

Appendix 3: Background Information that could be used if a council submission was submitted

Background

The electoral review of Wolverhampton by the Local Government Boundary Review for England (LGBCE) began in July 2019 with all out elections planned to take place in May 2022.

The review was triggered because 6 out of 20 wards within the local authority had an elector number variance +/- 10% the average ward elector population.

The last electoral review the Council experienced occurred in 2003. Since then, the city's population has grown by nearly 30,000 residents. The wards are being reviewed because the population in some wards has grown more than others and more development is now taking place.

The first part of the review involved the Council submitting its recommendation to the Council size.

In March 2020, the Council submitted its recommendation for the Council Size – arguing that the number of councillors should be maintained at 60 with three councillors per ward. This recommendation was accepted by the LGBCE in April 2020.

The second stage of the review – the consultation on ward boundaries – was meant to commence on 12 May 2020. However, due to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19, the electoral review had to be delayed.

The second stage of the review and public consultation instead began on 19 January 2021 with a community briefing on the 14 January, delivered by the LGBCE, on the ward boundary consultation.

The Council was asked to deliver a submission to this consultation. The LGBCE has three primary criteria that must be followed for submissions. These are:

- A. Electoral equality – the new pattern of wards should mean that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters as other councillors in the authority.
- B. Community – ward patterns should, as far as possible, reflect community interests and identities with boundaries being naturally identifiable.
- C. Effective electoral governance – the electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the Council.

What follows is the City of Wolverhampton's submission to the LGBCE's consultation on ward boundaries.

Wolverhampton Now

1. In 2019, Wolverhampton was the 18th largest city in the UK with a population of 262,008. It has seen strong economic growth over recent years with the city being named the top city in Western Europe for job creation in manufacturing, building on our already-strong automotive and aerospace sectors. Whilst the city continues to build on these existing strengths, it is also developing clusters in other key sectors whilst retaining a strong focus on investing in skills and matching local people to local jobs.
2. It is one of the top ten growing economies in the UK and is currently experiencing record levels of private and public investment, with £4.4 billion being injected into regeneration projects citywide. The city was the seventh most improved in the 2016-2018 Demos-PwC Good Growth index.
3. The city is ideally placed at the centre of the UK's rail and road network, offering unrivalled connectivity to national and international markets. The investment of £150 million to redevelop our Interchange transport hub, incorporating a brand-new railway station, will further cement the City of Wolverhampton as a place open and connected for business.
4. Wolverhampton also has a thriving digital sector, with creative industries offering huge opportunities for our businesses. Recently, the University of Wolverhampton has made a £100 million investment into a new Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment, alongside the National Brownfield Institute. This will create an international centre of excellence for urban innovation and advanced methods of construction.
5. Wolverhampton is also home to a great cultural offer including a Premier League football team in Wolverhampton Wanderers, a unique live music and comedy venue in the Civic Halls, an excellent art gallery and the beautiful, Victorian Grand Theatre. Green and open spaces make up just under one fifth of the city with attractions including two large Victorian parks, Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve, and two prime National Trust properties: Wightwick Manor and Moseley Old Hall.
6. The city is home to a thriving voluntary and community sector with individuals and groups dedicating their time to improve their communities. We value the contribution of the sector and recognise the critical role it plays in delivering the city's priorities. The sector generates over £140 million with over 12,000 volunteers.
7. Wolverhampton is diverse and cohesive. One third of our population is from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and 19% of our residents were born outside the UK. There are around 90 languages spoken within the city. Wolverhampton's diversity is the fabric which holds our city together and our people are proud of our friendly and supportive communities. The city's population continues to grow as new communities decided to move here.

8. Wolverhampton is one of the fastest improving cities in the country, however, it still has social challenges to be overcome. 25.9% of children in the city live in poverty and the authority ranks 24th in the country for overall deprivation (1 being the most deprived), with many clusters of deprived small areas in the east of the borough. However, the achievement of an Ofsted rating of 'good' for the city's children services in 2017 (the only city in the West Midlands with a rating of good or higher) is a significant indicator that the city is on the up.

Demographics

Within the LGBCE's guidance, it is recommended to examine "demographic pressures" upon the local authority. Therefore, this section details recent and projected demographic trends.

According to the Office for National Statistics' Mid-Year Population Estimates data series, between 2003 and 2018 (the latest year available), the number of people living in the city increased from 239,851 to 262,008; a growth of 9.2%. The population of adults aged 18+ in Wolverhampton (the base population from which the electorate is drawn) increased from 184,458 in 2003 to 200,764 in 2018, a growth of 8.8%.

