

North Herts Boundary Review 2022

NE Herts Constituency Labour Party Submission | December 2022



North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party
(NE Herts CLP)
5 London Road
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SG7 6LE

Review Officer (North Hertfordshire)
LGBCE
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23 December 2022

To The Review Officer,

NE Herts CLP response to the Commission's draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire District Council

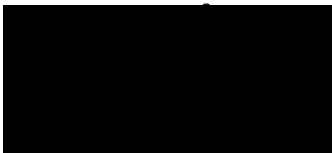
In November 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) published draft recommendations on the future electoral boundaries for North Hertfordshire. We welcome this opportunity to provide additional evidence for the Commission's consideration.

The NE Herts CLP supports North Hertfordshire Council's response to the commission and is broadly satisfied that the Commission's draft recommendations achieve the difficult balance between the statutory criteria – to ensure electoral equality, to deliver effective and convenient local governance, and to represent the interests and identities of local communities. There are however some notable exceptions.

1. We share the Council's strong objections to the proposed arrangements for Baldock and Ashwell & Weston. Having reviewed the options, our view is that the Council's proposal remains the strongest. We include in this submission an alternative arrangement for the Commission's consideration that takes on board the concerns about parish wards and, while not as strong as the Council's proposal, does offer greater alignment with the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations.
2. In Letchworth we support the Council's proposed amendment to the Grange-Wilbury boundary.
3. We share the Council's concern that while the proposals for Great Ashby - and by extension Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts - deliver the necessary electoral equality, they fall short on enabling effective governance or representing community identity. However, we do note the limited range of options available.

We thank the Commission for considering this additional evidence.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Alistair Willoughby
Chair, NE Hertfordshire CLP

Cc: Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Leader of Council, Leader of the Labour Group, North Herts Council

(1) The North East Herts CLP supports the proposals put forward by the Commission as relates to the following:

- North Hertfordshire should be represented by 51 councillors.
- The renaming of Baldock Town to Baldock West.
- The arrangements for Letchworth (with one minor amendment).
- The arrangements for Royston.
- The arrangements for Hitchin.
- The arrangements for Great Ashby and Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts.
- We support the Council's view for Ermine, Codicote & Kimpton, Langley, Preston & Walden, Knebworth and Offley & Pirton and Cadwell.

(2) The NE Herts CLP does not support the proposals put forward by the LGBCE as relates to the Baldock wards and Ashwell & Weston.

(3) The NE Herts CLP proposes a small amendment to the Letchworth Grange-Wilbury boundary.

In this document:

- Baldock wards and Ashwell & Weston
- Great Ashby and Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts
- Royston
- Hitchin
- Letchworth
- Appendix A: Statistical analysis for Baldock
- Appendix B: Statistical analysis for Great Ashby
- Appendix C: Original NE Herts CLP boundary review evidence submission

Baldock wards and Ashwell & Weston

The NE Herts CLP agrees with North Herts Council and is particularly concerned about the proposals put forward by the LGBCE for Baldock and Ashwell & Weston.

We do support the decision of the LGBCE to maintain the majority of the existing southern, western and northern boundaries of Baldock Town, but we are concerned about the Commission's approach to accommodating the expansion of Baldock into the rural parishes of Bygrave and Clothall and the resulting boundary proposals for Ashwell & Weston, Baldock East and Baldock Town wards. These new developments will be urban in nature and residents will identify as being part of Baldock. They should not be located in a new rural 'super-ward' but with their natural communities in Baldock East and Baldock Town.

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Our concerns are:

- The proposed 'super-ward' of Ashwell & Weston will fail 2,100 urban residents. Inclusion in a new rural 'super-ward' will divide the urban residents from their community in Baldock.
- The proposed ward will also fail rural residents. The population of the ward will be concentrated in the new Baldock developments that are being built in areas of Bygrave & Clothall parishes. As a result, the ward will be dominated by residents who will identify as being from Baldock and are serviced by Baldock's schools, shops, pubs and transport links.
- The proposed Ashwell & Weston ward is too large to be effective and convenient, with 11 separate parish areas to represent. Given the necessity for district Councillors to attend parish councils, meetings and events, many of which take place in the evenings, the proposed warding would require Councillors to potentially travel the length and breadth of a large rural ward on multiple occasions each week. Current Councillors report that their wards, with up to 7 parish areas, can already be hard work to manage and consider that increasing this to 11 would be unviable and lead to worse representation for local communities.
- The LGBCE also says that the alternative proposed by the Council is not feasible since it would involve the creation of parish wards that would have an insufficient electorate in 2024. In fact, this is not the case. The population of the potential "Baldock Ward" of Bygrave Parish is currently 16% of the total population of Bygrave parish which would allow a Parish Council of five to have four members from a Bygrave Ward and one from a Baldock Ward.
- The challenge of unviable parish wards with low/no electors, including in areas with no parish council, must be navigated. The goal of achieving good governance in parishes should not diminish good governance at district level.

In the first instance, we recommend that the Commission take up North Herts Council's proposal which enjoys cross-party support and we believe to be the best solution to represent both the residents of Baldock and the rural northern parishes.

If it remains the view of the Commission that the Council's proposal is not viable, we propose an alternative for consideration, 'Baldock East, Bygrave & Clothall'. This ward would include the existing Baldock East, the entirety of Bygrave parish and the Baldock developments within Clothall parish (which does not have a Council or elections).

This option would ensure electoral parity and remove any need to adjust parish boundaries. The new Baldock East, Bygrave and Clothall ward would become a two member ward and Baldock Town ward would remain a three member ward. The remainder of Arbury and Weston & Sandon wards would remain single-member wards. We believe this option to be less ideal than the Council's proposal but do believe it would better protect the interests of both urban and rural residents and be more closely aligned to the statutory criteria than the Commission's proposal.

The village of Bygrave, while distinct, is close to Baldock East and is connected to Baldock via a string of houses along Ashwell Road. The village has a population of ~300, limited services of its own, and is dependent on Baldock for all facilities.

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The inclusion of part of Clothall parish would ensure that the 200+ home development of Baldock would be located appropriately.

This is much more pragmatic than creating a super-ward and much closer to the original NHC proposal. This may also negate the need to modify the Baldock Town & Baldock East A505 boundary near the Salisbury Road and Bygrave Road areas.

This is not a perfect solution, but it does ensure that the needs of a greater number of people are met and that the rural parishes and urban wards are, for the most, achieving effective representation.

Reviewing the data, we believe this would result in:

Baldock:

- Baldock West (Town) using the NHC proposed boundary (not the revised one the LGBCE used) and including the development site from Clothall: 6,100 electors, three councillors, -6% variance.
- Baldock East, Bygrave & Clothall including the development site from Clothall: 4,364 electors, two councillors, +8% variance.

