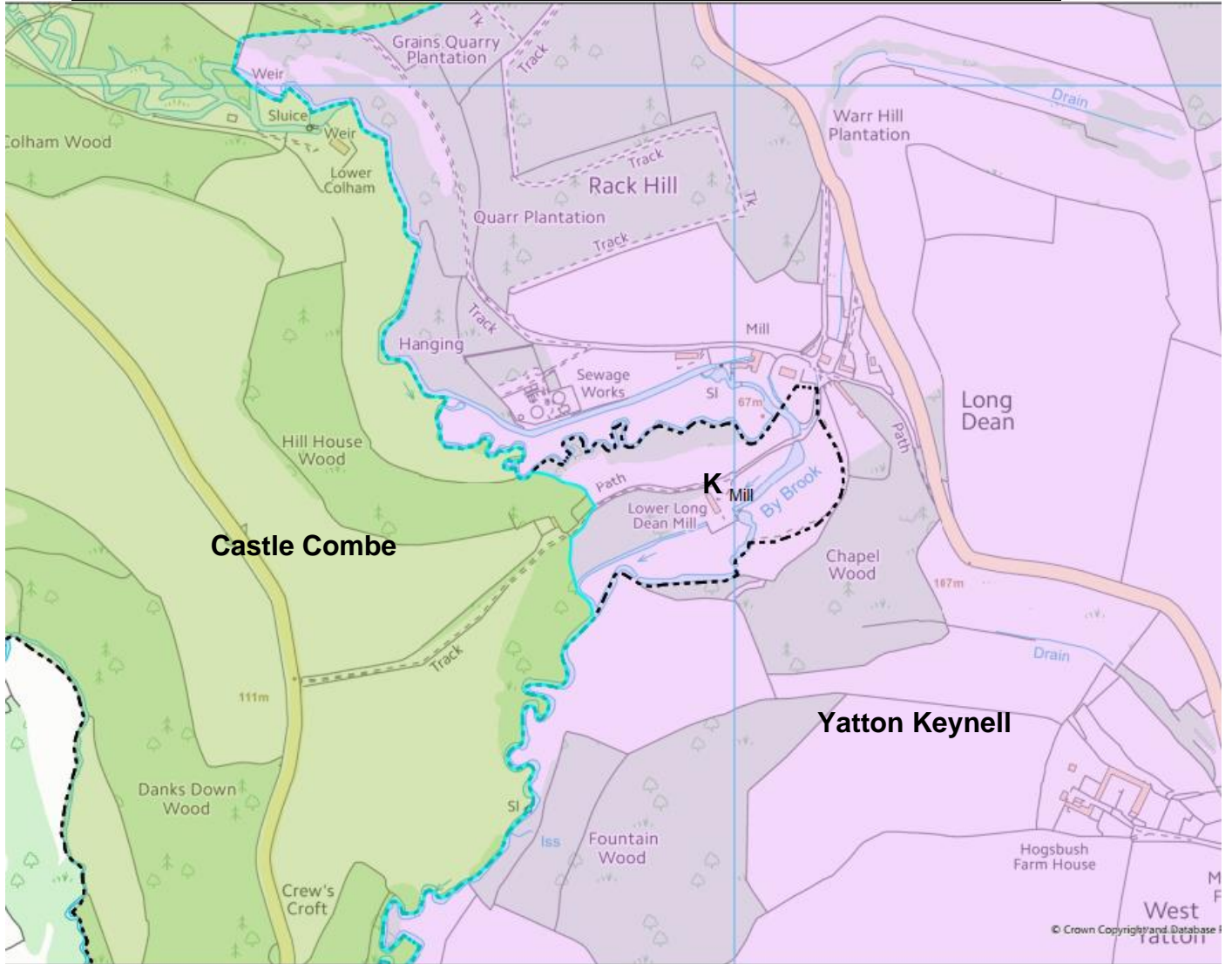
Reasons: Paragraphs 80, 83, and 85 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews

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



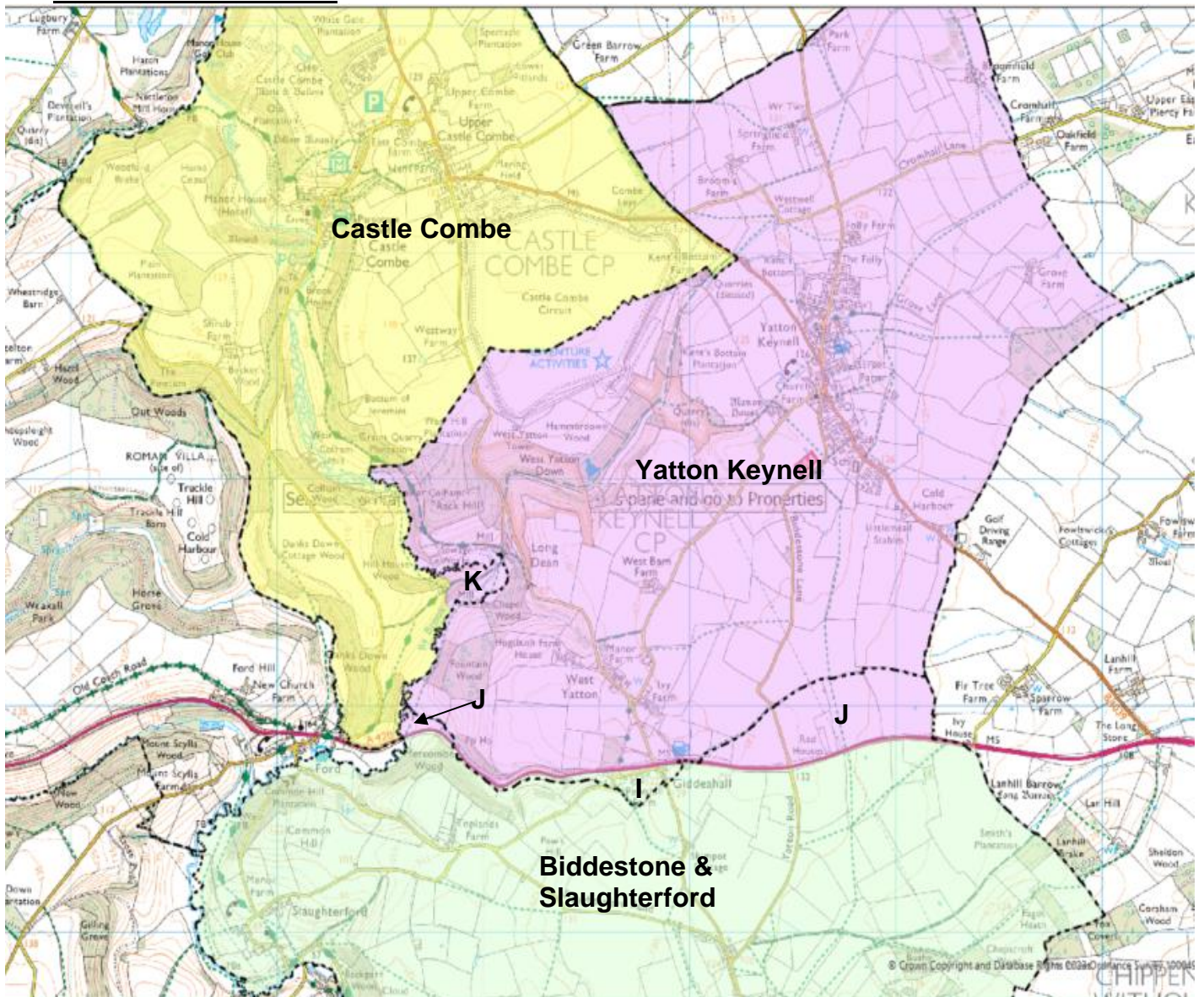
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Dotted line is existing parish boundary.

