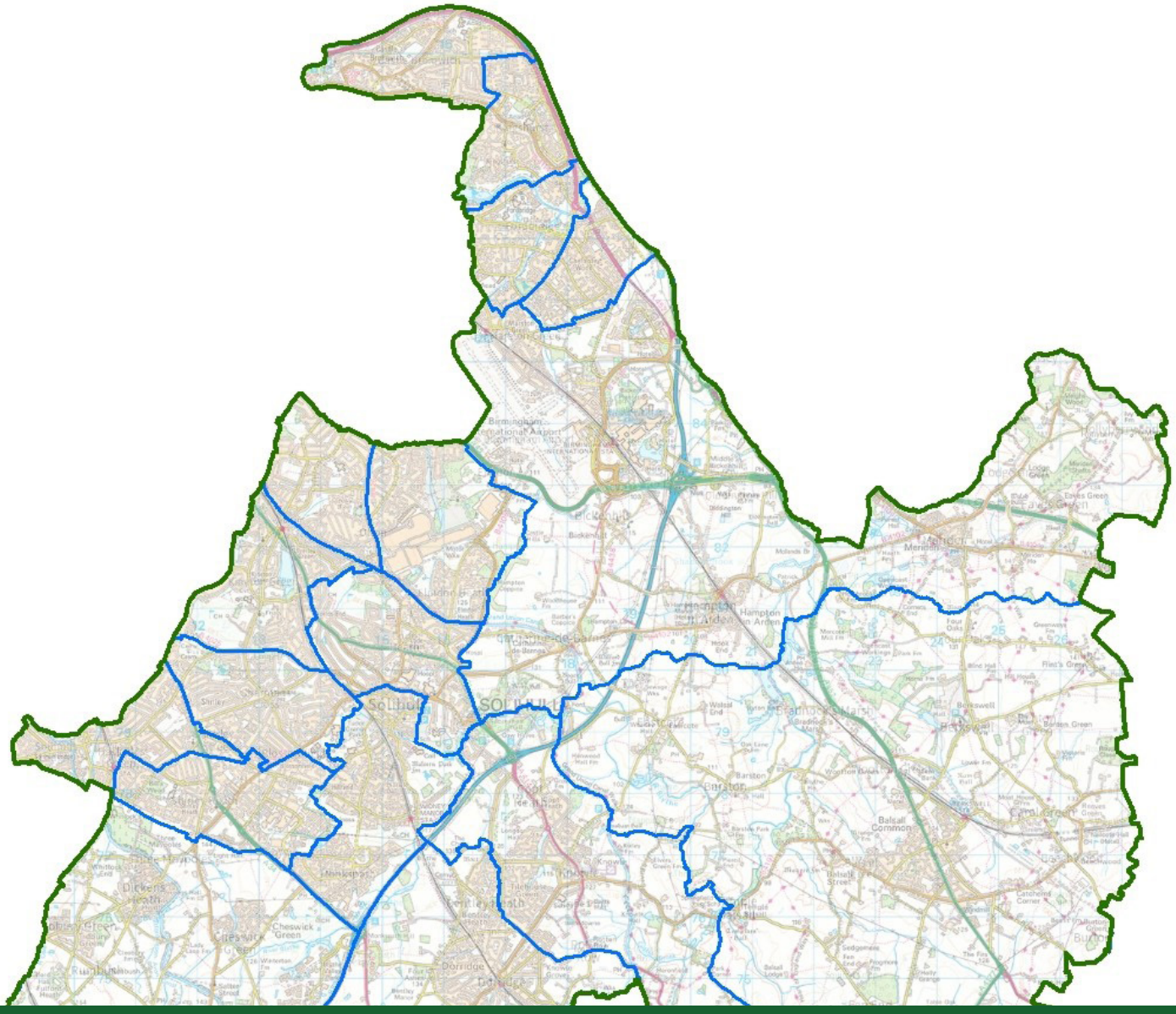
The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England



New electoral arrangements for Solihull Council

Draft Recommendations

January 2024

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Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Electoral review

January 2024

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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)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Wallace Sampson OBE
- Liz Treacy
- Ailsa Irvine (Chief Executive)

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 Solihull?

7 We are conducting a review of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2003, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.[2]

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

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

Our proposals for Solihull

9 Solihull should be represented by 51 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Solihull should have 17 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change; none 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, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough 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.

[2] Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 30 January 2024 to 10 April 2024. 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 10 April 2024 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 23 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 Solihull. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 August 2023	Number of councillors decided
22 August 2023	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
30 October 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
30 January 2024	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
10 April 2024	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
2 July 2024	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation[3] states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors[4] 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.

	2023	2029
Electorate of Solihull	161,574	179,197
Number of councillors	51	51
Average number of electors per councillor	3,168	3,514

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 Solihull are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029.

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 2029, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2024. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 9% by 2029.

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

[3] Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
[4] Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Number of councillors

26 Solihull Council currently has 51 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council in its submission, which advocated for retaining 51 councillors, as well as alternative evidence provided by Solihull Green Group ('the Green Group'), which advocated for an increase to 57 councillors. We have concluded that keeping the same number of councillors will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively. The Council's submission was additionally supported by the Solihull Conservative Association and by the Conservative Group of the Council.

27 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 51 councillors.

28 As Solihull Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation[5] that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. In each review of local authorities that elect by thirds, we will aim to deliver a pattern of three-member wards. However, in all cases this consideration will not take precedence over our other statutory criteria, and we will not recommend uniform patterns in the number of councillors per ward if, in our view or as is shown in evidence provided to us, it is not compatible with our other statutory criteria.

