

Local government reorganisation in West Suffolk

Proposed warding pattern to be included in the West Suffolk Structural Change Order

1. Following the announcement on 8 February, the plan is for an Order to be laid before Parliament and if approved by Parliament to be made and to come into force by early June at the latest. This will establish the new West Suffolk Council from 1 April 2019, provide for elections in May 2019, and allow the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake an electoral review and provide new warding arrangements in advance of the May 2019 elections.
2. However as is always the case with any Order making provision for local government reorganisation, there must be provision in the Order for warding arrangements which would be used as a fall back if, for any reason, the electoral review was not completed in time for the May 2019 elections. Whilst the expectation is that these fall-back warding arrangements will never be used, the Ministry aims to provide as soundly based as possible arrangements using (which is much necessarily do) existing “lines on the map”.
3. When developing a warding schedule to be included in the Order, the Ministry has regard to the guidance issued by LGBCE. The Commission’s [guidance](https://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/guidance)¹ explains that it is required by law to meet three key objectives when considering electoral boundaries:
 - To secure equality of representation (ie, each councillor represents a broadly equal number of voters)
 - To reflect the identities of local communities
 - To secure effective and convenient local government
4. There is no upper limit in legislation regarding the number of councillors that may be returned to each ward or division. However, particularly with the third objective in mind, the LGBCE are of the view that “wards or divisions returning more than three councillors results in a dilution of accountability to the electorate”. There are currently no principal authority wards or divisions in England that return more than three councillors.
5. It is the view of MHCLG that the proposal to use the fourteen existing county divisions would not meet the objectives and guidance of the LGBCE. It was previously proposed that the following county divisions and councillor allocation be used as the fall-back warding schedule for the new council:

Existing county division	Electorate	Number of Cllrs
BLACKBOURN	8,242	4
BRANDON	6,901	4
CLARE	8,917	4
EASTGATE & MORETON HALL	7,447	4

¹ <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/guidance>

APPENDIX 1

EXNING & NEWMARKET	8,106	4
HARDWICK	6,844	4
HAVERHILL CANGLE	13,616	8
HAVERHILL EAST & KEDINGTON	7,084	4
MILDENHALL	7,231	4
NEWMARKET & RED LODGE	9,550	4
ROW HEATH	8,372	4
THINGOE NORTH	7,284	4
THINGOE SOUTH	7,495	4
TOWER	15,859	8
(14 divisions)	122,948	64

6. The Ministry is concerned that using the county divisions and electing four or eight councillors to each, would risk criticism, particularly during the Parliamentary consideration of the Order, that it was making provision for warding arrangements which diverged significantly from the commission's guidance and which risked weakening local accountability and hence weakening effective and convenient local government. The Ministry is therefore proposing a warding pattern which significantly mitigates these risks by ensuring significantly greater compliance with the guidance issues by the LGBCE.