Map of proposed boundary between Yatton Keynell and Castle Combe Parishes



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

Wider Map of proposed boundary between Yatton Keynell, Biddestone & Slaughterford, and Castle Combe Parishes

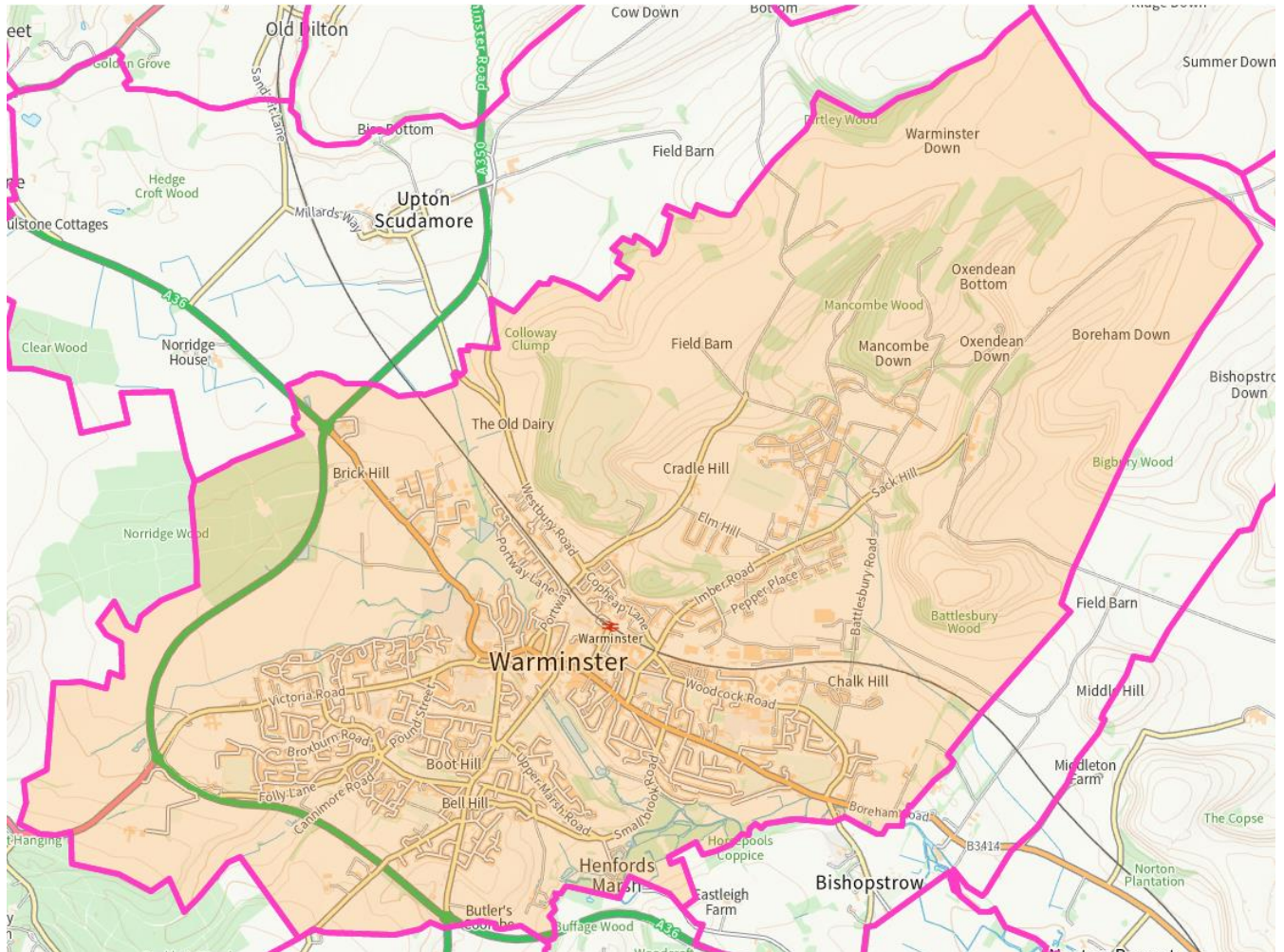


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Dotted line is existing parish boundary. Shaded areas showing new parish proposal.

Warminster **Background**

171. 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. It is represented by a Town Council of up to 13 councillors across four wards.