Northern rural parishes:

- Arbury Ward: Hinxworth, Ashwell, Caldecote, Newnham, Radwell. 2,052 electors, one councillor, -7.2% variance
- Sandon and Weston: Sandun, Wallington, Weston, Clothall and Rushden. 2,439 electors, one councillor, +10.3%.

Great Ashby and Wymondley, Graveley & St Ippolyts

The NE Herts CLP notes concerns for the proposals for Great Ashby on similar grounds as to Baldock. However, we reluctantly acknowledge that the Commission's proposal is the best of a poor set of options.

You can find a full note on our statistical analysis of this in Appendix B.

Royston

We support the Commission's proposals for Royston which maintain the majority of the existing boundaries within the town and keep the recognised existing wards, whilst recognising the ongoing growth in the local population.

Hitchin

We support the proposals for Hitchin which maintain the majority of the existing boundaries within the town and keep the recognised existing wards.

Hitchin Bearton:

We broadly support the LGBCE proposals for Bearton Ward with two small provisos and a couple of additional comments regarding Bancroft.

Bearton was a small hamlet lying to the north of Hitchin. It was incorporated into Hitchin over a century ago, and now forms part of the Hitchin Bearton ward.

For the most part there is a synergy and clear boundaries for the current Bearton ward. The area covered was last significantly reviewed to add the roads around the Wilbury Road industrial estate in the 2006/7 boundary review. In our conversations with residents they have agreed, and welcomed, the continued inclusion of the roads around the industrial estate in Bearton. The residents of this area identify more closely with the Bearton area, and Grove Road, than neighbouring Walsworth. And so we are broadly in agreement with the draft proposals for Bearton.

The "triangle" from Hitchin Town football ground to the industrial estate and then down to the station, forms a distinctive part of the community of Hitchin. It includes the areas around the Bancroft Recreation and Ransom's Recreation grounds. It also includes the conservation area around Walsworth Road. Splitting this community as proposed by other respondents, notably the Conservative Group would create an artificial divide and damage local community identity and cohesion. The community in the "triangle" is best served by a ward generally coterminous with the existing Bearton boundaries.

We support the extension of Bearton ward further up Benslow Lane, and including Benslow Rise. However, residents have commented to us that this would mean that the other side of Benslow Lane is in another Ward (Highbury). There is an argument to include both sides of the Lane, up to the Music Society, in the revised Bearton ward in order to avoid splitting residents on the same street who have a common community identity. This also reduces the administrative burden on residents and councillors by removing the confusion over which houses on the road are in which ward.

There is a similar argument about the houses in Fishponds Road, and whether all of this should be in Bearton. However Fishponds Road is a major road through the town and can be viewed as a natural boundary which residents and councillors will find easier to understand as a dividing line than a minor residential road - there is a clear "town" and "Bearton" side to the road.

Hitchin Highbury

We support the proposed Highbury ward. This reflects the natural community belonging to Bearton ward which has previously been artificially split by a boundary midway up Benslow Lane that posed administrative confusion for the community and all but the most experienced councillors.

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Equally the B656 is a natural self-contained boundary giving clear focus between the residential needs of the Highbury community which are distinct from the needs to the town centre which has more in common with Priory ward. The smaller Highbury ward is administratively more workable than its previous sprawl.

We do not support subdividing the ward to create a Benslow and Whitehill ward as this is not necessary in an urban area where the community already identifies as a larger unit. The area is best served by two members as single members could be overwhelmed by the casework generated by an area on the edge of the town centre.

Electoral equality is also met best in our view by the Commission's proposals.

Hitchin Oughton

We support the limited expansion of Oughton Ward into Priory Ward. It maintains Oughton as viable 2-member ward numbers wise and also means it is based around identifiable local communities.

The southward expansion to Gaping Lane also has the major benefit of uniting the previously artificially divided community on either side of Oughtonhead Way into one ward.

Hitchin Priory

We endorse the Commission's proposals for Priory and the decision to return the historical priory estate to the ward. We agree with the Commission's assessment of Conservative proposals to make Hitchin Priory a single member ward for the reasons cited.

The Commission asked for thoughts about extending Priory Ward further up Bancroft.

On balance, we do not favour this. The roads behind Bancroft like Whinbush Road form part of the distinctive Bearton community. In addition, the balance of number of electors moving between the wards would leave Bearton proportionately smaller than the target and Priory well above.

Finally, it is a matter of some confusion to residents that the County Council Divisions of Hitchin North and South, most recently looked at in 2016/7 do not offer terminosity with District ward boundaries. This will be exacerbated by this review. For example, the north side of Walsworth Road, Trevor Rd and some of Benslow Lane are all in Hitchin South for County elections but already in Bearton for District elections. How will this be considered?

Hitchin Walsworth

We endorse the Commission's proposals to maintain the longstanding boundaries of Walsworth which reflect the character of the old Walsworth village, and the cohesive communities of Walsworth, Purwell, and the newer Poets' Estate. The railway lines form a natural boundary which the community uses to define itself.

We note the comments from the Conservatives, but respectfully disagree. The area surrounding the Wilbury industrial estate has more in common with Bearton ward in terms of local connectivity and

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community cohesion. The character and nature of Walsworth is a village centred around Walsworth Common. The railway bridge on Woolgrove Road is a narrow road, with limited pedestrian access. Residents close to the Wilbury Road industrial estate are more likely to utilise Grove Road as a safer travel route, and to access the greater amenity offered by the Nightingale Road shops - which reside in Bearton Ward.

Equally the newer Wedgewood estate off St Michael's Road has no natural connectivity to the Benslow area. There is a single railway bridge and poorly maintained path which crosses the railway line near this part of the Walsworth community. The estate is located close to the St Michael's Mount Community Centre, which has served the local community of Walsworth for decades. Residents from the estate use the community centre's facilities and identify as being part of Walsworth very strongly. There is no comparable facility on the other side of the bridge residents of this area would have the same affinity to. And the poor connectivity would make it likely that any councillor serving the new Benslow ward would find it administratively difficult to fairly serve this part of the community as the geography would impede efficient movement around the proposed ward.

We also note the electoral variance is less favourable in the Conservative proposal. Therefore the NE Herts CLP submits the most equitable approach to meet the Commission's aims is to maintain the existing Walsworth Ward boundaries.

Letchworth

The NE Herts CLP endorses the Commission's proposals for Letchworth and believes this provides the best option for both recognising the distinct communities of Letchworth and achieving good electoral balance. We do propose a small amendment for the benefit of 12 electors.

