



Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire District Council

Warding arrangements submission

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Background

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) are currently undertaking an electoral review of North Herts Council (NHC). This is considering the warding arrangements for the district, taking effect from the May 2024 elections.
2. In December 2021, NHC resolved to move to all-out elections from the May 2024 elections. This means that whilst electoral equality (the ratio of the number of electors to Councillors in each ward) remains necessary, it is no longer a requirement to have only 3-member wards. As such, wards created through this Review can be served by 1, 2 or 3 councillors.
3. The LGBCE have advised that they have agreed to a council size of 50. This means that, from the May 2024 elections, NHC will be served by 50 Members. This number may flex up or down by one/two in order to facilitate a stronger and more equal warding pattern, but the aim is to achieve electoral equality with 50 Councillors.
4. The LGBCE have provided guidance about warding arrangements and ward boundaries, which this document reflects. This submission has due consideration to the three statutory criteria that electoral reviews conducted by the LGBCE must have, namely:
 - a. Delivering electoral equality for local voters.
 - b. Interests and identities of local communities.
 - c. Effective and convenient local government.
5. This document sets out the proposed submission for warding arrangements for the NHC area. Once agreed by Council, this document shall become the formal submission of NHC as part of the LGBCE Review. No consultation with the public or communities has taken place in developing these proposals, as the LGBCE will consider these proposals alongside others submitted during the consultation and their own work, and will then develop 'Draft Recommendations' for public consultation. NHC, elected representatives, local communities, and anyone else with an interest will be able to respond to that LGBCE-led consultation.

Council Size

6. As noted above, the LGBCE have agreed to a council size of 50, albeit with flexibility of +/- one or two Councillors overall in order to facilitate a stronger and more equal warding pattern
7. It is important to ensure rural wards are not excessively large, in order to maintain effective and convenient local governance, and for Councillor workloads to not be excessive. These representations to the LGBCE supported NHC's submission to have 50 Members following this current review.
8. Officers and Councillors of NHC have worked to produce a warding pattern that the interests and identities of communities, whilst maintaining wards that allow for effective and convenient local government and ensuring electoral equality. The district of North Herts has unique geographical and community features that mean rural wards can only be configured in specific ways. Whilst Officers and Councillors have developed, reviewed, discussed and considered a range of options for both rural and urban communities within the district, it has proved impossible to develop a warding arrangement with 50 councillors that meets the three statutory criteria. However, a viable and effective arrangement has been developed with 51 Members.
9. This submission is therefore based on 51 Councillors in total.
10. Taking into account the projected electorate in 2028, and with **51** Councillors in total, the number of electors per ward (+/- 10% electoral variance) is set out below for single-member, 2- and 3- member wards. Variance using 2021 electorate figures is based on a Council size of 51, with current electorate (98,824).

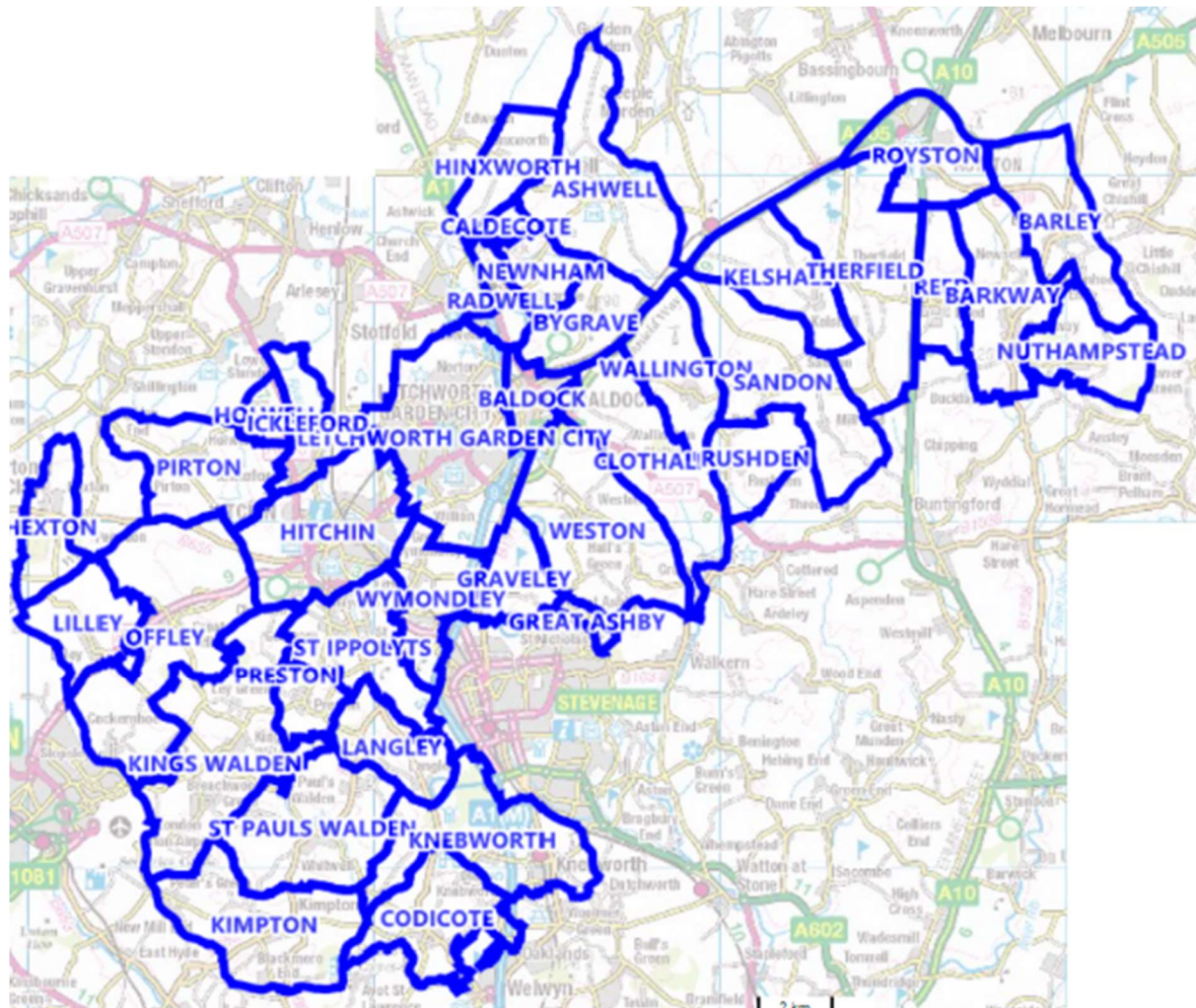
Number of Councillors in ward	Number of electors (± 10% variance)
1	2,210 (1,989 – 2,431)
2	4,421 (3,979 – 4,862)
3	6,631 (5,968 – 7,294)

Agreed principles

11. In developing these proposals, officers worked with Group Leaders through a Project Board. Through discussions, key principles were agreed to form the foundation of the warding proposals:
 - a. Unparished towns (Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock) and large urban parishes (Royston) should each be considered separately when looking at warding arrangements. These large urban areas have different interests and identities to the neighbouring rural parish areas, and face different challenges. In North Herts, the difference in population densities and, therefore, in the issues faced by urban and rural communities is very stark. It is therefore important that wards either include urban communities, or rural parishes, but not both wherever possible – this ensure arrangements are both representative of local interests and identities, and that governance arrangements are effective.
 - b. Given the shape of the District, and the layout of parishes within it, there are very limited options in some areas when grouping parishes if electoral equality is to be achieved.
 - c. Local knowledge, from Councillors and Officers, has been included to ensure warding plans reflect local communities. The views of local Members have been vital in developing warding arrangements that, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of communities.

Map of North Herts district

12. The map below shows the parishes (and unparished areas) in North Herts for reference.

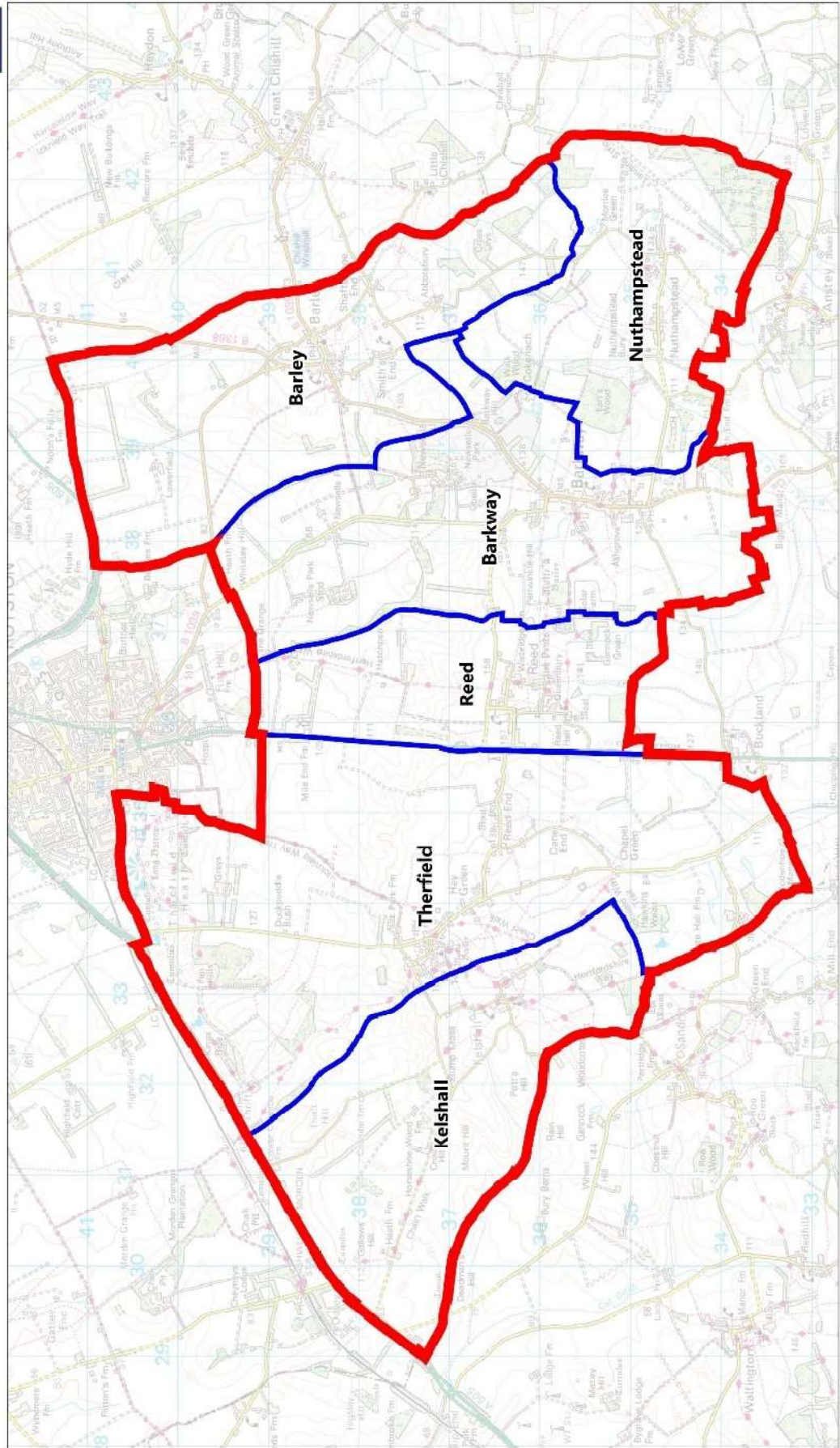


Warding arrangements

North-East parishes

13. Due to the geography of the District, there are limited choices for which parish areas to include or exclude from the ward serving the north-eastern corner of North Herts. Five of the parishes have to be included, as they are geographically distinct from any other areas and do not adjoin them. The sixth parish proposed to be included, Kelshall, is included in order to ensure acceptable electoral variance in the next ward. In addition, given the village of Kelshall is closer to that of Therfield than of the neighbours on the other side, and given Kelshall is currently in the same ward as Therfield, the proposal is that Kelshall remains in the same ward.
14. Consideration has been given to splitting this ward along the A10 main road. However, this creates significant electoral inequality and so cannot be included in the proposal.
15. Thus, the proposal is that the current Ermine ward serving the north-eastern parishes remains unchanged in boundary and in name. The ward will represent six parish council areas. Given the ward remains unchanged, it meets the three statutory criteria.
16. Whilst this ward has a variance just outside the +/- 10% variance, it represents the best possible warding configuration to represent the identities and interests of the local communities and ensure governance remains effective and convenient.
17. Proposed warding arrangement:

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Ermine		
Councillors	1		
Parishes	Barkway	650	928
	Nuthampstead	114	116
	Therfield	433	440
	Barley	532	555
	Kelshall	130	140
	Reed	261	262
Total electorate		2,120	2,441
Variance		9.4%	10.4%



Northern parishes

18. Due to the geography of the District, there are very limited choices for which parish areas to include or exclude from the ward serving the northern-most point of North Herts. Much of the current Arbury ward have to be included, as they are geographically distinct from any other areas and do not adjoin them.
19. There is considerable residential development planned at the edge of the rural Bygrave parish, forming an extension of the urban Baldock town area. It is likely these new developments will be more similar in nature to Baldock than the rural parish. Therefore, the warding arrangement proposed does not follow the parish boundary but excludes these new developments to be within Baldock. Thus, the proposed ward of Arbury remains rural in nature, and includes all of the existing parishes save for the new developments moving to Baldock.
20. Retaining the rural communities of this ward ensures the interests and identities of the communities continue to be aligned. A small single-member ward in this area delivers effective and convenient local government, given this area is separated from other rural parishes by a major road with very few links across. Electoral equality is achieved by ensuring the new urban development, more closely aligned with the urban Baldock communities, is not included in this ward.

