Title	Implications of Oxfordshire Local Government Reorganisation Proposals
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director	Darren Carter, Acting Executive Director of Resources
Report author	Gavin Handford, Assistant Director, Policy, Change & Customer Service
Lead Councillor	Cllr Liz Terry, Leader of the Council
Council priority	Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
Recommendations	That Policy Committee: 1. Note the interim proposals submitted for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire, 2. Agree a formal request be made to Government for a modification of the boundary between Reading and West Berkshire, 3. Authorise the Chief Executive to undertake all necessary activities to inform and evidence the request, in line with the initial proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, and consultation with the Leader of the Council, and 4. Note that the request will be presented to Council for approval prior to submission to Government in November 2025, to align with the reorganisation timetable, thereby enabling the Secretary of State to consider the rationale for a modified boundary.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. On 16 December 2024 the Government published the English Devolution White Paper. This wide-ranging paper set out a range of Policies that the Government is proposing for Local Government. The most significant of these are proposals for devolution to Strategic Authorities covering all areas of England, and for reorganisation of local government in two tier areas to "deliver sustainable and high-quality services.

1.2. A report was provided to Council on 28 January 2025 providing a summary of the White Paper and the potential implications for Reading and actions being taken in response. At that meeting, Council resolved to note the key elements of the White Paper and agreed that "the Leader of the Council be authorised to work with other local authority leaders to develop a proposal for a Strategic Authority in line with the criteria in the White Paper" and that this should "in principle, assume an elected Mayor for the new Strategic Authority". That work is ongoing.

1.3. This report provides an update on the implications of Oxfordshire's Interim Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) which they have submitted to Government. Whilst the local authorities across Berkshire were not invited to submit any local government reorganisation proposals, two of the options submitted by Oxfordshire include West Berkshire Council joining with all or parts of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council, to create a proposed new 'Ridgeway Council'.

1.4. The Oxfordshire Councils received a response to their Interim Proposals on 3 June 2025. This feedback reiterated the importance of the proposals meeting the Government's criteria for reorganisation. The feedback did not rule out the inclusion of a cross-border proposal with West Berkshire, but did state they needed to consider the implications for the wider area. Oxfordshire must submit their final detailed business cases for local government reorganisation by 28 November 2025.

1.5. There will subsequently be a six-to-eight-week consultation on the proposals by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in due course. It is understood Reading Borough Council will be a consultee.

1.6. Over time Reading has grown: the current Borough boundary does not reflect the area people generally recognise as Reading or the way people travel and access services. For this reason, and to protect the Borough's future position (should smaller Unitaries subsequently be required to reorganise), it is recommended that the Secretary of State be requested to undertake a review of the border between West Berkshire and Reading, and agree a modification to the proposed 'Ridgeway Council'.

2. Policy Context

2.1. The Council has no policy seeking local government reorganisation and was not invited to make any reorganisation submission.

2.2. The priority for Government has been to request local government reorganisation proposals from two-tier areas. Those areas have a county council and multiple district councils, with each tier responsible for different types of local government services. The White Paper outlined the Government's intention to reorganise these areas and create unitary councils across the Country, which it states will provide better and more efficient services.

2.3. Reading, like all Berkshire authorities, is already a unitary council and provides all local government services for residents, businesses and communities within the Borough. The Council has, to date therefore, focused on working with neighbouring authorities to develop a proposal to deliver the opportunities offered through Devolution and the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

2.4. Reading Borough Council is a member of the Berkshire Prosperity Board, which brings all local authorities in Berkshire together through a formal Joint Committee. The Berkshire Prosperity Board has six key workstreams which form the basis for the joint Berkshire Economic Strategy. The workstreams align strongly with the proposed mandate for Strategic Authorities included in the White Paper.

3. Implications of Oxfordshire's Local Government Reorganisation proposals

3.1. On 5 February 2025, the Minister for Local Government & English Devolution wrote to all Council Leaders in Oxfordshire: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

3.2. The letter was a formal invitation, with guidance, for the submission of local government reorganisation proposals. The letter confirmed that councils could explore options with neighbouring councils beyond those in the invitation letter. Similar letters were sent to all two-tier areas across the country. No letters were sent to Berkshire local authorities on the basis they are already unitary authorities.

