

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for the City of Wolverhampton Council

Electoral review

June 2021

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A note on our mapping:

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

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

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

What is an electoral review?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why City of Wolverhampton?

7 We are conducting a review of City of Wolverhampton Council ('the Council') as the value of each vote in city council elections varies depending on where you live in Wolverhampton. Some councillors currently represent many more or fewer voters than others. This is 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where votes are as equal as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

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

Our proposals for Wolverhampton

9 Wolverhampton should be represented by 60 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Wolverhampton should have 20 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of 17 wards should change; three will stay the same.

How will the recommendations affect you?

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

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the city or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 29 June to 6 September 2021. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

15 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 6 September 2021 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 29 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

17 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Wolverhampton. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the city. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
20 April 2020	Number of councillors decided
19 January 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
29 March 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
29 June 2021	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
6 September 2021	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
2 November 2021	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

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

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

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

	2020	2026
Electorate of Wolverhampton	183,681	190,477
Number of councillors	60	60
Average number of electors per councillor	3,061	3,175

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Wolverhampton will have good electoral equality by 2026.

Submissions received

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

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2026, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2026. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 3.7% by 2026.

25 In addressing delays to the progress of this review, the Council has revisited its initial forecast in order to better reflect current information about housing development likely to take place in the next few years. Whilst this reassessment has not altered the forecast change in the total number of electors in Wolverhampton, it has changed expectations of the relative distribution of those electors around the

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

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

city. In particular, the forecasts for Bilston East, Bushbury South & Low Hill and Ettingshall now indicate a greater number of electors than shown in initial forecasts.

26 We considered the updated information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the updated projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

Number of councillors

27 The City of Wolverhampton Council currently has 60 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

28 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 60 councillors. As the Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation⁴ that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

29 We received five submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on ward patterns. The submissions proposed reductions to the number of councillors with resultant council sizes ranging from 20 to 40 councillors. None of these submissions gave us evidence regarding the ability of the Council to represent people in Wolverhampton with adequate governance, scrutiny or community engagement and we therefore based our draft recommendations on a 60-member council.

Ward boundaries consultation

30 We received 18 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included four city-wide proposals. The Council, the Conservative Group on the Council ('the Conservatives') and the City of Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') each proposed uniform schemes of 20 three-councillor wards. A scheme submitted by a resident proposed that the city be represented by 10 two-councillor wards. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for ward arrangements in particular areas of the city.

31 We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the city and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

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

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

33 Given the travel restrictions, and the social distancing arising from the Covid19 outbreak, there was a detailed virtual tour of Wolverhampton. This helped to clarify issues raised in submissions and assisted in the construction of the proposed draft boundary recommendations.

Draft recommendations

34 Our draft recommendations are for 20 three-councillor wards. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

35 The tables and maps on pages 8–26 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Wolverhampton. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

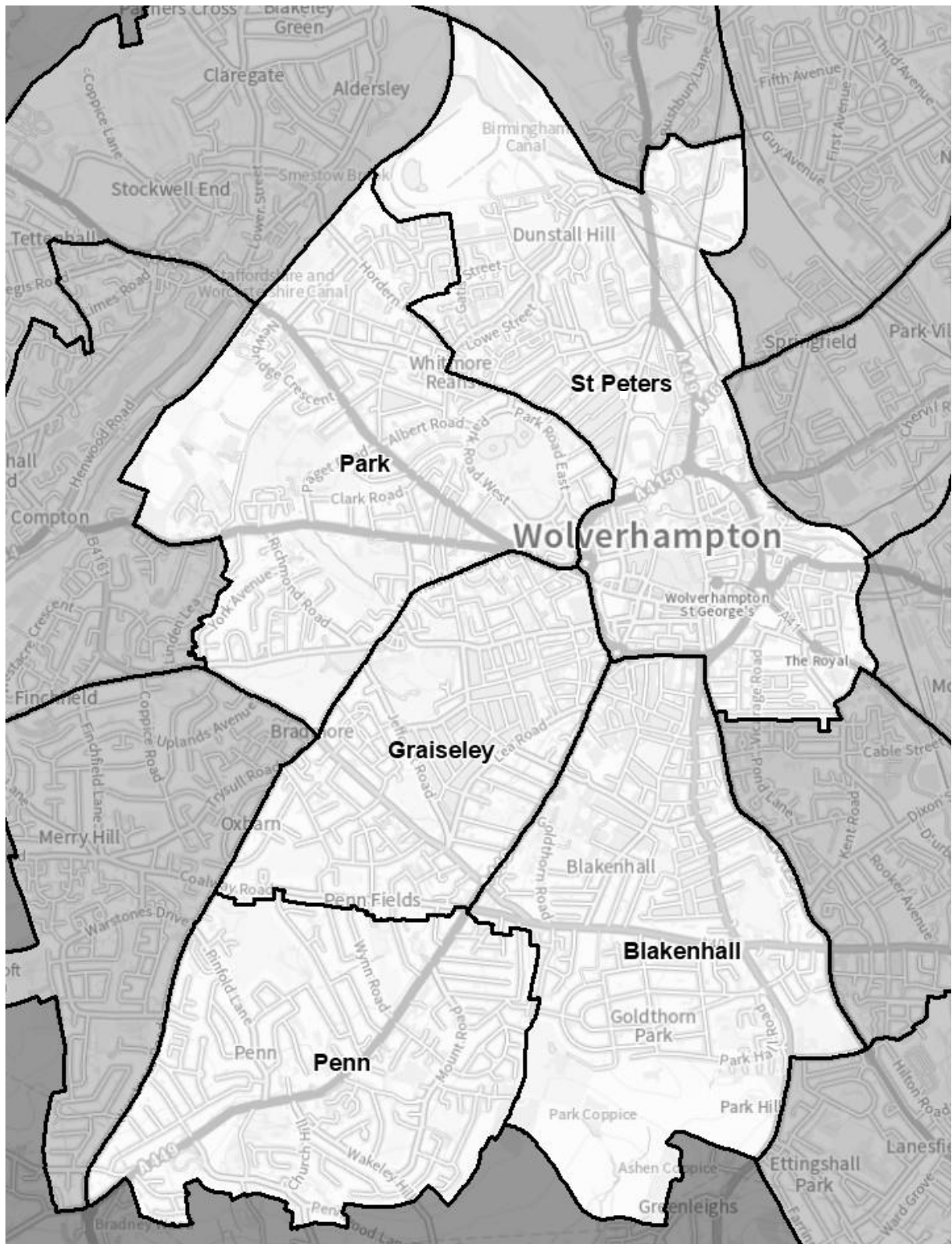
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

36 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 35 and on the large map accompanying this report.

37 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries, and the names of our proposed wards.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Wolverhampton Central



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2026
Blakenhall	3	-5%
Graiseley	3	-7%
Park	3	-2%
Penn	3	3%
St Peters	3	-4%

Blakenhall

38 Blakenhall is south of the city centre, stretching from the ring road to the city's boundary with Dudley. The ward is forecast to have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026.

39 The Council proposed very modest changes to the ward. It suggested that housing fronting onto both sides of Thompson Avenue be included in Blakenhall ward. However, we do not consider that housing on the east side relates closely to the streets that exit onto Thompson Avenue from the west side and so recommend that Thompson Avenue continues to form the eastern boundary of Blakenhall ward.