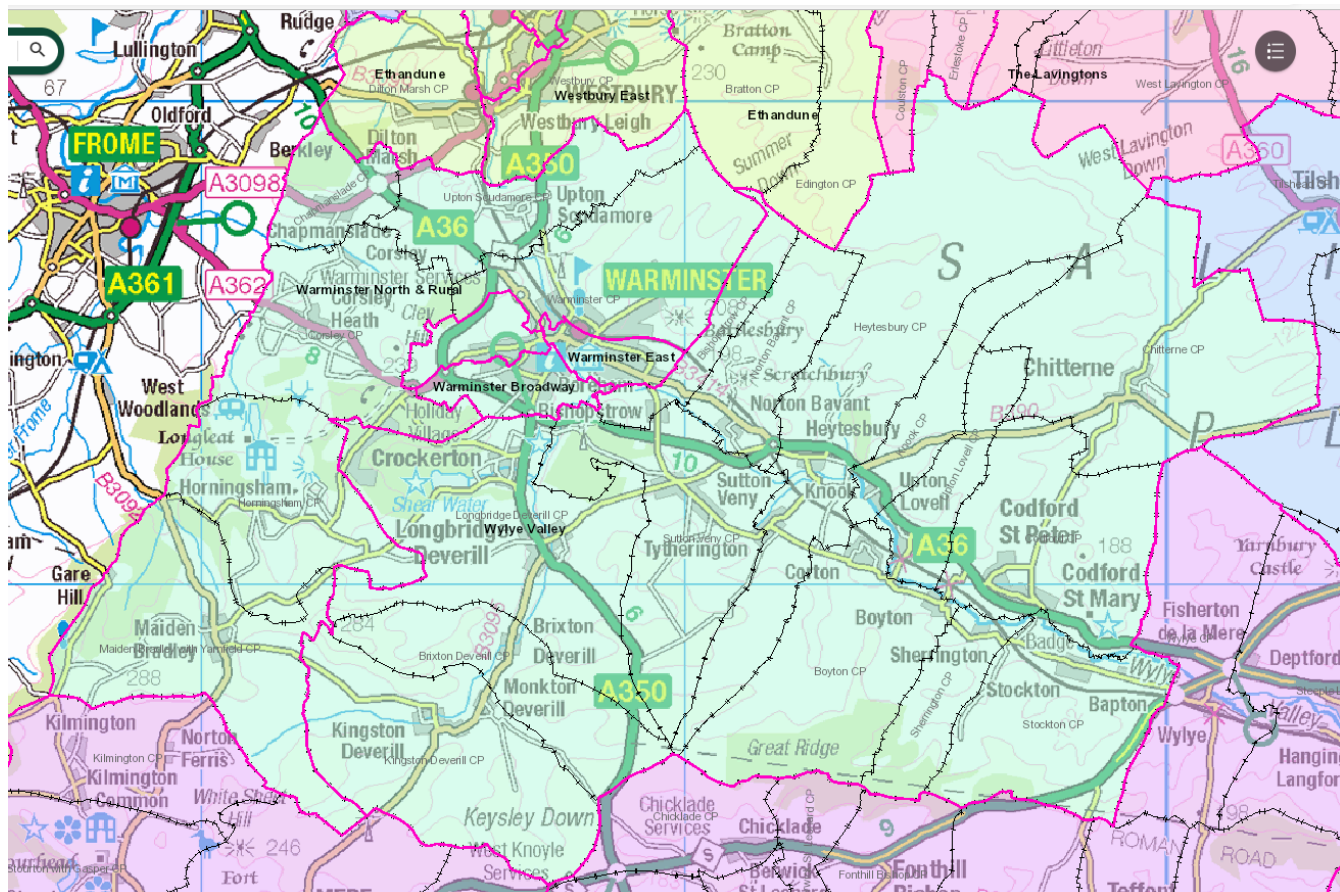
Map of Warminster town



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

172. 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 Wylve 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

173. 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.
174. 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 a number more proportionate to their populations than Warminster had.
175. 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.
176. 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

177. 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.
178. 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 in number of electors. Accordingly, the Committee would need to consider the specific situation and needs of Warminster, taking account of its current arrangements.
179. 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.
180. 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 and Consultation

181. 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 to recommend and consult on the request.
182. No additional responses were received in relation to the proposal during the consultation, and the Committee was satisfied the reasoning and evidence previously considered was sufficient to confirm its initial recommendation.
183. 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**