3.3. Government has set out key criteria for developing proposals for unitary government. This guidance is set out in full in Appendix 1, but in summary states:

- Sensible economic areas which achieve a single tier of government across the whole area (in this case, Oxfordshire)

- New councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more, although proposals could set out a rationale for a different figure

- Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money

- Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, with particular consideration to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness.

- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements and where no Combined Authority is in place (as is the case in Oxfordshire), the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution

- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

3.4. Oxfordshire submitted their interim proposals on 21 March 2025. They comprise three options:

- A single countywide unitary council for the whole of Oxfordshire

- Two unitary councils covering Oxfordshire plus West Berkshire

  o 'Oxford and Shires Council', covering Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils

  o 'Ridgeway Council', covering South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and West Berkshire Council

- Three unitary councils covering Oxfordshire plus West Berkshire

  o 'Greater Oxford', covering an expanded Oxford City area

  o 'Northern Oxfordshire', covering the majority of West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils

  o 'Ridgeway Council', covering the majority of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and all of West Berkshire Council

3.5. Maps showing these various options are attached at Appendix 2.

3.6. Government provided feedback on the interim proposals from Oxfordshire on 3 June 2025. The feedback confirmed that boundary changes are possible, but existing District areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals. Where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.

3.7.	Each Council in Oxfordshire can submit a single final proposal, but this must cover the entirety of the reorganisation area. At the time of writing, there is no consensus among Oxfordshire councils on a preferred option. It is therefore reasonable to assume that multiple options will be submitted by Oxfordshire as final, detailed proposals.

## 4.	Responding to the reorganisation proposals in Oxfordshire

4.1.	In developing the options that include West Berkshire, there was no engagement or attempt to seek input from Reading Borough Council.

4.2.	The prospect of the whole of West Berkshire becoming part of a large new unitary council present a number of concerns for Reading:

- The existing boundary between Reading and West Berkshire is out of date

- The 'Ridgeway Council' boundary does not reflect a sensible economic area to support future growth

- No consideration has been given to the impact on shared service arrangements across Berkshire

The need for a revised boundary

4.3.	The local authority boundary between West Berkshire and Reading was established over 100 years ago (1911). Over that time period Reading has changed beyond recognition, growing to be one of the largest towns and economies outside of London. Reading's economy and urban area extend beyond the current boundaries of the Borough.

4.4.	Moving parts of the greater Reading area into a larger, mainly rural, new unitary council does not align with the Government's criteria for sensible economic geographies.

4.5.	As the map below demonstrates, the areas to the west of Reading are not in the same economic area of West Berkshire and South Oxfordshire.

Figure 1: Reading Travel to Work Area (TTWA) and Local Authority boundaries
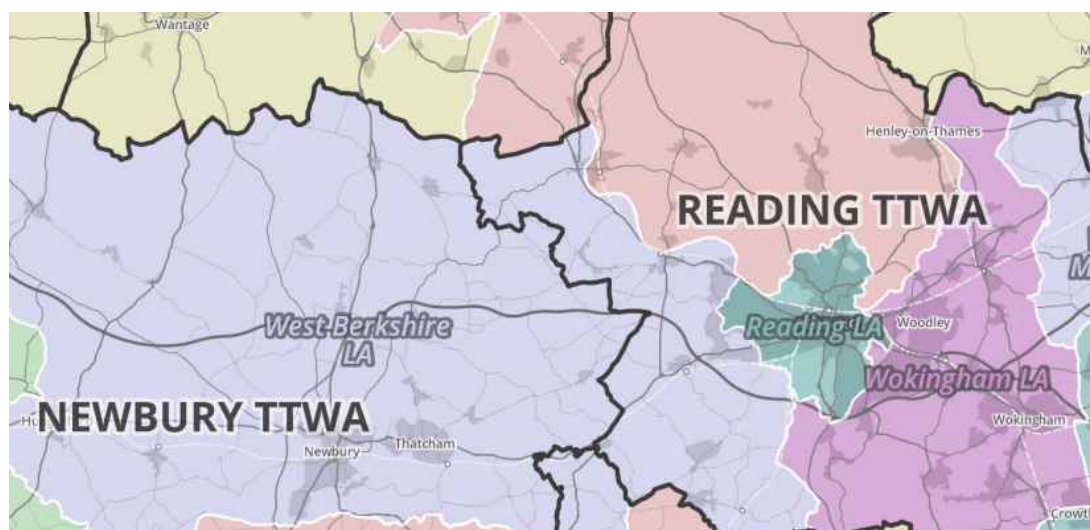
Delivering growth sustainable and high-quality services