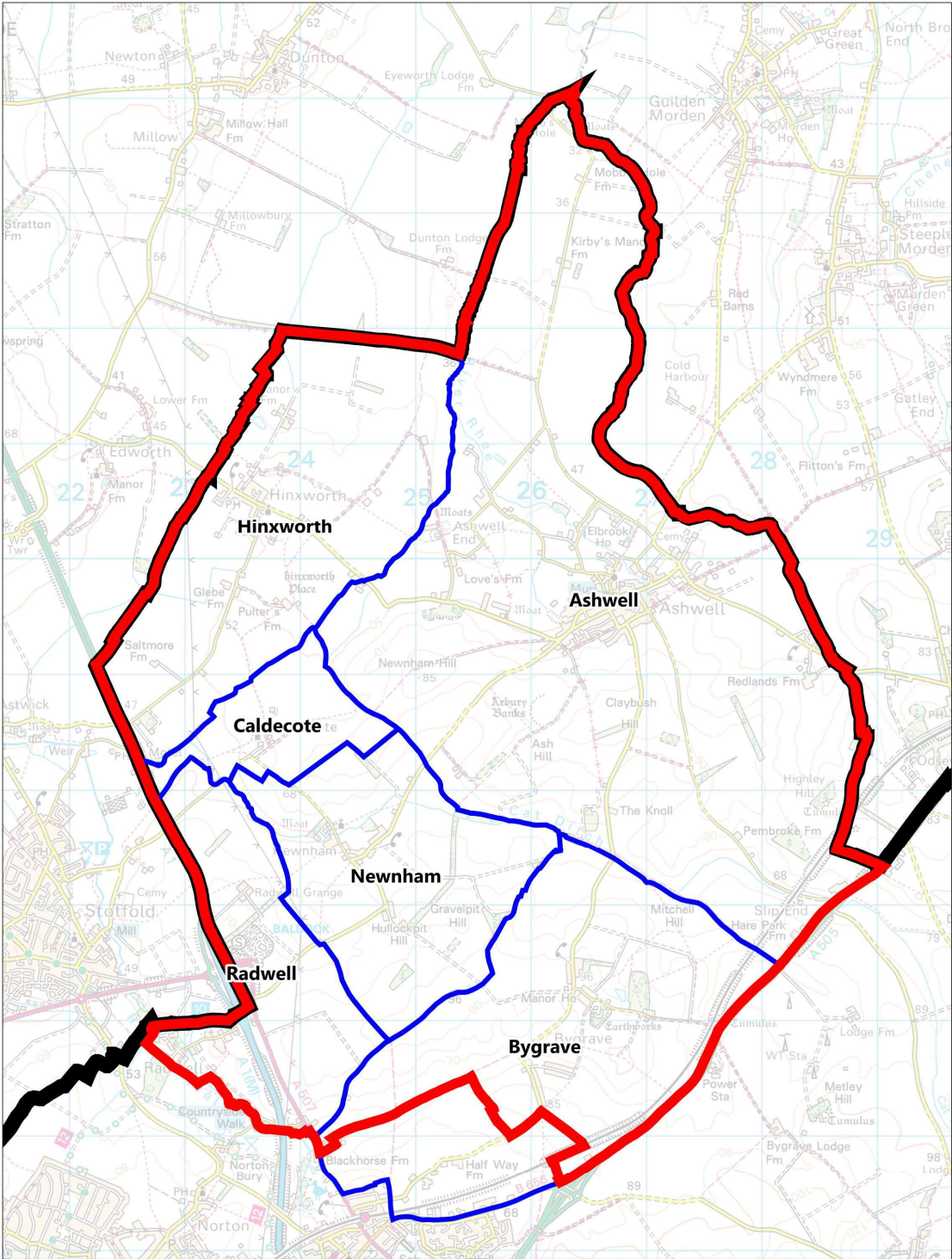
21. Proposed warding arrangement:

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Arbury		
Councillors	1		
Parishes	Ashwell	1,525	1,608
	Bygrave (without new development sites)*	223	214
	Hinxworth	256	257
	Caldecote	11	11
	Newnham	68	68
	Radwell	108	108
Total electorate		2,191	2,266
Variance		13.1%	2.5%

* Excludes electors in the new development who will be part of Baldock.



Proposed Arbury Ward



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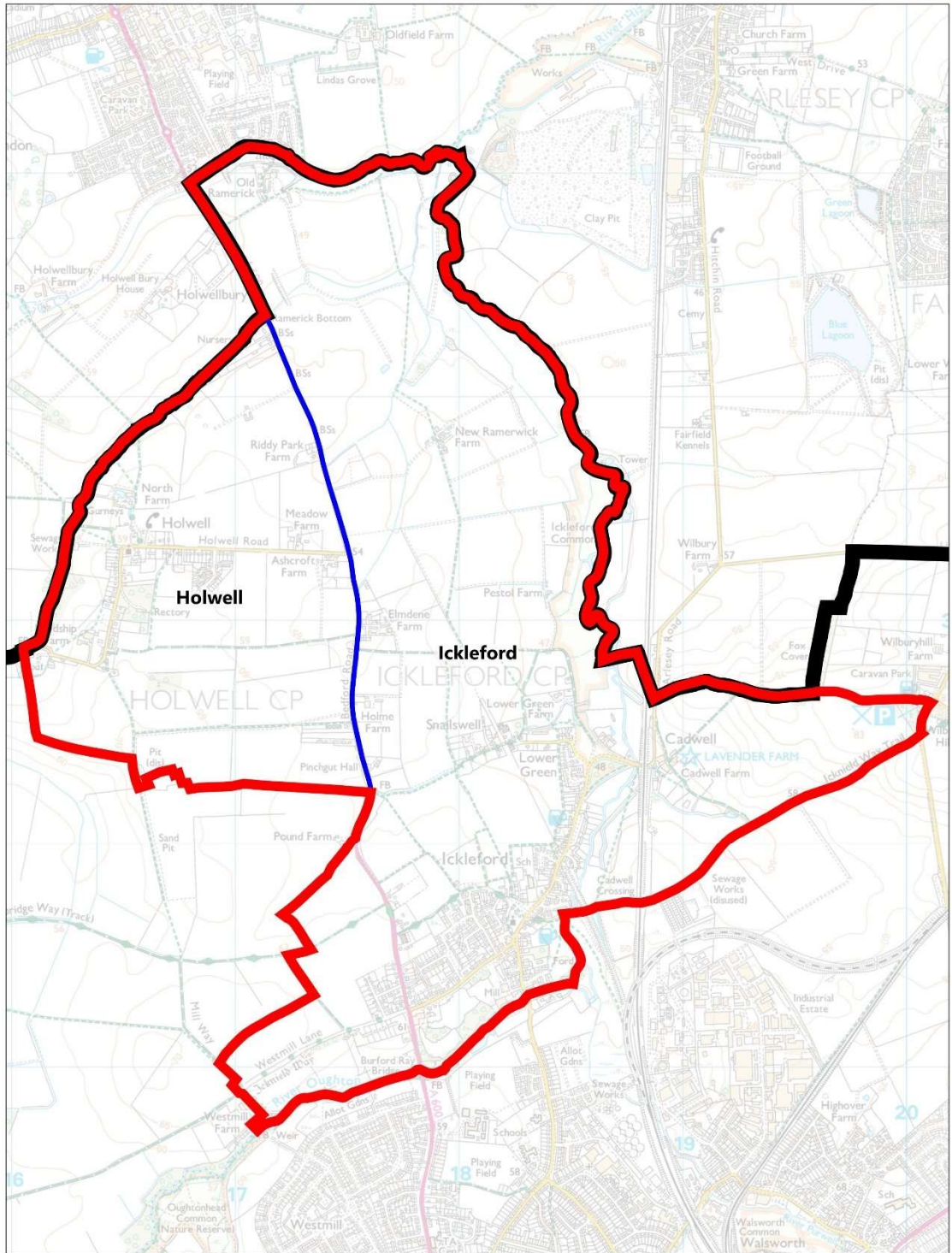


North-Western area parishes

22. As with parishes in other parts of the district, several of the parishes in the north-western corner of the district only connect to one another and cannot therefore be joined to other parishes.
23. As with other communities, there is significant growth expected in this area, primarily in Ickleford and Offley. The proposal is to retain Cadwell ward as a single-member ward as it currently is, and to create a new ward of Offley & Pirton representing four parishes.
24. Retaining Cadwell unchanged meets the three statutory criteria, reflecting the interests and identities of the local communities, remaining effective and convenient, and delivering electoral equality.
25. These three criteria are also met with the Offley & Pirton ward. The four parishes are currently part of a much larger ward, which covers nine parishes and a wide geographic area. The proposed smaller ward of Offley & Pirton leads to more effective and convenient local government, allowing local Councillors to focus local issues from the four included parishes, and better reflects the local communities whilst delivering electoral equality.
26. Proposed warding arrangement:

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Cadwell		
Councillors	1		
Parishes	Holwell	328	354
	Ickleford	1,517	2,036
Total electorate		1,845	2,390
Variance		-4.8%	8.1%

Proposed Cadwell Ward



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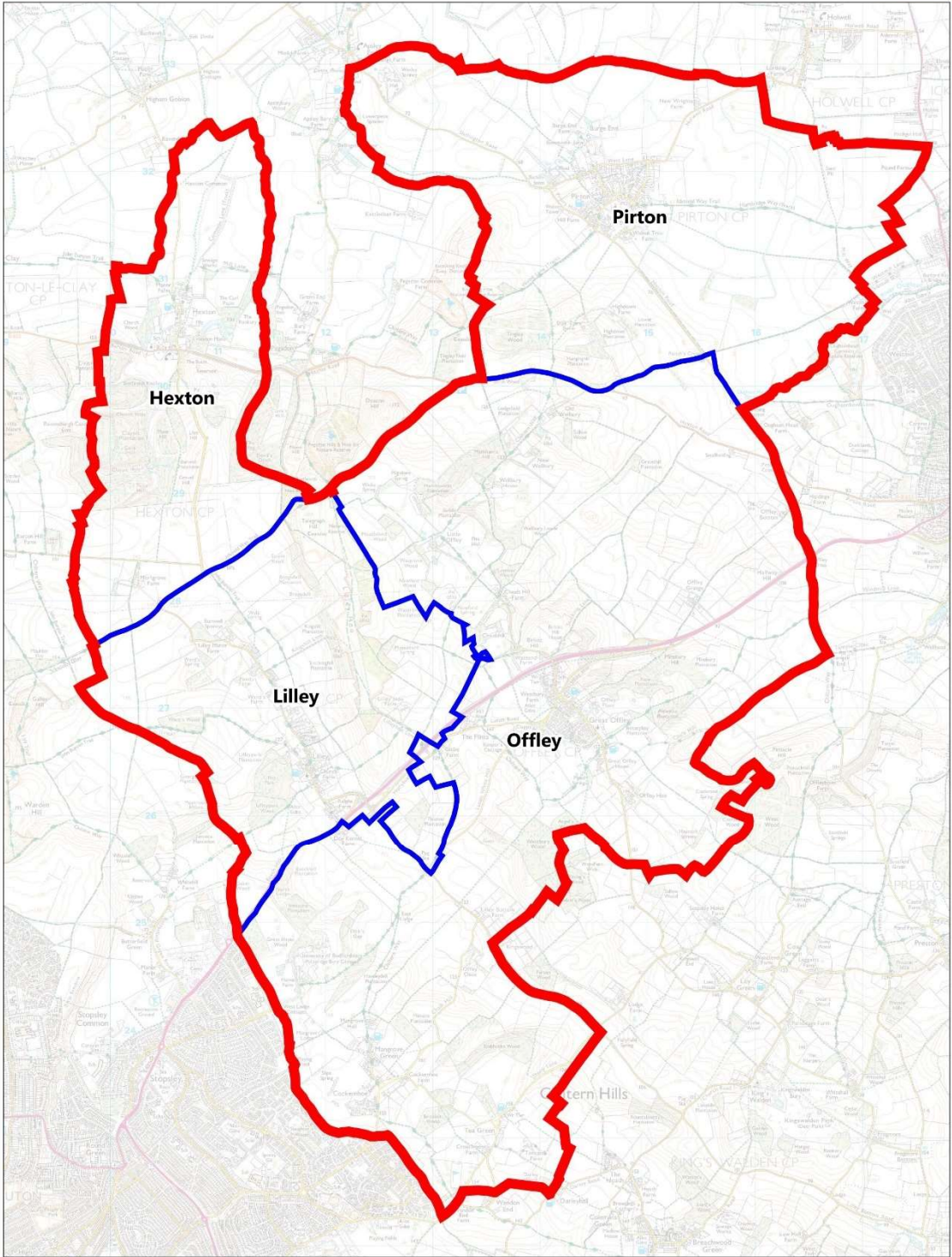
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		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Offley & Pirton		
Councillors	2		
Parishes	Offley	1,245	2,905
	Pirton	1,124	1,262
	Lilley	296	308
	Hexton	99	102
Total electorate		2,764	4,577
Variance		-28.7%	3.5%