40 The Council also proposed, however, that houses on both sides of Coton Road and Goldthorn Hill are included in Blakenhall ward, stating that the houses are of a similar size and type on each side of both roads, and that cul-de-sacs here need to exit onto Goldthorn Hill. In this case, we are persuaded by the Council's comments to include those proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

41 The Liberal Democrats proposed more substantial changes to the ward. They suggested that Lea Road and the roads which run between it and Penn Road, which are currently part of Graiseley ward, be included in Blakenhall. They also proposed that the area between Parkfield Road and Lawnswood Avenue be included in Ettingshall ward. This addition to Ettingshall would accompany a substantial transfer of part of that ward to St Peters. We are not including these proposals for Blakenhall as part of our draft recommendations because we are not persuaded that they best reflect community identities in the wards concerned.

42 The Conservatives also proposed substantial changes to Blakenhall. Their suggestion was that the part of Blakenhall ward which lies to the north of Marston Road be added to Ettingshall, and that part of Ettingshall Park to the north of Laburnum Road and Delhurst Avenue, currently in Spring Vale ward, be added to Blakenhall. We note the Conservatives' view that Ettingshall Park is a community which is part of Blakenhall, but we are not persuaded that Delhurst Avenue marks a boundary between communities on Farrington Road, Grosvenor Road and Dovedale Road. We are not, therefore, including the Conservatives' proposals for Blakenhall as part of our draft recommendations.

43 Our draft recommendation for Blakenhall envisages minimal amendment to the boundary of the current ward. We are not persuaded that substantial change to the

ward is necessary either to improve the reflection of community identities and interests or to secure improvements to electoral equality in neighbouring areas.

Graiseley and Penn

44 The Council and the Conservatives both described the Graiseley and Penn wards in similar terms. Graiseley is an inner-city, largely residential ward which extends out of the city in a south-westerly direction and gradually takes on a more suburban aspect. Towards the city centre the housing is more varied compared with the older nature of the housing in the Penn Fields area. Penn ward lies to the south, between Graiseley and the city boundary.

45 One resident proposed that Penn be included in South Staffordshire district. We do not have the power to make recommendations to change the city boundary as part of this review and therefore we are unable to take this suggestion any further.

46 We described in paragraph 41 the proposal of the Liberal Democrats to include the Lea Road area of Graiseley in Blakenhall ward, and our reasons for not including it as part of our draft recommendations. They also proposed the inclusion of the York Avenue area, currently part of Park ward, in Graiseley. However, we are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, taken as a whole, would provide wards which reflect the identity and interests of all the communities involved and we are not including this particular element of their proposals in our draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrats also matched the Conservatives in proposing that Leighton Road, Wynn Road and Woodfield Avenue be included in Graiseley ward. Whilst this would improve the disparity between electoral variances for 2026, we are not persuaded that these streets have greater community linkages to areas on the north side of Coalway Road than to their neighbours in Penn.

47 We note the Council's comments about housing on both sides Coalway Road being, for the most part, large detached and semi-detached properties. The Council proposed that that both sides of Coalway Road should be in Graiseley ward. This would be consistent with the approach suggested for Goldthorn Hill and Coton Road described in paragraph 40 and we are similarly persuaded to include both sides of Coalway Road in Graiseley ward.

Park and St Peters

48 Both of these wards are forecast to have 13% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026. However, we also note that Bushbury South & Low Hill and Ettingshall wards, which lie adjacent to St Peters, are forecast to have considerably more electors per councillor than the average, with variances of 25% and 24% respectively.

49 Neither the Council nor the Conservatives proposed changes to Park ward which would adequately address the forecast level of electoral inequality. The Liberal Democrats proposed that the Farndale Avenue and Gatis Street areas to the north-

east of Hordern Road should be included in Park ward. This would give Park ward 8% more electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026, and therefore be within our normal range of tolerance around electoral equality. However, given our draft recommendations for St Peters ward described below, adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposal for Gatis Street would leave St Peters ward with a relatively high electoral variance of -13% by 2026.

50 We note that Farndale Avenue is the spine road in a modern housing estate which takes its access only from Hordern Road. Furthermore, Gatis Street is the spine road for a similarly modern housing development, but one which takes its access from both Craddock Street and Dunstall Lane. Whilst we recognise that these housing areas are different in character from most of the housing areas in the current Park ward, we do consider that adding the Farndale Avenue development to Park ward allows us to ensure that both Park and St Peters wards will have good electoral equality by 2026.

51 St Peters ward takes in the whole of the city's civic, shopping and commercial centre, tightly bounded by a ring road. The ward extends northwards to the residential areas of Dunstall Hill. It takes its name from St Peter's Church, which is in the city centre.

52 One local resident told us that St Peters ward should not include the city centre because reported spending on city centre services skews the spending in residential parts of the ward. We must, however, provide for the city centre to be included in a ward as there are, and will continue to be, people entitled to vote in city council elections living in the city centre. Additionally, the area contained within the city centre ring road is not large enough to constitute a city ward which would be consistent with our wider objectives for a good pattern of ward boundaries.

53 Forecasts for the ward show that by 2026, the number of electors in the city centre will have increased substantially as a result of a number of housing developments. However, these will not provide sufficient growth to ensure that the current ward would have good electoral equality. Adding the changes to the current ward at Farndale Avenue and Leverton Rise, which we describe in paragraphs 50 and 63 respectively, would result in even greater electoral inequality.

54 The Council, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats all propose that the site of proposed housing development on Bone Mill Lane be located in St Peters ward. This is expected to accommodate 600 electors by 2026, but still is not sufficient to ensure good electoral equality. Nevertheless, we do consider that the development will relate well to the city centre and are including this change in our draft recommendations for the eastern side of St Peters ward.