4.6.	A key theme underpinning the White Paper is the need to unlock growth, and Reading is well-placed to help accelerate the new Government's growth agenda. Our workforce ranks 4th in the UK for productivity (Centre for Cities, 2024) and Reading (plus Wokingham) is forecast to be the fastest growing area in the UK over the next 2-3

years, with annual GVA growth of 2.5% (EY, 2024). Greater Reading is home to offices for some of the world's leading technology firms, including Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco, and Nvidia. Reading is also a major retail centre and has excellent transport links to London and the rest of the country.

4.7.   As the map above demonstrates, Reading's economy does not start/finish at the boundary with West Berkshire. Residents in areas such as Calcot, Tilehurst, Theale, Pangbourne, and Purley on Thames have a strong connection to Reading. Transport routes and employment centres are based in Reading, with over 42,000 commuters travelling into Reading from outside the Borough each day. Retail and shopping facilities are centred on Reading – the only 'major town/sub-regional centre' in Berkshire, according to the ONS.

4.8.   The White Paper is clear that reorganisation should deliver sustainable and high-quality services. There are numerous services and activities that cross the current boundary between West Berkshire and Reading, particularly education, leisure and housing, with examples of residents in the same street receiving services from different councils.

4.9.   Education also has a strong overlap across the boundary with higher education centred in Reading (Reading College and the University of Reading). The growth of Reading is interconnected with its immediate surroundings, which is not reflected in the proposed new 'Ridgeway Council' boundary with Reading.

4.10.   If reorganisation of Oxfordshire proceeds and includes West Berkshire, it will arguably compromise Reading's future position, particularly should Government subsequently require smaller unitary authorities like those in Berkshire to reorganise.

4.11.   As indicated above, the last boundary between West Berkshire and Reading was set over 100 years ago – any new boundary may last that long again.

4.12.   Any local government reorganisation involving West Berkshire is likely to have implications for the rest of Berkshire, including Reading due to the number of shared service arrangements that exist between Berkshire councils (for example, Reading hosts the Coroner's Service and Joint Legal Team on behalf of all the Berkshire Councils, and share a Director of Public Health with West Berkshire). At the time of writing, there has been no engagement on how and if these arrangements will continue following reorganisation.

5.   Reviewing the boundary between Reading and West Berkshire

5.1.   For the reasons set out in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.12 above, it is recommended that the Council makes a formal request to the Secretary of State to modify any proposed new authority that involves West Berkshire by seeking views from the Local Government Boundary Commission for a revised boundary between Reading and West Berkshire.

5.2.   Government guidance and feedback to interim proposals submitted by Oxfordshire has indicated a preference for reorganisation to be built from existing district council boundaries. However, it has also stated that boundary changes are possible and will be considered where there is a strong justification.

5.3.   Whilst guidance has stated that any new council should seek a population of 500,000, it has subsequently been stated this is not a hard target, and there is a working assumption that c350,000 is the threshold.

5.4.   The Ridgeway Council proposal has a current population of between 419,000 (in a three unitary option) and 463,000 (in a two unitary option). A boundary review on the lines outlined at Appendix 3 would not compromise the Oxfordshire / West Berkshire proposal, as it would only impact the five wards which are the urban areas close to Reading's boundary with a population of approximately 32,000. Thus, the remaining population would be between 387,000 and 431,000; both above the working assumption.