Offley & Pirton



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Date: 23/05/22

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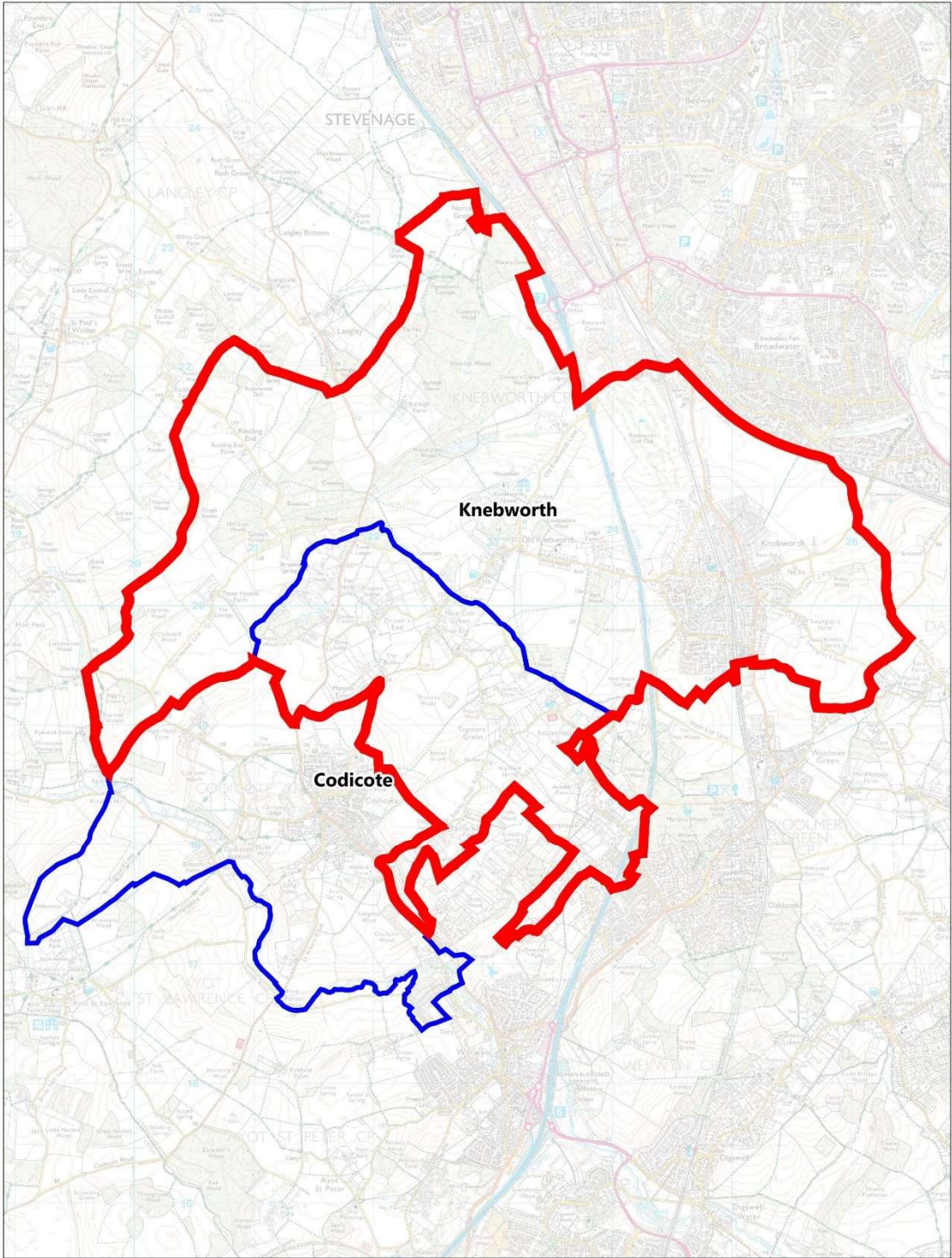
Knebworth

27. Knebworth has significant growth anticipated and, given there is no longer a need for 3-member wards, can become a separate ward in its own right. The community of Knebworth is likely to be different from the more rural parishes surrounding it, and therefore the issues faced by local residents will differ.
28. In order to facilitate electoral arrangements that reflect local communities in the neighbouring wards, Codicote East parish ward of Codicote will remain within the Knebworth ward as it currently is.
29. The proposed ward reflects the interests and identities of the local communities, delivers effective and convenient local government, and provides electoral equality.
30. Proposed warding arrangement:

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Knebworth		
Councillors	2		
Parishes	Knebworth	3,492	4,175
	Codicote (Codicote East parish ward)	640	660
Total electorate		4,132	4,835
Variance		6.6%	9.4%



Proposed Knebworth Ward



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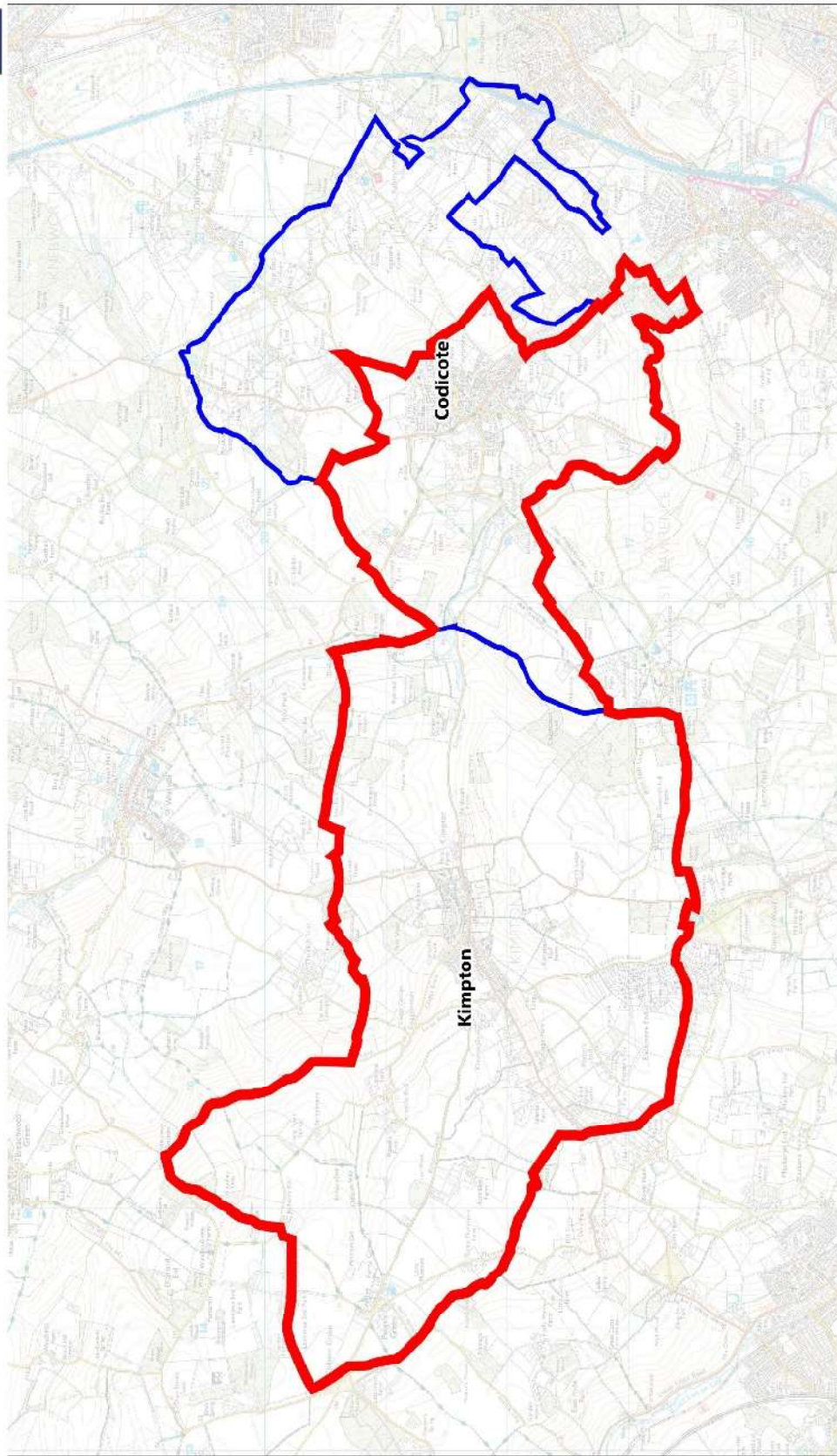
Southern area parishes

31. This area is constrained by the southern and western district boundaries. With a few larger parishes and some smaller communities, these parish areas have previously been split between four separate wards. However, there is a need to reconfigure the wards to ensure electoral equality. The nature and communities of these parishes have been considered carefully, and this has been reflected in the proposed warding arrangements.
32. The first ward is Codicote & Kimpton, comprising the two parishes of these names (other than that part of Codicote, Codicote East parish ward, that remains in Knebworth parish). These two parishes adjoin and it is felt that it makes more sense from both a community and governance perspective to keep them as a relatively compact ward rather than adding other nearby parishes. It is recognised that these two parishes have different identities, however the priority is to ensure communities are not split between wards; grouping different communities together is acceptable and appropriate provided the statutory criteria are met. This ward meets those criteria.
33. The second ward in this area is Langley, Preston & Walden. This includes these three parishes. At present, these parishes are within the same ward, albeit a much larger geographic area. This smaller ward delivers more effective local governance. Neighbouring parish areas face different community issues, with Langley, Preston & Walden affected by concerns regarding the airport, which area less of an issue for other parish areas.

34. Proposed warding arrangement:

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Codicote & Kimpton		
Councillors	2		
Parishes	Codicote (Codicote Village parish ward)	2,074	2,612
	Kimpton	1,795	1,810
Total electorate		3,869	4,422
Variance		-0.2%	0.0%

Proposed Codicote & Kimpton Ward



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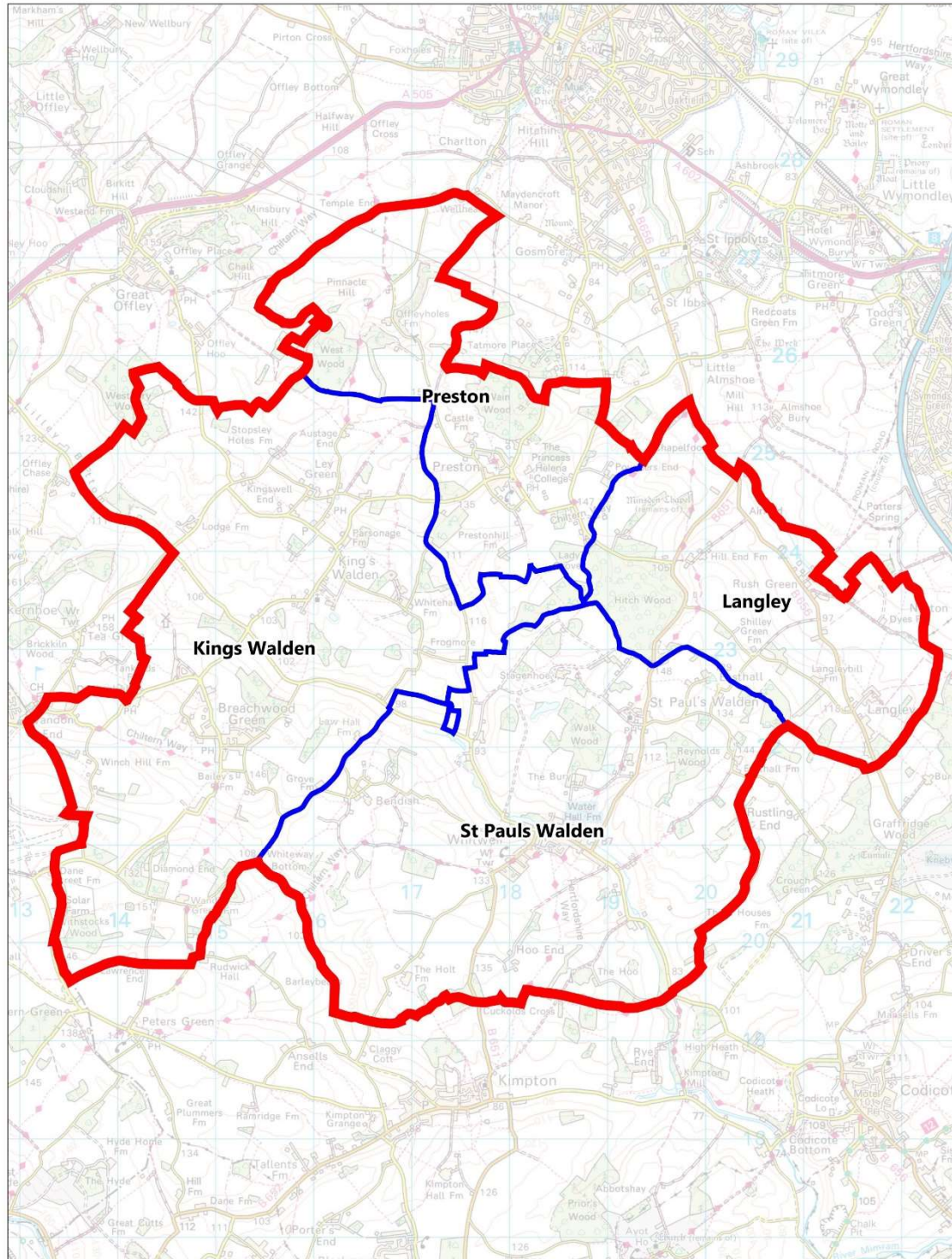


		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Langley, Preston & Walden		
Councillors	1		
Parishes	Langley	137	138
	Preston	316	365
	Kings Walden	781	799
	St Paul's Walden	1,035	1,116
Total electorate		2,269	2,418
Variance		17.1%	9.4%