The railway line is a firm boundary between the north and south of Letchworth and it is entirely appropriate to use it as a basis for boundary divisions across the town. This also provides a more natural division than the current arrangements in Letchworth East - which crosses the tracks - which we support.

The Commission proposals retain all existing communities without any inappropriate division, both north and south of the railway. They not only respect the main established communities of Wilbury, the Grange, Westbury, Jackmans and Old Pixmore (the area to the east of Norton Way South), but also the smaller communities within the Garden City, such as Norton village, the area around Nevells Road between the Common and the Railway, the small estate between Wilbury Road and the Pix Brook, (Longmead, Haymoor, Hawthorn Hill and Wheat Hill), and Willian Village.

The proposed wards are also well adapted to the major new developments which are being planned, north of the Grange, east of Kristiansand Way and the redevelopment of the town centre.

Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West wards

We endorse the Commission's proposal for the southern Letchworth wards as the two three-member wards will provide better electoral equality, better represent established communities and support stronger governance. As discussed, this option would provide 3% and

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2% more electors than the district average by 2028, well below the 10% tolerance. It also ensures that Pixmore Junior School and The Crescent are rejoined with their natural community in the current Letchworth East ward. It also avoids dividing the Lordship area or placing areas of it in a ward collocated with the Jackmans. While the Jackmans is distinct, it has much more in common with Letchworth East ward, particularly in terms of use of Council services and councillor casework. The Lordship has distinct needs, much more in common with those in the west of Letchworth.

Letchworth Wilbury, Letchworth Norton and Letchworth Grange wards:

We endorse the Commission's proposal for the northern ward as three two-member wards. The boundaries reflect the natural boundary divisions between the established Grange, Wilbury and Norton communities.

The Grange is a distinct community grounded in the Grange estate. The creation of Letchworth Norton more accurately reflects the nature of these communities than the current Letchworth East/Letchworth Grange boundaries. We note the impact of Norton Common as a natural boundary between the proposed Norton and Wilbury wards. Further, we endorse the Commission's adoption of the Conservative proposal to include residents north of Wilbury road in Wilbury rather than the Grange for the reasons cited. We also support the Commission's decision on Cowslip Hill given the benefits for electoral equality.

Minor amendment:

We propose that the 12 electors living in the area north of Wilbury Road between the Pix Brook and Stotfold Road be transferred from the Grange to Wilbury, as such links as they have are with Wilbury rather than the Grange.

Appendix A: Statistical analysis for Baldock

PROVISIONAL DATA ANALYSIS BY LABOUR PARTY VOLUNTEER

A. Support the LGBCE proposal:

This would be bad for about 2,100 electors in the new developments. Meanwhile it would be addressed by a Community Governance Review and sorted out at the next boundary review in c. 15 years' time.

It's not a good option, but possible.

B. Propose a 2-member Baldock East and Bygrave ward (reducing Ashwell & Weston to 2-members):

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Transfers 1,650 electors in 2028 from the Ashwell & Weston ward to BE&B. So BE&B forecast electorate in 2028 is $2,057 + 1,650 = 3,707$.

If it were a 2-member ward the $3,707 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = -16.1\%$ electoral equality in 2028.

This is not a viable option.

C. Propose a 2-member Baldock East, Bygrave and Radwell ward.

Transfers another 108 in relative to B. The forecast electorate in 2028 is $3,707 + 108 = 3,815$ so electoral equality is $3,815 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = -13.7\%$ in 2028.

Geographically odd, not feasible.

D. Propose a 2-member Baldock East, Bygrave, Radwell and Newnham ward:

Adds another 68 and so $3,815 + 68 = 3,883$ and electoral equality in 2028 is $3,883 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = -12.1\%$.

Still not viable.

E. Propose a 2-member Baldock East, Bygrave, Caldecote, Radwell and Newnham ward.

That only adds another 11 and by now the ward is very large geographically.

Still not good enough for electoral variance.

F. Backtrack (to B above) and add Clothall to B to propose a 2-member Baldock East, Bygrave and Clothall ward.

That adds another 834 in 2028 so forecast electorate in 2028 is $3,707$ (from B) $+ 834 = 4,541$. Electoral equality in 2028 is $4,541 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = +2.7\%$.

If we take those wards out of Ashwell & Weston its forecast electorate in 2028 becomes $6,797 - 1,650 - 834 = 4,313$ and electoral equality in 2028 is $4,313 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = -2.4\%$. This seems to have some merit.

Who is it good for? The 2,057 current Baldock East and the c. $1,424 + 712 = 2,136$ new developments if near Baldock itself = 4,193 will be happy. The rural residents (c. 348 in Bygrave and Clothall combined) will be less so. Under this proposal Ashwell & Weston would reduce from 3-members to 2-members.

Our view is that option F is a better option than A.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS ON BALDOCK EAST, BYGRAVE AND CLOTHALL

- Baldock West (Town) using NHC proposed boundary (not the revised one the LGBCE used) and including the development site from Clothall: 6,100 electors, 3 Cllrs, -6% variance.

- Baldock East & Bygrave, including the development site from Clothall: 4,364 electors, 2 Cllrs, +8% variance.

- That leaves the rural parishes. A single ward with all of them would have 4,491 electors, 2 Cllrs, +1% variance. It obviously relies on them agreeing the new developments in Clothall being part of Baldock. This might be better split into two to allow better community representation (Hinxworth, Ashwell, Caldecote, Newnham, Radwell - Arbury ward - 2,052 electors, 1 Cllr, -7.2% variance) and (Sandon, Wallington, Weston, Clothall and Rushden - Weston & Sandon ward - 2,439 electors, 1 Cllr, +10.3%).

So, looking at the numbers, it might work numerically if the LGBCE agrees to the Clothall developments being included in Baldock and with a variance of 10% in Weston & Sandon.

Appendix B: Statistical analysis for Great Ashby

PROVISIONAL DATA ANALYSIS BY LABOUR PARTY VOLUNTEER

Based on some provisional analysis, there are various options, none of them good. In summary, the only credible way forward is A.

- A. Support what LGBCE proposes. That results in the new homes in Graveley parish (661 electors, presumably mainly Great Ashby) going into the rural ward.

Possible. Not ideal, but pragmatic - will just have to be sorted out via a CGR and then the next boundary review in c. 15 years' time.

- B. Create a Great Ashby and Graveley ward. That would mean that GA&G's electorate would become something like: current 3,932 + 351 = 4,283 and projected 3,932 + 1,014 = 4,946.