5.5. To make any review as straight forward as possible it is recommended that parish and ward boundaries are maintained.

5.6. In considering a revised boundary with West Berkshire, Officers have looked at the urban areas and transport corridors to the west of Reading. Given Reading's urban nature, to achieve a 'sensible geography' it is recommended that any new boundary does not encompass large rural areas unnecessarily.

5.7. As set out earlier in the report, Berkshire Councils have not been invited to submit reorganisation proposals, and the priority for Reading is to focus on the opportunities that devolution and the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority can unlock. Therefore, it is proposed that only the boundary between Reading and West Berkshire is considered due to the latter seeking to partner with Oxfordshire for reorganisation purposes. Reading making its case for a Boundary Review will provide the Secretary of State with evidence to consider a modification to the reorganisation proposals that are submitted by Oxfordshire.

5.8. The priority for the Council remains seeking a Strategic Authority that will bring additional funding and powers to the local area, supporting the Council to deliver benefits for all Reading communities and businesses. It is critical that we maintain strong partnerships across Berkshire and avoid resources being diverted on speculative additional reorganisation activity.

5.9. The proposed revised boundary to the west of Reading is as set out in Appendix 3. This is an initial proposal to enable Officers to develop the detailed information to support a proposal to the Secretary of State, who will then determine if the reorganisation proposals from Oxfordshire should be modified.

5.10. The proposed submission for a boundary review to the west of Reading will be reported to Council for approval in November (either through a rescheduled meeting or an extraordinary meeting).

5.11. In order for the Secretary of State to consider the rationale for a modified boundary, should she be minded to agree in principle a new 'Ridgeway Council', the request will be sent to Government in accordance with the deadline for final reorganisation proposals – 28 November 2025.

6. Options

6.1. The preferred option, as recommended, is for the Council make a formal request for a review of the boundary between Reading and West Berkshire to be submitted in November 2025. This would ensure that the request is considered alongside the final reorganisation proposals from Oxfordshire.

6.2. Alternative options, which are not recommended, include:

- Making no submission and awaiting any Government consultation to make representations regarding appropriate geography. Under the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act the Secretary of State will need to consult prior to any reorganisation decision. However, consent is not required, and it is recommended that the Council does not wait to make its case, enabling government to be aware of the Council's position as soon as possible.

- Requesting a boundary review, but for the review to be undertaken following any structural reorganisation. Whilst this may make the initial reorganisation 'simpler' to implement, it will significantly extend the period of disruption should a boundary review then take place. This would delay new councils becoming established and unnecessarily divert resources for an extended period when focus should be on delivering the service improvements and growth that are sought under the Government's White Paper and reorganisation criteria.

- Make a full boundary review submission looking at all areas around Reading. This would not be supported by neighbouring councils and therefore unlikely to be agreed. In addition, it could significantly disrupt partnership work to bring forward proposals for a Strategic Authority, which would delay any benefits from devolution being realised.

7. Contribution to Strategic Aims

7.1. It is critical that the success of Reading is not impeded, in particular the delivery of sustainable and effective local services and the growth of its local economy and workforce, by implementing reorganisation that does not recognise the natural boundaries and connections of Reading.

7.2. The recommendation that the Council make a formal request for a boundary review to counter Oxfordshire and West Berkshire's 'Ridgeway Council' proposal for local government reorganisation, is driven by the principles within the Council Plan:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

8. Environmental and Climate Implications

8.1. There is alignment across Berkshire to tackling the Climate Emergency. It is a key theme in the Berkshire Shared Prosperity Board's priorities and within the proposed mandate for Strategic Authorities under devolution.

9. Community Engagement

9.1. As set out in the government guidance at Appendix 1, there is a clear expectation that any local government reorganisation proposals are informed by consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders.

9.2. It is important, therefore, that any boundary review submitted by the Council in response to any reorganisation proposals should equally be informed by consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders.