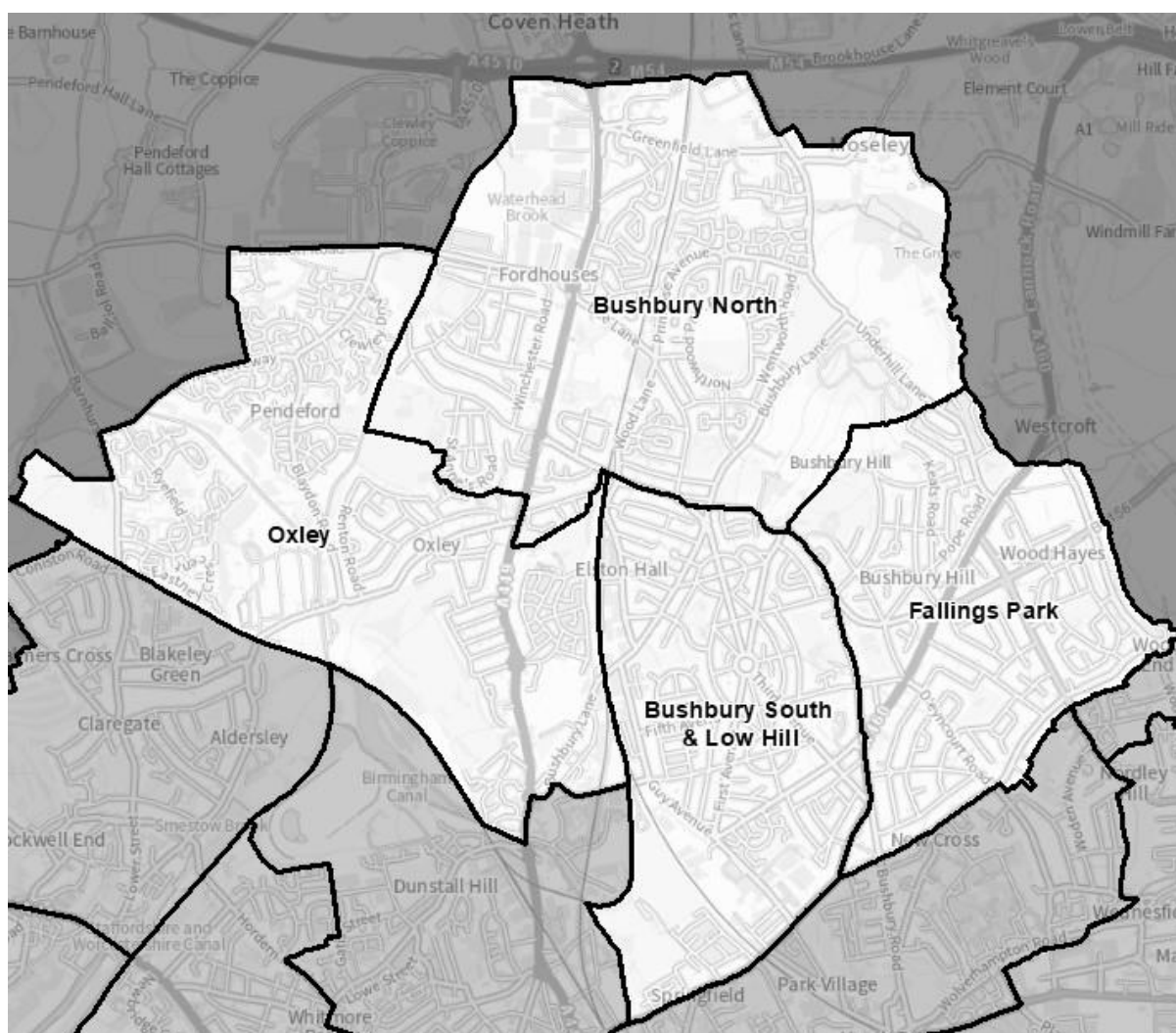
55 The Conservatives proposed adding the part of Bushbury South & Low Hill ward which lies between the West Coast Main Line and the and A449 Stafford Road

to St Peters. The Liberal Democrats proposed that a larger part be added by including all the properties between Park Lane and Stafford Road. They would also add the Walsall Street area from East Park and a substantial northern part of Ettingshall ward. The Council proposed that St Peters ward be extended to the Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton railway line and then the West Coast Main Line from Wolverhampton rail station to the A454 at Horseley Fields. The Council explained that this takes in the estates in Albion Street and the proposed Canalside South, which are predominantly commuter/city-living estates with local residents using facilities to commute into Birmingham.

56 We have taken elements of all of these proposals in forming our draft recommendations but modified and added to them in ways which we consider will secure good electoral equality, reflect community identities and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government.

57 Our draft recommendation is that St Peters ward include the whole of Mammoth Drive, Coxwell Avenue, Fox's Lane, Crown Street and Bone Mill Lane. We also include Cross Street North. We then follow the boundary proposed by the Council to include the Albion Street area. We propose to add to St Peters ward that part of East Park which lies to the west of the Birmingham Canal as we consider that those living in the Walsall Street area have interests in common with the communities near the ring road rather than more distant communities in East Park ward. We also propose to add to St Peters ward, All Saints Road and the substantial residential development proposed at the former Royal Hospital site. These extensive changes mean that St Peters ward would have 4% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026 whilst also providing good electoral equality for all of the surrounding wards.

Wolverhampton North



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2026
Bushbury North	3	9%
Bushbury South & Low Hill	3	1%
Fallings Park	3	-2%
Oxley	3	9%

Bushbury North and Oxley

58 Bushbury North is on the northern edge of the city. It is a largely residential area, although there is an extensive area of industrial and commercial activity on the north-western part of the ward, whilst the eastern parts of the ward predominantly are open space. To the west and south-west of Bushbury North lies Oxley ward, again a predominantly residential ward. The ward is described by the Conservatives as having the three distinct constituent parts of Pendeford, Dovecotes and Oxley.

59 The Council proposed very modest changes to the boundaries of Bushbury North. That proposal would embrace all of the properties at the eastern end of Elston

Hall Lane in the ward. We agree that numbers 90 to 114 Elston Hall Lane should be included in Bushbury North, joining the houses that face them. However, we also consider that the local shops on the part of Bushbury Lane to the north of the roundabout at Kempthorne Avenue should be included in the same ward as those to the south in order that any issues arising from this local commercial and service centre can be addressed as a whole.

60 The Council also proposed that in the east of the ward, the boundary should follow the line of a footpath running to the south of the Bushbury Cemetery & Crematorium. We have noted that the current boundary is not clearly defined where it crosses the cemetery and therefore accept the Council's proposal. This would mean that the whole of the cemetery and the whole of Northcote Farm & Country Park would lie in Bushbury North.

61 The Conservatives proposed a small change to the Bushbury North ward to include Watson Road, a cul-de-sac close to the junction of Marsh Lane and Patshull Avenue. They also proposed that McLean Road and Marsh Lane Parade be included in Bushbury North, bringing all of the local shopping facilities at Stafford Road into one ward. We consider that these proposals have merit and include them as part of our draft recommendations.

62 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the Patshull Avenue area, which lies to the north of Marsh Lane, be added to Oxley ward and, in effect, be replaced by including the Tennyson Road area of Bushbury Hill in Bushbury North. The addition of Patshull Avenue to Oxley would be offset by adding the southern part of Oxley to Bushbury South & Low Hill ward. We are not persuaded that Patshull Avenue and Winchester Road should lie in different wards or that the Tennyson Road area should be included in a Bushbury North ward to which it has no direct road access. Nor are we persuaded by the suggestion that the southern part of Oxley should be excluded from Oxley ward.

63 The Council proposed a small change to Oxley ward, adding South Street and the Leverton Rise area, which lies to the north of the Birmingham Canal and to the west of Stafford Road. We consider that this area is better related to Oxley than to the St Peters ward area to the south, and therefore include the Council's proposal for this area as part of our draft recommendations. The Conservatives proposed a more substantial change to Oxley. This would add the area of a modern and ongoing housing development at Akron Gate. The development is currently part of Bushbury South & Low Hill ward, which is forecast to have 25% more electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026.

64 We note that the principal access of the Akron Gate development is to Stafford Road via a roundabout at Mercury Drive. Development plans indicate that the area will also have access to Bushbury Lane via the new Banbury Place development. Bushbury Lane runs north-eastwards from Stafford Road passing through

commercial areas and crossing the main railway line which links Wolverhampton to North West England and beyond. Whilst Bushbury Lane provides an accessible crossing of the railway, we are persuaded that the Akron Gate and Banbury Place areas, together with the housing on Bushbury Lane which backs on to Bushbury Lane Academy, relate better to Oxley than to Low Hill. We therefore accept the Conservatives' proposal to add Akron Gate to Oxley ward, but we are also including housing at the southern end of Bushbury Lane in the ward.