If a 2-member ward then that means the variances are $4,283 / 1,938 / 2 - 1 = 10.5\%$ currently and $4,946 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = 11.9\%$ in 2028.

Meanwhile the rural ward losing Graveley would become St Ippolyts and Wymondley and would become something like $2,078 - 351 = 1,727$ and $3,989 - 1,014 = 2,975$ projected. The latter causes a problem as $2,975 / 2,210 / 2 - 1 = -32.7\%$ and $2,975 / 2,210 / 1 - 1 = +34.6\%$.

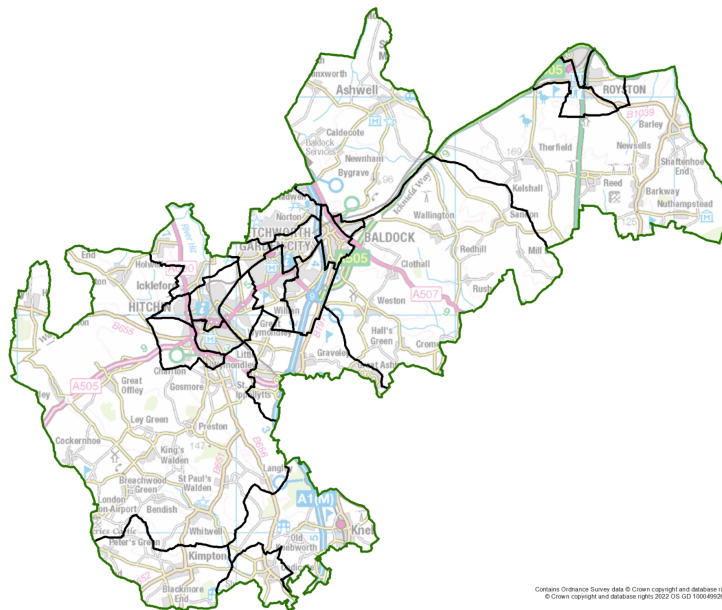
Great Ashby and Graveley seems to be marginally outside tolerance (so the LGBCE might accept that), but St Ippolyts and Wymondley doesn't work at all as a ward.

This isn't a feasible proposal unless someone can rejig the other rural areas to come up with something else that combines with St Ippolyts and Wymondley to make it acceptable size. If a solution could be found then the argument in its favour would be that it is only bad for the 350 residents of Graveley, but good for the c. 650 new residents of Great Ashby.

- C. Encourage the LGBCE to split Graveley into two wards (say 200 electors and 150 electors) with the 150 electors being those nearest Great Ashby and then put them into Great Ashby. That suffers the same electoral equality problem as B and might be difficult to come up with a sensible parish ward boundary. However, it could be considered if anyone has time to work on B. If a solution could be found then the argument in its favour would be that it is only bad for c. 150 residents of Graveley, but good for the c. 650 new residents of Great Ashby.
- D. Support the Conservative proposal of a 3 member Chesfield ward combining Great Ashby and rural areas. I cannot see any merit for this - it seems designed to make the maximum number of residents unhappy!

Appendix C: Original NE Herts CLP boundary review evidence submission

**Local Labour Party evidence submission on the
North Herts boundary review 2022**



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- [Recommendations](#)
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 - [Letchworth wards](#)
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Appendices:

[A] [Baldock wards map](#); [B] [Hitchin wards map](#); [C] [Letchworth wards map](#) [D] [Royston wards map](#)

North Herts and the need to review electoral boundaries

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On the 1st June 2022 the Local Government Boundary Commission opened a public consultation with residents and organisations in North Hertfordshire on the revision of ward boundaries for North Hertfordshire Council as part of the Commission's 10-year boundary review process.

The North East Herts Constituency Labour Party welcomes this review as an opportunity to:

- Reflect the demographic changes in North Hertfordshire, noting that existing population growth and future residential developments has, and will, cause an unacceptable level of electoral variance in some areas.
- Take advantage of the review process to adjust boundary lines to ensure distinct communities are not divided across ward boundaries.
- Recognise where co-location of distinct communities within single wards limits effective representation and make adjustments accordingly.

The NE Herts CLP evidence submission builds on the North Herts Council's submission which we agree with in the majority of areas but with exceptions which are noted below.

Our priorities for the Commission's consideration

1. **We support the Council's proposal to increase the number of Councillors from 50 to 51 in North Hertfordshire.** We recognise the district's changing electorate and the need to both increase and re-allocate Councillors to ensure the fair and effective representation of North Hertfordshire's residents.
2. **We support the North Herts Council proposals for Hitchin, Royston and the Southern Rural Communities in full.**
3. **We support the Council's proposed boundaries for Baldock and for the northern wards of Letchworth.** These are Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Wilbury and Letchworth Norton.
4. **We do not support North Hertfordshire Council's proposal for the southern Letchworth wards.** In the development of its submission North Hertfordshire Council considered two options for the boundary proposals for southern Letchworth - [Option A](#) and [Option B](#). The Council adopted Option A for its submission however we believe strongly that Option B best fulfils the three statutory criteria and recommend it as the most suitable option to the Commission.
5. **Rename Baldock Town 'Baldock West'.** We encourage the Commission to rename the ward 'Baldock Town' to 'Baldock West' in recognition that both wards equally identify as Baldock Town.

Recommendations

Baldock wards

The North East Herts CLP supports the North Herts Council's evidence submission for Baldock with the exception of the naming of Baldock Town which we propose be renamed

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Baldock West.

- We support the increase of councillors representing Baldock from 4 to 5 given the changing demographics of the town and the impact of residential development projects to the electorate.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].
- We advocate for the renaming of Baldock Town to Baldock West to reflect that both wards are equally integral to the town and that it is not the case of Baldock East being perceived as 'Baldock Town and the rest'.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

We support the following proposal for Baldock wards:

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.

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.

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.

We propose to adjust the boundaries of the existing awards to accommodate the new developments and increase the number of councillors to 5.

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.

Baldock West

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.

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		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock East		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		2,319	4,225
Variance		-42.5%	-6.3%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Baldock West		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,654	6,147
Variance		-6.6%	-9.1%

See [Appendix A](#) for reference maps of the proposed Baldock warding arrangements.

Hitchin wards

The North East Herts CLP supports the North Herts Council's evidence submission for Hitchin.