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Proposed Langley, Preston & Walden Ward



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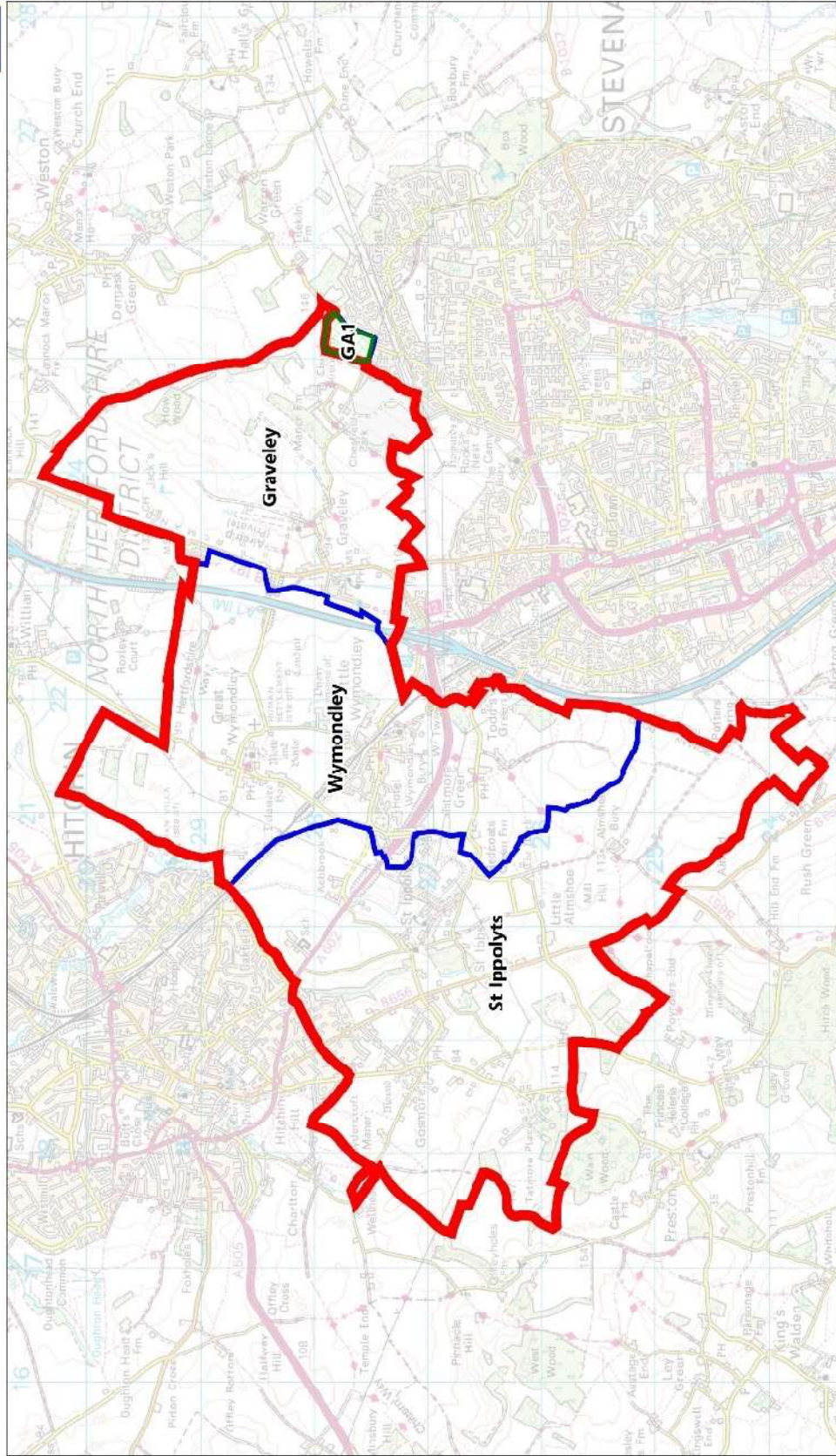


Central area parishes

35. Bounded on the north by unparished towns, the south by the district boundary and the east by the previously-discussed wards, in this area there are very limited options.
36. The parishes of Wymondley and Graveley sit either side of the motorway, and both lay between the urban areas of Stevenage in the South and Letchworth to the North; they are currently in the same ward. St Ippolyts is also adjacent the urban area of Hitchin, and faces similar community issues. Bringing these three parishes together in one ward, and removing Great Ashby, creates a new more rural-focussed ward with three communities.
37. At present, the parish ward of St Ippolyts North is within the Hitchin town district wards. This has been reviewed and considered in light of the population growth across the district and the other necessary warding changes. It is not possible to include this parish ward within Hitchin and still achieve electoral equality within the rural wards without creating geographically huge wards that do not deliver effective and convenient local government. As a result, St Ippolyts North is included with the rest of the parish in this rural ward.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts		
Councillors	2		
Parishes	Wymondley	894	1,275
	Graveley	351	1,014
	St Ippolyts	1,562	1,846
Total electorate		2,807	4,135
Variance		-27.6%	-6.5%

Proposed Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts Ward



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Date: 08.06.22

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Weston & Sandon area

38. Given the parish configurations in the north east and north of the District and the southern boundary of the District itself, three of the four sides of this ward are already fixed. In addition, the parishes in this area run north-to-south and fill the 'gap' between the existing and fixed boundaries. As a result, the only decision is how far to the west should the ward extend. However, the elector-to-councillor ratio must remain within the acceptable tolerance. Therefore, once the above two wards are agreed this third ward becomes fixed.

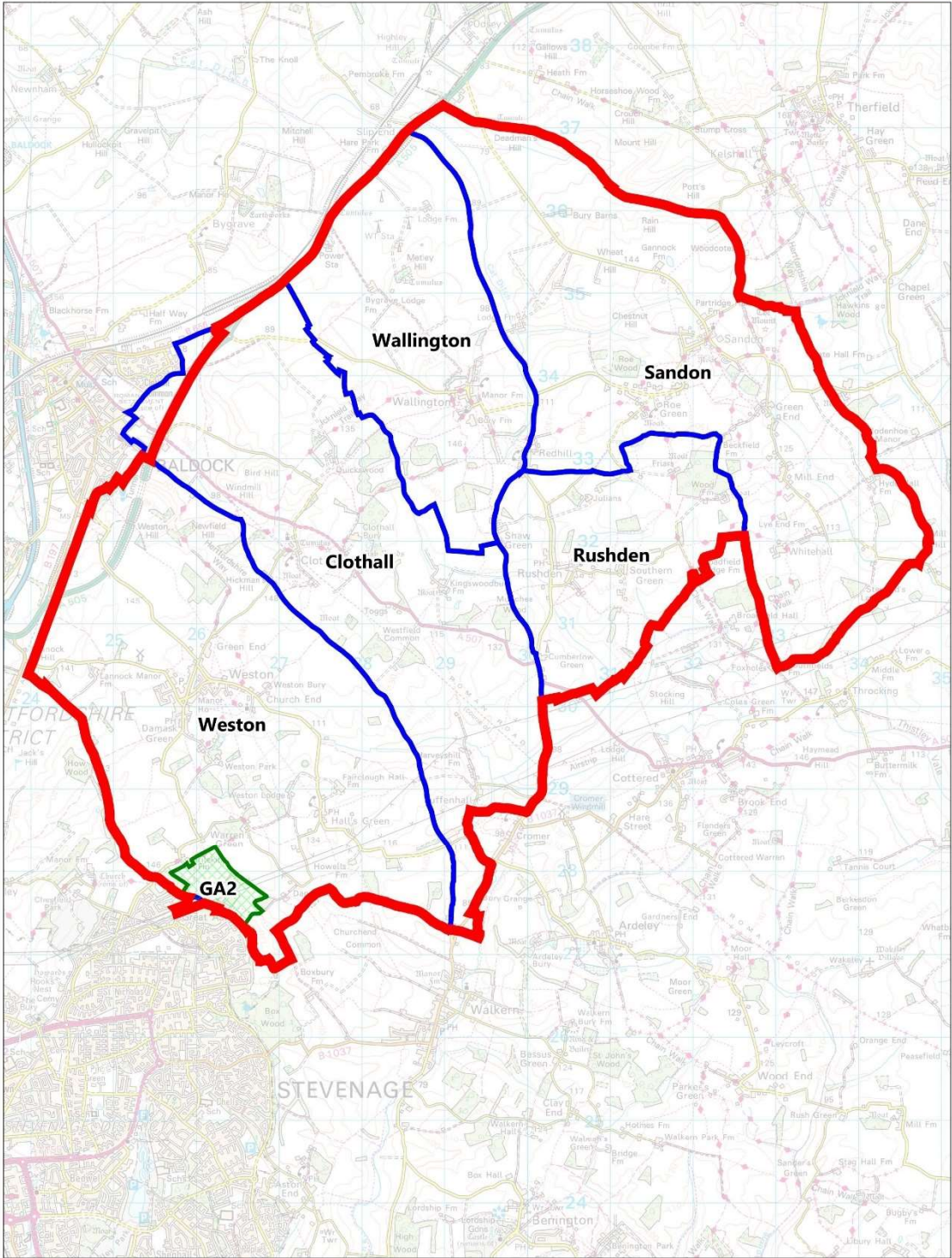
39. As with Arbury, the significant residential developments in Clothall rural parish will be incorporated in urban wards in Baldock. This ward will serve five parish areas.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Weston & Sandon		
Councillors	1		
Parishes	Sandon	406	418
	Wallington	118	118
	Weston	797	1,515
	Clothall *	124	130
	Rushden	208	210
Total electorate		1,653	2,391
Variance		-14.7%	8.2%

* Excludes electors in the new development who will be part of Baldock.



Proposed Weston & Sandon Ward



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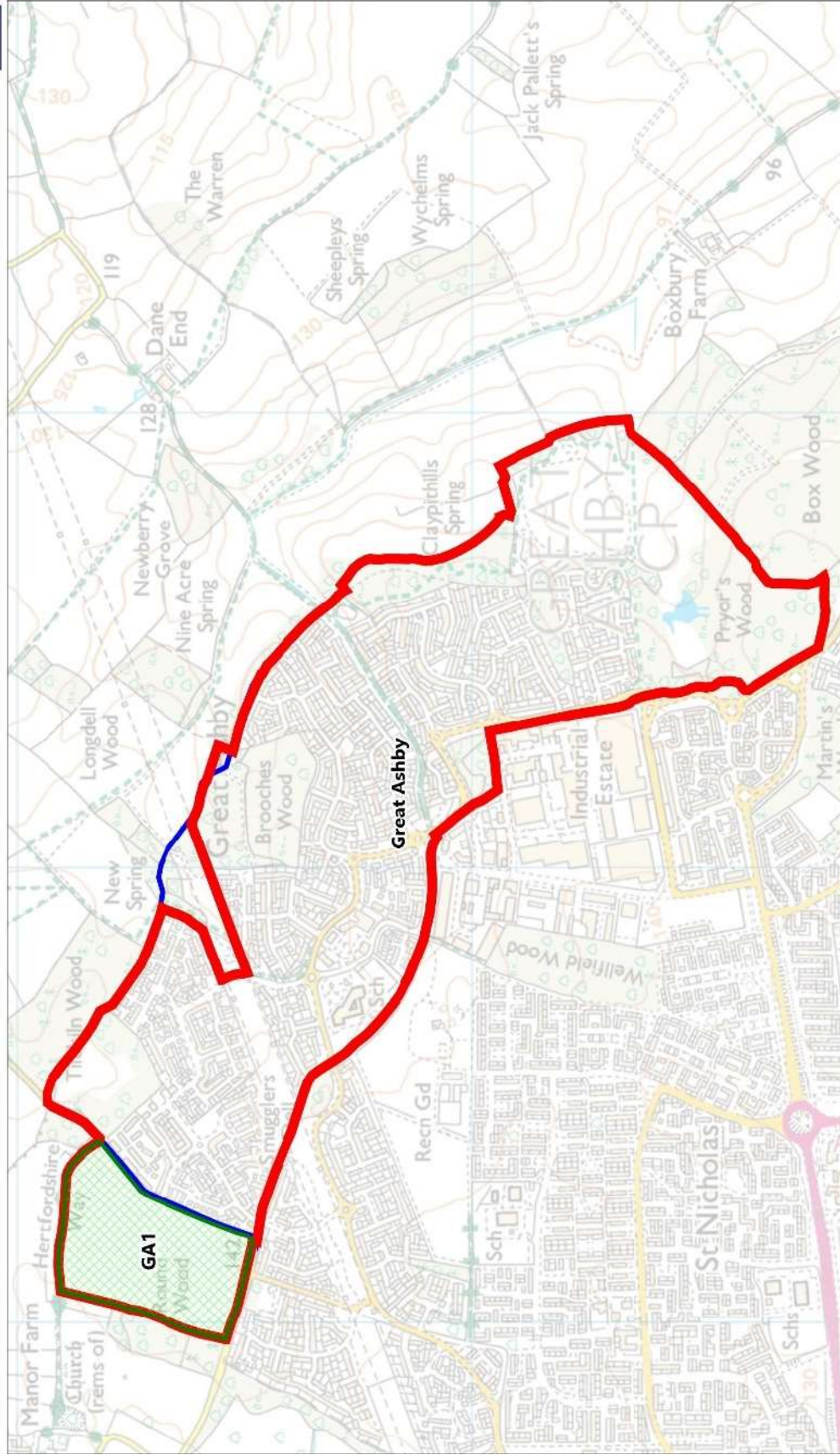


Great Ashby

40. The parish of Great Ashby is currently split, with most in Chesfield ward and a small area (13 electors) in Weston & Sandon ward.
41. Significant growth is expected in two development sites just outside Great Ashby. GA1 (within Graveley parish, to the north-west) and GA2 (within Weston parish, to the east). Given the need to balance the three statutory criteria, it is proposed that Great Ashby plus GA1 will become a new ward, allowing the whole of the existing Great Ashby parish to be in the same ward. Due to significant electoral inequality, development GA2 will remain in Weston & Sandon ward.
42. The proposal also moves the 13 electors from Weston & Sandon into Great Ashby, correcting what appears to be an anomaly.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Great Ashby		
Councillors	2		
Parishes	Great Ashby	3,932	3,932
	Graveley (development site GA1)	0	595
Total electorate		3,932	4,527
Variance		1.5%	2.4%

Proposed Great Ashby Ward



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Summary of changes in parish areas

Parish	Current ward	Proposed ward
Barkway	Ermine	Ermine
Nuthampstead	Ermine	Ermine
Therfield	Ermine	Ermine
Barley	Ermine	Ermine
Kelshall	Ermine	Ermine
Reed	Ermine	Ermine
Ashwell	Arbury	Arbury
Bygrave *	Arbury	Arbury
Hinxworth	Arbury	Arbury
Caldecote	Arbury	Arbury
Newnham	Arbury	Arbury
Radwell	Arbury	Arbury
Holwell	Cadwell	Cadwell
Ickleford	Cadwell	Cadwell
Hexton	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Offley & Pirton
Lilley	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Offley & Pirton
Offley	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Offley & Pirton
Pirton	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Offley & Pirton
Knebworth	Knebworth	Knebworth
Codicote (part)	Knebworth	Knebworth
Codicote (part)	Codicote	Codicote & Kimpton
Kimpton	Kimpton	Codicote & Kimpton
Langley	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Langley, Preston & Walden
Preston	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Langley, Preston & Walden
Kings Walden	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Langley, Preston & Walden
St. Paul`s Walden	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Langley, Preston & Walden
St. Ippolyts (part)	Hitchin Priory	Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts
St. Ippolyts (part)	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts
Wymondley	Chesfield	Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts
Graveley	Chesfield	Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts
Great Ashby (part)	Chesfield	Great Ashby
Great Ashby (part)	Weston and Sandon	Great Ashby
Sandon	Weston and Sandon	Weston & Sandon
Wallington	Weston and Sandon	Weston & Sandon
Weston	Weston and Sandon	Weston & Sandon
Clothall *	Weston and Sandon	Weston & Sandon
Rushden	Weston and Sandon	Weston & Sandon

* Parts of these parishes will become part of the district wards covering Baldock.

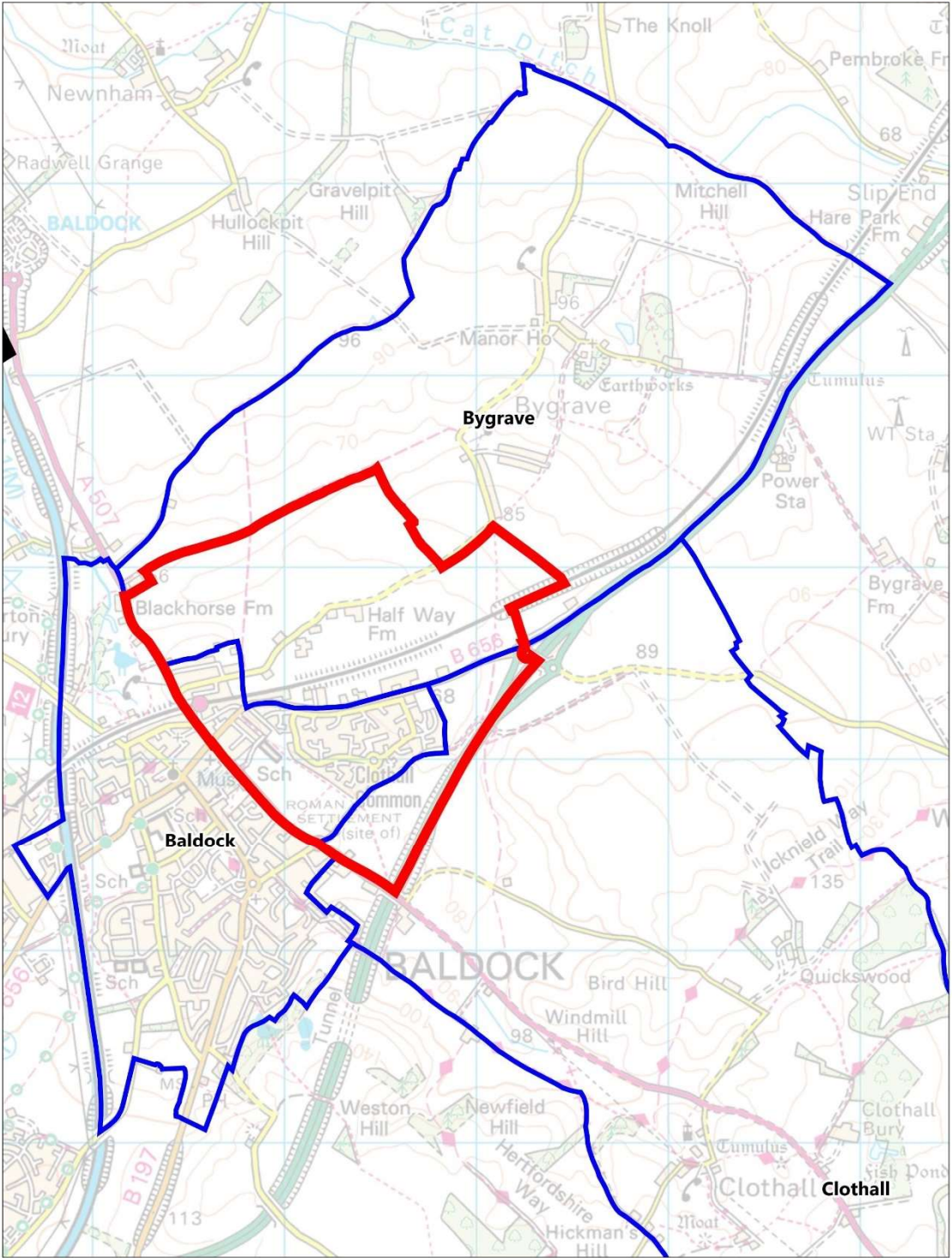
Baldock

43. The unparished town of Baldock is currently served by 4 Councillors in total, split across two wards (Baldock East with 1 Councillor, and Baldock Town with 3). The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review.
44. Baldock is currently split into two wards along the A507. The majority of properties in Baldock East ward are geographically separated from the main road, and the communities of Baldock Town, by the schools, garden centre and fields. Despite a number of significant roads in Baldock, few can readily be identified as being a clear boundary between communities.
45. However, significant residential development is planned to the north-east and east of the town. As noted above, these areas will be predominantly urban in nature, and very different to the rural parish in which they reside. Therefore the proposal is that these areas become part of the urban wards serving Baldock. Similarly, significant developments within Clothall parish are proposed to be included within the district wards serving Baldock.
46. The proposed wards are:
 - a. Baldock East. This is the area to the east of the A507. The current boundary at the south is extended to the A505 and then runs north along the A505 until the junction. Here it heads north along the new development link road, then around the major new residential development boundary to re-join the existing boundary on the A507 north of the town.
 - b. Baldock Town. This is the area to the west of the A507. The current boundary at the south is extended to the A505 and then runs south to the parish boundary between Clothall and Weston, then follows this north back to the existing ward boundary.
47. Given the boundary between the two Baldock wards is unchanged, in order to ensure continuity and reduce confusion the ward names are similarly unchanged through this Submission. However ward names in this area are of particular interest to local representatives, and a range of options have been proposed and discussed, and therefore further discussion through future rounds of LGBCE-led consultation will be welcomed.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock East		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		2,319	4,225
Variance		-40.2%	-4.4%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock Town		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,654	6,147
Variance		-2.7%	-7.3%

Proposed Baldock East Ward

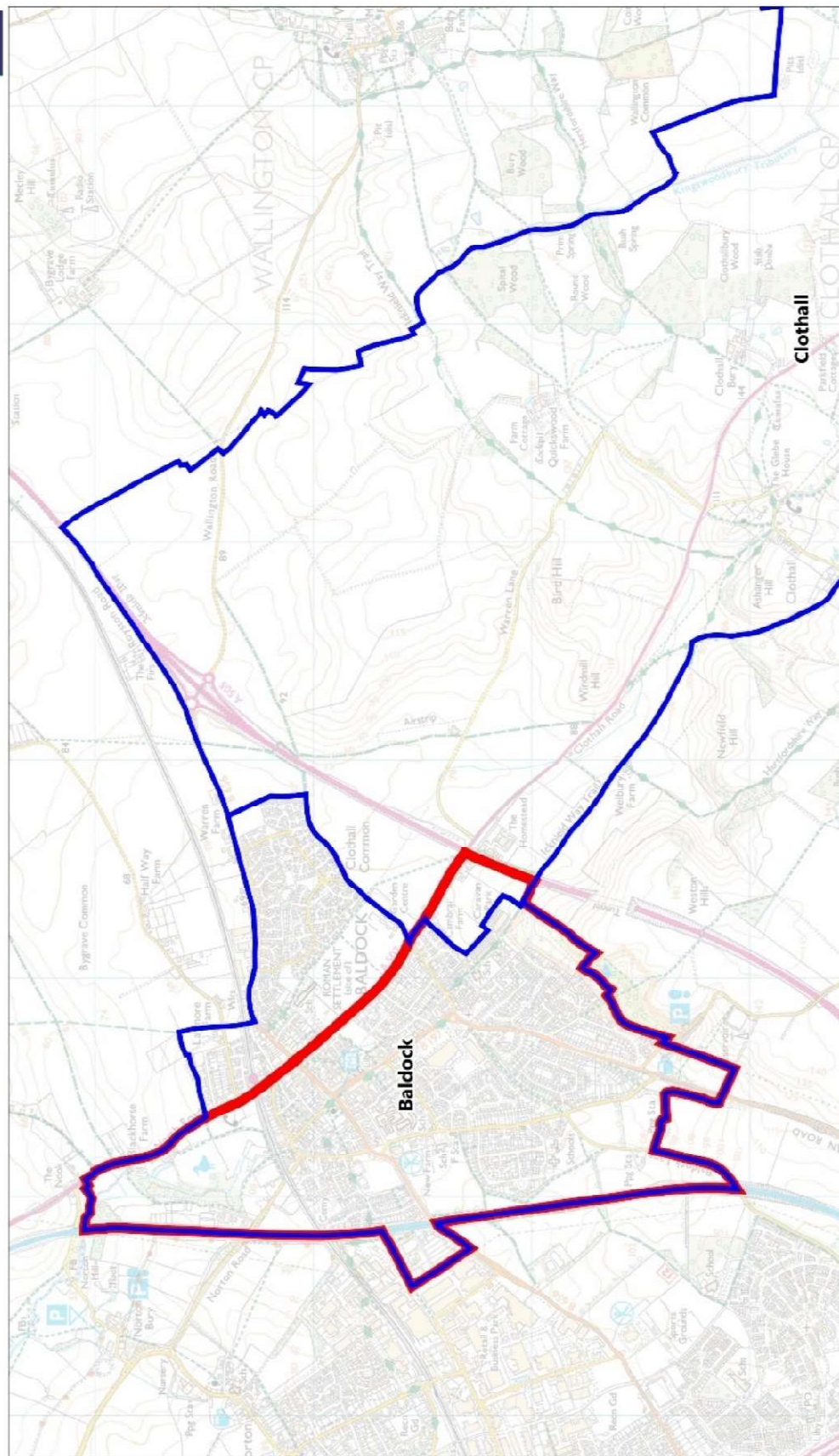


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Proposed Baldock Town Ward



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Royston

48. The town of Royston is currently served by 6 Councillors in total, split across 3 wards. The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review.
49. In addition, some areas are expecting significant growth due to new residential development. This growth is substantially greater than in some of the other urban areas, and hence the town requires an additional district councillor to enable electoral equality.
50. The northern part of the town is bisected by the railway, with very few crossing points. However, due to the electorate within the northern most part of the town, the new warding arrangement does need to straddle the railway. In reality, the only vehicular access across the railway within Royston is along the Kneesworth Road / Old North Road. This therefore marks a central point of the new warding arrangements.
51. Using major roads as markers, the proposed warding arrangements create 4 new wards served by a total of 7 councillors. These proposed wards reflect the community boundaries as reported by local councillors as far as possible.
52. Proposed warding arrangement:
 - a. Royston Palace.
This includes all electors to the north of the railway line, as well as electors in a triangle bordered by the Kneesworth Road to the west, Queens Road to the south, and Melbourn Road to the east.
 - b. Royston Meridian.
This includes all electors to the east of Kneesworth Street / Lower Kings Street, and north of Melbourn Street / Newmarket Road, and south of the new Royston North ward boundary. This area is clearly demarked by the major roads, and represents distinct communities from other areas of the town.
 - c. Royston Burloes.
This is the area to the east of the A10 Priory Lane, Barkway Street and the B1039 Barkway Road, below the Newmarket Road. This is a single-member ward, with distinct communities from neighbouring wards. This area has a large new development planned, representing significant growth in the electorate.

d. Royston Heath.

This retains the name of the existing ward, due to the location of the heath itself, but has significant changes in the ward composition. This is the remainder of the town (west of the B1039, Priory Lane and Lower Kings Street, and south of the railway).