29 We received no further submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on ward patterns.

Ward boundaries consultation

30 We received 33 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included two borough-wide proposals, one from the Council and one from the Green Group. The Liberal Democrat Group made a submission in support of the Green Group's pattern. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments on warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

31 The two borough-wide schemes provided a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards for Solihull. 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 authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

32 Our draft recommendations are mostly based on the Council's proposals, except in the north of the borough where they are based on the Green Group's proposals. These draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that

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

we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals from the Council and the Green Group did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

33 We visited the area in order to look at the various different proposals on the ground. This tour of Solihull helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

34 Other than the two full schemes for the borough, we received relatively few detailed submissions from parish councils, local organisations, or residents. We have therefore relied heavily on our tour of Solihull to inform our draft recommendations, particularly where we identified alternative boundaries from those suggested by the Council or the Green Group. We welcome additional submissions from local communities throughout the borough to help inform our final recommendations.

Draft recommendations

35 Our draft recommendations are for 17 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.

36 The tables and maps on pages 8–20 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Solihull. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory[6] criteria of:

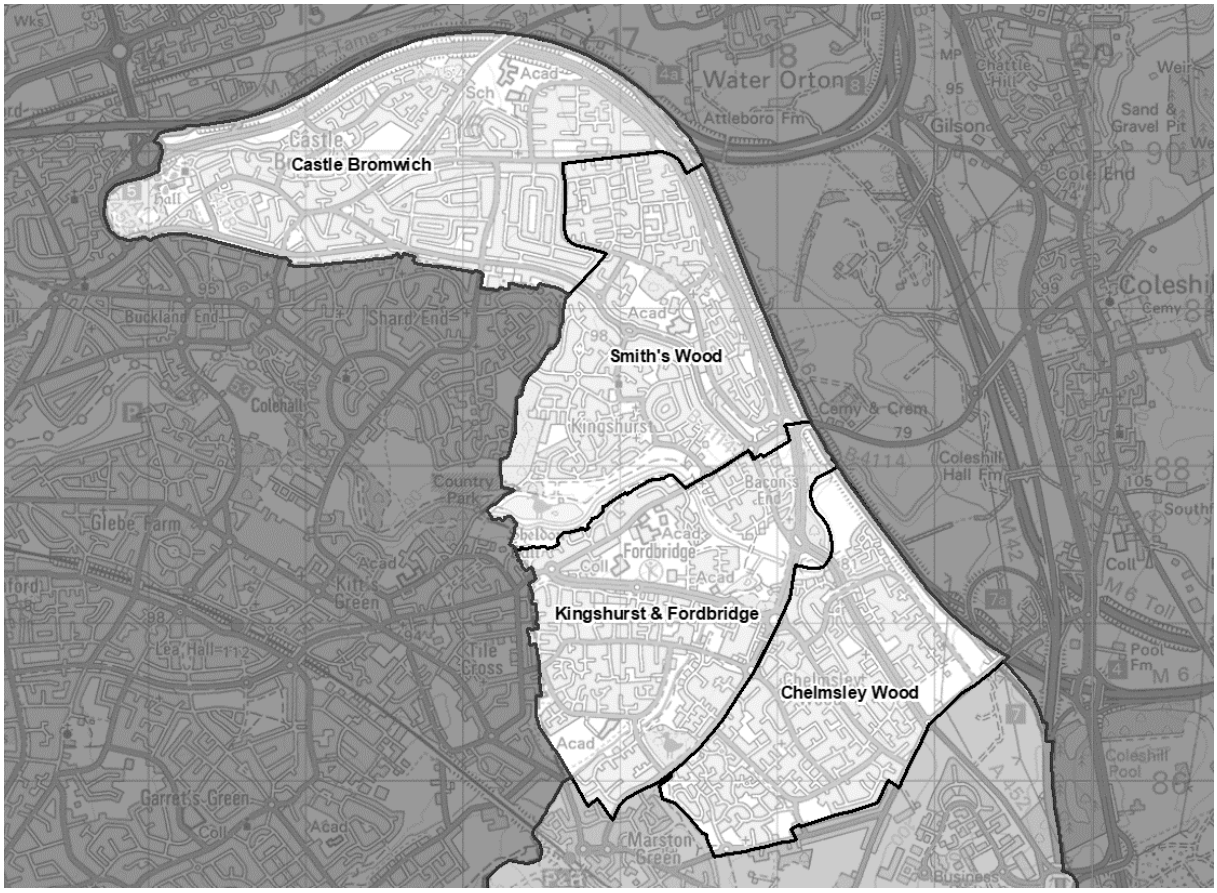
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 27 and on the large map accompanying this report.

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

[6] Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Urban North



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Castle Bromwich	3	9%
Chelmsley Wood	3	-6%
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	3	-7%
Smith's Wood	3	-3%

39 The existing pattern of four urban wards in the north of the borough comprises five parishes. Due to changes in the forecast electorate for the borough, these wards would all fall below the average variance with fewer electors than average and additional electors are required from the adjacent southern Bickenhill ward to bring them within an acceptable range.

40 At the northernmost extent of the borough is Castle Bromwich ward, which is surrounded on three sides by other local authorities; its only connections within the borough are with Smith's Wood. Following existing boundaries which are coterminous with the parish of the same name, Castle Bromwich is forecast to have an electoral variance of -11% by 2029; any attempts to address this variance would therefore involve a knock-on impact for Smith's Wood.

Castle Bromwich and Smith's Wood

41 The two borough-wide submissions we received proposed different arrangements in this area. The Council argued that preserving Castle Bromwich ward unchanged, and maintaining its coterminosity with Castle Bromwich parish, was the most effective reflection of community identity and that this warranted accepting a variance of -11%. The Green Group proposed an alternative arrangement, including the Lanchester Park area (sometimes referred to as the Cars Area, due to local roads named after car makers and models) from Smith's Wood into Castle Bromwich instead. This pattern results in a Castle Bromwich ward with a forecast variance of 9% and a Smith's Wood ward with a forecast variance of -3%.