- We support the decrease of councillors representing Hitchin from 13 to 12 recognising the impact of changing demographics across the district to the electorate.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].
- We support the Council's recommendations for Hitchin Walsworth, Bearton and Oughton. In particular we endorse the recommendation to keep Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Highbury as separate wards but both with 2 members. We also endorse the return of the Hitchin Priory listed building to the electoral ward which bears its name.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].
- We note with concern earlier options considered and rejected by the Council that proposed the creation of a single ward of Oughton and Priory. Not only does this not represent a cohesive community but it would also co-locate communities that have very different needs of local government. We note similar alternatives considered that would have kept Hitchin Highbury a three member ward and reduced Hitchin Priory to a single member ward. We do not support this option and believe that the proposal below, with Highbury and Priory each being two member wards, best reflects the communities.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].

We support the following proposal for Hitchin wards:

h. Hitchin Highbury

This ward is bounded on the west by the B656 Queen Street, as above.

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 the electorate of the town, it is not as significant as in other areas, hence the number of councillors serving the community could reduce to 12. The proposal is for five wards, represented by 12 Councillors.

Hitchin Walsworth

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Hitchin Walsworth Ward should remain unchanged and within its current boundary configuration. It reflects well the established communities in that part of town.

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 Bancroft, 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.

Hitchin Bearton Ward should remain unchanged and within its current boundary configuration. It reflects well the established communities in that part of town.

Hitchin Oughton

The Hitchin Oughton ward is expanded southwards, taking into account representations, including from local Councillors. The existing ward splits a community, and the new arrangement resolves this, with Gaping Lane now included in this ward.

Hitchin Priory

The boundary between Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Highbury wards follows the B656 Queen Street; this retains the historic Priory within Priory ward, with the ward boundary following the main route through the town. At the southern end of Queen Street, the boundary follows the A602 eastwards, also including the roads of Folly Close, Traherne Close and The Maples within Hitchin Priory ward.

Hitchin Highbury

This ward is bounded on the west by the B656 Queen Street, as above.

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		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 Priory		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,978	4,325
Variance		-1.4%	-4.1%
		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Hitchin Highbury		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,823	4,823
Variance		19.6%	7.0%

See [Appendix B](#) for reference maps of the proposed Hitchin warding arrangements.

Letchworth wards

The North East Herts CLP supports the [option B](#) proposal developed for consideration by North Hertfordshire Council. We note with concern the adoption of [option A](#) by the Council in its evidence submission. The differences between these options focus on the boundaries of the southern Letchworth wards.

- We support the decrease of councillors representing Letchworth from 13 to 12 recognising the impact of changing demographics across the district to the electorate.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority].
- We note earlier proposals of 11 Councillors with concern as this would result in the residents of Letchworth having a democratic deficit. In addition to being underrepresented we have concerns that this would impact negatively on effective governance.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].
- We support the proposed boundaries for the wards of Letchworth Grange, Letchworth Wilbury and Letchworth Norton as presented in both [option A](#) and [option B](#). In particular we support the commitment to represent these distinct communities through separate wards.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;
Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].
- We note with concern the adoption of [option A](#) by the Council for their proposed southern Letchworth wards. [Option A](#) offers the worst electoral variance with Letchworth West having an electoral variance over the 10% threshold and Letchworth East very close to the threshold at 9.8%. This position will be worsened should the new Garden Square owners seek to increase residential dwellings. By contrast [Option B](#) results in all wards having an acceptable level of variance below the 10% threshold.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;
- [Option A](#) offers further challenges, dividing the residents of The Crescent and Pixmore Junior School from the community to which they belong in Old Pixmore - the original Letchworth Garden City community. While not perfect, [Option B](#) with two larger wards rather than three smaller ones offers a less divisive alternative and greatly improves community cohesion for the Lordship which is currently split down the middle.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable]

- Further [Option A](#), also continues to co-locate the distinct Lordship and Jackmans communities within a single ward which we see as a missed opportunity to resolve tensions on criteria 2 and 3. These communities are divided by the A505 and the Letchworth Gate longabout - a large structural divide between communities. While we recognise that the co-location of distinct communities is acceptable if it supports the requirements of criterion 1, we are concerned about the suitability of it in this case. In addition to the physical divide, these communities have starkly differentiated incomes and polarised needs that are reflected in their demands on Council services, the policy priorities of Councillors representing the community and the volume and nature of casework. The Jackmans community is one of the most deprived in the district, Lordship amongst the wealthier communities. Our firm belief is that these differences place unnecessary tension on meeting Criterion 2 and Criterion 3 in a similar way to the differences that urban and rural communities experience. Further, the Jackmans community has more in common with the adjacent community in Letchworth East. Likewise, the Lordship with neighbouring communities in Letchworth South West. [Option B](#) therefore is the most appropriate way to ensure community cohesion and ensure effective representation and government.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable;
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].
- We support the [option B](#) boundaries for Letchworth South East and Letchworth South West as proposed to the Council for consideration for its evidence submission. We believe this to be the only option which meets all three statutory criteria that each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors; that new wards reflect community interests, identities and boundaries and that new wards promote effective and convenient local government.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;
Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable;
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].

We support the following proposal for Letchworth wards:

The unparished town of Letchworth 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 the electorate in the town, it is not as significant as in other areas, hence the number of councillors serving the community is necessarily reducing.

Cutting across the town is the railway. Whilst current wards straddle the railway, local Councillors have advised it does form a barrier in some places. The town can therefore effectively be divided into 'north' and 'south' using the railway as a reference point. Members of NHC have been invited to identify communities within Letchworth, and these have been accommodated within the proposed warding arrangements.

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In total, Letchworth will be served by 12 members across 5 wards.

The proposed wards have been discussed by Members and a range of options considered. Two options have been presented to Members at Full Council, and the preference chosen by Councillors, which they feel best meets the three statutory criteria is:

Letchworth South East

This comprises the south eastern part of the town, bordered on east by the town boundary. The northern boundary is the railway line. The western boundary follows Norton Way South and Willian Way, then runs to the north of Whitethorn Lane, along Howard Drive, then south along the A505.

Letchworth South West

This is the remaining area of Letchworth, south of the railway line. The communities in the northern area here are distinct from those elsewhere in southern Letchworth.

Letchworth Grange

This is the northernmost part of Letchworth, bordered on the north and west by the town boundary. It includes the Grange estate, as identified by local Councillors.

Letchworth Wilbury

This ward is the Wilbury community, as identified by local Members, expanded slightly eastwards to ensure electoral equality. e. Letchworth Norton This ward is centred on Norton common, and includes the community of Norton village and the Longmead/Hawthorn Hill area.

Letchworth Norton

This ward is centred on Norton common, and includes the community of Norton village and the Longmead/Hawthorn Hill area.