65 Without further amendment to Oxley, our acceptance of both the Council's and the Conservatives' proposals would result in Oxley having 18% more electors per councillor than the average for the city, a variance considerably higher than that we would normally recommend. Marsh Lane is the spine of the road layout of a large housing area. As we have described in paragraph 61, Marsh Lane provides the main road access to Watson Road. It also provides the only direct road access to St Anne's Road. We therefore propose to include St Anne's Road in addition to Watson Road to Bushbury North, giving both that ward and Oxley ward electoral variances of 9% by 2026.

66 A local resident proposed that the part of Oxley between Stafford Road and the canal should be part of Bushbury. The whole of Bushbury should then be divided into three or four wards. This proposal would not be consistent with our presumption that we should provide for three-councillor wards or that we have sufficient grounds to override that presumption. Therefore, we have not included this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

67 Another resident proposed that Oxley ward be renamed Pendeford. We are not including this suggestion as part of our draft recommendations as we note that the Pendeford area contributes less than a third of the electorate of our proposed ward.

Bushbury South & Low Hill

68 As we indicated in paragraph 63, Bushbury South & Low Hill is forecast to have 25% more electors per councillor than the average for the city. We are not prepared to maintain such a level of electoral inequality in our draft recommendations. Our proposal for Oxley ward partially addresses that inequality.

69 The Council proposed that instead of excluding Akron Gate from Bushbury South & Low Hill ward, the Hallam Crescent and Norbury Road areas be excluded. We are not persuaded that Akron Gate is as well-related to Low Hill as the area to the south of Park Road and therefore do not accept the Council's proposal as part of our draft recommendations. However, as described in paragraph 54 we have accepted the proposal made by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats that the site of housing development on Bone Mill Lane be included in St Peters ward.

70 Our proposals for Bushbury South & Low Hill mean that the ward would have 1% more electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026.

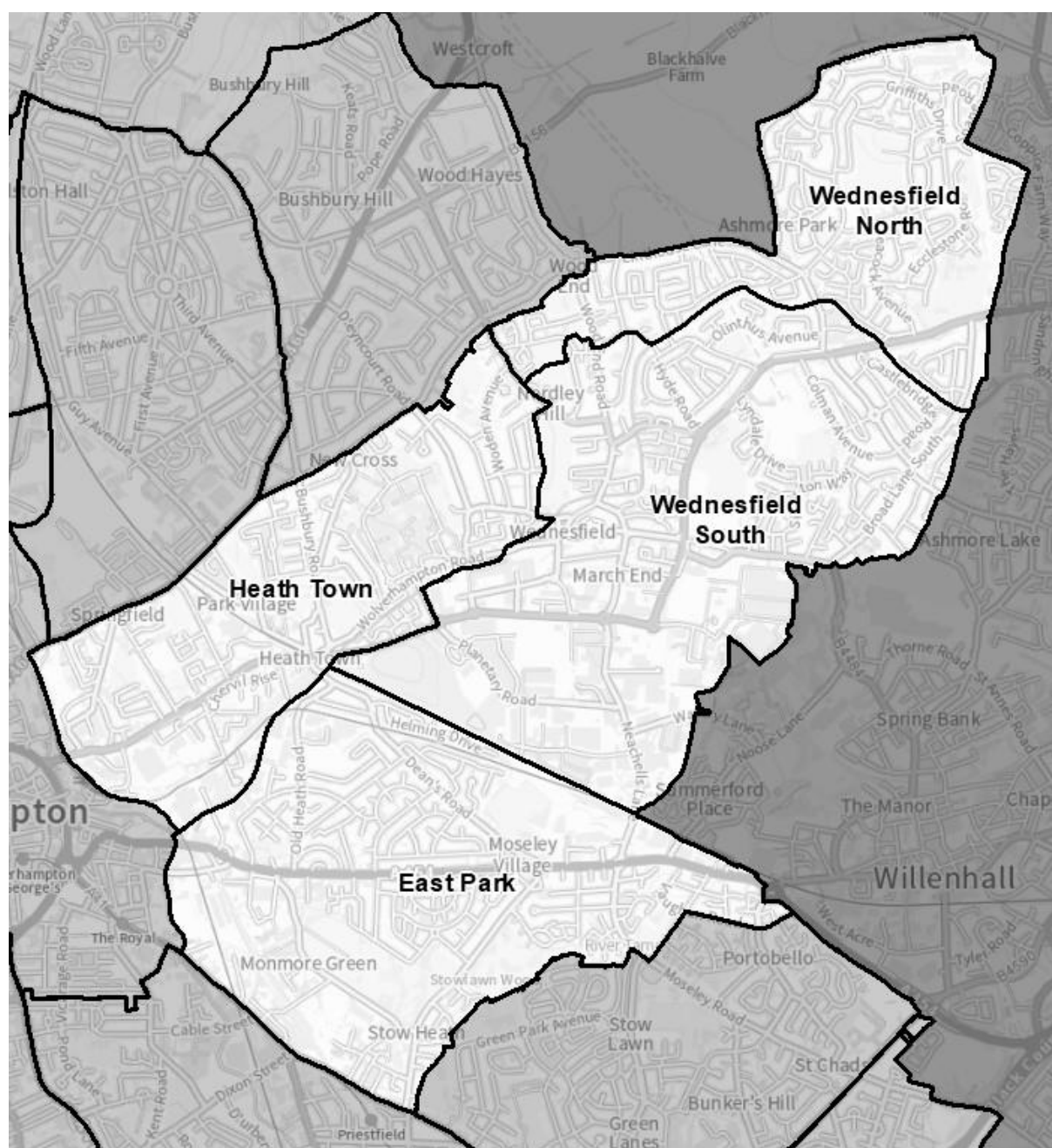
Fallings Park

71 The Conservatives describe Fallings Park as a residential suburb with much of the housing being inter-war council housing with later housing being of mixed tenures. The Council proposed to add to the ward an area to the south of Park Lane currently in Bushbury South & Low Hill ward. As we described in paragraph 69, we are not persuaded to include this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

72 The Conservatives proposed to add an area to the south of Prestwood Road West and Lower Prestwood Road to Fallings Park. This area currently forms part of Wednesfield North ward and would be replaced by Olinthus Avenue and Castlebridge Road. Whilst we consider that those areas are better related to their neighbours in Wednesfield South than to Wednesfield North, we do agree that combining houses on Prestwood Road West and Lower Prestwood Road with those which face them in Fallings Park ward has merit and make that proposal part of our draft recommendations.

73 In consequence of our draft recommendations, Fallings Park ward would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026.

Wolverhampton North-east



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2026
East Park	3	-2%
Heath Town	3	-4%
Wednesfield North	3	-6%
Wednesfield South	3	-3%

East Park

74 The Council and the Conservatives describe East Park ward in broadly similar terms. The ward is on the eastern edge of the city centre with East Park itself lying

between Moseley Village and Monmore Green and Stow Heath. The ward has a mixture of housing types, age and tenure, but there are also some large industrial estates in the west of the ward.