42 We received additional submissions from the Meriden and Solihull Conservative Associations which supported the Council's scheme elsewhere in the borough but proposed transferring a smaller residential area of Smith's Wood (comprising Balmoral Road, Buckingham Road, part of Chester Road, Kings Croft, Mey Coppice, and Windsor Road) in order to bring Castle Bromwich ward within a more acceptable variance. This results in a variance of -8% for Castle Bromwich and -6% for Smith's Wood.

43 In the south of Smith's Wood, the Council proposed including part of Fordbridge parish (around Chester Road) in the Smith's Wood ward, creating a narrow access point for the ward at the A252/Birmingham Road roundabout. The Green Group proposed an alternative boundary at Babb's Mill Local Nature Reserve (Babb's Mill LNR), in part to account for the shift in forecast electorate due to proposed changes at the north of the ward. This proposed boundary mostly follows Fordbridge Road, which is also the northern extent of Babb's Mill LNR; however, we consider that including all of Babb's Mill LNR in one ward better reflects its access points to the north.

44 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull, and agree with the suggestion put forward by the Green Group for Castle Bromwich and Smith's Wood. We believe this arrangement achieves a more equal electorate, and reflects more clear boundaries. Although we note the logic of the submissions by the Meriden and Solihull Conservatives, we believe that Auckland Drive represents a stronger boundary between the Cars Area and the rest of Smith's Wood; we also believe that including a larger, more well-defined neighbourhood in the Cars Area better reflects community identity.

45 We therefore propose a Castle Bromwich ward consisting of Castle Bromwich parish and the Cars Area (specifically, the area aligning to the existing Smith's Wood parish ward of Bosworth) as part of our draft recommendations. We additionally propose a Smith's Wood ward consisting of Smith's Wood parish (other than Bosworth) as well as the northern area of Kingshurst parish up to the southern extent of Babb's Mill LNR, which includes the reserve itself.

46 Although there were a number of submissions from borough-wide groups in this northern area of the borough, we would particularly welcome additional submissions from local residents who could present further insight into the suitability of the Cars Area versus the Buckingham Road area to be included in Castle Bromwich, or whether the boundary of Castle Bromwich parish is reflective of the community such that it warrants a ward with a forecast variance of -11%. We consider this a finely balanced decision and would appreciate further local information.

Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst & Fordbridge

47 To address the electorate shortfall for the northern wards, both the Council and Green Group include some of the Bickenhill & Marston Green parish (specifically the Marston Green component at the north of the parish) in the urban north area.

48 The Council proposed including the area north of Moorend Avenue and east of Chelmsley Lane in Chelmsley Wood ward, along with all of Chelmsley Wood parish except for the Alcott Wood neighbourhood, also north of Moorend Avenue, which it proposed including in Kingshurst & Fordbridge.

49 The Green Group also proposed including Alcott Wood in Kingshurst & Fordbridge. It additionally proposed including a greater amount of Marston Green in the ward, namely everything north of Moorend Avenue and Chelmsley Lane. The Greens proposed Chelmsley Wood ward also included much of Marston Green north of Land Lane, including the train station.

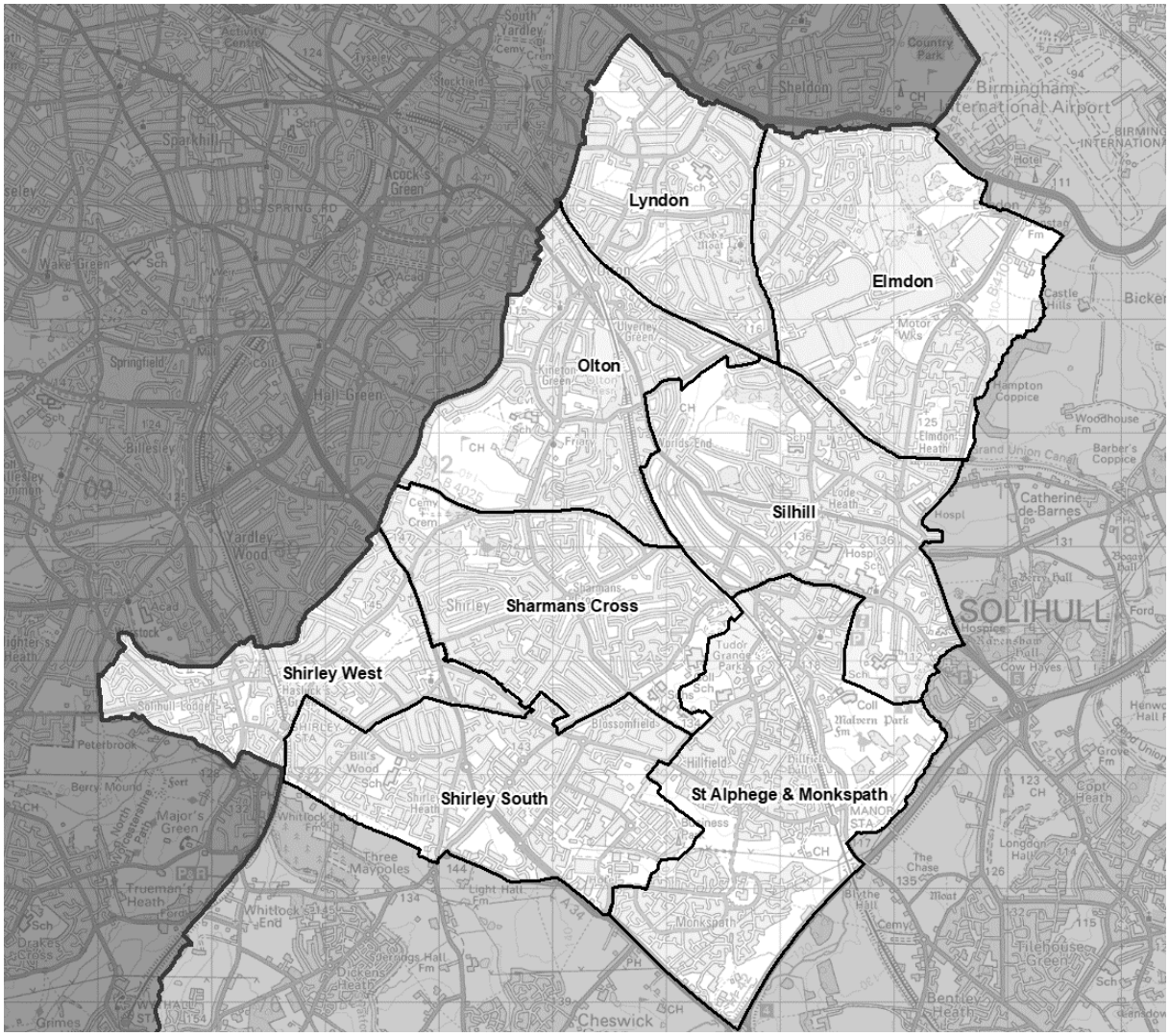
50 We received a submission from a resident of Chelmsley Wood who identified two anomalies around specific boundaries in the urban north; however, as these boundaries are based on parish boundaries, any attempt to address them in isolation would result in unviable parish wards (i.e. those which have very few electors).

