

**Community Governance
Review 2023/24**

**Additional Draft
Recommendations of the
Electoral Review
Committee**

April 2024

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Links

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

[Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review 2023/24](#)

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

[Online Additional Draft Recommendations Survey](#)

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

Contact CGR@wiltshire.gov.uk 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 Additional Draft Recommendations were as follows:

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

On what grounds will a Community Governance Review be decided?

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

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

Background to the 2023/24 Review

10. From 2017-2019 the LGBCE 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 26 June 2023, on 11 September 2023 Wiltshire Council published terms of reference for a Community Governance Review for the following parish areas:
 - Winterbourne
 - Laverstock & Ford
 - Firsdown
 - Idmiston
 - Durnford
 - Chippenham
 - Mere
 - Zeals
 - North Bradley
 - Trowbridge
 - Lacock
14. The terms of reference also included provision to review any parishes in Wiltshire where potential minor boundary 'anomalies' had been brought to the attention of the Committee. This was to enable complete consideration of any options which might emerge during information gathering. These additional draft recommendations relate to potential anomalies in Melksham, North Bradley, and Southwick.
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 9 January 2024 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 12 February – 28 March 2024 (extended from 18 March). The consultation included:

- A public meeting in Mere.
- An online survey
- Letters to households who were proposed to be transferred from one parish to another or from one ward to another
- A public briefing note sent to relevant parishes

Additional Draft Recommendations and Consultation

19. At its meeting held on 3 April 2024 the Committee considered an information pack compiling all relevant materials from the draft recommendations consultation, including meeting sessions notes, responses from parish councils and public representations received by email, post or online survey, and representations made at the meeting.

20. The Committee agreed to delegate 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. The delegation was in respect of two potential minor electoral boundary anomalies, relating to the town of Melksham and the parishes of North Bradley and Southwick.

22. As the additional draft recommendations made only minor changes, the Committee could decide to make the consultation online only, as it has done appropriately in the past. However, due to the small scale of the changes, the Committee agreed to write to potentially affected electors directly.

23. 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 very limited aspect of the overall recommendations.

24. The consultation on these additional draft recommendations has been scheduled to run from 10 April to 7 May 2024.
25. Following consideration of any responses and other relevant information, the Committee will prepare Final Recommendations for consideration by Full Council as soon as practicable.
26. The Draft Recommendations relating to original recommendations 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,12 were confirmed at the meeting on 3 April 2024, and will be taken forward to Full Council when practicable.
27. Original Draft Recommendations 5 and 9 were withdrawn at the meeting on 3 April 2024.