75 The Council proposed modest changes to East Park ward, adding the Alcester Drive housing estate. The Liberal Democrats proposed adding not only Alcester Drive but also Lawnside Green and the residential roads to the north of Green Park Drive. The Conservatives went even further, adding Oaklands Green to East Park. We have looked at the layout of housing in this area and agree with those submissions in respect of Alcester Drive, but are not persuaded to add those further roads from Bilston North.

76 The Liberal Democrats would add the Walsall Street area to St Peters ward whilst the Conservatives would add that area to Heath Town. We agree that this area is isolated from other residential parts of East Park ward by extensive industrial areas and better related to other residential areas on the eastern fringe of the city centre. As we described earlier in this report, our draft recommendation is to add the Walsall Street area to St Peters ward.

77 We received proposals to exclude other areas from East Park ward but in each case, having regard to electoral equality and community identity, do not propose to incorporate them into our draft recommendations. This includes the Council's proposal that the eastern parts of Brook Road and Vaughan Road should be added to Bilston North ward. We are not persuaded to recommend this as we consider that the whole of Brook Road forms part of a distinct and identifiable housing estate. The Liberal Democrats proposed to add Monmore Green to Ettingshall. This would include the part of Stow Heath which lies between Culwick Street and Stowheath Lane. We are not persuaded to recommend that those living at Stow Heath be divided between Ettingshall and East Park wards. In particular, we consider that Stowheath Lane provides the core of a distinct housing area surrounded by commercial and educational land uses and extensive parklands.

78 The Conservatives proposed that the housing area which is centred on Old Heath Road be divided between wards: St Giles Road and other roads to the east of Old Heath Road forming part of East Park ward whilst Stanton Road and the Eastfield roads forming part of Heath Town ward. Whilst we note that this proposal would not result in good electoral equality, we also consider that the whole area to the west of Deans Road forms a distinct and identifiable area which we would not wish to divide between wards.

Heath Town

79 Heath Town ward lies immediately to the north-east of the city centre, extending from the ring road to the edge of Wednesfield. The south-west half of the ward includes the Springfield estate, the Heath Town High Rise estate and Park Village estate. It includes university-based housing as well a growing university

campus. The north-eastern part of the ward is dominated by the campus of New Cross Hospital and either side of this are predominantly private houses built between and after the wars.

80 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the current ward boundaries be retained, The Council proposed that the area between the ring road and the West Coast Main Line be added to St Peters ward, a proposal we have accepted (see paragraph 57). The Council also proposed that the Barbel Drive area be excluded from Heath Town ward and added to Wednesfield South ward. We note that this area is only accessible to the remainder of Heath Town by Wednesfield Way and New Cross Avenue, roads which cross the Wyrley & Essington Canal. However, we also note that Barbel Drive is at a considerable distance from other residential areas of Wednesfield South, being separated from them by industrial and commercial estates. For this reason, we are not incorporating this aspect of the Council's proposals in our draft recommendations. The Council did, however, propose that a small area between the canal and Wolverhampton Road be added to Heath Town ward from Wednesfield South. In similarly recognising the separation of this area from other residential parts of Wednesfield South, we do accept this proposal as part of the draft recommendations.

81 The Conservatives proposed that Graiseley Lane and the roads leading to Nordley Hill be excluded from Heath Town ward and added to Wednesfield South. This proposal is consistent with the views of a local resident who described both Graiseley Lane and Nordley Hill as amongst the oldest parts of Wednesfield and citing the proximity of these areas to Wednesfield town centre.

82 Whilst we recognise the proximity of the town centre, we are not persuaded to accept the Conservatives' proposal. In order to secure good electoral equality, it would be necessary to add electors from adjacent wards. The Conservatives proposed to add the Walsall Street area and the Stanton Road and Eastfield Road area to Heath Town ward. However, not even these additions would ensure good electoral equality by 2026. In addition, the Conservatives would address a resultant inequality in Wednesfield South by transferring Olinthus Avenue and the Castlebridge Road area from Wednesfield South to Wednesfield North. We are not persuaded that these consequences, which would split the communities bounded by the Wyrley & Essington Canal, should form part of our draft recommendations.

83 In addition to our draft recommendations outlined above, we propose that housing on both sides of Prestwood Road West be included in Fallings Park ward. The houses on the south-east side are of similar character to those which they face but less similar to those in areas served by Victoria Road and Amos Lane. While this does not necessarily indicate, of itself, that they share a community identity, this proposal would ensure a cohesive warding pattern in this area.

Wednesfield North and Wednesfield South

84 Wednesfield North is a predominantly residential ward in the north-east corner of the city. Much of the housing to the north-east is the large Ashmore Park estate. Other housing is private housing built between the wars, with some more modern development. Wednesfield South ward is split almost into two halves, with the residential portion being in the north of the ward and a large industrial area in the south of the ward. Residential areas are varied, generally comprising traditional early 20th-century development, inter-war and post-war housing, circa 1960s development including sporadic apartment blocks and more modern suburban areas.

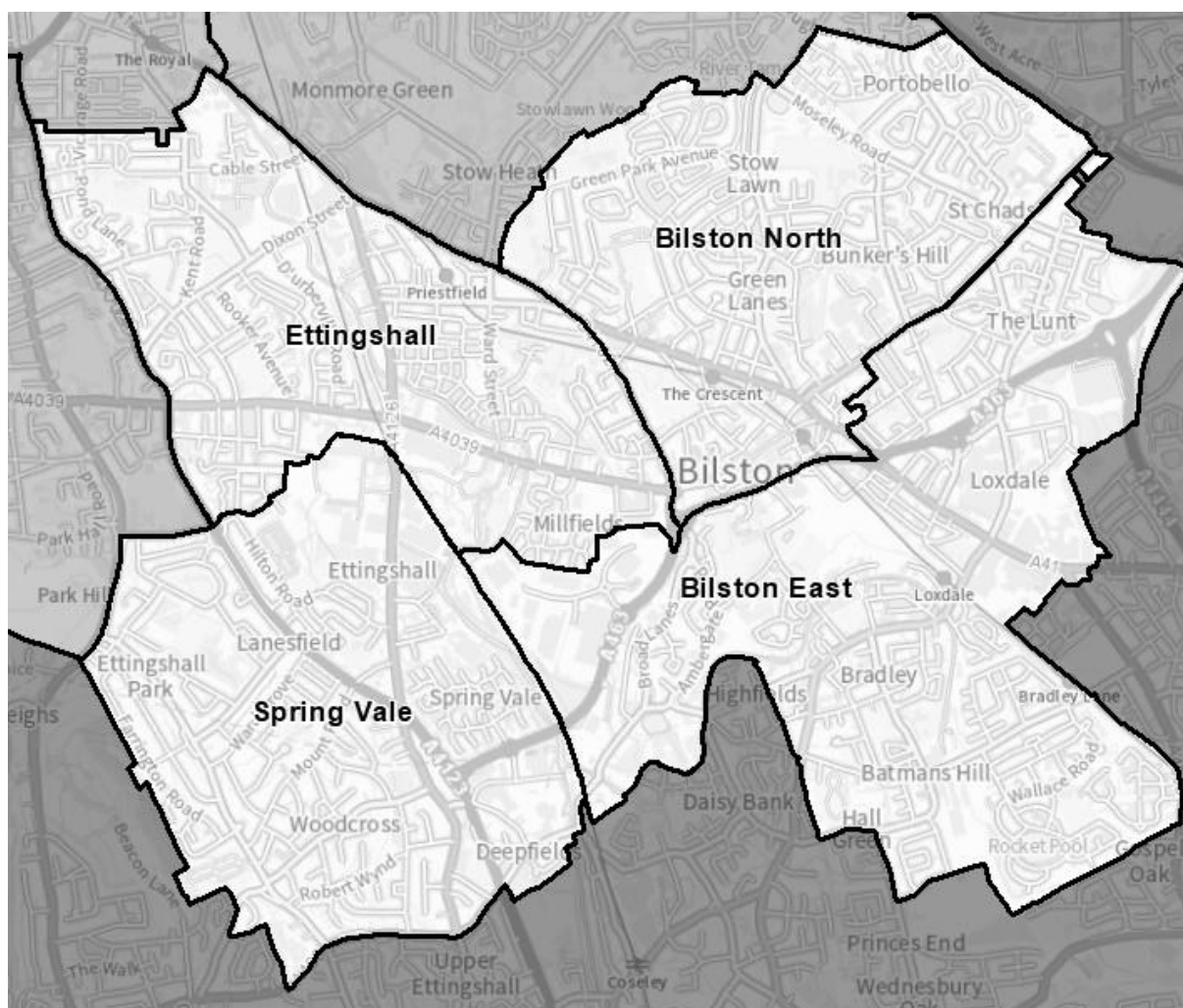
85 Councillor Hicken of Walsall Council advocated amendments to the external boundary between Walsall and Wolverhampton. Whilst the changes proposed may be viewed as ‘tidying up’ anomalies resulting from housing development, we cannot make such changes part of this electoral review.