51 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull. Although we agree with the principle of including electors from the greater Marston Green area in wards to the north and east, we believe that a stronger pattern of wards can be achieved than what was put forward by either the Council or the Green Group. We propose a Kingshurst & Fordbridge ward consisting of part of the southernmost area of Kingshurst parish, the entirety of an undivided Fordbridge parish, the Alcott Wood neighbourhood of Chelmsley Wood, and part of the Bickenhill and Marston Green parish ward of Merstone; specifically the residential neighbourhood south of Hatchford Brook and west of Alcott Wood and Low Brook, along Cambridge Drive and Gloucester Way. We propose a Chelmsley Wood ward consisting of Chelmsley Wood parish (other than Alcott Wood) as well as the Brooklands neighbourhood east of Low Brook. We consider that our draft recommendations here facilitate wards which match local community ties, and that better reflect the area's geography. We think that Low Brook is a stronger boundary at the west of Chelmsley Wood than the Council's proposed boundary through Old Farm Drive, and that the Green Group's proposed

boundary along Chelmsley Lane is less strong than Moorend Avenue at the south of Kingshurst & Fordbridge.

52 Both the Council and Green Group proposals leave one parish undivided between wards in their warding patterns in this area: Castle Bromwich and Fordbridge, respectively. We believe that the pattern put forward by the Green Group, on which our draft recommendations are principally based (with the exception of including a different area of Marston Green in the urban north), presents a stronger case because there are no wards with a variance beyond ±10%. We also believe that the Green Group's proposals are based upon more evident divisions between communities, including a boundary at Babb's Mill LNR, while also avoiding the narrow access point of the Council's proposal at the south of Smith's Wood ward.

Suburban West



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Elmdon	3	-7%
Lyndon	3	7%
Olton	3	-1%
Sharmans Cross	3	10%
Shirley South	3	4%
Shirley West	3	7%
Silhill	3	-1%
St Alphege & Monkspath	3	9%

53 The eight wards east of the densely populated Birmingham local authority border and west of the M42 motorway and Birmingham Airport have a suburban character distinct from the more urban north and the more sparsely populated villages of the south and east of Solihull borough. This area includes two core town

centres, at Shirley and Solihull, but in contrast to most of the rest of the borough it is entirely unparished.

Elmdon and Silhill

54 Both the Council and the Green Group proposed only one minor amendment to the existing Elmdon ward: the inclusion of a small unparished area east of the B1405 (Damson Parkway), which includes one residential road at Gables Close.

55 The Green Group proposed an unchanged Silhill ward, while the Council proposed including three roads from the existing St Alphege ward: Blythe Way, Brueton Avenue, and Park Avenue. This shift was suggested to account for the inclusion of additional electors in St Alphege ward to the south.

56 As part of our draft recommendations we propose an Elmdon ward matching the proposals of the Council and the Green Group. We have adopted the Council's proposals at the southern extent of St Alphege ward; we are similarly persuaded by their adjustments at the north of the ward, where the three residential roads noted above have better links to the north with Silhill. We also do not believe that the section of Warwick Road east of the Hampton Lane intersection, which serves as the existing southern boundary for Silhill, is particularly strong here – there is a similar character of community which spans the road. We therefore propose a Silhill ward in line with the Council's proposals.

Lyndon and Olton

57 Both the Council and the Green Group proposed keeping Lyndon ward unchanged from its existing arrangement; this would result in a forecast electoral variance of 0% in 2029.

58 We received a submission from a local resident who suggested that the boundary between Lyndon and Olton wards should follow the Grand Union Canal north of Richmond Road; the boundary between the two wards already follows the canal south of Richmond Road and continues to serve as the boundary between Elmdon and Silhill further east.

59 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull and were persuaded by the resident's comments. We therefore propose a Lyndon ward where the Grand Union Canal serves as the entire southern boundary of the ward. Although this results in a ward with a forecast variance of 7%, we feel that it better reflects local communities and provides a stronger boundary.

60 Elsewhere in Olton, both the Council and the Green Group proposed including the residential area around Stonor Park Road with a ward to the south. However, on our visit to this area, we were persuaded that the B4025 (Streetsbrook Road) functions as a stronger boundary than Beechwood Park Road and we have therefore

included this PD area in Olton ward to allow for more convenient and effective local government.