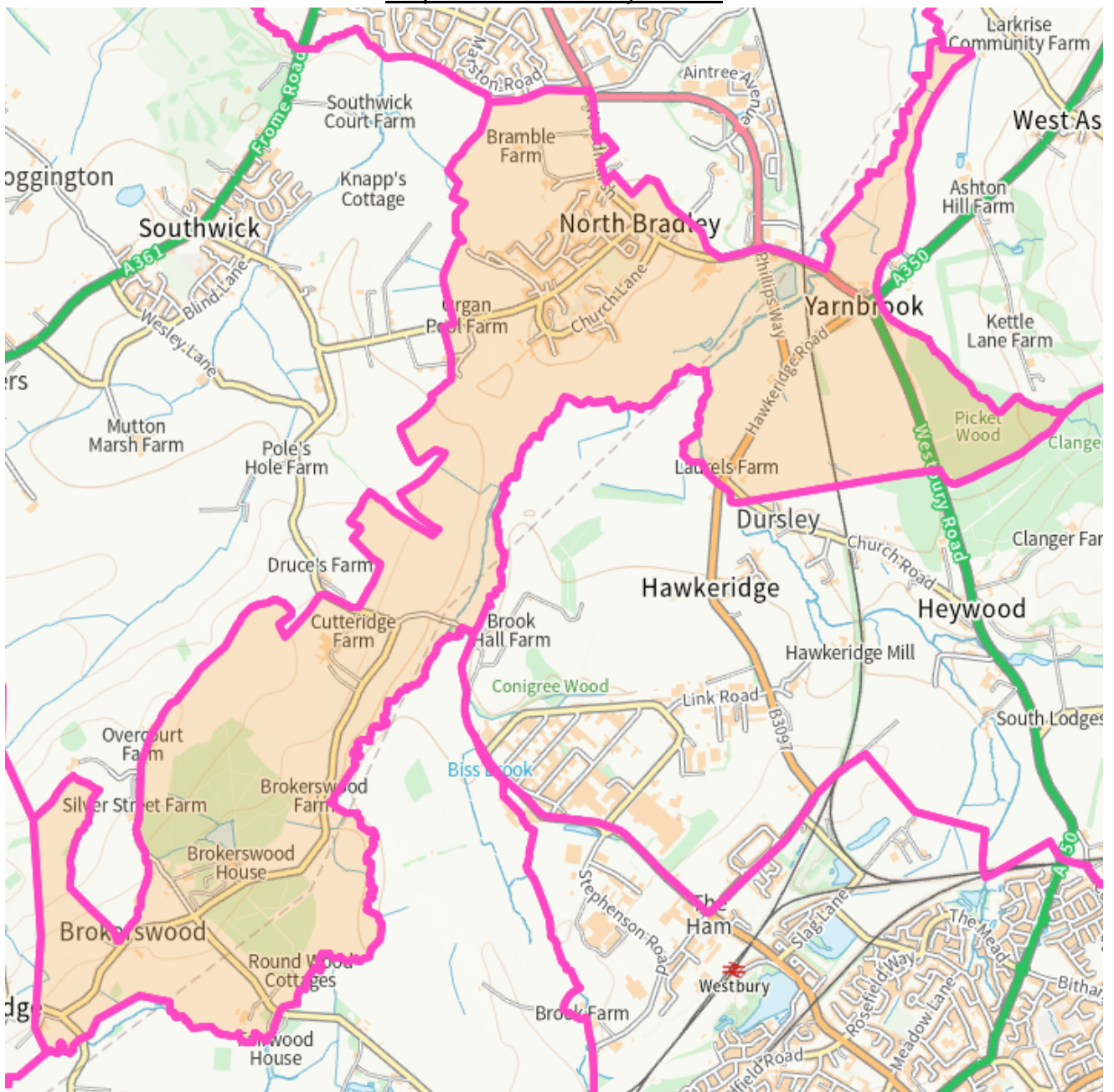
ADDITIONAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

North Bradley and Southwick

Background

1. North Bradley is a large village immediately south of Trowbridge next to the boundary with Somerset. It is bordered within Wiltshire by West Ashton to the East, Heywood and Dilton Marsh to the South, Southwick to the West, and Trowbridge to the North. In September 2023 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 1438 electors.
2. The parish is served by North Bradley Parish Council, which contains up to eleven councillors and is unwarded. The parish forms part of the Southwick Electoral Division, together with Southwick and West Ashton parishes, and is part of Trowbridge Area Board.