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		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South East		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		5,957	6,359
Variance		2.5%	-4.1%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth South West		
Councillors	3		
Total electorate		7,077	7,204
Variance		21.7%	8.6%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Grange		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,391	4,860
Variance		13.3%	9.9%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Norton		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,571	4,078
Variance		-7.9%	-7.8%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Letchworth Wilbury		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4086	4086
Variance		5.4%	-7.6%

See [Appendix C](#) for reference maps of the proposed Letchworth warding arrangements.

Royston wards

The North East Herts CLP supports the North Herts Council's evidence submission for Royston.

- We support the increase of councillors representing Royston from 6 to 7 through four wards. This reflects the changing demographics of the town and the impact of residential development projects to the electorate.
[Criterion 1: new wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of electors as other councillors elsewhere in the authority;
Criterion 3: new wards should promote effective and convenient local government].
- We support the use of Royston Palace and Royston Meridian instead of Royston North and Royston East reflecting established community identities.
[Criterion 2: new wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable].

We support the following proposal for Royston wards:

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.

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.

The northern part of the town is bisected by the railway, with very few crossing points. However, due to the electorate within the northernmost 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.

Using major roads as markers, we propose the creation of 4 new wards served by a total of 7 councillors. These proposed wards reflect the community boundaries as far as possible.

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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.

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 Palace ward boundary. This area is clearly demarcated by the major roads, and represents distinct communities from other areas of the town.

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.

Royston Heath

The 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 North		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		4,184	4,309
Variance		3.7%	-4.4%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston East		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,529	4,104
Variance		-12.5%	-9.0%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Burloes		
Councillors	1		
Total electorate		1,452	2,146
Variance		-28.0%	-4.8%

		Electorate	
		In 2021	In 2028
Ward name	Royston Heath		
Councillors	2		
Total electorate		3,716	4,205
Variance		-7.9%	-6.7%

See [Appendix D](#) for reference maps of the proposed Royston warding arrangements.

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About the Labour Party in North Hertfordshire

A joint Labour and Liberal Democrat administration has led North Hertfordshire Council through a joint administration since 2019. The North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party (NE Herts CLP) works closely with colleagues in the Hitchin & Harpenden Constituency Labour Party CLP to support the Labour group of 17 councillors. The NE Herts CLP has 630 members resident in Letchworth, Royston, Baldock, and rural East Herts. The CLPs are hubs of activity and community organising.

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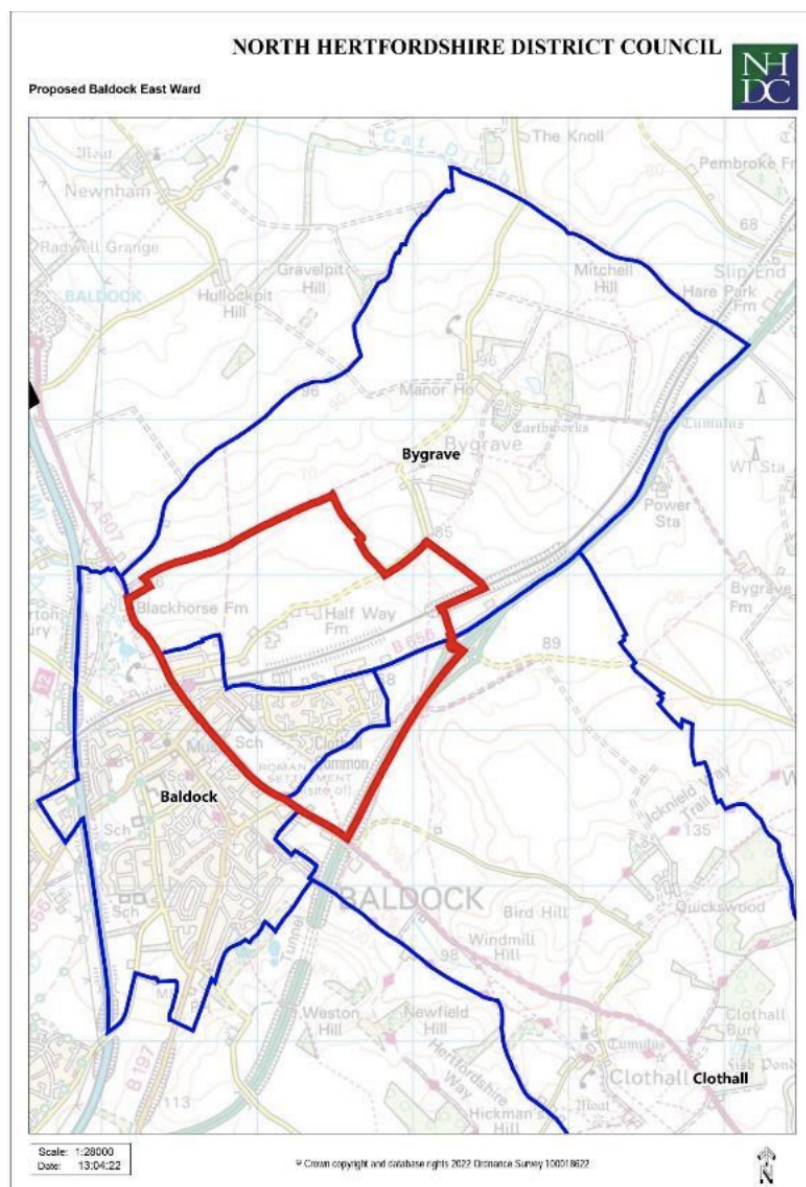
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Appendices