61 We received a submission from Solihull Councillor Michael Carthew which opposed the Council's suggestion to include the residential area south of the B4025 (Streetsbrook Road) around Robin Hood Cemetery in Olton ward; he argued that this area has no commonality or connection with the rest of Olton.

62 We agree with the submission from Cllr Carthew, noting that Robin Hood Cemetery acts as a significant geographical boundary to areas north of the B4025 (Streetsbrook Road), with limited internal access within the Council's proposed Olton ward. Therefore, as part of our draft recommendations, we propose an Olton ward bounded to the north by the Grand Union Canal and to the south by the B4025 (Streetsbrook Road).

Sharmans Cross, Shirley South, Shirley West, and St Alphege & Monkspath

63 The community of Monkspath has grown considerably in the 20 years since Solihull's boundaries were last reviewed, and is projected to continue to grow through the forecast period to 2029. This area therefore requires a greater degree of change to the existing warding pattern than elsewhere in the borough.

64 The Council and the Green Group suggested different options for Monkspath, although both agreed that it does not fit well with Blythe ward, where it is currently. The Council proposed including Monkspath in a north/south oriented ward which it called St Alphege with Monkspath & Hillfield. The Green Group proposed including it in an east/west oriented Shirley South ward.

65 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull, and agree with the Council that Monkspath's connections to the north, particularly with the community of Hillfield (which currently falls within the existing St Alphege ward), along the Monkspath Hall Road are stronger than its connections to the west with Shirley. Although Monkspath is a distinct community, separated from adjacent areas to both the north and west, we noted that there was a greater traffic flow (including pedestrians) along Monkspath Hall Road and through the Hillfield Nature Reserve than there was along the A34 (Stratford Road) or along Highlands Road via the business and industrial park. We also felt that the Monkspath and Hillfield neighbourhoods share a common residential style, and are more similar in character than Monkspath is with Shirley. We also agree with the assessment of the Council that Monkspath's proximity to St Alphege, as well as accessibility for the proposed ward through Hillfield, make for a sensible ward which best accounts for changes to the electorate distribution here.

66 As part of our draft recommendations, we therefore propose a St Alphege & Monkspath ward in line with the Council's proposal. We consider the name of St

Alphege with Monkspath & Hillfield slightly verbose, but would be interested in submissions from local residents on its suitability as a more descriptive option.

67 Following on from adopting the Council's proposed pattern around Monkspath, we are similarly persuaded by its proposals for the neighbouring wards of Sharmans Cross, Shirley South, and Shirley West.

68 The Green Group proposed a Blythe ward which included part of Shirley Heath, as described in greater detail below. We found this warding pattern unsatisfactory, as it combined two dissimilar neighbourhoods within one ward and does not reflect community identities. We are also less persuaded by the Shirley East and Shirley West wards described in the Green Group submission.

69 On our visit to this area on our tour of Solihull, we noted a number of small adjustments that could be made to the Council's proposed pattern for these wards. As previously mentioned, we felt that the B4025 (Streetsbrook Road) represented a strong boundary between Olton and Sharmans Cross, and that the area west of the Olton Road fits better with Sharmans Cross than Olton. Our draft recommendation boundaries reflect these observations.

70 We were not convinced by the strength of Longmore Road as a boundary and have therefore included the Featherstone Crescent residential road in Shirley South, a ward we consider it is better connected to than the more distant Shirley West. We did agree with the Council that the rest of the neighbourhood along Longmore Road shares some links with Shirley West, although we additionally felt that the Dove Tree Court retirement home should be included in Shirley West as its only access is to Longmore Road as opposed to the rest of the Sharmans Cross ward.

71 We propose Sharmans Cross, Shirley South, and Shirley West wards largely in line with the Council's proposals, reflecting the amendments detailed above.

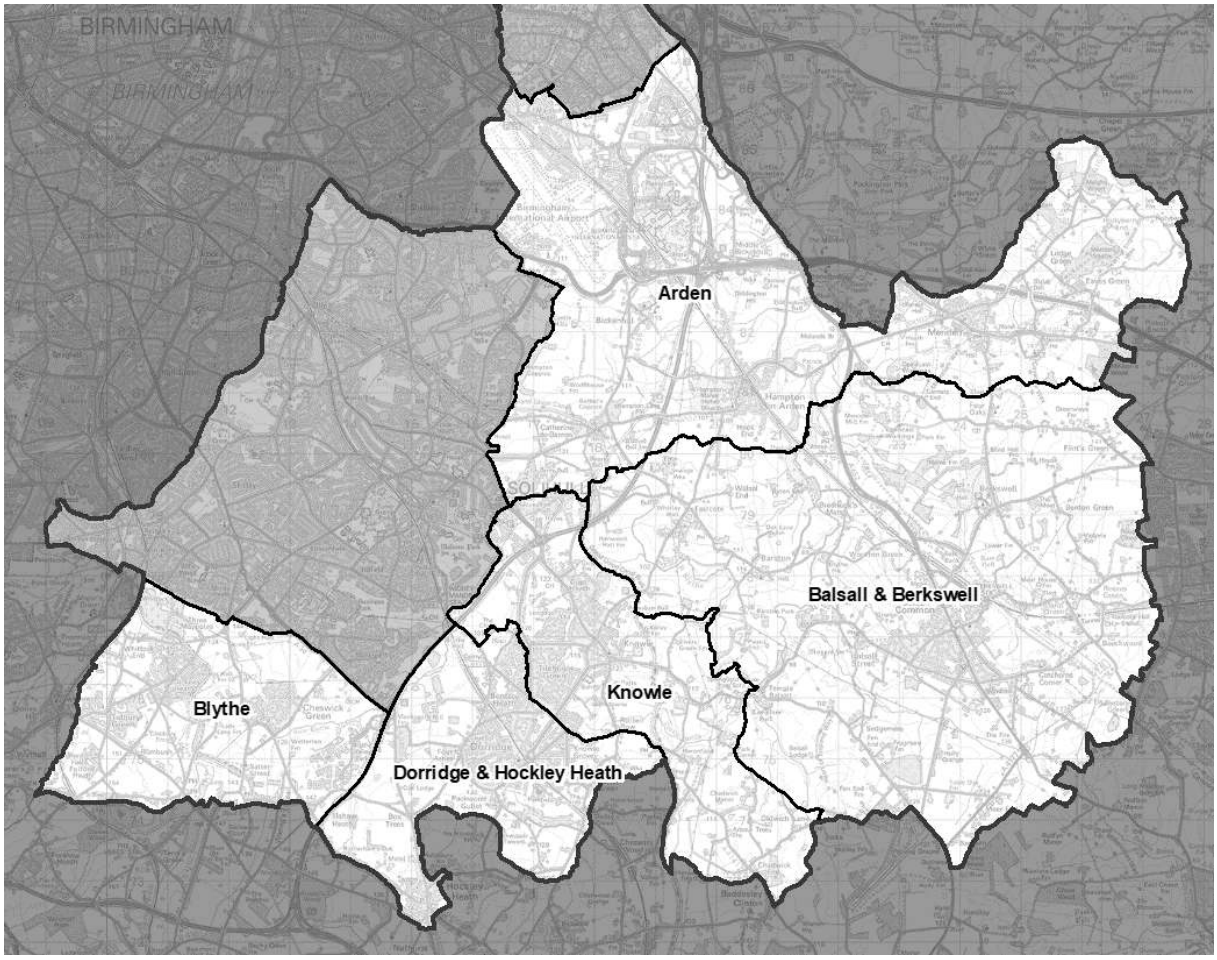
72 We received a submission from a Monkspath resident who gave evidence of the area's links with central Solihull and suggested that it would fit with St Alphege.