Map of North Bradley Parish



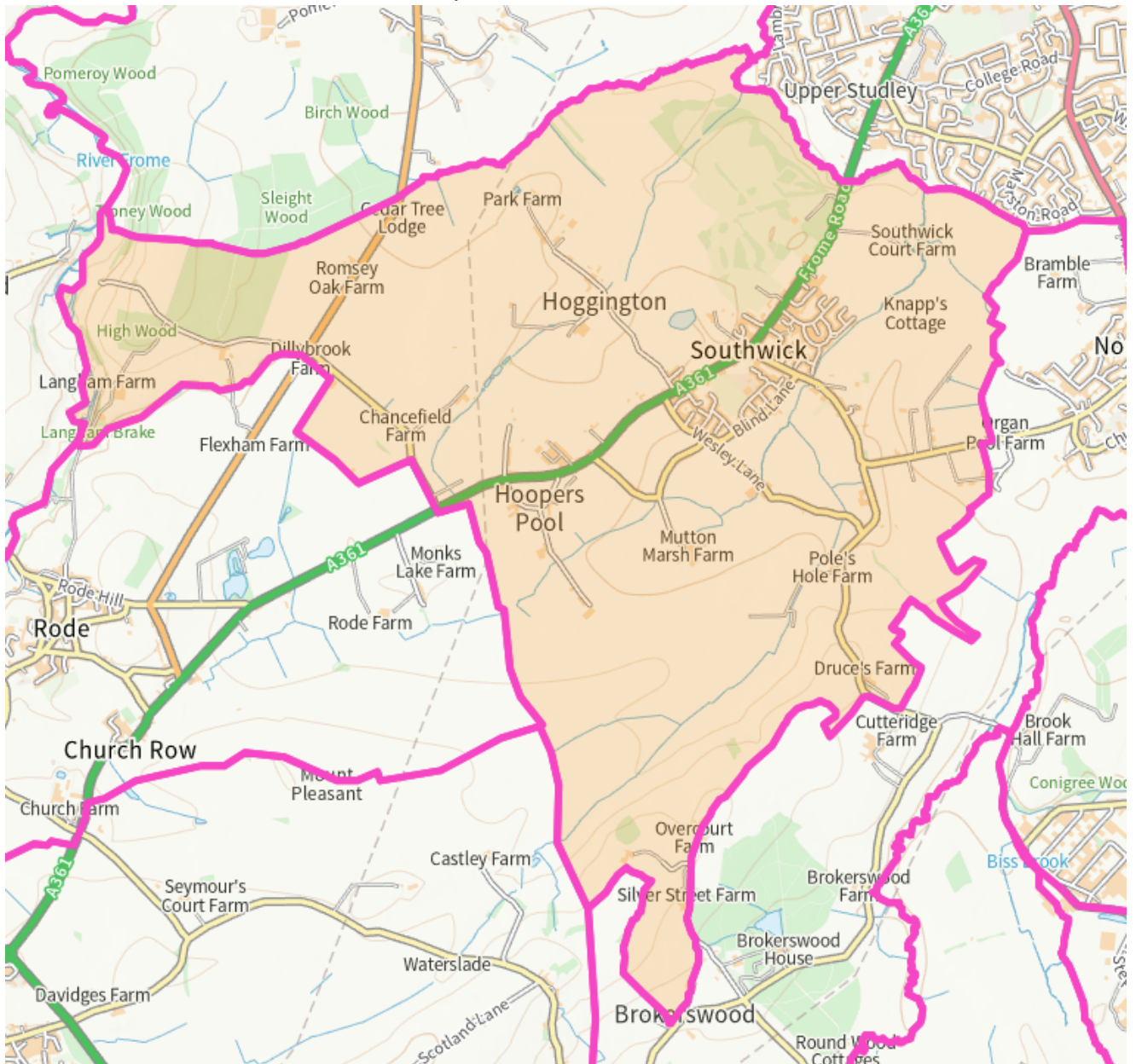
Map from <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

3. Southwick is a large village also immediately south of Trowbridge next to the boundary with

Somerset. It is bordered within Wiltshire by Wingfield to the North, North Bradley to the East and South, and Trowbridge to the North. In September 2023 the parish was estimated to contain approximately 1626 electors.

4. The parish is served by Southwick Parish Council, which contains up to eleven councillors and is unwarded. The parish forms part of the Southwick Electoral Division, together with Southwick and West Ashton parishes, and is part of Trowbridge Area Board.