Appendix A: Proposed ward boundaries for Baldock

Baldock East

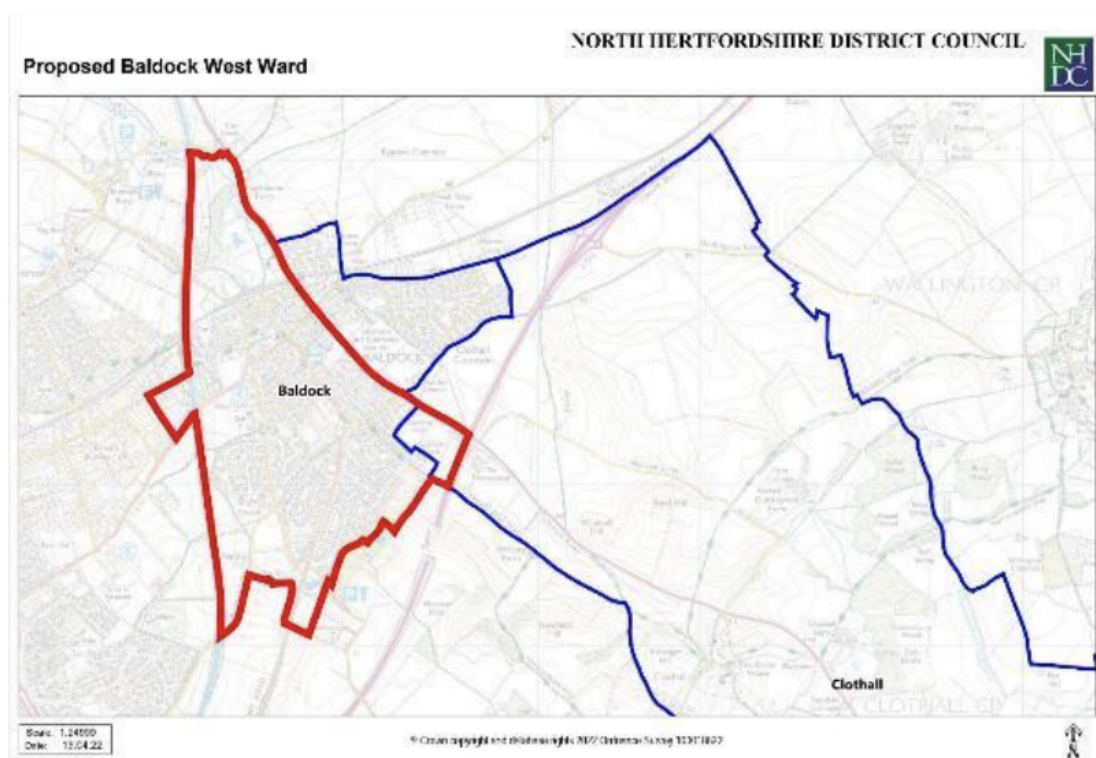


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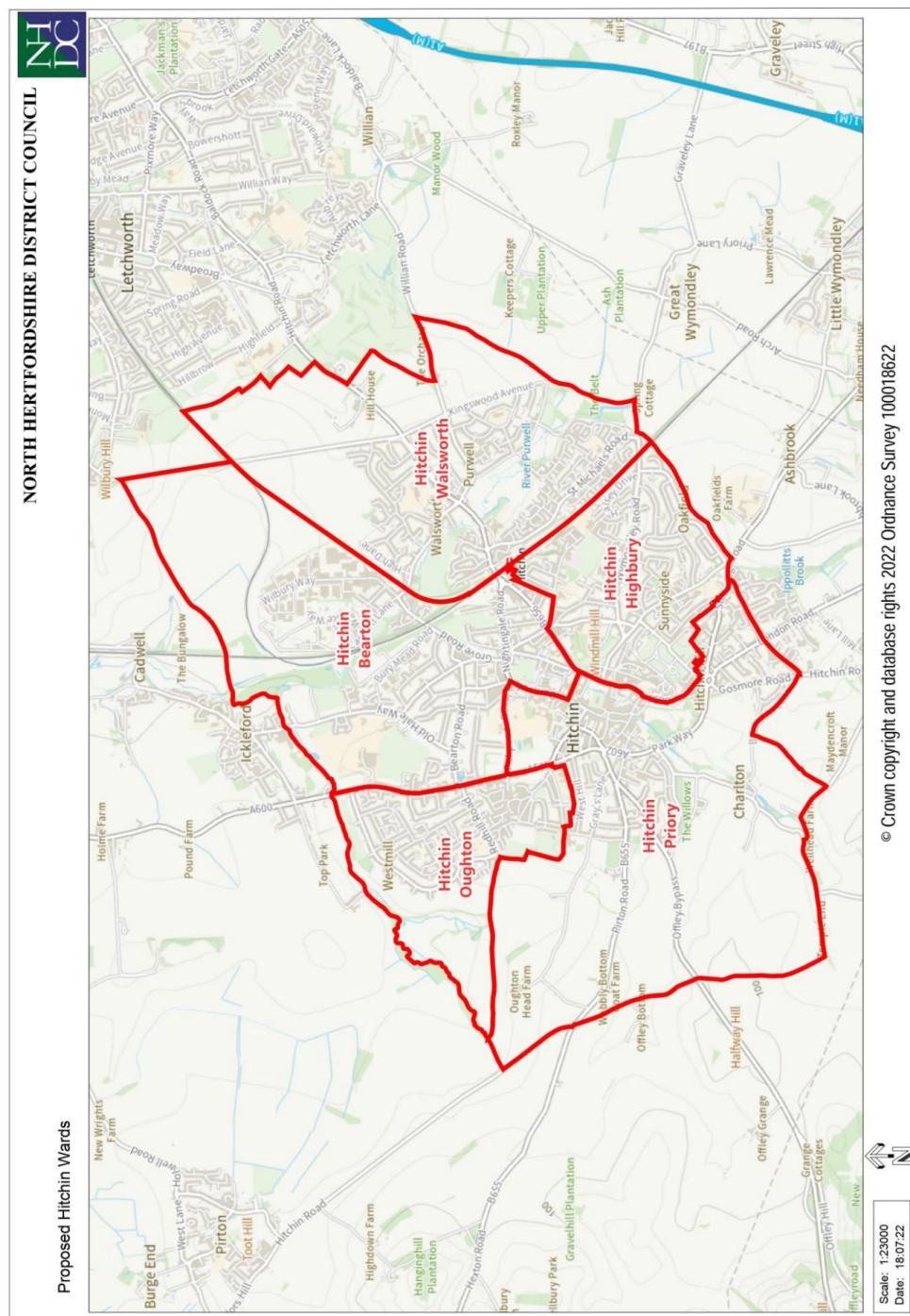
Baldock West