9.3. It is proposed that the Council develop its request for a review of the boundary between Reading and West Berkshire openly and transparently, with significant engagement including:

- Communications activities to raise awareness of the proposals and why the Council thinks an alternative boundary is necessary

- Surveys and engagement to seek feedback from residents, business and stakeholders, including feedback on priorities for improvement from an enlarged Reading Council

- Provision of briefing packs and information to support Councillors and other key stakeholders with community engagement

9.4. Beyond our residents and businesses, stakeholder engagement will include MPs, Parish Councils, voluntary and community organisations, and public service partners in relevant areas of greater Reading.

10. Equality Implications

10.1. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of developing the proposed alternative boundary.

10.2. This will enable the Council to ensure the proposal has given due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10.3. The communications and engagement activities will provide particular insight in relation to fostering good relations across Reading communities within any revised Reading Council boundary.

11. Legal Implications

11.1. Sections 1-7 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provide the statutory powers for the Secretary of State to undertake local government reorganisation to move from two-tier to single tier local government.

11.2. Under the Act, the Secretary of State can invite proposals for reorganisation. This took place in January 2025, when letters were sent to Councils in two -tier areas. These letters set out the Government criteria for reorganisation and Oxfordshire submitted its interim proposals on 21 March 2025.

11.3. On 3 June 2025, Government wrote to the Chief Executives of the six Oxfordshire Councils to provide feedback on the interim proposals. This confirmed that final detailed proposals must be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025.

11.4. After receiving reorganisation proposals, the Act allows for the Secretary of State to:

- Implement a proposal as proposed;

- Implement a proposal with modifications; or

- Not implement the proposal

11.5. The recommendations set out above facilitates the Council making a request to the Secretary of State, for a modification to any reorganisation proposal submitted by Oxfordshire involving West Berkshire Council, based on a revised boundary between Reading and West Berkshire, as set out at Appendix 3.

11.6. The Secretary of State is required to consult before making a decision. Feedback from MHCLG has confirmed this will include affected Councils and neighbouring Councils, which in this scenario, would include Reading. It is anticipated that the consultation will also include other government departments and key stakeholders. The consultation will likely run for 6 – 8 weeks. The timing is as yet unclear.

11.7. It is also important to note however, that the Secretary of State is not required to secure consent from the affected Councils to implement a proposal.

11.8. Michael Graham, Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services has cleared these Legal Implications.

12. Financial Implications

12.1. There will be a range of workstreams required to support this work, evidence gathering, communications and consultation. This work will also include developing a financial model to understand the financial implications in terms of Council Tax and customer demands under any expanded Reading Council area.

12.2. Any commissioning of external studies or support will follow the Council's procurement rules to ensure value for money.

12.3. Any resources and expenditure will be managed within the existing approved budget for 2025/26.

12.4. Darren Carter, Acting Executive Director of Resources / Director of Finance, has cleared these Financial Implications.

13.   Timetable for Implementation of Local Government Reorganisation

13.1. The deadline for final detailed local government reorganisation proposals is 28 November 2025.

13.2. There are 21 two-tier areas across England. In almost all cases, multiple interim proposals were submitted from each area.

13.3. As set out above, three options were submitted for Oxfordshire. It is considered unlikely that this will change for the final proposals.

13.4. Therefore, Government will likely have 50-100 detailed reorganisation proposals to review and consult on across all areas. As a result, it is anticipated that any outcomes will not be known until late Spring 2026 at the earliest.

14.   Background Papers

14.1. There are none.

Appendices

1.   Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government

2.   Maps showing the interim proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire

3.   Map showing proposed alternative boundary between Reading and West Berkshire

Appendix 1: Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government

Criteria for unitary local government

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

   a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.

   b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.

   c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.

   d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

   a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.

   b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.

   c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.

   d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

   e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.

   f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

   a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.

   b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.

c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

   a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.

   b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

   c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

   a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.

   b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.

   c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

   a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.

   b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.

b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.

c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.

d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.

e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.

f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to government on or before **21 March 2025**. This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration.