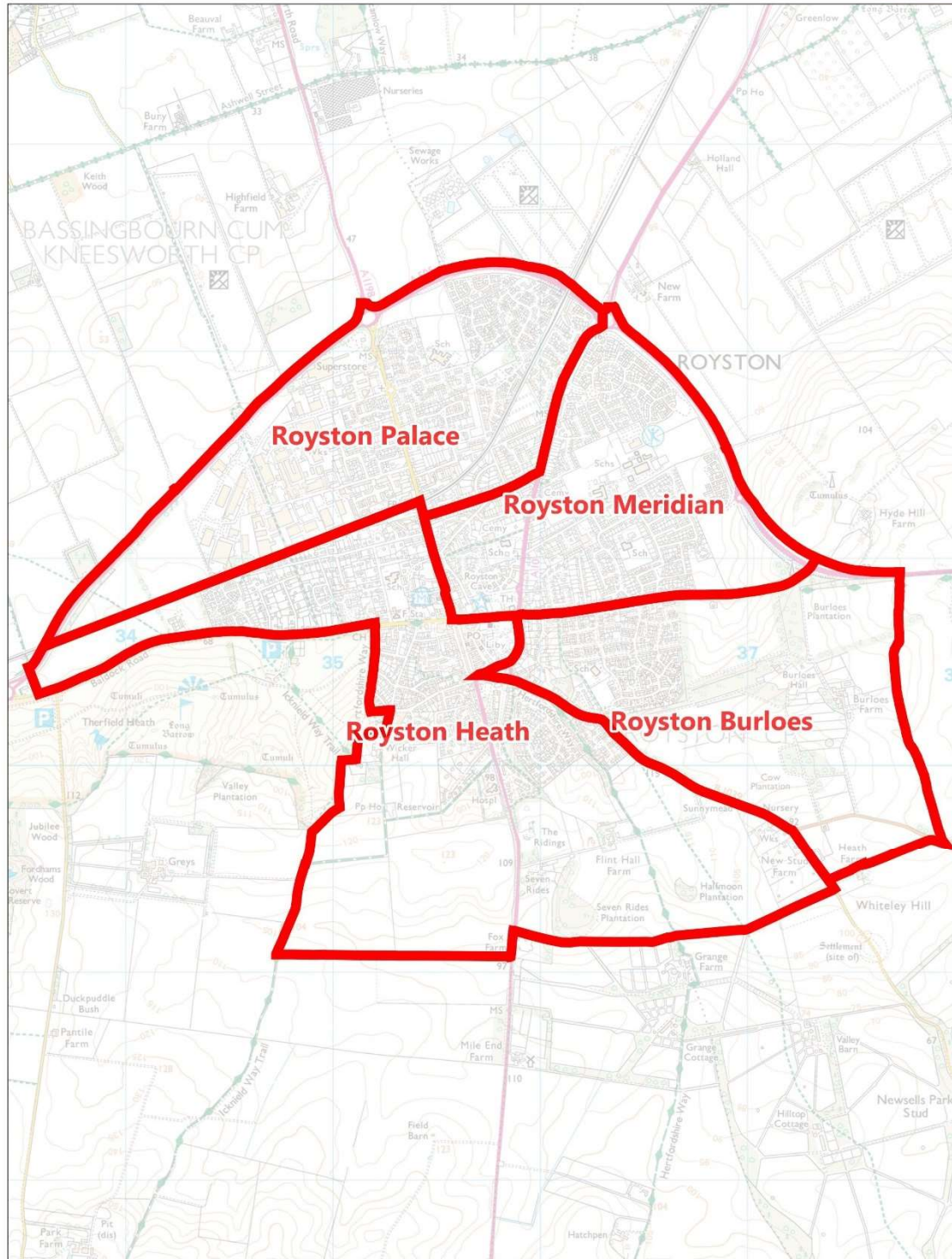
		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Palace		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,184	4,309
Variance		8.0%	-2.5%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Meridian		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,529	4,104
Variance		-8.9%	-7.2%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Burloes		
Councillors	1		
Total electorate		1,452	2,146
Variance		-25.1%	-2.9%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Heath		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,716	4,205
Variance		-4.1%	-4.9%

Proposed Royston Wards



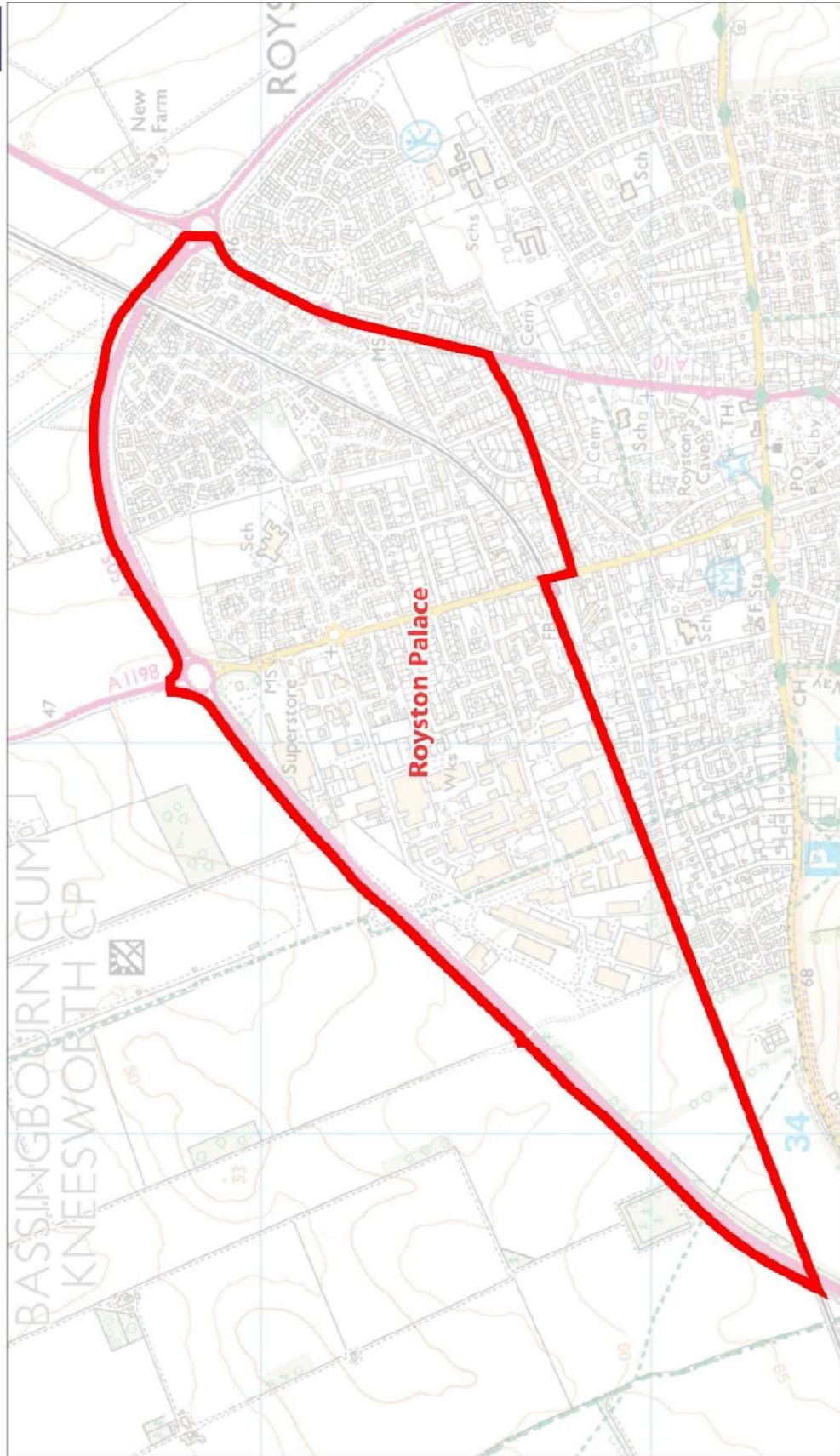
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Proposed Royston Palace Ward

Proposed Royston Palace Ward



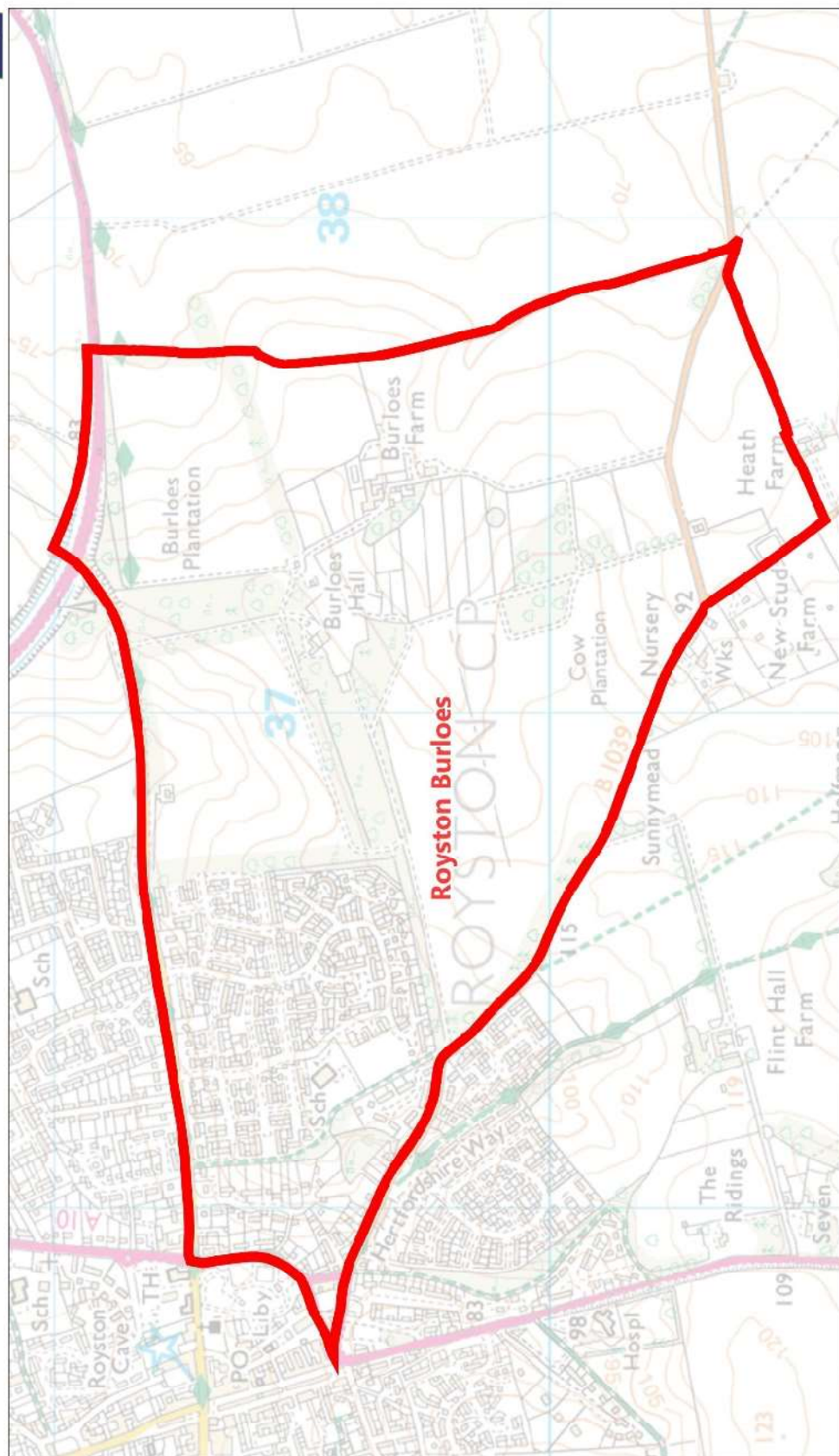
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Proposed Royston Burloes Ward