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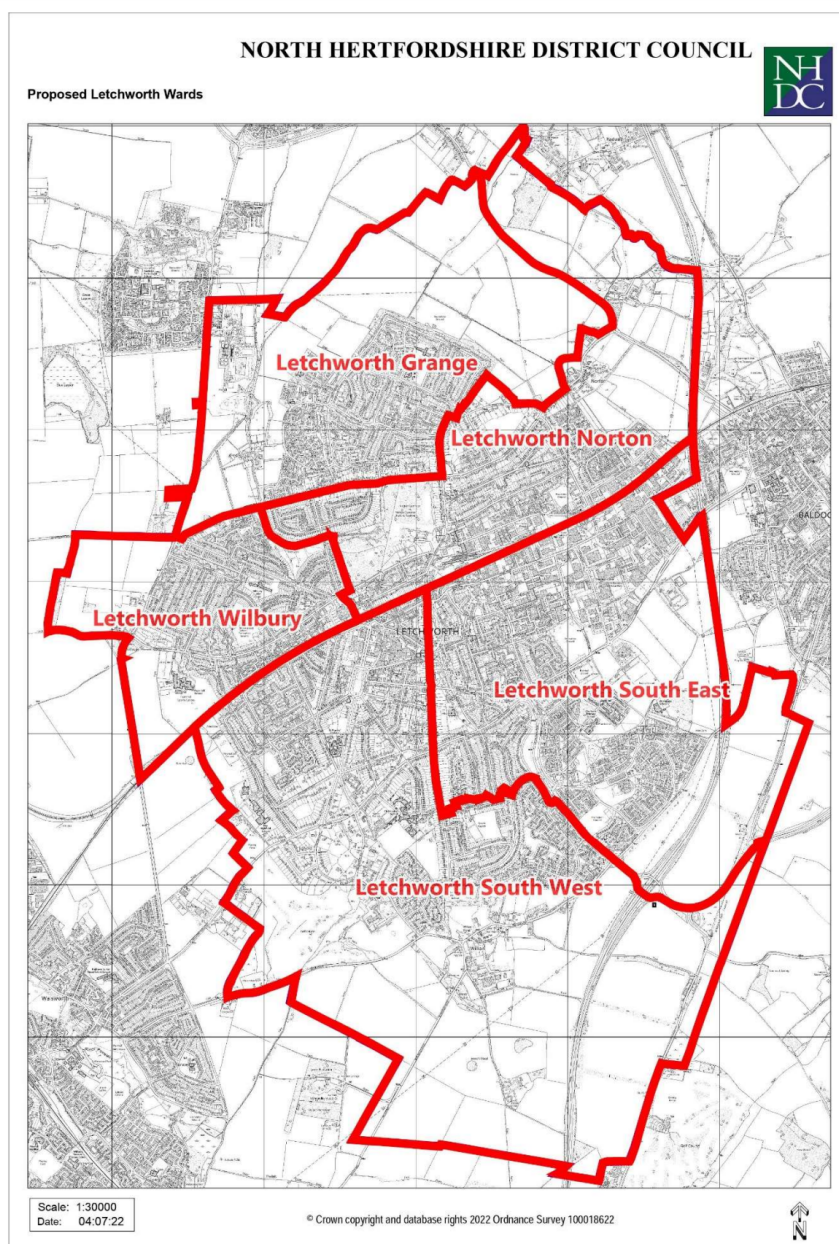
Appendix B: Proposed ward boundaries for Hitchin



Appendix C: Proposed ward boundaries for Letchworth

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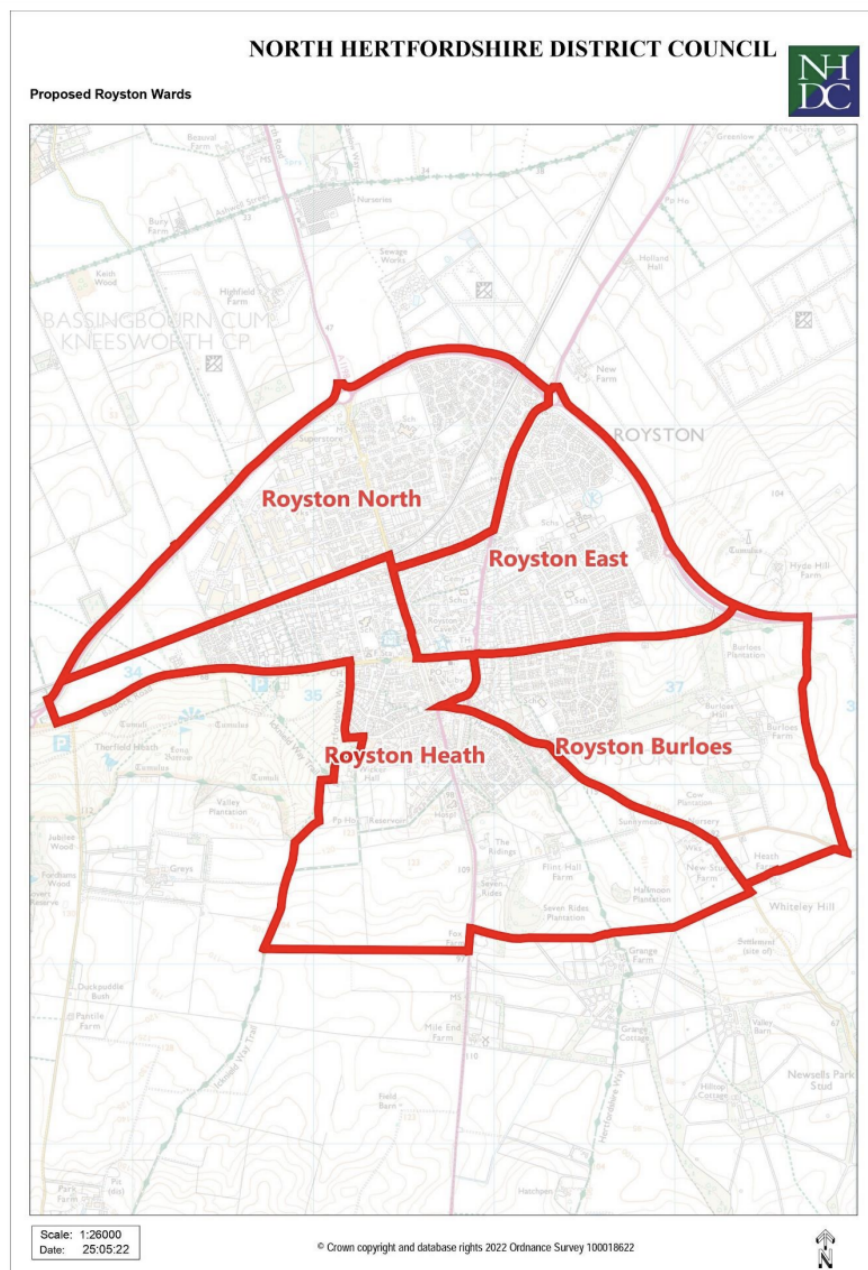
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Appendix D: Proposed ward boundaries for Royston

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END OF SUBMISSION

North Hertfordshire District Council

Personal Details:

Name: Alistair Willoughby

E-mail:

Organisation Name: North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party

Comment text:

To The Review Officer (North Hertfordshire), Please find here (<http://bit.ly/3YF16E5>) the North East Hertfordshire Constituency Labour Party response to the Commission's draft recommendations on the boundaries for North Hertfordshire District Council's electoral wards. We have also made submission via email. Best wishes, Alistair Cllr Alistair Willoughby, Baldock Town Chair, North East Hertfordshire CLP cc: Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg Leader of Council, Leader Labour Group, North Hertfordshire Council

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded