New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Special Council Meeting
Agenda

25 September 2025

SUMMONS

To All Members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a Special Meeting of the District Council to be held in Council Chamber - Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, SO43 7PA on Thursday, 25 September 2025 at 6.30 pm

Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA
www.newforest.gov.uk

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Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should contact the name and number shown below.

Enquiries to: Karen Wardle
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AGENDA

Apologies

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To note any declarations of interests made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interests must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - FINAL PROPOSAL

(Pages 5 - 742)

3. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

Special Council – 25 September 2025

Special Cabinet – 26 September 2025

Local Government Reorganisation – Final proposal

Purpose	For Review and Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report seeks Cabinet approval for the submission of New Forest District Council's (NFDC) proposal for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire and the Solent. The proposal is grounded in collaboration with 11 other councils in the region, extensive engagement, technical analysis, and statutory alignment, and reflects NFDC's commitment to protecting the integrity of the New Forest District. The report recommends the submission of Option 1 – a mainland four-unitary model that retains the New Forest District in its entirety within a new Forest Mid Hampshire unitary authority. This option can be delivered within the full case for change developed collaboratively by 12 councils across Hampshire and the Solent, and is further strengthened by NFDC's own evidence base, including the case to keep the forest whole.
Recommendations	**That Council advise the Cabinet on the following recommendations:-** **That Cabinet:-** **1. Approve Option 1 contained within Appendix 4 as its single local government reorganisation proposal, for submission to government by the 26 September 2025 deadline.**

	2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any final amendments to the full proposal in advance of submission to the Government. **3. Endorse the Council's LGR Engagement work undertaken, summarised at Appendix 5, noting that the outcome of this engagement is strongly in favour of Option 1.** **4. Endorse the case to 'Keep the Forest Whole', at Appendix 6, for continued dialogue with MHCLG as local government reorganisation progresses.**
Reasons for recommendations	To comply with the Government's request for remaining two tier areas of local government to submit proposals for local government reorganisation. The case for change and proposal aligns with all six of the Government's criteria for LGR, including community identity, effective governance, and support for devolution. Extensive engagement has demonstrated very strong support for Option 1. It has also demonstrated overwhelming support for keeping the Forest whole, particularly in the Waterside area, which would retain the New Forest District as a coherent geography, avoiding boundary change, fragmentation and urban alignment. The submission reflects NFDC's statutory duties under the Environment Act 1995 and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, particularly in relation to the New Forest National Park.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader

Strategic Director	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive
Officer Contact	Matt Wisdom Assistant Director – Strategy and Engagement (Monitoring Officer) 023 8028 5072 matt.wisdom@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. On the 16th December 2024 the government published its English Devolution White Paper setting out its plans for both devolution and reorganising local government.

2. Following this the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government at the time, Angela Rayner, exercised her powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which allow the Secretary of State to invite any principal authority in the county of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

3. The Leader and Chief Executive received a letter on the 5th of February 2025 to this effect, inviting the Council to submit proposals for local government reorganisation. The letter includes six criteria the government will consider proposals against and a range of guidance. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix 1. This letter commenced the process of local government reorganisation under the legislation.

Devolution

4. Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government. Through the government's White Paper, it has set out a strong preference to see new 'strategic authorities' created in all regions across England. These authorities, led by an elected Mayor and covering an area of at least 1.5 million population, would be responsible for setting the key strategic vision for a region as well as having powers and responsibilities for areas such as transport, economic development and skills and employment support. These are predominantly policy making authorities rather than service providers. This model has already been implemented in other regions across the country such as Greater London and Greater Manchester.

5. Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council submitted an expression of

interest in January 2025 to be part of the government's Devolution Priority Programme.

6. On Wednesday 5th February, the Secretary of State announced that Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (referred to by the government as Hampshire and the Solent) has been accepted onto the priority programme. Statutory instruments, which is the legal process, will be laid in parliament in the autumn with a strategic authority established in spring 2026 in advance of the first mayoral election in May 2026.

7. The process for devolution must, at present, be led by the current upper tier local authorities in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, namely Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire County Council. However, once local government has been reorganised, the unitary councils that replace all the current upper tier and lower tier councils will automatically be constituent members of the new strategic authority.

Local Government Reorganisation

8. In the White Paper, the government also set outs its vision for local government reorganisation. Local government reorganisation is the process in which the structure and responsibilities of local authorities are reconfigured. This will mean Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and all the district and borough councils, including New Forest District Council, being replaced with unitary councils of population sizes of approximately 500,000. The government has set out that this is just a guideline figure, and not a target. Lower and higher numbers can be submitted.

9. The Council's Leader and Chief Executive received a letter on the 5th of February 2025, inviting us to submit proposals for local government reorganisation. A copy of the letter can be found at Appendix 1.

10. The letter set out six criteria the government will assess proposals against. They are:

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

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

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

- 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.

- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment. The letter also set out a range of guidance for councils to consider in developing proposals.

11. This highlights that councils work together to ideally reach consensus on a proposal for new unitary councils for each county area rather than submit competing proposals where possible.

12. Since the English Devolution White Paper was first published, the Council has taken part in several workshops for Council Leaders and Chief Executives across Hampshire to consider how we can work together and the possible ways forward.

13. Work was commissioned on behalf of all the 15 councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight with KPMG, to assess the options for unitary councils against the six criteria set out in the letter from the Minister and to support the development of an interim plan to submit to government by the 21st of March deadline and then a full proposal.

14. The Council worked collaboratively with all the other councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to try to reach consensus on an interim plan to submit to government supported by KPMG. This work was coordinated through a weekly Chief Executive Group and regular Council Leaders' Group meetings and workshops. In the short time available it was not possible to reach consensus amongst all the 15 existing councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight on an option(s) of unitary councils to submit in an interim plan to replace the current structure of local government.

15. As such, this work led to the creation of an interim plan based on a sensible set of guiding principles and a process for continuing to all work together, where possible, towards a full proposal. The interim plan (Appendix 2) was approved by all 15 councils and submitted to government on 21 March 2025. As well as approving the interim plan, this Council also agreed at Cabinet and Council in March to consider key points of importance in the development of a final proposal that reflects the unique geography, history, economy and

communities of the New Forest. This included the total opposition to any proposal that would split the New Forest community through boundary changes, and the coherent rural identity of the district and its incompatibility with urban geographies.

16. The government provided feedback on the interim plan which is included in Appendix 3. This feedback has been used to inform the work carried out since including the development of the full proposal to government.

17. Since the interim plan submission in March, the Council worked with the other 14 Councils and KPMG to carry out a detailed appraisal of the options for unitary councils against the government criteria and the agreed guiding principles through an evidence driven process involving 44 metrics utilising a large amount of economic, community, service and financial data. This process appraised 8 options in depth for between 2 and 5 unitary councils to replace the existing councils. The analysis focused on identifying balanced, resilient and financially sustainable unitary models that would deliver improved outcomes for residents, reflect local identities and best meet the government criteria. That process was completed in May 2025 and the assessment showed that 4 new unitary Councils for mainland Hampshire with the Isle of Wight remaining an independent island authority would best meet the government criteria and the guiding principles agreed by all 15 councils in the interim plan. The appraisal process is set out in detail in the full proposal to government at Appendix 4 and its supporting appendices.

18. Following this appraisal process, Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council withdrew from the joint process to pursue an alternative proposal. We now expect them to submit to government a competing proposal for 3 unitary councils for mainland Hampshire with the Isle of Wight remaining separate as an island unitary. Gosport Borough Council also left the joint process.

19. The remaining 12 councils, encompassing the 3 existing unitary councils and 9 district and borough councils, have turned this data led process into a full proposal for government. The 12 councils are:

    - Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
    - Eastleigh Borough Council
    - Fareham Borough Council
    - Hart District Council

- Havant Borough Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- New Forest District Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council

20. To take this work forward, the 12 Councils continued to work collaboratively (all 15 councils agreed to continue to share data), to develop this full proposal with three variations of four-new mainland unitary councils, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent.

21. The base case and Options 1 and 2 are based on the existing building blocks of the current district/borough and unitary council footprints. A third variation in the form of a modification request ("Option 1A", previously Option 3), introduces the concept of boundary changes. It is anticipated that all references to "Option 3" in the main proposal document will be updated to "Option 1A" prior to submission to government. The three variations are shown in the diagram below:

Outline of the three option variations of the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model

Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**598,823**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester	**417,159**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**484,546**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, Southampton	**423,221**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton	**604,885**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest*, Southampton, Test Valley*	**510,102**
South East Hampshire: Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**	**South East Hampshire:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**	**South East Hampshire:** East Hampshire*, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Winchester*	**582,137**
Isle of Wight	**146,351**	**Isle of Wight**	**146,351**	**Isle of Wight**	**146,351**

East Hampshire*: Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle
New Forest*: Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley
Test Valley*: Valley Park, Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth
Winchester*: Newlands

22. Despite some differing views for elements of the two variations, and the boundary change modifications, principally around where the New Forest should be part of in the future new unitary configurations, the 12 councils have consistently worked collaboratively through an inclusive, respectful and equitable approach to develop a robust full proposal to government. The proposal has been informed by extensive engagement with communities and partners which is included in the full proposal and summarised later in this report.

23. Once final proposals are submitted on 26 September, the government will then consult on proposals received that meet their established criteria. We expect this consultation to happen during Autumn/Winter 2025 with the government then deciding on which proposals to implement in early 2026. Structural Change Orders, which is the legal process, will then need to go through parliament, which is likely to happen in Autumn 2026. There would then be elections to the shadow authorities for the new unitary Councils in May 2027. Those shadow authorities will oversee the implementation of the new unitary councils, with them replacing the existing councils on the 1 April 2028.

The Case for Change

24. The full proposal sets out that four new unitary councils on the mainland would best meet the government's criteria and best serve our communities into the future by:

    - driving economic growth and housing delivery
    - delivering high quality and sustainable public services with a focus on innovation and transformation to improve outcomes for communities
    - achieving significant savings while being large enough to be financially sustainable
    - unlocking and maximising devolution arrangements, working effectively alongside the Isle of Wight Council and the new elected Mayor for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, as constituent members of the strategic authority
    - effectively engaging, empowering and serving their local communities by providing opportunities for residents to shape local decisions.

25. The four new unitary councils on the mainland, with a population range of between 407,465 and 604,885, provide significant scale in

service delivery and will reduce costs accordingly, while still being connected to the communities they serve. Importantly they will ensure services are tailored to respond to local needs and improve outcomes for residents.

26. The full proposal also sets out that the Isle of Wight meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances to remain as existing island unitary authority due to its unique local identity and geography and the fact most services and infrastructure would just need to be duplicated on the Island, were they to be run from a unitary council on the mainland, due to the barriers provided by access only by boat. However, the full proposal also ensures that any genuine opportunities for collaboration with the four new unitary councils on the mainland are maximised. This will include an enhanced partnership whereby the Isle of Wight Council works closely alongside the four new mainland unitary councils to explore each opportunity they progress for transformation and innovation, as they move forward through implementation of the full proposal and beyond, to see how they could be applied to the Island either on a shared basis or individually.

27. In section 4 of the full proposal (Appendix 4) it sets out how the proposal for four new mainland unitary councils, and, the variations being put forward, deliver strongly on each of the government criteria. It also sets out in detail in section 5 why the Isle of Wight Council should continue to remain independent aligned to the government criteria as requested in the feedback from government on the interim plan. However, the summary below provides an overview of the key strengths in line with the criteria, highlighting why the four-new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal is the best option for the future of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Local government reorganisation criteria	**The four-new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal**
Criteria 1: *A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.*	• **Balanced configuration**: Ensures equitable distribution of resources by avoiding disparities in tax base, population, and GVA among new unitary councils. • **Tailored governance and leadership**: Strong local leadership with strategies customised to the unique geographies of each unitary area to drive economic

	growth, high quality service delivery and improved outcomes • **Economic development and innovation**: Creates a focused environment for business innovation and economic growth by leveraging strengths and fostering partnerships tailored to the needs of the different economic areas. • **Infrastructure and housing**: Prioritises shaping infrastructure and addressing housing needs with tailored approaches to support delivery and meet local requirements. • **Community and skills development**: Invests in people to build an inclusive workforce, addressing skills gaps and raising living standards to support growth ambitions. • **Rural and local engagement**: Addresses unique rural challenges and enhances local engagement by aligning governance with community identities.
Criteria 2: *Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.*	• **Financial sustainability**: Addresses current financial challenges by reducing duplicated functions in the two-tier system, centralising back-office support, and empowering each authority to manage its budget based on local needs through place focused transformation and innovation, thereby improving financial resilience. • **Efficiency and improving capacity**: Brings together capital and revenue planning and enhances transformation teams, the proposal achieves savings through transformation and service redesign tailored to local needs, improving overall service delivery. Recognising that Portsmouth and Southampton have already made many of these efficiencies. • **Economic growth and local focus**: Enables enhanced economic growth by forming unitary structures around distinct economic areas, ensuring opportunities are realised and challenges

	addressed to maximise economic potential. • **Population balance**: Creates balanced new unitary structures that reflect economic areas and local identities.
Criteria 3: *Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.*	• **Local connections and community focus**: Effectiveness of services, particularly in areas such as adult social care, is driven by local connections and understanding community needs. The proposal includes co-producing services with local partners through a total place approach and maintaining local relationships which even larger unitaries cannot replicate. • **Place-based governance**: Captures local intelligence and prioritises prevention. The proposal aligns services with the lived realities of communities, ensuring they are delivered responsively. • **Service design and transformation**: The proposal is based on creating genuinely new unitaries through a comprehensive approach to service design, focusing on high-quality and sustainable services. The proposal has prioritised collaboration and transformation opportunities, ensuring services are tailored to local needs. The Isle of Wight Council, whilst remaining independent, will have a transformation partnership with the new unitaries to ensure opportunities are maximised for the Island where appropriate. • **Adult social care**: Our model focusses on localised neighbourhood service delivery, budgetary savings, and data-driven decision-making. It aligns with the NHS 10-year plan, focusing on prevention and community resilience. • **Children and young people**: Promotes localised governance and collaboration, addressing educational challenges and supporting children with complex needs. Our proposal emphasises prevention, early intervention, and community-centred approaches.

	• **Economic Growth and Strategic Planning**: Aligning services with local economic and social geographies, fostering collaboration and co-investment in infrastructure. • **Public sector reform**: Aligns with the wider public sector reform agenda, focusing on place-based prevention and tailored collaborative service delivery to meet community needs effectively in each of our areas
Criteria 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.*	• **Collaborative working:** Extensive collaboration among 12 Councils over six months, involving key stakeholder groups and regular meetings with leaders, chief executives, Section 151 officers, monitoring officers, directors and heads of service. This collaborative approach ensures that the proposal is robust, evidence-based, and informed by a wide range of perspectives. • **Informed by local views:** The proposal is shaped by joint local government efforts and engagement with local people and partners. A joint survey was conducted to gather views from residents, businesses, and community groups, ensuring that the proposal reflects public sentiment and priorities. A series of workshops, including face-to-face in local communities, have been held with businesses and partners, and with the public, voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils. Discussions have also been held with local members of parliament. The Councils are grateful to all of our communities and partners for helping to shape the proposal. This approach prioritises community identity and future-proofs local government to effectively respond to local needs. • **Local identity:** Recognising and preserving the unique character and contributions of the North, Mid, South East, and South West areas and the Isle of Wight. Each area has distinct

	geographic, historical, economic and cultural identities, which are actively preserved and empowered through the proposal.
Criteria 5: *New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.*	• **Strategic planning and local delivery:** A Combined/Strategic Authority with five well-balanced unitaries (four new unitaries on the mainland and the Isle of Wight Council) as constituent authorities. This structure enables strategic planning and coordination for nearly 2.2 million people, while the unitary councils focus on local delivery. • **Effective decision-making:** With five constituent members, our model provides a strong foundation for decision-making. It aims to avoid the pitfalls of smaller Combined Authorities, which may operate as rivals rather than cohesive governance bodies. Our approach draws on the success of Greater Manchester. • **Balanced new unitary authorities:** Populations between 400,000 and 600,000 of the new unitaries, ensuring balanced representation and avoiding democratic deficits. The proposal also includes the Isle of Wight, emphasising balanced representation and collaboration with non-constituent members like NHS bodies and National Parks.
Criteria 6: *New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.*	• **Enhanced local representation:** Localised unitary authorities, which would allow for governance that is more tailored and representative. This structure would enable local leaders to better understand and address the unique challenges and opportunities within their areas. • **Improved service delivery:** Aligning governance structures with local needs and engaging local stakeholders in decision making, means our proposal will deliver services more effectively and efficiently. This will allow for the customisation of services to better fit the

	specific requirements of each community, leading to improved outcomes in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. • **Proposed councillor ratios:** Future indicative councillor ratios are designed to support the individual demands of the four-new mainland unitary configurations and the communities they serve. The proposed configurations aim to optimise the number of councillors to ensure effective representation and governance with an enhanced ward councillor role. The Isle of Wight would continue with its existing councillor numbers. • **Enhanced neighbourhood working and governance**: A localised place-based approach will see enhanced neighbourhood engagement and delivery models. The new Councils will co-design with communities and local partners neighbourhood governance arrangements that best meet local requirements for each area. This will deliver decision making at the lowest effective level to speed up delivery, tailored to each community's needs.

Council support for an option

28. Since March, NFDC has intensified its efforts to ensure that the district's priorities are reflected in the emerging models. The Council has consistently advocated for a financially sustainable, rural-focused unitary authority that preserves the historic integrity of the New Forest and avoids boundary changes that would fragment its communities. Whilst two options and a boundary change modification have been progressed to full case development, NFDC has supported the particular development of Option 1 - a model that aligns with the district's identity and service needs. The Council has opposed Options 2 and the boundary change modification "Option 1A", which propose splitting the New Forest and/or merging it with the urban centre of Southampton, a move that has raised significant concerns among residents, stakeholders, and local leaders.

29. Option 1 proposes the creation of a Mid Hampshire unitary authority comprising the current areas of New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Winchester City Council, and East Hampshire

District Council. This configuration is supported by two of the four councils and reflects a coherent geography, shared service models, and a strong sense of local identity. It also avoids disruptive boundary changes, offering a deliverable and community-backed solution.

30. This option provides a balanced and strategically aligned partner for the proposed Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). With a population of approximately 600,000 and a GVA of £18.2 billion, Mid Hampshire offers economic strength, environmental stewardship, and national infrastructure connectivity. It links the Solent Freeport's coastal economy with the Midlands' industrial base, supported by the M3, A34, A303, and M27 corridors, and fast rail access to London.

31. Option 1, ensures rural and market town voices are represented in regional decision-making, complementing urban-led authorities and supporting the full potential of devolution. Its rural and market town geography includes two National Parks, nationally significant defence assets, and a thriving visitor economy, making it a vital contributor to regional growth and resilience.

32. Option 1 builds on a proven track record of place-based innovation and preventative service delivery. Councils in Mid Hampshire have already developed integrated models in adult social care, housing, and health - such as the Andover Health Hub and New Forest's integration of homelessness and Mental Health Services, as well as its Independence Matters programme. These services are designed around community needs and delivered in partnership with the NHS, voluntary sector, and local stakeholders.

33. The proposed unitary would scale these approaches, enabling joined-up planning, co-commissioning, and investment in neighbourhood-based services. It supports the government's ambitions for public service reform, offering a credible platform for transformation rooted in local relationships and community empowerment.

34. Mid Hampshire councils demonstrate strong financial governance, with high reserves, balanced budgets, and low debt exposure. Their shared delivery models and aligned priorities provide a stable foundation for integration, avoiding the disruption and cost of boundary change. The configuration supports efficient service delivery, strategic investment, and long-term resilience.

35. The geography also enables sustainable housing growth, with sensitive planning in protected landscapes, innovative solutions to environmental constraints, and strong partnerships with Homes England and local developers. The proposed unitary would act as a

corporate landlord to around 10,000 households, continuing its commitment to affordable housing and carbon reduction.

36. Public engagement across the region shows clear support for this configuration. Residents value the preservation of local identity, the integrity of the New Forest, and the alignment of governance with how people live. Option 1 reflects these preferences, retaining whole districts and empowering communities through neighbourhood governance and local decision-making.

37. Town and parish councils, market towns, and rural communities are central to this model. It strengthens local democracy, supports inclusive growth, and ensures that services remain responsive to the distinct needs of Mid Hampshire's diverse communities.

Corporate plan priorities

38. The proposal for local government reorganisation is closely aligned with NFDC's corporate priorities. It provides a clear opportunity to protect and enhance the New Forest's unique environment, its communities, economy and heritage by maintaining the district's integrity within a coherent Mid Hampshire geography. This approach ensures that governance, planning, and service delivery remain rooted in the Forest's ecological, cultural and community context, supporting statutory duties and enabling landscape-led stewardship.

39. The proposal strengthens NFDC's commitment to supporting strong and sustainable communities. By retaining the district as a whole, it preserves the social and civic fabric of the New Forest, ensuring that communities - particularly those in the Waterside, continue to be served by governance structures that understand their identity, values, and needs. This model enables neighbourhood-level decision-making and maintains the close connection between residents and their representatives.

40. Finally, the proposal enhances NFDC's ability to deliver high-quality, place-based services. It builds on existing operational strengths and partnerships, ensuring that services such as housing, waste, planning, and community safety are delivered efficiently and responsively across a unified geography, integrating them with those services delivered by the County Council. The preferred option supports transformation, resilience, and long-term sustainability in service delivery.

Options appraisal

41. The Council could decide to not be part of the proposal submitted to government. However, this would mean it would have no say in the

future local government arrangements that serve the communities of the New Forest district. This option is therefore not recommended.

42. Option 1 retains the New Forest District in full within a new Mid Hampshire unitary authority, avoiding boundary change and fragmentation. It reflects community identity, supports coherent service delivery, and aligns with all six of the Government's statutory criteria for local government reorganisation.

43. Option 2 aligns the New Forest District in its entirety, with Southampton and Eastleigh. Extensive engagement tells us that this fundamentally misunderstands the needs of residents and businesses, who have consistently favoured the development of an option that can deliver on the delicate balance of conservation, community and a planning approach that understands the pressures, sensitivities, and duties of stewardship that come with managing land in and around a nationally protected landscape.

44. The boundary change modification "Option 1A" proposes splitting the New Forest District by transferring the Waterside area into a new authority alongside Southampton and Eastleigh. This would sever long-standing cultural, environmental, and operational ties, and risks undermining statutory duties related to the National Park. It also poses a significant risk to service delivery, community identity, and statutory obligations, and potentially fails to meet the government's own criteria for boundary change. A full appraisal of the risks associated with boundary change is presented at Appendix 6, which is also overwhelmingly supported by the engagement outcomes, summarised in the consultation section below and detailed in Appendix 5.

45. Following detailed technical appraisal and engagement, Option 1 is presented as a financially sustainable, publicly supported and deliverable configuration. It is also considered as the most balanced for devolution, allowing for the voice of rural and market towns to be represented at the regional level.

Consultation undertaken

46. The development of NFDC's proposal has been informed by extensive engagement across Hampshire and the Solent, and specifically within the New Forest. A summary of the engagement undertaken is presented at Appendix 5, which includes a link to a number of accompanying background reports published by the Council.

47. A county-wide survey commissioned by the 12 councils working together gathered views on reorganisation options, with net overall support for retaining the New Forest District as a whole, and for

Option 1, with overwhelming support from respondents within the New Forest district. Indeed, the New Forest district was the highest local authority area for responses, with 3,141 received, representing 1.79% of the population and with every ward represented.

48. To ensure that the Council's final proposals for local government reorganisation were grounded in the lived experiences and aspirations of local communities, NFDC commissioned a deliberative engagement programme with residents across the district. The programme involved 59 residents, from a range of backgrounds, taking part in a mix of online workshops and in-person focus groups, designed to explore how local government can best work with and for communities in the future.

49. The engagement revealed a deep and consistent connection between residents and the New Forest as a place. The Forest itself was seen not only as a physical landscape but as a defining element of local identity, culture, and community. Residents expressed strong concerns about overdevelopment, the erosion of traditional ways of life - particularly among Commoners, and the risk of losing local representation in any future governance model. There was a clear preference for decision-making that remains rooted in place, with local knowledge and accountability at its core.

50. Participants articulated a vision for "good" local government that is efficient, accessible, communicative, and cost-effective. They emphasised the importance of councillors being visible and active in their communities, and of services being designed around the needs of residents - not imposed from distant urban centres. There was particular concern about the risks of merging with urban authorities such as Southampton, which residents felt would not reflect the distinct character, or needs of the New Forest.

51. The workshops concluded with a set of guiding principles that residents felt should underpin any future unitary council. These included:

    - being rooted in place and tradition;
    - empowering local voices;
    - ensuring accessibility for all;
    - maintaining accountability and transparency; and
    - delivering services efficiently and effectively.

These principles reflect a strong desire for local government that is responsive, representative, and protective of the unique qualities of the New Forest.

52. A Waterside Engagement Project captured powerful narratives of place, belonging, and civic pride. These insights were further reinforced through ongoing dialogue with elected members, town and parish councils, public sector partners, and community organisations.

53. A number of stakeholders were directly engaged throughout the case development, including MPs, the New Forest National Park Authority, the Official Verderer, Town and Parish Councils, community organisations and businesses. Early Town and Parish Council engagement identified that 85% of respondents supported the development of a Forest Mid Hampshire option, and the priority to keep the New Forest District whole. A business survey revealed that 98% of respondents support a rural council for mid-Hampshire that includes the whole New Forest District.

54. The engagement process has consistently demonstrated a clear public mandate for keeping the Forest whole, rejecting proposals that would fragment its governance, or align it with urban governance.

55. The Leader of the Council has engaged regularly with Group Leaders in the development of the case for change.

56. It is anticipated that the Government will undertake a statutory consultation on the options in the Autumn.

Financial and resource implications

57. The cost of developing the full proposal has been shared with the other 11 councils. New Forest District Council's share of this is £13,416.

58. The government allocated funding across England for the cost of developing local government reorganisation proposals. The Council's share of the funding in Hampshire and the Solent, is £26,540.

59. The specific work for developing the Option 1 appendix was shared with Test Valley. The Council has committed £16,247 on this work. Approximately £80,000 has been spent or relates to outstanding commitments on programme, communications and public engagement activity, both collectively with partners across Hampshire, and on New Forest specific activity.

60. The Council has an established £150,000 ongoing revenue budget for Devolution and LGR, alongside a separate £500,000 reserve for one-

off costs associated with this activity. The costs above are drawn from the reserve, as one-off expenditure.

61. Through the work led by KPMG and supported by the Section 151 Officer group across the 12 authorities, option 1 is projected to deliver significant financial and operational benefits. The financial sustainability analysis shows that the proposed reorganisation will generate recurring annual savings of between £63.8 million and £91.8 million across the region. Implementation costs are estimated at £128–160 million, with a payback period of between 2.2 and 3.1 years. The proposal also unlocks the potential for additional revenue of £458 million over ten years through council tax harmonisation.

62. By avoiding the costs and risks associated with boundary change, service disaggregation, and electoral disruption, Option 1 supports long-term financial sustainability and enables investment in transformation, digital infrastructure, and service innovation.

Legal implications

63. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of their powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), can invite any principal authority in the area of the county of Hampshire, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government. This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

    - Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned

    - Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts

    - Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas

    - Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

64. The invitation issued on 5 February 2025 specified that any councils responding must have regard to the guidance appended to the invitation. If the Council does support Option 1, it can be satisfied that this is entirely in accordance with the legislation and the invitation issued.

65. The submission of the proposal does not give rise to direct legal implications for the Council. At the point at which the government has consulted on proposals and made a final decision on local government reorganisation, the Structural Change Order that follows will give rise to significant legal implications for the Council.

Risk assessment

66. The principal risk connected with this decision would arise if the Council does not agree to submit the full proposal. In that case the Council would lose the ability to influence the process.

67. There is also the risk that the Government decides to implement a competing proposal that is not supported by the Council. This is risk is not fully controllable, but the best mitigation is the evidence led process the Council working with the other 11 councils has been through to develop a robust full proposal in line with the government criteria.

68. There are risks associated with Options 2 and the boundary change modification "Option 1A". A separate and specific case has been developed regarding the strategic risks of the boundary change modifications. This is outlined in full at Appendix 6.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

69. Option 1 supports integrated environmental governance and stewardship. By retaining unified oversight of the New Forest National Park, it enables coordinated planning, biodiversity management, and climate resilience. It avoids fragmentation of ecological corridors and disruption to landscape-led service models, and aligns with national policy on protected landscapes, net zero, and nature recovery.

Equalities implications

70. A full equality impact assessment is included with the full proposal in Appendix 4 (Appendix 7 therein).

Crime and disorder implications

71. A key aspect of service design for new unitary councils will be how bringing together current county, district and partnership functions can effectively deliver community safety responsibilities.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

72. A key consideration through the implementation of local government reorganisation will be the approach to appropriate data protection,

information governance and the alignment of ICT infrastructure for the safe delivery of new councils and the ongoing provision of services.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

73. Option 1 presents the strongest alignment with the New Forest National Park Authority's statutory purposes and strategic priorities, undertaken in a recent assessment by the NPA. By retaining the integrity of the New Forest as a whole and combining it with other predominantly rural authorities - Test Valley, Winchester, and East Hampshire, the option safeguards vital landscape, ecological, and cultural heritage links. It supports collaborative delivery of national objectives such as nature recovery, climate resilience, and the 30x30 targets, while recognising the socio-economic value of the New Forest's natural capital. Crucially, it avoids fragmentation of the Waterside area, preserving the commoning system essential to the Park's management and identity. It also provides for alignment of duties with the South Downs National Park, which is covered geographically by Winchester and East Hampshire.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Letter from the Secretary of State – February 2025
Appendix 2 – Interim Plan approved by all 15 councils
Appendix 3 – Interim Plan feedback
Appendix 4 – Full proposal to government
Appendix 5 – Summary of Engagement
Appendix 6 – Keep the Forest Whole – the case against boundary change

Background Papers:

Cabinet agenda, report and minutes – 21 March 2025
Resources and Transformation O&S Panel agenda, report and minutes – 26 June 2025
Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

APPENDIX 1

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:
Our reference:

To: Leaders of two-tier councils and neighbouring unitaries in Hampshire

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Hart District Council
- Havant Borough Council
- New Forest District Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Southampton City Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore 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.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change

It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County

Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals

We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

As your area has been successful in joining the Devolution Priority Programme, we will be working with you toward an election for the Mayor of the Strategic Authority in May 2026. To help manage these demands, I have decided to make legislation to postpone the local elections in your area from May 2025 to May 2026. My department will work with your area to take forward both devolution and reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline possible. Government will be consulting across your area in February and March on the benefits that devolution will bring, and to allow sufficient time for you to also carry out engagement necessary to develop robust and evidenced unitary proposals, I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 26 September**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament, and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

Annex A

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Hampshire, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

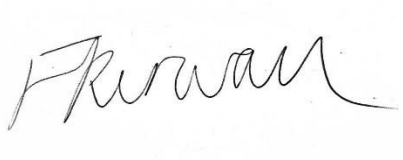
This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **26 September 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

SCHEDULE

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.

Hampshire and the Solent Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – Interim Plan

21st March 2025

Hampshire and the Solent Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – Interim Plan

Foreword

Following the invitation letter from MHCLG on 6th February 2025, all of the councils of Hampshire and the Solent have worked rapidly and collaboratively to develop and agree this interim plan.

The interim plan is submitted on behalf of:

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Hart District Council
- Havant Borough Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- New Forest District Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council

We acknowledge the timeline proposed relating to local government reorganisation and devolution and have prepared this interim plan jointly to outline the opportunities and challenges that it presents. We would welcome early feedback from the Government on this interim plan and require clarity and support in four specific areas, outlined in the concluding section of this document.

About Hampshire and the Solent

Hampshire and the Solent is a large and diverse place and our 15 Councils support over 2 million residents. The Isle of Wight and the port cities of Southampton and Portsmouth are already unitary councils, and in addition we are made up of 11 District and Borough Councils and a County Council.

Hampshire and the Solent contributes £33.5bn (GVA) to the UK driven by a range of sectors including finance and business, technology, aerospace and defence, tourism, and agriculture.

We work closely with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ICS and Frimley ICS.

Across Hampshire and the Solent, including the cities, the Isle of Wight, and some districts, there are pockets of deprivation and unemployment, which creates increased demand on public services.

Working collaboratively, we have agreed upon and highlighted key strengths of Hampshire and the Solent as a region:

1. **Connectivity with place:** A unique identity / culture, and characters of community – aligned with local priorities and place-based challenges.
2. **Strong economy:** Attracts and connects retail, finance, technology and innovation, aerospace, maritime, defence, logistics, trade, tourism, agriculture, creative and more. Fostering innovation was highlighted as a key driver of economic growth and a strength shared across the region.
3. **Highly skilled workforce:** A strong tradition of education and training – making it an attractive location for businesses looking to recruit talented employees. Although, there are areas where educational attainment is below the national average.
4. **A world class environment:** With our blue space of the Solent and a large, protected landscape including our two National Parks; and landowners, communities, businesses and councils committed to restore nature, reduce environmental harm and increase prosperity through natural capital.
5. **Excellent infrastructure:** With easy access to London and other major cities via road, sea, rail, and air, although there remains major need for improvement in coastal and some rural areas, and connectivity with the Isle of Wight.

Working together across the region

We are working closely together both on a devolution arrangement and establishment of a Strategic Authority, and to develop and deliver a form of local government reorganisation which will most benefit the people, communities and businesses of Hampshire and the Solent. The councils of Hampshire and the Solent are clearly aligned in the need to develop local government structures which are fit for the future and have agreed principles to guide our decision-making and approach going forwards.

Following the release of the White Paper in December and since receiving the letter from Jim McMahon MP on 5th February 2025, the councils in Hampshire and the Solent started the process to consider options, and as part of this a strategic advisor was brought on board to support the development of the interim plan. The councils across Hampshire and the Solent have prioritised a professional, equitable and collaborative relationship that underpins the process by which we have developed this interim plan (and will continue to harness throughout the full timeline). Our broad engagement timeline since receiving the letter has been as follows:

- 5th February 2025: Leaders' and Chief Executives met to appoint strategic advisor and agree terms of reference for this work.
- 10th February 2025: Mobilisation and engagement across each council in the region to formally develop plans for this interim plan.
- 11th February 2025 – 18th February 2025: Our strategic advisor held interviews with each council's Chief Executive and the majority of Leaders to identify key strengths, challenges, preferred options, red-lines, and opportunities. Each council was asked the same question-set to ensure a standardised approach.
- 10th February 2025: ongoing weekly engagement with the Chief Executive group to ensure progress against plan and discuss any actions / priorities from key meetings and workshops.
- 19th February 2025: Chief Executive workshop to playback themes from individual council interviews, discuss shared principles, provide an initial appraisal of potential options and plan timeline to submission for this interim plan.

- 24th February 2025: Leaders' and Chief Executive workshop to discuss progress to date and proposed next steps.
- 27th February 2025: Leaders' meeting to agree a set of guiding strategic principles, the content of the interim submission, agree the timeline for the full proposal and review data from across the Hampshire and Solent region.
- 5th & 6th March: Leaders' and Chief Executives met to agree the Interim Plan submission.

Throughout this engagement process, there has been full attendance from each council across Leaders' and Chief Executive stakeholder groups. This has facilitated a rich and targeted discussion of challenges to address and alignment on an agreed approach to developing a final proposal.

Our guiding principles

In the timescale provided, a consensus has yet to be agreed on detailed specific unitary options and so, this has not been included in this interim plan, with the exception that the Isle of Wight which should continue to remain separate and distinct. However, we have identified guiding principles to steer our work going forwards to create sustainable local government structures. Potential options will be appraised in detail, overlaying quantitative and qualitative data (including demand and cost), and consultation with the public and local partners and stakeholders.

The set of guiding strategic principles for LGR and the final submission are outlined below and designed to ensure delivery against the government's criteria and guidance. Where possible, these guiding principles will also apply to the Isle of Wight, although we are unanimous in proposing that it remains as a separate and distinct unitary council.

Our agreed guiding principles for Hampshire and the Solent are as follows:

- Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries.
- Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies.
- To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes.
- Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission.
- Proposals will ensure there are sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with options retaining equitable representation and voting rights.
- Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services.
- Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes.
- New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks.

Key areas of our interim plan

Below we have set out the key areas of our interim plan which are aligned with the Government's criteria and guidance:

a) Boundaries of new mainland unitaries

We are continuing to evaluate a range of options for unitary structures in Hampshire and the Solent and are therefore not providing a shortlist of options in this interim plan.

Our Chief Executives and Leaders are working collaboratively to understand the area and unitary options. This will inform a decision-making process, including local consultation to identify the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.

We have unanimously agreed that the Isle of Wight should remain as a separate unitary council due to being an island. This would not preclude exploring shared service arrangements across Hampshire and the Solent, but no model of local government reorganisation will comprehensively address the sustainability of local government on the island when also considering the geographic delivery of services. More detail on this is provided in point b) below.

b) Isle of Wight exceptional circumstances

Reflecting its position as an island, we propose that the Isle of Wight should remain as a separate unitary authority. The island will have a population of 148k people by 2028 which we acknowledge is below the MHCLG guidance regarding population sizes for a unitary. However, we consider that the Isle of Wight meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances related to local identity.

Fundamentally, the cost of providing council services on an island physically separated by water are driven by dislocation and the associated small markets which result in inherently higher costs due to market barriers and a lack of economies of scale. These characteristics cannot be remedied by a council's structure or scale (i.e., even if a boundary is on the mainland). As the physical boundary to the Island remains, the opportunities to reduce fixed costs and make procurement efficiencies and estate rationalisations are limited.

No model of local government reorganisation will address challenges regarding the tax base and financial sustainability of the island, whilst balancing and adding further challenge to the delivery of services from a geographical and financial perspective. Furthermore, Isle of Wight residents possess a distinct cultural identity which does not necessarily align with mainland residents. While we will continue to explore opportunities for shared service arrangements, we require support and clarification to discuss an Island Deal to establish sustainable local government across the whole of Hampshire and the Solent.

c) Indicative costs and future service transformation opportunities.

Hampshire and the Solent has a population of over 2 million people, across 15 local authorities, which includes three existing unitaries. Therefore, this will be a large and complex reorganisation programme.

Previous local government reorganisation costs for smaller areas have ranged from £12-20m over a 12 to 18-month period to encompass programme management, additional ICT investment, meeting branding requirements, additional election costs, legal capacity and supporting staff, residents, and businesses through the process.

Due to the size of Hampshire and the Solent, inflationary pressures (since other reorganisations have taken place) and the need to implement the reorganisation programme for 3 years, our preliminary benchmarking suggests this could be the most expensive LGR programme delivered to date.

We will confirm our view on the expected cost of implementation in our final submission to Government.

Future service transformation opportunities

As all councils have not yet reached consensus on a preferred option of unitary structures, we have not been able to appropriately model transformation opportunities, beyond the very substantial savings, transformation and collaborative working which we have already delivered. We expect to explore opportunities regarding:

- Integration of front-line services and building on leading practice from across organisations in the region;
- Whole-system transformation across health, local government and other statutory partners;
- Consolidation of back-office functions and driving efficiencies through economies of scale in procurement, fleet, contracts and estates;
- Rationalising and improving digital and ICT systems;
- Rationalising supplier spend;
- Economic and housing growth that will stem from the formation of a strategic authority and devolution.

d) Councillor numbers

Democratic representation is an important facet of LGR and devolution. We are considering options for mainland unitary structures with democratic representation as one of the evaluation criteria and will provide indicative councillor numbers as part of our full proposal. Our approach will be informed by Local Government Boundary Commission guidance for England and focused on maintaining the local connection of the new unitaries with their respective communities.

e) Supporting devolution ambitions

We are committed to devolution and have agreed the principle that proposals should ensure there is a sensible population balance between the new mainland unitary authorities, each of which will have equal representation and voting rights on the new strategic authority for all constituent authorities.

f) Local engagement

Due to the timescales, it has not been practical to deliver meaningful local engagement to contribute to this interim plan. We have documented the engagement that we have completed and planned.

We have early engagement sessions planned with representatives from Hampshire Police, Hampshire Fire and Rescue, NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB, NHS Frimley ICB, New Forest National Park Authority and South Downs National Park Authority in March 2025.

Individual councils have engaged with key stakeholders, including briefing sessions for Parish and Town Councils. Public meetings by two councils were held in March 2025 to provide an update on devolution and LGR.

Our full proposal will be supported by appropriate local engagement with local partners, residents, and businesses, both to inform our decision-making process and to demonstrate local support for the proposal.

g) Indicative costs of preparing proposals

We acknowledge the importance of moving quickly into implementation and are preparing for this. We are balancing that alongside making the right decision for unitary structures, supporting devolution, and running councils alongside our respective change programmes.

We expect the cost of developing a detailed LGR proposal to be around £500k to include communications support, project management, engagement with residents and communities, strategic support, and drafting.

We will be building implementation teams to deliver preparatory work ahead of the Secretary of State's final decision on unitary structures in early 2026. We will confirm the final structure of our proposed PMO and governance structure, resource profile and associated cost in our final submission.

This implementation team will report into an LGR Programme Board and will include a Programme Director and two programme managers to oversee the transition from current state and a programme manager and three project officers to support the development of each future unitary council.

We understand the phases of LGR and how the governance and resourcing will need to change for each phase and are preparing our programme to be able to adapt.

h) How we are working together

We are working together across all of the councils of Hampshire and the Solent. This has included weekly Chief Executive meetings, regular update meetings and workshops with Leaders and Chief Executives and a joint commission for strategic support. This includes contributing to a joint dataset to inform decision-making and common decision-making in the interests of our residents and businesses.

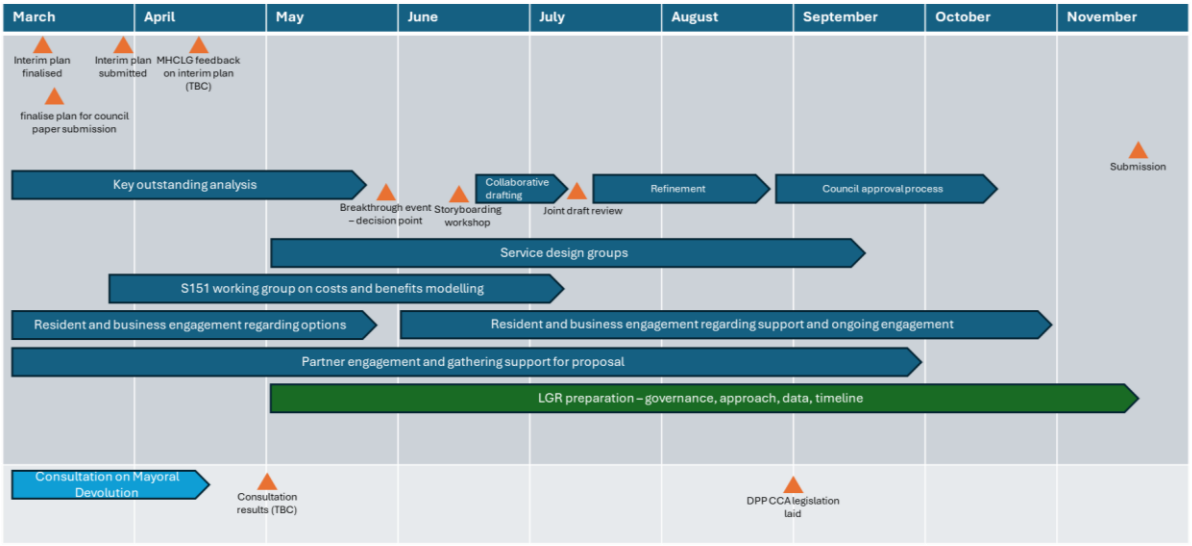
We are working collaboratively and have a solid foundation for implementing LGR and devolution as well as managing service delivery and setting the new unitaries up for success.

Proposed timeline

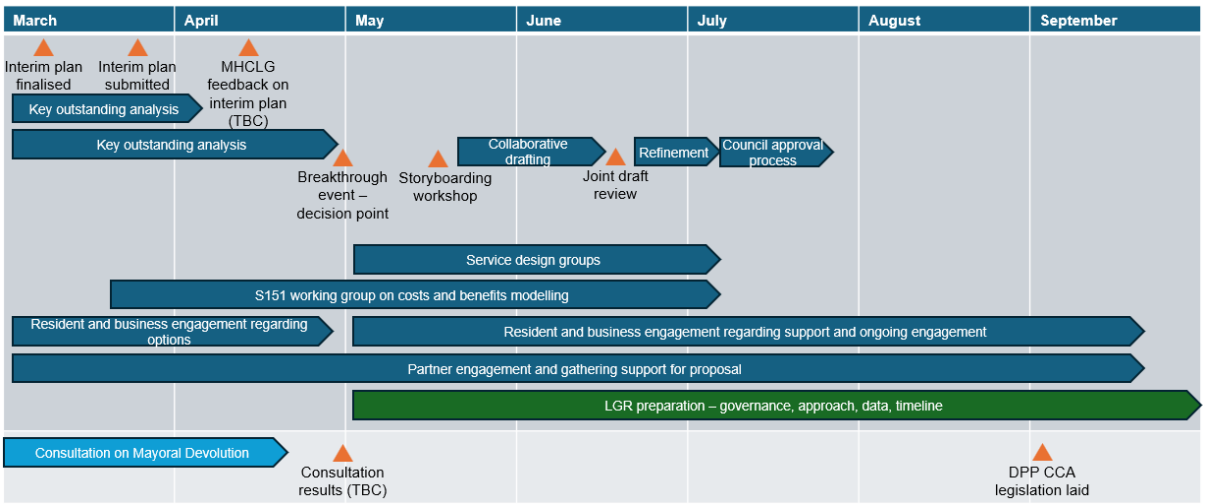
We are delighted to be selected for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) and see the benefits of delivering at pace. We are aligned to continue working collaboratively on both the DPP and LGR programme whilst ensuring a level of robust consultation and analysis we believe to be necessary for long-term sustainable services and growth across Hampshire and the Solent. Initial feedback from Government indicated that those on the DPP who are managing the complexity of delivering a new Strategic Authority would be granted extra time to submit their proposal for LGR. However, we have now been given two months less than

other authorities, and in consequence request an extension for the submission of the full proposal until at least 28th November 2025.

Our preferred plan aligning to an end of November 2025 submission date for our full proposal for LGR follows:



We have also outlined a scenario that aligns with the current submission date for the full proposal at the end of September 2025 (please see plan below). However, we collectively agree this accelerated plan with its curtailed time for service planning and engagement poses a risk to the engagement and analysis required to create an effective LGR proposal at the same time as delivery of a Strategic Authority. This timetable also requires that we receive timely feedback on this interim plan and the support required from Government to deliver at such an accelerated pace.



Barriers or Challenges where we require clarity and support

1. Principle of boundary changes: We are looking to develop unitary councils that reflect the current major economies and communities of Hampshire and the Solent, and we will deliver local government fit for the future. We do not have consensus on the proposal of boundary changes but have agreed a principle that, in order to support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not

have boundary changes. As a result of changes since district boundaries were defined for the 1974 reorganisation, some of the current boundaries in Hampshire split towns, communities and economic geographies. Unitaries should reflect economic geographies and how people access services, healthcare, education, leisure and shopping as well as driving economic and housing growth. As a result, our options analysis may lead to proposed changes to some boundaries (although we will also assess cost, complexity and feasibility of any such changes). To do this with accuracy and confidence, we require:

a) Clarity on the 500,000 minimum unitary population figure and what justification would be needed in instances where this makes no practical or economic sense for an area; and
b) confirmation whether boundary changes are acceptable to MHCLG and confirmation of the statutory mechanism, such as a Secretary of State power in the Devolution Bill, to deliver this; and
c) support to establish a timeline to deliver these structures.

2. Isle of Wight exceptional circumstances: As outlined earlier, reflecting its position as an island, we propose that the Isle of Wight should remain as a separate unitary authority. In order to be able to develop effective options for the mainland, we require early confirmation from the Government regarding the Isle of Wight as an exceptional circumstance and to remain a single unitary authority. Any delay in this confirmation will have an impact on our ability to deliver an accurate and timely options appraisal.

3. Critical service demand: Whilst councils embrace the opportunity to improve and transform service delivery, there are immediate challenges to address around the significant demand and associated financial pressures of Adult Social Care, Children's services, (particularly in SEND) and Homelessness. Efficiencies we will deliver will be off set against these significant demand and cost pressures. There are significant pockets of deprivation in some areas of Hampshire and the Solent, including coastal areas, as well as different council tax bases which will have a varied impact on proposed future unitaries. In addition, we face significant longer-term impacts such as climate change and coastal flooding.

4. Support for implementation and ongoing financial sustainability: As mentioned above, local government in Hampshire and the Solent is under significant financial pressure. The EFS support for Southampton to fund the council's transformation programme, restructuring costs and equal pay, and the request from Hampshire County Council for EFS shows the scale of the challenge we face. As an example, the Hampshire County Council deficit alone is over £216m. To help fill some of the budget gap post-LGR, we require support to fund transformation opportunities and the autonomy to be flexible around council tax.

While there may be opportunities through LGR, we do expect significant challenge from the capacity required to deliver LGR alongside devolution and our existing council's operations and change portfolios. We would request financial support to fund costs relating to the implementation of LGR and would want to agree a multi-year financial arrangements with the government to effectively support transition post vesting day.

5. Timeline: It remains challenging to deliver appropriate local engagement and decision-making in this period, alongside devolution. We therefore request an extension for the full proposal to 28th November 2025. If after a detailed options appraisal has been undertaken, the preferred option requires the need for boundary changes, then we would also request an extension to the implementation timeline to allow sufficient time for the appropriate statutory mechanism to be delivered.

Yours sincerely,

Signed by all Leaders of councils in Hampshire and the Solent

Council	Name of Leader	Signature
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council		x
East Hampshire District Council		x
Eastleigh Borough Council		x
Fareham Borough Council		x
Gosport Borough Council		x
Hampshire County Council		x
Hart District Council		x
Havant Borough Council		x
Isle of Wight Council		x
New Forest District Council		x
Portsmouth City Council		x
Rushmoor Borough Council		x
Southampton City Council		x
Test Valley Borough Council		x
Winchester City Council		x

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

7 May 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

INTERIM PLAN FEEDBACK: HAMPSHIRE, ISLE OF WIGHT, PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON

To the Chief Executives of:
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
East Hampshire District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Fareham Borough Council
Gosport Borough Council
Hampshire County Council
Hart District Council
Havant Borough Council
New Forest District Council
Rushmoor Borough Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Winchester City Council
Isle of Wight Council
Portsmouth City Council
Southampton City Council

Overview:

Thank you for submitting your interim plan. The thought from all councils is clear to see. For the final proposals, each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and, as set out in the guidance, we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued.