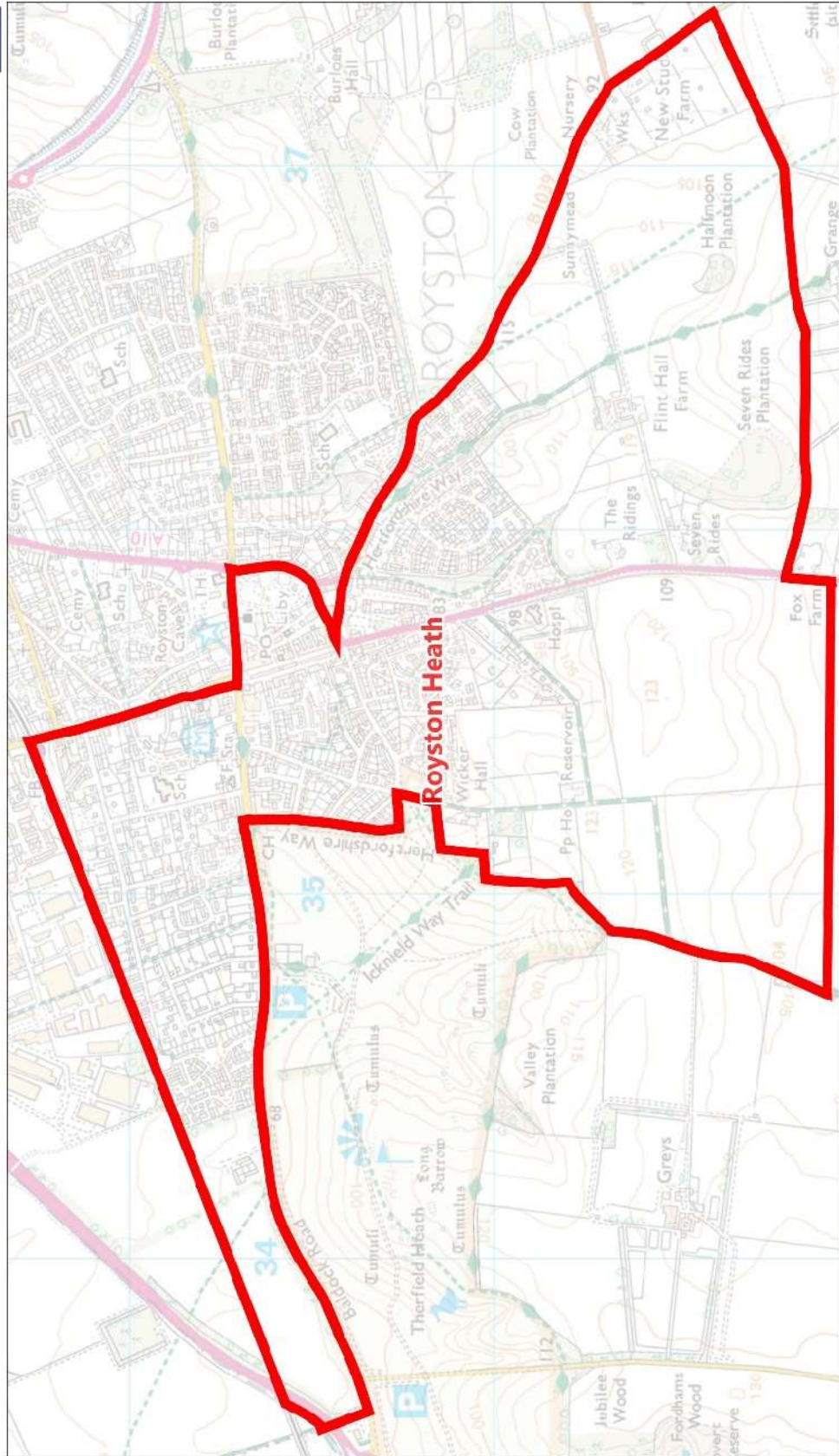


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Proposed Royston Heath Ward



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Date: 25/05/22

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Hitchin

53. The unparished town of Hitchin is currently served by 13 Councillors in total, split across 5 wards. The wards currently exhibit high electoral variance, so changes will be required through this review. Whilst there will be some growth in electorate in the town, it is not as significant as in other areas, hence the number of councillors serving the community is necessarily reducing.
54. Members of NHC have been invited to identify communities within Hitchin, and these have been accommodated within the proposed warding arrangements. Input from local Members has identified that current warding in the west of the town splits existing communities, and this has been taken into account in the proposed revised warding.
55. The proposal is for 5 wards, served by 12 Councillors in total.
- d. Hitchin Walsworth
This ward is unchanged, served by 3 Councillors.
 - e. Hitchin Bearton
This ward is enclosed by the town boundary in the north, Walsworth ward in the east and the A600 in the west. The southern boundary follows the A505, then south along Banroft, east along Hermitage Road, and then north along Walsworth Road. The properties to the east of Walsworth Road (in Trevor Road and surrounds) are also included. Served by 3 Councillors.
 - f. Hitchin Oughton
The Hitchin Oughton ward is expanded southwards, taking into account representations by local Councillors. The existing ward splits a community, and the new arrangement resolves this, with Gaping Lane now included in this ward.
 - g. Hitchin Highbury
This ward is bounded on the west by the A505 (Old Park Road), then the A602 (Park Way), and includes the properties of Gosmore Road, Priory Way, and surrounds.
 - h. Hitchin Priory
Given the boundary with Hitchin Highbury ward, Priory becomes a single-member ward.

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Walsworth		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		6,171	7,027
Variance		6.2%	6.0%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Bearton		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		6,251	6,251
Variance		7.5%	-5.7%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Oughton		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,098	4,177
Variance		5.7%	-5.5%

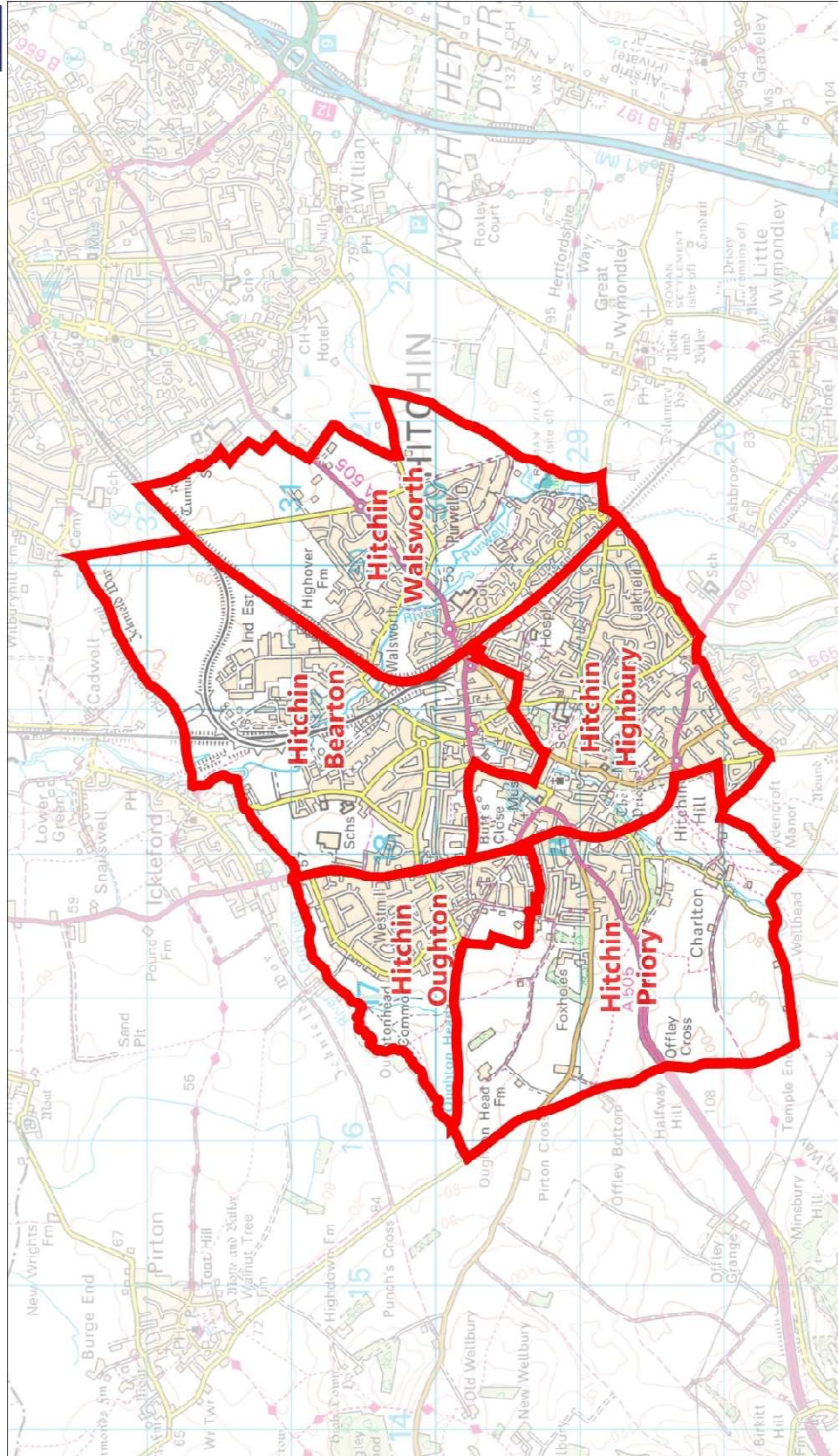
		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Highbury		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		7,065	7,065
Variance		21.5%	6.5%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Priory		
Councillors	1		
Total electorate		1,736	2,083
Variance		-10.4%	-5.8%