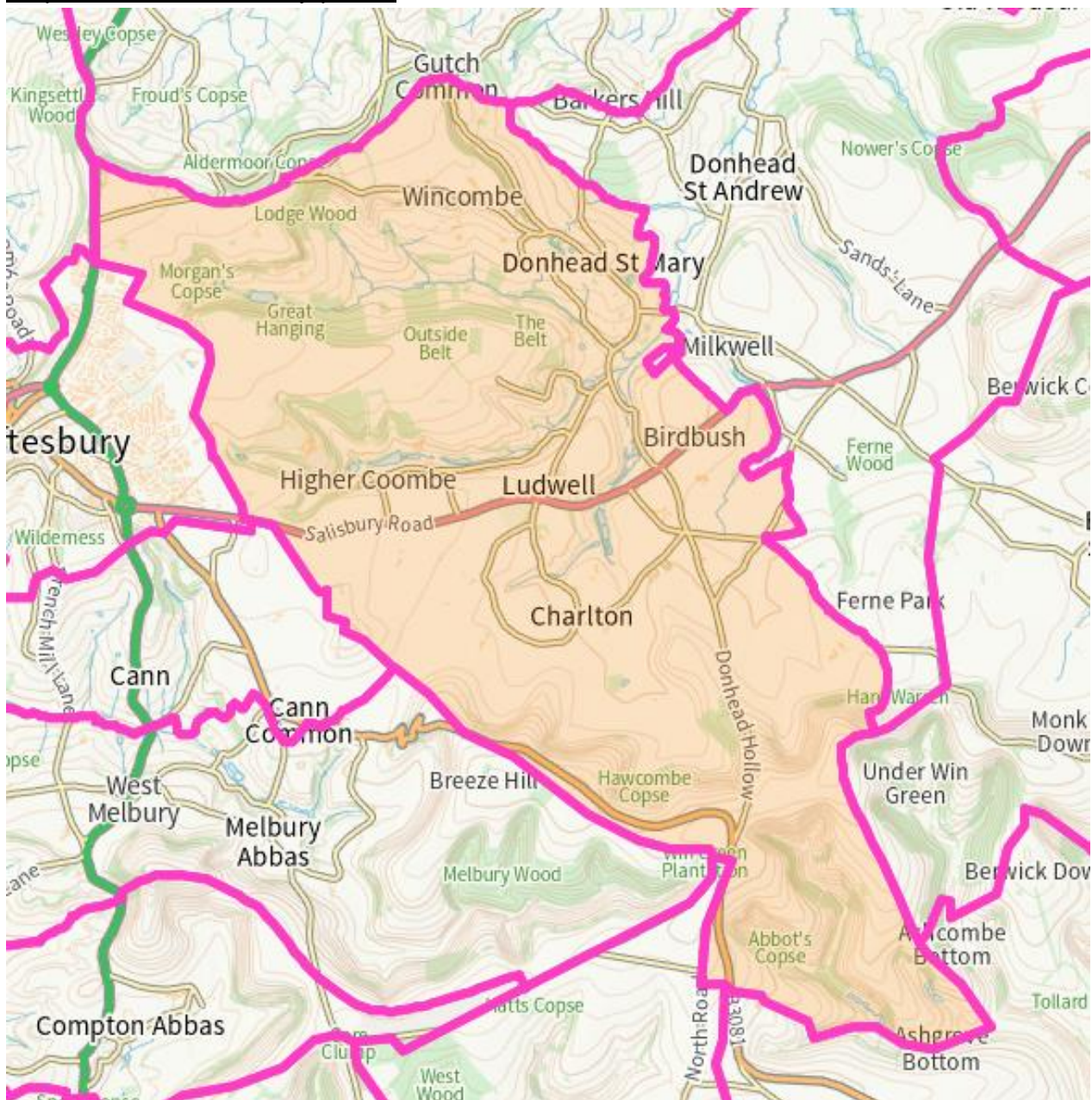
Reasons: Paragraphs 79 and 157 of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews

Donhead St Mary, Monkton Farleigh

Background

184. 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.
185. 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.