Our aim for the feedback on interim plans is to support areas to develop final proposals. This stage is not a decision-making point, and our feedback does not seek to approve or reject any option being considered.

The feedback provided relates to the following interim plan submitted by Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton councils:

- the Hampshire and the Solent, Local Government Reorganisation Plan, 21 March 2025, signed by all councils in Hampshire and the Solent

We have provided feedback on behalf of central government. It takes the form of:

1. A summary of the main feedback points;
2. Our response to the specific barriers and challenges raised in your plans; and
3. An annex with more detailed feedback against each of the interim plan asks.

We reference the guidance criteria included in the invitation letter throughout, a copy of which can be found at Letter: Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton – GOV.UK. Our central message is to build on your initial work and ensure that final proposal(s) address the criteria and are supported by data and evidence. We recommend that final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken to develop Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) plans for Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. This feedback does not seek to approve or discount any proposal, but provide some feedback designed to assist in the development of final proposals. We will assess final proposals against the guidance criteria provided in the invitation letter and have tailored this feedback to identify where additional information may be helpful in enabling that assessment. Please note that this feedback is not exhaustive and should not preclude the inclusion of additional materials or evidence in the final proposals. In addition, your named area lead, Jesse Garrick, will be able to provide support and help address any further questions or queries.

We are providing written feedback to each invitation area.

Summary of Feedback:

We have summarised the key elements of the feedback below, with further detail provided in Annex A.

1. The criteria asks that a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole area, the establishment of a single tier of local government (see criterion 1). **We recognise that plans are at an early stage and further analysis is planned in the run up to submitting the final proposal(s). Further detail on a proposed geography for new unitary authorities and evidence on the outcomes that are expected to be achieved for the whole area would be welcome.**

2. As set out in the invitation letter, the interim plan process is designed to help support you to develop final proposals. We note your argument regarding the Isle of Wight's exceptional circumstances and request for an 'Island deal'. As you know, **interim plans are not a decision-making point; decisions will be made on the basis of full proposals, and so any decision on a specific unitary solution for**

the Isle of Wight would need to be taken at that point too. More detail on the rationale would be helpful, and you may wish to support existing narratives with data. We have provided more information on addressing the population criteria below.

3. You asked if it was possible to extend the timeframe for providing LGR proposals until November. **As per your invitation, the deadline is the 26 September. The deadline for submitting a proposal has been designed to give areas as much time as possible to develop their final proposals. The timescales for submission are generally more generous than in previous reorganisation exercises. Ministers have set clear timelines, which were determined in the context of decisions to postpone elections, that were not taken lightly. It is important that final proposal(s) are submitted by 26 September 2025 to allow for LGR to take place as planned.**

4. In some of the options you are considering populations that would be below 500,000. As set out in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. **All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.**

5. We welcome steps taken to come together, as per criterion 4:
    a. **Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; we would encourage you to continue to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will support the development of a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).**
    b. **It would be helpful if final proposal(s) use the same assumptions and data sets.**
    c. **It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) set out how the data and evidence supports all the outcomes you have included and how well they meet the assessment criteria in the invitation letter.**
    d. **You may wish to consider an options appraisal that will help demonstrate why your proposed approach best meets the assessment criteria in the invitation letter, compared to any alternatives.**

Response to specific barriers and challenges raised

Please see below our response to the specific barriers and challenges that were raised in your interim plan:

1. **Principle of boundary changes**

   We note your desire to develop unitary councils that reflect the current major economies and communities of Hampshire and the Solent and that some of your proposals may lead to boundary changes.

   As the Invitation sets out, boundary changes are possible, but that "existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered."

   The final proposal must specify the area for any new unitary council(s). If a boundary change is part of your final proposal, then you should be clear on the boundary proposed, which could be identified by a parish or ward boundary, or if creating new boundaries by attaching a map.

   Proposals should be developed having regard to the statutory guidance which sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed (including that listed above). If a decision is taken to implement a proposal, boundary change can be achieved alongside structural change. Alternatively, you could make a proposal for unitary local government using existing district building blocks and consider requesting a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR) later.

   Such reviews have been used for minor amendments to a boundary where both councils have requested a review – such as the recent Sheffield/Barnsley boundary adjustment for a new housing estate. PABRs are the responsibility of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England who will consider such requests on a case-by-case.

2. **Isle of Wight exceptional circumstances**

   You asked for an early decision on the position of the Isle of Wight and to discuss an 'Island deal'. As set out above this is not a decision-making point so we cannot make any judgments at this time.

   We welcome the additional thinking conducted regarding the Isle of Wight. If pursuing this option, it would be helpful to build on the existing rationale and provide a full assessment against each criterion in your final proposal(s).

3. Critical service demand

We note your demand pressures, your different council tax bases, the levels of deprivation and challenges posed by climate change and coastal flooding. It would be helpful if detail on the councils' financial positions and further modelling on risks is set out in detail in the final proposal(s).

With regards to council tax, restructured councils often inherit different council tax levels from their predecessors. There is an established flexible system in legislation for the harmonisation of council tax levels over seven years.

4. Support for implementation and ongoing financial stability

We note the financial pressures in Hampshire and the Solent, plus your request for support on transformation opportunities, autonomy to be flexible around council tax and desire to agree multi-year financial arrangements.

£7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding.

In terms of transitional costs as per invitation letter, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects. We would welcome further detail on your estimated transformation costs against full proposals. This may be something you wish to pick up with your MHCLG LGR area lead, Jesse Garrick.

We also note your points around the financial pressures councils are facing. It would be helpful if detail on the councils' financial positions and further modelling could be set out in detail in the final proposal(s).

5. Timeline

You have asked for an extension to the 28 November 2025 to provide proposals. As set out above, it is important that final proposal(s) are submitted by 26 September 2025 to allow for LGR to take place as planned.

ANNEX A: Detailed feedback on criteria for interim plan

Ask – Interim Plan Criteria	Feedback
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. Relevant criteria: 1 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. & 2 a-f) Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. & 3 a-c) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	We welcome the initial thinking that has gone into this interim plan and recognise that it is subject to further work. We note the local context and challenges outlined. We appreciate you will be undertaking further analysis, significant further detail that addresses the criteria in the invitation letter and for this to be provided by 26 September would be welcomed. As per criterion 1, the final proposal(s) in accordance with the guidance should put forward a preferred single tier model for the whole invitation area, including describing all the single tier local government structures you are putting forward. Where there are proposed boundary changes, the proposal should provide strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for the change. For the final proposals, each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and, as set out in the guidance, we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued. Given the financial pressures you identify it would also be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity. We recognise that the options outlined in the interim plans are subject to further development. In final proposal(s) it would be helpful to include a high-level financial assessment which covers transition costs and overall forecast operating costs of the new unitary councils. We will assess final proposals against the criteria in the invitation letter. Referencing criteria 1 and 2, you may wish to consider the following bullets: • high level breakdowns, for where any efficiency savings will be made, with clarity of assumptions on how estimates have been reached and the data sources used,

	including differences in assumptions between proposals • it would be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity • information on the counterfactual against which efficiency savings are estimated, with values provided for current levels of spending • a clear statement of what assumptions have been made if the impacts of inflation are taken into account • a summary covering sources of uncertainty or risks, with modelling, as well as predicted magnitude and impact of any unquantifiable costs or benefits • where possible, quantified impacts on service provision as well as wider impacts We recognise that financial analysis will start once options for the geography have been fully identified. The bullets below indicate where information would be helpful. As per criterion 1 and 2, it would be helpful to see: • data and evidence to set out how your final proposal(s) would enable financially viable councils across the whole area, including identifying which option best delivers value for money for council taxpayers • further detail on potential finances of new unitaries, for example, funding, operational budgets, potential budget surpluses/shortfalls, total borrowing (General Fund), and debt servicing costs (interest and MRP); and what options may be available for rationalisation of potentially saleable assets • clarity on the underlying assumptions underpinning any modelling e.g. assumptions of future funding, demographic growth and pressures, interest costs, Council Tax, savings earmarked in existing councils' MTFS • financial sustainability both through the period to the creation of new unitary councils as well as afterwards • as criterion 2e states, and recognising that Southampton City Council has received

	Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a more sustainable footing, and any assumptions around what arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable We would welcome further details on how services can be maintained if you are proposing fragmentation of services, such as for social care, children's services, SEND, homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety. Under criterion 3c, you may wish to consider: • how will high quality and sustainable services be maintained for a proposed Isle of Wight or other proposed unitaries, for example, what shared services do you have in mind, how will housing or social care needs be met? • what would proposals mean for local services provision? For example: o impact on SEND services and distribution of funding and sufficiency planning to ensure children can access appropriate support, and how will services be maintained? o what is the impact on adults and children's care services? How will risks to safeguarding to be managed? o what partnership options have you considered for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services? o what is the impact on schools, support and funding allocation, and sufficiency of places and how will impacts on school be managed? Will the Isle of Wight's support from Hampshire continue? o what is the impact on safeguarding? How will risks be managed? o what is the impact of LGR and devolution on skills funding? o what are the implications for public health, including consideration of socio-demographic challenges and health inequalities within any new

	boundaries and their implications for current and future health service needs. What are the implications for how residents access services and service delivery for populations most at risk? Further detail would also be welcomed on what opportunities for wider public service reform are enabled by the options.
Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities. Relevant criteria: 2d) 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.	We note the estimation that costs will likely be above £20 million. In the final proposal, we would welcome further clarity on the assumptions and data used to calculate the transition costs and efficiencies (see criterion 2d). As per criterion 2, the final proposal(s) 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. • within this it would be helpful to provide detailed analysis on expected transition and/or disaggregation costs and potential efficiencies of proposals. This could include clarity on methodology, assumptions, data used, what year these may apply and why these are appropriate • detail on the potential service transformation opportunities and invest-to-save projects from unitarisation across a range of services -e.g. consolidation of waste collection and disposal services, and will different options provide different opportunities for back-office efficiency savings? • where it has not been possible to monetise or quantify impacts, you may wish to provide an estimated magnitude and likelihood of impact. • summarise any sources of risks, uncertainty and key dependencies related to the modelling and analysis • detail on the estimated financial sustainability of proposed reorganisation and how debt could be managed locally.

	We note the financial challenges highlighted in your response. It would be helpful if detail on the councils' financial positions and further modelling is set out in detail in the final proposal. We welcome the joint work you have done to date and recommend that all options and proposals should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference (linked to criterion 1c).
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. Relevant criteria: 6) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment. Additional details on how the community will be engaged specifically how the governance, participation and local voice will be addressed to strengthen local engagement, and democratic decision-making would be helpful. In your final proposal(s) we would welcome detail on your plans for neighbourhood-based governance, the impact on parish councils, and thoughts about formal neighbourhood partnerships and area committees.
Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions. Relevant criteria: 5a-c) New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.	Further detail would be welcome in all plans on how the proposed new structures would support arrangements for the proposed Hampshire and the Solent Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). We welcome the area's commitment to devolution, and the adoption of the principle that governance arrangements in a future MSA should continue to equally represent all areas following LGR. Across all proposals, looking towards a potential future MSA, it would be beneficial to provide an assessment that outlines if there are benefits and disadvantages in how each option would interact with an MSA and best benefit the local community, including meeting devolution statutory tests.

	More detail would also be welcome on the implications of the various LGR options for the timelines and management of devolution across the Hampshire and the Solent geography. While we cannot pre-judge devolution decisions, we are happy to discuss further any eventual transition period as the new unitary authorities and potential MSA are established. We would welcome continued engagement with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Members of Parliaments and wider local stakeholders as you continue to develop your proposal(s). To note, an MSA is the same as a Mayoral Combined Authority or Mayoral Combined County Authority.
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. Relevant criteria: 6a-b) new unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	We welcome your interim update against criterion 6, the engagement undertaken so far and your plans for the future. It is for you to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way with residents, voluntary sector, local community groups, neighbourhood boards, parish councils, public sector providers, such as health, police and fire, and local businesses to inform your proposals. You may wish to engage in particular with those who may be affected by any proposed disaggregation of services. It would be helpful to see further detail of your engagement plans and to provide detail that demonstrates how local ideas and views have been incorporated into any final proposal(s).
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. Relevant criteria: 2d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation	We would welcome further detail in final proposal(s) over the level of cost and the extent to which the costs are for delivery of the unitary structures or for transformation activity that delivers benefits (see criterion 2d). £7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding.

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.	
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. Relevant criteria: 4 a-c) 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.	We welcome the ways of working together you have outlined in the interim plan (see criterion 4). Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; areas will need to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will enable you to develop a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposals (see criterion 1c). We recommend that final proposals should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.

Close enough to be local
big enough to stay strong

A shared vision for the future of local government that will best deliver for the people of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

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Foreword

Close enough to be local, big enough to stay strong.

This proposal presents a bold and unified vision for the future of local government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. At the heart of this proposal is a commitment to our communities. Our communities are not just areas on a map – they are places where people live, raise families, build businesses and care for one another.

The current two-tier system, which has remained largely unchanged since 1974, except for the creation of three unitary councils that have already achieved efficiency savings associated with the removal of the two-tier system, has created fragmentation and inefficiencies that hinder our ability to respond to local needs. Since then, our population has grown, digital technology has transformed how services are delivered and residents rightly expect more responsive, efficient and joined up local services that we know can be addressed by our proposed unitary councils.

With the decision made by government to initiate local government reorganisation, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine how we can build councils that are close enough to communities to be local but big enough to have a sustainable future. Councils that deliver transformed services that meet local needs, rather than larger 'one size fits all' type approaches. Councils that reflect our different areas and will listen and improve things. Councils where local services are not just delivered but designed for the modern world, co-created and tailored to local community needs and with people at the heart of every decision and where every pound spent goes further.

Grasping this opportunity with both hands, we initially came together as a group of 15 authorities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. With the decision of Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council and Gosport Borough Council to leave this shared process, we are now working together as 12 unitary, district and borough councils serving communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, to co-design proposals for a local government system that is more agile, accountable, sustainable and better equipped to serve our communities – today and in the future.

Driven by the needs of our communities, we are proposing the creation of four new unitary councils for mainland Hampshire, focused on each of the four anchors of the major urban economies and population centres of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke. We all agree that

the Isle of Wight Council, as an island unitary authority, should remain independent to reflect its unique island geography and circumstances. However, our proposal looks to ensure integration with the Isle of Wight where beneficial to ensure local government reorganisation succeeds for all.

Strengthened collaboration, backed by investment in transformation and digital innovation, will enable us to work seamlessly, ensuring services are joined up, accessible and tailored to the unique needs of each community. It will also empower local decision-making so we can meet today's challenges without losing the local knowledge and relationships that residents value.

Financial sustainability is central to this vision. Our proposal will reduce duplication and deliver on the scale needed to invest in innovation and modernise critical services. It will also provide a stronger foundation for economic growth, enabling councils to work more effectively with businesses, developers and regional partners to unlock the economic potential of each of the areas.

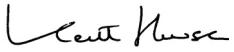
Whilst we are clear that the two-tier system is both inefficient and confusing to residents and its removal for the area is necessary for a modern, responsive, and resident centred model of local government, equally we are realistic about the scale of the financial challenge facing the area as a whole and that cannot be solved by local government reorganisation alone. Our proposal is clear, when viewed across the whole area, that it will realise substantial savings, provide more joined up and modern services for residents and create a better opportunity for economic growth. However, each new unitary council will still need to address the legacy deficits of its predecessor authorities.

This document reflects our shared ambition to create a modern and responsive local government system that truly reflects the different communities we serve.

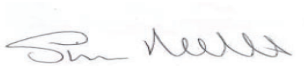
We owe it to our residents and the future generations to come together to get this right. By embracing change and working together, we can build a future where every community thrives, every voice is heard, and every service delivers real value. We strongly believe this proposal will deliver lasting transformation and improvement and we ask for your support in making it a reality.

Basingstoke and Deane BoroughCouncil
Leader Cllr Paul Harvey

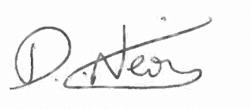
Eastleigh Borough Council
Leader Cllr Keith House



Fareham Borough Council
Leader Cllr Simon Martin

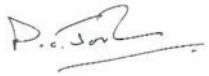


Hart District Council
Leader Cllr David Neighbour



Havant Borough Council
Leader Cllr Phil Munday

Isle of Wight Council
Leader Cllr Phil Jordan



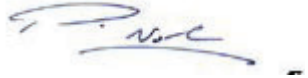
New Forest District Council
Leader Cllr Jill Cleary

Portsmouth City Council
Leader Cllr Steve Pitt*

Rushmoor Borough Council
Leader Cllr Gareth Williams

Southampton City Council
Leader Cllr Alexander Winning

Test Valley Borough Council
Leader Cllr Philip North



Winchester City Council
Leader Cllr Martin Tod

* See page 17

Executive summary

Local government reorganisation presents an opportunity to take a fresh look at how councils operate to build a system that best serves Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's residents, now and in the future.

Fully embracing this opportunity, while balancing the size and diversity of the area, our group brings together the majority of councils (12 of 15) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. We have worked collaboratively to shape the future of local government for our region; built on the foundation of our existing population centres and economic areas to reflect the way people live.

We agree unanimously that a five-unitary council structure, with four new mainland unitaries plus the Isle of Wight remaining independent, provides the most effective solution for local government reorganisation in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Our proposal, set out in this document, is the best way to support a balanced and effective Mayoral Combined Authority to achieve the shared vision for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It is backed by our robust and comprehensive options appraisal methodology in line with the government's criteria.

As part of this proposal, three variations for four new mainland

unitaries have been identified, to which councils have differing support for. All three variations fully meet the government criteria and are based on having a unitary council focused on each of the four major population centres and economies of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent. This fully aligns with Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution, Jim McMahon MP OBE's, view of the important role cities and larger towns play as 'economic or academic' anchors for designing new unitary councils.

We strongly believe our four new unitary councils on the mainland, plus the Isle of Wight, would best meet the government's criteria and best serve our communities into the future by:

- driving economic growth and housing delivery.
- delivering high quality and sustainable public services with a focus on innovation and transformation to improve outcomes for communities.
- achieving significant savings while being large enough to be financially sustainable whilst also being committed to local people and local communities.
- unlocking and maximising devolution arrangements, working effectively alongside the new elected Mayor for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as constituent members of the strategic authority.
- effectively engaging, empowering and serving their local communities by providing opportunities for residents to shape local decisions.

The four new unitary councils on the mainland, with an average population size of 500,000, provide significant scale in service delivery and will reduce costs accordingly while still being connected to the communities they serve. Our commitment to transformation will ensure services are tailored to respond to local needs and improve outcomes for residents.

We also strongly believe that the Isle of Wight meets the criteria of exceptional circumstances to remain as existing island unitary authority due to its unique local identity and geography and the fact most services and infrastructure would just need to be duplicated on the Island, were they to be run from a unitary council on the mainland, due to the barriers provided by water-only access.

However, we will ensure that any genuine opportunities for collaboration with our four new unitary councils on the mainland are maximised. This will include an enhanced partnership whereby the Isle of Wight Council works closely alongside the four new mainland unitaries to explore each opportunity they

progress for transformation and innovation, as they move forward through implementation of our proposal and beyond, to see how they could be applied to the Island either on a shared basis or individually.

Later in this document in section 4 we set out how our proposal for four new mainland unitaries, and the three variations being put forward, deliver strongly on each of the government criteria. We also set out in section 5 why the Isle of Wight Council should continue to remain independent aligned to the government criteria as requested in the interim feedback letter from government. However, the summary below provides an overview of the key strengths in line with the criteria, highlighting why our four new-mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal is the best option for the future of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

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

- **Balanced configuration:** Ensures equitable distribution of resources by avoiding disparities in tax base, population, and GVA among new unitary councils.
- **Tailored governance and leadership:** Strong local leadership with strategies customised to the unique geographies of each unitary area to drive economic growth, high quality service delivery and improved outcomes.
- **Economic development and innovation:** Creates a focused environment for business innovation and economic growth by leveraging strengths and fostering partnerships tailored to the needs of the different economic areas.
- **Infrastructure and housing:** Prioritises shaping infrastructure and addressing housing needs with tailored approaches to support delivery and meet local requirements.
- **Transport and connectivity:** Aligns travel geographies with unitary boundaries to enable integrated transport planning, improving connectivity, and reducing congestion.
- **Community and skills development:** Invests in people to build inclusive workforces, addressing skills gaps and raising living standards to support growth ambitions.
- **Rural and local engagement:** Addresses unique rural challenges and enhances local engagement by aligning governance with community identities and travel-to-work patterns.

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

- **Financial sustainability:** Addresses current financial challenges by reducing duplicated functions in the two-tier system, centralising back-office support, and empowering each authority to manage its budget based on local needs through place focused transformation and innovation, thereby improving financial resilience.
- **Efficiency and improving capacity:** Brings together capital and revenue planning and enhances transformation teams, our proposal achieves savings through transformation and service redesign tailored to local needs, improving overall service delivery. Recognising that Portsmouth and Southampton have already made many of these efficiencies and can share their learning and experience.
- **Economic growth and local focus:** Enables enhanced economic growth by forming unitary structures around distinct economic areas, ensuring opportunities are realised and challenges addressed to maximise economic potential.
- **Population balance:** Creates balanced new unitary structures that reflect economic areas and local identities

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

- **Local connections and community focus:** Effectiveness of services, particularly in areas such as adult social care, is driven by local connections and understanding community needs. Our proposal includes co-producing services with local partners through a total place approach and maintaining local relationships which bigger unitaries, serving even larger communities and areas, cannot replicate.
- **Place-based governance:** Captures local intelligence and prioritises prevention. Our proposal aligns services with the lived realities of communities, ensuring they are delivered responsively.
- **Service design and transformation:** Our proposal is based on creating genuinely new unitaries through a comprehensive approach to service design, focusing on high-quality and sustainable services. Our proposal has prioritised collaboration and transformation opportunities, ensuring services are tailored to local needs. The Isle of Wight Council, whilst remaining independent, will have a transformation partnership with the new unitaries to ensure opportunities are maximised for the Island where appropriate.
- **Adult social care:** Our model focusses on localised neighbourhood service delivery, budgetary savings, and data-driven decision-making. It aligns with the NHS 10-year plan, focusing on prevention and community resilience.
- **Children and young people:** Promotes localised governance and collaboration, addressing educational challenges and supporting children with complex needs. Our proposal emphasises prevention, early intervention, and community-centred approaches.
- **Economic Growth and Strategic Planning:** Aligning services with local economic and social geographies, fostering collaboration and co-investment in infrastructure.
- **Public sector reform:** Aligns with the wider public sector reform agenda, focusing on place-based prevention and tailored collaborative service delivery to meet community needs effectively in each of our areas.

Criteria 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.

- **Collaborative working:** Extensive collaboration among 12 councils over six months, involving key stakeholder groups and regular meetings with leaders, chief executives, section 151 officers, monitoring officers, directors and heads of service. This collaborative approach ensures that the proposal is robust, evidence-based, and informed by a wide range of perspectives.
- **Informed by local views:** Our proposal is shaped by joint local government efforts and engagement with local people and partners. A joint survey was conducted to gather views from residents, ensuring that the proposal reflects public sentiment and priorities. A series of workshops have been held with businesses and partners including from the public, voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils. Discussion has also been held with local members of parliament. We are grateful to all of our communities and partners for helping to shape this proposal. This approach prioritises community identity and future-proofs local government to effectively respond to local needs.
- **Travel for work and leisure activities:** Builds on our strong travel-to-work ecosystem, supported by motorways, rail corridors, bus networks, ferries, and active-travel routes. The future unitary councils are aligned with key population and economic centres as anchors, providing opportunities to streamline travel services.
- **Local identity:** Recognises and preserves the unique character and contributions of the North, Mid, South East, and South West areas and the Isle of Wight. Each area has distinct geographic, historical, economic and cultural identities, which are actively preserved and empowered through our proposal.

Criteria 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- **Strategic planning and local delivery:** A Combined/Strategic Authority with five well-balanced unitaries (four new unitaries on the mainland and the Isle of Wight Council) as constituent authorities. This structure enables strategic planning and coordination for over 2.1 million people, while the unitary councils focus on local delivery.
- **Effective decision-making:** With five constituent members, our model provides a strong foundation for decision-making. It aims to avoid the pitfalls of smaller Combined Authorities with less constituent members, which may operate as rivals rather than come together as a cohesive governance body. Our approach draws on the success of Greater Manchester.
- **Balanced new unitary authorities:** Populations between 400,000 and 600,000 of the new unitaries, ensuring balanced representation and avoiding democratic deficits. Our model also includes the Isle of Wight, emphasising balanced representation and collaboration with non-constituent members like NHS bodies and National Parks.

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

- **Enhanced local representation:** Localised unitary authorities, which would allow for governance that is more tailored and representative. This structure would enable local leaders to better understand and address the unique challenges and opportunities within their areas.

- **Improved service delivery:** Aligning governance structures with local needs and engaging local stakeholders in decision making, means our proposal will deliver services more effectively and efficiently. This will allow for the customisation of services to better fit the specific requirements of each community, leading to improved outcomes in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- **Proposed councillor ratios:** Future indicative councillor ratios are designed to support the individual demands of the four new mainland unitary configurations and the communities they serve. The proposed configurations aim to optimise the number of councillors to ensure effective representation and governance with an enhanced ward councillor role. The Isle of Wight would continue with its existing councillor numbers.
- **Enhanced neighbourhood working and governance:** A localised place-based approach will see enhanced neighbourhood engagement and delivery models. We will co-design with communities and local partners neighbourhood governance arrangements that best meet local requirements for each area. This will deliver decision making at the level closest to individuals and communities that improves delivery and enables efficiencies.

Our proposal is comprehensive, and evidence based, providing a bold platform for further economic growth and investment across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It unlocks the true devolution potential for our area and will tackle local housing pressures.

Developed by all 12 councils, our vision for local government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight for the future is:

We will deliver high-quality, locally tailored services that focus on prevention and long-term sustainability. By building strong, people-centred communities and harnessing the strengths of our local economies, we will drive inclusive growth and create vibrant, resilient places where everyone can thrive.

This proposal is submitted on behalf of the following existing district, borough and unitary councils:

Basingstoke and Deane

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Hart DISTRICT COUNCIL

Havant BOROUGH COUNCIL

Isle of Wight Council

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Test Valley Borough Council

Winchester City Council

1. Our approach to assessing the options and developing this proposal

We worked collaboratively to assess reorganisation options, culminating in the development of this four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal. This work has been underpinned by a comprehensive and robust, data-led assessment process, guided by 44 metrics (Appendix 1) aligned with the government's criteria and locally-agreed guiding principles. Extensive stakeholder engagement, including with residents, businesses and partners, has played a critical role in shaping and validating the proposal.

1. Our approach to assessing the options and developing this proposal

To coordinate the development of our interim submission in March and in the period directly after, all 15 existing councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight initially worked together on a detailed, evidence-driven assessment of unitary council options against the government criteria, supported by KPMG.

Options appraisal

Our approach to evaluating and selecting viable options for local government reorganisation in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight followed three key stages:

- **Mobilisation and stakeholder engagement:** We swiftly established a collaborative framework for all 15 councils and key partners across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This enabled the development of shared guiding principles and a consistent approach to assessing local government reorganisation options against the government criteria.
- **Data collection and analysis:** Data was collected from all 15 councils to inform the development of local government reorganisation scenarios. A high-level analysis, aligned to the government criteria, supported a council leaders' session to refine an initial 12 options down to eight options.
- **Options appraisal:** The eight shortlisted options (see the diagram on the next page) were fully assessed through a detailed data led process, utilising 44 metrics aligned with the government criteria to assess the options' potential. This assessment, supported by comprehensive economic, community, service and financial data, evaluated options for the creation of between two and five unitary councils to replace the existing local government structure. The analysis focused on identifying balanced, resilient and financially sustainable unitary models that would deliver improved outcomes for residents and best meet the government's criteria.

The eight options fully assessed for between two and five unitary councils

Option D

Combining existing unitaries

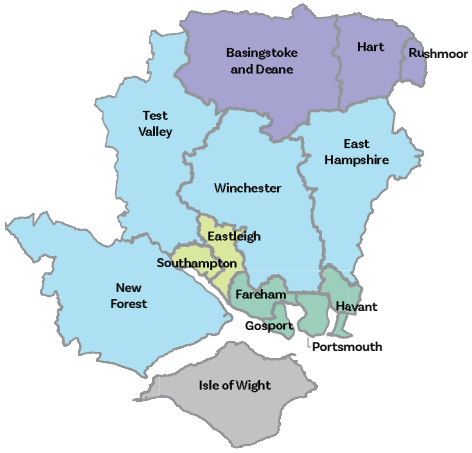
- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport, Southampton, Eastleigh
- Basingstoke and Deane, New Forest, East Hampshire, Test Valley, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester

Option E

Expanded cities, Mid and West, North and East

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport,
- Southampton, Eastleigh
- Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor
- New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester

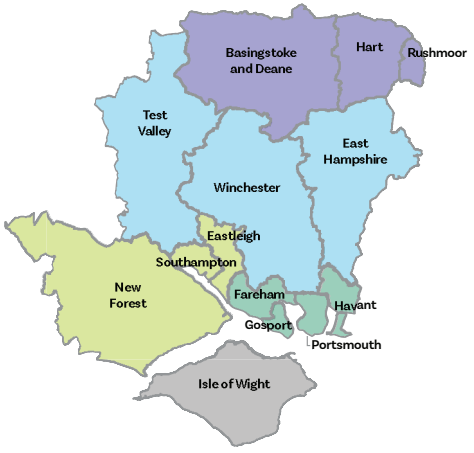
Option H



Expanded cities, Mid and West, North

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport,
- Southampton, Eastleigh
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor
- New Forest, Test Valley, East Hampshire, Winchester

Option I



Expanded cities with New Forest, North and Mid

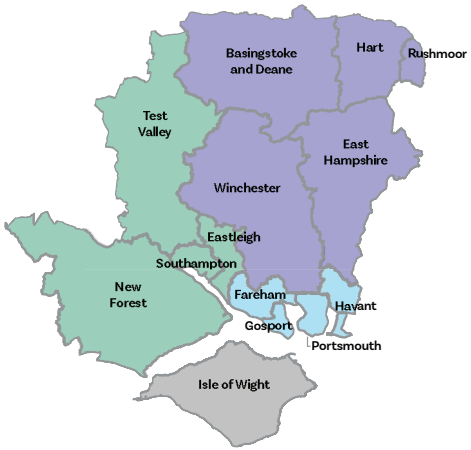
- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport,
- Southampton, Eastleigh, New Forest
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor
- Test Valley, East Hampshire, Winchester

Option J

Expanded cities with East Hampshire, Mid and West, North

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport, East Hampshire
- Southampton, Eastleigh
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor
- New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester

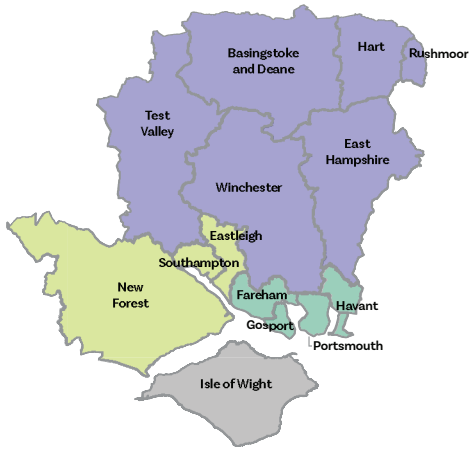
Option K



Expanded cities, Mid and North, West

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester, East Hampshire
- New Forest, Test Valley, Southampton, Eastleigh

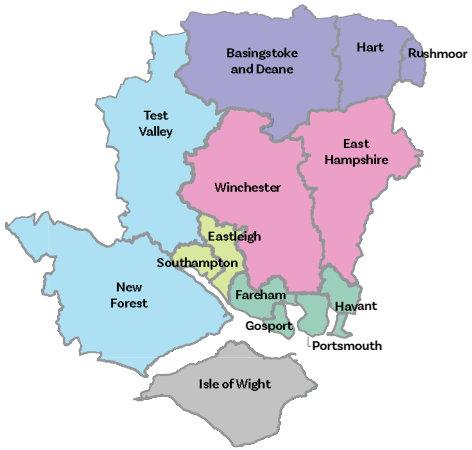
Option L



North unitary, expanded cities including New Forest with Southampton

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport
- Southampton, Eastleigh, New Forest
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor, Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Option M



Expanded cities, Mid, East, West

- Portsmouth, Fareham, Havant, Gosport
- Southampton, Eastleigh
- Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor,
- East Hampshire, Winchester
- New Forest, Test Valley

During the options appraisal, we developed a dashboard for each proposed option assessed against the government criteria. The key design principle for the options appraisal model was to provide a comparative data-led assessment based on overall balance between proposed new unitary authorities.

This joint approach enabled us to take a strategic view, identifying options that performed well for all proposed new unitary authorities, rather than those that benefit one new authority while disadvantaging others. By assessing each option in relation to others, and not in isolation, it enabled a more robust and holistic decision-making process. The outcome of this exercise can be found in Appendix 1.

Appraisal outcome

Our evidence-led approach enabled informed and constructive discussion about the viability of reorganisation options. This discussion focused on identifying a model for the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight region that would be financially balanced, reflect local identities and meet the needs of local residents.

The assessment process indicated that four new unitary councils for mainland Hampshire would create the most balanced and equitable solution, closely aligning with the government criteria and local guiding principles agreed by all 15 existing councils in our interim plan.

Following this appraisal process, Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council immediately withdrew from the joint process to pursue an alternative proposal for new unitary councils. Gosport Borough Council also left the process as they could not support any option in principle.

Portsmouth City Council, as a successful existing city unitary, wrote to the government asking to be excluded from the local government reorganisation process but were advised they had to respond to the statutory invitation despite 82% of respondents in a recent survey supporting the view that Portsmouth should not be part of the reorganisation process. On this basis, Portsmouth City Council is part of the process to ensure that any new arrangements are not 'done' to Portsmouth. A separate letter will be submitted from Portsmouth City Council.

The remaining 12 councils, including Portsmouth City Council, have turned this data-led process into a full proposal for the government to consider. Collectively, we all strongly believe that reorganising into a four new mainland unitary structure (with the Isle of Wight remaining as an independent island unitary authority) best meets the government's criteria.

To take this work forward, the 12 councils continued to work collaboratively (all 15 councils agreed to continue to share data), to develop this full proposal with three similar variations of four new mainland unitaries. Each variation is based on establishing a unitary council centred around the four major urban economies and population centres of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke.

Despite some differing views on elements of the three variations, principally around where the New Forest should be part of in the future new unitary configurations, we have consistently worked collaboratively through an inclusive and equitable approach.

Following discussions, council leaders agreed to include Options H(now called option 1) and I(now called option 2) in the final case for change. Both were among the highest scoring options to meet

the principles agreed by councils in the interim proposal. Option H (now called option 1) was assessed as the strongest comparative choice against the government criteria. Option I (now called option 2) was assessed strongly for key criteria relating to strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment, which would be key to effective local service delivery and good representation within a future combined authority. This demonstrates how the options appraisal was used as the guiding process to determine the best way forward for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, rather than a fixed, final assessment, recognising that place-based factors and resident feedback were also essential in the overall decision-making process.

Finally, it was agreed that a boundary change option (BC) was to be developed to test whether a boundary adjustment could offer additional benefits against options H and I. As a result, an analysis was undertaken to assess three boundary change tiers (BC1, 2 and 3) against the government criteria and options H(now called option 1) and I (now called option 2) which can be found in Appendix 1. BC1 performed favourably and was identified as the core basis for the boundary change option. Following further analysis and targeted resident engagement, it was agreed by council leaders that a single boundary change option (option 3) would be developed and submitted as one of the three variations in this proposal. The details of the boundary changes for option 3 are outlined below.

Boundary changes included as part of option 3. The parish areas listed are all currently within the proposed Mid Hampshire Unitary (within option 1) and are identified to be included in either South West or South East Hampshire in option 3.

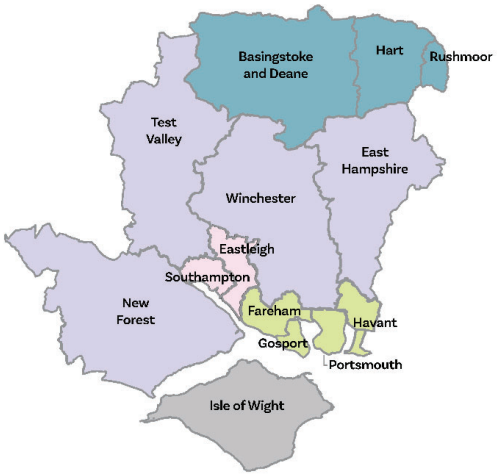
Existing Council	Parishes	Moving to unitary configeration
New Forest	Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley	Southampton/Eastleigh (South West)
Test Valley	Valley Park, Nusling & Rownhams and Chilworth	Southampton/Eastleigh (South West)
Winchester	Newlands	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant (South East)
East Hampshire	Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant (South East)

For the ease of reading throughout the rest of the document, the selected four mainland unitary variations H/I/BC have been renamed as highlighted in the graphic on the next page to option 1 (was option H), option 2 (was option I) and option 3 (was option BC) respectively.

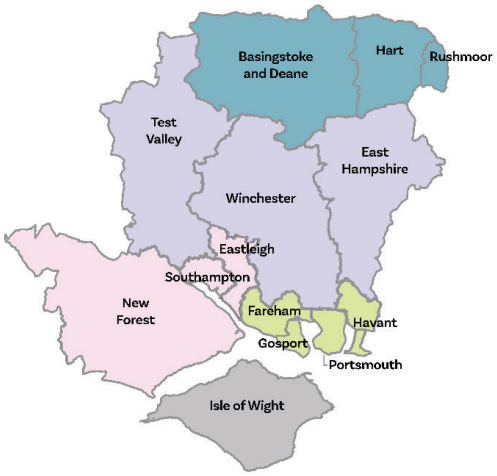
Each variation has the support of at least one council and therefore, should be seen as a separate proposal for government review and consultation in line with our shared view that the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model is the best way forward.

Outline of the three option variations of the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model

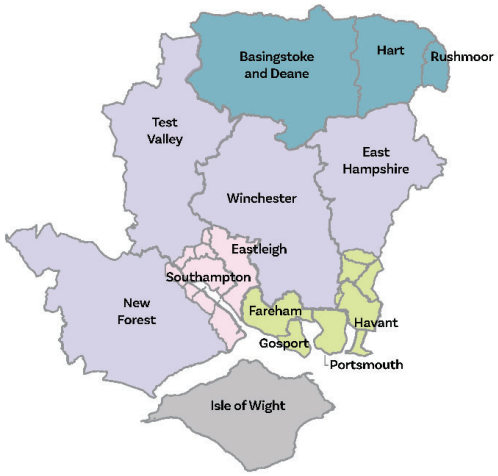
Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**598,823**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester	**417,159**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**484,546**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, Southampton	**423,221**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton	**604,885**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest*, Southampton, Test Valley*	**510,102**
South East Hampshire: Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**	**South East Hampshire:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**	**South East Hampshire:** East Hampshire*, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Winchester*	**582,137**
Isle of Wight	**146,351**	**Isle of Wight**	**146,351**	**Isle of Wight**	**146,351**

East Hampshire*: Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle
New Forest*: Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley
Test Valley*: Valley Park, Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth
Winchester*: Newlands

Council Support - to be added in after formal council decisions

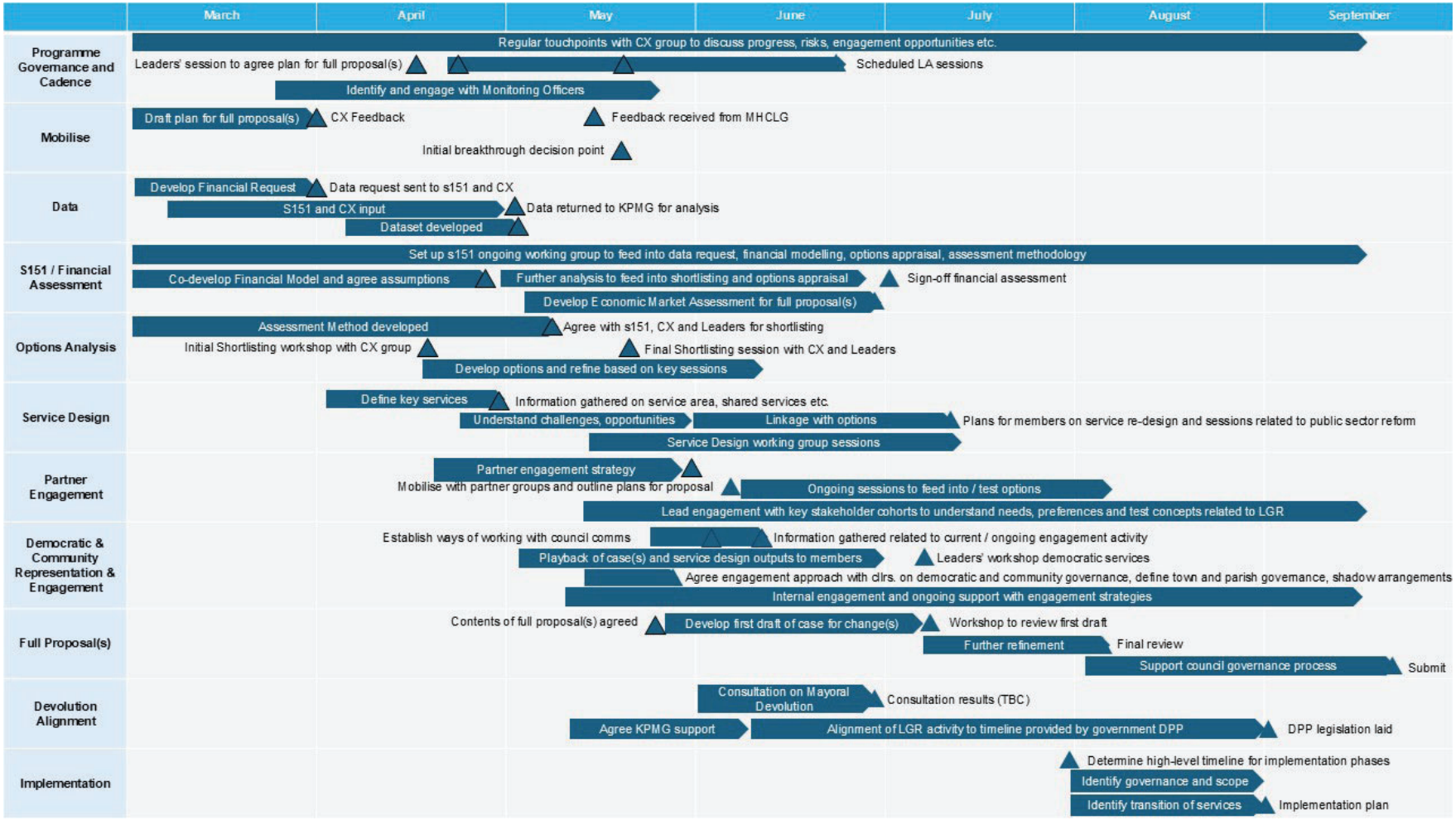
For the purposes of this report, please refer to the following descriptions of the future unitary configurations:

Term	Option
North Hampshire unitary	In Option 1, 2 and 3, the new unitary configuration 1 (U1), includes Basingstoke and Deane, Rushmoor and Hart.
Mid Hampshire unitary	In Option 1, the new unitary configuration 2 (U2), includes East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley and Winchester. In Option 2, the new unitary configuration 2 (U2), includes East Hampshire, Test Valley and Winchester. In Option 3, the configuration is the same as 1, with the movement of the following parishes to other unitaries: • Totton and Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden and Fawley from New Forest • Valley Park, Nursling and Rownhams and Chilworth from Test Valley • Newlands from Winchester • Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle from East Hampshire
South West Hampshire Unitary	In Option 1, the new unitary configuration 3 (U3), includes Southampton and Eastleigh. In Option 2, the new unitary configuration 3 (U3), includes Southampton, Eastleigh and New Forest. In Option 3, the configuration is the same as in option 1, with the addition of the following parishes: • Totton and Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden and Fawley from New Forest • Valley Park, Nursling and Rownhams and Chilworth from Test Valley
South East Hampshire Unitary	In Option 1 and 2, the new unitary configuration 4 (U4), includes Portsmouth, Gosport, Havant, and Fareham. In Option 3, the configuration is the same as 1 and 2, with the addition of the following parishes: • Newlands from Winchester • Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle from East Hampshire

Joint programme of work to develop our proposal

We have been running a comprehensive programme over the previous few months, encapsulating multiple workstreams, to develop this proposal. As highlighted in the figure below, the core workstreams included as part of our joint programme included engagement, data collection and options appraisal, financial sustainability, service design and democratic approach. These are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Overview of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight LGR programme



Engagement

The joint efforts of 12 councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have been instrumental in shaping a forward-looking four new mainland and the Isle of Wight unitary model. Working together we have engaged extensively with stakeholders, to ensure that our proposal is shaped by local insight, shared priorities and robust evidence. This has included:

- **Leaders and Chief Executives:** The 12 council leaders and chief executives have worked collaboratively together to steer the work through regular working sessions to continuously test and agree the best approach for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The regularity through which we have all maintained a coordinated approach, via weekly and fortnightly meetings and workshops, has allowed us to move at pace.
- **Section 151 Officers**: A Section 151 working group has coordinated the collection of financial data and overseen the development of the financial case working with our advisers at KPMG. They have met regularly to test and validate assumptions to ensure our financial case is evidence led and robust.
- **Monitoring Officers:** The 12 monitoring officers have held workshops to assess the best options for future democratic arrangements and governance for our proposal.
- **Directors and Heads of Service:** Through a programme of service design workshops, this group has worked closely with specialist advisers in key areas to develop the opportunities for innovation and transformation that are central to our approach to local government reorganisation.
- **Residents and communities:** Extensive communication and engagement has taken place with communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to explain what local government reorganisation means for them and the options being considered. On a countywide and new unitary level, we have tested support and views on our proposal and what communities would like new unitary councils to look like through a series of public surveys. This approach has ensured our proposal reflects the voices and needs of those most directly affected.
- **Key partner organisations and stakeholders:** Our partners, at both a countywide and new unitary area level, have played a key role in informing and shaping our proposal, through a comprehensive programme of engagement. This has included sessions with MPs, trade unions, higher education and further education, police, fire and health service providers, coastal partners and national park authorities, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils.

Service design

Understanding our existing strengths, alongside the local challenges and the opportunities for transformation presented by local government reorganisation, was integral in the development our proposal.

To guide the development of future service models, the 12 councils agreed to prioritise service areas that are high-cost and high demand, and strategically significant. This included adult social care, children's services, waste, highways and transport, strategic planning, economic development and regeneration, education, housing and homelessness and customer and digital. To explore how transformation could be achieved at this level, focused workshops were held with key representatives from the existing council leads and external advisers which focussed on the following:

- Understanding the current service provision.
- Identifying pain points, good practice and existing collaboration.
- Embracing and learning from good practice and emerging insights from elsewhere.
- Identifying transformation opportunities, shaping the future of services through local government reorganisation.

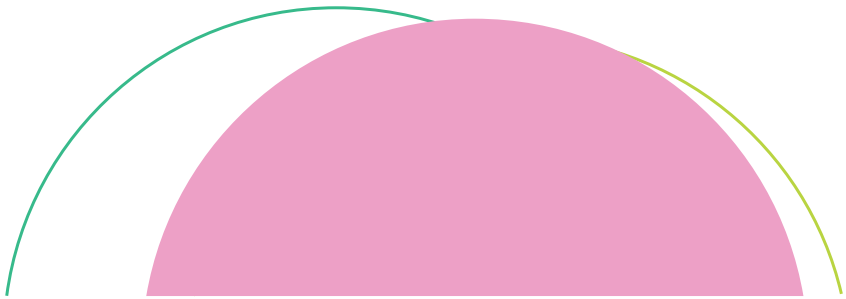
Each workshop has contributed to the development of our proposal. Further information is highlighted throughout our proposal but in more depth within our chapter on criteria three which focuses on high quality sustainable services.

Democratic approach

We have been working collaboratively with the relevant monitoring officers, election teams and democratic service teams to consider the future of democratic services, including indicative councillor numbers, localism and neighbourhood governance arrangements. The focus of this work has been ensuring councillors can effectively represent their residents within the future unitary councils. The key areas of work have included:

- **Councillor ratios:** National research into unitary councillor ratios has been undertaken, alongside considering Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance. We have also reviewed local needs and numbers across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This information was developed further in partnership with council leaders to arrive at the proposed indicative numbers.
- **Localism:** Working collaboratively to carry out research into best practice to understand how neighbourhood committees and governance arrangements are currently structured and the opportunities for delivering these in the future, informed by co-production with local communities and partners.

More information on the outcomes of this work can be found within the chapter on Criteria 6.



Financial sustainability analysis overview

Our financial sustainability analysis is a fundamental part of our proposal. It evaluates the financial implications of local government reorganisation, demonstrating that our proposal will lead to long-term improvements in financial resilience, efficiency, and value for money, meaning every pound will go further. The analysis assessed potential savings, investment required and net benefits to support informed decision-making by local leaders and stakeholders.

The financial sustainability analysis followed a structured methodology, covering four key stages. Detailed information on the full methodology can be found in Section 7 - our financial case.

- **Data collection and validation:** The Section 151 officers of all 15 councils completed standardised data requests, covering revenue budgets, housing revenue accounts, dedicated school grants, council-owned companies, reserves, capital plans and balance sheets.
- **Baseline construction:** A consolidated financial baseline was built, combining existing district, county and unitary budgets into unified figures based on agreed assumptions. Key financial metrics were developed for each proposed new authority for comparison across the considered options.
- **Cost and savings estimation:** We estimated the incremental impact of reorganisation across two scenarios (base case and stretch case informed by learning from other local government reorganisation processes elsewhere).
- **Implementation costs:** Estimated the total one-off costs required to deliver the reorganisation (e.g. staff, programme delivery, IT).
- **Top-down savings:** Estimated the annual high-level savings from efficiencies that can be unlocked through reorganisation (e.g. workforce, governance, systems).
- **Disaggregation costs:** Estimated the annual additional expenditure required from dividing upper tier (i.e. county level and unitary) services into multiple new upper tier authorities in key cost levers (for example adult social care, children's services, housing, place services and corporate/support services).
- **Scenario modelling:** For each unitary option and across the scenarios, we consolidated and phased the option specific costs and savings and calculated the expected payback period, breakeven year and total 10-year net financial benefit.

Financial sustainability outputs and use in the case for change

These modelled outputs have directly informed both the comparative analysis between reorganisation options and the financial case narrative underpinning this proposal. They also support the key metrics presented in the accompanying technical appendices (Appendix 5) to ensure transparency and traceability.

Our proposal for four new mainland unitary councils, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent, has emerged as the strongest model to address growing financial pressures, increasing service demands, and limitations of the current two-tier system. Our proposal offers a streamlined governance model and opportunities to redesign and transform services to achieve significant efficiencies and savings through a place-focused approach. Our analysis quantifies the financial impact

of the preferred reorganisation model, compares options, demonstrates financial viability, and provides confidence in the assumptions and modelling approach.

All three variations of our four new mainland unitary proposal enable councils to pay back within three years for Options 1 and 2 and 3.1 years for Option 3, delivering annual savings of £63.9 million (post transformation) as part of our base case which we believe to be a very prudent approach. However, we are confident in our proposals' ability to deliver genuine transformation and so we have also included a stretch case, which sets out a faster approach to transformation that we will aim for. This would allow all councils to pay back within 2.3 years for Options 1, 2 and 3 and deliver annual savings of £91.8 million post transformation.

2. Our vision for four new mainland unitary councils and the Isle of Wight

Our proposal for four new mainland unitaries alongside the Isle of Wight – anchored around the population centres and urban economies of Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth and Southampton – sets out a bold vision for a modern, efficient and resident-focused local government structure.

Our focus is on delivering services that are outcome-driven and designed around our customer journey, with a key focus on prevention. This will be achieved by reimagining service delivery and adopting cost-effective models. Service delivery will be tailored to local needs with a digital-first approach to empower residents while ensuring everyone has equal access to services. This forward-thinking approach sets out a compelling case for change, balancing innovation with practicality to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

2. Our vision for four new mainland unitary councils and the Isle of Wight

Our vision is driven by our commitment to achieve the best outcomes for our residents and communities. It recognises and protects the distinct geographic areas and economic identities of the four new unitary areas, prioritising the diverse needs of our residents through financially sustainable, place-focused services.

We have refined our vision through engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:

"We will deliver high quality, locally tailored services that focus on prevention and long-term sustainability. By building strong, people-centred communities and harnessing the strengths of our local economies, we will drive inclusive growth and create vibrant, resilient places where everyone can thrive."

The vision is supported by our guiding principles, as outlined in our interim plan, and service design opportunities which emphasise our values and priorities. To deliver on this vision, we will:

- Design services that respond to the **customer journey**, with a focus on prevention and outcomes tailored to local needs. This clear focus would drive **collaboration, simplicity, and efficiency** – minimising duplication, multiple hand-offs, and unnecessary interventions.
- Actively seek opportunities for real **transformation** by exploring how **services can be delivered differently, including with partners, through a total place-based approach**.
- Deliver the most appropriate service delivery models that are **cost effective, meet the diverse needs of our residents** and respond to the **unique challenges** in each of our areas.

- Prioritise a **customer first, digital by design approach**, encouraging self-service for all who can digitally interact with councils.
- Focus on the future state, supported by a defined methodology **and the roadmap required to achieve it**.
- Demonstrate a compelling case for change, underpinned by clear criteria around cost reduction and improved local service delivery, while acknowledging the **varying priorities in different parts of the unitary geographies**.
- Address the **resilience of authorities**, including **staff recruitment** and **smarter use of public assets**, ensuring an accurate picture of where each service is operating to **inform design and identify efficiencies**.
- Build on the existing service strengths while **optimising procurement practices to drive better value and outcomes**.
- Improve the **environmental sustainability** of the region as a key principle, ensuring that service models contribute to a greener and more resilient region.

Our four new mainland and the Isle of Wight unitary council proposal will build upon the strengths of existing district, borough, and unitary city councils, particularly their deep understanding of local communities and their needs. We recognise that the voices of our communities must continue to be heard and shape the delivery of high quality, accessible services. Understanding and being responsive to the local nuances and issues that matter most to our residents is fundamental.

By building new mainland authorities around four distinct geographic areas and communities, we can ensure that local needs are understood and effectively addressed. The four areas proposed for the new mainland unitaries mirror existing patterns of economic and social activity, where existing hubs serve as focal points for their communities. A dedicated unitary council focused on each area enables councils to concentrate their efforts and resources, avoiding the dilution that comes from managing multiple distinct population centres and economic areas.

Anything other than this approach, which best reflects the way people live, work and travel, risks creating overly large and disconnected authorities that fail to reflect how people live and use local services. Combining distinct communities into broader geographies would alienate our communities, reduce responsiveness and limit the ability to tailor services to local need. It would also reduce the potential for targeted economic growth, missing the opportunity to unlock the full potential of each area.

Our residents clearly value local identity and decision-making. In a recent survey conducted across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with over 13,000 respondents, an average of 87% agreed that councils should reflect the identity of local communities, and that decisions about local areas should be made close to the communities themselves. Our proposal is underpinned by these principles, alongside other key factors that matter deeply to our residents, which are outlined in more detail below.

Built around the anchors of the four population centres and economic hubs

Our new mainland unitaries reflect how people live, travel and work. The four major population centres and economies of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke form the anchors for these new unitary councils to ensure they can better serve their distinct communities.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a very diverse area with distinct geographical, economic, cultural, and infrastructural characteristics. We have rejected bringing together communities where there is no strong local connection into much larger unitary councils serving huge geographical areas. This would overlook specific communities' needs and fail to maximise the potential of each area. Such an approach would dilute political representation and community identity, leading to ineffective decision making and poor outcomes for our residents.

Collaborative and inclusive approach

From the outset, all 12 councils have committed to a common purpose to develop the best proposal for our residents. We have worked together as leaders and officers, with partners and communities at both a local and regional level. This has meant that our proposal has been informed by working with those that will help deliver it and shaped by the communities it will impact.

Aligned with community priorities and delivers genuine transformation

As a group of existing unitary, district, borough and city councils, we know our communities. We work with them, deliver services they rely on every day and understand the challenges they face.

Through our proposal, we have an opportunity to shape new unitary councils that reflect our areas, built around the four anchors of our major cities and towns and the unique requirements of the areas through a place-focused approach.

Our approach ensures a balanced and thriving Hampshire and the Isle of Wight at both the unitary and regional level. For instance, our four new mainland unitaries offer balanced population sizes across sensible geographical areas with an average population size of around 500,000. In contrast, an option with just one less council would create some of the largest council populations in the country, similar to Leeds in population, but spread over geographical areas larger than Greater London and Greater Manchester.

Under our proposal, we will build new councils that reflect our areas and that listen, lead and deliver on our vision for the future. With transformation and innovation at its heart, services would be designed for the modern world, making it easier for residents to access service and get a faster, more effective response. Our focus will be on tailoring services to the specific needs of our communities with partners through a total place approach. This will enable us to make the best use of community opportunities, assets and capacity in a way that that larger unitary councils will not be able to.

Our size and close connection to the distinct communities we serve will enable us to quickly deliver innovation, drive transformation and deliver flexible, placed focused services in partnership with others, leading to greater efficiency and cost savings.

3. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - the areas, economies and partnership working

As a region, we are an economic powerhouse and a vital part of the UK economy, generating over £72 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) annually. With thriving sectors such as maritime, manufacturing, aerospace, education and tourism, our region is a key contributor to national growth and innovation.

The creation of four new unitary councils across mainland Hampshire, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent — centred around the population centres and economic hubs of Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton and Portsmouth — is the most effective model to unlock inclusive economic growth and deliver high-quality public services.

Developed through extensive engagement with partners and building on a strong legacy of collaboration and innovation, this proposal reflects a shared ambition to reshape local government in a way that is financially sustainable, resilient to rising demand and responsive to the complex needs of our communities.

3. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - the areas, economies and partnership working

An introduction to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Map of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Data table: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight	
Key economic areas	Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth
Area	4,148 square kilometres
Population (2023)	2,035,872
Population (2028)	2,130,601
Households	858,860

Hampshire is a very large and strategically significant county on England's south coast, with the Isle of Wight situated on the other side of the Solent. It plays a vital role in the UK's economy and trade, hosting major ports in Southampton and Portsmouth as well as convenient access to London.

It is the fifth largest county in England for population – at over 2.1 million people (by 2028) – and ninth for geographical area at 4,148 square kilometres. It provides seamless connectivity to London and international transport hubs and ports – making it a prime location for economic growth.

The sheer scale and diversity of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a key driver for creating new unitary councils using the anchors of the four major population centres and economies of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke.

The Isle of Wight is uniquely placed to serve its own communities as an island unitary and will continue to remain independent under our proposal given its geography and specific needs. We do however recognise the need to ensure the Isle of Wight unitary authority remains sustainable for the long term, which is addressed in this proposal.

Each of the five areas have a unique set of characteristics and associated requirements which cannot be aggregated into even larger 'one-size-fits-all' unitary type solutions over bigger geographies.

Our proposals are best positioned to maintain the unique character and diversity of the areas, protecting residents' sense of place and local identity while driving economic growth. The four new mainland unitaries will be local enough to genuinely understand communities' needs and give them a real say in shaping decisions while being big enough to be financially sustainable for the future with an average population size of 500,000.

Our economies

The region contributes a GVA of £72.6 billion annually to the UK economy, supported by approximately 130,000 registered businesses, including an estimated 12,000 voluntary, community, and social enterprises (VCSEs).

Although unemployment remains below the national average at 3.56%, notable disparities exist between urban and rural communities, including significant pockets of deprivation and under achievement. Our region benefits from thriving sectors such as manufacturing, aerospace and tourism and is anchored by four universities. This diverse and evolving landscape calls for a locally tailored, responsive approach to service delivery and economic development to unlock the area's full potential.

The areas covered by the proposed four new mainland unitaries are now discussed in more detail.

North Hampshire

North Hampshire boasts a dynamic and diverse economy with huge growth potential, strategically positioned along the M3 corridor, connecting Basingstoke, Fleet, Farnborough, and Aldershot. Unlike most of the rest of Hampshire, North Hampshire looks economically to the Thames Valley and Blackwater Valley (West Surrey and Berkshire) and London, benefiting from exceptional rail connectivity to London and Europe's busiest business-only airport, Farnborough Airport.

It is home to key industries such as aerospace, defence, tech, and financial services, hosting globally recognised businesses like QinetiQ, Serco, BMW, Fujitsu, Eli Lilly, AWE and, in

Aldershot, a significant army garrison. The area offers unique opportunities for growth in its key industries, including the development of a defence and aerospace hub, leveraging its established industrial base, housing growth, connected labour market and innovation networks.

With a GVA of over £19.3 billion annually, North Hampshire combines economic vitality with a highly productive workforce, positioning it as a key driver of regional and national prosperity.

The creation of a new unitary council for North Hampshire is supported by the Chamber of Commerce and businesses of all sizes across the area. They fully recognise and support the unique opportunity a North Hampshire unitary council provides to drive and enable further economic growth, generating more high value local jobs with the housing they require and attracting and retaining talent in North Hampshire so that the area realises its immense economic potential.

Mid Hampshire

Mid Hampshire is a strategically positioned high-performing economy, generating £18.2bn in GVA annually. As a connected regional economy, it forms the natural link between the Solent's coastal economy, anchored by the Solent Freeport's New Forest waterside tax sites, and the Midlands' industrial base, offering seamless access to international markets and regional supply chains. The area is underpinned by nationally significant infrastructure. The M3, A34, A303 and M27 form the backbone of freight and business connectivity, while fast, frequent rail services link key towns to London in around an hour - boosting labour mobility, investment confidence, and access to talent.

This is an area built on enterprise and innovation, anchored by nationally recognised higher education institutions and sixth form colleges.

Mid Hampshire is home to global businesses such as IBM, Arqiva, INEOS, Estée Lauder, and Stannah, alongside a strong network of high-growth SMEs in digital, logistics, green technology and advanced manufacturing.

Mid Hampshire's two National Parks are not only custodians of landscapes of national and global importance - they are also active economic drivers. As centres of natural capital, they attract millions of visitors annually, support green innovation, and underpin land-based enterprise across farming, forestry, and environmental services. They also play a critical stewardship role, shaping sustainable land use and climate resilience across the area.

Agriculture and the wider rural economy are tightly interwoven with this landscape - supporting food production, skilled employment, and sustainable land management. SMEs in artisan food, hospitality, and creative industries bring innovation and energy to rural areas and market towns, driving

economic vitality and resilience. The area's economic diversity is unique across the proposed Hampshire unitary authorities, offering a balanced, resilient and adaptable economy at the centre of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region.

The area also plays a nationally strategic role in defence, with British Army Headquarters and Middle Wallop Flying Station (home of the Army Air Corps Headquarters) in Test Valley, the Tri-Service Defence College in Winchester and Marchwood Military Port in the New Forest. These sites underpin national security and logistics, sustain skilled employment, and reinforce long-term government investment across Mid Hampshire.

Mid Hampshire is primed for further growth. Strategic regeneration, levelling up investment, and the sub-regional potential of the Solent Freeport position it to deliver major housing, employment, skills and infrastructure gains that would serve both the wider region and the national economy.

South East Hampshire

South East Hampshire is a natural economic geography that is based around Portsmouth and stretches along the Solent coastline from Hayling Island in the east to the River Hamble in the west. Centre for Cities uses the Primary Urban Area (PUA) as the basis for its definition of cities and the Portsmouth PUA is based on the four existing local authorities of Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth, which have a shared coastal economy.

With an annual GVA for the area of £15.7bn, it is part of the wider Solent economy, with some common sectoral strengths including marine and maritime, advanced manufacturing, space and tourism with national agencies such as ONS based in the area. Historically Portsmouth, home to the Royal Navy, has built an economy with industries and services associated with defence and support to the Royal Navy as opposed to the much larger professional services based in Southampton that developed alongside the commercial port.

As the home of the Royal Navy, defence is still an important part of the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire economy with Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport all having shore establishments. BAE's Warship Support Team is based at Portsmouth Naval Base and there are a number of other defence focused businesses throughout the area including Standard Aero and Autonomous Surface Vehicles. This supports the national Industrial Strategy and Defence Industrial Strategy.

The local economy is part of an internationally significant marine and maritime sector and also has a significant strength in advanced manufacturing and engineering, supporting the aerospace and space sectors, with companies such as Airbus, BAE, Eaton, Lockheed Martin, and Mitsubishi based

in the area. Huhtamaki, in Gosport, and Cytiva, spread across Portsmouth and Havant, are significant employers in other sectors. Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus, which straddles the existing Fareham/Gosport boundary, is a significant and growing employment hub with a large number of advanced manufacturing, marine and maritime and aviation and aerospace businesses located there, alongside a thriving general aviation airport. The cultural and creative sector is also important to the area, providing a strong sense of place, supporting employment opportunities and helping to create a vibrant feel. Major events also take place in Portsmouth, such as Sail GP and Victorious, a festival. The major national tourism attraction of the historic dockyard also pulls visitors into the area from across the country. Local government reorganisation provides an opportunity to ensure the geography of the new unitary reflects the actual economic geography for South East Hampshire while also addressing entrenched problems of inter-generational deprivation and poor health outcomes.

The University of Portsmouth, the Portsmouth University Technical College (UTC) and other further education colleges and providers supply a large number of highly skilled young people to support these advanced manufacturing businesses. However, there are challenges that need to be overcome within the area with a high proportion of school leavers underperforming compared to national averages and pockets of significant deprivation within the area.

Portsmouth International Port (PIP) is complementary to the larger commercial port of Southampton. Portsmouth is the second busiest international ferry port within the UK (behind Dover) with links to France and Spain (alongside routes to the Channel Islands). Portico Shipping, Portico Logistics and Portico Port Services, operating out of Portsmouth International Port, provide a cargo and freight service. PIP is part of the Solent Freeport as is Dunsbury Park in Havant, with Portsmouth City Council as the developer.

The M27, M275 and A3M provide direct and indirect motorway access to London and other parts of the strategic road network with other A roads, such as the A32 or A27 linking to these roads. This supports the development of inward investment opportunities in the region. There are rail links between Fareham, Havant and Portsmouth with further links to London and to other parts of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The future delivery of transport infrastructure, to serve expanding employment areas and facilitate economic growth across the new unitary authority area, would be significantly enhanced by the transport/highway authority functions being brought into the same single unitary authority.

Centre for Cities Data – Local Authorities in Primary Urban Area

Portsmouth

Local authorities in PUA:

Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport, Havant

	Total	Rank	Rate	Rank
population				
Total population, 2023	**532,519**	(13/63)		
Population change, 2013-23			**1.7%**	(60/63)
business & innovation				
GVA (bn), 2022	**£13.5**	(15/63)		
GVA per hour, 2022	**£36.8**	(14/63)		
Business start-ups per 10,000 pop, 2023			**36.2**	(42/63)
Business closures per 10,000 pop, 2023			**35.1**	(48/63)
Business stock per 10,000 pop, 2023			**305.3**	(33/63)
New economy firms per 10,000, 2024			**25.2**	(21/63)
industrial structure				
Manufacturing jobs, 2023	**20,625**		**9.4%**	(19/62)
Private knowledge services jobs, 2023	**20,500**		**9.3%**	(42/62)
Publicly-funded services jobs, 2023	**71,000**		**32.4%**	(26/62)
Other private services jobs, 2023	**90,000**		**41.0%**	(33/62)
Ratio of private to public jobs, 2023			**2.1**	(37/62)
wages				
Avg. weekly workplace earnings, 2024	**£694**	(21/63)		
employment & unemployment				
Employment rate, 2024			**78.2%**	(14/62)
Claimant count, Nov 2024	**12,560**		**3.8%**	(37/63)
skills & education				
High level qualifications, 2023			**40.3%**	(41/63)
No formal qualifications, 2023			**7.2%**	(32/63)
GCSEs in Maths & Eng., grade 9-4, 2024			**56.8%**	(49/55)
living standards				
GDHI per capita, 2022	**£21,135**	(18/63)		
housing				
Housing stock change, 2022-23	**887**		**0.2%**	(62/63)
Average house price, 2024	**£310,989**	(19/63)		
Housing affordability ratio, 2024			**9.2**	(17/63)
environment				
GHG emissions per capita (t), 2022			**3.4**	(54/63)
Days a year of poor air quality, 2023-24	**24**	(4/63)		

Case Study:
Leigh Park Youth Hub

Leigh Park, within the borough of Havant, is one of the most deprived areas in the country, facing significant challenges in education and health. The area has a low skills base, with 28% of the population having no qualifications, and life expectancy is significantly lower than in more affluent areas. Health issues such as obesity, heart disease, and mental health problems are prevalent. Recognising these challenges, Havant secured £500,000 for a research project to address health inequalities and received funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a Youth Hub aimed at supporting 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

The Youth Hub, launched in 2022, has supported 695 young people, with 316 entering paid employment and 353 enrolling in accredited training courses. It operates on three key strands: health and wellbeing, qualifications and experience and motivation and confidence, providing tailored help to support young people into employment. The hub also offers a job matching service to connect businesses with young talent, addressing skills shortages and supporting young people with additional needs.

The hub's innovative model has attracted interest from public and private partnerships, including prime employers like Lockheed Martin. An Economic Impact Assessment revealed significant benefits. Supporting 222 young people into long-term work costs £140,000 annually but yields a financial benefit of £6.1m to individuals and £9.1m to the government over five years. The reduction in crime saves £1.1m and NHS savings amount to £0.8m. The local economy benefits by £2.48m annually, with a total return of £25.7m over five years. The Youth Hub's success lies in its ability to transform lives and raise aspirations among young people facing barriers to education and employment.

South West Hampshire

The economic strength of this area is underpinned by its exceptional connectivity, integrated labour market, and high levels of functional economic integration, particularly south of the M27 corridor. This is an area with national significance. It is home to the UK's leading port for cruise and containers, a thriving Freeport, an international airport, and a dense network of rail and motorway connections that link it seamlessly to London, the Midlands, and other global markets.

Yet Southampton's urban geography, one of the south's primary urban centres, remains constrained by administrative boundaries that do not reflect how its population lives, works and accesses services. This disconnect inhibits effective spatial planning, infrastructure delivery, and public service integration at the scale required to be the engine of growth and unlock the potential of the broader Solent region.

Southampton is at the heart of a cohesive, interconnected economic geography that spans across surrounding areas. The Solent Freeport exemplifies the scale and ambition of this geography, projected to generate 26,000 direct jobs and £2bn GVA within the Solent area, with wider supply chain benefits, including 57,000 jobs and £3.6bn GVA across the UK. Over £1.35bn in private investment is being catalysed across tax sites in Eastleigh's Navigator Quarter and surrounding areas, supporting a globally significant trade and logistics cluster anchored by the Port of Southampton. This investment is enabling the port to double cruise passenger capacity from two million to four million annually by 2030, enhancing its role as a global gateway for trade and tourism.

Housing and infrastructure development are closely aligned with this economic geography. Eastleigh Borough Council's 'infrastructure first' approach ensures that highways, drainage and green spaces are delivered ahead of housing occupation, ensuring new communities are connected to jobs and services before they are built. Notably, 42% of Eastleigh's workforce commutes to Southampton, reflecting deep functional integration. This is a model of strategic, sustainable planning across boundaries, demonstrating the kind of integrated leadership needed to drive inclusive growth.

But governance has not kept pace. Southampton's administrative footprint is misaligned with its functional urban area, diluting accountability and limiting its ability to act at the right scale. This reduces efficiency, fragments public services and stifles the housing and infrastructure delivery required to meet future demand.

Local government reorganisation presents an opportunity to fix this misalignment - to right-size the new unitary's boundaries

to match its real geography and economy. This would:

- Unlock coordinated investment and growth across a wider area of opportunity.
- Enhance democratic accountability and resident voice across interconnected communities who currently don't get a say due to severance caused by administrative boundaries.
- Enable integrated public service reform at the scale needed to prevent crisis and reduce demand.
- Support the UK's shift to a more polycentric model of urban growth, where cities like Southampton drive regional and national prosperity.

Local government reorganisation also presents a unique opportunity to address entrenched deprivation across the wider geography, particularly in areas where poor health, low skills, and intergenerational poverty persist. By aligning governance with lived economic geographies, there is scope for more targeted investment, coordinated service delivery, and integrated prevention strategies that tackle root causes, not just symptoms, of social and economic exclusion.

Aligning governance to reflect the area's real economic and social footprint is not just about efficiency; it is a chance to unlock the full potential of the Solent region, deliver more inclusive growth and ensure that opportunity reaches every community within this vibrant, nationally significant area.

A guide to the current local government structure

Hampshire is currently served by 15 councils across upper and lower-tier authorities, including Hampshire County Council, 11 district and borough councils, as well as the three existing unitary councils of Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

As a result, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has the highest number of local authorities within a single county area (other than Greater London), again emphasizing the size and scale of the place.

Partnership working in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Local authorities and communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight work with key partners to deliver critical services for residents across our distinct geographies. This includes fire and rescue, police, health and care, and National Park authorities.

They have been central to the development of our proposals. We are grateful to all of our key partners and partnerships in helping to inform and refine our proposal. Our partners recognise the significant opportunities our proposal provides for enhanced service integration and transformation and delivering improved outcomes for our communities. For example, recognising the integrated care board landscape is changing, and that Frimley may become part of Hampshire and Solent Integrated Care Board in April 2026, we are working with them to align their changes with our work to ensure the opportunities for joint redesign, innovation and improvement are maximised.

Key partner	Description
NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board	Replaced the NHS Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group in July 2022. As part of the Integrated Care Partnership, it collaborates with Rushmoor Borough Council, other local authorities, the NHS, Healthwatch, and VCSE organisations to improve health and care outcomes for residents.
NHS Hampshire and the Solent Integrated Care Board	Covers the rest of the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, excluding Rushmoor. It works with local authorities via the Hampshire and the Solent Integrated Care Partnership, bringing together health and social care partners to devise strategies that address healthcare, social care and public health needs.
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services (HIWFRS)	Operates under a Combined Fire Authority comprising representatives from Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council. It sets regional strategic priorities, approves budgets and develops risk management plans tailored to a mix of rural, urban, maritime and rural needs.
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary	Overseen by a single Police and Crime Commissioner, the constabulary delivers policing services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
New Forest National Park Authority and South Downs National Park Authority	Work in partnership with councils' other agencies to deliver joined-up planning, conservation, and community services within the park boundary of over 560 km^2 (New Forest National Park) and 1,625 km^2 (South Downs National Park covering East and West Sussex as well) of woodland, heath and coastline across South West and Mid Hampshire.

There are a number of key partnerships across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region that have played a key role in developing our proposal including:

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Leaders Group

The group is made up of all the council leaders and chaired by the leader of Winchester City Council. The group has overseen our process for the assessment of the options for unitary councils, using the government's criteria and locally agreed principles as the foundation, and the supporting work that has led to this proposal.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Public Sector Leaders Board

This group brings together the chief executives of all the councils, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, New Forest and South Downs National Parks, Chief Constable, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Local Government Association (LGA). The group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, has discussed the emerging work on local government reorganisation at each meeting

and helped to shape the process including further engagement that has informed our proposal.

Outside of these organisations and partnerships, there are many other stakeholders we have continued to engage in the development of our proposal such as coastal partners. In addition, at a new unitary configuration level, we have maintained local engagement with our partner groups to inform our proposal, recognising the distinct value they bring to the residents and ecosystems within their respective areas which are set out below.

North Hampshire

The three existing councils in North Hampshire already have a strong track record of working closely together across a range of areas including economic development and planning policy and the delivery of key services such as waste collection, street cleaning and grounds maintenance, licensing, legal and building control services.

Beyond council collaboration, there is a strong track record of wider partnership working in north Hampshire such as the Safer North Hampshire Community Safety Partnership. This is made up of statutory agencies such as local councils, health services, probation, fire and rescue and the police, as well as other co-opted members. It develops and implements strategies aimed at reducing crime, enhancing residents' quality of life, and increasing feeling of safety focused on the specific needs and issues of north Hampshire. Only recently the police identified a rise in youth-related antisocial behaviour, with a specific group displaying signs of gang-like activity which was assessed as a high risk. The partnership worked together at pace to develop a problem-solving approach aimed at reducing community impact and providing tailored support for those coming to the attention of the police and other services. Through coordinated local action and timely intervention, the associated risks and community disruption have been significantly reduced.

North Hampshire showcases how effective collaboration can spark innovative solutions to address local issues. One example of this is Basingstoke's innovative solution to tackling rough sleeping. Historically Basingstoke had high levels of rough sleeping. But with a shared focus to address the root causes, the Basingstoke and Deane Social Inclusion Partnership, bringing together statutory partners and community, voluntary and faith sectors, has delivered pioneering and psychologically informed approaches to support individuals. This has seen the number of rough sleepers fall from 25 in 2015 to now consistently close to zero. This partnership approach has been commended by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and was featured on BBC South as an example for the rest of the country to follow.

In Rushmoor there has been a range of innovative partnerships with the NHS to address health and equalities with a particular

focus on childhood obesity, and with the police and other partners to tackle antisocial behaviour in town centres and associated addiction issues.

Rushmoor and Hart already share a police command arrangement and a joint approach to policing priorities. Within housing, Rushmoor and Hart have a close relationship and in 2018 had a successful joint bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding. This secured resources for rough sleeper support workers who continue to operate across both areas and remain in post today.

Thanks to the well-established culture of partnership working in North Hampshire, our proposal has been shaped collaboratively through a series of workshops involving public sector bodies, businesses, voluntary and community groups, and town and parish councils. These sessions have been invaluable in helping us to develop the detail of our proposal and earned widespread support for the benefits a North Hampshire unitary council will deliver for communities through a focused approach to its unique opportunities and challenges as an enhanced leader of place.

The North Hampshire councils have appointed two professional advisers in adult social care and health and in children's services to support a new North Hampshire unitary in preparation for the transition to delivering these vital services. Both experienced directors in their field, they have been working with local NHS organisations and education providers to co-design the future shape of services – focusing on ensuring a safe and legal handover of statutory responsibilities but also ensuring that the model of care in both services delivers an integrated, innovative and preventative-driven approach which is cost effective and financially sustainable.

Discussions have already begun with the local NHS organisations to design a new model in adult social care and health based on integrated neighbourhood teams, working with local primary care networks (PCNS) to identify meaningful populations within which the local community health care providers could work with social care as part of an integrated approach, building on the work being carried out with Public Health and the integrated care board.

Performance in the NHS system is currently under scrutiny and there is an appetite to transform services with local authority partners which North Hampshire is already engaging with, helped by our advisers having worked closely with system leaders previously.

As part of our work with the other local authorities in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to develop our proposal, the Directors of Adult Social Care and Health in the other unitaries have already begun to identify how they might work together to jointly commission, where appropriate in the market, to collaborate on providing low volume high-cost services, to develop joint recruitment and retention strategies and to support each other to improve services.

We are looking to best practice in other local authorities, including those who have recently gone through local government reorganisation and those where the models would align with the shape and size of North Hampshire. We know we have an ageing population in North Hampshire and higher than average costs of care for our younger adult population, both of which combine to create demand that we need to manage in an innovative and transformational way.

In developing a new model of adult care and health, we recognise the greater benefit a North Hampshire unitary council brings in terms of:

- community development, housing and homelessness services
- a genuine desire to focus on prevention and tackle health inequalities across our area
- the strong relationship with the voluntary sector and the more local democratic accountability across all public service provision
- the use of technology and digital to streamline and connect services, creating opportunities for easier public access and efficiencies in service delivery.

We will maximise these opportunities in North Hampshire, for a new council and with partners, to deliver a smarter, more-connected and community-driven future.

Mid Hampshire

Mid Hampshire has a proven track record of securing and delivering major investment through effective partnerships that unlock local potential and drive long-term impact. From transformative regeneration schemes to pioneering preventative health models, collaboration is embedded in how Mid Hampshire works. Across the area, the culture is defined by cross-sector collaboration, local co-delivery, and strong community engagement. This shared approach puts Mid Hampshire in a unique position to scale up proven models and deliver better outcomes as a new unitary.

Strategic regeneration exemplifies this. In Andover and Romsey, town centre transformation is being co-designed with residents and delivered in collaboration with local businesses, cultural organisations, and design partners, demonstrating that real transformation is not just about capital, including from Levelling Up funding, but about building lasting local coalitions that deliver change. City centre regeneration in Winchester is leveraging significant private capital to support a sustainable future. Meanwhile, the New Forest plays a key role on the Solent Freeport Board, and across a wider waterside partnership, working with Associated British Ports, ExxonMobil, the New Forest National Park, colleges, and the community to deliver the waterside vision and ensure that the benefits of the Freeport deliver outcomes across the wider area.

Mid Hampshire's health partnerships are already delivering nationally relevant preventative neighbourhood models, which align with the 10-year NHS plan. In the New Forest, the Independence Matters and Just Got Home programmes support hospital discharge, adaptations, and independent living, reducing strain on acute services. In Winchester, integrated care with NHS and voluntary partners has improved outcomes for older adults and reduced delayed discharges. In East Hampshire, joint working with dementia organisations and carers' networks supports independent living and reduces hospital admissions. In Test Valley, joined-up working with NHS trusts and charities delivers home care, with the Andover Health Hub being a regionally significant example of best practice in integrated, place-based healthcare.

New Forest's Domestic Abuse Strategy and Winchester's Gold Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation exemplify the strength of Mid Hampshire's multi-agency partnerships. Developed with Stop Domestic Abuse, the Hampton Trust, Hampshire County Council and the New Forest Domestic Abuse Forum, it combines trauma-informed services, early

intervention, and local coordination to deliver national impact.

Mid Hampshire also takes a proactive, place-led approach to community safety. The community safety partnerships work closely with police and fire services to tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce rural crime, and protect vulnerable residents, using early intervention, shared intelligence, and local insight. Across the emerging unitary authority area (with variations across the three options), multi-agency tasking has already delivered targeted results, while strategic coordination enables a joined-up response across the area.

At the heart of Mid Hampshire's delivery model are strong partnerships with community-based organisations, including parish and town councils. These are not optional extras, they are essential delivery partners. Through local resilience forums, ward-level plans, and joint funding mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy, Mid Hampshire empowers communities to shape and deliver what they need. This decentralised model enables faster responses, more trusted services, and tailored solutions, particularly vital in rural areas where local knowledge and self-reliance are key.

Together, Mid Hampshire brings a mature ecosystem of partnerships ready to scale. With collaboration embedded across all four areas, and a skilled population that attracts forward-thinking employers, Mid Hampshire is not starting from scratch, it is building from strength.

Case Study:
World Class Environment

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight there are 38.5% of nationally protected landscapes and all 15 councils recognise our world class environment as a key strength in our interim plan. Local government reorganisation provides an opportunity to lead this agenda in bold new ways across some of the most exceptional landscapes in Europe. From our renowned marine environment focussed around the Solent to the large protected landscape, including two National Parks and two National Landscapes (Cranborne Chase and North Wessex), working with landowners, communities and businesses, we are committed to restoring nature, reducing environmental harm and increasing prosperity through natural capital.

The *case for four mainland unitary councils provides an opportunity in options 1 and 3 for a Mid Hampshire Council that will form a single local authority administration to partner with the two National Parks Authorities that are partly based in Hampshire. The predominantly rural land-based economy forms a home for the great work across Hampshire on conserving and enhancing the purposes for which they were designated.*

Nationally protected landscapes coverage across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

This would build on experiences in delivering nature recovery and biodiversity net gain alongside a continued drive to innovate to provide mitigation to enable strategic growth both within the new council area, and also within more urban areas including across the coastal areas of southern Hampshire. With option 2, work would be undertaken to ensure the same focus from the two unitary councils with National Parks in their area.

Southampton is actively working towards becoming a National Park City, reflecting a strong commitment to protect and enhance its urban natural landscape. Unlike traditional National Parks that are predominantly rural and protected areas, a National Park City recognises the value of biodiversity, green spaces, and nature embedded within an urban environment, emphasising coexistence between people, habitats, and development. This is aiming to position Southampton alongside pioneering cities like London, the world's first National Park City. Achieving National Park City status means fostering a healthier, greener, and more connected city that enhances urban biodiversity and improves residents' quality of life. These efforts complement and create stronger links with the surrounding Hampshire natural landscapes, including the New Forest National Park, reinforcing regional ecological networks and recreational opportunities. Ultimately, Southampton's journey towards a National Park City represents a transformative model where urban and natural environments support each other. It promotes sustainability, climate action, and social inclusion, creating a city that is not only a better place to live but also a key part of the wider network of green spaces in Hampshire and beyond.

Nature Positive Portsmouth has secured £896,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of Nature Towns and Cities partnership. The project will build capacity for nature recovery and climate resilient green infrastructure in Portsmouth addressing health inequalities and creating collaborative strategies and plans which will draw in further investment. Match funding provides a total project budget of £980,000.

As part of our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model, we will build on the leadership model of the New Forest National Park and South Downs National Park Authorities to enable the new councils to deliver their duty to further the purposes of all protected landscapes. The New Forest 'Leaders' Panel' brings together system leaders to drive the implementation of the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan. Building on this framework for collaboration supports the joint work required to deliver our collective goals for climate, nature and the green recovery.

This focus will also support the Mayoral Strategic Authority to deliver its environment and net zero agenda, building on established partnership working across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight such as the Greenprint initiative, Bird Aware Solent and Nutrient Mitigation which are governed through the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), alongside the two existing Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

South East Hampshire

There is already excellent partnership working taking place across South East Hampshire with the four existing councils collaborating on a range of initiatives and schemes. Examples of the existing links include:

- Coastal Partners (see case study on page 52) which brings together the four authorities, alongside Chichester District Council, to protect 246 kilometres of Hampshire and West Sussex coastline.
- Building Control Partnership which was set up as a joint service between Gosport and Fareham around 20 years ago, with Portsmouth joining in 2015. Havant is also actively exploring joining the partnership. It has over 70% of the building control market share, built on strong relationships with regional developers.
- Fareham and Gosport Environmental Health Partnership which provides a joint environmental health service across the two authorities.
- Portsmouth and Gosport shared service arrangements with Portsmouth providing a range of services for Gosport Borough Council including the S151 function, Monitoring Officer function, communications support, property support and strong links with the housing services.
- Portchester Crematorium - a joint committee for the four authorities managing the operation of one of the UK's most active crematoria based in Fareham.
- There has been a range of work across the four authorities to support economic development, including:
  - The Portsmouth Harbour Economic Development Group, bringing together the four authorities, to discuss news, projects, and collaborative opportunities for inward investment monthly.
  - Joint work on the Get Solent Working Strategy recognising the needs across the area.
  - Collaboration between the four authorities and DWP on a redundancy package as we recognise that employers recruit across our borders.
  - Through the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce Portsmouth and District Strategy Group, the four authorities work with skills providers and business leaders to discuss government policy and local initiatives and for a number of years have been running an annual business week, delivering support events across the south east area working with organisations including SBSS and all authorities.
  - Activities and meetings to support the Solent Freeport.
  - Portsmouth advanced manufacturing and engineering cluster (PAMAEC) is a well-established group of employers (all sizes) who work together in south east Hampshire with bi-monthly meetings hosted on employer premises.
  - South East Defence and Security Cluster – monthly and quarterly meetings/events to promote defence contract opportunities for SMEs within the region. All of our local authorities attend and promote the sessions.
  - Multi-agency Solent Enterprise Zone Strategic Board, working jointly to deliver highways, utilities and other infrastructure projects that drive growth within the Enterprise Zone.
- Supporting joint bids for funding, for example the Havant and Gosport partnership with Department for Business and Trade to support a defence contract bid from Lockheed Martin and Standard Aero.

- The four authorities in the south east are part of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) which supports sustainable development across the Solent area. The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified two housing market areas within PfSH, of which one was a Portsmouth housing market area covering the eastern part of PfSH. This has helped to provide a shared understanding of unmet needs within each of the local housing market areas, enabling individual councils to work together across their neighbouring areas to consider how to meet unmet needs.
- Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham and Havant Borough Council are signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant and form the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board (SAFPCB). This partnership approach to delivering the covenant within the Solent region of the wider county of Hampshire is supported through a joint needs assessment and action plan. It aims to raise awareness among serving personnel, reservists, and veterans of the support they can expect from local authorities, provide a broader understanding of the needs of the local veteran population as well as serving personnel during transition to civilian life, and evaluate the impact of these initiatives.
- The Portsmouth and SE Hampshire Partnership (https://the-partnership.co.uk), which is an organisation committed to improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the wider city region.

While the links with Hampshire Constabulary are not currently coterminous, there have been a number of changes over the years to the constabulary operating boundaries, and it would be possible for Hampshire Constabulary to make a further change if it wished to. For health, Portsmouth Health and Care Board includes providers that go across the geography including a hospital catchment for South East Hampshire. While there is also cross Solent partnership work, e.g. through Solent Transport, this does recognise the different transport networks and housing market areas, around the two cities of Southampton and Portsmouth.

The move to the new unitary authority will provide opportunities for enhanced outcomes for local communities. Portsmouth Homes hold council housing stock in Havant, Fareham and Gosport and so for example, Portsmouth City Council is the landlord to council house tenants in their stock based in Havant. This means that the support of the landlord function is from a different authority than the services provided by Havant Borough Council or the social care services provided by Hampshire County Council. This support for tenants / residents would all be provided by the new unitary council.

Case Study:

Coastal Partners - Delivering multiple benefits for coastal communities

Coastal Partners was formed in 2012 and is a partnership of the four Portsmouth & South East Hampshire authorities. Chichester District Council also joined in 2022. Havant Borough Council acts as the host and employing organisation for Coastal Partners. Coastal Partners leads on coastal issues across 246 kilometres of Hampshire and West Sussex's coastline and provides a mechanism for areas to combine expertise, local knowledge and access to cost-effective solutions for managing the risks associated with coastal flooding and erosion.

Coastal Partners helps to protect thousands of homes, businesses, wildlife and infrastructure. The partnership manages flood and erosion risk, plans and designs new coastal defence schemes, inspects and maintains existing defences and works towards a flood resilient future.

Coastal Partners is involved in schemes across the area, including the design and delivery of the hugely significant Southsea Coastal Scheme. This scheme is worth £187 million and will provide 4.5 kilometres of defences that will protect 10,000 homes and 700 businesses.

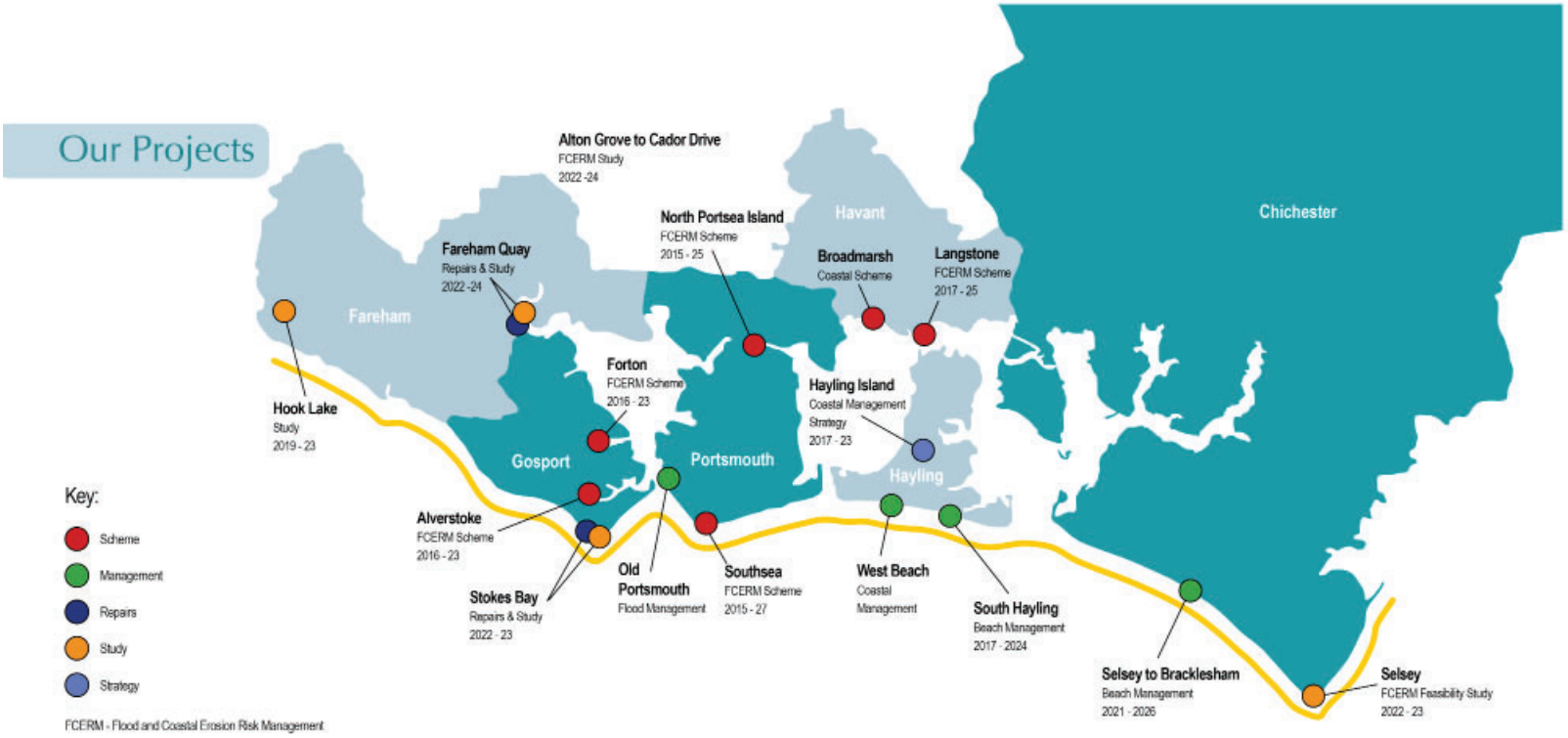
With its knowledge and expertise, it can act as the single voice for the local authorities across the area and help to act as a focal point for different government departments/agencies including HM Treasury, DEFRA and the Environment Agency. This means that it knits together the local bodies and the central bodies which aids decision making and funding bids.

A further example of coastal partnership work delivering efficiencies is the Channel Coastal Observatory (COO), hosted by New Forest District Council (NFDC). It is the lead organisation for the delivery of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme (SE RCMP) and is one of six regional programmes that make up the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes (NNRCMP) and it leads the co-ordination and delivery of the NNRCMP.

Through the delivery of the SE RCMP, the CCO is supported by partner authorities across the south east of England. This programme has been in place since 2002 delivering high quality coastal data to support Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) across the country.

Through the delivery of its FCERM function, New Forest works with partner risk management authorities through the Southern Coastal Group to share and develop research, best practice and resources across the region. Partnering work is also undertaken through the delivery of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) and coastal strategies. This has recently included Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council for the Christchurch Bay Strategy and the ongoing Hurst Spit to Lymington Strategy. The latter is being undertaken with the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council and Natural England. By working together, more is achieved and potential duplication is reduced with resources more efficiently used across the local authorities.

Coverage of projects by Coastal Partners



South West Hampshire

Partnership working in the South West Hampshire area is exceptionally strong and has operated in many contexts, from regional to ultra-local. Given that the Solent area has long been recognised as a natural economic geography – including by governments over many years – much of the partnership work has been on a Solent or South Hampshire footprint. Organisations such as Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), which includes all of the councils in the South Hampshire area, have been a vehicle for successful co-operation for decades.

The PfSH work on successive spatial planning strategies is described further in Section 4 Criteria 1. For the South West Hampshire area, the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified two housing market areas within PfSH, of which one was a Southampton housing market area covering the western part of PfSH. This has helped to provide a shared understanding of unmet needs within each of the local housing market areas, enabling individual councils to work together across their neighbouring areas to consider how to meet unmet needs.

During the life of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, councils in the South West Hampshire area collaborated effectively with the LEP and local colleges to promote growth schemes such as the Solent Careers Hub (West) and the Central and West Hampshire Youth Employment Hub. Similarly, Solent Transport was for many years an effective partnership, co-ordinating transport policy in the South West Hampshire area and working together to secure investment in projects such as the Southampton City Region Transforming Cities Fund, which featured schemes to improve connectivity across three major travel corridors in and out of Southampton from the Waterside, Eastleigh and Bursledon.

Local collaboration on cross-boundary schemes has also been strong, for example on the delivery of new and replacement sports pitch facilities associated with the North Stoneham housing development. Eastleigh Borough Council worked closely with Southampton City Council in engaging with the Football Foundation as pathfinders in their Parklife Football Hubs scheme. As a result, £8.9 million of grant funding was secured from the Football Foundation to create new football hubs at Stoneham Lane Football Complex in Eastleigh (completed 2019) and the Outdoor Sports Centre in Southampton (under construction). The two sites will be overseen by a charitable trust known as the Eastleigh and Southampton Football Trust, which will have representatives from both authorities as trustees.

Councils in the South West Hampshire area have always collaborated positively with the private sector where there are strong local interests to consider. A number of joint committees exist including the Southampton Airport Consultative Committee, the Port of Southampton Consultative Committee and the Solent Freeport Board. The Freeport in particular has a centre of gravity around South West Hampshire, featuring sites on both sides of Southampton Water and at Southampton Airport in Eastleigh, and has received strong and constructive support from all participating councils.

4. How our model meets the government's criteria

The government's criteria for local government reorganisation has been a key pillar in the development of our proposal for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Supported by a strong history of collaboration across the region, our proposal responds to local needs and challenges with a clear focus on transformation and best practice to deliver high-quality public services.

Our approach is financially sustainable and resilient to rising demand to deliver improved outcomes for our communities. By aligning new councils with established population centres, our model protects local identity and strengthens place-based decision making.

4. How our model meets the government's criteria

Criteria one: a proposal should seek to achieve a single tier of local government for the whole area

In identifying the most effective unitary configuration for the region, our approach has prioritised balance – structuring new councils around the anchors of the four principal population centres and economic areas of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Basingstoke.

We have discounted options that create significant disparities between the proposed unitary councils, such as imbalances in tax base, population size, and GVA (gross value added). Our thorough analysis, backed by strong evidence, has been strengthened by place-based insights. This ensures that the impact of the proposed new unitary authorities is analysed from both a local and regional perspective, with a clear focus on outcomes and benefits.

Our four new mainland unitaries will deliver:

1. **Economic leadership:** strong local leadership tailored to the unique opportunities and challenges of each economic area, with bespoke strategies to drive growth.
2. **A focus on place, infrastructure and housing:** shaping and delivering the physical foundations to support sustainable development and growth, aligned with local priorities.
3. **Innovation and economic development:** creating the conditions for an innovative business environment, focused on growth and innovation, leveraging and scaling excellence.
4. **Strong communities with the skills of tomorrow:** investing in people and developing the skills needed in each of the economic areas to maximise their growth potential and support equal living standards and opportunities.
5. **Ensuring financial sustainability and continuous improvement:** using balanced unitaries which build on our distinct areas to reduce operating costs and deliver efficient services tailored to local requirements.

The table below outlines the various quantitative metrics that we used during the options appraisal. This table also highlights the assessment factors aligned to government criteria.

		Option 1				Option 2				Option 3			
Assessment Factor	**Metric**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**
Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£45,957	£32,696	£37,186	£28,005	£45,957	£32,992	£35,606	£28,005	£45,957	£32,267	£37,568	£27,576
	Unemployment Rates	3.29%	2.91%	4.62%	4.12%	3.29%	2.75%	4.21%	4.12%	3.29%	3.11%	4.46%	4.08%
	Gross disposable household income per head	£25,546	£27,687	£19,950	£21,130	£25,546	£28,182	£21,979	£21,130	£25,546	£28,944	£21,406	£21,496
Tax base	Council Tax base	152333	233472	116921	174170	152333	160117	190276	174170	152333	193124	147113	184326
	Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£422.51	£633.33	£421.27	£481.74	£422.51	£438.00	£616.60	£481.74	£422.51	£492.77	£550.77	£492.80
Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	888 km2	2,555 km2	130 km2	196 km2	888 km2	1,803 km2	882 km2	196 km2	888 km2	2,418 km2	215 km2	248 km2
Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	148%	126%	76%	44%	148%	136%	76%	44%	148%	131%	78%	47%
	Council owned dwelling stock per 1000 residents	0.45	18.94	41.10	32.46	0.45	13.42	38.12	32.46	0.45	18.60	38.59	30.95
Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.11	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.09

Key	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Unitary 1 -North Hampshire	Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor	Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor	Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor
Unitary 2 – Mid Hampshire	East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester	East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester
Unitary 3 – South West Hampshire	Eastleigh, Southampton	Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton	Eastleigh, Southampton, plus boundary changes to include parts of New Forest and Test Valley
Unitary 4 – South East Hampshire	Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth, plus boundary changes to include parts of East Hampshire and Winchester

Economy and tax base

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's different economies are home to approximately 130,000 businesses, having experienced a healthy bounce-back after the pandemic dip. This has grown by around 11% over the previous five years to 2024. This is largely due to our key sectoral strengths across our major industries that have experienced notable growth. This includes the defence, digital and technology, agriculture and tourism sectors, amongst others.

We are well positioned to scale our established and emerging industries as we have aligned each of the four proposed new mainland unitaries with a distinct economic area. This structure will enable more focused, locally responsive strategies to drive growth that benefits everyone.

In analysing the options, we focussed on creating a balanced configuration of equally sized new councils, each of which would be able to focus on promoting growth in its own area. Key indicators, such as council tax bases and business rates total rateable value, were included in the metrics when assessing balance between unitaries in potential options, as a fundamental measure of the new authorities' ability to source income.

Our four new mainland unitary proposal enables each distinct unitary, as well as the wider Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area, to harness strong partnerships with the business community and other key partners. This will deliver proactive, place leadership and ensure each area is well position to seize economic opportunities when they arise.

Major industries

The economies across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are both diverse and distinct, capitalising on local skills, infrastructure, and network partnerships. Each economic area contributes unique strengths. Structuring new unitaries around these distinct economies will enable:

- **Focused economies strategies:** with tailored economic visions, streamlined planning and a targeted inward investment and business support approach.
- **Strong identity and influence:** by aligning economic strengths, areas will position distinct growth zones with greater leverage in funding bids.
- **Unlocking business growth:** simplified engagement with local government, coordinated investment, access to a larger and integrated talent pool, and more consistent planning and regulatory arrangements.

For example, Basingstoke in north Hampshire, serves as a key business hub with strong links to London via the M3 corridor. It is home to technology firms, data centres, and logistics operations, supported by a skilled workforce and business parks like Basing View. There is a high demand for IT and engineering skills, with local colleges and training providers offering STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and vocational pathways aligned with employer needs. Its GVA and productivity is amongst one of the highest nationally comparably and the potential for further growth is huge.

Joining Basingstoke and Deane, Rushmoor and Hart as part of a North Hampshire unitary, would allow the area to draw on its shared industry base across technology, aerospace, defence, and financial sectors. The location of the proposed North Hampshire council is seeing increased interest from the film sector with studios in Farnborough alongside the international conference centre which is increasingly attracting national events out of London including the British Motor show and DPRTE, the UK's premier defence procurement and supply chain event. This creates a complementary business ecosystem that supports innovation, supply chains, and skilled employment, facilitated by a mobile workforce across North Hampshire. The economy of the area has a GVA of £19.2 billion, and unlike the rest of Hampshire, points out of Hampshire into Berkshire, Surrey and towards London. Businesses in North Hampshire see the huge potential a new unitary council focused on the area would have as a catalyst for the massive growth potential it has. The existing councils already collaborate on areas such as waste management, street cleaning, and digital infrastructure, laying the groundwork for unified economic and spatial planning, development and investment as part of a new authority.

Winchester serves as a hub for key public administration, education, creative, and tourism industries. Establishing a Mid Hampshire unitary authority would integrate high-tech innovation, sustainable rural enterprise, and cultural-heritage tourism, providing a broader platform for sustainable growth

and business innovation in complementary industries. This expansion would also encompass the thriving market towns across Mid Hampshire, further enhancing regional development and economic opportunities.

Portsmouth's economy is anchored in defence, engineering, maritime, and digital innovation, driving a strong demand for engineering and digital skills, such as cyber security. This demand is supported by educational networks, including the University of Portsmouth. A South East unitary authority would create a robust economic zone, integrating major industries like maritime logistics, defence and security, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, and digital innovation within a unified investment and skills framework. A South East authority will align further and higher education curriculums with local employers, simplify inward investment and export support for Solent firms, unify investment strategies for cross-cutting infrastructure, and enhance connectivity across all sectors.

Southampton, known for its established maritime logistics and life sciences industries, also boasts a growing manufacturing base, particularly in aerospace and pharmaceuticals. The skills required align with maritime, engineering, and bioscience sectors. The University of Southampton and Southampton Solent University support research and development, especially in marine and environmental sciences. Similar to the South East, a South West unitary authority would align further education and university programmes, such as Southampton's National Oceanography Centre and Eastleigh College, and coordinate capital budgets to upgrade port infrastructure (Freeport). It would also accelerate improvements at the M27 junction and provide opportunities to address the wider city's housing needs through the One Horton programme.

Case Study: Building a coastal economy

Southampton Water's coastal location cannot be underplayed. Ideally located on the south coast close to major shipping lanes linking the UK to European and global markets, Southampton is Britain's Gateway to the World. The port is the UK's number one hub for deep sea trade and a critical link in supply chains serving businesses and manufacturers throughout the UK. As a designated Freeport it supports 45,600 jobs and contributes £2.5 billion to the nation's economy. As an example, through sectors such as automotive and with EV supply-chains the Port supports 11,700 jobs in the West Midlands alone. Connectivity and infrastructure are critical through the Port, Southampton Airport, or via the M27 and M3 north and to London, or via direct rail links to the national railway network for both freight and passengers.

Creating a new coastal powerhouse is a major opportunity for our region that would result in a more strategic, unified position for business and infrastructure investment, higher GVA (gross value added), improved labour market outcomes such as employment and wages, productivity and export led growth.

Currently this significant asset base and associated manufacturing and logistics industries cover a clear geographic area spanning three local council areas, including New Forest District Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Southampton City Council.

Case Study: Aerospace and Defence in North Hampshire

The aerospace and defence sector are widely acknowledged as a critical driver of economic growth in Farnborough, across North Hampshire and into neighbouring areas such as Surrey. Work is already underway with regional partners and multi-national businesses to help realise the opportunity of place-led sector growth. The sector assets are local, such as Farnborough Airport, Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre and regional business partners like Farnborough Aerospace Consortium, but their outlook and operations are global. Future growth will come by working collaboratively across the North Hampshire unitary area and with the wider strategic authority so that we align investment, innovation assets, and infrastructure to maximise regional and national impact.

Travel infrastructure

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is strategically positioned along two of England's busiest east-west corridors - the M3/A303 and M27/A27. The A31 from Guildford to Winchester also plays an important role in that economic area. The M3/A34 provides the north/south link across Hampshire. There are five key rail lines: South West Main Line, the West of England Line, the Portsmouth Direct Line, the Alton Line and the Wessex Main Line. The rail networks in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight mirror the four mainland distinct economies, with large rail stations situated in Basingstoke, Southampton Central, Portsmouth and Southsea, Portsmouth Harbour and Winchester.

Southampton Airport has its own rail station and is near the M3/M27 junction. These transport routes connect its urban centres, ports, and airports. The region's two major sea gateways, the Port of Southampton and Portsmouth International Port, handle over £45 billion in trade annually, while Southampton Airport and Farnborough Airport facilitate passenger and business travel.

Basingstoke benefits from the M3, A33, and the Reading–Basingstoke rail line to support its logistics and tech parks, with a borough-wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) approved in March 2023 to extend cycle routes into town and business estates. Journeys to London are 35 minutes from Farnborough Main with Farnborough North and Aldershot providing direct routes to Gatwick.

Winchester is strategically located on the M3 corridor and South Western Main Line.

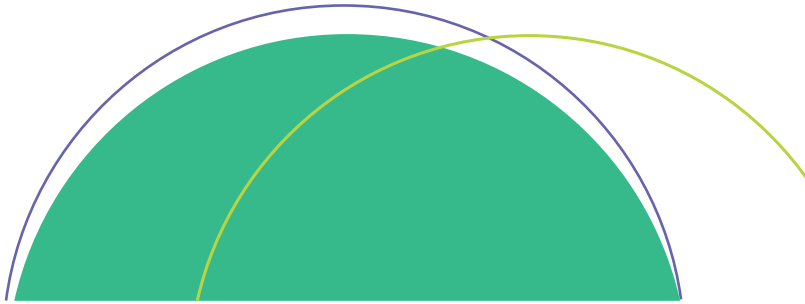
The New Forest is well connected through to the west and north by rail and road, and towards the Isle of Wight via ferry, while also being pivotal along the M27-A31 corridor linking South West Hampshire to Dorset and beyond. There are also several train stations including Brockenhurst and Totton.

Portsmouth benefits from the M275/A3, Portsmouth Direct Line, and multiple ferry links to neighbouring areas (Gosport, Isle of Wight and Hayling) with coastal road and rail upgrades focusing on tunnel refurbishments (Devil's Punchbowl) and city-centre bus prioritisation to support its naval dockyards and visitor economy. The £48 million Bus Service Improvement Plan grant and the work on the South East Hampshire rapid transit system support access across the proposed area.

Southampton, which also has a direct ferry link to the Isle of Wight and has seen transformation of transport services, supported by an £18.5 million Transforming Cities Fund award, is delivering active-travel zones, Park & Ride expansion, and a new travel hub to integrate bus, rail and walking routes.

Transitioning to four new unitaries on the mainland would align travel geographies, working with the new Mayoral Combined Authority as the new Transport Authority, enabling place-based transport planning, investment and better delivery on the ground. This shift would bring holistic benefits to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, including economies of scale in highways maintenance, shared ticketing systems, digital journey-planning platforms, and on-demand community transport. Improved outcomes could also be unlocked:

- **North Hampshire** could pool capital budgets for M3 junction upgrades, coordinate the Reading–Basingstoke and Waterloo–Farnborough timetable integration, and secure better bus franchising across commuter corridors to London and the Thames Valley.
- **Mid Hampshire** could develop a unified strategy for connectivity improvements, especially in Test Valley where there are fewer transport links with just the A303 running through Andover east-to-west and the A34 running south through Winchester. There are opportunities to enhance rural bus networks and implement a cross-district Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan linking villages to Winchester's station and employment hubs, improving access to surrounding areas.
- **South West Hampshire** could deliver a seamless Solent transport network, integrating Southampton West Park and Ride, Airport–City rapid transit, Eastleigh rail upgrades, and ferry-bus integration under one authority to boost port-driven freight and cruise tourism.
- **South East Hampshire** could streamline A3/A27 corridor management, enhance the Portsmouth Direct Line, improve Gosport ferry-bus-cycle interchanges and ferry access to the Isle of Wight, creating a single inward-investment offer for Solent and defence sector connectivity.



Case Study: Transforming Cities Fund

The Transforming Cities Fund has been used to develop Southampton West Park and Ride in partnership with University Hospital Southampton NHS Trust. Southampton City Council has continued to work together cross-boundary with Hampshire County Council on bus partnerships and in developing plans for Southampton Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), which are feeding into an infrastructure pipeline.

One example is creating a Park and Ride to serve Southampton. This has been a long-held transport policy aspiration for Southampton as a means of reducing car-based trips into the City Centre and other busy places such as the hospital. The City Council saw that this could be achieved by having a viable and affordable public transport route with a parking facility close to a major access route into the city.

In designing the service, it was important that the route from the designated park and ride car park to the end destination would need to improve bus priority to make journey times attractive and reliable. The car park at Adanac Park forms part of a wider Health Campus and is located on the boundary between Southampton and Test Valley. The development of the project required joint working between Southampton, Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council. The three authorities worked together through the development management process to ensure that planning permissions timescales and approvals aligned.

Working together in this way allowed a staff only weekday park and ride service to the hospital to be operated by the hospital trust, and from September 2025 Southampton City Council will run a city centre service.

Case Study: Blackwater Valley Transport Advisory Committee

Rushmoor and Hart are part of the Blackwater Valley Transport Advisory Committee which includes districts from Surrey and the two upper tier authorities. As part of the development of their current Local Plans Hart and Rushmoor worked closely on impacts on M3 junction 4A and the transport improvements associated with Hartland Village on the Hart/Rushmoor border. Rushmoor and Hart also engaged in preparation of Hart's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to align with the already adopted Rushmoor LCWIP. Coordination of Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor on M3 junction impacts of higher housing delivery has been identified in discussions between the three authorities as a key area of work moving forward for a new North Hampshire unitary council.

Case Study: Solent Transport

In 2019, over 3.2 million daily trips in the Solent area were managed through key transport points. Solent Transport, a partnership of local transport authorities, aimed to improve transport infrastructure in the region. It included Hampshire County Council (until they left earlier in 2025), Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council, and Southampton City Council. Since 2007, these councils collaborated with other local bodies and transport operators, forming the Transport for South Hampshire, later rebranded to Solent Transport. This unique partnership supported city growth in South Hampshire, driven by strong leadership and collaboration with the transport industry.

Solent Transport acted as a unified voice for transport, securing over £300 million in infrastructure investment, supported by the Solent Sub-Regional Transport Model (SRTM) developed in 2011, and improved partnership working arrangements which Solent Transport enabled. In 2018, Southampton, Portsmouth, Hampshire and Isle of Wight councils were shortlisted for the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund, receiving significant funding to improve transport infrastructure. The parallel Future Transport Zone programme, funded by the Department for Transport, aimed to enhance transport services and innovations in the Solent area, with Solent Transport receiving £28.8 million for a four-year programme which delivered a number of innovations including the award-winning Breeze transport super-app.

Effective partnerships and cross-border collaborations are crucial for the city's success, benefiting businesses, residents, scholars, and tourists. Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight have worked with Hampshire County Council to deliver major transport projects, such as the A3 "Star" Bus Priority corridor and the Transforming Cities Fund Programme, which are part of a broader vision for a South East Hampshire Rapid Transit network. Portsmouth City Council maintains strong links with the Department for Transport, National Highways, Network Rail, and the Train Operating Companies. The city received significant Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, totalling £48 million, which has led to a 41% growth in passengers over the past two years, achieving the best post-COVID performance in the UK. These improvements benefit Portsmouth and the surrounding districts of Havant, Fareham, and Gosport. The success of these initiatives highlights the importance of genuine partnerships and institutional trust, which are essential for future developments across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Travel to work

The area's travel-to-work ecosystem is supported by a network of motorways (M3 and M27), rail corridors, bus networks, ferries, and active-travel routes. In the four major population centres of Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth, and Southampton, commuting patterns often cross the existing small district boundaries, leading to fragmented services. Establishing four new unitary authorities on the mainland based on these four centres would align governance with actual travel patterns, enabling seamless planning, integrated ticketing, and targeted investment to enhance connectivity and economic resilience across the region.

- In the proposed North Hampshire unitary, commuters primarily use the M3 corridor and the Reading–Basingstoke and Waterloo–Farnborough rail lines to travel to Basingstoke and London.
- Mid Hampshire's travel-to-work flows follow the A31/A34 and South Western Main Line into Winchester, supported by rural bus services and active-travel links.
- The proposed South West unitary is defined by the M27 motorway, the Southampton–Eastleigh rail corridor, and ferry-bus connections around the Solent.
- Meanwhile, the South East unitary relies on the M27/A27/A3(M), Portsmouth Direct Line, and ferry-bus interchanges.

By forming four new mainland unitary authorities aligned with travel-to-work zones, that can work with the new Mayoral Combined Authority, several benefits will be achieved through integrated transport planning, targeted infrastructure investment, streamlined services (such as bus networks), and enhanced data-driven decision-making. This includes:

- **Reduced journey times and congestion:** Faster, more frequent and better-coordinated bus and rail services that mirror actual travel to work patterns around the four mainland economic areas, along with targeted road upgrades, will reduce peak-hour delays.
- **Enhanced labour-market access:** Reliable cross-existing district commuting will open up wider job markets, benefiting both employers and workers.
- **Economic resilience:** Streamlined transport governance under the four new unitaries focused on the actual economic areas on the mainland will lower barriers to investment in key employment zones.
- **Environmental gains:** Fewer vehicle miles travelled, increased public-transport ridership, and expanded active-travel infrastructure will help reduce carbon emissions.

Housing and homelessness

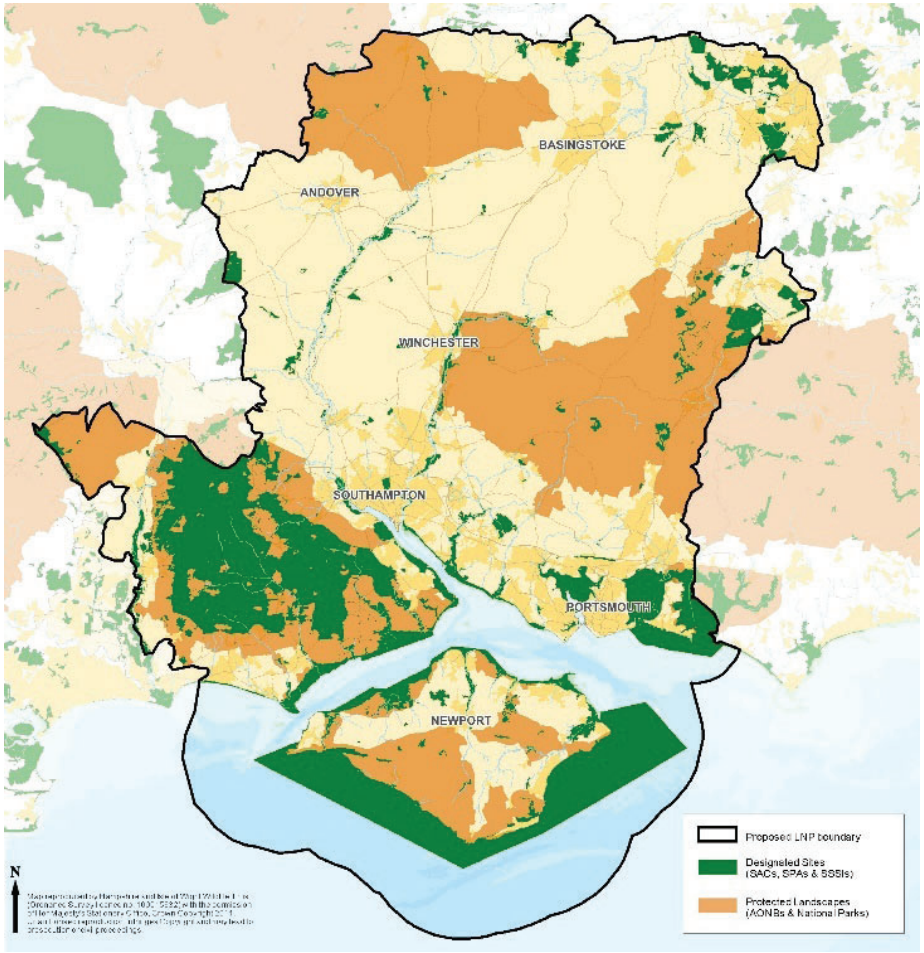
This model is designed to meet the specific needs of these areas. While meeting housing need as defined by the Government's standard methodology is a priority, we face challenges due to multiple constraints including flood risk, multiple nature conservation designations and protected landscapes. These make it harder to find land for development and plan locally. However, with careful planning and local decision-making, we will overcome these challenges and ensure sustainable housing development supported by new infrastructure that aligns with the region's diverse needs and environmental considerations.

More than 22% of Hampshire's area is covered by nature conservation, with planning designations covering 49%. This is especially the case in the New Forest, with approximately 75% of the existing district falling within the New Forest National Park boundary. There are additional challenges experienced at a local level, impacting the ability to meet housing targets. Some areas have either virtually no green or brownfield land left (Portsmouth, Southampton and Gosport), impacted by airport zones or national landscapes (Basingstoke and Deane and Fareham), or face expensive viability hurdles on brownfield and small-site infill (Winchester, East Hampshire and Rushmoor).

Environmental factors also cause constraints across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, particularly in coastal areas. Rural authorities, such as Test Valley and the New Forest, depend on limited windfalls or piecemeal greenfield releases, while affluent areas struggle to build genuinely affordable homes.

These current challenges result in shortfalls against five-year land supplies, protracted section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy negotiations, slim development margins on high-density schemes and pressure from appeals related to greenfield growth. This is shown in the diagram below which demonstrates the extent of the challenge across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

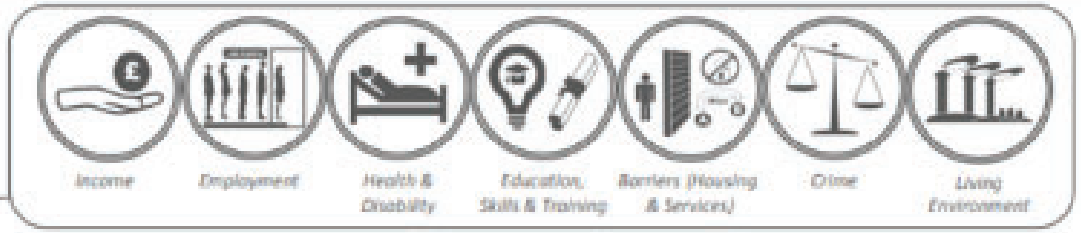
Designated sites and protected landscapes across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight



Focused governance in each of the four new mainland unitary authorities will facilitate more coherent and strategic planning policy, particularly in areas such as housing delivery. This approach supports pooled infrastructure levy receipts, single points of contact for developers and the supply chain, and clearer management of the five-year land supply. Together, these measures would accelerate the delivery of homes better aligned with local needs:

- In a **North Hampshire unitary**, a single local plan and enabling approach will unlock garden community sites and establish consistent developer contribution rates. This would enhance the deliverable land supply and expedite Section 106 and CIL agreements to provide the necessary supporting infrastructure.
- A **Mid Hampshire unitary** will balance the natural capital of the area's unique environment (including, options 1 and 3, two national parks and two national landscapes) with regeneration and intensification of their market towns, rural infill and strategic allocations (including new settlements). By planning the growth of communities strategically across this area, opportunities can be taken to maximise the delivery of new infrastructure to unlock development opportunities to meet a variety of different needs in this rural setting.
- The **South West unitary** will coordinate brownfield intensification, residential releases near airports, and the timing of urban extensions within a single strategy, focusing on the viability of high-density schemes.
- In the **South East unitary**, there will be some opportunities to integrate coastal planning with waterfront regeneration and infill targets. This would align flood-risk mitigation investments with the delivery of new homes.

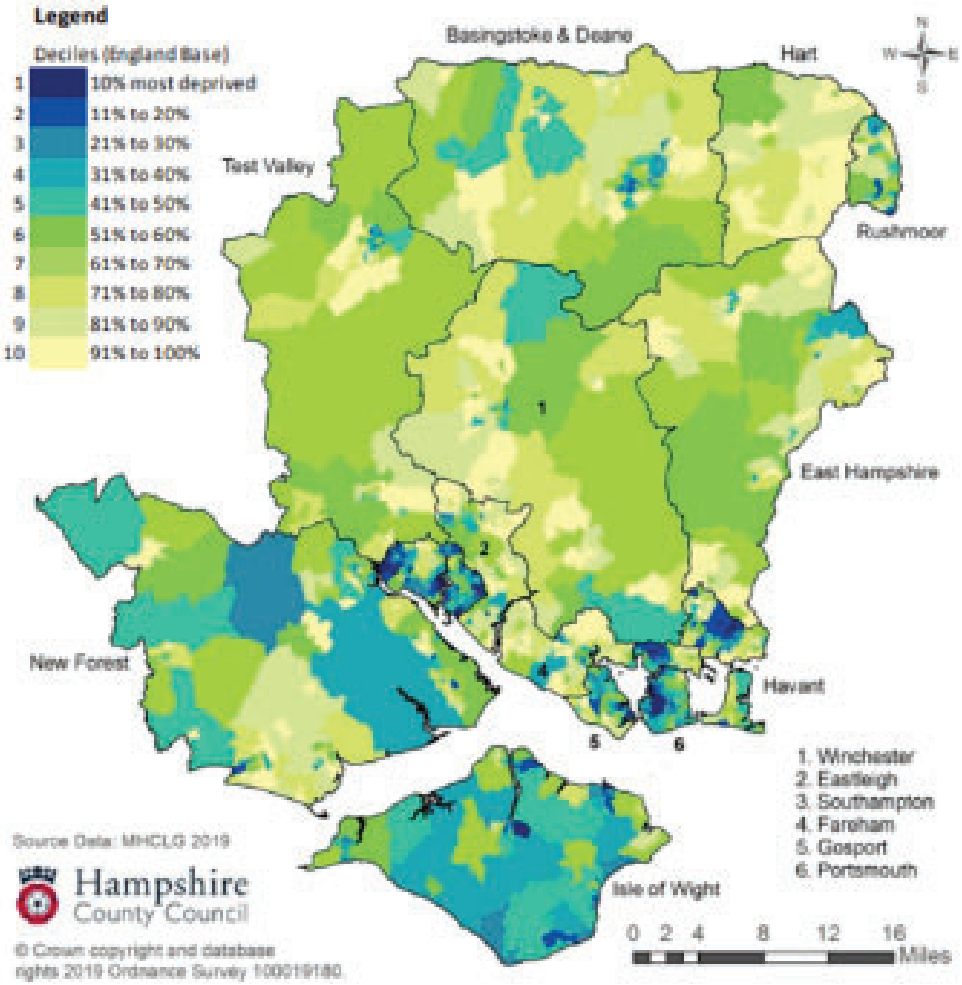
The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation



The Indices of Deprivation is the collective name for a group of 10 indices that all measure different aspects of deprivation, although the most widely used of these is the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The IMD is a combination of the seven indices shown above to give an overall score for the relative level of multiple deprivation experienced in every neighbourhood in England. There are 32,844 areas (lower super output areas) in England. They are ranked with 1 most deprived.

Area (Number of LSOAs in each area are in brackets)	No. of LSOAs in the 10% Most Deprived areas in England (% of LSOA in brackets)	No of LSOAs in the 11%-20% Most Deprived areas in England (% of LSOA in brackets)
Hampshire & Isle of Wight (1,194)	44	81
Hampshire Economic Area (1,105)	41	72
Hampshire County area (832)	7	33
Isle of Wight (89)	3	9
Portsmouth (125)	15	15
Southampton (148)	19	24
Basingstoke and Deane (109)	0	1
East Hampshire (72)	0	0
Eastleigh (77)	0	1
Fareham (73)	0	0
Gosport (53)	1	7
Hart (57)	0	0
Havant (78)	6	17
New Forest (114)	0	3
Rushmoor (58)	0	3
Test Valley (71)	0	1
Winchester (70)	0	0

LSOA are census based population areas of between 1,000 and 3,000 residents.



Our community-aligned and focused new unitaries will be able to plan and deliver at a scale, remaining close to local priorities and requirements. Larger, one-size-fits-all solutions, cannot be applied to housing in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight due to specific place-based factors, and there is a risk posed from a larger unitary model in which remoteness blunts responsiveness and the ability to deliver. Through our four new mainland unitaries, local plans and delivery can effectively address the mix of green-belt, national landscapes, brownfield and flood-risk constraints in each area.

Placing further pressure on already stretched housing resources is the increasing challenge of homelessness across the region. Increasing numbers of people in temporary housing and those experiencing rough sleeping are diverting affordable housing stock into emergency use. This reduces the availability for general allocation and drives up reliance on costly solutions such as bed and breakfast placements and spot-purchased hotels.

The scale and nature of homelessness challenges vary across the region. For example, in deprived areas within Portsmouth, Southampton and Gosport, annual homelessness acceptances range from 200 to 650 households, with year-on-year increases and have risen between 10 and 20% year-on-year. Temporary accommodation figures in these areas range from 150 to 400 households, up 8 to 15% year-on-year.

While urban areas face increased pressure, pockets of deprivation exist throughout Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Deprivation is not the only factor driving homelessness across the area, with health and social care, rural isolation and flood-risk also contributing to local issues.

Our four new mainland unitary councils, aligned to the distinct population centres and economic areas and the way people live their lives within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, would better understand and respond to local housing challenges – enabling more targeted, innovative and sustainable solutions.

Pooling affordable housing contributions and aligning local best practice approaches to homelessness prevention, rough-sleeper outreach and temporary accommodation procurement to local demand and land availability are some of the ways through our proposal will improve outcomes for our communities. A place-based approach at this scale optimises resource pooling but also allows the new unitaries to specialise in local issues while keeping decision-making close to communities.

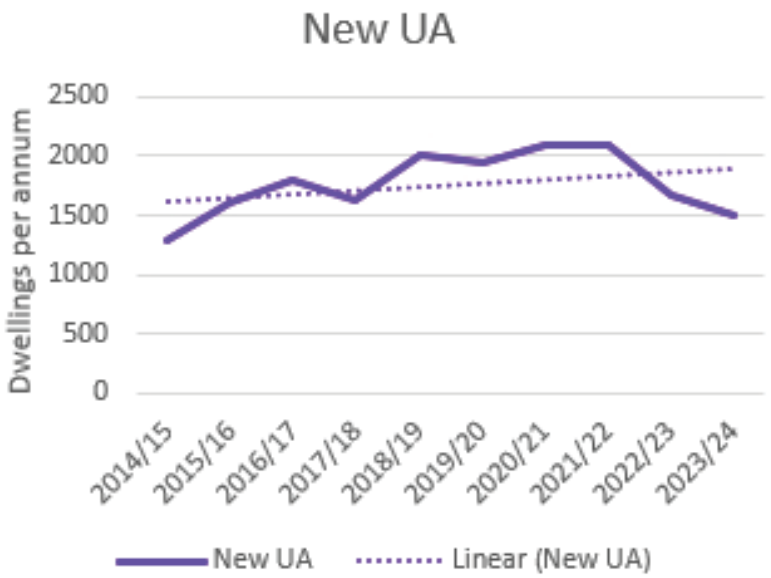
This place focused model of new unitary councils enables more effective prevention, delivering healthy land-supplies and stable housing delivery by tailoring policy to local market conditions and community needs. There is a risk through aggregating on a larger scale into even larger unitary councils that local voices will be diluted, slowing down homelessness responses and housing allocations.

Case Study: Local based housing solutions to build sustainable communities

Ensuring local based housing solutions for residents in sensitive and protected landscapes across the proposed Mid Hampshire unitary area is an established key strength. Balancing a shared commitment for growth with the responsibilities to ensure that the natural environments are protected and enhanced, work is progressing around ambitious growth strategies with a diverse mix of scale and type of sites throughout both urban and rural areas.

Mid Hampshire existing councils are already leaving no stone unturned in rising to the challenges of meeting housing needs, while also being mindful of the unique characteristics of the geography, particularly its internationally recognised chalk streams, national parks, and the flora and fauna throughout. Over the last ten years, Mid Hampshire has enabled a significant uplift in housing delivery across the geography, despite the challenges caused by COVID-19 and the short-term impacts of addressing nutrient neutrality since 2020.

Housing delivery across Mid Hampshire from 2014/15 to 2023/24



Working through the Civic University partnership with the University of Southampton, in-depth research has shaped an approach that identifies and addresses the often-expressed concerns about increased housing in smaller settlements. This enables sensitive development that strengthens local communities and allows generations to remain in the communities they identify with, especially within national parks and national landscapes. This is set alongside a positive approach to exception sites to provide local housing for local people in rural areas.

The shared geography has led to significant collaboration as Mid Hampshire innovates to find solutions to unlock growth. Recent examples include mitigation works to secure nutrient neutrality and recreational disturbance mitigation. Working with partners in the national parks and landscapes, Mid Hampshire recognises the intrinsic value that the national parks and landscapes have for existing and future residents, including their natural capital and green growth opportunities.

In delivering new growth, Mid Hampshire has been successful in delivering infrastructure and associated services that support communities in living sustainably. Mid Hampshire has been working closely with the NHS and other partners to ensure that new community infrastructure (e.g., halls/ surgeries) is designed to be adaptable to changing needs. Opportunities to use developer contributions and other funding available have been maximised to help create and sustain communities. Examples include community developer workers and upgrades to village halls.

A commitment to tackling the climate crisis runs through Mid Hampshire's approach to delivering sustainable communities, with emerging policies seeking to respond to the challenges of delivering net-zero carbon development. Winchester City Council's Local Plan, currently at examination, includes requirements for Passive House build, with emerging local plans promoting LETI energy efficiency and the concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods to ensure sustainability. In addition, groundbreaking work to ensure nutrient neutrality through upgrades to small-scale wastewater treatment works enables development on sites otherwise blocked and protects internationally recognised chalk streams.

The new Mid Hampshire unitary would be the corporate landlord to around 10,000 households and would continue its commitment to affordable/social housing provision through established success in securing Homes England and MHCLG grants and LAHF funding. With a flexible approach to local authority-led building, leading the way in securing s106 sites to boost delivery, a housing company providing housing for key workers, and buying off-plan from developers to ensure the provision of social housing. Strong partnerships exist with the Registered Provider sector, with several large RPs securing affordable housing on key strategic sites. Finally, there is a commitment to carbon reduction to tackle the climate emergency

Case Study: Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH)

The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) has been established for over 20 years and currently represents 11 authorities in South Hampshire, including those represented in the south of Mid Hampshire, South East and South West Hampshire unitary clusters, and covering the main local housing markets in the area. Over this period, in-order to support housing delivery, the PfSH authorities have agreed:

Successive spatial planning strategies

These set out a common strategic approach and agree a distribution of housing and employment development needs, the latest being the Spatial Position Statement, December 2023. They form a key part of the evidence to demonstrate that individual councils are working together to address strategic planning matters. This is a requirement under the statutory 'duty to co-operate', so forms an important part of preparing local plans which can pass their examination and be adopted.

The most recent Spatial Position Statement (December 2023) agreed a distribution for 65,000 homes. It also identified a number of broad areas of search for growth, to be considered further through local plans. Previous versions of PfSH's planning strategies have been instrumental in helping to bring forward new strategic sites, such as at Welborne (north of Fareham), identified for 6,000 new homes in the Fareham local plan.

Common approaches to the delivery of environmental measures

These are measures required under the habitat regulations, to fully mitigate the effects of increased recreational pressures on the Solent (the 'Bird Aware' programme) and nutrients in the Solent.

The schemes have been devised in close partnership with Natural England, and with other affected authorities in the Solent area. They have overcome significant regulatory

barriers by creating a shared and practical approach which can be implemented by developers in-order to protect internationally important environmental designations and enable development. This work has put South Hampshire in a leading position in addressing these issues.

Common Evidence / Sharing of Information

PfSH has prepared successive Strategic Flood Risk Assessments, a Green Infrastructure Strategy and Integrated Water Management Study. It also acts as a single point of contact for strategic dialogue on development issues with transport and other infrastructure providers. This work has secured efficiencies and a better shared understanding of strategic issues.

Overall, these approaches have all facilitated housing delivery by supporting a strategic and 'joined up' approach, providing the evidence to support the progression of local plans and facilitate the delivery of development in accordance with the habitat regulations.

PfSH is determined to ensure that this successful record of joint working is carried forward into the new structures to be created through local government reorganisation.

Rural geographies

Rurality in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight presents a distinct set of pressures that creates and challenges in meeting the needs of many residents. Around 75% of land, home to approximately 300,000 people out of over 2.1 million, is classified as rural, yet communities and local authorities often lack the critical mass and budgets to sustain services on the ground.

Public transport in rural areas is sparse and expensive to operate, resulting in unequal access to services. Broadband and mobile coverage also adds to current inequalities, cutting people off from jobs, education and tele-health. The small-scale nature of settlements means higher per-capita costs to deliver housing, social care and healthcare, further driving inequalities in access and outcomes compared to urban areas. With ageing populations, flood-risk zones and National Park constraints, there are issues when trying to attract investors and developers or retain skilled workers, compounding isolation and service shortfalls.

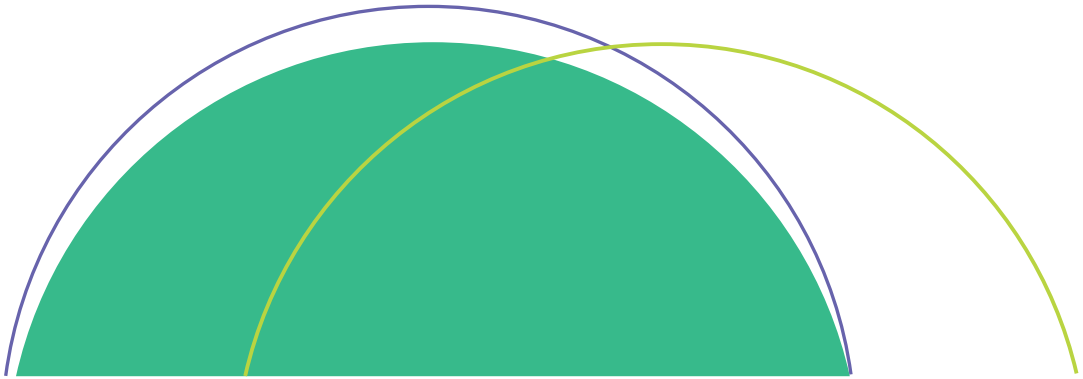
These dynamics contribute to deprivations and inequalities across rural areas: longer emergency service response, delayed hospital and social care access, rising loneliness, fewer affordable housing options and limited employment opportunities beyond agriculture, tourism or care work. Young people in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing local employment opportunities, contributing to outward migration and weakening long-term community resilience.

Our four new mainland unitary councils align boundaries with rural catchments and how people live and work. By creating new unitaries that can focus on their specific priorities and

challenges, each authority would be able to work with the new Mayoral Combined Authority to:

- Pool and prioritise transport budgets to extend rural bus, mini-bus and demand-responsive services, and fund community-led volunteer schemes.
- Coordinate digital infrastructure upgrades to deliver broadband and 5G, using streamlined planning and investment.
- Consolidate housing strategy to inlock small-site rural exception schemes, aligning s106/infrastructure levy receipts and fast-track affordable homes.
- Embed multi-agency rural support hubs combining social care, health outreach and mental wellbeing services, avoiding duplication across the area.

There is a high likelihood that these challenges will get lost if aggregated into a bigger unitary model, creating further division and inequalities. Our four new mainland unitaries would be responsive to local needs, enabling rural focused decision making and working with residents to bring better outcomes that would be lost in a larger scale structure.



Case Study: Test Valley's Approach to Rural Connectivity and Economic Growth

Rural connectivity is a critical factor in ensuring that communities remain sustainable and resilient. Test Valley Borough Council has played an important role in creating the conditions for this to happen through a range of initiatives, based on local need, both with a community and economic focus. In 2011, Test Valley Borough Council engaged the LGA to help develop a model that would empower councillors to become catalysts for change in their communities. The council has developed a 'community councillor or front line' model to provide local communities with the resources and support required to achieve real impact and build community capacity/ resilience. In Test Valley this form of neighbourhood empowerment has seen significant investment in our rural communities through community led action planning. The infrastructure established, such as community hubs, has been much more than bricks and mortar. Communities

have been provided with the means to look after their own and ultimately it is at local level, where the power of prevention will reduce demand for public services. An example of this is the creation of a new Broughton Community Shop which helps combat rural isolation and where accessing services is difficult. This hub provides a combination of village shop, post office, café, and digital workspace to improve connectivity and meet the daily needs of surrounding villages, as well a supporting the local tourist economy.

Our approach has extended to investment in the rural economy including the creation of business support grants, to increase productivity and job creation, and Rural Net Zero Business grants. Community grants have supported facility improvement projects to increase their resilience and sustainability. The Net Zero Pilot Demonstrator is example in increasing resilience in the agricultural sector. This was a national first which trialled new farming techniques on two farms with the joint aims of maintaining crop productivity through reduction in fertiliser use therefore reducing input costs and reduced nitrate impact on river courses.

Council tax and business rates harmonisation opportunities

Our proposed reorganisation into four new mainland unitary councils presents a significant opportunity to address long-standing disparities in council tax levels. The financial modelling underpinning this proposal does not assume council tax harmonisation in its breakeven analysis as any decision to harmonise council tax levels would rest with the new Shadow Authorities. However, there is a potential additional revenue of £128 million over 10 years through harmonisation. This predominantly relates to the uplift in the council tax referendum threshold (or cap) from 3% for a borough/ district council to 5% for a unitary council. This represents a substantial fiscal lever that could be used to support local investment and service transformation.

In parallel, there is also opportunity to strategically manage the total business rates. With a current average of £422 million across the four new unitaries for each option, there is opportunity to create a platform for more consistent and equitable economic planning, enabling each unitary to align business rate strategies with local economic priorities while contributing to a more balanced and resilient regional economy. By aligning governance with distinct economic geographies, our new councils will be better positioned to unlock growth, attract investment, and ensure that business rates income is reinvested in ways that reflect the needs and ambitions of each area.

Together, these opportunities underscore the potential of our proposal not only to streamline governance and improve service delivery tailored to local needs in each area, but also to unlock new fiscal tools that support long-term financial sustainability and local empowerment.

Criteria two: unitary councils that are the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

Like many areas across the country, councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are struggling with rising demand for adult social care and children's services, alongside inflationary pressures that are increasing overall operating costs. The two-tier system in part of the region exacerbates these financial challenges by maintaining parallel teams, separate IT platforms, and duplicated back-office functions, which diverts resources away from frontline services.

Hampshire County Council faces a budget gap of £136 million, rising to £206 million in 2027/28 and £281 million in 2028/29. The county council has acknowledged that even if they were able to balance their budgets in the short term, it would still likely lead to a S114 notice in the future. Without genuine transformation, the county council's budget gap is likely to widen due to unachieved savings and continued growth in demand and spend.

In contrast, Southampton, one of the two existing city unitaries, has transitioned to a self-sufficient position, having previously used £39.3 million in exceptional financial support (EFS) to set a balanced budget. Through transformation initiatives and targeted government funding, Southampton has been able to balance spend without needing new EFS for day-to-day spending in 2025/26. Portsmouth, the other existing city unitary, continue to manage its finances effectively and has never applied for EFS.

We believe this demonstrates that four new place-focused unitaries, serving a population of 400,000 to 600,000 each can achieve even greater efficiencies and improvement through transformation and innovation while remaining close to the communities they serve.

Our proposal outlines that four new authorities on the mainland is the most viable way to establish financially sustainable structures, ensuring that reorganisation and devolution lead to economic growth and high-quality service delivery built for the long-term, linked to the wider public sector reform agenda. Our four new unitaries model will unlock efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks by:

- Empowering each authority to manage its entire budgetary process from start to finish.
- Centralising procurement, including IT, highways maintenance, and social care placements.
- Enhancing transformation teams across each distinct area to achieve savings from service redesign tailored to local needs and secure post-vesting day milestones.
- Unifying capital and revenue planning to ensure major projects are funded from a strategic envelope tailored to local requirements, rather than a broad model that overlooks specific resident, community, and local ecosystem requirements.
- Leveraging local relationships to support key localised service provision and service integration and transformation through a total place based approach, building and scaling capacity across distinct areas.
- Fostering competitiveness within the supplier market

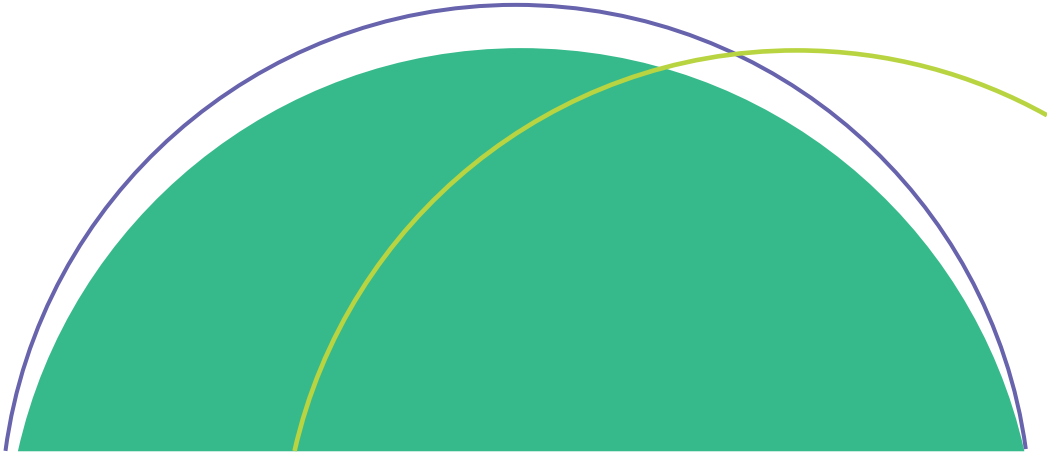
as unitary authority's cover balanced geographical and population areas.

- Enabling growth and increasing financial resilience in major and emerging industries by forming unitary structures that focus on the distinct economic areas and industries, such as defence, maritime, agriculture, and digital. Local interventions can enhance diverse economic areas across rural and urban settings, positively impacting the local economy, skills, and employment and generating significant income.
- Ensuring the best democratic representation for each new unitary with balanced populations connected to distinct communities, reducing current councillor numbers by 40%, and reviewing member allowance schemes across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
- Ensuring the size of the organisation is proportionate to the services that are being delivered by enhancing operational efficiency and delivering more impactful roles.
- Reviewing and rationalising the property portfolios to ensure alignment with each authorities' overall objectives and community needs, optimising the return on assets.
- Enhancing customer contact facilities by ensuring the needs of residents are met through proportionate customer engagement services, including developing self-service digital channels alongside driving operational efficiencies and improving overall customer satisfaction.
- Consolidating the fleet portfolios to realise route efficiencies and minimise environmental impact through sensible geographies for each of the unitaries.

While larger unitary models may offer greater scale, they risk prioritising short-term financial gains at the expense of local responsiveness, diluting local voices and stifling the economic specialisms that underpin local resilience. There is also a risk that simply consolidating Hampshire County Council's existing liabilities under a smaller number of roofs will make the deficit even more unwieldy, rather than addressing underlying issues in focused, place-based structures.

Our new four mainland unitaries strike a balance - being large enough to deliver and benefit from financial efficiencies, such as s106 and infrastructure levy receipts, streamlined procurement, staff rationalisation and reduced duplication, while remaining closely connected to local areas.

By aligning our new unitaries with local economies, we can tailor fiscal strategies to local growth sectors, safeguard reserves against demand-driven shocks in adult social care and maintain the democratic accountability that ensures key public services remain responsive to local needs. The four new mainland unitaries will be genuinely connected to their communities and able to realise the opportunities of focused, place-based prevention, commissioning and transformation in high-cost areas such as adult social care.



Approach

During our options appraisal process, we assessed each option against government criteria 2 to determine whether they were the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. As well as the detailed financial case, which includes a detailed assessment of each option, we first established the viability using a variety of metrics, informed by public sources as well as council s151 officers. This data was then ratified with them to ensure data and analysis was accurate. The purpose of this initial piece of work was to determine options with appropriate balance and ensuring that, for example, one unitary was not left with an unviable position that would be detrimental to their financial sustainability.

Metrics covered a number of assessment factors as part of the options appraisal aligning to government criteria 2, including population, transition costs, financial efficiencies, establishing a firmer financial footing and council debt.

Please see page 54 for more information on the proposed areas for each unitary option.

		Option 1				Option 2				Option 3			
Assessment Factor	**Metric**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**
Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	407,465	598,823	423,221	554,741	407,465	417,159	604,885	554,741	407,465	484,546	510,102	582,137
Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£29,231	£32,268	£27,418	£21,533	£29,231	£23,827	£35,858	£21,533	£29,231	£26,265	£31,348	£23,604
	Gross Staff costs (000s)	£160,045	£233,392	£194,684	£292,728	£160,045	£161,906	£266,170	£292,728	£160,045	£188,304	£229,395	£303,104
	Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£6,097	£7,664	£7,304	£8,974	£6,097	£5,230	£9,737	£8,974	£6,097	£6,209	£8,417	£9,315
	Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£360,555	£534,507	£538,622	£451,513	£360,555	£367,563	£705,565	£451,513	£360,555	£430,206	£618,740	£475,696
	Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	-£283,198	-£413,739	-£233,629	-£348,846	-£283,198	-£284,460	-£362,908	-£348,846	-£283,198	-£333,660	-£295,093	-£367,461
	Social Care Ratio	86.84%	86.84%	87.43%	91.33%	86.84%	86.84%	87.37%	91.33%	86.84%	86.84%	87.40%	91.22%
Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£42,078	£55,047	£16,669	£33,532	£42,078	£38,293	£33,423	£33,532	£42,078	£44,507	£24,761	£36,979
Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	0.41%	2.77%	15.03%	6.14%	0.41%	1.88%	11.74%	6.14%	0.41%	2.66%	13.02%	5.94%

Population

The three variants of our four new mainland unitary model creates balanced populations across each unitary, reflecting each distinct economic area and local identity. The following table outlines the 2023 and forecasted 2028 population sizes for each proposed unitary under options 1, 2 and 3.

Our proposal creates the right sized unitary structures which focus on place-based prevention and public sector reform, tailored to the distinct requirements of our communities. We want the future of critical services and local government to focus on outcomes, quality services and the capacity to deliver through strong local leadership.

		Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
		2023 population	2028 population	2023 population	2028 population	2023 population	2028 population
U1	North	394,648	407,465	394,648	407,465	394,648	407,465
U2	Mid	570,739	598,823	395,341	417,159	460,889	484,546
U3	South West	397,060	423,221	572,458	604,885	480,839	510,102
U4	South East	532,519	554,741	532,519	554,741	558,590	582,137

Summary of financial sustainability

Our proposal enables efficiencies to be gained by our four new mainland unitaries through a comprehensive review of the existing structures and processes to identify opportunities which are achievable. Our four new mainland unitaries will drive efficiencies, capacity and wider public sector reform through sustainable structures linked to distinct identity and requirements.

The following represents a summary of our financial case which is also set out in full in section 7:

- **Implementation and disaggregation costs:** One-off implementation costs by year 3 for Options 1 and 2 are estimated at £128.2 million (base) and £155.5 million (high), with additional annual disaggregation costs of £17.9 million (£19.7 million in High). For Option 3, there are one-off implementation costs of £133.0 million (base) and £160.3 million (high), primarily driven through the additional complexities and costs of disaggregating with boundary changes.
- **Recurring savings:** By year 3, the reorganisation is projected to deliver annual recurring savings (net of existing partnerships) of £81.8 million in the base case and £111.5 million in the high case across options 1, 2 and 3. These savings represent 2.2% and 3.0% respectively of the combined net revenue budget of £3.8 billion.
- **Payback and net benefit:** Payback is achieved within 3.0 years (2.3 years in high), with an annual net financial benefit of £63.9 million (£91.8 million in high) by year 4 for Options 1 and 2. In Option 3, Payback is achieved in 3.1 years in the base case (2.3 years in high) with the same annual net financial benefit as Options 1 and 2.
- **Comparative viability:** All three modelled options (Options 1, 2, and 3) deliver a positive net financial benefit, with Option 3 incurring slightly higher implementation costs due to boundary changes but achieving similar long-term savings.

Hampshire County Council alone is forecasting a gross budget gap of £136 million by 2028/29 and with pressures to rise to £281 million. There is an expectation that the county council will look to reduce this budget gap as much as possible prior to vesting day. The forecasted gross budget gaps of all other councils by 2028/29 totals £42 million. However, if there are any residual budget gaps post vesting day, the recurring savings of £81.8 million (base case) and £111.5 million (high case) projected from our proposal would contribute to closing residual budget gaps across the new unitary authorities. By enabling more efficient, place-based service delivery, the new councils would be better positioned to manage financial pressures and reinvest in post-reorganisation transformation, supporting long-term financial resilience and sustainability.

As of 31 March 2025, there are £1,779 million of total usable reserves. It will be up to each new authority to determine how to use its resources to fund the cost of reorganisation which is likely to be through a mixture of use of reserves and capital receipts to support the transformation.

Case Study: Ten years of environmental health success

Since formalising their Environmental Health Partnership in 2014, Fareham and Gosport Borough Councils have exceeded all expectations of joint working. What began as a trial to save £50,000 each has delivered over £450,000 in its first year alone, thanks to a strategic restructuring later honoured with an iESE Transformation Award, and a further £77,000 between 2014 and 2023.

By pooling staff, assets and expertise, the partnership has driven continuous efficiencies while enhancing service quality, flexibility and customer focus. Today, environmental health teams in both boroughs deliver the same high standards at no additional cost to residents, even as everyday prices rise, demonstrating the power of place-based collaboration to protect public health and the local environment while generating significant value for money.

Case Study: Financial Efficiencies - Coastal Partners

The service has a clear vision to manage coastlines, improve community resilience and enhance the natural environment and has a strong capital programme in excess of £500 million. Through 'growing their own', the service is a high performing multidisciplinary team reducing reliance on consultancy support. They also perform as an intelligent client, commissioning multi-million-pound projects delivering high quality outcomes for our communities with significant measurable efficiencies of over £11 million.

The shared service is now a mature partnership that demonstrates strong governance delivering under a Section 113 Local Government Act agreement placing staff at the disposal of each of the partner councils. The partnership operates an equitable fee structure where those with most need contribute more but also receive the most benefit. Clear business planning and excellent communication is a hallmark of the success of the service which has led to national sector recognition through various awards. By working as 'One Team for One Community' across all borders, the service demonstrates an efficient use of staff, increased confidence that key objectives will be achieved and has a strong track record of project delivery with more staff delivering more projects more efficiently for a lower cost to the partner authorities saving £4million in operational costs since its inception.

Working side-by-side with the five local authorities and in line with their corporate strategies, vast cost savings, shared resources, and knowledge pool benefits are realised. The partnership approach has promoted 'swimming together' rather than in lanes to deliver something greater than the sum of its parts. The agile approach and proven success of the model can be easily scaled to deliver well for the proposed new unitary authorities following local government reorganisation under a new flood, coast and environment service. Through cross-boundary working, the partnership also maximises its presence which leads to greater fund generation opportunities, a wider network and increased influence in the sector. The team is at the forefront of lobbying for a more cohesive sector approach, nationally and locally, that will help councils deliver more realistic outcomes for coastal communities.

In Portsmouth, the Southsea Coastal Scheme is the UK's largest local authority-led Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) scheme. It stretches for 4.5km and will reduce the risk of flooding and erosion to more than 10,000 homes and 700 businesses. The £200m project will revive and rejuvenate the Southsea seafront through significant public realm improvements, all while delivering a world-class flood defence system to protect the city for the next 100 years.

Examples of how these efficiencies are achieved:

- *Realised through single officer attendance at meetings or lead on objectives with mutual benefits to represent the interests of a wider geography or multiple organisations rather than sending separate representatives.*
- *Capacity building where upskilling of colleagues can enable cost effective and focussed working on specialist functions avoiding unnecessary periods of development if working in isolation or avoiding the costs of commissioning through external specialist suppliers.*
- *Having a larger portfolio and pipeline of projects spread over several organisation and geographies provides the confidence to recruit additional staff and invest in their development whilst also creating a trusted and sought after brand which is attractive to the recruitment market ensuring we attract and retain the most capable and dedicated colleagues in the sector.*

The investment in growing our own staff and nurturing the commitment to the service has also created high performing teams seeing increased confidence key objectives will be achieved and a track record for delivery. The experience gained through bidding, securing funds and delivery in a complex sector has helped the service gain national recognition and seek out innovation driving for constant improvement. The expertise and techniques developed also provide wider organisational benefits whether this be through shared use of UAV/Drone technology or Laser Scanning for surveys and images or sharing project management approaches to reporting. Working across more authorities has also helped the service take a more strategic approach to procurement where they have led on Frameworks for Professional Services and Minor Civil Engineering Works being utilised by a number of local authorities. The service is ambitious and sees the opportunity of working across more larger unitary authorities within a combined authority as an opportunity to provide even stronger and resilient services for our communities.

With coastlines, communities, and the environment under increasing pressure from rising seas, more frequent and powerful storms, Coastal Partners is a driving force in practical, experienced, and specialist coastal management. Building on these excellent examples of innovative partnership working, our four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model is well placed to continue driving efficiencies and improving outcomes for their diverse communities, whilst providing value for money.

Criteria three: how unitary councils will prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens - including perspectives on key service design challenges and transformation opportunities

The assumption that two or three even larger 'mega-unitaries' will automatically deliver superior services and financial efficiencies is not supported by current evidence and previous reorganisations that delivered no consistent uplift in service quality. When existing unitaries are divided into balanced populations and compared using Ofsted, CQC, and tenant satisfaction metrics, smaller and mid-sized authorities (similar to our proposed new unitaries) often match or outperform their larger counterparts, challenging the argument for large-scale aggregation.

For instance, adult social care is often cited as a prime example of scale-driven reform. However, analysis shows that while scale can offer benefits in commissioning capital-intensive or specialist services and negotiating digital infrastructure deals, scale alone is not the determining factor in delivering high quality care. True excellence in care and outcomes for residents is driven by deep local connections, understanding people's needs within coherent communities, co-producing preventative services with neighbourhood partners and maintaining local relationships that larger unitary configurations cannot replicate.

Analysis indicates that smaller unitary structures are not more vulnerable to financial instability or service failure. In fact, councils serving smaller populations have achieved twice as many "outstanding" Ofsted inspection outcomes for children's services when compared with larger populations and were equally likely to achieve top CQC ratings for adult social care. Tenant satisfaction data also supports this trend, with smaller structures often delivering better housing outcomes through an intense focus on local housing conditions and community engagement and delivering better experiences without the overheads associated with large, aggregated structures.

This also aligns with evidence from elsewhere about the successes of placed focused approaches such as the Wigan Deal. In Appendix 6 this is set out in more detail in a report by Collaborate for Social Change called '*The bigger you go, the less you know - Why place-based, relational approaches to public services must be core to Local Government Reorganisation*'. This report demonstrates how place-based and neighbourhood approaches can reduce demand and make services more effective through building better relationships with local people and communities, by giving them more power over the decisions that affect them and greater access to the resources local government and other partners hold. Focusing on a scale of place that people identify with, enabling community power, and investing in preventative, relational, and asset-based ways of working, all have the potential to improve outcomes as well as enable better use of resources and sustainable cost reductions for the long term.

Our proposed four new mainland unitaries, built around the way people live their lives, embodies this place-focused governance and neighbourhood delivery. This model would allow councils to capture local intelligence, nurture micro-provider networks, and prioritise prevention over crisis management, consistently outperforming those driven by larger top-down strategic remits. Initiatives such as the

Mockingbird Fostering Model and Regional Care Co-operative demonstrates how hyper-local care provision can be scaled. Success is driven at a local level through democratic proximity, relational delivery, and the flexibility to tailor services to distinct local dynamics. In this proposal, scale is not about viewing residents as numbers but about aligning Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's distinct boundaries with the lived realities of our communities, ensuring services are co-designed locally and delivered responsively to meet local needs. There is no better example to demonstrate the importance of building structures that are tied to the communities which they distinctly represent and serve than the 10-year health plan for England, known as Fit for The Future. It makes it clear that the future of health and social care lies in hyper-local, neighbourhood-centred delivery rather than distant, one-size-fits-all bureaucracies. By championing care as locally as possible, from in-home visits to neighbourhood health centres, and making digital the default front door for appointments, diagnostics and self-care, the plan relies on councils that know their communities inside out, understanding travel-to-work patterns, deprivation hotspots and the voluntary and clinical networks already in place.

Our four new mainland unitaries, built around our four population centres, aligns to real economic and social geographies, and can co-invest in digital infrastructure, target prevention in high-risk wards and co-design services with Integrated Care Board neighbourhood teams, ensuring that early-intervention screening, personal health budgets and wrap-around support hit the right doorsteps at the right time. Fit For The Future shows that scale without proximity doesn't drive better outcomes.

Current service delivery in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight partially operates under a two-tier system where Hampshire County Council is responsible for adult and children's social care, public health, education, highways, transport planning, waste disposal, and strategic services. Meanwhile, 11 district and borough councils manage local housing, planning, environmental health, leisure, and waste collection services. Alongside this Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight function as existing unitary authorities, providing the full spectrum of county and district services under one roof.

Each of the areas within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are unique in terms of geographical landscape and economy, leading to diverse needs across the region. Reorganising around the anchors of distinct population centres and economic areas and place-based requirements is essential and we have begun developing what future service delivery will look like after local government reorganisation. The future structure of local government will be integrated with wider public sector reform and designed equitably to ensure effective service delivery, focusing on prevention and outcomes tailored to local requirements.

Approach

Each reorganisation option was assessed against government criteria 3 in our options appraisal, focussing on the future of high quality and sustainable services for citizens. This would be later complimented through service design workshops to identify challenges and transformation opportunities (see next section). Several metrics were used to perform a comprehensive analysis, to determine whether options were viable based on balance and sustainability for both the unitary and future of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as a whole. Across all three of our variations of our four new mainland unitaries, the difference between unitary figures were minimal (for example, 0.99% versus 1.15% of number of older adults in adult social care % total population when assessing Option 1 and Option 2), demonstrating balance. This can be seen in the table below.

Please see page 54 for more information on the proposed areas for each unitary option

		Option 1				Option 2				Option 3			
Assessment Factor	**Metric**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**	**U1**	**U2**	**U3**	**U4**
Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	6.21%	6.10%	5.31%	5.22%	6.21%	6.38%	5.45%	5.22%	6.21%	6.23%	5.46%	5.19%
	Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.64%	1.10%	0.96%	0.92%	0.64%	1.03%	1.05%	0.92%	0.64%	1.09%	1.01%	0.92%
	Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.51%	0.57%	0.88%	0.88%	0.51%	0.52%	0.83%	0.88%	0.51%	0.55%	0.85%	0.86%
	Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	4.73%	4.84%	4.80%	4.69%	4.73%	4.40%	5.13%	4.69%	4.73%	4.72%	4.95%	4.68%
	Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	10.94%	11.74%	19.78%	19.73%	10.94%	10.65%	18.40%	19.73%	10.94%	11.42%	18.88%	19.32%
	Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	9.16%	9.91%	16.69%	16.61%	9.16%	8.96%	15.55%	16.61%	9.16%	9.64%	15.93%	16.27%
	Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£40,904	£67,563	£33,418	£60,409	£40,904	£43,695	£57,286	£60,409	£40,904	£53,798	£44,233	£63,360
	Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£22,890	£23,984	£15,796	£33,161	£22,890	£17,060	£22,720	£33,161	£22,890	£19,399	£19,399	£34,202
	Homelessness per 1,000 households	0.77	0.70	0.92	2.47	0.77	0.68	0.86	2.47	0.77	0.70	0.89	2.39
	Rough sleeper count	8	13	26	18	8	11	28	18	8	11	27	18
	Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.01
	Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	0.77	2.51	2.32	4.14	0.77	1.70	2.91	4.14	0.77	2.31	2.62	4.01

Service design workshops

Through a comprehensive process, council chief executives identified key service areas to explore as part of our transformation journey, building future services around our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model. This process was guided by our vision for the future in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and key design principles. The areas of focus identified were adult social care, children's services, education, economic growth, strategic planning and regeneration, waste management, customer and digital, highways and transport and housing and homelessness.

These sessions brought together representatives from all 12 councils alongside external advisers, fostering a collaborative environment to generate ideas on opportunities for the transformation journey that our proposal provides. Each workshop then formed its own ongoing 'working group' that continues to collaborate, contributing to implementation planning and broader transformation efforts.

There are significant opportunities to enhance service delivery across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight from both financial and service perspectives. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model provides the strongest platform for achieving this, ensuring that service design is tailored to local communities and prioritising those that might be overlooked in even larger unitary councils. The remainder of this section focuses on our four new mainland unitaries with section 5 setting out the transformation opportunities for the Isle of Wight council which would remain an independent island authority.

Building on the momentum of our design workshops, we will draw on valuable insights, including recommendations from LGA peer reviews, both during the reorganisation process and as we move forward.

Adult social care

The adult social care (ASC) landscape in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is complex, with many challenges experienced from both a national and local level. The population across the place is ageing, with 17.2% of residents aged 70 and over, compared to 13.7% nationally. In the Isle of Wight, this number is significantly higher at 21.5%. Rushmoor is also forecast to see one of the largest increases in over-75s of approximately 33% by 2030. In addition, there are pockets of deprivation, with 8.3% of householders classed as fuel poor in 2022 (approximately 13.5% on the Isle of Wight).

In terms of current service provision, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board oversees strategic planning and resource allocation for health and care services. Frimley Integrated Care Board currently delivers services in part of North Hampshire. With the ICB boundary review comes the opportunity to align the ICB with the combined authority boundary.

Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight deliver adult social care as part of their existing responsibilities, with place-based partnerships in place across the existing unitary authorities to bring integrated teams together to understand the needs of the population, agree plans to meet those needs, develop strong partnerships and implement solutions.

The existing Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton Safeguarding Adults Boards work together to develop policies and guidance for protecting vulnerable adults. Spend on adult social care as a percentage of total council spend is approximately 35%, with several factors contributing to a large cost-base, including transport, residential and home care, specialist support for complex needs, hospital discharge support and temporary accommodation for vulnerable adults.

Ahead of CQC inspections, Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council each highlighted strengths and areas for improvement. Hampshire pointed to strategic planning, integrated care, safeguarding, and digital innovation as key strengths, while noting workforce challenges, financial pressures, and delays in hospital discharge as areas needing focus. Portsmouth identified strengths in person-centred care, digital tools, carer support and integration, but highlighted issues with service transitions, direct payments, and waiting lists for improvement.

Key challenges

Adult social care faces mounting pressures from rising costs, market fragility, and rural service delivery challenges, worsened by an ageing population and high demand for complex care, especially learning disabilities and mental health support. Currently, fragmented commissioning and poor alignment between Hampshire County Council and local district services hinder integrated care, with gaps emerging around transitions, homelessness support, and community health. Workforce instability and leadership turnover adding strain, while the existing extra care housing model is increasingly unfit for purpose, contributing to discharge delays and inadequate service access in deprived communities.

Existing collaboration and good practice

Health and social care integration focuses on aligning primary care, community services, and adult social care to improve service delivery. Initiatives such as Healthworks support independent living and strategies for dementia care and workforce planning. Collaborative partnerships, particularly with Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and local stakeholders, enhance service delivery through joint efforts like the Andover Vision and Health Hub. Housing and community support are reinforced through multi-agency forums and co-located roles that address mental health and social challenges, supported by initiatives like Hampshire Home Choice. Public health priorities are shaped on prevention models and setting local health priorities with Integrated Care Boards.

Safeguarding and safety are addressed through multi-agency partnerships and networks, aligning with Safeguarding Adults Board priorities. Community resilience is built through networks and co-location initiatives to improve service delivery.

Good practice includes integrated health and social care efforts to reduce inpatient admissions and support housing pathways, partnerships for homelessness prevention, and community-based support through funding for disability charities and citizen advice.

Future plans

A transformative service delivery model for adult social care would be best achieved through our four new mainland unitaries. Our proposal emphasises the importance of being close to residents and distinct communities, ensuring that services are tailored to meet local needs effectively which is crucial to adult social care and health:

- **This model enables budgetary savings, including the alternative use of Hampshire County Council assets**, such as libraries, community hubs, and disused clinics, which could be reinvested directly into prevention programmes like homelessness outreach and reablement focused on the specific needs of each of the four areas. This is an approach already followed by Portsmouth City Council.
- **Data becomes a guiding tool, with local analytics teams embedded within each unitary** to monitor care quality and demand in real time. This allows for the identification of hospital discharges, rural transport issues, and targeted learning-disability placements. Open-book partnerships with local providers ensure transparency on costs and outcomes, supporting self-funders with tailored options and generating new income streams that enhance overall service quality.
- **Long-term resource efficiency is achieved through a place-based, multi-disciplinary approach focused on the specific needs of the area.** NHS colleagues, adult social care and children's services, housing officers, education leads, and voluntary-sector partners developing tailored local solutions at the neighbourhood level. Creative commissioning with local staff and volunteer networks creating delivery models that build community resilience, avoiding costly statutory interventions. This approach previously worked effectively in Portsmouth through the previous Clinical Commissioning Group model and the new unitaries can enable this to be better replicated within the ICB model.
- Our four new mainland unitaries unlocks **better use of shared assets** by maintaining local stewardship, community solutions, and agile collaboration, enabling more effective and community-focused management. Over the implementation window, each authority would map its critical infrastructure, such as Lymington Hospital, Andover Hills Hub, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and supported-living blocks, New Forest's mobile clinics, and Fareham's homelessness shelters, into an integrated prevention network aligned with the NHS's 10-year plan.
- This approach **embeds shared risk management, with councils underwriting care needs and co-financing capital projects.** The four new mainland unitaries would work collaboratively with partners under a leadership culture that emphasises cross-organisational learning and rapid innovation through a total place approach. This model ensures that services are not only efficient and effective but also deeply rooted in the communities they serve, fostering resilience and empowerment, making it a superior choice over a larger, mega-unitary model.

Our four new mainland unitaries would deliver adult social care services that are efficient, responsive and deeply rooted in place which provides the best opportunities for cost-effective, high quality services. It balances scale with proximity, harnesses data and partnership power, and prioritises a prevention-first culture tailored to local needs. The alignment of our proposal with the NHS 10-year plan is

strong, complementing and prioritising neighbourhood health services, moving to digital channels, prevention, co-production of care plans and stronger partnership working between local authorities, the ICB and the voluntary sector. By staying close to our residents and their distinct communities, we build a stronger, fairer, more sustainable future for adult social care and better outcomes for our communities.

Case Study: Portsmouth Provider Partnership (P3)

P3 is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance the coordination of health and care services in Portsmouth. It brings together a diverse range of organisations including Brunel Primary Care Network, Healthwatch Portsmouth, Island City Primary Care Network, HIVE Portsmouth, NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Portsdown Primary Care Network, Portsmouth City Council, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust, Portsmouth North Primary Care Network, Portsmouth South Coast Primary Care Network, Solent NHS Trust, and the South Coast Alliance. The partnership aims to support the wellbeing, care, and health needs of the city's residents through effective collaboration and innovation.

Before P3 was established, Portsmouth faced significant challenges, primarily the need for better coordination of health and care services to support the wellbeing and health needs of Portsmouth's residents. Additionally, there was an ambition to move toward place-based commissioning, which required a more integrated approach to service delivery. To address these challenges, P3 focused on sharing experiences, collaborating,

and innovating for the benefit of the communities and neighbourhoods it serves, sponsoring projects aimed at improving services for residents and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation.

The partnership has achieved several notable improvements, including the development of a Health Inclusion Service at Brunel Primary Care Network to deliver primary care health interventions to the homeless population, the establishment of a Weight Management Hub to provide psychological support for patients undergoing weight management treatment, and the testing of a Breathlessness Diagnostic Hub in partnership with the Targeted Lung Health Check programme. This hub supports two primary care networks with spirometry testing and reduces pressure on primary care. Additionally, P3 has implemented 10 health kiosks in GP practices, allowing patients to ask health questions, get their blood pressure and other vital signs taken, request oral contraception, NHS health checks, diabetes appointments, and more. The partnership has also developed an 18-month Physical Activity Improved Lifestyles (PAIL) project to improve access to and support sustained engagement in exercise and physical activity for individuals living with mental health issues. The partnership is currently working on community help desks in two areas of the city (following research about digital exclusion for some residents) and community connection for residents who use substances to support their recovery journey. In addition, there is an ongoing bid to work on implementation of a neighbourhood health and care model as part of the 10-year health plan.

In our four new mainland unitary model, there is opportunity to capitalise on the success of P3 by sharing its method and model of working. This approach would enable more effective decision-making around scarce resources, informed by local resident-led research in distinct communities. By growing place-based relationships and ambition, we can gain delegation of resources for commissioning from ICB/LA, rooted in the communities served. This ensures that work makes a difference and can be tailored to utilise local assets, resources, skills, and meet local needs effectively.

Children and young people

Delivering children's services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight presents significant challenges. Despite Hampshire County Council receiving 'outstanding' ratings from Ofsted, there is a developing, complex and fragmented landscape that is exerting increasing pressure on both finances and outcomes both short and long term. Hampshire's population of those aged 15 and under accounts for 17.8% of the total population, compared to 18.5% nationally. The percentage of residents in the Isle of Wight aged between 10 and15 years old has decreased from 7.0% in 2011 to 6.0% in 2021, while those aged four years and under dropped from 4.6% to 4.0%. More broadly, the 0 to 19 population in Hampshire is approximately 22%, and the 0 to 25 population is around 27%. This highlights the need to build strong pathways and transition services for young people with SEND into adult support services, which would be a focus of our new unitary authorities.

Winchester and parts of East Hampshire has seen the steepest decline in younger cohorts, while Basingstoke and Deane and Fareham have shown the largest increase in numbers of children (partly driven by new residential development). There is a differential rate of children living in poverty across Hampshire, concentrated around the cities of Southampton (33.3%) and Portsmouth (23.9%) and approximately 30% on the Isle of Wight, this compares to a national rate of 31%.

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, children's services are delivered through a large network of health and social care initiatives. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB provides essential health-related services, including mental health support, school nursing, and specialist care. In part of North Hampshire, Frimley Health and Care ICB extends its services, while Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight offer a range of support, such as early help, respite care, and services for looked-after children, fostering, youth support, and safeguarding. The Children's Community Nursing Service in Southampton and Portsmouth offers specialist paediatric nursing care for children with complex health needs, supporting families in their homes.

The Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) Safeguarding Children Procedures provide a multi-agency framework to maintain consistent safeguarding practices across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton.

Children's services accounts for a large percentage of council budgets (e.g. 34.2% of total Hampshire County council budget). This is largely driven by increasing costs and demand pressures, specifically increased demand for safeguarding, child protection, looked-after children, SEND support services, and high costs related to residential care, recruiting and retaining social workers with rising salaries and agency staff expenses.

There are number of key themes from Ofsted children services (ILACS) inspections. Hampshire County Council is noted for its strong safeguarding and social work practices, innovative family help model, stable care for children, and leadership-driven continuous improvement. Portsmouth excels in outstanding safeguarding and early help services, strong multi-agency collaboration, stable foster care placements, and committed leadership. Southampton is praised for its strong leadership, effective safeguarding, high-quality support for children in care, and holistic services for children with disabilities. The Isle of Wight demonstrates effective safeguarding, stable leadership, high-quality care for children, and a commitment

to early intervention, following its transition to an independent children's services model.

In terms of areas for improvement, Hampshire County Council requires improvement in the quality and uptake of return interviews for missing children and improved oversight of private fostering arrangements. Portsmouth requires better support for care-experienced young people, especially the most vulnerable, in accessing employment, education, and training, and ensuring they are aware of their entitlements and health histories. Although a recent focus visit from Ofsted in February 2025 recognised significant improvements in this area. Southampton faces challenges in placement sufficiency, timely health assessments, and support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as strengthening private fostering oversight. The Isle of Wight needs to improve partner agency involvement in child protection strategy discussions, amplify children's voices in decision-making, enhance oversight of key processes, and address high caseloads in safeguarding teams.

Key challenges

Financial constraints and increased services costs are placing pressure on councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, particularly in SEND, leading to in-year and cumulative deficits as a greater number of children and young people require Education and Health Care Plans and higher costs per student. Even with substantial investment, there are insufficient school and specialist places and educational outcomes for these children have not improved.

Frontline workers face high caseloads in some areas, exacerbating workforce challenges and affecting outcomes for children. The high number of children in care highlights the need for alternative interventions. Safety issues, such as youth violence and domestic abuse persist, revealing vulnerabilities in service delivery. Effective multi-agency collaboration and information sharing are needed to manage risks, while health and education inequalities continue to impact children's outcomes.

Existing collaboration and good practice

The Mockingbird Fostering Model and Regional Care Co-operative is an example of enhanced support for foster families and local authority collaboration. Safeguarding efforts are bolstered by partnerships and networks in some areas that focus on shared learning and resources, involving children in developing safeguarding initiatives and maintaining strong relationships with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH).

In some areas, public health services are integrated with children's services, working closely with the ICBs to improve service delivery. Education and school collaborations are strengthened in parts through partnerships, while housing services work jointly to enhance outcomes for children. Regional improvement is driven by the Southeast Sector Led Improvement initiative, and parental involvement is encouraged through the SEND Parent Carer Forum and Children's Partnership Board.

Best practices include the Family Safeguarding Model, which engages families in safeguarding interventions, and the Community Councillor Model, which directs funding into local services. Family hubs unify support for families, and the voice of the child is prioritised in decision-making. Health services collaborate effectively in some areas with local health hubs, and education initiatives like Eastleigh Borough Council's not in full time education, employment or training initiative which has successfully reduced NEET rates.

There is strong practice around enhanced safeguarding through the front door conversational model and strong engagement with secondary schools. Relational and restorative practices focus on relationship-based approaches, while risk management strategies implement place-based deterrents and reduce residential care placements. Multi-agency collaboration assists service delivery, and specialised models support neurodiverse children and reintegrate them into their homes. Finally, there are good examples of quality practice interventions and manageable workloads, with targeted support for vulnerable populations, including children seeking safety and asylum.

We are aware that MHCLG is currently working with DfE and DHSC colleagues on principles for partnership working and will take those into account during the service design phase, while also proposing to join the strong partnerships currently in existence across the region.

Future plans

At the Hampshire County Council level, decisions about children and young people are often centralised at a very large scale. However, this can mean that local options and interventions are overlooked, leading to unnecessary contacts and referrals. More localised structures promote consistency and accountability, reducing the need for intensive oversight and encourages managed risk taking. This approach would enable more responsive and personalised care for children and families.

The strength of our four new mainland unitaries lies in their ability to support deeply local, strength-based approaches. Communities naturally form around families, friendship groups, schools, faith-based organisations, sports clubs, and local businesses. When a unitary council aligns with these organic communities, it is better positioned to build meaningful relationships – something often lost in larger council structures. Additionally, essential services like housing and voluntary support are typically present at the local level, making them more accessible and easier to integrate as part of a locally focused, total place approach. Through our four new mainland unitaries,

we would unlock the following transformation opportunities which would not be achievable through even larger unitary councils:

- Fostering **workforce development and implementing new delivery models that emphasise collaboration** and mutual aid. By creating, strengthening and reinforcing new and existing localised teams, a new holistic practice model would facilitate stronger partnerships with other agencies, ensuring a more cohesive approach to service delivery. We would build on the local family help teams, maintain the existing MASH arrangements whilst working to develop locally relevant MASHs, using the learning from the Isle of Wight model. We would, in the development of the front door and early help services, also seek support and draw learning from Portsmouth, in respect of whom Ofsted said, in their last report, *"Impressive early help services are a strength and have improved since the last inspection in 2018. Well-designed and resourced integrated support services are commissioned to deliver an excellent range of services and interventions through five family hubs across the city..."*
- Our approach would focus on locally tailored solutions, that **removes past unnecessary two-tier barriers and supports a comprehensive through-care strategy from prevention to resolution**. The focus on localisation and place-based service delivery will allow services to be truly designed around the specific needs of families and children in their communities.
- Integration and collaboration are key components of our proposal, with **opportunities to merge housing and social care at a local level, thereby improving outcomes and prevention intervention efforts for children and families**. Strengthening connections and empowering local education leaders, voluntary and community leaders, schools, and civil society to co-create and collaborate, it would enhance the overall service framework by focusing on the total place for local communities.
- Our proposal also **prioritises prevention and early intervention and inclusion, promoting a shared responsibility to use local resources effectively.** By targeting interventions at a preventative local level and using retained funds, the model would address issues earlier, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children, young people and families linking in with the Families First Partnership Programme / children's social care reforms.
- Our proposal would **tap into the existing areas of excellence and partnerships across Hampshire County Council and the three unitary councils of Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight**. In particular, while Hampshire County Council currently administer the Adopt South partnership and the National Secure Welfare Coordination Unit, it is proposed they would transfer to one of the existing unitary councils, with the newly formed councils utilising their services and joining the Adopt South partnership. We are aware of Hampshire County Council's plans to replace the existing Swanick Lodge secure children's home with a larger unit proposed in Fareham and would support our colleagues in the newly formed South East unitary council to continue with and bring forward that plan.

Fostering across the region is currently delivered via the South East Partnership, with all current upper-tier councils across the region part of that partnership. The new councils would propose to join that partnership on formation.

Case Study: Isle of Wight Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

After a decade-long partnership with Hampshire County Council, in February 2024 the Isle of Wight Council embarked on the challenging journey of establishing its own children's services, including a locally developed Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

In spring 2024, the Isle of Wight conducted a rapid options appraisal and decided to house the MASH in County Hall Newport, initiating implementation in September and going live by the end of February 2025. As a result, social workers, police officers, and health professionals, all fully focused on Island children and families, now work together under one roof on the island. This co-location, supported by rigorous project management and a deep understanding of local needs, has significantly helped the multi-agency face to face conversations relating to decision making and the approach to local safeguarding interventions. This success story, driven by close collaboration, place-based insight and enhanced information-sharing, includes learning for local government reorganisation, managing risk through transition, building on local expertise, and the opportunities of bringing partners together.

Education

Existing unitary authorities in Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight each play distinct roles in delivering education services, tailored to the needs of their communities. Hampshire County Council, meanwhile, supports a network of schools and students across a much broader area, focusing on accessibility through managing admissions, transport, and free school meals.

Southampton City Council emphasises school improvement and special educational needs and disabilities outreach through its Inclusion Partnership, which has successfully reduced permanent exclusions and supports numerous educational settings. Portsmouth City Council collaborates with the Portsmouth Education Partnership to improve literacy, numeracy, attendance, and digital inclusion, leading to notable improvements in Key Stage 2 outcomes. Meanwhile, the Isle of Wight Council focuses on high aspirations and special educational needs and disabilities excellence, with a strategy for 2024 to 30 that aims to provide a rich curriculum and sustainable infrastructure. Their efforts have resulted in an increase in Early Help Care (EHC) plans, highlighting their dedication to supporting students with special educational needs from an early age. There are also examples of place-based pupil planning at a time where there is an increased demand in secondary schools, but decreased demand in need in primary settings, while maintaining strong inclusive practices.

When viewed holistically, the Ofsted landscape across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is considered to perform above national averages. However, there is a mixed reality across our four proposed areas, with both strengths and areas for improvement. Challenges remain in equitable access to high-quality quality of education, particularly in rural areas, and addressing the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities.

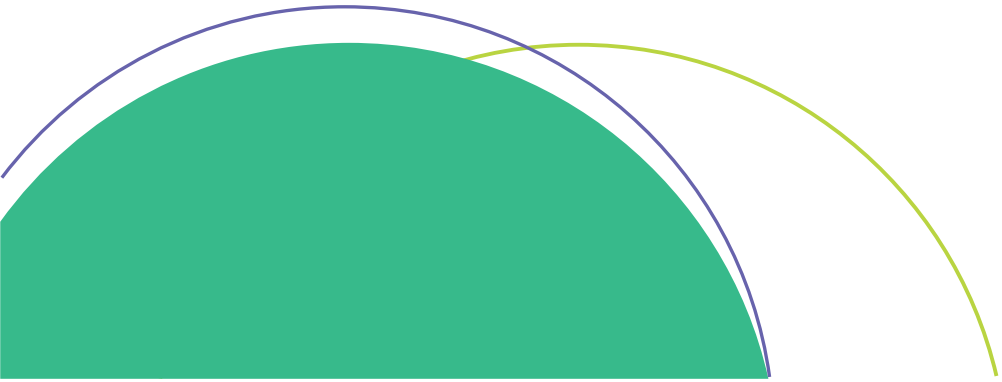
Key challenges

Existing councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are facing several educational challenges that impact both the quality and accessibility of education. In some areas, education outcomes at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 are notably below national levels, highlighting a need for targeted interventions to improve student performance. The High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is under significant pressure, reflecting the growing demand for resources to support students with special educational needs. Health and wellbeing initiatives, particularly those involving the NHS to address issues like obesity, require more collaboration. The voice of young people also needs to be strengthened to ensure their experiences and perspectives are considered in decision-making.

Supporting mainstream schools to manage the complex needs of children is crucial, as is addressing the growing mismatch between secondary school place availability and the growth in student numbers, intensified by cross-boundary demand. At the same time, funding for school improvement initiatives has been reduced, placing additional strain on already stretched school budgets. There is a rising demand for early years and specialist places, which the current infrastructure struggles to meet. In some areas of South Hampshire, shortages in secondary school places are already forcing children to travel long distances. The number of children who are severely absent, attending less than 50% of the time, is increasing,

alongside the rising complexity of student needs. Access to the curriculum for citizenship activities is limited, and there is a growing demand for early years childcare places. Alternative provision, such as those operated by Hampshire County Council like Hants Outdoors, is under pressure to accommodate diverse needs. Additionally, the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) aged 16 to 18 is rising, further emphasising the need for comprehensive educational and vocational support through collaboration with education providers and local employers.

From a financial perspective, projections have shown that home-to-school transport costs for Hampshire County Council may rise to approximately £70 million in the year ending 2025/26. Staffing costs and recruitment challenges are also adding to budget pressures, along with increased special educational needs and disabilities and additional support costs. Finally, per-pupil funding is decreasing aligned to declining enrolment on the Isle of Wight, compounded by fixed costs and operational costs that are remaining unchanged or increasing.



Existing collaboration and good practice

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, education provision is strengthened through a network of collaborative initiatives and shared best practices. Programmes such as the Southeast Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP) and local ASEND Partnership Boards focus on improving educational outcomes and supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities. Local authority collaborations, such as the Portsmouth Education Partnership and strategic growth efforts in Test Valley, enhance educational services and infrastructure.

Protocols like the Fair Access Protocol promote equitable access to education, while data sharing aids in strategic planning. Relational Practice Leadership training for schools and local authority leaders in Portsmouth is helping to reduce school exclusions and headteacher collaboration is contributing to improved school attendance.

Good practices include the SEND Alternative Provision (SENDAP) Change Programme which supports language development, and initiatives to reduce exclusions and out-of-city placements for special educational needs and disabilities students. Resource allocation is optimised through strategic planning in some places with quality assurance ensuring good quality alternative education provision.

Future plans

Our four new mainland unitaries would foster localised governance and collaboration, which is crucial for addressing current educational challenges. A number of key opportunities, that our four new unitaries will realise, have been outlined below:

- **Developing a consistent and enhanced educational offer across all unitaries** driven by their local needs, ensuring equity of voice and opportunity for all children, including those with complex needs. By investing in inclusive and well-resourced schools, the model supports children who require specialist provisions, thereby addressing the pressure on the High Needs Block. Inclusion will be a key focus for our new mainland unitaries, especially given the recent increase in school suspensions which disproportionately affect poor and disabled students.
- **Collaboration and co-production are central to this approach,** with strengthened partnerships with ICB and other agencies ensuring a holistic approach to education and health services. Engaging and working with local education leaders (early years, schools, colleges) will also be essential to address local challenges and make the system inclusive and responsive to children and families, advocating the voices of young people.
- **Using technology and innovation,** including AI to enhance Education, Health, and Care Plans and improving IT infrastructure for better service delivery. Improved information sharing across agencies supports this effort, addressing issues like obesity through robust health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Resource allocation and investment are targeted to our distinct unitary areas,** with capital investment in infrastructure supporting educational needs and ensuring equitable distribution of resources. This approach incorporates local identity and supports community resilience, addressing the mismatch between secondary school place availability and student growth.
- **Workforce development is prioritised, with training tailored to the place** and specialist teaching resources enhancing staff capacity and resilience. This supports schools in managing anti-social behaviour and improving educational outcomes, particularly in areas where education outcomes are below national levels.
- **Community and family-centred approaches are integral, with local plans reflecting and strengthening community identity.** This addresses the rising demand for early years and specialist places, as well as the need for comprehensive educational and vocational support for young people not in education, employment, or training.

Our four new mainland unitaries provides an adaptable and locally responsive framework to enhance education quality, accessibility and outcomes across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Case Study: Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP)

The Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) was established in 2016 to unite system leaders across Portsmouth in driving school improvement and fostering collaboration amidst the government's push towards full academisation. This initiative aimed to maintain a unified educational community, involving Portsmouth City Council, 14 Multi Academy Trusts, teaching school and subject hubs, the DfE Regions Group, religious dioceses, various educational institutions, and the voices of children, young people and parents.

Previously, Portsmouth faced challenges such as persistent underperformance in educational outcomes, a critical Ofsted inspection, and the risk of fragmentation due to increasing academisation. The pandemic further impacted attendance, behaviour and mental health, compounded by issues like the cost of living crisis, recruitment and retention challenges, and the growing number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

To address these challenges, the PEP was formed as a strategic partnership with a shared vision and priorities, led by sub-groups chaired by school leaders. A performance dashboard was developed and school improvement capacity was increased through collaboration with various partners. The PEP brand aligned existing initiatives, and a three-year strategy was published. Portsmouth City Council encouraged schools to join strong MATs, while continuing to support LA maintained schools. During the pandemic, existing systems facilitated effective communication and response to changing demands. In 2020, MATs agreed to fund an independent chair for the PEP, bringing healthy challenges to all partners. In 2022, Portsmouth was designated a Priority Education Investment Area, with the PEP driving project priorities. All schools participated in areas like literacy, maths, attendance, digital, and CPD, celebrated at the PEP Annual Conference.

The initiative led to a significant increase in schools with good or outstanding judgements, from 77% in 2016 to 95% in 2025. Educational outcomes at Key Stages 2 and 4 are improving, with the gap between Portsmouth and national averages narrowing. Collaboration and alignment between training and priorities have improved, shaping strategies for inclusive practice and supporting schools in meeting all children's needs.

Success factors include a shared vision and values, organic partnership development, inclusive membership, strong leadership, and effective use of data for decision-making and funding. Local government reorganisation could capitalise on this success by fostering inclusive partnerships, using data strategically, supporting shared accountability, encouraging organic collaboration, adopting strategic leadership roles, and facilitating peer support and challenge among MATs.

Economic growth, strategic planning and regeneration

Economic development, strategic planning, and regeneration was identified as being a priority to explore throughout the development of our proposal, given its importance in achieving sustainable and thriving communities. Government priorities focus on driving inward investment, creating jobs, supporting local businesses and accelerated housing and infrastructure delivery to boost economic prosperity. It is important that work in these policy areas will link with the new Mayoral County Combined Authority and the work that they will need to deliver through Local Growth Plans and associated documents such as the Spatial Development Strategy.

Infrastructure planning is central to supporting growth. Strategic investment in transport, utilities and other essential services will ensure communities are well-connected and equipped to handle development. Efficient public transport systems, reliable and well-maintained roads and robust utility networks are essential for facilitating economic activity and improving residents' quality of life.

Addressing housing needs and promoting affordable housing are also key components of strategic planning. A sufficient and diverse supply of affordable housing helps build inclusive communities and prevents displacement. Additionally, integrating housing development with transport and other local services through strategic urban planning helps manage sustainable growth. Environmental protection and sustainability are integral to these efforts, with a focus on reducing carbon emissions, encouraging renewable energy use and protecting natural resources.

By cultivating a thriving business environment and developing a skilled workforce tailored to the unique needs of each of the economic areas, our four new mainland unitary councils will attract new enterprises and encourage the expansion of existing ones, enhancing employment opportunities and economic growth and resilience.

Our proposal enables focus on the distinct sectors within each of their geographies and a more targeted and effective response to implement the government's Industrial Strategy. If the areas are too large, the distinctiveness of local economies are lost and there is a risk every sector becomes a priority.

For example, the North Hampshire economy is more orientated towards Surrey and London, which is also true of transport. The current Hampshire County Council area can appear to demonstrate a high level of self-containment. However, this is simply due to the scale of the authority which masks the distinct geographies operating beyond their boundaries. A similar fundamental problem would occur if a three unitary mainland model was pursued given the huge size and geography of those unitaries.

Key challenges

Through our series of collaborative workshops with service leads, a number of existing challenges were identified. In some areas, strategic planning is hindered by a lack of coordination and comprehensive strategic systems, compounded by issues like land availability and environmental capacity. Infrastructure and connectivity are also concerns, with challenges related to energy network capacity, transport connectivity, and specific issues like the M3 J12. Improving transport networks, including rail, road, and public transport, is essential for enhancing regional connectivity and supporting economic growth.

Environmental and geographical constraints, such as the flooding, multiple nature conservation designations and protected landscapes, present unique challenges for development. Coastal erosion, rising sea levels, and air and water quality issues further complicate environmental management. Economic and industrial challenges include the vulnerability of land-based industries to climate change and concerns about town centre regeneration viability. Resource limitations, such as a shortage of qualified planners and funding challenges, affect infrastructure planning and delivery. While communication across the county is good, there is a need for better collaboration on planning beyond boundaries. Demographic issues, like an ageing and shrinking populations in some areas, impact workforce availability and economic development, necessitating a balance between development and environmental preservation.

Existing collaboration and good practice

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, collaboration and good practice in economic development, strategic planning, and regeneration is evident through various initiatives. There are examples of significant collaboration in planning and environmental management, with shared evidence and strategies for local plans, and efforts like Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANG) provision and nutrient neutrality. Partnerships such as Bird Aware and the Solent Mitigation Partnership focus on environmental conservation and sustainable development. Joint service delivery is also a key feature, with councils like Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth (and soon to be Havant) alongside similar arrangements for

Hart and Rushmoor, and Southampton and Eastleigh, working together in building control partnerships and also informal planning collaborations, enhancing efficiency and resource sharing.

Economic and tourism development is enhanced in some areas by collaborative efforts, such as the Hampshire-wide Local Visitor Economic Partnership and initiatives between Havant and Portsmouth to promote tourism. These partnerships build on regional strengths to attract visitors. Transport and infrastructure planning is coordinated through groups like Solent Transport, facilitating regional connectivity and supporting growth. The Greenprint Network and collaborations with universities focus on green recovery and sustainability, aiming for environmental resilience and sustainable economic growth. Effective communication and relationship building are central to these efforts, fostering a cooperative environment for addressing regional challenges and opportunities. Initiatives like Bird Aware Solent, which has become an award-winning integral part of regional planning, exemplify the success of these collaborative and sustainable practices.

North Hampshire's economic geography relates substantially outside of Hampshire and the Solent. Basingstoke, Rushmoor and Hart have strong economic and transport connections north towards Reading and to London. Rushmoor forms part of the Blackwater Valley area to the east in terms of both transport and economy. This is reflected in the cross-boundary Blackwater Valley Advisory Group for Public Transport.

The creation of our four new mainland unitaries, focused on each of their economic areas, would better address both economic and transport issues. The risk of creating even larger unitaries not orientated to the local economic geographies is that the current sub-optimal working will continue. The current challenges will not be addressed and the full growth potential of the areas will never be realised.

Future plans

Our four new mainland unitaries offer significant opportunities to enhanced economic development, strategic planning and regeneration focused on each of the four population centres and their economic areas. The new local plans that would be prepared by each of the new unitaries would need to be broadly consistent with the Spatial Development Strategy that will be prepared by the new Strategic Authority. By aligning our new unitary councils with the economic areas and the way people live and work, greater focus would be placed on initiatives that will make the most difference. This will mean challenges would be addressed and the opportunities for future growth and improving our place would be maximised through:

- **Enhanced strategic planning and coordination**, allowing for a more focused approach to the specific challenges and opportunities of each of the four areas. By aligning resources and expertise with priorities tailored to local requirements, the areas can better address pressures and meet their diverse needs, ensuring that planning is both strategic, better coordinated and more effective. Our four new mainland unitaries best reflect functional economic areas, housing and market areas, and enables coordination on issues where there is commonality.
- **Improved infrastructure coordination and resource management** are key benefits of our model. With more effective delivery of services and development projects focused on each of the four economic areas,

our new unitaries can enhance in-house regeneration and development teams with the financial capacity to undertake transformative projects. Our approach ensures that infrastructure and resources are managed efficiently, supporting sustainable growth and development at the local level.

- **Enhanced place-based strategies for transport, skills, housing, planning, and health**. By aligning areas with similar opportunities and challenges and larger budgets, our four new mainland unitaries would adopt comprehensive approaches to tackle issues like unemployment and health disparities. Our four new mainland unitaries ensure that the distinct economic needs are not submerged into even larger entities. The place-based focus allows for tailored solutions that address the unique needs of each area, promoting equity and inclusivity.
- **Strategic funding and investment are better enabled under this model, as it allows for pursuing funding bids that align with long-term strategic needs in each of the four new unitary areas** rather than them getting lost in larger areas under even bigger unitary councils. This leads to more sustainable and impactful investments, supporting each area and the region's growth and development goals. Additionally, the introduction of regional planning and spatial development strategies provides a framework for sensible growth targets and development plans, helping local planning authorities set achievable goals for each of their areas. Basing four new mainland unitaries on economic areas means that the new authorities will be able to most effectively engage with the Strategic Authority and bring together the strategic needs of their area working in a focused way with those that have shared interests. For example, North Hampshire and South Hampshire have sectoral interests in defence and aerospace which are distinct from other parts of Hampshire. The work of the previous Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership demonstrated clearly the need for digital infrastructure spanning North Hampshire and East Surrey. However, this was not pursued when the LEP was dissolved and a pan Hampshire approach adopted under Hampshire County Council.
- **Transformative regeneration and place-making efforts are also more feasible** with each of the four new mainland unitaries adopting targeted approach for their places. This enables the focused delivery of ambitious projects that larger unitary councils may struggle to implement, moving beyond masterplanning to actual execution on the ground. Work with housing associations and Homes England in strategic partnerships looking at bringing forward innovative funding approaches shows how this could work and with other sub regional towns outside of Hampshire. These approaches are difficult to pursue at a district level as they require scale, however unitaries at the size we are proposing have enough place focus to pursue such initiatives and enough scale to facilitate funding and achieve transformative regeneration.
- **Sector development and the skills pipeline** must also be central to the region's future planning. As the new council economies evolve, particularly in high value-added sectors like defence, aerospace, maritime and tech, decision making must enable coordinated investment in the future workforce across our distinct unitary areas. Working with further education and higher education providers, local employers, and business clusters, our four new unitary councils will be

better positioned to align skills pipelines with sector growth opportunities. This includes targeted training programmes, apprenticeships and investment in centres of excellence that support priority sectors that whilst most relevant to the unitary areas have relevance across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Unlike even bigger unitary councils, where there would be huge population numbers over geographical areas that are not aligned to functional economic areas, people and communities, our four new mainland unitaries offer a balanced solution that ensure a placed based approach while driving regional collaboration on key cross cutting issues, ensuring that development is both strategic and responsive to local needs.

Case Study: Winchester-Test Valley Planning Partnership

Since 2018, Winchester City Council and Test Valley Borough Council have operated under a formal "Duty to Cooperate," culminating in their August 2024 Statement of Common Ground (SoCG). Rather than each authority fighting through separate evidence bases and plan-making timetables, they jointly identified and resolved strategic cross-boundary issues – from meeting a combined housing need of 13,565 dwellings over the plan period to nutrient neutrality across the Solent and Itchen SAC catchments, employment land provision and shared infrastructure requirements.

By pooling technical studies, consulting together at Reg 18 and harmonising policies, they have kept both local plans firmly on track for Regulation 19 submission in early 2026, avoiding the six to 12-month delays that bespoke, unaligned plans often incur.

Waste management

Currently, across Hampshire's 11 district and borough councils, household waste collection operates on a classic two-tier model. Each authority is responsible for kerbside collection for mixed recycling, food waste and residual black bag waste, with optional subscription garden-waste services in most areas, but not disposal. Hampshire County Council acts as the waste disposal authority for the 11 districts. On the Isle of Wight, and in the two unitaries of Portsmouth and Southampton, the councils combine and are responsible for both collection and disposal roles, enabling them to tailor service levels to the islands and cities' unique demographic and geographic needs.