The interim plan should:

a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.

b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.

c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.

d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.

e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.

f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.
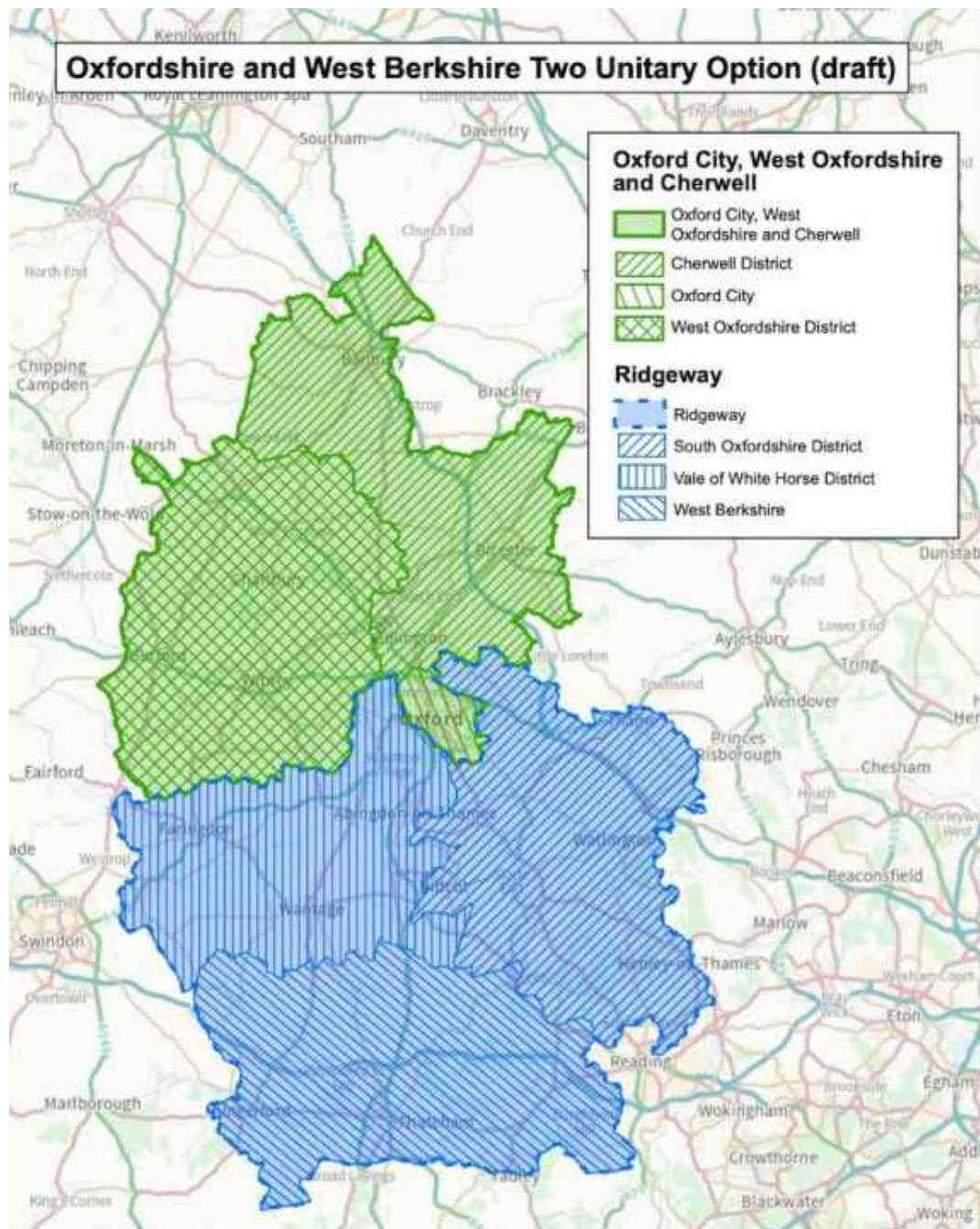
g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.