86 The Liberal Democrats proposed that no changes be made to the boundaries of Wednesfield North or Wednesfield South whilst the Conservatives proposed substantial changes to these wards, linked in part to their proposal for the Heath Town ward described in paragraph 82. They would add Orchard Road, Prestwood Avenue and the northern part of Wood End Road to Fallings Park ward and move the residential areas around Olinthus Avenue and the Castlebridge Road area from Wednesfield South to Wednesfield South. We have looked carefully at these areas but, whilst we note that the Conservatives’ proposals would provide good electoral equality in both Wednesfield North and Wednesfield South, we are not persuaded that they would present an accurate reflection of community identities and interests. We do not consider that Moat House Lane East would provide a distinguishing boundary between the communities to the east and west of the Edward the Elder Primary School, or that Stubby Lane would provide a similar boundary between communities living in the Castlebridge Road and Colman Avenue areas.

87 The Council proposed minor changes at Argil Close, Wood End Road and at Barbel Drive and Wolverhampton Road. We recommend a modification of the Council’s proposal by including Suffolk Close, Exmoor Green and the Bellamy Lane Playing Fields in Wednesfield North ward and, similar to our recommendation for Prestwood Road West, propose that housing on both sides of Prestwood Road be included in Fallings Park ward. This being the case, we do not propose to accept the Council’s suggestion that Argil Close be included in Wednesfield North.

88 Our draft recommendations provide for 6% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city in Wednesfield North and 3% fewer in Wednesfield South by 2026.

Wolverhampton South-east



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2026
Bilston East	3	8%
Bilston North	3	3%
Ettingshall	3	1%
Spring Vale	3	4%

Bilston East and Bilston North

89 Bilston East is forecast to have an electoral variance of 16% more electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026. The Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all recognised that this degree of electoral inequality should be avoided. Bilston North, if unchanged, would have a variance of -3% by 2026.

90 The Conservatives proposed a pattern of extensive changes to the Bilston wards. They proposed that the Ladymoor area be excluded from Bilston East and added to Spring Vale ward and that the area north of the High Street be added to Bilston North from Bilston East. They also proposed to add to Bilston North, Hickman

Park and the housing areas to the west of Ward Street, which currently lie in Ettingshall ward. These changes would reduce electoral inequality in both Bilston East and Ettingshall. Consequential inequality in Bilston North would be addressed by transferring a substantial area from the northern part of Bilston North ward to East Park as described in paragraph 75.

91 The proposal for Ladymoor would mean that the Bilston East ward boundary would be marked by the edge of the Bilston Urban Village, which is an extensive mixed-use development currently under construction. Whilst we recognise that the housing in Broad Lanes is of a different character to that in the urban village, we consider that the immediate proximity of that development will raise issues for Broad Lanes. This may be more effectively addressed if they are in the same ward than if Broad Lanes were to be included in a Spring Vale ward, which will have its focus well away from the urban village.

92 To the east of Ward Street is an area of mixed housing, but one in which development is taking place under the auspices of an urban regeneration scheme set out by the Ward Street Master Plan. We consider that this scheme will strengthen the ties between the area and the remainder of Ettingshall ward and we therefore do not propose to recommend the inclusion of this area in Bilston North ward.

93 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the part of Bilston East which lies between Mount Pleasant and the A463 be included in Bilston North ward and that this be offset by adding the northern part of Bilston North to East Park. This proposal would leave the residential area around St Chad's Road and Darlaston Lane remote from the remainder of Bilston East's residential areas and break the link between Vernon Road and Lonsdale Road, parts of the same housing estate. Whilst we note that these proposals would provide good electoral equality in the south-eastern part of the city, we are not persuaded that either would best reflect community identities and interests. We have therefore not included them as part of our draft recommendations.

94 The Council proposed a less complex pattern of changes to existing ward boundaries by including the whole of Bilston town centre and Hickman Park in Bilston North. We accept this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. The Council would then include Alcester Drive in East Park which, as stated earlier in this report, we have accepted as part of our draft recommendations. The Council would also transfer the eastern part of Brook Road and the northern part of New Street from East Park ward to Bilston North.

95 We are not persuaded by the Council's proposals for Brook Road and New Street as we consider that the whole of Brook Road forms part of a distinct and identifiable housing estate.

96 We note that the Council proposed that the Bilston Campus of the City of Wolverhampton College be included in East Park ward. We would particularly like to

hear evidence relating to this change during the current consultation. We would also like to hear views about the name of Bilston East ward. The Conservatives proposed that it be named Bilston South, but we would be interested to receive further views on this.

Ettingshall and Spring Vale

97 Ettingshall is an inner-city ward with a mix of industrial, retail and residential land uses. The All Saints area in the north of the ward is composed of older terraced housing. The area also includes the site of the former Royal Hospital, which is under redevelopment, providing a significant element of urban renewal. To the south of All Saints Road the housing tends to be in lower density estates, many being council-built between the wars. Ettingshall extends south-eastwards where it meets Spring Vale, an outer city ward where part of the boundary coincides with the city boundary.

98 Ettingshall is forecast to have 24% more electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026. This would mean significant under-representation for people living in the ward. Part of our obligation in carrying out this review is to address this under-representation. This in turn inevitably means that changes to the boundaries of the ward are required. Spring Vale, if unchanged, would have a variance of -3% by 2026.