73 We received five submissions from residents of the area north of Blossomfield Road, which is in the existing St Alphege ward and is proposed to be included in Sharmans Cross in part due to the knock-on effects of including Monkspath in the draft St Alphege & Monkspath ward. We visited this area on our tour of Solihull, and although we acknowledge its proximity to central Solihull, we feel that it is similarly well connected to the core of Sharmans Cross. We also feel that the Solihull College & University Centre's Blossomfield campus, as well as other neighbouring schools and parks in an extended unpopulated green space, south of Blossomfield Road, represent a strong boundary that, when respected, encourages more convenient and effective local government in this area.

74 We received a submission from a resident on Dingle Lane who suggested that it did not fit well with Shirley South; however, we think it represents a strong boundary. Dingle Lane is bordered by The Alderbrook School and Arts College, and the Tudor Grange Academy, to the east – it only has residential properties on its western side.

75 We note that these four wards all have forecast electoral variances above the average for the borough, in some cases very close to or at the 10% threshold for good electoral variance. Alterations to these boundaries are therefore difficult to achieve without significant change to the proposed warding pattern in this area.

Rural East and South



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Arden	3	5%
Balsall & Berkswell	3	-5%
Blythe	3	-3%
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	3	-9%
Knowle	3	-9%

76 The five wards outside of the urban north and suburban west constitute the more rural east and south of Solihull borough. These less densely populated wards principally consist of smaller towns and villages which are, for the most part, aligned with local parishes. The average forecast variances for wards in this part of the borough are notably lower; however, the Council has identified that these wards as areas where significant residential allocations are expected to accommodate growth in the period after 2029.

Arden and Balsall & Berkswell

77 Both the Council and the Green Group proposed including areas at the northern extent of the existing Bickenhill ward in the urban north contingent of wards,

as described in that section above. They both also propose including the parish of Meriden in a new configuration of this ward, noting the strong east/west transport links between Meriden village and Hampton in Arden.

78 The Council proposed new names for these two wards. It suggested that Arden was a more suitable name for the collection of villages across an area that once contained large swathes of the historic Arden forest, and that Balsall & Berkswell was a more appropriate name for the ward after the transfer of Meriden elsewhere.

79 The Green Group additionally proposed including part of Berkswell parish, north of the West Coast Main Line, in its Bickenhill ward. The rest of Berkswell parish would be included in a modified Meriden ward composed of the parishes of Balsall, Barston, and Chadwick End.

80 We received submissions from the Balsall and Berkswell parish councils, who worked together to respond to the initial consultation. These parish councils argued that they should not be separated into different wards, principally due to the historic parish boundary splitting the relatively recent settlement of Balsall Common. They provided evidence of an 'interdependency between the parishes which form one larger community' including school attendance, places of worship, shared green spaces, and local sports clubs named for both parishes (e.g. Berkswell & Balsall Cricket Club or Berkswell & Balsall Hornets Football Club).

81 We received two submissions from residents of Balsall Common who corroborated this evidence from the parish councils, and advocated for both parishes remaining together in one ward.

82 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull and agree with Balsall and Berkswell parish councils that there is a strong community link between the two areas such that they should not be split. We additionally thought that the submissions from these parish councils provided significant evidence of their shared identity such that maintaining both within one ward would allow for convenient and effective local government.

83 We do feel that the parish of Barston is fairly remote, and agree with the Council's assessment in its submission that 'the settlements in this [parish] are midway between the higher order settlements of Knowle, Hampton in Arden, Catherine-de-Barnes and Balsall Common and an argument could be made that the [parish] could be associated with any of these.' Therefore, to allow for the best balance of electorate between wards, and to account for the hamlet of Bradnock's Marsh being situated at the intersection of Balsall, Barston, and Berkswell parishes, we propose including Barston parish in a ward with Balsall and Berkswell parishes.