h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.
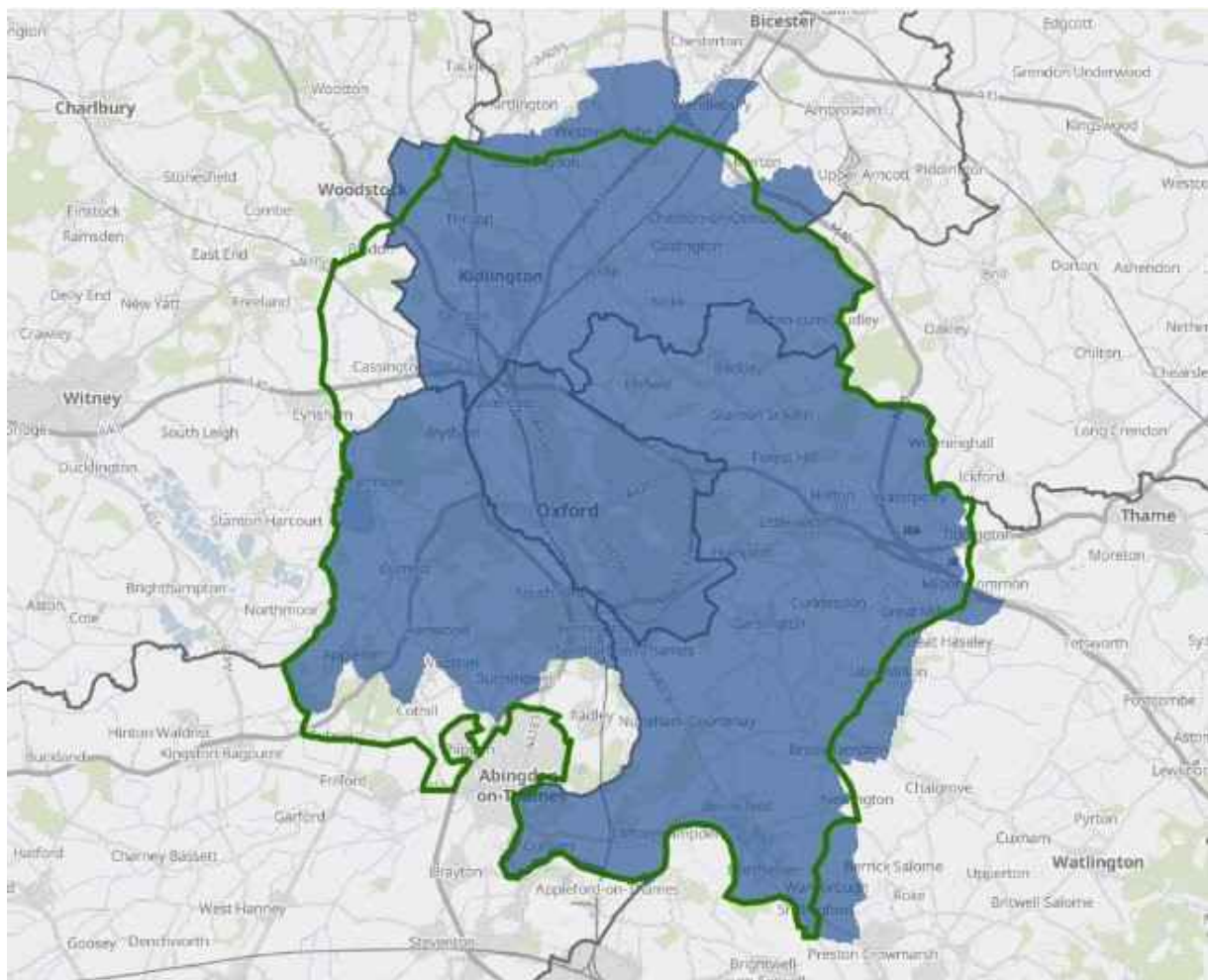
Appendix 2: Maps showing the interim proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire

Single countywide unitary council for the whole of Oxfordshire

Two unitary councils covering Oxfordshire plus West Berkshire

Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Two Unitary Option (draft)

Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell
- Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell
- Cherwell District
- Oxford City
- West Oxfordshire District

Ridgeway
- Ridgeway
- South Oxfordshire District
- Vale of White Horse District
- West Berkshire

Three unitary councils covering Oxfordshire plus West Berkshire

Appendix 3: Map showing proposed alternative boundary between Reading and West Berkshire

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