Hampshire County Council, working alongside the unitaries, through the long-standing Project Integra partnership, fulfil their disposal responsibilities through a long-term public private partnership entered into in 1999, with its contracting partner Veolia. This arrangement has enabled significant waste infrastructure to be developed and put into use across the region including three energy recovery facilities, two materials-recovery facilities as well as composting plants, transfer stations and a network of household waste recycling centres.

However, the councils need to continue to meet rising service standards, such as DEFRA's mandatory weekly food waste collections and new Extended Producer Responsibility requirements against a backdrop of flat or falling budgets, aging MRFs and depots, vehicle and staffing shortages, contamination issues, geographic constraints in dense urban streets and dispersed rural or island communities (exacerbated by seasonal tourism peaks) creating an urgent need for capital, digital and partnership investments through Project Integra to modernise services. Further information related to these challenges are explored below.

The inter-authority agreement, refreshed in April 2024, aimed to make some progress on these challenges through revision to cost sharing and operational responsibilities arrangement across the 14 councils, helping to balance rising treatment costs, drive contamination reduction and prepare for the next wave of Extended Producer Responsibility requirements.

Key challenges

Councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight face both local and county-wide challenges in delivering effective waste services. Infrastructure and logistics issues arise from inconsistencies at waste transfer stations and inadequate coverage of household waste recycling centres, particularly in the north. This results in logistical difficulties, such as limited site capacity, outdated facilities, and long travel distances for waste delivery. Financial and contractual constraints add to the problem, with costs associated with changes, the end of disposal contracts, and uncertainty over future funding arrangements, like Extended Producer Responsibility payments, posing significant financial hurdles. The lack of procurement competition due to fixed timelines further complicates matters. Governance and alignment issues also hinder progress, as conflicts between waste collection authorities and Hampshire County Council create challenges in decision-making and service design due to differing views.

There are also operational challenges, such as an ageing fleet and low recycling rates in some areas. Additionally, there are difficulties with collection frequency, bin coordination, and resource allocation beyond routine operations. Regulatory and reform pressures add another layer of complexity, with the timelines and costs associated with initiatives like Simpler Recycling, along with imminent deadlines for waste reform, creating pressure to align these changes with the Environment Act's requirements to half waste levels by 2042. Public perception and engagement are also affected, as negative resident perceptions about booking systems and access to recycling centres, along with varying charges for services like garden waste, impact public satisfaction and engagement.

Existing collaboration and good practice

Regional collaboration among local authorities, such as Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, and Havant, continue to play a crucial role in facilitating decision-making and strengthening relationships between waste teams. Project Integra, despite facing challenges as a result of the county council and collection authority dynamics, serves as a platform for sharing knowledge and best practice. Recent improvements, such as the tripartite partnership which enhances waste disposal collaboration, have strengthened cooperation and alignment. Joint contracts and partnerships, such as the joint waste contract between Basingstoke and Deane and Hart, demonstrates effective benefits of collaborative service delivery, optimising resources and improving efficiency. Community-focused initiatives such as the Community Furniture Project, supported by Basingstoke and Deane, which repairs and resells household items while offering skills development and job training opportunities to volunteers.

There are also strong examples of good practice in waste management, particularly on customer engagement and satisfaction monitoring using customer portals and digital platforms. Technology such as Bartec in-cab systems is playing a vital role to understand operational data to drive decision making. Strategic direction is also being guided by joint governance groups, ensuring alignment across partners and a shared focus on outcomes. Collaboration and communication are enhanced through shared communications and learning from others which improves service delivery and community engagement. Additionally, health and safety are prioritised through groups such as the CASH and Ops group, which promote a common approach. The group's efforts have been recognised by national bodies like the Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum.

Future plans

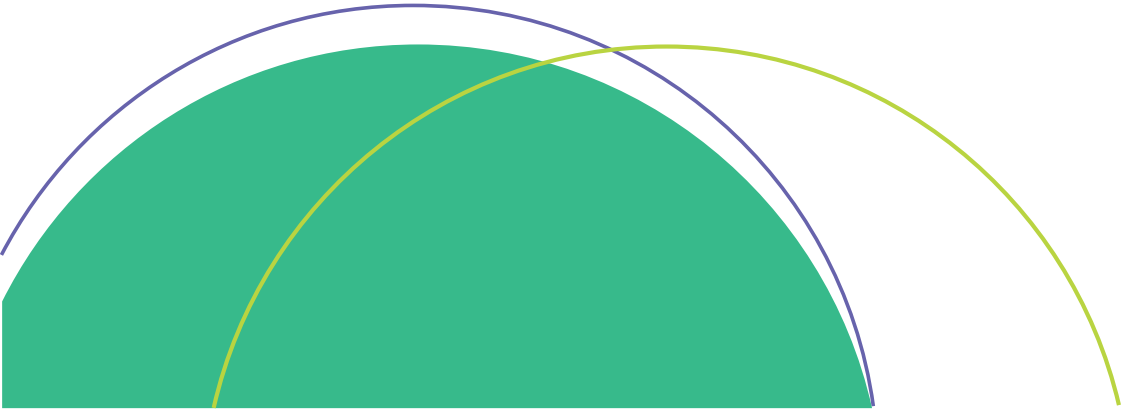
Through our four new mainland unitaries, we would be able to build on the existing good practices and collaboration across our future unitaries, while addressing some of the key challenges identified below:

- Our proposal will promote **economies of scale through joint procurement and shared resources across similar geographies,** driving cost savings and improved buying power. Maintaining a local focus with economies of scale, our model enables tailored services that meet specific needs, such as urban and rural requirements, without the inefficiencies of a much larger, centralised system. This balance ensures relevance and effectiveness.
- New facilities like public anaerobic digestion plants and "super depots" would **enhance service delivery and create**

income opportunities. Embracing technology across the region, tailored to local requirements, would improve performance and accountability, which may be overlooked by new unitaries with a much larger footprint.

- **Collaboration and partnerships are strengthened** because of connection, understanding and proximity with local networks, including disposal partnerships and cross-border collections which enhance service efficiency and resilience.
- **Service alignment and simplification reduce customer confusion and improve satisfaction** by providing consistent collection services and a single point of contact.
- Our model's **adaptability and responsiveness ensure that local waste infrastructure can quickly adapt to challenges,** keeping services responsive to local needs, improving resilience and sustainability.

Our four new mainland unitaries enhances waste provision by balancing economies of scale with local focus, enabling efficient joint procurement, tailored waste collection services to local requirements, and strategic infrastructure investments that address specific community needs.



Case Study: Joint waste collection - Basingstoke and Hart

In October 2018, a joint waste collection contract was launched to serve 125,000 households across Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) and Hart District Council (HDC). Managed by the Joint Waste Client Team (JWCT) within Basingstoke and Deane, this contract was recently extended to September 2033. The service is contracted to Serco, with support from smaller charity partners like the Community Furniture Project. Prior to this, the councils faced challenges in maintaining service provision amidst limited resources and budgets, particularly for smaller authorities like Hart. They also had to navigate new legislation, such as simpler recycling processes and the introduction of food waste services, while dealing with uncertainties around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and future Material Recovery Facility (MRF) infrastructure, all while the current contract was nearing its end.

To address these challenges, both councils collaborated on a shared initiative to explore future operating models, costs, recycling rates, and carbon impacts as the initial contract term concluded. This collaborative effort aimed

to ensure a seamless transition and continued service provision. The extension of the shared contract eliminated the need for separate procurement processes. For new services like food waste collection, both councils jointly procured vehicles and caddies, and launched a unified communications campaign. The caddy design included a QR code linking to a shared food waste information page. Efficiencies of scale were achieved through joint efforts, such as transitioning collection fleets from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to reduce carbon emissions. A single contractor management team and shared vehicles for services like bulky collections further streamlined operations. Monthly client team reports provided consistent performance reporting across the contract.

Key to the success of this initiative was a robust governance structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The JWCT met monthly with portfolio holders from each authority, while the contract was overseen by a Joint Governance Group (JGG) meeting quarterly, and a Waste Partnership Board (WPB) meeting biannually. The JGG, comprising officers and councillors from both authorities, ensured unified oversight and a shared vision for the contract. All joint working arrangements were formalised in a legal Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).

The success of this joint contract model offers valuable insights for local government reorganisation. By adopting a similar structure across the four new unitary authorities, economies of scale can be maximised while maintaining local focus. Unified communications campaigns across household waste collection, Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRS), schools, businesses and shops promote localised behaviour change. Reducing authority boundaries allows for rebalancing future collection contracts over a larger area, reducing capital and revenue expenditure on vehicles and crews. Larger infrastructure and operational needs across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight could be managed through similar IAAs, with equal input and ownership from all parties or one party acting as a lead on behalf of others.

Customer and digital

Delivering customer-focused, digitally enabled services are central to meeting residents' expectations and driving operational efficiency. Our residents expect high quality services and timely responses to their queries to reflect good value for taxpayers' money. True innovation and transformation require a deep and ongoing understanding of local community needs and issues. Applying blanket one-size-fits-all solutions through even larger unitary councils risks overlooking local needs. Through our four new mainland unitaries, we would harness the full potential of real time data and resident feedback to tailor our services to community requirements, with a focus on prevention by quickly responding to emerging issues. For example, the creation of a Mid Hampshire unitary will make better use of the existing network of community hubs across our network of market towns to enable effective rural access.

Key challenges

Key issues include a significant digital skills gap among staff and residents, which hampers workforce resilience and data skills development. The complexity and accessibility of numerous systems create barriers for customers, compounded by limited control over some outsourced services. Increasing demand and complex situations strain resources, necessitating savings while requiring investment in transformation. Organisational silos hinder collaboration and data visibility, while procurement practices need to be more customer focused. Service accessibility, particularly for county council services, special educational needs and disabilities, and out-of-hours services, remains problematic. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach to improve service delivery and meet community needs.

Existing collaboration and good practice

While there are many challenges, existing councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have identified effective collaboration and good practices. Shared services and resources, such as contact centres and legal services, streamlined operations and reduced costs, while digital and IT collaborations align technological strategies across councils. Joint management of public services, including waste and crematorium operations, exemplifies cooperative service delivery. There are also examples of election and governance collaborations to ensure coordinated electoral processes, and networks like the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Customer Service Network which focuses on customer service and internal functions.

Examples of good practice include centralised customer service through shared service centres and a unified CRM system, a comprehensive digital strategy framework, and efforts to enhance digital accessibility and inclusivity. Data management initiatives, such as the Data Academy and robust security practices, underscore a focus on data integrity. Collaborative practices with the Local Government Association and participation in pilots foster a culture of continuous improvement. Finally, community engagement initiatives, such as the Youth Hub and "Here for Hart" directory, demonstrate a commitment to supporting residents and fostering community connections.

Future plans

Our four new mainland unitaries present a transformative opportunity for customer and digital services, focusing on creating an enhanced digital infrastructure for each new

unitary that offers a single view of residents and enables better prevention and service delivery focused on local needs. They will have strong connections with their distinct communities, ensuring that digital and wider services are tailored to each communities' requirements. This would include:

- **Promoting cultural innovation by establishing, customer-centric cultures in each unitary that embraces digital transformation** from the outset, reducing single points of failure and enhancing digital service delivery through resource pooling.
- **Existing digital strategies extending, enhancing and integrating more easily, facilitating a cohesive approach.** We would scale digital solutions, balancing efficiency with local relevance and improving customer confidence through simplified and integrated services focused on local requirements.
- **Streamlined system integration would reduce complexity, enhancing the overall customer and staff experience.** Our priority would be to reduce confusion and duplication, transforming customer digital channels and fostering customer-centric authorities.
- **Geographical relevance and accessibility being emphasised, ensuring services are easily accessible and tailored to local communities and diverse customer need.** Our proposal would balance economies of scale with local connection, ensuring efficiency while maintaining a close relationship with residents.
- **Building financial resilience, enabling investment in critical services that improve community outcomes**. Simplified customer journeys would enhance the customer experience by reducing the complexity of navigating fragmented services.

It is critical that transformation is applied in the context of the areas we serve, remaining close enough to understand and address the diverse needs of our communities.

Case Study: Eastleigh Borough Council - Digital transformation with a customer-centric approach

Eastleigh Borough Council's digital transformation has led to significant positive outcomes, particularly through the implementation of the Salesforce CRM platform which now supports around 75% of the council's business applications. This shift has drastically reduced reliance on outdated legacy systems like Lagan and IDOX. The comprehensive Customer 360 view ensures that all customer interactions are linked to a single record, providing a seamless and cohesive experience for both customers and staff. The MyAccount portal further enhances this by offering a consistent user interface across all interactions.

A notable achievement is the development of a fully in-house housing management solution on Salesforce, delivered more efficiently than procuring off-the-shelf products. This initiative underscores Eastleigh's ability to innovate and adapt quickly, reducing costs and increasing service delivery speed. By embracing a "Cloud First" policy, Eastleigh has modernised its IT infrastructure, enabling the reuse of components such as payments and bookings across multiple services, leading to enhanced operational efficiency and service quality.

Highways and transport

Hampshire County Council and the existing unitary authorities are responsible for the management of the highway, overseeing a large network of roads and transport services, focusing on maintenance, traffic management and public transport improvements. Their aims are to enhance road safety, reduce congestion and promote sustainable transport options, such as cycling and public transport.

The district and borough councils work with the upper tier authorities to support delivery, with the amount of support varying by district, but in some cases, this extends to funding some local bus and community transport services. They work on projects that address local traffic issues, improve road conditions, and support public transport initiatives. District and borough councils often attempt to collaborate with the county council to align their efforts with broader regional transport strategies as well as seeking to ensure that new development outlined in local plans can be delivered and supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Key challenges

Managing highways and transport services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight presents a range of challenges. Ageing infrastructure is a significant concern, with many roads and bridges requiring investment to meet modern standards. At the same time, there is also a growing demand for sustainable transport solutions to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality which includes promoting public transport, cycling and walking. Technological integration is another challenge, as implementing new technologies like smart traffic systems and electric vehicle infrastructure is crucial for future-proofing the transport network. However, this requires coordinated planning and investment. Additionally, transport infrastructure must be resilient to the impacts of climate change and adapted to withstand increased flooding and extreme weather events.

In some areas, inconsistent management of parking and network planning across different authorities hinders collaboration and leads to a lack of alignment. This results in fragmented decision-making and complicates efforts to create an effective transport strategy. Additionally, efforts to decarbonise transport fleets are impacted by infrastructure and funding constraints, particularly in rural areas, where resources are limited and fleet electrification lacks coordination.

Strategic planning and investment in housing and transport are not well-coordinated in some instances, impacting growth and development. Furthermore, there is evidence of limited emphasis on social value in infrastructure projects, with insufficient local engagement and collaboration. Inequitable funding and resource allocation, along with disjointed service design and delivery, add to these challenges, highlighting the need for more integrated and customer-centric approaches to transport planning and infrastructure development tailored to local requirements.

Existing collaboration and good practice

Despite some of these challenges, some examples of effective collaboration and good practice exist across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. One notable example is the vision-led planning approach adopted by Southampton and Eastleigh. By using a single evidence base, Southampton and Eastleigh have been able to develop local plan allocations with broad agreement, ensuring a coordinated approach to regional development. Southampton and Portsmouth's emphasis on social value in infrastructure projects further exemplifies collaborative efforts, as delivery contracts are used to meet local goals such as green contributions and workforce development. Information sharing and best practices are also a focus, with Portsmouth and Southampton collaborating on the Future Transport Zone initiative, which has brought together four authorities working to optimise resources to deliver a programme of nationally significant trials of various innovative approaches to transport.

Cross-boundary transport initiatives, such as the South East Hampshire Rapid Transit programme, highlight successful collaboration between Portsmouth and Southampton. This programme adopted a cross-boundary 'city region'/ travel to work area approach to secure funding from the Transforming Cities Fund, showcasing effective regional cooperation. Strategic planning and investment are further supported by the Solent Transport Prospectus and the TfSE Strategic Investment Plan, which set out agreed regional transport infrastructure/ investment strategies for the Solent area and the south east of England more widely.

Other examples include Portsmouth's enhanced partnership with local bus operators, supported by a £52 million Bus Service Improvement Plan. This programme focuses on improving connectivity, ticketing, and infrastructure, and is being delivered through strong operator relationships and effective public sector service delivery. The Coastal Partners model, involving Portsmouth, Havant and Gosport, is as an example of effective regional collaboration in delivering flood defences, influencing national policy. Additionally, shared procurement and resource utilisation efforts, such as Southampton's legal support for Portsmouth's contracts, highlight practical approaches to resource sharing and cost efficiency, further strengthening regional collaboration.

Future plans

Our distinct communities and landscape across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight mean there are differing challenges which requires a focused approach by each new unitary who genuinely understands local requirements. Our four new mainland unitaries enable this and will be critically important to improve equity of access and opportunity for residents, underpinned by effective travel infrastructure. This includes:

- **Transport and infrastructure plans focussed on their distinct communities and economic areas.** This would ensure that we can genuinely support economic growth and housing delivery that is representative of the residents we serve, leading to improved outcomes for all.
- **By consolidating resources and aligning funding with strategic growth plans, discrepancies in funding distribution would be addressed, ensuring more equitable resource allocation, particularly benefiting rural areas.** Our approach would help overcome current funding constraints and support balanced development.
- **Focused and coordinated service design and delivery, that promotes climate resilience and customer-centric design.** This would speed up road adoption and infrastructure delivery processes, making them more efficient and responsive to community needs. Additionally, aligning transport and housing planning would reduce inefficiencies and enable more sustainable travel patterns and modal mix that supports development as well as priorities such as improved non-car accessibility and reduced emissions from transport.
- **Unified parking and network management, bringing together efforts across authorities and improving collaboration.** Our model ensures that local interventions are effectively implemented, enhancing the overall efficiency of transport networks. Furthermore, comprehensive fleet and decarbonisation strategies would be developed by coordinating fleet procurement and electrification efforts, particularly in rural areas, advancing decarbonisation goals.
- **Streamline community and school transport systems,** addressing financial concerns and promoting more sustainable approaches.
- **Strategic planning and investment alignment** would also be enhanced, supporting long-term growth and development through a focused approach to each area's opportunities and challenges. By redefining infrastructure delivery contracts, we would improve social value outcomes, focusing on local resource use, green contributions and workforce development.
- **Improve the processes for scheduling and delivering capital programmes, reducing administrative burdens and accelerating project timelines.** This would lead to more efficient infrastructure delivery, ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget, ultimately benefiting the entire region.

In summary, through our four new mainland unitaries, we have the opportunity to enhance highways and transport services by more focused strategies and improving integration and collaboration around our four economic and population centres, ensuring transport and infrastructure plans are representative of the requirements of distinct areas and effectively support economic growth and housing delivery.

Case Study: Solent Transport - Micro-Consolidation Hub Trial

The Micro-Consolidation Hub Trial is part of the Solent Future Transport Zone Logistics programme. The project aims to enhance the quality of life in the Solent area by reducing large vehicle traffic and improving company efficiencies through the use of e-cargo bikes. The trial, located in Winchester, is fully funded by the Future Transport Zone initiative, covering costs such as parking bay leases, installation, decommissioning, and hub management for 12 months. Key preparatory steps have included securing planning permission, insurance discussions and finalising agreements between stakeholders.

The project relies on effective collaboration between local councils, transport authorities and the private sector. It involves comprehensive risk assessments, legal agreements and insurance coverage to mitigate potential challenges. The trial's success relies on the timely completion of installation works, expected to begin in September 2025, and effective communication strategies to align with the Winchester's "going greener faster" initiative.

Housing and homelessness

Councils deliver housing and homelessness services within a tight national framework shaped by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and government housing targets. District housing teams deliver free advice, assessments and personalised housing plans, working in partnership with organisations such as Two Saints, to provide 'housing first' and supported accommodation that tackles complex needs and supports the transition into independent living. Southampton City Council works with organisations such as No Limited Advice Centre to run drop-in hubs offering showers, laundry, digital access and youth support alongside statutory case work for prevention, relief and rough-sleeping outreach. Portsmouth's Housing Needs Advice and Support team combines face-to-face advice, duty-to-refer protocols, priority-need assessments and emergency placements, while collaborating with local churches and charities to expand supported housing options. On the Isle of Wight, the Single Homelessness Pathway and rough sleeping teams coordinate services such as mother-and-baby units, priority need determinations and rural outreach.

Homelessness rates (per 1,000 households between April and June 2024) averaged at 1.1 across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with Portsmouth (4.76), Rushmoor (1.41) and Southampton (1.17) reporting rates above this average. Rough sleeper numbers are mostly concentrated within the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, while multiple councils have levels above the 2.41 average for households in temporary accommodation outside the cities (per 1,000 households April to June 2024), including New Forest (4.08), Isle of Wight (3.56), Fareham (2.99) and Test Valley (2.81). The landscape is mixed across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight when assessed against 2023 housing delivery targets. There are multiple constraints that exist as demonstrated below, including limited greenfield land and coverage of National Parks (e.g. New Forest), a predominance of brownfield sites with high remediation costs, areas already densely populated (e.g. Southampton, Portsmouth) and steep build cost inflation. There are vast differences in housing delivery (2023 measurements), with Portsmouth (26%), Gosport (31%), Southampton (50%) and Fareham (55%) falling below the 99% average across all of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Hart (197%), Winchester (171%), Rushmoor (147%), Test Valley (144%) and Basingstoke and Deane (131%) are examples of councils who have over-performed on delivery targets.

Key challenges

Beyond the broader challenges outlined, councils face other significant challenges in delivering effective housing and homelessness services. For example, the scarcity of affordable private rented housing limits accommodation options for those in need while large scale centralised commissioning across Hampshire, such as for domestic abuse services, hinders the ability to tailor services to local needs, affecting community-specific challenges. There are also challenges around maintaining existing council housing to meet the anticipated new Decent Homes Standards and addressing issues with disabled facilities grants are ongoing concerns.

Interdepartmental relationships, particularly between existing housing and adult services, pose coordination challenges, affecting the delivery of comprehensive support services. The limited supply of land, especially in rural areas and cities, hampers the delivery of affordable housing and the attraction of new registered providers. In addition, the shortage of

temporary accommodation and slow turnover rates lead to increased emergency accommodation spending and difficulties in managing housing needs effectively.

Furthermore, rising levels of complex needs among the population are increasing demand for intensive support services. At the same time, adult social care services that adequately address the highest support needs for homelessness remains a challenge. Finally, non-stock holding councils face challenges in delivering affordable housing due to limited opportunities to effectively use section 106 contributions.

Existing collaboration and good practice

There are a number of initiatives and partnerships across councils driving improvements in housing provision and homelessness prevention. Collaborative responses to specific issues, such as the Make Every Adult Matter Rough Sleeper service and the coordinated approach to domestic abuse support in Basingstoke and Hart, demonstrate targeted efforts to address pressing challenges. There are ongoing examples of engagement with the community and voluntary sectors, including partnerships with charities like Trinity and collaborations around refugee support in Basingstoke and Eastleigh. In addition, efforts to influence systemic change and break existing barriers, particularly in adult and children's social care, telecare, and community safety, aim to address broader societal issues and enhance service effectiveness. Another example relates to geographical collaboration, such as shared services between Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham and Havant, building on regional strengths and resources, while cross-agency protocols and partnerships, like the Hampshire-wide duty to refer and the Social Inclusion Partnership in Basingstoke, facilitate collaboration across different sectors. The use of data-driven prevention initiatives in some areas, such as using artificial intelligence to predict those at risk of homelessness, demonstrates a proactive approach, and regular communication and best practice sharing through forums assist with ongoing learning and process improvements. Additionally, there is opportunity to enhance consumer standards across the social housing portfolio. This could be achieved by building on existing good practice and the strong performance demonstrated by councils such as New Forest which is currently meeting the new regulatory standards and reports an impressive 84% tenant satisfaction rate.

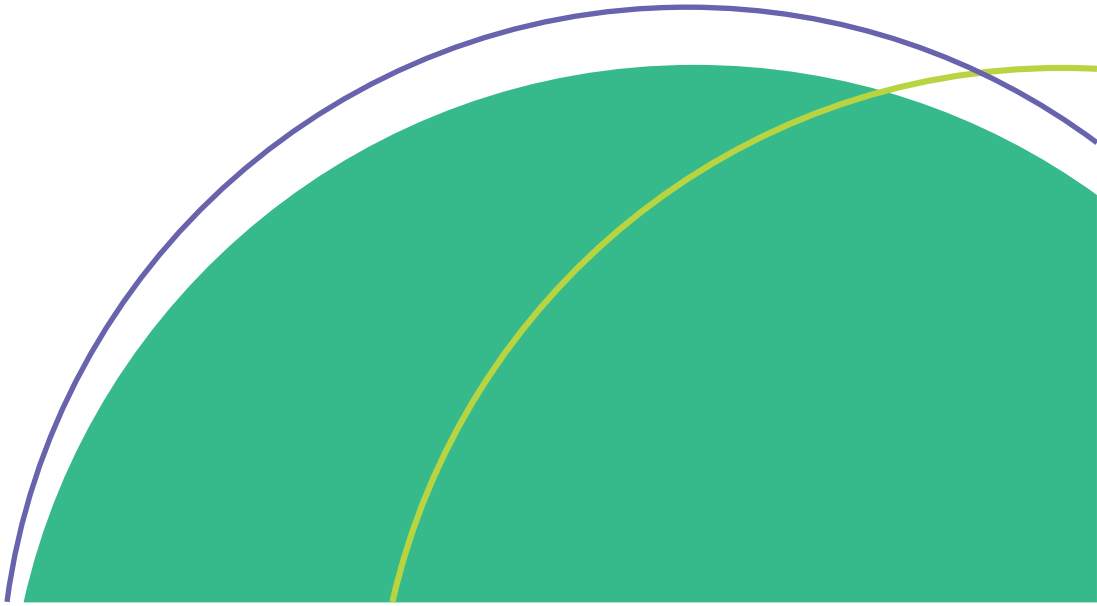
Good practice examples include developing effective housing policies and frameworks for affordable homes, supported by strategic housing groups and collaboration with registered providers. Education and awareness initiatives, such as those in colleges, aim to equip young people with the knowledge to secure and maintain housing. Examples of responsive and flexible service delivery is evident in some areas with embedded mental health practitioners and accommodation for ex-offenders (AFEO). The emphasis on shared objectives and a collaborative culture supports effective service delivery and homelessness prevention. Integrated approaches, involving partnerships with NHS mental health services, community groups, and local councils, facilitate comprehensive support through multi-disciplinary teams. Similarly, proactive prevention and early intervention efforts focus on reducing rough sleeping and minimising the use of temporary accommodations. Strategic use of funding, such as grants from better care funding and the housing revenue account (HRA), supports initiatives like hospital discharge and affordable housing.

Future plans

Effective housing and homelessness services are intrinsically linked to other key areas, particularly the provision of social care, addressing poverty and health and wellbeing and the need to work in a focused and collaborative way at a local level to enable prevention and meet needs. This is core to our four new mainland unitaries and the only way to effectively address challenges and improve outcomes.

- Our model would **enable place focused commissioning and procurement** as cost-effective strategies to increase service capacity and improve outcomes in each of the four areas.
- **By creating integrated, community-based delivery models with partners,** services would be tailored to local needs through a total place approach, ensuring they remain connected to local communities and maximise the ability to meet specific needs.
- **Our proposal would achieve economies of scale by optimising resources** across the four new mainland unitary areas and reduce duplicative functions.
- **Enhanced housing development** focused on the opportunities in each of the four economic areas and the potential to become a social landlord are key opportunities, alongside innovative approaches to homelessness that integrate support from various services tailored to local requirements.
- **Improved outcomes by providing increased opportunities for staff development and retention,** which is critical for building a skilled workforce who can act upon local community requirements effectively and drive the required transformation.
- **Services are tailored to local geographies,** building on existing local good practice that would be scaled, while enhancing community and voluntary sector engagement.
- **Developing innovative housing delivery models** that incorporate proven best practices and are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of each community, all while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

Underpinning our proposal is the importance of local solutions and partnerships, ensuring services remain relevant and appropriate to specific local needs, and allows for unitary service delivery models that recognise locality without becoming too large where inflexibility and generalisation will occur.



Case Study: Basingstoke and Deane Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP)

Established in 2015 in response to potential funding cuts by Hampshire County Council (HCC), the social inclusion partnership has evolved into a dynamic coalition of local stakeholders dedicated to reducing homelessness and rough sleeping. The partnership facilitates strategic discussions, planning and information sharing among statutory, voluntary, community, faith groups and private sector partners. It has successfully implemented initiatives such as the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) program, a Real Change campaign to raise awareness and funds and a winter night shelter that adapted to virtual support during COVID-19. The SIP's success is attributed to its focus on community engagement and the organisational capacity of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) to foster strategic relationships. This innovative approach has seen previously high level of rough sleeping reduced to consistently close to zero.

Complementing the partnership, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has developed a unique devolved funding and commissioning model, a rarity for a second-tier authority. This model, initially created to mitigate the impact of funding reductions, has become a primary vehicle for driving improved outcomes in homelessness support services as well as significant budgetary efficiencies from the initial HCC model. It has enabled Basingstoke and Deane to lead and influence the sector locally and nationally, enhancing accountability, data gathering and service delivery. The model's success offers opportunities to expand innovative commissioning practices across North Hampshire, particularly services which do not deliver the same high-level outcomes for residents and stakeholders that have demonstrably been achieved under Basingstoke and Deane's commissioning model. This expansion aligns with the forthcoming requirements of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, which mandates local authorities to develop a Supported Housing Strategy. Through these initiatives, Basingstoke and Deane demonstrates a commitment to creating bespoke, person-centred homelessness support pathways, ensuring vulnerable individuals do not return to the streets.

Case Study: Winchester City Council - innovative multi-agency collaboration for housing stability

After Hampshire County Council decided to cut £249,000 in annual funding for a 29-bed supported housing contract, Winchester City Council (WCC) quickly launched a program to find new homes for the affected residents. This effort involved working closely with each household, using a team that included a clinical psychologist, to address behaviours that could lead to homelessness and help them become ready for tenancy. The residents were relocated to a variety of housing options, including other supported housing, independent living through the housing register, family reconnections and temporary accommodations like bed and breakfasts until permanent solutions were found. Support was provided from existing resources as needed. This approach demonstrated that better outcomes for households can be achieved at a lower cost to the public sector, improving their life chances. The success of this initiative highlights the effectiveness of focused, multi-agency collaboration at the local level, which could be even more efficiently managed by a unitary council capable of delivering locally sensitive services.

Criteria four: 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

Working collaboratively

In section 2, we outlined the comprehensive collaborative process undertaken initially by the 15 existing councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (now 12 councils) to assess the options for unitary councils against the government criteria and locally agreed guiding principles using an evidence-led approach:

- **Appraisal outcome:** We identified the four new unitary mainland model with the Isle of Wight remaining independent as the most balanced solution and continued collaboratively, as the 12 existing councils to develop this, after three councils withdrew from the joint process.
- **Joint programme of work:** We ran coordinated workstreams across councils covering engagement, finance, service design, and governance.
- **Engagement:** We engaged leaders, officers, residents, and partners, including VCSEs and businesses, through surveys, workshops, and regular meetings.
- **Service Design:** We held eight workshops to explore transformation in high-cost services like social care, housing, and transport.
- **Democratic approach:** We reviewed councillor ratios and neighbourhood governance to support effective local representation.
- **Financial sustainability analysis overview:** We analysed costs, savings, and financial resilience across scenarios to support decision-making.
- **Financial sustainability outputs:** We confirmed the four new mainland unitaries deliver long-term savings and strong transformation potential.

Our evidence-led, collaborative and inclusive process led to the emergence of the four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model as the best way forward for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Following the outcome of the options appraisal process, Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council and Gosport Borough Council formally left the joint process. The remaining 12 councils have continued to work closely together across several key groups as follows:

- **Leaders and Chief Executives:** The 12 leaders and chief executive have worked collaboratively together to guide the process, test emerging ideas and agree the best approach for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
- **Section 151 Officers:** The Section 151 working group has coordinated financial data collection and overseen the development of the financial case working with our advisers at KPMG. They have met regularly to test and validate assumptions to ensure our financial case is evidence led and robust.

- **Monitoring Officers:** Monitoring Officers and Electoral Service teams have explored the best options for future democratic arrangements and governance for our proposal.
- **Directors and Heads of Service:** Working alongside specialist advisers, and service leads across key areas have shaped transformation and innovation opportunities central to our approach to local government reorganisation.

This structured collaboration across all tiers of leadership and service delivery has been a central part of shaping a model that reflects the collective ambition of the councils involved through a technically robust and democratic approach.

We have also continued to engage with the three councils who left the joint process. Gosport Borough Council, whilst favouring the status quo, has continued to work collaboratively with us and provide input throughout the development of our proposal. We are grateful to them for their collaborative approach.

We have also made a collective effort to engage collaboratively with Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council to get their views to inform our own proposal. We arranged a special workshop with them to test their views on our emerging work, but they were unwilling to discuss them with us, and we were instead directed to a report they were later going to be publishing for their Cabinet and Council meetings. While this approach from them has been unexpected and disappointing, we remain committed to encouraging open dialogue and collaboration with them as the local government reorganisation process progresses.

Despite this, the 15 existing councils within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have committed to sharing data throughout this process, as requested by government. This has enabled us to analyse options and develop our proposal based on a consistent set of data.

Informed by local views

Residents have played a crucial role in shaping the future design of local government and ensuring that our proposal effectively serves them to achieve improved outcomes is the top priority for us.

To gather residents' perspectives, a public engagement survey was conducted throughout July across the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area. This survey collected feedback on the broader proposed options through Have Your Say Today - Our Place Our Future. The survey received a total of 13,336 responses, representing one of the highest response rates for a Commonplace-hosted engagement of this kind, with particularly strong participation from New Forest, Test Valley, and Winchester, as well as robust input from all other council areas.

Across the region, residents consistently expressed a deep sense of pride in their local areas (76% of all respondents said they feel proud of their local area), with high levels of satisfaction regarding access to green spaces, the natural environment, and the unique character of their communities.

Residents placed a premium on the delivery of high-quality, accessible public services (89% of respondents said 'very important' or quite important'). There is a clear expectation that councils should prioritise essential services such as adult social care, education, waste and recycling, road maintenance,

and public transport. Access to care services is a top priority across all council areas (7.9/10 weighted average score), reflecting concerns about an ageing population and the need for robust support for vulnerable residents.

While many residents value their area's connectivity, especially in urban and peri-urban councils, there are widespread concerns about the adequacy of public transport, road maintenance, and traffic congestion. Rural areas, in particular, highlighted issues with infrequent or inaccessible public transport, making it harder for residents to access services and employment.

There is a strong desire for local decision-making, with residents wanting councils to reflect the identity of their communities and ensure that decisions are made as close to residents as possible. While many recognise the need for efficiency and collaboration, there is a clear preference for governance structures that empower local voices and avoid the dilution of local representation. 87% of respondents agree that "it is important that my council reflects the identity of my local community". Many respondents, especially in rural and semi-rural areas, express concerns that much larger councils could dilute local identity, reduce accessibility to services, and make it harder for residents to influence decisions.

A key takeaway from the engagement is the widespread concern that being part of a much larger unitary, or one that does not fit with a community's distinct geography, will dilute local identity, reduce accessibility to services, and make it harder for residents to influence decisions. Respondents across rural, semi-rural, and edge-of-city areas consistently express a desire for councils that are 'local enough to understand and respond to their needs, but big enough to be sustainable.'

There is strong resistance to artificial groupings that combine communities with little in common, and a clear preference for governance structures that reflect real geographies, travel patterns, and community identities.

The insights gathered through this engagement directly informed Leaders and Chief Executives discussions and decisions, ensuring that our proposal is grounded in the lived experiences and preferences of local people.

As well as direct engagement with residents and council staff, we have actively engaged with key partner organisations and stakeholders. This has included workshops and meetings with representatives from police, fire and health services, Coastal Partners and National Parks, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils, to understand their views on potential opportunities and challenges, options for reorganisation, including benefits and weaknesses of those options in the context of the delivery of critical services. We are grateful to them all for helping to inform our proposal.

The proposed new unitary areas in our proposal have also been engaging with residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups, members of parliament, education providers and town and parish councils to gather more local views and preferences. We have provided a summary below of the work that each area has carried out to gather local views:

North Hampshire engagement

The three existing councils in North Hampshire have carried out a comprehensive programme of engagement to inform our proposal. This includes:

- An open public survey running on the three council websites.
- A research company running interviews with residents.

- Workshops with businesses, public sector partners and service providers, voluntary and community groups and parish & town councils.
- Discussions and briefings with local members of parliament.
- A range of regular individual discussions with partner organisations and service providers.
- In Rushmoor a series of roadshows over a two-week period engaged directly with 980 residents.
- Regular staff and union briefings.

Discussions and feedback have generally been incredibly positive across all groups with:

- The public survey results, based on over 1500 responses through the council websites, showing over 70% support for a North Hampshire Unitary as opposed to only 7% support for a larger unitary council option with approximately 20% not supporting either option or don't know.
- Local members of parliament are very supportive of our proposal and its alignment with people's sense of place and the opportunities it provides to improve services for communities.
- Businesses welcome the unique opportunity a North Hampshire unitary council provides to drive and enable further economic growth so that the area maximises its huge potential. For example, the creation of a new unitary council for North Hampshire is supported by the Chambers of Commerce, and businesses of all sizes.
- Public sector partners and service providers are excited by the prospect of having a unitary council focused on North Hampshire, providing all local government services, who they can work collaboratively with to integrate and transform services. Similarly, all three existing councils currently have the same waste collection provider, two of the councils through a shared contract, and the provider has already started work on how this could be brought together into a single arrangement and the opportunities for savings and wider service innovation such as through having artificial intelligence enabled cameras on the waste vehicles, which travel on every road regularly, meaning they can pick up road defects early such as pot holes forming, leading to earlier fixing and efficiencies.
- Further educations providers are looking forward to the opportunity that a North Hampshire unitary provides to work in a more holistic way to improve educational opportunities and skills development.
- Voluntary and community groups are really positive about the opportunity to work with a new North Hampshire Unitary to co-design a new commissioning strategy and the future neighbourhood arrangements. For example, the three current voluntary infrastructure / representative organisations have already started discussions on how they can work even more closely together on a North Hampshire basis in advance of a new North Hampshire unitary being created.
- Parish and town councils are very keen on having a unitary council focused on the specific needs of North Hampshire. For example, they want to work with the new council to develop a collaborative ongoing partnership including informing future service design and working alongside the new council to co-design the future neighbourhood governance arrangements to ensure decisions are taken at the most effective level.
- Rushmoor's series of roadshows did highlight amongst some residents within Rushmoor a lack of understanding of the local government reorganisation process and the loss

of the existing borough council. It is recognised that the engagement work is an ongoing process and there is more to do, particularly in certain areas, to increase understanding of reorganisation and the benefits that will bring.

- Staff have been positive throughout about the improvement this can bring for our residents and the opportunities to work more holistically across wider services. Both staff and the union have welcomed the regular opportunities to put forward their views and help to shape our proposal.

Mid Hampshire engagement

Three of the existing councils in Mid Hampshire; New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, and Winchester City Council have undertaken a comprehensive and inclusive programme of engagement to inform the proposal.

This includes:

- Deliberative engagement with residents across all three council areas, designed to explore lived experiences, local priorities, and aspirations for future local government.
- An open public survey running across the 12 councils.
- A research company conducting interviews with residents.
- Workshops with businesses, public sector partners and service providers, voluntary and community groups, and parish & town councils.
- A range of regular individual discussions with partner organisations and service providers.
- Regular staff and union briefings.

Each council commissioned deliberative workshops to ensure the voices of residents were central to shaping the proposal. These sessions explored what good local government looks like, how services should be delivered, and what principles should guide reorganisation.

Key themes emerging across all three areas include:

- Strong local identity and pride in place, with residents emphasising the importance of nature, heritage, and community.
- A desire for efficient, seamless service delivery that feels reliable and offers value for money.
- A clear expectation that decision-making must be rooted in local knowledge, with transparency and accountability.
- Support for place-based services that reflect the unique needs of each community.
- Recognition of the benefits of a unitary structure, but only if it retains local agility and responsiveness.
- In New Forest, the Waterside Engagement Project also provided a rich, place-sensitive narrative of communities such as Totton, Hythe, Marchwood, Holbury, and Calshot. Through creative and qualitative methods - including mapping and deep listening. It captured the emotional, cultural, and ecological identity of the area. Residents expressed a strong desire for governance that reflects their Forest-rooted identity, protects environmental assets, and supports meaningful local decision-making. The project highlighted the importance of designing administrative boundaries that respect lived experience and cultural coherence.

- In Test Valley, residents valued the rural character and community spirit of their towns and villages. They supported simplification and efficiency but emphasised the need for local decision-making and responsiveness.
- Winchester participants expressed a need for a connected joined up approach, efficient services, ensuring local voices are meaningfully heard and that services are designed and rooted in the local area, to best serve local communities. Concerns were raised that services may not be tailored specifically enough for local populations. Local identity and culture, and community spirit in their local area was highly valued. They support a centralised and simplified approach as long as local needs were met and community voices were heard in decision making.
- These insights have directly shaped the guiding principles for our proposal, ensuring it reflects the lived experiences and aspirations of Mid Hampshire communities.
- Discussions and feedback have been incredibly positive across all groups, with:
- Businesses welcoming the opportunity to work with a council focused on Mid Hampshire's economic potential. Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, and local enterprises have expressed support for the proposal. Partners in the Waterside Steering Group including the Solent Freeport, Exxon Mobil and Associated British Ports Ltd have also been involved in discussing the options for the New Forest.
- Public sector partners, educational establishments and service providers enthusiastic about the opportunity to integrate and transform services. Colleagues across New Forest and Mid Hampshire keen to build on their regional work to support growth and skills opportunities appropriate to a non-urban centred model.
- Town and Parish Councils have been a significant partner group. They are eager to work with the new council to co-design neighbourhood governance arrangements and ensure decisions are taken at the most effective level. Their deep local knowledge and community connections make them essential to shaping future service delivery and local democracy.
- Staff and unions have engaged consistently and have been positive about the options that promote the interests of communities in the areas they serve. Both staff and unions have recognised the opportunity to work more holistically across services and improve outcomes for communities. They have welcomed regular engagement and the chance to shape the proposal.

South East engagement

Portsmouth, Fareham and Havant have carried out a comprehensive programme of engagement to inform our proposal. This includes:

- An open public survey and/or residents survey within each council area.
- A research company running interviews with residents.
- A range of regular individual discussions with partner organisations and service providers.
- Regular staff and union briefings.

Discussions and feedback have been incredibly positive across all groups with:

- Portsmouth City Council undertook a residents' survey between 20 and 30 June. Over 3,900 residents participated and 82% of respondents disagreed with Portsmouth being included in LGR proposals. However, a majority of residents (61%) who expressed a preference of authorities to merge with agreed that if forced to take part in the reorganisation plans, Portsmouth City Council should merge with Fareham, Gosport and Havant Borough Councils.
- The Havant residents survey, a representative sample survey of 1,249 face to face interviews conducted between 8 May and 4 July 2025, found that the places in Hampshire that residents visited/had most connections with was either Havant or Portsmouth. Reasons for visits connections in Portsmouth included shopping (62%), socialising (45%) and work/ business (18%).
- The Havant residents Survey gathered data on what residents defined as their local area with many citing their local town or village (68%). In addition, over three quarters (79%) cited it was very or somewhat important to have local political representation.
- Over 800 Fareham residents took part in an LGR survey with a strong majority (81%) wanting to see the wards of Locks Heath, Park Gate and Sarisbury retained within the SE Hampshire Unitary Authority's boundary.
- Havant have run a series of public meetings across the borough to engage with any resident to ask questions about the future direction of local government. These sessions have been well attended and allowed for a range of views and opinions to be shared.
- Hundreds of residents have been engaged with in person as part of the Let's Talk Fareham Roadshow 2025. Discussions have highlighted that issues such as continued quality service provision, Council Tax levels, local political representation and the potential for improvements to services such as local road maintenance and schools' provision are of particular importance.
- Portsmouth City Council ran an update and consultation session with the Community Wellbeing Alliance in July. This brought together 3rd sector partners from across Portsmouth with many organisations supporting wider geographies. Portsmouth City Council, and colleagues from Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council also engaged with the Solent Growth Partnership Business Representative Board on LGR. Discussions about LGR have also been held with key partners that Portsmouth City Council works with.
- Regular updates have been provided on our social media channels and dedicated sections on our websites to inform and engage the public with respect to our LGR plans as they have been developed.

- Staff have been regularly briefed throughout about the improvement this can bring for our communities and the opportunities to work more holistically across wider services. Both staff and the union have welcomed the regular opportunities to put forward their views and help to shape our proposal. Portsmouth City Council have undertaken regular management team, Councillors and All Staff briefings on LGR.
- Portsmouth City Council has also worked to raise awareness of the topic and opportunities to engage through local media including issuing four press releases. Media coverage generated is estimated to have been seen more than 700,000 times.

South West engagement

Across the South West there has been a significant programme of engagement with residents, businesses, partners and staff in addition to the region-wide survey. The insight gained has been used to inform the development of proposals for new unitary authorities in our area. This includes:

- Senior engagement with strategic partners across the area including major businesses, and public sector partners.
- Engagement with local MPs.
- Staff, councillor and trade union briefings.
- Full council debates and briefings on LGR, and the proposed options.
- Engagement workshops with voluntary and community sector partners.
- Regular news updates on social media channels, website and council email bulletins.
- Out of home digital opportunities across the city.
- Email from the economic development team to the Renaissance members requesting they share with their networks.
- Eastleigh Borough Council carried out additional engagement under the banner "A Place for Everyone" focused on residents in the South West Hampshire area who had previously signed up to research panels.
- The work included a dedicated survey and three online focus groups - one with residents from three different areas in South West Hampshire. These explored where people lived and worked, how they travelled, where they spent their free time, and the services they used across the wider Southampton, Eastleigh, Waterside and southern Test Valley area. Residents were also asked about their sense of local identity and their views on the proposed changes to council boundaries. Engagement included explaining the process and drivers for local government reorganisation, as well as providing available information on the options under consideration, how and why these are being developed. Feedback has consistently supported the principle of four new unitary authorities on the mainland plus the Isle of Wight retaining its current arrangements as a way to ensure councils are large enough to be sustainable but small enough to respect and retain local identities.
- Businesses appreciate the chance to highlight economic ties between Southampton, the port, and the South West authorities.
- Strong engagement with our LGR updates across social media platforms.
- Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council, and the Isle of Wight Council had a positive and productive LGR session with the Solent Growth Partnership Business Representative Board.

- Voluntary sector partners, for example though workshops held with Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS), welcomed the opportunity for Local Government Reorganisation to streamline and redesign processes across the region in collaboration with residents and service users. SVS members also stressed the need for new councils to be close to their communities and reflect local identities, giving support to the four-mainland unitary model.
- Staff and local trade unions have appreciated updates on the reorganisation process and what it might mean for the areas they serve. Discussion has focused on the options for reorganisation, the impact it might have for improving service delivery and how to handle the transition process sensitively and make it successful for staff.
- All Eastleigh town and parish councils have received regular briefings on local government reorganisation from the Borough Council and have played an active role in communicating with residents about the process.
- Major local partners and employers including Eastleigh College, Hampshire Cricket Club and Southampton Airport have also been briefed.

It is recognised that there is still a lack of public understanding and, as the regional survey demonstrates (with less than 2% of the South West Hampshire areas' residents responding), limited interest in local government reorganisation at this stage. Having worked through the details of building the case, a further, appropriately timed engagement programme that builds understanding to clearly articulate the local, regional and national opportunities that creating a strong South West unitary provides is in development.

Isle of Wight engagement

Alongside the county-wide local government reorganisation survey, the council has:

- Held a range of discussion with partner organisations.
- Provided updates to staff and unions.
- Engaged with businesses through networks and partnerships.
- Provided updates to town and parish councils.

Feedback through engagement has been supportive of the Island being retained as a separate unitary authority, with understanding of the unique island and cultural identity, whilst understanding the challenges that being an Island brings. There is also an understanding that wider partnership working to ensure that the council can focus resource and capacity on delivering local services is a potential opportunity.

We have used this insight, shared data analysis and evaluated potential impacts on communities, services, and economies. This shared effort between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's existing councils has led to the creation of a proposal that prioritises community identity, future proofs local government and will effectively deliver improved outcomes.

Travel for work and leisure activities

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight benefits from a strong travel-to-work ecosystem, supported by a comprehensive network of motorways (M3, M27), rail corridors, bus networks, ferries and active travel routes. Each of our new four new mainland unitary councils are anchored around the key population and economic hubs of Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth and Southampton, which serve as major commuter destinations

for surrounding communities. Unlike larger, less connected models, our four new mainland unitaries proposal supports a more localised alignment of services with actual travel patterns, facilitating tailored integration and investment that can be more responsive and effective than the broader, less flexible approach of even larger unitary councils over bigger geographies.

Integrated transport planning, delivering jointly with the new Strategic Authority, would strengthen connections across the areas, not only for commuters but also for visitors and residents travelling for leisure. Opportunities to provide greater ticketing clarity and co-ordinated bus and rail services would increase public transport usage, supporting a reduction in road congestion and reduced carbon emissions.

This is set out in more detail in section 4 particularly under criteria 3.

Local identity

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a very large and diverse region, rich in history and shaped by a unique blend of rural landscapes, coastal settlements and vibrant urban centres. This diversity of geography, history and culture has supported strong identities for the communities who call it home. The natural geography of the area, from the sparsely populated chalk downlands of central Hampshire, which separate north from south to the harbours of Southampton and Portsmouth, has long provided natural settlement centres.

Our four new mainland unitaries recognises and respects this unique character and the contribution of the North, Mid, South East and South West areas in the life of the wider region. This recognition will be evident through the active preservation and empowerment of the rich cultural identities and historic legacies that define our communities throughout this proposal.

Our proposal is focused on how people live their lives, from an economic social, cultural and leisure perspective, with a new mainland unitary council focused on each of the four major population centres and urban economies of Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester, Basingstoke. This aligns with Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution, Jim McMahon MP OBE's view of the important role cities and larger towns play as 'economic or academic' anchors for designing new unitary councils, which we agree is fundamentally important.