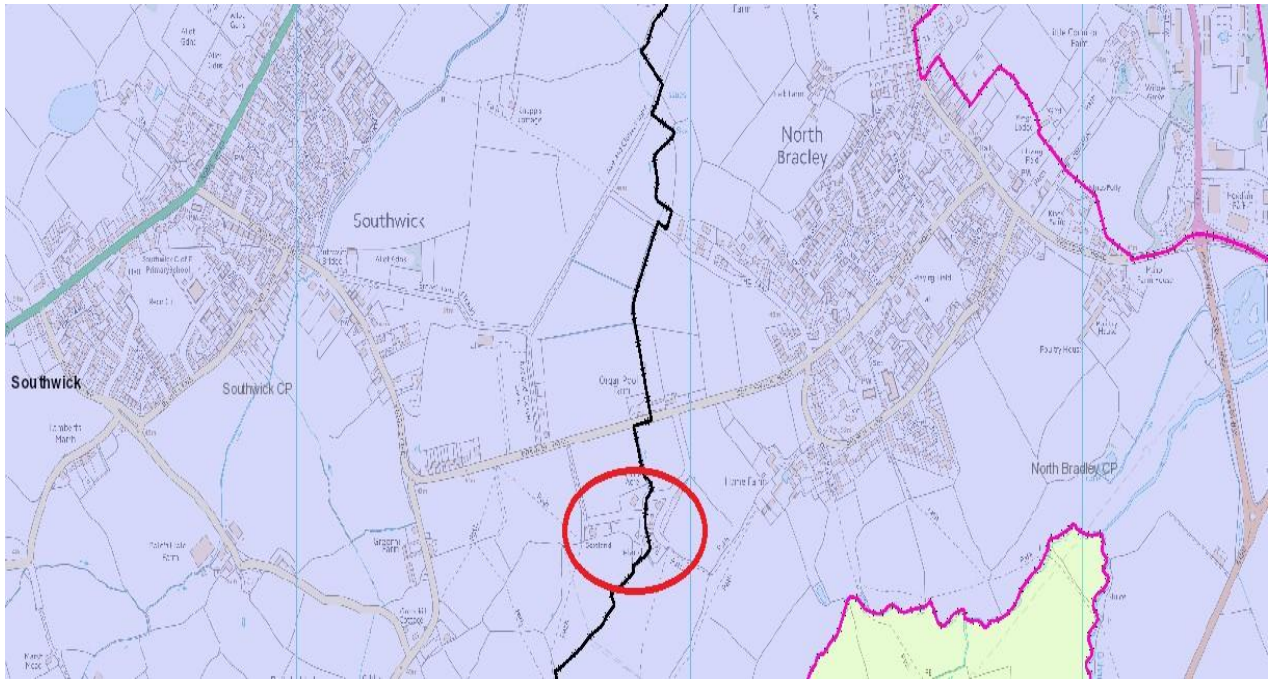
Map of Southwick Parish



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

5. The settlement(s) of Scotland and Ireland comprises a little over a dozen properties partway between the villages of Southwick and North Bradley. The boundary between the parishes of Southwick and North Bradley bisects the settlement.

Maps of Scotland and Ireland



Background to Committee Proposal

6. Although the Committee was currently engaged in a review of another part of North Bradley parish from September 2023, this had not included reviewing its boundary with Southwick.
7. Following a query from North Bradley Parish Council to the Elections team on 16 March 2024 regarding a property which they had been consulted about a submitted planning application, the Committee was advised that the boundary as currently drawn not only divided the tiny settlement at Scotland and Ireland, but ran through several properties.
8. On 21 March 2024 the parish councils for Southwick and North Bradley were contacted to enquire if they had any views about whether any changes should be made to the current boundary. Neither council was in a position to respond ahead of the next scheduled meeting of the Electoral Review Committee.
9. The terms of reference for the 2023/24 review permit the Committee to include additional minor anomalies from within any parish in Wiltshire as part of their review, notwithstanding they had not previously been subject to pre-consultation and information gathering.
10. Accordingly, at its meeting on 3 April 2024 the Committee delegated authority to the Director, Legal and Governance, to undertake a short consultation regarding the boundary at Scotland and Ireland, taking account of any views that might be received by the parish councils.
11. The parish councils were further contacted on 3 April 2024 with one potential consultation option.

Committee Proposal

12. The current boundary cutting through several properties is considered to be neither convenient nor effective.
13. Furthermore, although Scotland and Ireland are listed separately on a road sign opposite the entrance to the site, the tiny settlement is inextricably connected, being a single settlement with a single access, and no appreciable distinction between the two listed areas, and so it is considered the current arrangements also do not reflect the community interests or identity of the area.
14. It is therefore considered appropriate that the area could be unified within a single parish in accordance with the statutory criteria, and to consult for local views on such a proposal.
15. The settlement is geographically closer to the village of North Bradley, with the village speed limit signs visible from the road entrance to Scotland and Ireland. The road entrance to the settlement is currently within North Bradley, sitting at the bottom of the hill leading up toward Southwick village. By virtue of geography and community connection there appears to be greater affinity with North Bradley than Southwick for residents of Scotland and Ireland.
16. For these reasons, the Director after consultation with the Committee, under delegated authority agreed to consult with local electors on a proposal to unify the area within North Bradley.