However, within the population of adults aged 18+, not all adults will be registered to vote. This is important because the LGBCE uses the number of electors per ward (people registered to vote) to determine "electoral fairness". The LGBCE uses the concept of variance from the Wolverhampton average per ward and will intervene if over 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.

For the LGBCE review, in order to ascertain the population size into the future, the starting point is the expected adult population drawn from the Office for National Statistics' 'Sub-National Population Projections' (SNPP). The most recent SNPP (2016-based) projects the city's population from 2016 until 2041, and the population in 2041 is projected to be 286,396. As there is steep population growth according to the SNPP until the early 2040s, the total population of Wolverhampton is projected to be 270,940 by 2026, of which 64,629 people would be under 18. This leaves a total adult population, from which the electorate is drawn, of 206,311 by 2026.

Furthermore, the LGBCE requires an estimate of the proportion of the adult population registered to vote. The historical data for Wolverhampton between 2017 and 2019 yields an average ratio of 91% adult population to electorate, which has been used for the purposes of this forecast. This gives an estimated electorate via the SNPP of 187,740 electors by 2026, but this figure has been slightly revised for forecasting purposes, in light of other information about population growth external to the SNPP forecast (see the Electorate Forecasting submission for more details). Even using the SNPP's unadjusted 187,740 base, however, this would be a rise of circa 10,000 extra electors compared to the LGBCE's most recent data.

Part of the growth in extra electors is in the age profile of the population, with many present-day children who will become attainers (that is, aged 18+) by 2026. Overall, Wolverhampton has a younger population than the English average; the median age

in Wolverhampton in 2018 was 37, compared to England's median of 39. Within Wolverhampton, there is variance in the median age of residents per ward: the oldest ward is Tettenhall Wightwick (median age: 48) and the youngest ward is St Peter's (median age: 28.5).

A further reason for the increase in the electorate size is the increase in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community (residents not of White British ethnicity), due to overseas migration and high fertility rates amongst this cohort. In the 2011 Census, 35.5% (88,525) of the city's residents were from a BME background, which is very likely to have risen subsequently. However, the distribution of people from BME backgrounds is not uniform across the city. For instance, the BME population is significantly higher than average in certain wards such as St Peter's (71.8%) and Blakenhall (76.8%).

Further evidence of the impact of migration is in the number of residents who don't speak English as their main language. The most recent data for this is also from the 2011 Census, where 26,032 residents aged 3+ (10.9% of all residents aged 3+) spoke a main language that wasn't English. The two most common non-English main languages were Panjabi (11,055 residents, 4.6% of all residents aged 3+), and Polish (2,458 residents, 1.0% of all residents aged 3+).

As stated, a high level of overseas migration into Wolverhampton contributed to the population rising since 2011, when the city had 249,470 residents at the time of the Census. By 2018, the city had 262,008 residents, an increase of 12,538 residents (5.2% increase). Substantial housebuilding has taken place over recent years, with 577 net additions to the housing stock in 2016/17, 796 additions in 2017/18, and 692 additions in 2018/19, which will have been a spur to population growth. There have been increased levels of housebuilding in recent years and this will impact the city's population size in the next few years.

Although the city's population is growing, Wolverhampton has considerable deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measures relative deprivation in England following an established methodological framework. There have been five releases since 2004. As the map in Figure 4 shows, 78 of the city's 158 LSOAs (49.4% of all LSOAs) are in the top 20% most deprived overall in England. Child poverty sits at 29.2%; a fall in previous numbers.

Further evidence of the challenges faced in Wolverhampton is the Claimant Count uptake, which measures the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system. The claimant count has remained high since the recession of 2008-2010, and the position has worsened since then. In November 2019, the claimant count rate was 6.1% (England's average was at 2.9%), and the city ranked 3rd out of 317 Local Authorities.

Correspondingly, Universal Credit uptake for working-age people was also very high in recent months: in October 2019, the percentage of working-age people claiming Universal Credit due to unemployment in Wolverhampton was 7.5% (England's average stood at 4%). Even amongst employed working-age residents, 3.5% were claiming universal credit (England's average was 2.2%). Levels of child poverty

(children in low-income families) are also higher than the English average, at 25.9% for Wolverhampton compared to England's average of 17% for 2016. The employment rate stands at 67.2%.