84 We did not receive any evidence that Chadwick End parish has community links with Balsall parish, so our draft recommendations facilitate a pattern of wards with better electoral equality and good access links between settlements. The main access road for Chadwick End village is the A4141 (Warwick Road), which looks north to Knowle (and south out of the authority); additionally, the new development at Hall Farm Court at the northern end of the parish is immediately adjacent to Knowle.

85 As part of our draft recommendations, we therefore propose an Arden ward consisting of part of the parish of Bickenhill & Marston Green, the northern boundary of which is described in detail in the Urban North section above, as well as the parishes of Hampton in Arden and Meriden. We additionally propose a Balsall & Berkswell ward consisting of the parishes of Balsall, Barston, and Berkswell. We believe that the names suggested by the Council are reflective of communities here.

Blythe

86 As described above, the Monkspath area is more suburban in nature than the rest of the existing Blythe ward, from which it is separated by open countryside. The Council has therefore proposed a Blythe ward consisting of only Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath, and Tidbury Green parishes.

87 In contrast, the Green Group has proposed a Blythe ward which pairs Dickens Heath and Tidbury Green parishes with the southern section of the (unparished) Shirley Heath neighbourhood.

88 We received a submission from a resident of Cheswick Green who expressed that Dog Kennel Lane, at the southern end of Shirley, represents a clear boundary between the villages of Blythe ward to the south and the more densely populated areas of Shirley to the north.

89 We received two other submissions from local residents. One suggested that some housing development sites from Blythe ward should be included in Shirley South; however, this would result in unviable parish wards. Another suggested crossing the M42 between Blythe and Dorridge & Hockley Heath but provided no evidence aside from electoral equality.

90 We received another submission from a resident of Blythe ward who stressed that Monkspath and Hillfield are one continuous suburb of Solihull, and was dissatisfied with the existing mix of rural and urban areas in the current Blythe ward.

91 We visited this area on our tour of Solihull, and did not feel that there were any community ties between Shirley and Dickens Heath. Although the Green Group's submission makes reference to the fields between these areas as a coherent focal point for the ward, we saw no evidence of this on our tour. We also felt that there

was a common character to the villages of Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath, and Tidbury Green such that the three parishes would constitute a sensible ward.

92 We were persuaded that Dog Kennel Lane, as well as the northern boundary of Dickens Heath parish, represent strong boundaries between Shirley and the villages of the south.

93 As part of our draft recommendations, we therefore propose a Blythe ward in line with the Council's submission; that is, consisting of the parishes of Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath, and Tidbury Green. This arrangement is similar to the existing Blythe ward, with the notable transfer of Monkspath to a central-Solihull oriented ward.

Dorridge & Hockley Heath and Knowle

94 The Council proposed only small changes to the existing Dorridge & Hockley Heath ward. As the existing boundaries of the ward result in a variance of -11% by 2029, it suggested including a small area of Knowle to allow for a better balance of the electorate. Specifically, this area constitutes the residential Norton Green Lane and houses south of Grove Road; it argues that these areas are more closely related to Dorridge rather than Knowle. In the north of Knowle it proposed including the parish of Barston in a new configuration; however, as noted above, the Council's submission acknowledged that this parish could also fit with other adjacent wards.

95 The Green Group proposed more significant changes to these wards. It suggested including part of Bentley Heath with Knowle to facilitate a more compact ward. It also suggested a Dorridge & Hockley Heath ward spanning the M42 motorway to include Cheswick Green parish to account for new developments in the Blythe Valley.

96 We agree with the pattern proposed by the Council in this area. In particular, we believe that the M42 represents a significant boundary that should not be straddled by separate settlements within one ward. We have therefore proposed a Dorridge & Hockley Heath ward in line with the Council's submission, and a Knowle ward based principally on its submission but with the transfer of Barston parish to Balsall & Berkswell ward for reasons detailed above.

Conclusions

97 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Solihull, referencing the 2023 and 2029 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	
	2023	2029
Number of councillors	51	51
Number of electoral wards	17	17
Average number of electors per councillor	3,168	3,514
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	9	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council should be made up of 51 councillors serving 17 wards representing 17 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 Solihull. You can also view our draft recommendations for Solihull on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

98 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

99 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our

recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Solihull Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

100 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bickenhill & Marston Green, and Kingshurst.

101 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bickenhill & Marston Green parish.

Draft recommendations	
Bickenhill & Marston Green Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:	
Parish ward	**Number of parish councillors**
Bickenhill	2
Blackfirs	1
Brooklands	2
Low Brook	2
Marston Green	5

102 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Kingshurst parish.

Draft recommendations	
Kingshurst Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:	
Parish ward	**Number of parish councillors**
Cooks Lane	2
Kingshurst North	3
Kingshurst South	7

Have your say

103 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 borough or just a part of it.

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

105 Our website is the best way to keep up to date with progress on the review and to have your say www.lgbce.org.uk

106 Each review has its own page with details of the timetable for the review, information about its different stages and interactive mapping.

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

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

108 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Solihull which delivers:

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

109 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- 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.

110 Electoral equality:

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

111 Community identity:

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

112 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?

113 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.

114 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.

115 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.

116 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 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in 2026.