North Hampshire: This unitary area encompasses Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor councils and the towns of Aldershot, Basingstoke, Fleet and Farnborough. This area is characterised by its rolling countryside, with close proximity to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, parks and urban green spaces and strong literary, aviation and military history. There are strong transport links by both rail and road towards London. This geography and historic interest combined with good transportation links supports a thriving economy in the area which, unlike the rest of the county, points out of Hampshire into Berkshire, Surrey and towards London. Basingstoke is a key anchor with its reputation as a leader in the UK's digital economy and major firms providing employment across the region with many commuting to the town. Farnborough has a significant and growing aviation, space and defence sectors and Aldershot remains a significant garrison for the military and, alongside Farnborough, has a thriving gaming sector.

Mid Hampshire: Home to Hampshire's county town of Winchester, it is one of England's oldest settlements and is a thriving area not just as a tourism hub, but also with growth in small enterprises and digital businesses. The area also includes Test Valley, renowned for its famous chalk rivers, and the New Forest, with most of its land covered by the New Forest National Park. New Forest is part of two of the three options we have evaluated. These areas, while also associated with the leisure industry, also include significant traditional industry including land-based and marine businesses, as well as four major Solent Freeport tax sites including Solent Gateway and Exxon Mobil.

South East Hampshire: The South East area of Hampshire includes the city of Portsmouth and the boroughs of Havant, Fareham and Gosport. This is a major maritime area with harbours in Portsmouth, Chichester and Langstone and the UK's only island city. The River Hamble, to the west, is internationally famous for its sailing and has been a yacht and boat building centre for centuries. The area is home to historic market towns such as Emsworth, and the area is rich in maritime and military history. There are common industrial sectors, cultural opportunities, education provision, regional retail offers and access to services for the proposed new area e.g. for health provision. The area is also home to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard (covering Portsmouth and Gosport), and a vibrant visitor economy which is fed by the surrounding area including vineyards (Wickham), regional brewers and distilleries (all) and tourism locations including being home to the Hayling Island Links Golf Course. Portsmouth was voted the UK's second coolest city to live in outside London in 2022 by the Nomads Nation website, with the visitor economy, facilities and events drawing people in from the wider region.

South West Hampshire: Southampton is the major centre for South West Hampshire, bordered by the M27 and the Solent. The region encompasses the Hampshire Basin and includes the railway town of Eastleigh and the surrounding countryside. Southampton's port is the major driver of this region's economy with significant cruise and cargo traffic. The Solent Freeport would attract significant investment of around £1 billion, leading to the creation of thousands of jobs and further boosting the local economy and providing opportunities for further investment in green technology and developments.

Criteria five: how the model will support devolution arrangements

As a region, we are delighted to have been selected for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) and are committed to working collaboratively on delivering the Devolution Priority Programme and local government reorganisation. Meaningful devolution will help generate local investment, drive economic growth and improve services and structured effectively, local government reorganisation could help deliver and maximise these opportunities.

Devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

The establishment of a Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA) for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a huge opportunity for the region that is best supported by creating four mainland unitaries plus the Isle of Wight to work alongside the new directly elected Mayor. This configuration provides clear strategic regional leadership, with authorities based around core urban centres, while maintaining robust, local council involvement at a suitable size and scale that could generate operational efficiencies but continue to deliver services based on publicly recognised communities.

This approach would improve coordination on any devolved funding and powers allowing responsiveness to both regional and local priorities and enable a focus to be maintained on city and town regions as the engines of growth. The four new mainland authority structure allows for a greater community voice and could also address issues like urban-rural transport imbalances and infrastructure pressures more precisely than a structure with fewer, larger councils, where more local needs can be misunderstood or at worst, overlooked.

The results of the government consultation reflect support for the new four mainland unitary approach and the Isle of Wight, with some respondents concerns around "disproportionate influence by a single or a smaller number of larger councils".

This approach also better reflects residents' desires for local accountability, community-tailored service delivery, efficient governance and meaningful engagement within a devolved framework than three larger councils, while simultaneously enabling unified strategic leadership and the different functional economic areas of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. A smaller number of larger mainland councils would not support the urban focused growth agenda in the same way, losing the focus on the specific devolution opportunities for economic growth.

Our four new mainland unitary proposal plus the Isle of Wight, with a population of around 2.1 million people, would enable and support devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight through:

- **Strategic planning and local delivery -** The strategic authority would operate with well-balanced unitaries as constituent authorities made up of the four new unitaries for mainland Hampshire and the existing Isle of Wight Council. This relationship would enable strategic planning and coordination in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, supported by unitary councils that are focused on local delivery and connected to the needs of the local communities that they serve. To be effective, devolved arrangements need councils that are closely connected to their residents, businesses and place. The well balanced unitaries, as constituent authorities,

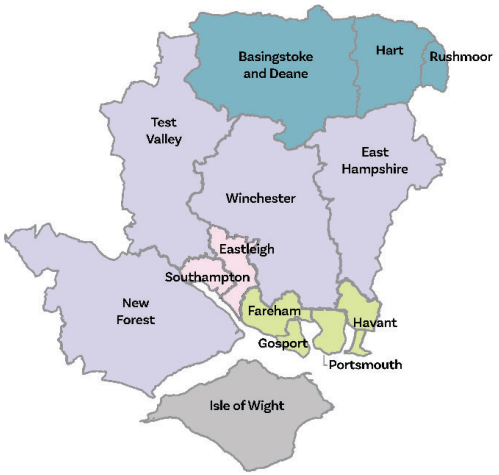
would be local enough to bring insight into common local priorities and opportunities which could be supported and strengthened at the strategic authority level.

- **Driving economic growth** - With four new unitary authorities on the mainland, there is much greater potential to support the new MCCA drive for growth across the region. City regions and urban areas are the basis for strong growth in this proposal, with three of the four mainland unitaries representing such areas, this is a good basis for making sure that the new authorities would support the MCCA sustainable growth ambitions. The fourth mainland authority would ensure a focus on rural and town growth needs and ambitions. The existing Isle of Wight unitary authority would ensure a focus on the growth needs of the island economy.
- **Effective decision-making -** Having well balanced constituent unitary councils provides a strong foundation for decision-making. The Mayor, when elected, would manage decision-making by chairing debate across balanced mainland constituent authorities. This provides an effective basis for consensus building, voting and decision-making and would support a strong, functional and effective strategic authority. The four new unitaries on the mainland would have populations between 400,000 and 600,000 and are well balanced across many economic and social factors. The Isle of Wight (see section 5) would also be part of the MCCA Strategic Authority with a population of 140,000 to provide effective representation on behalf of their residents. This proposal will dramatically improve the balance and governance of the combined authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Currently the largest existing council within the proposed combined authority covers 70% of the population. The proposals in this submission ensure that no council represents an excessively large proportion of the population - with a maximum percentage of the total combined authority population in any single unitary council of around 28%. This would achieve a fair balance between the mainland authorities, a sensible number of councils to make up the combined authority, and avoid an excessive ratio between the largest authority and the smallest (Isle of Wight). This make up is critical to avoid one or two larger unitaries creating a democratic deficit regardless of how decisions are made. Configurations with a smaller number of total unitaries were discounted during the options appraisal process as the population ratios between unitaries would be more imbalanced under a mayoral strategic authority. The population ratio table below demonstrates the level of balance the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary configuration provides. Our approach to the strategic authority would enable closer working with non-constituent and associate members such as NHS bodies and National Parks who will play a crucial role in delivering our target outcomes and the wider public service reform agenda.
- **Strength through diversity -** An effective strategic and unitary authority relationship will be symbiotic and reduce both national and intra-region competition for funding by focusing properly on evidence informed local priorities. Our unitaries would have a common purpose through devolution but would also be able to respond effectively on behalf of the distinct communities and economies. Our proposal would drive diversity in opinion and strengthen the advice that can be provided to the future Mayor, leading to enhanced overall strategy and outcomes with a collaborative approach to delivery. The new unitary councils that cover the coast and the waterside would continue to work collaboratively to deliver sustainable growth including through the Solent Freeport. It is recognised that the mayoral strategic authority

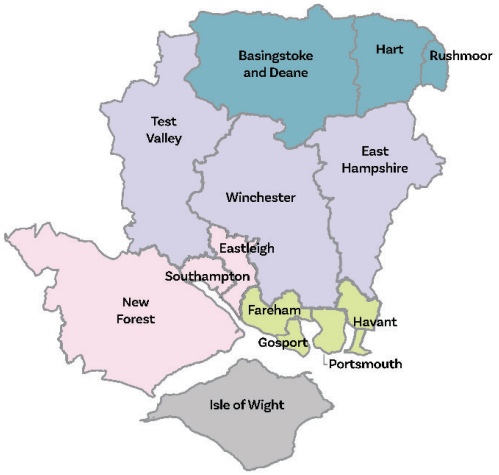
will have oversight of the Freeport, the Enterprise Zone and major strategic planning, and the new councils would collectively support the authority in this role. The two new unitaries for North and Mid Hampshire have Basingstoke and Winchester as economic, social and cultural hubs but also encompass significant rural areas and would provide a voice for rural and agricultural communities and environmental considerations. The existing unitary authority of the Isle of Wight has Newport and Ryde as the main economic, social, and cultural hubs but also encompasses significant rural areas. This provides a voice for rural and agricultural concerns as well as a major focus on tourism and the visitor economy and other specific island requirements.

Population ratios of the three option variations of the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model

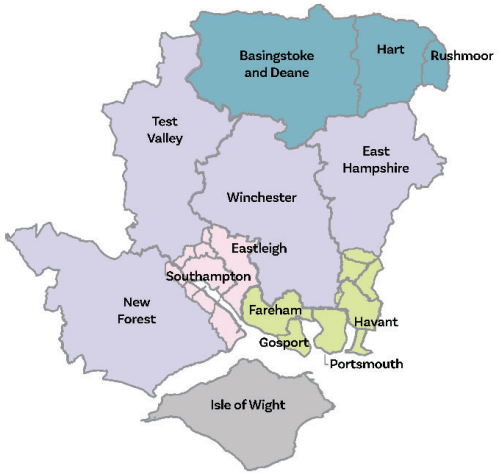
Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**19%**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**19%**	**North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**19%**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**28%**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester	**20%**	**Mid Hampshire:** East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**23%**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, South-ampton	**20%**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton	**28%**	**South West Hampshire:** Eastleigh, New Forest*, Southampton, Test Valley*	**24%**
South East Hampshire: Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**26%**	**South East Hampshire:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**26%**	**South East Hampshire:** East Hampshire*, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Winchester*	**27%**
Isle of Wight	**7%**	**Isle of Wight**	**7%**	**Isle of Wight**	**7%**

Our progress towards devolution

We have a dedicated programme working to establish an MCCA ready for Mayoral elections in May 2026.

Our four new mainland unitary proposal for devolution presents a transformative opportunity to enhance local governance, optimise funding allocation and address the distinct needs of our communities. This model offers a solid foundation from which to build a strong, innovative future for devolution across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Criteria six: how unitaries will enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

How four new mainland unitaries will enable stronger community engagement

Our four new mainland unitaries, especially when compared to options with fewer than four mainland unitaries, are in a much stronger position to foster stronger community engagement and genuine neighbourhood engagement. By restructuring the current local government landscape into localised unitary authorities focused on each of the main population centres and the way people live, this approach would bring government closer to the people, ensuring that local voices are heard and local needs are met with greater efficiency and responsiveness.

1) **Enhanced local representation:** Each unitary authority would have a manageable geographic and demographic scope, ensuring more tailored and representative governance. This closeness to the community means that local leaders could better understand and address the unique challenges and opportunities within their areas. Residents would have more direct access to their representatives, facilitating a more participatory form of governance where community input is actively sought and valued.

2) **Improved service delivery:** With governance structures that are linked to local needs, unitary authorities would commission and deliver services more effectively and efficiently as is already demonstrated by the three existing unitary councils in Hampshire and the Solent. This approach allows for the customisation of services to better fit the specific requirements of each community, leading to improved outcomes in areas such as education, healthcare and infrastructure. By reducing bureaucratic layers, resources could be allocated more directly to where they are needed most, enhancing the quality of life for residents.

3) **Empowerment through local neighbourhood initiatives and governance:** A key advantage of our proposal is its potential to empower neighbourhoods through local initiatives. By devolving powers and responsibilities, communities are given the opportunity to take charge of local projects and initiatives. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and pride among residents, encouraging active participation in community development and decision-making processes. Together with communities and local partners, we would co-design future neighbourhood governance arrangements that best meet local requirements in each new unitary area through a total place type approach. This would deliver decision making at the lowest effective level to speed up delivery, tailored to each of our community's needs.

By bringing governance closer to the people, enhancing service delivery, and fostering local initiatives, our proposal would create vibrant, empowered communities that are actively involved in shaping their futures.

The future democratic structures and councillor numbers

This section outlines the research carried out to inform the proposed councillor ratios, provides a summary of the current councillor arrangements and a recommendation for indicative future councillor numbers. The analysis highlights the benefits of transitioning to four new unitaries on the mainland which would deliver more effective and responsive local governance.

Summary of research conducted

Research around current councillor numbers in existing unitary authorities was completed, focusing on councillor-to-population ratios and the effectiveness of representation. The table below highlights key data from comparator councils, providing a benchmark for assessing the proposed changes:

Unitary	No. Cllrs	Population 2028	No. of electorate divisions/wards	Population per Cllr	No. Cllrs per electorate division
Somerset	110	581,145	54	5,283	2.04
Cornwall	87	578,324	87	6,647	1.00
Durham, County	98	532,182	63	5,430	1.56
Wiltshire	98	517,979	98	5,286	1.00
Bristol, City of	70	482,998	34	6,900	2.06
West Northamptonshire	93	434,349	28	4,670	3.32
Cheshire East	82	412,458	36	5,030	2.28
Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole	76	404,050	33	5,316	2.30
Dorset	82	384,809	36	4,693	2.28
Leicester	54	379,780	21	7,033	2.57
Totals	**850**	**4,708,074**	**490**	**5,539**	**1.73**

Summary of current councillor arrangements in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Currently, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is served by a total of 650 councillors across various councils, including individuals who serve on two councils. The councillor-to-population ratio varies significantly across different tiers of authority, with districts averaging one councillor per 3,391 residents and unitaries averaging one per 4,839 residents. The county council has a notably higher ratio of one per 19,126 residents.

Council	Number of Wards	Number of Councillors	Population 2028 estimates	Cllr ratio
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	18	54	194,247	3,597
East Hampshire District Council	31	43	134,583	3,130
Eastleigh Borough Council	14	39	148,682	3,812
Fareham Borough Council	16	32	122,677	3,834
Gosport Borough Council	14	28	84,558	3,020
Hart District Council	11	33	106,464	3,226
Havant Borough Council	12	36	129,654	3,602
New Forest District Council	26	48	181,664	3,785
Rushmoor Borough Council	13	39	106,754	2,737
Test Valley Borough Council	20	43	140,248	3,262
Winchester City Council	16	45	142,328	3,163
Isle of Wight Council	39	39	146,351	3,785
Portsmouth City Council	14	42	217,852	5,187
Southampton City Council	17	51	274,539	5,383
Hampshire County Council	76	78	1,491,859	19,126

Introducing the indicative future councillor number and ratios

Guided by the research, we have designed indicative councillor numbers for each of the proposed new mainland unitary councils, recognising that ultimately this will be determined by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Each of our new unitary configurations worked in small groups and using the research, Boundary Commission guidance, approach to decision making and considering the needs of the residents and the areas, developed the indicative numbers. The indicative numbers proposed, set out below, are for the long-term governance and decision making and it is understood that in the short-term other arrangements would be needed for the shadow authorities, which we would be keen to discuss with government as the process moves forward.

The councillor numbers for Isle of Wight remain unchanged as per the current arrangements. This is because the case being submitted includes the Isle of Wight remaining independent as a continuing island unitary authority.

Across the three options, there is a range of a total number of councillors from 67 for Option 1 in the South West and 99 for all options in the South East. There is an average of 88 councillors and a ratio of one councillor per 5,316 population (3,921 electorates) across all three options. These ranges and averages exclude the Isle of Wight who will remain separate under our proposal. This represents tailored approaches, numbers and ratios which fit the specific configurations within each option. There is also a reduction in total councillor numbers from 650 to 390 (average across each option).

	Option 1			Option 2			Option 3			Average		
Council configurations	Population ratio (2028)	Electorate ratio (31/03/2025)	Number of Councillors	Population ratio (2028)	Electorate ratio (31/03/2025)	Number of Councillors	Population ratio (2028)	Electorate ratio (31/03/2025)	Number of Councillors	Population Ratio	Electorate Ratio	Number of Councillors
Total Councillors	4,115	3,925	383	4,005	3,820	393	4,005	3,820	393	**4,042**	**3,855**	**390**
North Councillors	4,794	3,346	85	4,794	3,346	85	4,794	3,346	85	**4,794**	**3,346**	**85**
Mid Councillors	6,439	4,711	93	5,250	3,727	79	5,267	3,850	92	**5,652**	**4,096**	**88**
South-West Councillors	6,317	3,998	67	6,647	4,503	91	6,221	4,060	82	**6,395**	**4,187**	**80**
South-East Councillors	5,603	4,059	99	5,603	4,059	99	5,880	4,249	99	**5,696**	**4,122**	**99**
Isle of Wight Councillors	3,753	2,845	39	3,753	2,845	39	3,753	2,845	39	**3,753**	**2,845**	**39**
Ave exc low	**5,454**	**4,008**	**86**	**5,260**	**3,891**	**89**	**5,233**	**3,865**	**90**	**5,316**	**3,921**	**88**

The future of neighbourhood governance in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

In our four new mainland unitary authorities, neighbourhood governance would be a core part of our approach, ensuring local voices remain central to decision-making, service oversight and community engagement. Our approach aligns with best practice, national policy direction and the lived realities of our communities.

The proposed neighbourhood governance would reflect the distinct identities and needs of communities across each of the new unitary footprints. They would be co-designed with partners and communities to operate at a scale that is close enough to be local, while being embedded in the wider system that is big enough to stay strong. We know from evidence (see Appendix 6) that neighbourhood scale governance promotes trust, improves outcomes and enables more effective public sector reform.

The role of neighbourhood governance would be to connect the strategic with the local, ensuring that decisions made at the unitary level are informed by granular, place-based insight. This aligns with the principles of the DCMS Civil Society Covenant, recently agreed by the government, which calls for deeper collaboration, participation and transparency between government and society.

Neighbourhood governance in each new unitary area would be empowered to influence and shape services in their locality. This includes:

- Oversight of local service delivery and performance
- Participatory budgeting and local grant-making
- Acting as a forum for co-designing services with residents and partners
- Providing a democratic route for community priorities to inform strategic planning.

This model builds on successful examples such as Local Community Networks in Somerset and Neighbourhood Partnerships in Wigan which have demonstrated how devolved governance can improve outcomes, reduce demand and build trust.

It would also play a vital role in supporting the wider devolution agenda. By anchoring neighbourhood governance within our framework for the MCA, we would ensure that local priorities are not lost in regional strategies. This dual alignment, local responsiveness and strategic coherence, would be essential to the success of our new governance model.

The specific design of neighbourhood governance in each new unitary area would be co-produced with communities and partners, including town and parish councils, during the shadow authorities phase. This would ensure flexibility and responsiveness to our local contexts, while embedding democratic innovation from the outset and maintaining pace against timelines. Over time, these arrangements would be regularly reviewed and refined to reflect changing community needs and expectations, ensuring that governance and supporting delivery remains dynamic and inclusive.

The following two case studies demonstrate differing approaches to neighbourhood governance which we would learn from. Ultimately, each of our four new mainland unitaries, along with the Isle of Wight unitary, would work closely with their local partners and communities to co-produce the specific neighbourhood governance and delivery arrangements that work best for them.

Retaining ceremonial and civic arrangements

Our proposals include applications from the constituent authorities to retain City status (for existing cities) and to retain the status of existing civic and ceremonial positions including, but not limited to, Lord Mayor or Mayor status for the different areas, Admiral of the Port for Southampton and Portsmouth and other civic and ceremonial functions. The constituent authorities would seek the retention of these civic and ceremonial roles in subsequent Designation Orders to ensure the historic and community value of these roles are recognised and retained for the benefit of the areas. We are keen to talk to the government about this as the process moves forward.

Case Study: Strengthening local democracy through neighbourhood empowerment

Across Mid Hampshire, the existing local councils have strengthened democracy over many years by empowering communities to shape their futures. From Test Valley's community-led Andover Vision and Romsey Future partnerships to Winchester's forums in their new neighbourhoods and New Forest's Totton regeneration partnership, frontline councillors are working with residents to set local priorities, co-design the future, and drive lasting change within their communities. This place-based approach, through neighbourhood empowerment, enables decisions to be made that reflect real community needs and provide the catalyst for communities to access the resources they need to deliver long-term sustainable outcomes for their place. The regeneration of Andover Town Centre is real example of this from a community-led masterplan involving thousands of people through to delivery of multi-million-pound schemes including a brand-new theatre by 2027.

Innovation in engagement and closeness to communities is at the heart of this. Methods such as citizens' assemblies and award-winning digital consultations are used to reach a more diverse range of voices than ever before and build consensus on complex issues - from local plans to health and resilience planning. Test Valley continues to build on its national reputation for its deliberative engagement work, while Winchester's lockdown-era consultation scooped two national awards. New Forest's community forums are tackling issues like emergency planning and cost of living - bringing together councillors, partners and residents in meaningful dialogue all with a focus on their communities.

There is also a deep understanding of the value of formal decision-making processes being close enough to communities through examples such as area-based planning committees. In Test Valley, a dedicated communities team directly supports frontline community councillors to deepen the presence of the principal council in local communities through their convening and facilitating role giving access to resources to get things done. At New Forest, there is an annual active grants scheme that awards £350,000 to local projects and in Winchester, neighbourhood work in its new communities has led to the creation of new governance structures, redesigned parishes and stronger local engagement at a neighbourhood level. Across each authority, this collaborative approach is strengthening local democracy, resilience, and ownership - proving that when working with their communities at a neighbourhood level, councils can deliver bold, lasting impact.

Case Study: Eastleigh Borough Council neighbourhood area working

Eastleigh Borough Council has successfully operated neighbourhood area working since the 1990s. The borough is divided into five Local Area Committees (LACs), which are made up of all the borough councillors in each area. They range in size from 6 to 12 councillors who take decisions and make representations on a wide range of council business relating to their area including:

- *determining planning applications*
- *managing local budgets*
- *managing capital projects*
- *deciding on local priorities*
- *promoting local participation from residents/ businesses and town/parish councils*
- *traffic management and environmental improvements.*

LAC meetings are open to the public and are periodically attended by partner organisations including the police, local business organisations and the voluntary sector. Each LAC has a Local Area Manager who works with councillors to provide support and to set the strategic direction of the committee's work.

The LAC system offers residents the opportunity to engage with, and influence, a very local democratic forum with real powers, while for councillors it is a chance to get involved in decision-making from the very first day they are elected. It builds on the model of Local Area Boards which has been widely adopted in other parts of England by delegating real power, along with budgets that can be sizeable, to the very local level. For planning and other potentially sensitive matters, the system ensures that decisions are taken by locally elected people with a real stake in the debate. With adaptations, the LAC model could be suitable for application in new unitary authorities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

5. Isle of Wight case for remaining as an existing unitary council

With a track record of financial sustainability and effective service delivery, the Isle of Wight Council has operated successfully as a unitary council since 1995.

The Island's unique geography, accessible only by ferry, creates distinct logistical and service delivery challenges that are best addressed through a locally focused model. Being an independent authority has enabled tailored responses to challenges, demographic pressures and environmental priorities while protecting the Island's local identity.

Our approach is anchored by a shared commitment to build on a history of collaboration with mainland councils. Maintaining the Isle of Wight as an independent or unitary authority will ensure it continues to respond to local needs while standing alongside new the mainland unitary councils through an enhanced partnership.

5. Isle of Wight case for remaining as an existing unitary council

Introduction and key arguments for Isle of Wight to remain independent from the mainland

The Isle of Wight is the largest island off the English coast, covering approximately 380 square kilometres (147 square miles). It is home to just over 72,000 domestic properties and 7,600 businesses, with a current population of around 142,000 residents. The Island's character is primarily rural, interspersed with historic towns and urban areas, and it offers a unique blend of community, heritage, and environment.

Unlike any mainland area in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight is accessible only by ferry, as there are no fixed links to the UK mainland. All ferry services are commercially operated and subject to weather, capacity and operational constraints, which present significant challenges of reliability, frequency and affordability. These limitations impact not only day-to-day connectivity but also the cost and organisation of public services, supply chains and economic activity across the Island.

This physical separation has contributed to the development of a distinct, self-contained community with a strong sense of self-reliance and mutual support, qualities that were especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments have long recognised the unique circumstances of the Island by providing for a single council covering the Isle of Wight alone in successive local government reorganisations.

Since 1995, the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) has operated successfully as a unitary authority, delivering the full range of local government services, statutory and otherwise, to its residents for three decades. Over this period, the council has managed its finances in a prudent, sustainable and efficient

manner, setting it apart from many larger authorities which have faced significant financial pressures in recent years. The Island's council has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of wider funding challenges, using its resources to address local priorities and deliver targeted improvements for its residents.

Maintaining the current unitary authority for the Island enables the council to focus resources on its unique local challenges, such as rural service delivery, demographic pressures and environmental protection, while pursuing targeted transformation within existing funding and strategic frameworks. By contrast, incorporating the Island into a larger mainland-based unitary authority would introduce unnecessary bureaucratic complexity, risk undermining local responsiveness and increase costs due to the inevitable logistical barriers of the Solent. Such a move would likely result in duplication of services and infrastructure, with little prospect of cost savings or effective asset sharing due to the Island's natural separation and service delivery requirements. The additional travel needed for elected representatives and officers to attend meetings on the mainland would only add to the administrative and financial burden, further weakening the direct accountability between the council and the Island's residents.

Appropriate sharing of services between the Isle of Wight Council and mainland authorities has supported efficiencies and capacity building frameworks. However, merging or enlarging the Isle of Wight Council would neither enhance nor improve service sharing; instead, it would risk diluting the Island's strong local governance and community identity.

Our five-unitary council model proposal is anchored by a shared commitment to collaborative transformation, with the Isle of Wight Council working alongside the four new unitary councils on the mainland. This enhanced partnership approach will enable shared learning, joint innovation and the flexible exploration of shared services where appropriate, ensuring that the Island continues to benefit from regional collaboration while retaining the local responsiveness and accountability essential for effective service delivery in its unique context.

The Isle of Wight's size, structure and governance model has proven its ability to deliver high-quality public services at a local level. The council's tailored transformation agenda, strong partnerships with mainland authorities and record of innovation and community engagement demonstrate why the Isle of Wight is ideally suited to remain a stand-alone unitary authority. The Island's unique needs, identity and civic culture are best served by a council that is accountable to local residents and empowered to innovate, adapt and lead.

Our proposal is not for the Isle of Wight to stand apart, but to stand alongside its new mainland unitary partners: a resilient, high-performing council that continues to serve its residents with efficiency and distinction. Below, we set out the case for the Island to remain a unitary authority with an enhanced partnership with the four new mainland unitaries, addressing each of the government criteria as requested in the interim feedback letter.

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

The Isle of Wight stands as a singular entity in the UK – geographically, culturally, economically and environmentally. For over 30 years the council has successfully operated as a unitary authority, delivering locally attuned services and governance that reflect the Island's distinct identify.

A distinct demography and cultural identity

The Island is not merely separated by water, it is defined by its insularity and has a very different demography to South East and South West Hampshire (see definitions in the approach section), including:

- A proportionately larger elderly and ageing population, 21.5% aged 70 plus versus 17.2% in Hampshire and a median age of 51 years (43 years in Hampshire).
- A higher proportion of residents, 8.8% compared to 5.8% in Hampshire, reporting a long-term health problem or disability limiting daily activities.
- A deeply embedded culture of unpaid care, with over 11% of the population being unpaid carers, providing essential care and support to their partner, child, parent, friend or neighbours.
- A lower proportion of working age residents at 51.8%, impacting the labour market dynamics and service demand.
- Higher levels of deprivation, with a deprivation per head score of 0.14, indicating greater socioeconomic challenges.
- A lower population density of 385.5 people per square kilometre, reflecting its rural and dispersed settlement pattern, contrasting with more urbanised areas of South East and South West Hampshire.

The Island's cultural identity is equally distinct. Its maritime heritage, rural settlement patterns and strong community ethos foster a level of civic engagement, with over 1,500 voluntary organisations. This self-reliance, amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic is a direct product of its geographic isolation and resilience, and can be safeguarded through locally accountable governance.

This close-knit culture is also influenced by the Island's physical separation from the mainland, which creates a natural boundary and fosters a more self-reliant way of life. The Island's identity is also shaped by its role as a tourist destination, its maritime heritage, and its environmental character, including protected landscapes and coastal settings. These features contribute to a shared pride in place and a strong local voice, which residents feel is best supported by having their own unitary council.

Inevitably these differences in demographics and cultural identity require a council that fully understands this and tailors its priorities, approach and services accordingly.

A unique economic ecosystem

Contributing £2.5 billion GVA, the Isle of Wight's economy is shaped by its geography and seasonality. Tourism, care, food and retail dominate, supported by a high concentration of over 5,000 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that rely on local networks and council-led initiatives, such as the Isle of Wight Rural SME Fund and small grants programme. This is very different from the economies of both South East and South West Hampshire on the mainland.

The Island functions as a cohesive economic area with strong community ties and entrepreneurial spirit. However, to unlock further growth the Island requires strategic investment aligned with its environmental sensitivities and workforce capabilities. A targeted and place-based approach is essential – one that builds on its status as a premier holiday and visitor destination while diversifying its economic base to reduce seasonal dependency.

To attract sustained inward investment, particularly from international markets, the Island requires a strategic marketing and regeneration programme that showcases its unique assets and investment-ready opportunities. This will not only stimulate economic activity but also generate new revenue streams to support vital public services. This must be delivered in a way that respects the Island's environmental sensitivities and aligns and improves local wage levels and workforce capabilities. Development sites and opportunity areas have been identified across the Island offering a clear pathway to deliver new jobs, homes and increased local revenues. To unlock these opportunities, the Island needs a bespoke, targeted approach including enhanced infrastructure, particularly in digital connectivity and the policy flexibility to reflect the Island's unique economic context.

In short, the Isle of Wight's distinctiveness, strategic coherence and the need for tailored, Island-specific solutions make a compelling case for it remaining a unitary authority. The governance model is not just administratively efficient; it is essential for unlocking the Island's full potential and delivering prosperity for its residents.

Travel and transport infrastructure

The Island's transport infrastructure is fundamentally different from its neighbouring mainland councils. Unlike the mainland, which benefits from integrated road, rail and bus networks, the Island's connectivity is shaped by its geography isolation and reliance on ferry services. These maritime links are not optional – they are the Island's lifeline for residents, businesses and visitors. Their cost, reliability and vulnerability directly affect access to employment, healthcare and education. Improving ferry services is a key priority, including better reliability, affordability, and integration with mainland transport. The Island also needs investment in its local roads and public transport to make travel easier within the community. These challenges are unique to the Isle of Wight and require tailored solutions that reflect its rural setting and limited transport options.

Within the Island itself transport delivery is characterised by the rural character and limited transport options. Investment in local roads and bus services are essential to maintain mobility, social inclusion and economic resilience. The council's Local Transport Plan (2025-2040) is in development and is tailored specifically to the Island's needs, including sustainable transport and congestion reduction. Two key coastal routes (the Military Road along the south west coast and Leeson Road in Ventnor) are particularly vulnerable to erosion and climate

related disruption. These roads are not only vital for connecting communities and supporting tourism but also serve as critical corridors for services. Their maintenance requires bespoke engineering solutions and sustained investment, reflecting the Island's unique environmental pressures.

There are local transport challenges which cannot be addressed through regional or larger authority strategies that may not recognised the vital importance of these issues for the Island community. They demand local leadership, tailored policy responses and dedicated resources.

Travel to work: A self-contained labour market

Over 85% of employed residents live and work on the Isle of Wight. Solent (ferry) dependent commuting is minimal (3.2% of residents), and the average commute time is significantly shorter than the mainland, reflecting not only geographic isolation but a community-based economy reliant on local services and seasonal industries.

The Island's economy is shaped by services that are deeply embedded in the local community: tourism, health and social care, education, retail and public services. Unlike urban centres such as Southampton or Portsmouth there are no large scale industrial or commercial hubs. Its economic resilience depends on seasonal demand, community needs and public sector provision.

This distinct economic and social profile has direct implications for workforce planning, transport policy and investment strategy. For example, while improving ferry reliability and affordability could enhance access and support business growth, it would not fundamentally alter the Island's self-contained labour market in the short term.

These structural patterns necessitate workforce planning and investment strategies that are hyper-localised. For example, Adult Community Learning (ACL) on the Island plays a vital role in empowering individuals, strengthening communities and fostering lifelong learning – a vital first step on the ladder for those that did not achieve in school or who have barriers to learning. With most of the working age population living and working locally, ACL provides accessible pathways to improve skills, confidence, health and wellbeing and for progressing into work, apprenticeships and further or higher education. It does this via collaborative partnerships with local organisations to help learning progress from foundation-level courses to higher qualifications. It also contributes to the local Skills Board.

The Island's challenges and opportunities are not shared with neighbouring areas and therefore cannot be addressed through anything other than localised service delivery.

Housing and Homelessness

The Island benefits from a more affordable and community-oriented housing landscape, particularly in the provision of supported social retirement accommodation and extra care housing. These types of housing are more accessible on the Isle of Wight, reflecting its older population and rural character, and are often embedded within local communities to support ageing in place.

The Isle of Wight's Single Homelessness Pathway coordinates services such as mother-and-baby units, priority need assessments, and rural outreach, tailored to the Island's geography and demographic needs. In contrast, urban centres like Southampton and Portsmouth focus more on drop-in hubs, rough sleeping outreach and emergency placements, often delivered in partnership with charities and faith groups.

Despite its strengths in supported accommodation, the Isle of Wight still faces challenges. Between April and June 2024, the Island reported a homelessness rate of 1.13 per 1,000 households, slightly above the Hampshire and Solent average of 1.1. It also had 3.56 households per 1,000 in temporary accommodation, which is higher than many rural districts but lower than urban centres like Portsmouth (4.76).

These figures reflect the Island's limited housing stock, seasonal pressures, and rural isolation, which can complicate access to services and emergency housing. However, the Island's strong community networks and place-based service models offer a foundation for prevention and early intervention that is harder to replicate in more urban environments.

Rural geography: stewardship of a globally recognised environment

The Isle of Wight is not just a local authority; it is a nationally and internationally recognised environmental asset. Approximately 47% of the Island's land surface and 95% of its coastline are under legal and policy protection for wildlife and natural heritage. Half of the Island is designated as a National Landscape (formerly AONB), with many of these areas overlapping with other protected zones. These protections underpin the Island's designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, placing it among a select group of regions globally recognised for their commitment to sustainable development and conservation. This environment is fundamentally different to that found in South East and South West Hampshire.

This unique environmental profile demands a governance model that is locally accountable, strategically focussed and environmentally literate. The IWC has consistently demonstrated the ability to deliver services and stewardship tailored to this complex landscape.

As a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the Isle of Wight is uniquely positioned to attract environmental investment, innovation funding and international partnerships. These opportunities are contingent on having a coherent, place-based governance arrangement.

The Isle of Wight's environmental significance is not incidental – it is central to its identity, economy and future resilience.

Criteria 2: unitary councils that are the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

The IWC stands as a resilient, efficient and community-driven authority, uniquely positioned to deliver public services tailored to the Island's distinct needs. Artificially extending local authority boundaries based on demographic size will not automatically achieve significant savings due the natural physical separation of the Solent. It will though lose the targeted focus the Island needs on its specific opportunities and challenges. Inevitably for most major services the same arrangements and infrastructure will need to be duplicated and based on the Island. This means the opportunities to reduce fixed costs and make procurement efficiencies and estate rationalisation are always going to be limited.

Costs to deliver public services on the Island are rising, a significant concern compounded by increasing demand, driven by factors such as the island's elderly and ageing population. While we recognise demand pressures are a national issue, they are more pronounced on the Island than in other locations. The IWC's ability to manage demand is further constrained by an inconsistent health offer from the NHS, which is dealing with the same island cost pressures. The challenges are further explained below, which cannot be resolved through being part of a new, larger unitary authority on the mainland:

- **Unique and unavoidable costs** - Transporting goods and services across the Solent, such as waste disposal, incurs ferry-related costs that mainland authorities do not face. These costs would persist regardless of whether the Island were part of a larger unitary, meaning integration would not deliver the efficiencies typically expected from reorganisation.
- **Market failures and small markets** - The Island's limited market size leads to reduced competition and higher costs in key sectors like public transport, waste, and social care. These conditions are endemic to the Island's geography and cannot be resolved through being part of a larger mainland unitary authority. In fact, being part of a larger mainland unitary could obscure these challenges and reduce the Island's ability to tailor solutions to its unique market dynamics.

Despite these challenges, the IWC has consistently demonstrated its ability to effectively manage its resources, meet statutory obligations and innovate in service delivery. This success is driven by local people as councillors and business leaders striving to deliver the best for the Island. The sense of community means that people are willing to step up and help where they can.

Collaborative transformation without structural change

Whilst the physical barriers the Island's geography presents to savings will remain, our four new mainland unitaries and the Isle of Wight will work collaboratively to explore and realise any transformation opportunities that are achievable. Through an enhanced transformation partnership, IWC will work collaboratively alongside the four new mainland unitaries to assess each redesign and savings opportunity they progress to test any potential savings that could be realised for the Island and other authorities collectively.

Recent and planned IWC transformation initiatives include:

- **Telephony upgrade:** Replacing the outdated legacy system with a modern, integrated solution aligned with its digital strategy. This aims to enhance customer experience, support flexible working and future-proof communications, though a funding gap remains.
- **Business Centre Model:** Centralised transactional services have delivered significant savings over 15 years (see case study).

Under our proposal, an enhanced partnership approach across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area would also enable:

- **Core systems modernisation:** A proposed initiative for the IWC is the replacement of its outdated SAP ERP system, paused due to the LGR announcement but still a strategic priority. The plan involves investing £7.5 million over three years to implement a new ERP solution for HR, finance, payroll, and procurement functions. The new ERP system is expected to streamline processes, reduce manual workload and improve staff wellbeing, with projected annual savings of approximately £0.2 million (equivalent to five full-time roles).
- **Shared support services:** By pooling resources and expertise, IWC and the new mainland unitary authorities can benefit from economies of scale, reduce duplication and enhance service quality in areas not dependent on location.
- **Joint specialist roles:** Establishing shared specialist roles across councils will help IWC address recruitment challenges. This model would also support more strategic, cross-boundary working and reduce overhead costs.
- **Joint systems:** Implementing joint systems will enable the IWC to standardise processes, improve data accuracy and enhance service delivery, in particular, allowing for greater data sharing with the Integrated Care Board covering Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. For example, a shared CRM system could provide a single view of customer interactions, improving responsiveness and service quality.
- **Joint procurement and buying power:** Where appropriate, IWC will participate in joint procurement exercises with new mainland unitaries to leverage collective buying power. This can result in better contract terms, reduced unit costs and access to higher-quality suppliers, particularly for IT, infrastructure and facilities management.
- **Flexible and agile ways of working:** The IWC will continue to explore modern working practices, including remote and hybrid working, digital collaboration tools, and agile service design. These approaches can improve staff satisfaction, reduce estate costs and support more responsive service delivery.

The IWC's current and planned transformation initiatives reflect a strong commitment to doing things differently, with a clear focus on leadership and operational delivery. These potential initiatives demonstrate that collaboration and efficiency gains are best achieved without structural change. The partnership approach can ensure that best practices are adopted across the authorities while preserving local decision-making and community identity.

Case Study:

IWC Business Centre which could be grown into a shared service

The IWC Business Centre represents a mature and efficient model for delivering high-volume transactional services across a wide range of council functions. Over the past 15 years, the centre has delivered significant savings through centralisation, role rationalisation and process automation. Its success demonstrates the potential for this localised model to be scales into a broader shared service offering across multiple authorities.

Current operating model

The Business Centre comprises several small, multi-disciplinary teams that operate generically across functions, enabling flexibility, resilience and knowledge sharing. This structure allows specialist and professional colleagues to focus on strategic priorities, supported by a capable and agile operational backbone.

Key service areas include:

- *Customer Contact and Help Centre: Serving over 30 service areas, this team provides the first-contact resolution (targeting a 95% resolution) and undertakes administrative tasks such as staff benefits, concessionary travel applications, vendor setups and complaints monitoring.*
- *Payments and Payroll: A centralised procure-to-pay function, including ordering, invoicing, debt collection and payroll services. Proximity and integration enable rapid resolution of financial queries.*
- *Fleet and Facilities Management: Responsible for County Hall maintenance, fleet oversight, post room and stores. The team also support with empty property checks.*
- *Revenue Collection and Enforcement: In-house administration and enforcement of council tax, business rates and penalty charge notices.*
- *Tourism support: Administration of the Visit Isle of Wight tourism Business Improvement District (BID).*
- *Benefits Administration: Delivery of housing benefits and local council tax support, including partnership with the ferry companies to administer the locally developed affordable travel scheme.*
- *Operational Support: Scanning, indexing of post for the revenues and benefits and payment processing of council utility bills supporting property services.*
- *Blue badge administration: End-to-end management of applications and renewals.*

Strategic opportunity

The Business Centre's integrated and working model offers a compelling foundation for a scalable service. Its proven ability to deliver efficiencies, maintain service quality and adapt to evolving demands positions it as a blueprint for a broader collaboration. Whilst previous outreach to Portsmouth and Gosport councils did not progress, the current context of LGR presents renewed opportunity to revisit.

An IWC Business Centre based model could:

- *Standardise transactional process across authorities, reducing duplication and improving consistency.*
- *Leverage economies of scale through pooled resources and centralised systems.*
- *Enhance resilience by creating a larger, cross-trained workforce capable of flexing to meet demand.*
- *Drive innovation through shared investment in automation and digital transformation.*

Future funding

Current funding formulas do not adequately reflect the Island's unique cost pressures. The IWC lacks the remoteness adjustments available to other geographically isolated areas, resulting in an inequitable distribution of resources. Joining a larger mainland unitary would not correct this imbalance. Recognising that the government is currently going through a fair funding review, which we very much support, the IWC council would be keen to discuss with government how that can lead in future to funding that does adequately address the Island's unique challenges and circumstances.

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

The IWC has consistently demonstrated its capacity to deliver quality and responsive public services tailored to the unique needs of its island population. The council has shown a commitment to improvement, innovation and community engagement, despite the unique challenges of serving an island population. Remaining as a unitary authority the IWC is sized and structured to prioritise local outcomes, drive innovation and maintain accountability.

Proven track record of quality service delivery

Isle of Wight Council's performance across key service areas reflects a strong commitment to quality and continuous improvement:

- **Children's Services:** Rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2023, with inspectors praising strong leadership, effective safeguarding and a clear focus on improving outcomes. Investment in early help and foster care support has created a more stable and responsive system. Children's Services on the Isle of Wight has maintained a 'Good' rating from Ofsted, with inspectors noting improvements since the end of the council's partnership with Hampshire County Council. The council has increased capacity and leadership focus, and a clear commitment to further enhancing service quality.
- **Adult Social Care:** on the Island 85% of adult social care providers are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. The council has worked closely with local NHS partners to streamline care pathways and reduce hospital admissions. Feedback from people who draw on care and support indicate increasing satisfaction with the quality and responsiveness of care. The Isle of Wight Dementia Strategy (2022–2025) has been praised nationally and was a finalist in both the Health Service Journal and Local Government Chronicle Awards. Key achievements include a dementia training programme for health and social care staff; the opening of the Parklands Dementia Hub and community café in Cowes; and a Dementia Outreach Team providing community-based support. The strategy is overseen by a multi-agency board and is currently being refreshed to build on early successes.
- **Waste Management and Recycling:** IWC achieved a 56.2% recycling rate in 2023 – well above the national average of 44.1%. Less than 5% of waste is sent to landfill, supported by innovative schemes and strong public engagement.
- **Education:** Targeted interventions and partnerships have led to improved Ofsted outcomes in several primary schools with ongoing efforts to raise secondary education standards.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Over 30 active community-led conservation projects and a well-received climate action plan demonstrate the IWC's leadership in biodiversity, coastal protection and climate resilience. The Isle of Wight's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), approved in April 2025, has been recognised by DEFRA and Natural England as a national exemplar. It is one of the first four LNRSs in the country to go live. The strategy includes a detailed habitat map and targeted actions to reverse biodiversity loss. Toolkits and community engagement resources are being rolled out to support implementation.

- **Adult Community Learning (ACL):** Adapted to reduced funding since 2010 by offering flexible, non-accredited learning through Tailored Learning and the Multiply project (2022-2025), in addition to essential skills qualifications to support positive outcomes for learners. The May 2025 Ofsted inspection rated ACL on the Isle of Wight as "Good" with learners' behaviour and attitudes towards learning deemed "Outstanding".

Tailoring service delivery for local needs

The IWC as an existing unitary authority, is uniquely positioned to continue to redesign and improve services in a way that is locally responsive, efficient, and sustainable. The council is progressing a transformation agenda that reflects the Island's distinct geography, demographics and service challenges. Current plans focus on integrated health and social care, digital transformation, early intervention in children's services, environmental resilience, and housing development. For example, the council is expanding community-based care to reduce hospital admissions, investing in digital platforms to streamline access to services, and working with local partners to deliver affordable housing and climate adaptation projects.

Managing these improvements within the existing unitary structure offers significant advantages over being part of a new, larger unitary authority on the mainland. IWC already has consolidated governance, which allows for faster decision-making and clearer accountability. It also ensures that resources are directed specifically toward island priorities, rather than being diluted across a larger, more diverse region.

Being part of a new, larger mainland unitary authority would not resolve the Island's inherent cost pressures. The Island's unique challenges, such as transport connectivity, coastal management and seasonal population shifts require bespoke solutions that may be overlooked in a broader model. Furthermore, maintaining local control supports stronger community engagement and preserves the Island's identity, which is a key factor in service design and delivery.

As mentioned previously, key opportunities for IWC going forward include sharing non-location-dependent support services like HR, finance, IT and procurement, allowing the council to benefit from economies of scale and specialist expertise. Joint specialist roles and teams in areas such as legal, commissioning and data analytics help to address recruitment challenges and foster strategic collaboration. The implementation of joint systems, particularly in customer relationship management and data sharing with health partners, enhances service delivery and responsiveness. Additionally, joint procurement strengthens buying power, securing better value and access to high-quality suppliers. By embracing flexible and agile working practices, IWC can also modernise its workforce and service design, improving staff satisfaction and operational resilience.

The IWC can build on these plans for improving and redesigning services through working closely with the new mainland unitary authorities, accelerating service innovation and efficiency. Central to this collaboration is a commitment to shared learning, where IWC actively reviews successful transformation programmes, such as digital service delivery, customer access enhancements, and workforce optimisation, and adapts them to the island's unique context (see section in Criteria 2). This shared learning model allows IWC to remain locally focused, retaining the agility and accountability needed to tailor services to the island's distinct needs, while benefiting from regional collaboration and innovation.

Criteria 4: 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

The IWC has been a fully engaged and collaborative partner throughout the LGR programme, working in close partnership with the eleven other mainland councils across Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth. From the outset, IWC has demonstrated a strong commitment to shared learning, transparency, and co-design, recognising the value of regional collaboration in driving service improvement and innovation.

IWC has consistently participated in all Chief Executive and Leader sessions, ensuring that the Island's unique context is not only represented but meaningfully integrated into discussions. Senior officers from finance, governance and service design have participated in key forums, bringing forward the council's expertise as an established unitary authority.

IWC representatives have attended service design workshops focused on current challenges and transformation opportunities. As an established unitary authority, the Isle of Wight brings a wealth of practical experience in integrated service delivery, governance, and community engagement. This has enabled the council to contribute meaningfully to discussions, sharing insights from years of operating as a single-tier authority responsible for a full range of local services. The council's deep understanding of how services interact at the local level has been valuable in identifying what works, what doesn't and how transformation can be realistically implemented. Additionally, IWC has been proactive in data sharing, contributing to joint analysis and system design and helping to ensure that regional solutions are informed by both urban and rural perspectives, including the unique needs of island communities. This deep and ongoing engagement reflects IWC's commitment to collaborative transformation, while maintaining its identity and autonomy as a standalone unitary authority. This is reflected by the fact that all 15 existing councils agree that the Isle of Wight should remain an independent unitary authority. By actively participating in regional forums and embracing shared learning, the council is well-positioned to adapt successful models to the Island's needs, improve service outcomes and deliver value for residents.

Informed by local views

This position is not only institutionally supported but also supported by public views. Local media outlets have reported that public sentiment leans heavily toward preserving the Island's autonomy. Residents and stakeholders consistently express concern that being part of a new, larger unitary authority on the mainland could erode the Island's cultural identity and result in decisions being made without sufficient understanding of local challenges. The prevailing view is clear: maintaining the Isle of Wight Council as a separate unitary authority enables the council to tailor its services and policies to the specific needs and characteristics of the island community, ensuring that local priorities are locally informed and addressed.

"As an island community it is unique. We are different to the mainland and that difference should continue to be respected through having our own unitary county going forward." (Survey response – Our Place, Our Future)

Local identity

As described earlier, the Isle of Wight's identity is not incidental – it is foundational. As an island community, it possesses a distinct blend of geographic, cultural and economic characteristics that shape its public service needs. The Island's sense of place is defined by its coastal environment, rural landscape, strong community networks and a proud heritage of independence and self-reliance. These factors influence everything from service delivery and infrastructure planning to economic development and community engagement.

Unlike the more urbanised and densely populated areas of South East and South West Hampshire, the Isle of Wight faces specific challenges such as seasonal population fluctuations, limited transport connectivity and a reliance on tourism and small businesses. These require tailored policy responses and service models that reflect the island's scale, pace and priorities. The council's ability to respond quickly and locally to these needs is a direct result of its unitary status and close relationship with its residents.

Being part of a new, larger mainland unitary authority would risk diluting this local focus. Decision-making could become more centralised and less responsive to the Island's unique context. Resources might be redirected to meet the demands of larger urban centres, and the Island's voice could be diminished. The Isle of Wight's distinct identity, so integral to its community cohesion and civic pride, could be overshadowed by broader, less tailored priorities.