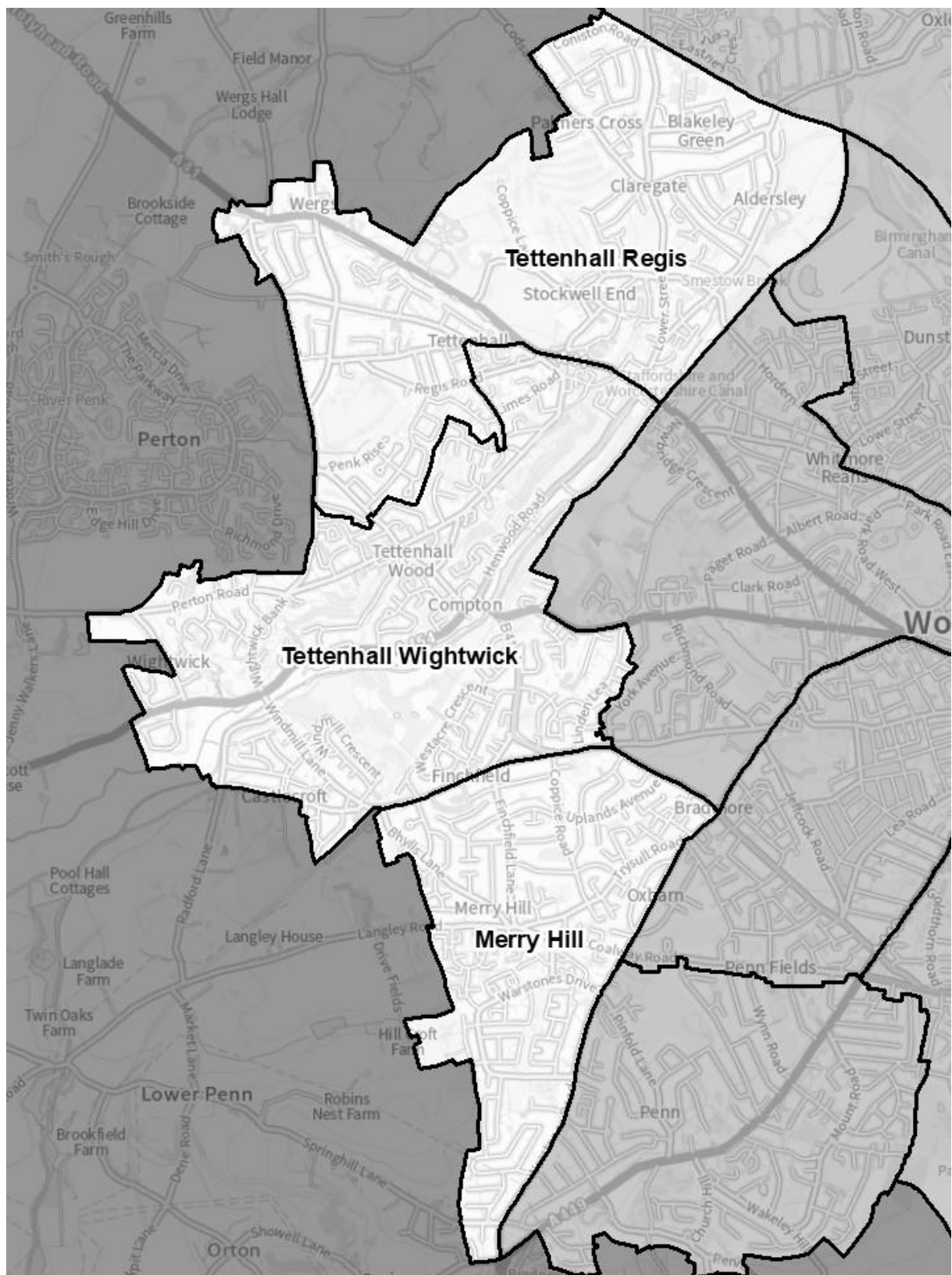
99 The Council proposed limited changes to the boundaries of Ettingshall ward. They proposed that some properties fronting onto Thompson Avenue be included in the Blakenhall ward. We note, however, that the Council also proposed that the southern parts of Thompson Avenue and Birmingham Road should form the western boundary of Ettingshall ward. The Council also proposed that Hickman Park be included in Bilston North ward and that an area of industrial and retail warehousing premises at Springvale Avenue be included in Bilston East ward. Industrial and commercial areas at Spring Road and Lanesfield Drive, and residential areas at Dock Meadow Drive and Overfield Drive, would be included in Spring Vale ward. Finally, the Council proposed that the recent housing development at Greenock Crescent be included in Ettingshall ward. We have calculated, using the Council's updated forecast, that the effect of these changes would be that Ettingshall ward would have 12% more electors per councillor and Spring Vale 4% more than the average for the city by 2026.

100 The Conservatives proposed that the northern part of Blakenhall ward be included in Ettingshall. An area to the east of Ward Street would be included in Bilston North ward. The Millfields area, together with Springvale Avenue and the Dock Meadow Drive and Overfield Drive areas described above, would be included in Spring Vale ward along with the Ladymoor area. Finally, the Conservatives would include the area around Spring Vale Primary School in Blakenhall ward. This would give electoral variances of -3% in Ettingshall and of -5% in Spring Vale ward by 2026.

101 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the part of Ettingshall ward to the north of Pond Lane and the Cable Street area be added to St Peters ward. This would represent a large reduction in the electorate of Ettingshall ward, which would be offset by the inclusion in Ettingshall of the area between Byrne Road and Lawnswood Avenue, and the Monmore Green area. The Liberal Democrats also proposed that the current boundaries of Spring Vale ward be retained.

102 We consider that the Council's proposals for Spring Vale ward best reflect the form and extent of community areas in this part of the city. The proposals made by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats appear to divide distinct community areas. We therefore include the Council's proposed Spring Vale ward in our draft recommendations. However, we are not prepared to recommend boundaries of Ettingshall ward which would result in electoral inequality. We therefore propose that All Saints Road and the area to its north be included in St Peters ward. We also propose that the ward include the Royal Hospital redevelopment. We consider that this will consolidate an area of inner-city traditional and modern housing areas.

Wolverhampton West



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2026
Merry Hill	3	-1%
Tettenhall Regis	3	2%
Tettenhall Wightwick	3	-3%

Merry Hill

103 The Merry Hill ward is a predominantly residential ward on the south-west corner of the city. The Conservatives describe the ward as composed of two communities with the Five Ways area, which contains a number of shops, in the centre knitting the two together. The ward is forecast to have good electoral equality, having 1% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the city by 2026.

104 The Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed that the current ward boundaries be retained. The Conservatives proposed only that Bantock Park be included. We note, however, that a consequence of such a change would be to separate Bantock Park Cottages from their nearest neighbours in Park ward and do not accept the change proposed by the Conservatives as part of our draft recommendations.

Tettenhall Regis and Tettenhall Wightwick

105 Tettenhall Regis and Tettenhall Wightwick are described as two wards covering the historic village of Tettenhall which, as a whole, has a distinct identity. They are forecast to have electoral variances of 2% and –3% respectively, by 2026. The Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all proposed that the current boundaries of Tettenhall Regis ward remain unchanged. We are content that the ward continues to reflect community identity and therefore retain the existing ward as part of our draft recommendations.

106 Whilst the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed that the boundaries of Tettenhall Wightwick should also be retained, the Council proposed that Compton Hill Drive and Alpine Way, currently part of Tettenhall Wightwick, be added to Park ward. We find, however, that making this change will not provide for good electoral equality in Park ward by 2026 and can find no other reason to support the change proposed. Therefore, our draft recommendation is that the current boundaries of Tettenhall Wightwick be retained.