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Proposed Hitchin Wards

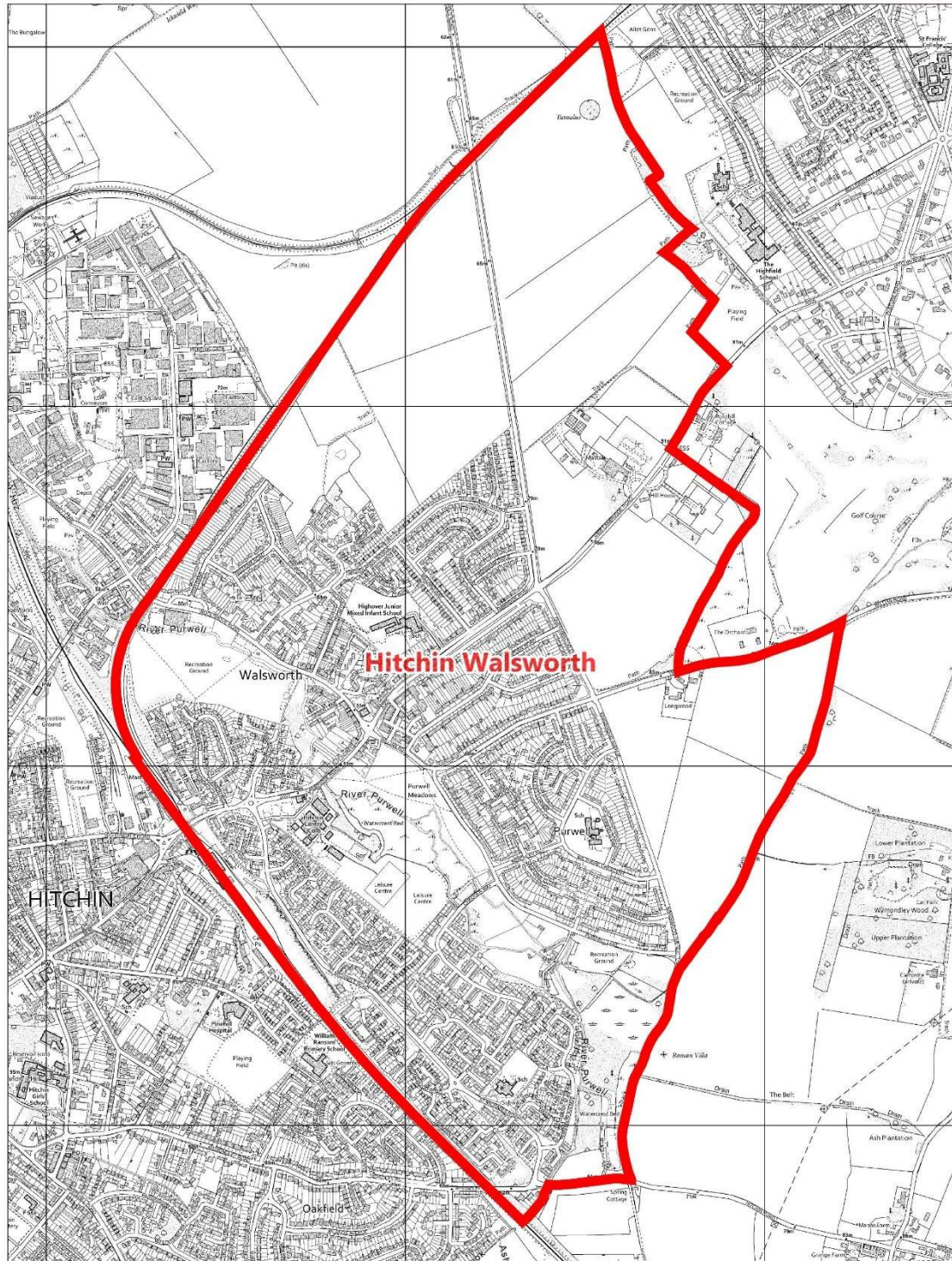


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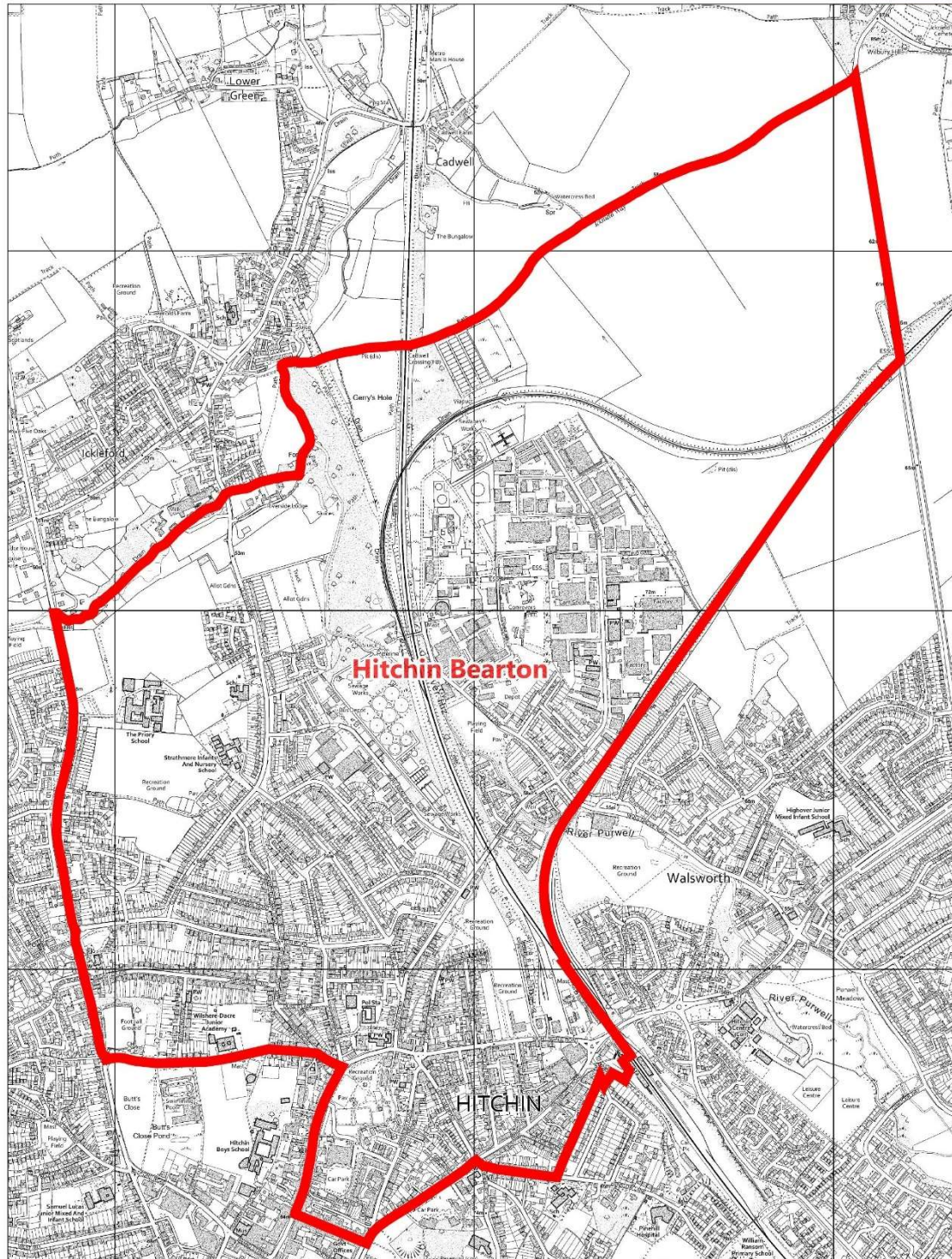
Proposed Hitchin Walsworth Ward



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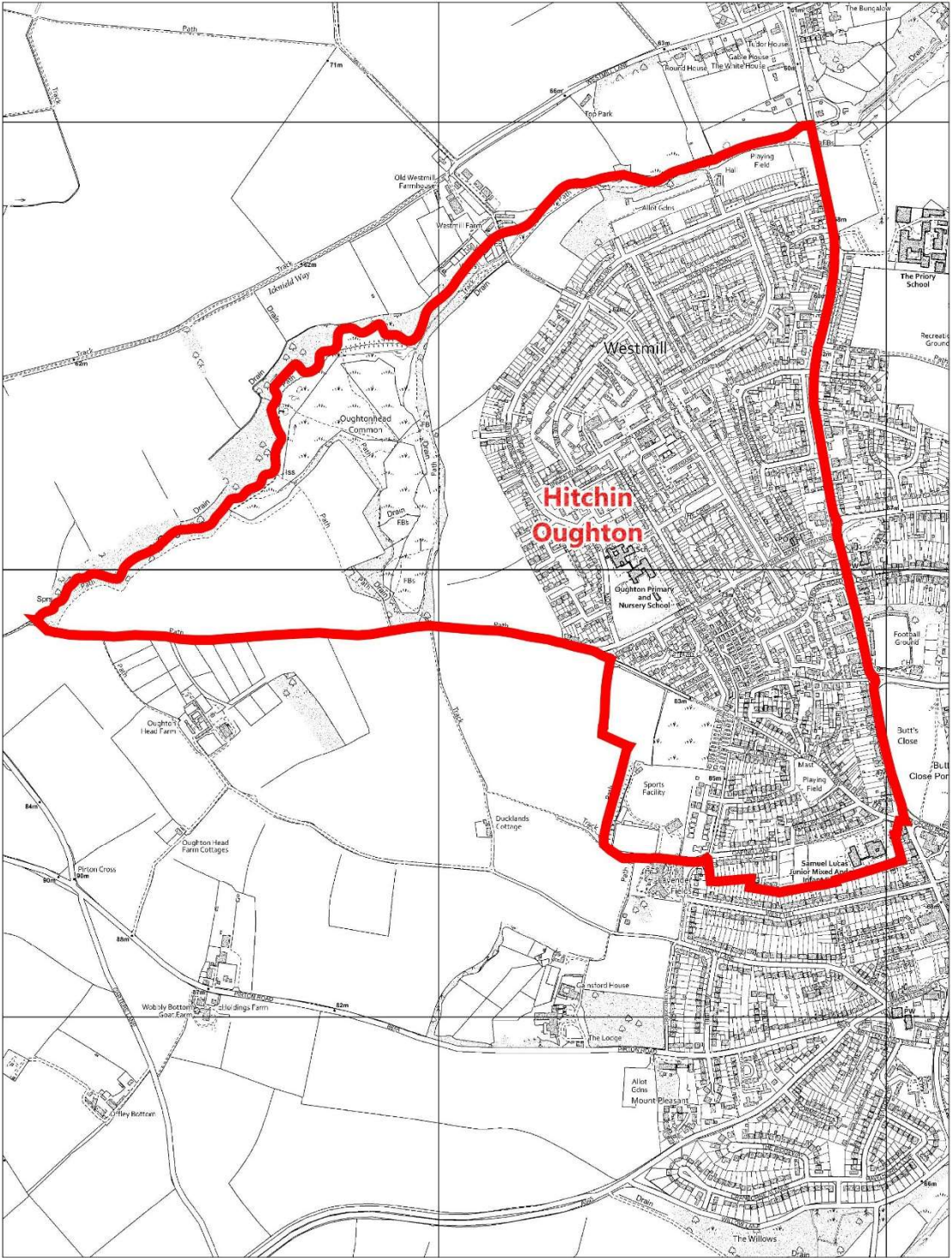
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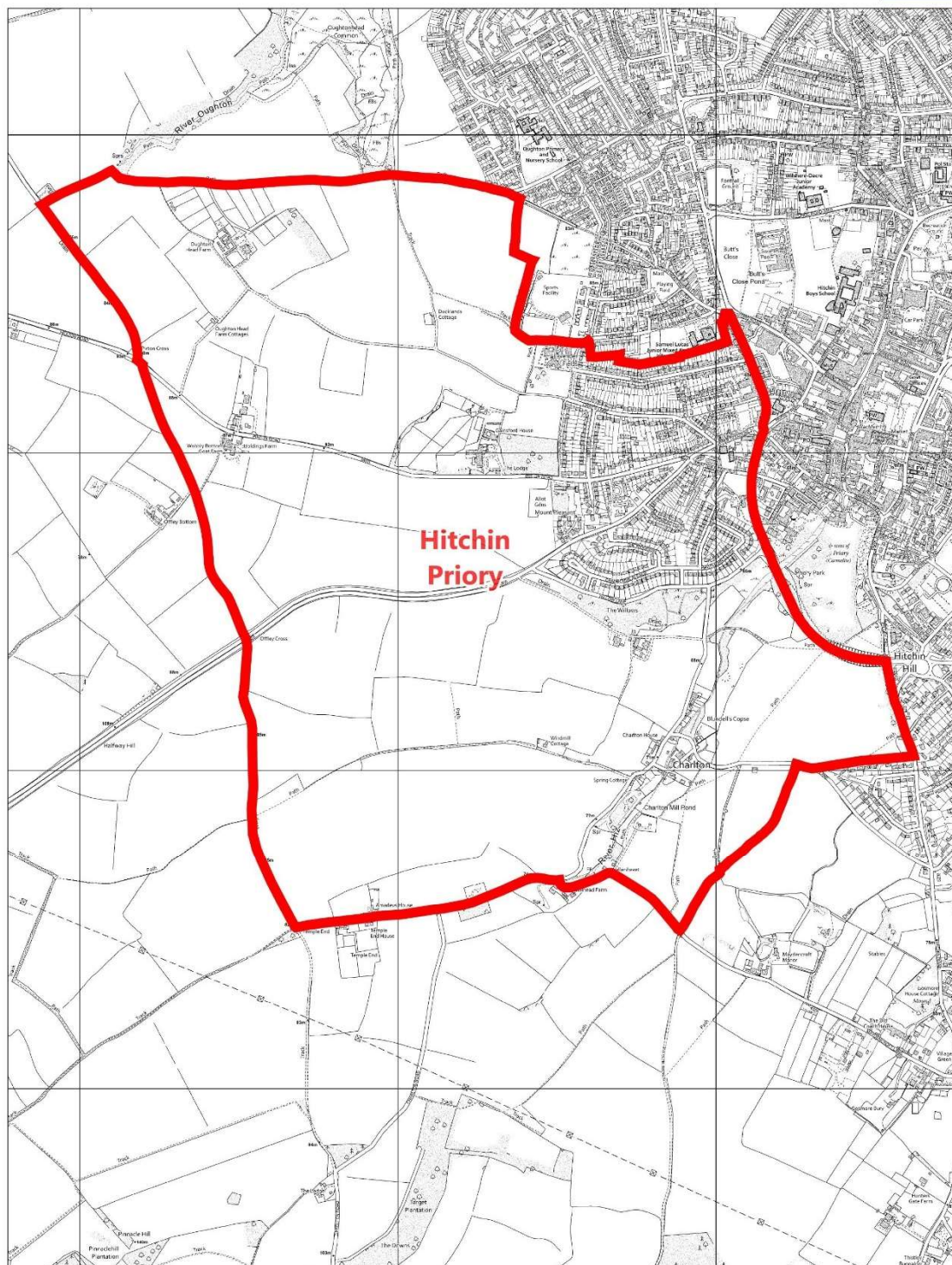
Proposed Hitchin Oughton Ward



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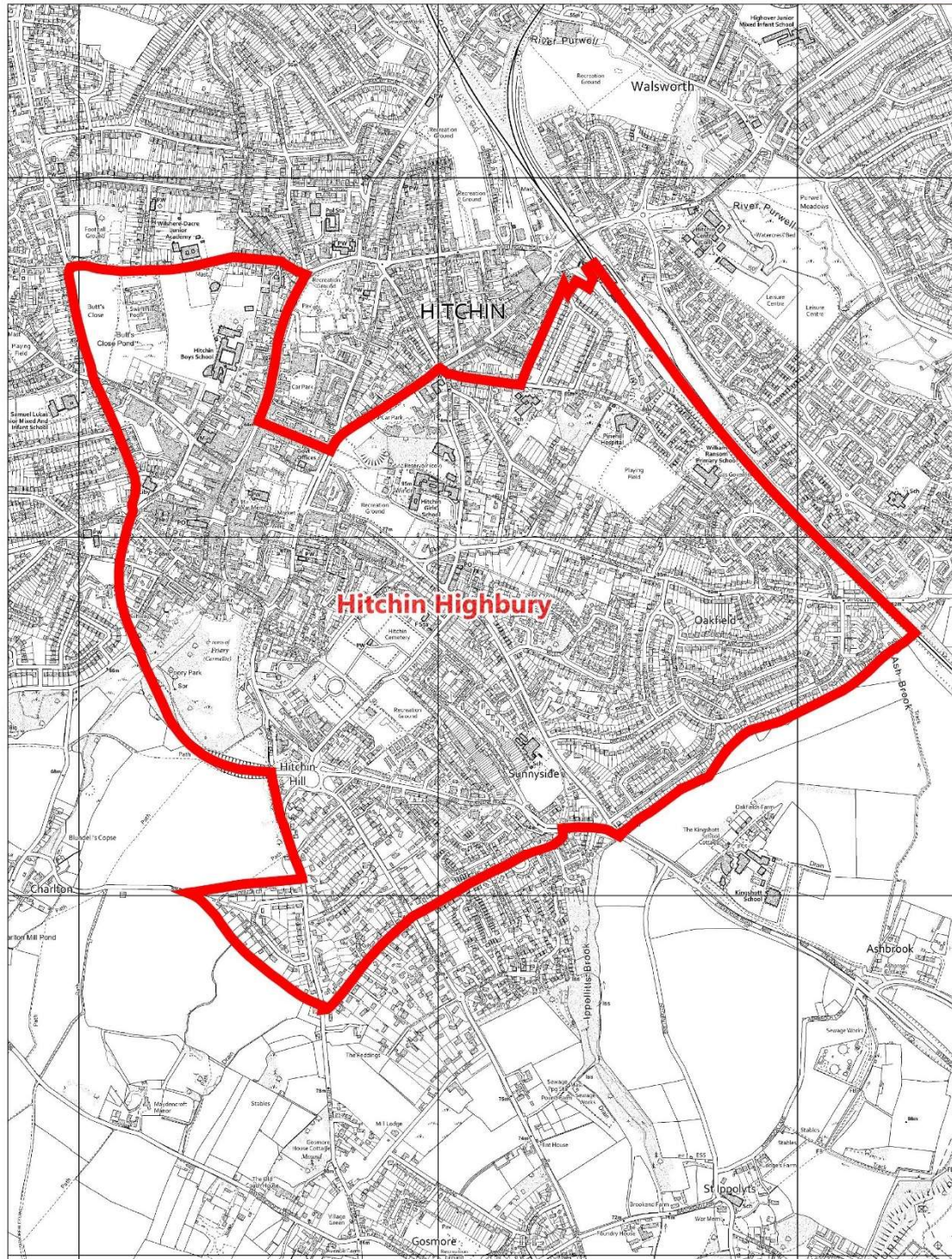


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Proposed Hitchin Highbury Ward



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Letchworth

Ward summary