Equalities

117 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 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Arden	3	8,420	2,807	-11%	11,063	3,688	5%
2	Balsall & Berkswell	3	7,897	2,632	-17%	9,978	3,326	-5%
3	Blythe	3	7,711	2,570	-19%	10,194	3,398	-3%
4	Castle Bromwich	3	10,953	3,651	15%	11,500	3,833	9%
5	Chelmsley Wood	3	9,041	3,014	-5%	9,857	3,286	-6%
6	Dorridge & Hockley Heath	3	8,925	2,975	-6%	9,571	3,190	-9%
7	Elmdon	3	9,314	3,105	-2%	9,801	3,267	-7%
8	Kingshurst & Fordbridge	3	9,064	3,021	-5%	9,813	3,271	-7%
9	Knowle	3	8,180	2,727	-14%	9,630	3,210	-9%
10	Lyndon	3	10,729	3,576	13%	11,300	3,767	7%
11	Olton	3	9,950	3,317	5%	10,408	3,469	-1%

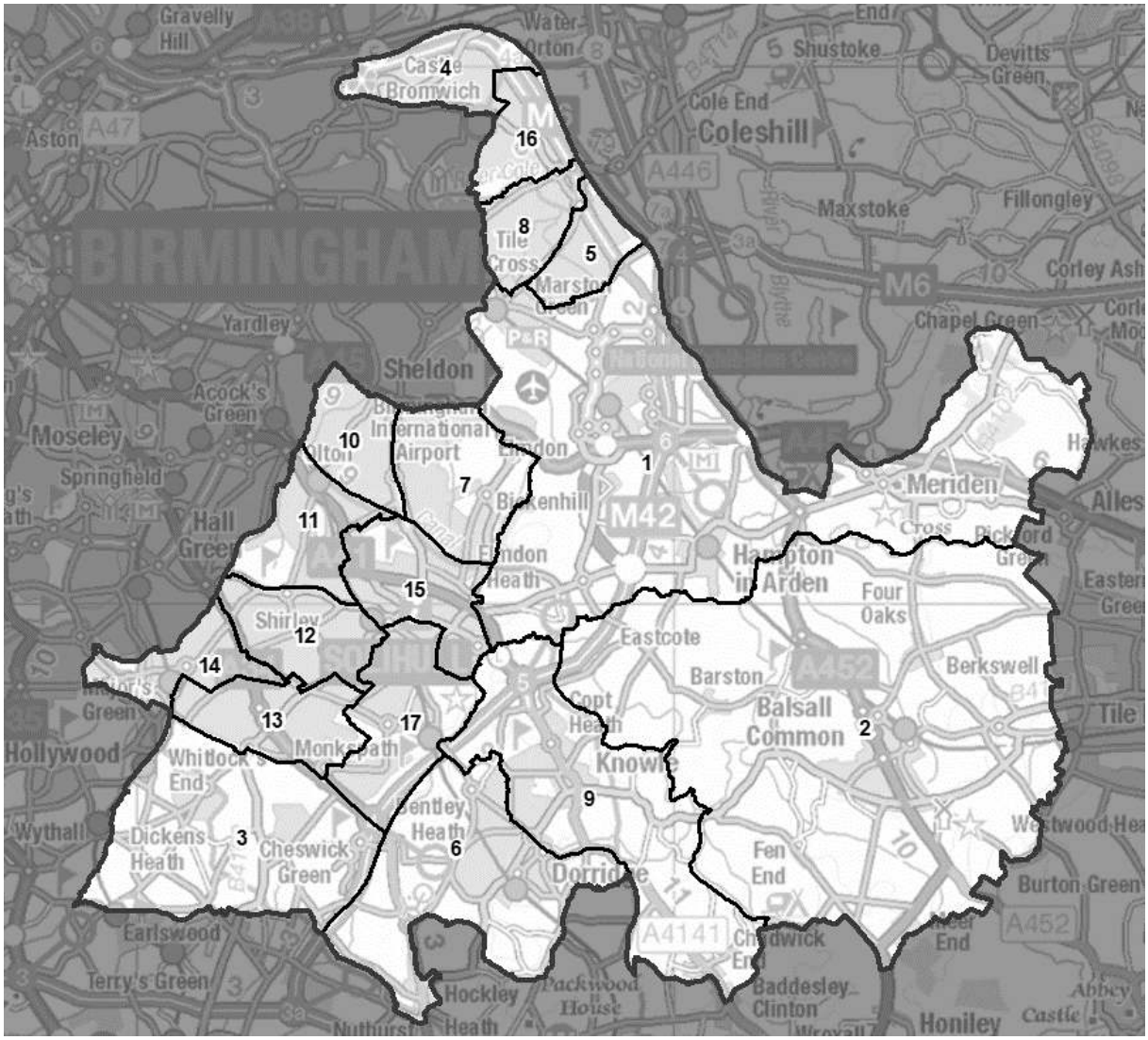
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Sharmans Cross	3	10,856	3,619	14%	11,619	3,873	10%
13	Shirley South	3	9,894	3,298	4%	10,979	3,660	4%
14	Shirley West	3	10,667	3,556	12%	11,268	3,756	7%
15	Silhill	3	9,776	3,259	3%	10,419	3,473	-1%
16	Smith's Wood	3	9,664	3,221	2%	10,244	3,415	-3%
17	St Alphege & Monkspath	3	10,512	3,504	11%	11,533	3,844	9%
	Totals	**51**	**161,574**	**–**	**–**	**179,197**	**–**	**–**
	Averages	**–**	**–**	**3,168**	**–**	**–**	**3,514**	**–**

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Solihull Metropolitan Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name
1	Arden
2	Balsall & Berkswell
3	Blythe
4	Castle Bromwich
5	Chelmsley Wood
6	Dorridge & Hockley Heath
7	Elmdon
8	Kingshurst & Fordbridge
9	Knowle
10	Lyndon
11	Olton
12	Sharmans Cross

13	Shirley South
14	Shirley West
15	Silhill
16	Smith's Wood
17	St Alphege & Monkspath

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/solihull

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

Local Authority

- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Political Groups

- Meriden Conservative Association
- Solihull Conservative Association
- Solihull Green Group
- Solihull Liberal Democrats Group

Councillors

- Councillor M. Carthew (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)

Parish and Town Councils

- Balsall Parish Council
- Berkswell Parish Council

Local Residents

- 25 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 area 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 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. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
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 area 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 area 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 area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can 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 area 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

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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