Conclusions

107 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Wolverhampton, referencing the 2020 and 2026 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2020	2026
Number of councillors	60	60
Number of electoral wards	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	3,061	3,175
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations

City of Wolverhampton Council should be made up of 60 councillors representing 20 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for City of Wolverhampton Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Wolverhampton on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Have your say

108 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole city or just a part of it.

109 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for Wolverhampton, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

110 Our website has a special consultation page for Wolverhampton where you can explore the maps and draw your own proposed boundaries. You can find it at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

111 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by writing to:

Review Officer (Wolverhampton)
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

112 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for City of Wolverhampton Council which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of voters.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

113 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of voters.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

114 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of voters as elsewhere in Wolverhampton?

115 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents Wolverhampton?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area of Wolverhampton?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

116 Effective local government:

- Are any of the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?
- Are there good links across your proposed wards? Is there any form of public transport?

117 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

118 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

119 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

120 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for City of Wolverhampton Council in 2023.

Equalities

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

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for City of Wolverhampton Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2026)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bilston East	3	9,736	3,245	6%	10,286	3,429	8%
2	Bilston North	3	9,512	3,171	4%	9,763	3,254	3%
3	Blakenhall	3	8,806	2,935	-4%	9,086	3,029	-5%
4	Bushbury North	3	9,888	3,296	8%	10,360	3,453	9%
5	Bushbury South & Low Hill	3	9,401	3,134	2%	9,648	3,216	1%
6	East Park	3	9,177	3,059	0%	9,330	3,110	-2%
7	Ettingshall	3	8,971	2,990	-2%	9,592	3,197	1%
8	Fallings Park	3	9,153	3,051	0%	9,304	3,101	-2%
9	Graiseley	3	8,696	2,899	-5%	8,883	2,961	-7%
10	Heath Town	3	8,699	2,900	-5%	9,133	3,044	-4%
11	Merry Hill	3	9,280	3,093	1%	9,425	3,142	-1%
12	Oxley	3	9,879	3,293	8%	10,342	3,447	9%

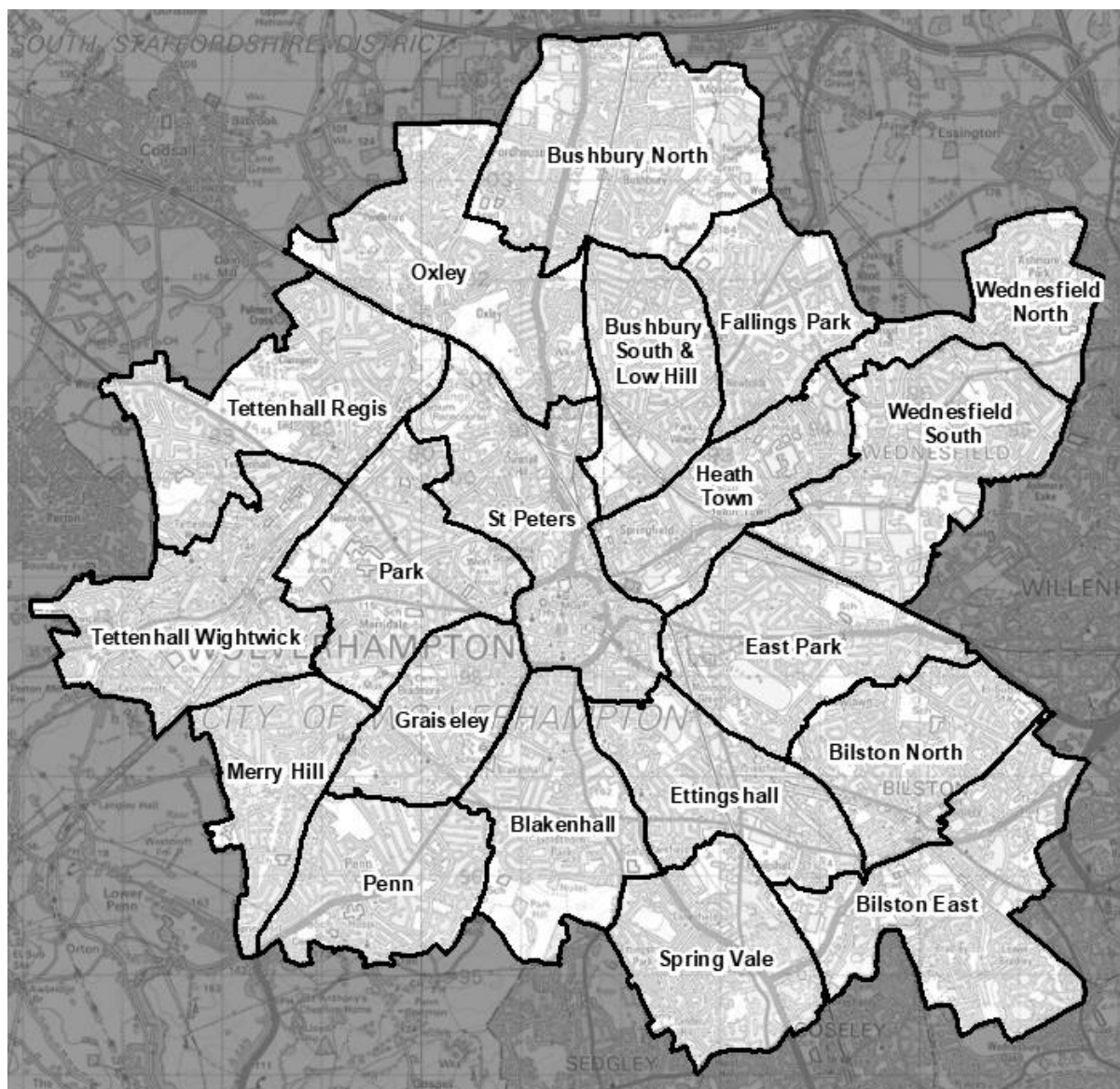
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2026)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 Park	3	9,342	3,114	2%	9,376	3,125	-2%
14 Penn	3	9,587	3,196	4%	9,800	3,267	3%
15 Spring Vale	3	9,713	3,238	6%	9,943	3,314	4%
16 St Peters	3	7,844	2,615	-15%	9,167	3,056	-4%
17 Tettenhall Regis	3	9,471	3,157	3%	9,677	3,226	2%
18 Tettenhall Wightwick	3	9,070	3,023	-1%	9,244	3,081	-3%
19 Wednesfield North	3	8,704	2,901	-5%	8,924	2,975	-6%
20 Wednesfield South	3	8,752	2,917	-5%	9,194	3,065	-3%
Totals	60	183,681	–	–	190,477	–	–
Averages	–	–	3,061	–	–	3,175	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by City of Wolverhampton Council.

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

Appendix B

Outline map



A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/west-midlands/wolverhampton

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/west-midlands/west-midlands/wolverhampton

Local Authority

- City of Wolverhampton Council

Political Groups

- Conservative Group – City of Wolverhampton Council
- City of Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats

Councillors

- Councillors Dr P.J. Birch, J.P. and J. Dehar (City of Wolverhampton Council)
- Councillor A. Hicken (Walsall Council)

Local Residents

- 13 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific Wolverhampton of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined Wolverhampton of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

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