Warding patterns for Wolverhampton 2026

Wolverhampton's electorate forecast for 2026 is set to be 190,477 (refer to where this info is from). To achieve electoral equality (divided by 60) so that each councillor represents same number of electors – 3,175. 3 members per ward – 9,524. The acceptable tolerance range for a ward would therefore be 2858 – 3493.

Currently, the six wards Bilston East, Bushbury South and Low Hill, Ettingshall, Park, Penn and St. Peter's are not within tolerance as displayed within the table below and therefore triggered the review as the cusp of the threshold was reached. As evidence below, Graiseley at -9.17% was on the cusp of the 10% set tolerance and therefore Wolverhampton is under review.

The LGBCE provide tables summarising the electorate totals per ward on their website². According to those tables, Wolverhampton had 6 wards (of 20 total) which were plus or minus 10% variance from the local authority average. This means 30% of the wards had an electorate +/-10% from the average, which is on the cusp of the threshold to trigger a review, even though it does not yet breach that threshold.

Fig.1 – Voter ratios in Wolverhampton for 2019 (LGBCE-sourced data)

Ward	Electors	Voters Per Cllr	Variance from W'ton Voter Ratio
Bilston East	10,017	3,339	12.80%
Bilston North	8,652	2,884	-2.57%
Blakenhall	8,450	2,817	-4.85%
Bushbury North	8,954	2,985	0.83%
Bushbury South and Low Hill	10,130	3,377	14.07%
East Park	8,825	2,942	-0.63%
Ettingshall	9,973	3,324	12.30%
Fallings Park	8,718	2,906	-1.83%
Graiseley	8,066	2,689	-9.17%
Heath Town	8,582	2,861	-3.36%
Merry Hill	9,079	3,026	2.23%
Oxley	8,781	2,927	-1.12%
Park	7,806	2,602	-12.10%
Penn	9,886	3,295	11.32%
Spring Vale	8,813	2,938	-0.76%
St. Peter's	7,349	2,450	-17.25%
Tettenhall Regis	9,348	3,116	5.26%
Tettenhall Wightwick	8,844	2,948	-0.41%
Wednesfield North	8,617	2,872	-2.97%

Wednesfield South	8,722	2,907	-1.79%
Wolverhampton	177,612	2,960	N/A

After running estimated population growth and estimated housing growth amongst other factors, as shown by the following figures, the wards would continue to get further away from being within the 10% tolerance; providing further rationale for the review being undertaken here at Wolverhampton.

Fig. 2 – With no alterations of PD-ward links

Ward	Electorate 2026 (constrained)	Voters per Cllr	Variance
Bilston East	11062	3687	16
Bilston North	9226	3075	-3
Blakenhall	8884	2961	-7
Bushbury North	9442	3147	-1
Bushbury South & Low Hill	11858	3953	25
East Park	9250	3083	-3
Ettingshall	11769	3923	24
Fallings Park	9080	3027	-5
Graiseley	8671	2890	-9
Heath Town	9490	3163	0
Merry Hill	9425	3142	-1
Oxley	9106	3035	-4
Park	8319	2773	-13
Penn	10215	3405	7
Spring Vale	9194	3065	-3
St. Peters	8333	2778	-13
Tettenhall Regis	9678	3226	2
Tettenhall Wightwick	9244	3081	-3
Wednesfield North	8897	2966	-7
Wednesfield South	9334	3111	-2
WOLVERHAMPTON	190477	3175	0

This submission not only considers and readjusts those wards which were out of tolerance at the time the review commenced, but also adapts the majority of the boundaries to ensure that electoral equality is delivered in the best way possible. This is achieved through considering future developments across the city and population growth and distribution. Considering future housing developments also takes account of the interests and identities of local communities. The following submission ensures any new communities are considered, whilst ensuring those already existing are not overlooked. Physical infrastructure, facilities and good transport links assist in making up these communities. Transport links, the ward size and councillor numbers all play a part in promoting and achieving effective local government.

Consideration of Natural Neighbourhoods

Both independent working groups were provided with the following map to consider when drawing up their proposals. The map highlights natural neighbourhoods within the city. This starts from the premise of looking at Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), a statistical geography used widely across central and local government, and aggregating the LSOAs according to which neighbourhood they belong to. This fulfils the LGBCE's need to start from a blank map, whilst also being mindful of community ties which exist across the city.