Conclusion

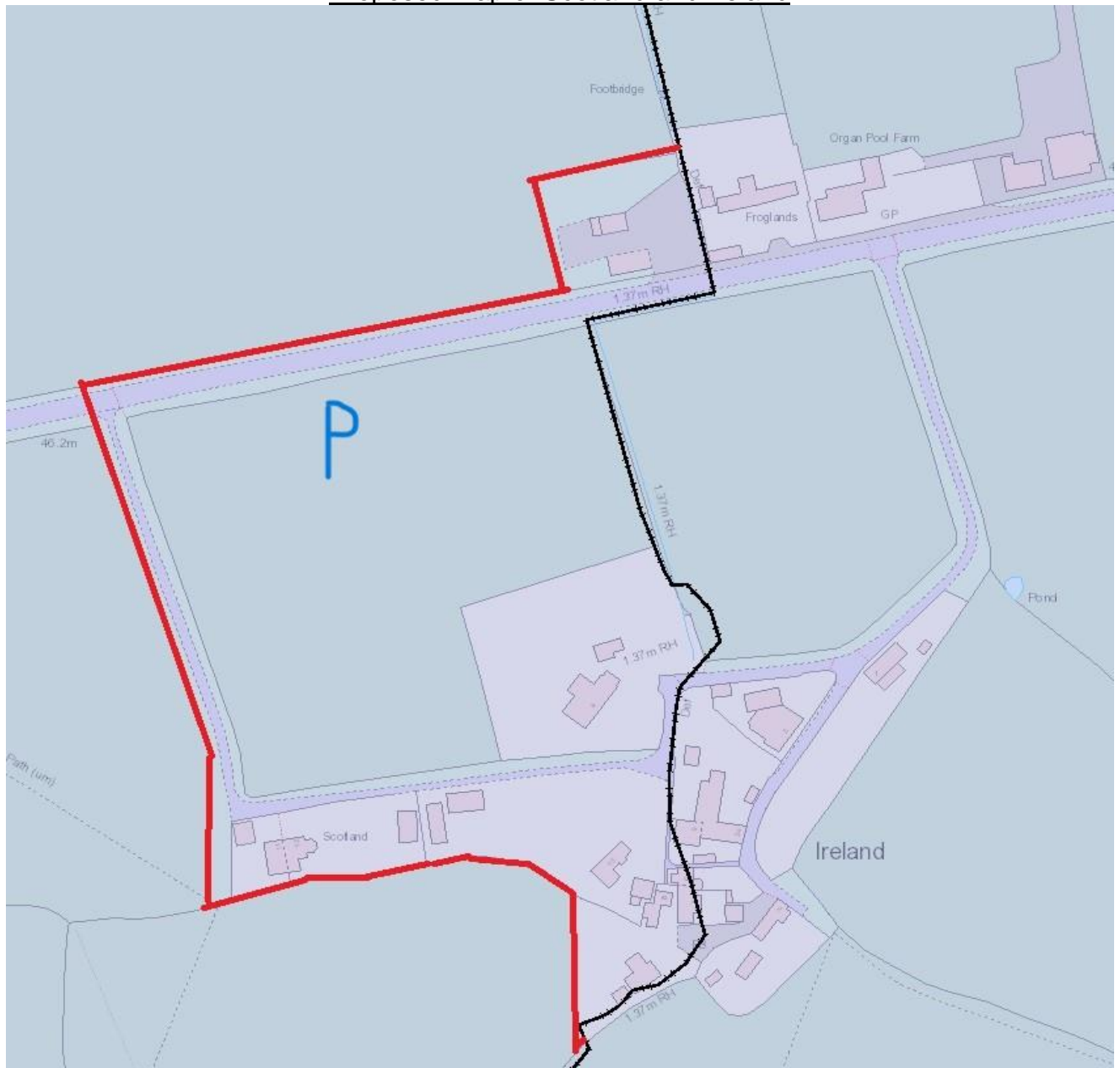
17. Having considered the evidence, statutory criteria, guidance, and other relevant information, the Committee therefore proposed the following:

Additional Recommendation 1

1.1 That the area marked as P in the map below be transferred from the parish of Southwick to the parish of North Bradley.