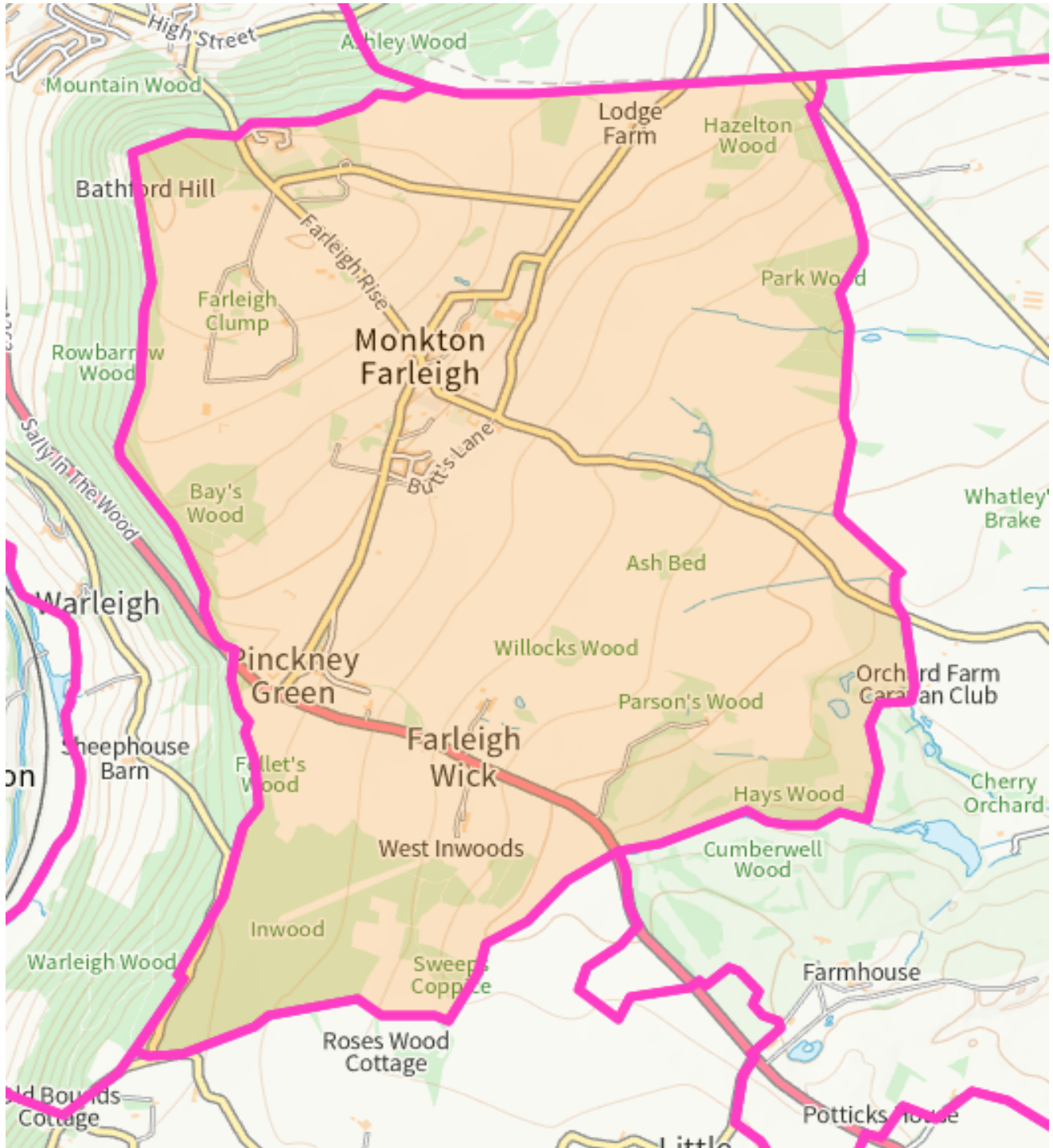
Map of Donhead St Mary parish



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

186. 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/>

187. Requests had also been received from Fovant, and Grimstead, however these were later withdrawn and are addressed in the Draft Recommendations.

Initial Proposals and Pre-consultation information gathering

188. 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.
189. 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.
190. 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

191. In reviewing the areas, the Committee 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 and determine if the requests were reasonable and appropriate against the criteria.
192. 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.
193. 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 and Consultation

194. 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.
195. 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.
196. 3 responses were received in relation to the proposals during the consultation, all in favour and relating to Monkton Farleigh. The Committee was satisfied with the reasoning and evidence behind each proposal, and so confirmed them for a Final Recommendation. It also remained satisfied that the reasoning for a reduction in Donhead St Mary was suitable

under the criteria.

197. 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