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

Proposed Map of Scotland and Ireland



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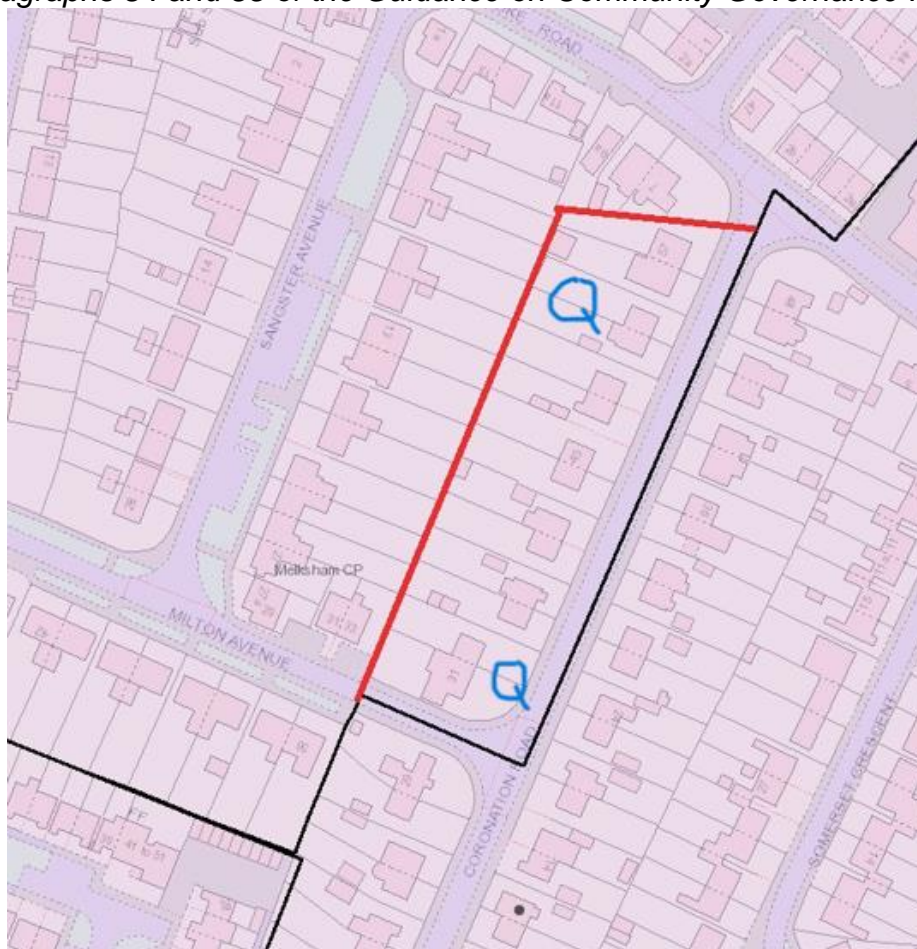
Melksham

18. In response to the Draft Recommendations consultation Melksham Town Council highlighted a further potential anomaly in the town of Melksham.
19. This related to Coronation Road, currently serving as the boundary between the Forest and South wards and Divisions. It was noted this means residents on one side of the road voted in one ward/division, and the other voted in a different ward/division, and that this was not an effective or convenient electoral governance arrangement.
20. The Committee at its meeting on 3 April 2024 agreed with the reasoning of the Town Council, which had been raised by the Local Member for the area.
21. Accordingly, it was agreed to consult upon a proposal to ensure the entirety of Coronation Road sat within a single ward/division.

Additional Recommendation

- 2.1 That the area shown as Q in the map below be transferred from Melksham Forest ward of Melksham Town Council to the Melksham South ward.
- 2.2 To request the LGBCE amend the Electoral Divisions accordingly to align to the wards.

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



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