Remaining a standalone unitary authority allows the IWC to preserve its autonomy, protect its identity, and continue delivering services that are designed with and for its residents. Autonomy does not mean isolation; the council's active participation in regional transformation partnerships ensures it can benefit from shared learning and collaboration without compromising its local character or strategic independence.

Criteria 5: how the model will support devolution arrangements

The IWC has played an active and committed role throughout the joint LGR and devolution process, contributing meaningfully to the development of a future strategic authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. We are proud to have been selected for the DPP and are working collaboratively to deliver both the DPP and the local government reorganisation programme. These initiatives will unlock local investment, drive economic growth, and improve public services across the region and for the Isle of Wight.

Throughout this journey, the Isle of Wight has consistently demonstrated its commitment to partnership working.

The proposed model of five unitary authorities across the area with four new, well-balanced mainland unitary authorities, working alongside the existing IWC, provides a strong foundation for effective devolution. Each mainland unitary will be large enough to deliver services efficiently, with populations ranging between 400,000 and 600,000, but not so large as to create democratic imbalance. This structure ensures that no single authority dominates decision-making, and that all constituent members have a meaningful voice in shaping regional strategy that would be diluted in a two or three mainland unitary option.

The Isle of Wight's continued status as an independent unitary authority supports equity in representation within the strategic authority. This arrangement avoids the risk of marginalisation and ensures that the strategic authority reflects the full diversity of communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Importantly, the Isle of Wight's continued status as a standalone unitary authority within the proposed strategic model supports the broader vision for devolution. The Island brings a distinct voice and perspective to the table, one shaped by its unique geography, rural character, and strong community identity. Unlike the more urbanised mainland areas in South West and South East Hampshire, the Isle of Wight faces specific island challenges which require tailored policy responses and locally led service delivery.

Our proposed model of four well-balanced mainland unitaries, working alongside the existing Isle of Wight Council, ensures that strategic planning is informed by diverse local priorities. This structure supports effective decision-making, avoids democratic imbalance, and enables the strategic authority to reflect the full breadth of communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Isle of Wight's inclusion strengthens the strategic authority by ensuring representation for rural and island communities, contributing to a more inclusive and responsive governance model.

By remaining an independent unitary authority, the Isle of Wight retains the agility and accountability needed to serve its residents effectively, while fully participating in regional collaboration. This balance between local delivery and strategic coordination is essential to the success of devolution, and the Isle of Wight is committed to playing a central role in shaping and delivering the future of public services across the region.

Criteria 6: how unitaries will enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

A continued status as a standalone unitary authority represents a unique and compelling opportunity to deepen community engagement and deliver authentic neighbourhood empowerment. As a geographically distinct island, with a strong sense of identity and civic pride, the Isle of Wight is positioned to be a model of local government that is both responsive and rooted in place.

The Isle of Wight's scale allows councillors to maintain strong connections with their communities. Residents know their representatives personally, and councillors are deeply embedded in the places they serve. This proximity creates trust, accountability and a shared understanding of local priorities. Maintaining the existing number of councillors ensures that representation remains proportionate and effective. It also avoids the risk of overstretched members, which can occur in larger authorities where councillors must serve significantly larger populations and wider geographies, and this can diminish local voice. In this respect, the Isle of Wight's scale is a strategic advantage.

Neighbourhood empowerment is further supported by the council's ability to tailor services and engagement strategies to the Island's specific needs. Whether through town and parish councils, community forums, or local partnerships, the IWC has the flexibility to design initiatives that reflect the character and aspirations of its diverse communities, from coastal towns to rural villages. This local responsiveness is a key strength of the existing unitary model and would be difficult to replicate within a new, larger, unitary authority.

The Isle of Wight actively supports community forums and place-based partnerships, bringing together residents, local organisations and service providers to co-design solutions. These forums are not just consultative – they are collaborative spaces where community voices shape policy and practice.

Equally important is the council's commitment to localised service design. Services on the Island are often developed with direct input from communities, ensuring they address specific challenges such as coastal resilience, rural transport and seasonal economies.

The IWC has demonstrated its ability to design and deliver locally responsive initiatives through town and parish councils community forums and place-based partnerships. Examples include:

- **The Bay Youth Project (BYP)** – launched in 2022 to address anti-social behaviour and youth disengagement in Sandown, Lake and Shanklin, it offers free services 48 weeks a year, including detached youth work, forums and structured activities chosen by young people. Over £3.5million in capital investment was secured for youth spaces and sports facilities, with strong collaboration between local councils and the Isle of Wight Council. The project has been recognised nationally. BYP is a prime example of place-based youth empowerment, shaped by local voices and supported by local governance.
- **Connecting libraries initiative** – led by Creative Island in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council library service, this project reimagines libraries as cultural and community

hubs. Activities include storytelling sessions, creative workshops, film screenings and performances across both council-run and volunteer-led libraries. A community development specialist works with local partners to expand library offerings and deepen engagement. This initiative demonstrates how local culture infrastructure is leveraged to foster intergenerational engagement and creativity.

As part of the wider strategic authority for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight will continue to contribute to regional planning and collaboration, while retaining the autonomy needed to empower its communities. This balance between strategic coordination and local delivery is essential to the success of devolution, and the Isle of Wight's role as a distinct, engaged, and community-focused unitary authority will be central to achieving it.

We have set out the case for it to remain a unitary authority with an enhanced partnership with the four new mainland unitaries, under each of the government criteria as requested in the interim feedback letter from government.

The Isle of Wight's coastal geography and landscape set it apart from nearby mainland areas like Southampton, Portsmouth and Hampshire, presenting unique challenges for service delivery and infrastructure. As an island, it is surrounded by the Solent and the English Channel, with a rugged coastline, chalk cliffs and limited access points via ferry or hovercraft. This isolation affects everything from emergency response times and healthcare access to economic development and transport logistics. Unlike the more urbanised and interconnected mainland cities, the Island's dispersed rural communities and reliance on maritime connections mean that services must be more locally resilient and tailored to a smaller, often older population. Coastal erosion, flooding risks and the need to protect sensitive marine and cliffside ecosystems further complicate planning and development, requiring innovative and sustainable approaches to land use and public service provision.

The Isle of Wight is the right size, structure and governance model to deliver high-quality public services at a local level. Its proven track record, tailored transformation agenda and strategic collaboration commitment with mainland partners demonstrate the case for retaining the IWC as unitary authority. The Island's unique needs, identity and community engagement are best served by a locally accountable council that can innovate, adapt and lead. Our proposal is not for the Isle of Wight to stand apart but to stand strong – as a resilient, high performing council that continues to serve its residents with distinction, while contributing meaningfully to the wider ambitions of devolution and public service reform across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Key data points for Isle of Wight in comparison with average for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

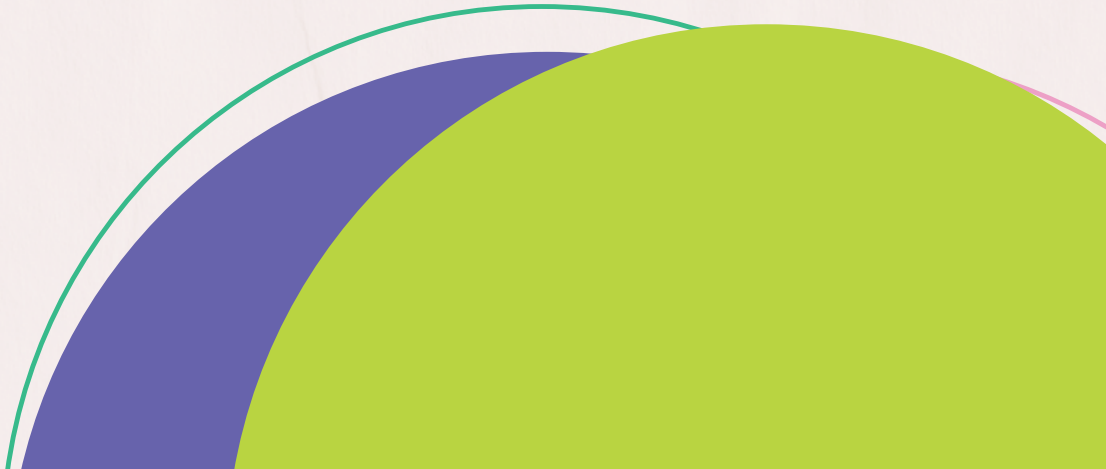
Criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	Isle of Wight Council	South East Hampshire	South West Hampshire*
Establishing a single tier of local government	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita	£21,766	£28,005	£37,186
		Unemployment rates	4.46%	4.12%	4.62%
		Gross disposable household income per head	£20,749	£21,130	£19,950
	Tax base	Council tax base	57,697	174,170	116,921
		Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£1,173	£481.74	£148.68
	Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	379.6	196	130
	Housing supply	Latest housing delivery test measurements (2023)	76%	44%	76%
		Registered provider housing (IOW) / Council housing stock per head	0.53	0.44	0.43
	Local Needs	Level of deprivation	0.14	0.11	0.10
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population size	Average unitary 2028 predicted population	146,351	554,741	423,221
	Potential financial efficiencies	Central services cost	£8,794	£21,533	£27,418
		Staff costs	£58,012	£292,728	£194,684
		Cost of IT licenses	£886	£8,974	£7,304
		Third party spend	£114,328	£451,513	£538,622
		Funding from council tax and business rates per head population	-£121,381	-£348,846	-£233,629
		Social care ratio	0.78%	91.33%	87.43%
	Establishing firmer financial footing	Gross budget gap (2026/2027) (£m)	£2,500	£33,532	£16,669
	Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	10%	6.14%	15.03%

Criteria	Assessment Factor	Metric	Isle of Wight Council	South East Hampshire	South West Hampshire*
High Quality and sustainable services	Crucial service protection	Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	0.25	0.20	0.20
		Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	0.21	0.17	0.17
		Environmental and regulatory services spend per head of population	£11,377	£60,409	£33,418
		Highways and transport services spend per head of population	£13,579	£33,161	£15,796
		Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.13	2.47	0.92
		Rough sleeper count	3	18	26
		Households on housing register per head of population	0.13	0.01	0.03
		Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 households	3.56	4.14	2.32
Working together to understand and meet local needs	Local identity	Proportion of population in rural output areas (%)	38%	0.50%	0.18%
Supporting devolution arrangements	Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	146,351	554,741	423,221
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS	41	205	118

*for the purposes of this comparison, South West Hampshire includes Southampton and Eastleigh. This changes depending on Options 1,2 and 3.

6. Alignment of our proposal to other government priority policy areas

In addition to the local government reorganisation criteria, our proposed four unitary council model for mainland Hampshire, with the Isle of Wight remaining independent, will best meet key government priority policy areas such as economic growth, integrated health and care, prevention and early intervention, digital transformation and public service reform.



6. Alignment of our proposal to other government priority policy areas

This table demonstrates how our four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal complements key government and NHS priorities.

Government / NHS priority	Four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model
Economic growth and regeneration: Drive inclusive growth through empowered local government	Brings together planning, housing, transport, economic development and placed-based marketing to enable enhanced inward investment activity, faster decision making, clearer accountability and more coherent place-based growth tailored to the economic areas and their opportunities and challenges. Our proposal is perfectly placed to deliver the priorities in the government's new Industrial Strategy.
Neighbourhood services and local accountability: Deliver services closer to communities at a neighbourhood level	Focuses neighbourhood-level delivery, co-locating health, social care, housing and early help in community hubs that are accessible, responsive and align with the requirements of residents in the different areas.
Prevention and early intervention: Shift from treatment to prevention-first public services	Closely connected to their local communities, the new unitaries will identify the risks earlier, intervene sooner and reduce long-term demand on acute services, making our communities more resilient. Through better use of shared assets and data while maintaining local stewardship, our proposal highlights existing critical infrastructure which will be mapped into a prevention network aligned with the NHS's 10-year plan.
Integrated health and care: Create Integrated Health Organisations (IHOs) and neighbourhood health teams	Provides greater use of our strong local networks across health partners to align our services with health provision to deliver joined-up care through shared governance and commissioning and co-located teams.
Data and digital transformation: Modernise public services by moving from analogue to digital	Enhances our local understanding and proximity to our distinct communities by simplifying data sharing and digital integration across services, enabling better use of analytics, shared case management and prioritise equitable access across our different communities.
Workforce and collaboration: Empower staff and cross-sector partnerships	Fosters our close working relationships between our council teams, NHS staff and voluntary sector partners to break down existing barriers and enable a collaborative and person-centred service delivery.
Public service reform: Reform services to be more preventative, efficient and locally led	Our proposal is underpinned by transformation, redesign and innovation to create new unitaries that work collaboratively with local partners to deliver efficiencies and enhanced outcomes through a total place approach to meet each area's distinct needs.

Aligning with the Local Government Outcomes Framework (LGOF)

Our proposal to create four mainland unitaries with the Isle of Wight remaining independent is also best placed to deliver on the priority outcomes and metrics highlighted in the government's new Local Government Outcomes Framework, which we support. Our work to date shows that our place-focused unitaries, with greater local insight and flexibility, will provide the assurance the government seeks.

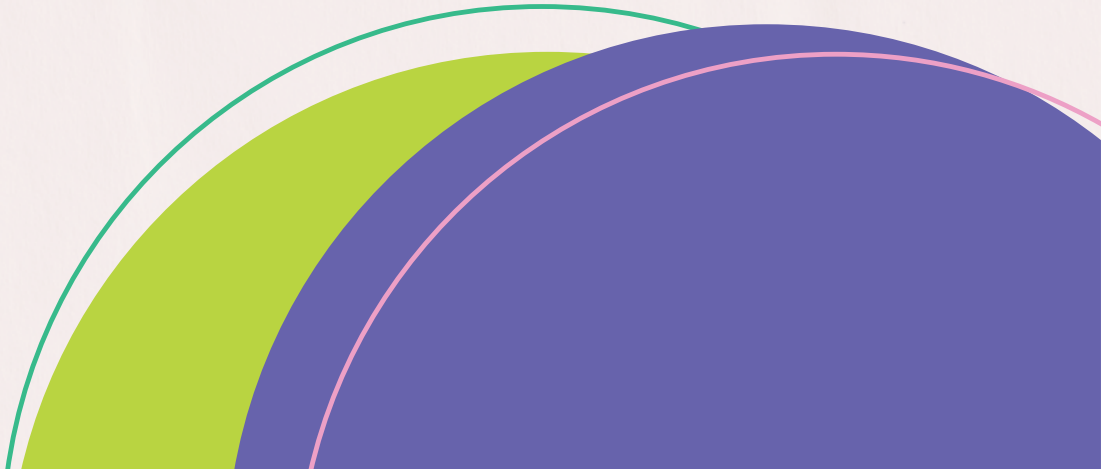
- **Alignment with priority outcomes:** Our proposal aligns with the framework's priority outcomes, such as preventing homelessness, improving housing access and enhancing health and wellbeing. By tailoring services to local needs with partners, our model will streamline efforts to ensure everyone has access to a decent, safe, secure and affordable home, and that people live healthier lives for longer.
- **Integration and interdependency:** The framework emphasises the interdependency between health and adult social care measures, housing and environment. Our proposal supports this by fostering integrated services at a neighbourhood level, which is crucial for achieving outcomes like reducing health inequalities and supporting independent living for care users.
- **Focus on neighbourhood health:** The framework's focus on neighbourhood health and integration is central to our proposal. By working closely with local NHS teams and voluntary sector partners, our model can deliver community-based services that are more responsive to local needs, supporting outcomes like keeping children safe and improving early child health.
- **Outcome measures and accountability:** The draft metrics in the framework provide a basis for measuring success in achieving priority outcomes. We see these as sensible metrics to demonstrate accountability and effectiveness in service delivery, ensuring that resources are used efficiently to meet local needs. This will be incorporated into our ongoing work around implementation planning and transformation.
- **Investment and transformation:** Achieving the framework's outcomes will require investment in and transformation of services which is a core part of our four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model. Our proposal demonstrates its potential to deliver investment and cost-effective, locally focused services.
- **Collaborative and locally driven approach:** The framework supports a collaborative approach to service delivery, which is a key feature of our proposal. By engaging with local communities and partners and building on existing community assets through a total place approach, our proposal will enhance service accessibility and effectiveness, contributing to outcomes like reducing child poverty and fostering economic prosperity.

7. Financial case including financial modelling of costs, benefits and payback period encompassing transformation opportunities

Our proposal is designed to address rising service pressures and long-term financial challenges through robust and detailed financial analysis. This balances disaggregation costs, recurring savings and implementation costs, while unlocking transformation opportunities to enhance service delivery and efficiency.

Through our financial modelling, we have developed two financial scenarios – a base case, which is prudent and we know can be delivered, and a more ambitious programme of change to deliver transformation and savings faster, which our new councils will strive for.

Our analysis indicates that our options will breakeven between 2.2 and 3.1 years and will deliver annual net recurring savings of £63.9 million per year in the base scenario and £91.8 million per year in our more ambitious scenario. Our strategic approach would ensure our new unitary councils are resilient against service pressures while improving outcomes and responsiveness.



7. Financial case including financial modelling of costs, benefits and payback period encompassing transformation opportunities

Overview of financial sustainability analysis

Financial sustainability analysis forms a central component of our proposal. Its purpose is to evaluate the financial implications of structural reform across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, assessing whether the proposed reorganisation delivers measurable, long-term improvements in financial resilience, efficiency and value for money. The analysis provides a structured, evidence-based appraisal of potential savings, required investment and net benefit.

Context and purpose

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, existing councils are managing substantial budget gaps, rising social care and housing pressures and constrained funding growth. In two-tier areas the current structure also leads to duplication of roles, fragmented service delivery and inefficiencies in support functions, digital infrastructure and decision-making.

Our proposal provides an opportunity to streamline governance, transform services tailored to local needs and release efficiencies. However, it also requires upfront investment and, like most local government reorganisation processes, may involve some temporary financial disruption during transition. This makes it critical to assess whether, over a realistic implementation horizon, the financial benefits outweigh the costs and whether the new authorities would be more resilient and sustainable than the status quo.

The financial sustainability analysis therefore aims to:

- Quantify the financial impact of the evaluated reorganisation options.

- Compare options on a like-for-like basis, considering savings, costs and payback.
- Demonstrate the financial viability and strength of the evaluated options.
- Provide confidence in assumptions, modelling approach, and scenario flexibility.

Methodology overview

The financial analysis followed a tried and tested methodology, benchmarked against other local government reorganisation processes and aligned with government guidance. The steps included:

1. **Scoping and agreement of method**
   - Worked with local finance teams to define scope, financial principles and data needs.
   - Agreed on the options to be modelled and the treatment of shared services and disaggregation.
2. **Data collection and validation**
   - Issued standardised data requests to all councils, covering revenue budgets, reserves, capital plans, balance sheets and key service metrics.
   - Gathered contextual and narrative information to understand pressures, risks and transformation plans.
   - Held follow-up meetings with finance officers to verify data accuracy, reconcile discrepancies and align on inputs.
3. **Baseline construction**
   - Built a consolidated financial baseline, combining all district, unitary and county budgets into unified figures based on agreed assumptions (for example population apportionment).
4. **Savings estimation**
   - Applied standardised top-down models to estimate savings across key categories:
     - Senior management and democratic structures
     - Corporate and back-office services
     - ICT rationalisation and systems integration
     - Estates and asset rationalisation
     - Procurement and contract consolidation
     - Service transformation and demand management (where credible)
   - Incorporated both direct (cashable) and enabling (efficiency) savings.
   - Used a combination of local inputs and benchmark data from other local government reorganisation programmes to calibrate assumptions.
5. **Implementation and disaggregation cost estimation**
   - Identified one-off costs required to deliver the reorganisation, including:
     - Programme management and transition team costs
     - Redundancy and pension strain
     - ICT integration or separation
     - Property and rebranding
     - Legal and governance setup
   - Included disaggregation costs such as:
     - Splitting finance or HR systems
     - Creating new organisational infrastructures
     - Establishing democratic and corporate capacity
   - Costs were phased over a six-year period, with timing aligned to implementation logic.

6. Scenario modelling

- Developed a structured financial model that calculates, for each scenario:
  - Annual and cumulative savings
  - Phased implementation costs
  - Year-on-year net benefit
  - Breakeven year
  - Total 10-year net financial benefit

Items considered in the financial case

The financial analysis integrates a wide range of inputs and assumptions, grouped into three main elements:

- **Recurring savings:** Cashable savings expected once reorganisation is complete and steady state is reached. These cover workforce reductions, systems rationalisation, contract management and operating model changes. Savings are categorised by source, with baselines derived from current budgets.
- **Implementation costs:** One-off costs required to implement the preferred options, typically incurred over the first two to three years. Includes programme delivery, ICT, staff redundancy, estates changes and transitional double running.
- **Disaggregation costs:** Disaggregation costs reflect the additional effort, complexity and duplication required to split shared systems and functions across new entities.

Scenario-based modelling approach

Recognising the inherent uncertainty in savings realisation and implementation cost delivery, the analysis uses two financial scenarios to bracket the likely outcomes:

Scenario	Description
Base Case	The most likely scenario based on agreed central assumptions. Balances prudent savings estimates with realistic implementation ambition, aligned to local capability.
High Case	A more ambitious but achievable scenario, assuming bolder service transformation, more aggressive rationalisation, and faster delivery. Also assumes more investment in digital and commercial capacity.

Each scenario uses the same methodology but varies assumptions across:

- % savings by category.
- One-off cost estimates.
- Degree of service transformation.

This enables the financial case to:

- Demonstrate the robustness of the evaluated options under different delivery environments.
- Quantify the risk and upside potential of reorganisation.
- Support stakeholder discussions on ambition verses feasibility.

Outputs and use in the proposal

For each scenario and option, the model outputs:

- Gross and net annual savings
- Cumulative implementation costs
- Payback period (breakeven year)
- Total net benefit over 10 years

These outputs inform both the financial case and the comparative analysis between reorganisation options.

Financial implications of the evaluated options

This section sets out the financial outlook and sustainability of the three variations in our proposal.

The purpose of this section is to consolidate and explain the end-state financial profile of the new councils. It brings together detailed evidence and modelling outputs across all relevant dimensions of local authority finance. This includes projected revenue budgets, the distribution and sufficiency of reserves and balances and the scale and timing of both anticipated savings and implementation costs. A critical component is the breakeven analysis, which models how quickly upfront investment in reorganisation will be recouped through long-term efficiencies. Taken together, these elements enable a judgement on the long-term financial viability of the new authority structure and whether it provides a credible route to enhanced sustainability compared to the status quo.

To structure this analysis, the section is organised into four sub-sections:

1. **Savings and efficiencies:** An estimate of recurrent savings achievable from reorganisation, including staff, systems, governance and estate rationalisation.
2. **Implementation and disaggregation costs:** A detailed breakdown of one-off transition costs required to achieve the reorganisation, including redundancy, ICT and programme delivery, alongside the incurred costs of disaggregation splitting county level services to four new unitaries.
3. **Breakeven and 10-year outlook:** A forward-looking payback analysis that tracks the net financial benefit of reorganisation over a seven-year period and illustrates improved fiscal resilience.
4. **Other considerations:** Consideration of other financial factors alongside the impact of transformation.

Each subsection includes validated financial inputs, analytical findings, and clearly explained narrative commentary. To aid interpretation and support transparency, visualisations such as summary tables, charts, and cumulative impact graphs are used throughout.

Ultimately, this section forms the evidential backbone of our financial case for reorganisation. It ensures that decision-makers, including Section 151 Officers, programme sponsors and central government stakeholders, have a clear and comprehensive view of the fiscal implications of the proposal. By articulating a clear path from current-state finances to the post-reorganisation end-state and quantifying the value that the change can deliver, this section helps confirm that our proposal is not only achievable, but financially sustainable.

Options summary

A summary view of the financial impact of reorganisation per option is outlined in the below tables for each scenario (Base and High). Further information regarding the estimated recurring savings, recurring disaggregation costs and one-off implementation costs are outlined in the subsequent sections and the Financial Technical Appendices.

Overall, the financial analysis confirms that all modelled options and scenarios deliver a positive net financial benefit, achieves payback within a short period and places the new authorities on a stronger financial footing than under the status quo.

Summary - Base		
£'million	Option 1 & 2	Option 3
Recurring Savings from Year 3	81.8	81.8
Recurring Disaggregation Costs from Year 1	- 17.9	- 17.9
Cumulative benefit / (cost) after 5 years	**251.9**	**251.9**
One-off Implementation Cost by Year 3	- 128.2	- 133.0
Net Impact after 5 years (2032/33)	**123.7**	**118.9**
Payback period	3.0	3.1
Annual recurring benefit / (cost) post transformation from Year 4	**63.9**	**63.9**

Summary - High		
£'million	Option 1 & 2	Option 3
Recurring Savings from Year 3	111.5	111.5
Recurring Disaggregation Costs from Year 1	- 19.7	- 19.7
Cumulative benefit / (cost) after 5 years	**367.1**	**367.1**
One-off Implementation Cost by Year 3	- 155.5	- 160.3
Net Impact after 5 years (2032/33)	**211.6**	**206.8**
Payback period	2.3	2.3
Annual recurring benefit / (cost) post transformation from Year 4	**91.8**	**91.8**

Evaluation of Option 1

Savings and efficiency opportunities from reorganisation – Option 1

This subsection outlines the projected savings from local government reorganisation, based on anticipated efficiencies from service integration, workforce reduction, streamlined governance and shared infrastructure. The estimates are built from both top-down modelling and local data inputs. Scenarios include the base and high savings estimates.

Reorganisation is projected to generate recurring savings of **£81.8 million** annually by Year 3 (**£111.5 million** in High case), equivalent to 2.2% (3.0% in High case) of the combined net revenue budget (£3.8 billion). The largest drivers are Right Sizing the Organisation (Base: £32.7 million. High: £44.6 million) and Service Contract Consolidation (Base: £24.5 million. High: £33.5 million). These savings underpin the financial case for change and position the new councils to achieve a more efficient and sustainable model of delivery.

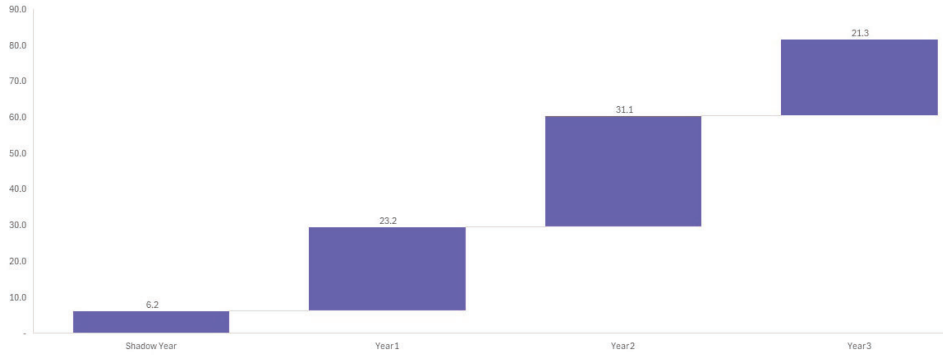
A summary table breaks down expected recurring savings by category (e.g. staffing, governance, IT, property) from Year 3 (2030/31).

Projected Annual Savings by Category - Option 1 (Base)				
£ '000	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Optimising Leadership	450	2,249	4,498	4,498
Right Sizing the Organisation	3,271	9,814	22,900	32,715
Centralising Corporate Services	-	164	491	818
Service Contract Consolidation	2,454	11,041	19,629	24,536
Proportionate Democratic Services	-	2,290	2,863	2,863
Improved Digital & IT Systems	-	797	2,658	5,316
Asset & Property Optimisation	-	981	1,963	2,454
Customer Engagement	-	981	2,944	4,907
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes	-	1,104	2,576	3,680
Total	6,175	**29,423**	**60,522**	**81,787**

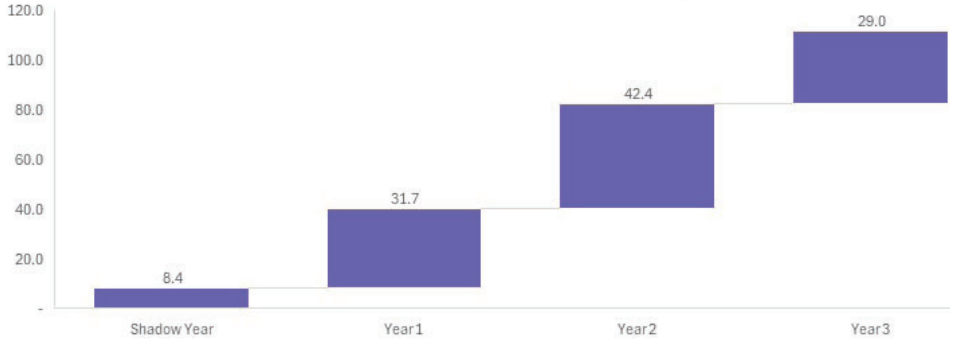
Projected Annual Savings by Category - Option 1 (High)				
£ '000	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Optimising Leadership	613	3,067	6,133	6,133
Right Sizing the Organisation	4,460	13,381	31,223	44,605
Centralising Corporate Services	-	223	669	1,115
Service Contract Consolidation	3,345	15,054	26,763	33,453
Proportionate Democratic Services	-	3,122	3,903	3,903
Improved Digital & IT Systems	-	1,087	3,624	7,248
Asset & Property Optimisation	-	1,338	2,676	3,345
Customer Engagement	-	1,338	4,014	6,691
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes	-	1,505	3,513	5,018
Total	8,419	**40,116**	**82,519**	**111,512**

The waterfall chart illustrates the annual savings build up, which are expected to be over a four-year period.

Annual Savings Build-Up (£ 'million) - Option 1 (Base)



Annual Savings Build-Up (£ 'million) - Option 1 (High)



The below comparative table shows Base vs High savings estimates by category. A comparison across the different options is also included although our modelling outlines consistent savings to be expected across all options.

Base and Stretch Savings Scenarios						
	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
£ '000	Base	High	Base	High	Base	High
Optimising Leadership	4,498	6,133	4,498	6,133	4,498	6,133
Right Sizing the Organisation	32,715	44,605	32,715	44,605	32,715	44,605
Centralising Corporate Services	818	1,115	818	1,115	818	1,115
Service Contract Consolidation	24,536	33,453	24,536	33,453	24,536	33,453
Proportionate Democratic Services	2,863	3,903	2,863	3,903	2,863	3,903
Improved Digital & IT Systems	5,316	7,248	5,316	7,248	5,316	7,248
Asset & Property Optimisation	2,454	3,345	2,454	3,345	2,454	3,345
Customer Engagement	4,907	6,691	4,907	6,691	4,907	6,691
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes	3,680	5,018	3,680	5,018	3,680	5,018
Total	**81,787**	**111,512**	**81,787**	**111,512**	**81,787**	**111,512**

Implementation and disaggregation cost estimates – Option 1

This subsection sets out the one-off costs required to implement the reorganisation, including programme delivery, systems integration, estates changes and workforce exit costs. It also includes disaggregation costs where services or systems are split due to the creation of the new unitaries. These costs are necessary enablers of the longer-term benefits and have been profiled over the implementation period.

The total estimated implementation cost is **£128.2 million** (**£155.5 million** in High) over a period of 6 years (including 2025/26 Base year, Year -1, Shadow Year and 3 Years post implementation), with the majority incurred in 'Workforce – Exit' and 'Transition – Team'. These costs are essential to unlock recurring efficiencies. Where disaggregation is required, additional annual costs of **£17.9 million** (**£19.7 million** in High) are included. These disaggregation costs are only reflected post implementation and primarily relate to Adult Social Care costs. The investment is proportionate and supports a positive return on investment over the planning period.

Below is a table of implementation and disaggregation costs by year and category presents the full financial profile.

Implementation and Disaggregation Costs by Year - Option 1 (Base)

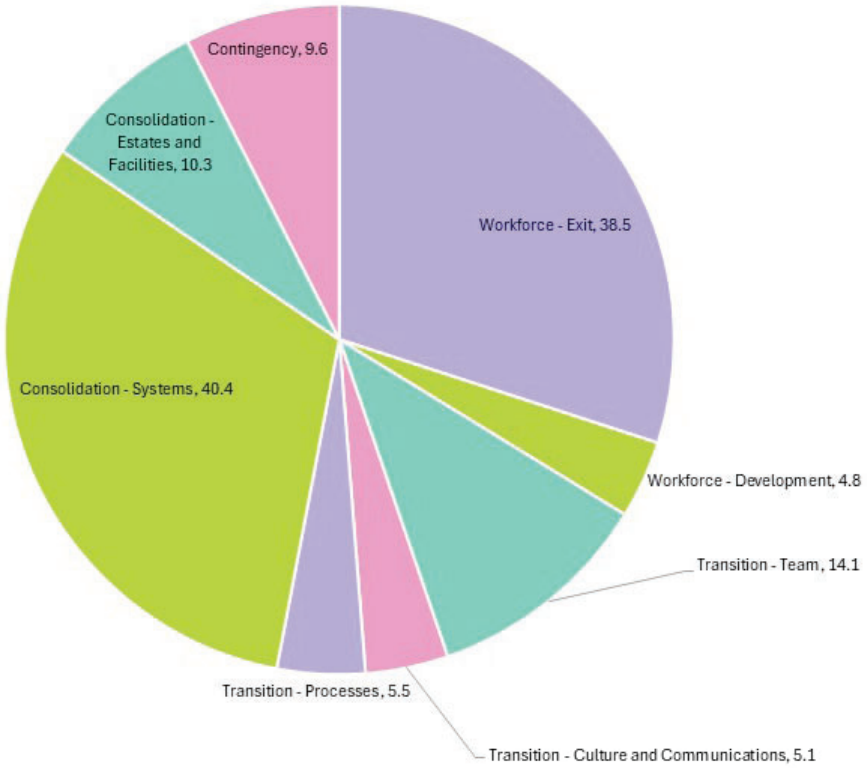
£ '000	Base Year	Year-1	Shadow Year	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7	Year8	Year9	Year10	Total
Implementation costs														
Workforce - Exit	-	-	3,847	7,694	11,542	15,389	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38,472
Workforce - Development	-	-	1,924	1,924	962	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,809
Transition - Team	2,821	4,937	4,937	1,411	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,106
Transition - Culture and Communications	1,026	1,795	1,795	513	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,130
Transition - Processes	1,090	1,908	1,908	545	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,450
Consolidation - Systems	4,040	4,040	24,237	8,079	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,396
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	-	-	1,539	3,591	5,130	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,259
Contingency	588	972	1,688	919	2,992	2,458	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,618
Total implementation costs	**9,565**	**13,652**	**41,876**	**24,676**	**20,625**	**17,847**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**128,240**
Disaggregation costs														
Adult Social Care Inefficiencies	-	-	-	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	102,213
Children's Services Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	29,095
Place Service Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	24,956
Corporate & Support Services to the Council Duplication	-	-	-	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	22,868
Total disaggregation costs	**-**	**-**	**-**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**179,132**
Total costs	**9,565**	**13,652**	**41,876**	**42,589**	**38,538**	**35,760**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**307,372**

Implementation and Disaggregation Costs by Year - Option 1 (High)

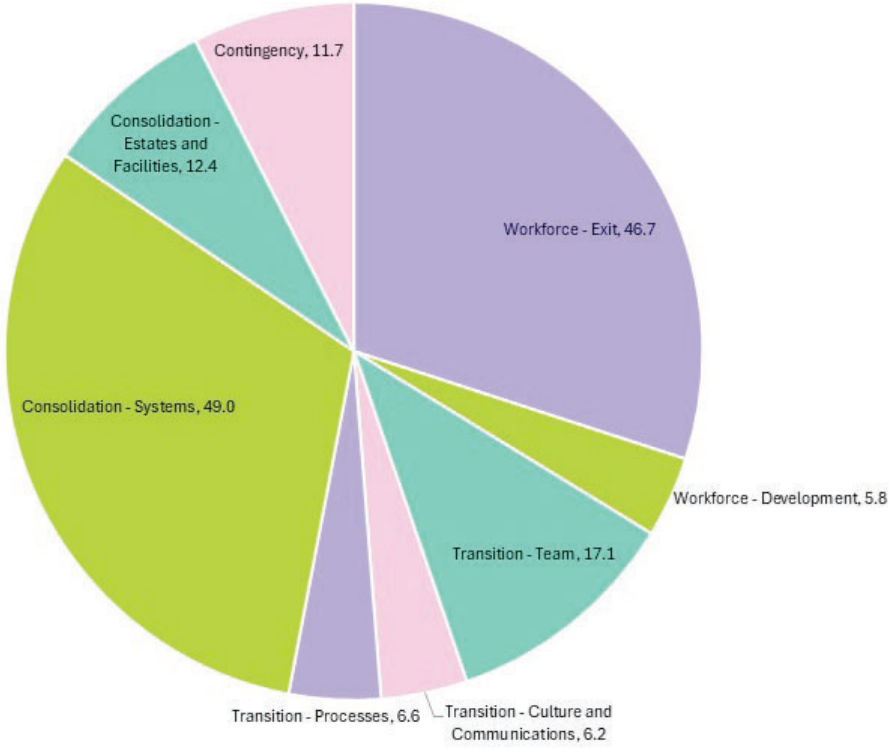
£ '000	Base Year	Year-1	Shadow Year	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7	Year8	Year9	Year10	Total
Implementation costs														
Workforce - Exit	-	-	4,665	9,331	13,996	18,661	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,654
Workforce - Development	-	-	2,333	2,333	1,166	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,832
Transition - Team	3,421	5,987	5,987	1,711	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,106
Transition - Culture and Communications	1,244	2,177	2,177	622	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,220
Transition - Processes	1,322	2,313	2,313	661	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,609
Consolidation - Systems	4,899	4,899	29,392	9,797	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,986
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	-	-	1,866	4,354	6,220	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,441
Contingency	713	1,179	2,048	1,115	3,629	2,981	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,663
Total implementation costs	**11,599**	**16,556**	**50,781**	**29,923**	**25,012**	**21,642**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**155,512**
Disaggregation costs														
Adult Social Care Inefficiencies	-	-	-	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	112,434
Children's Services Inefficiencies	-	-	-	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	32,005
Place Service Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	27,452
Corporate & Support Services to the Council Duplication	-	-	-	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	25,155
Total disaggregation costs	**-**	**-**	**-**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**197,045**
Total costs	**11,599**	**16,556**	**50,781**	**49,628**	**44,716**	**41,347**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**352,557**

The below pie charts show the cost composition, identifying the largest expenditure areas.

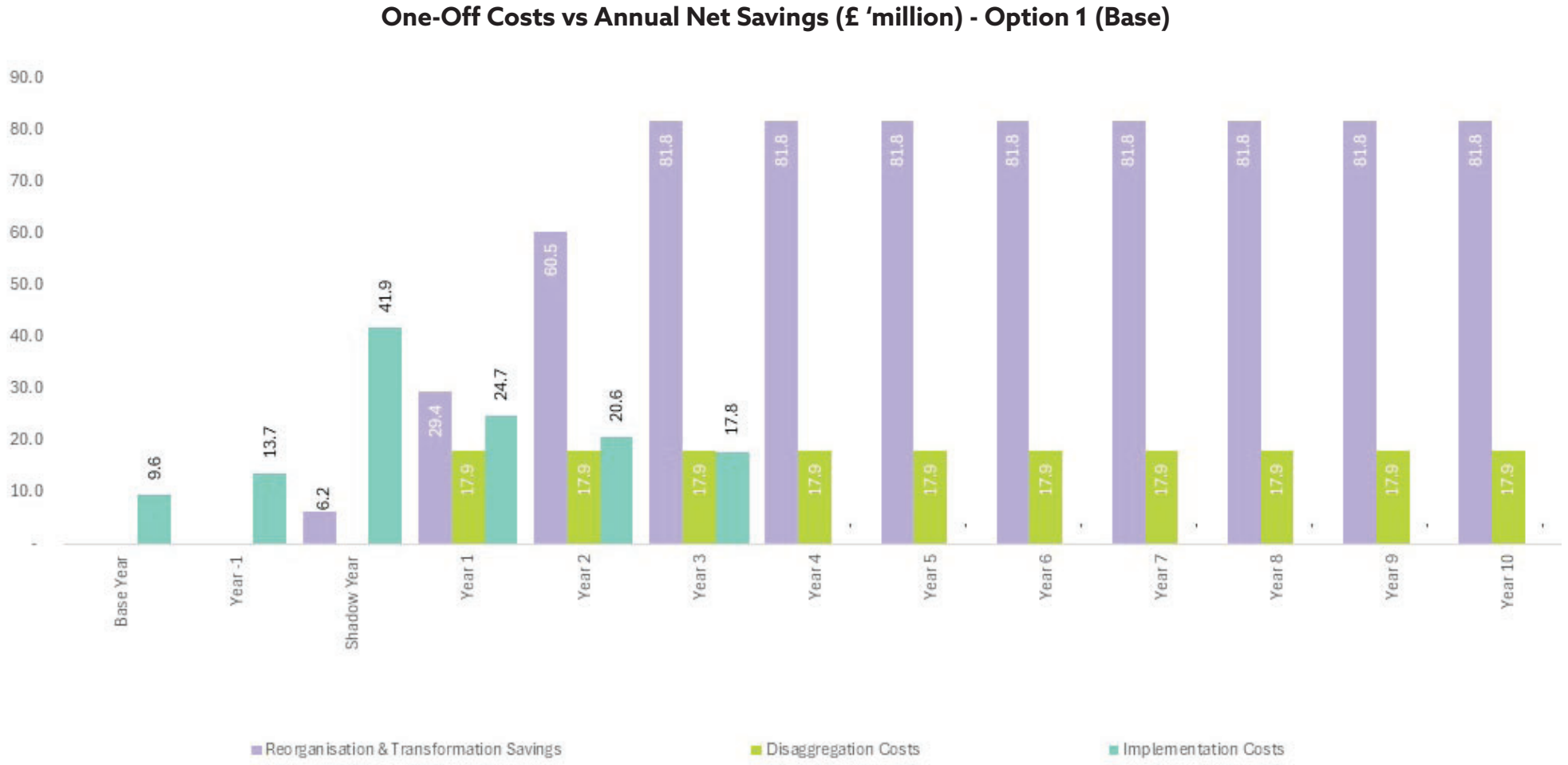
One-Off Costs by Category (£'million) - Option 1 (Base)



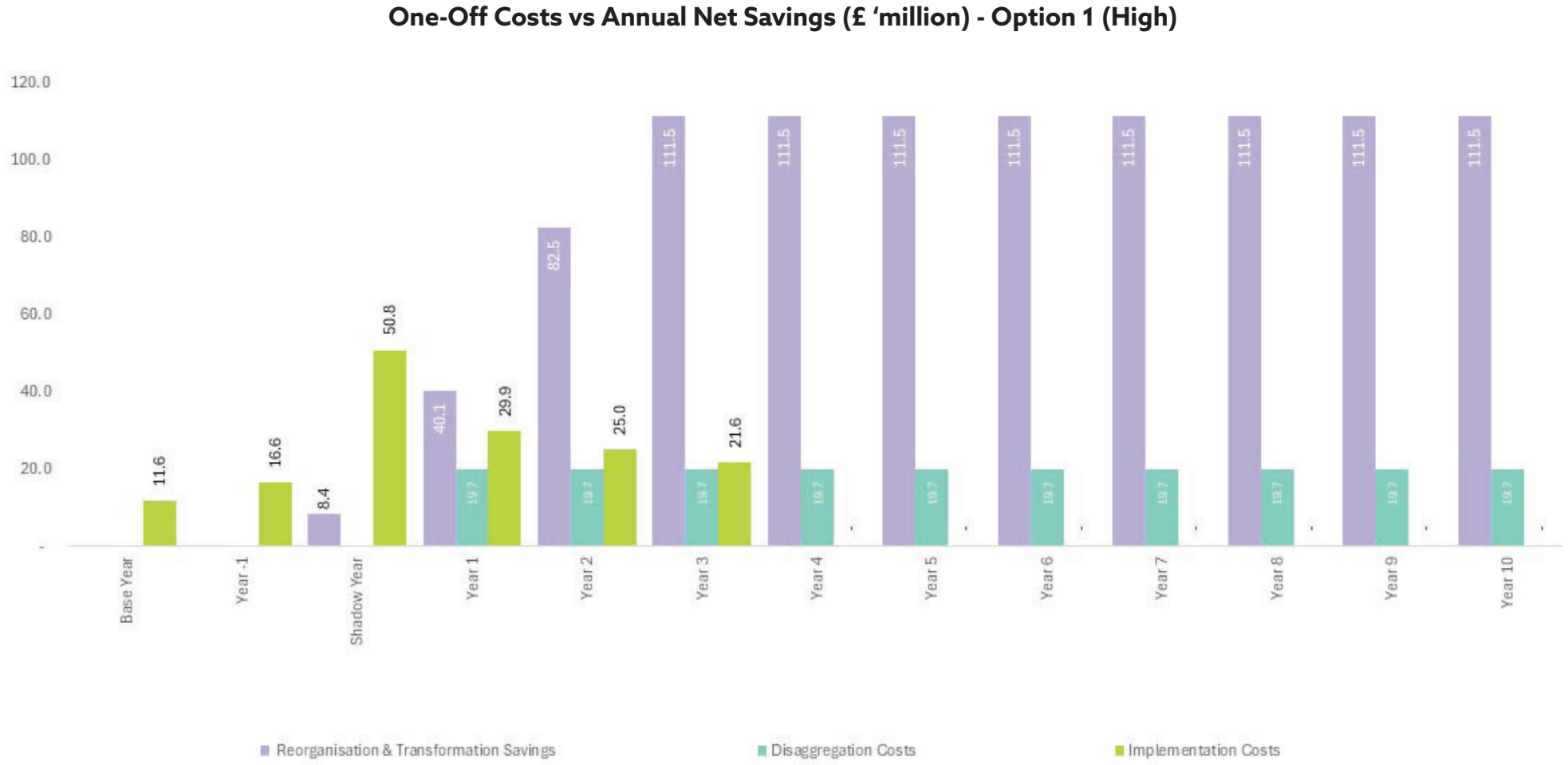
One-Off Costs by Category (£ 'million)- Option 1 (High)



The below bar chart compares one-off implementation costs against the estimated annual savings and estimated annual disaggregation costs.



The below bar chart compares one-off implementation costs against the estimated annual savings and estimated annual disaggregation costs.

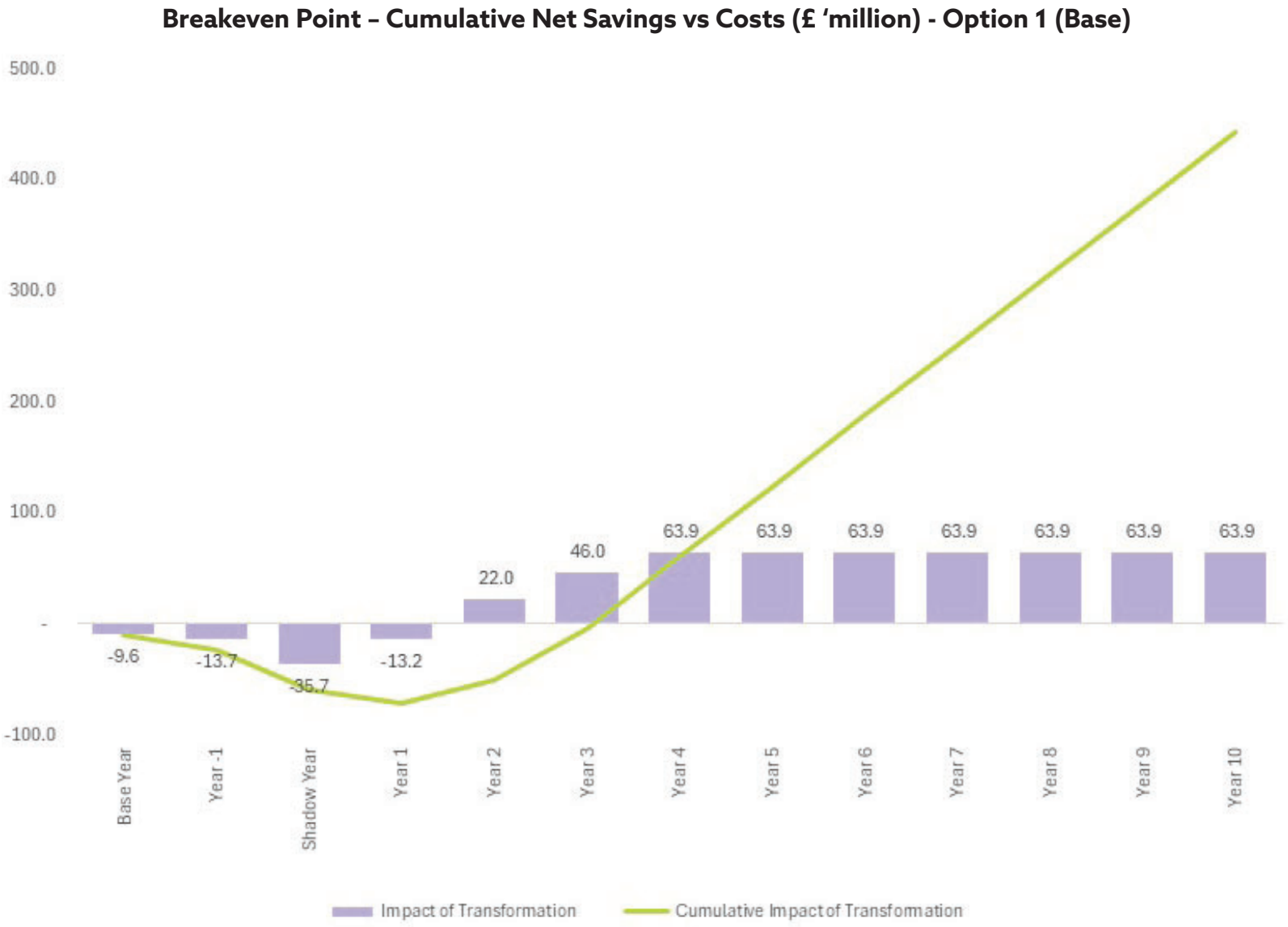


Breakeven analysis and 10-year financial outlook – Option 1

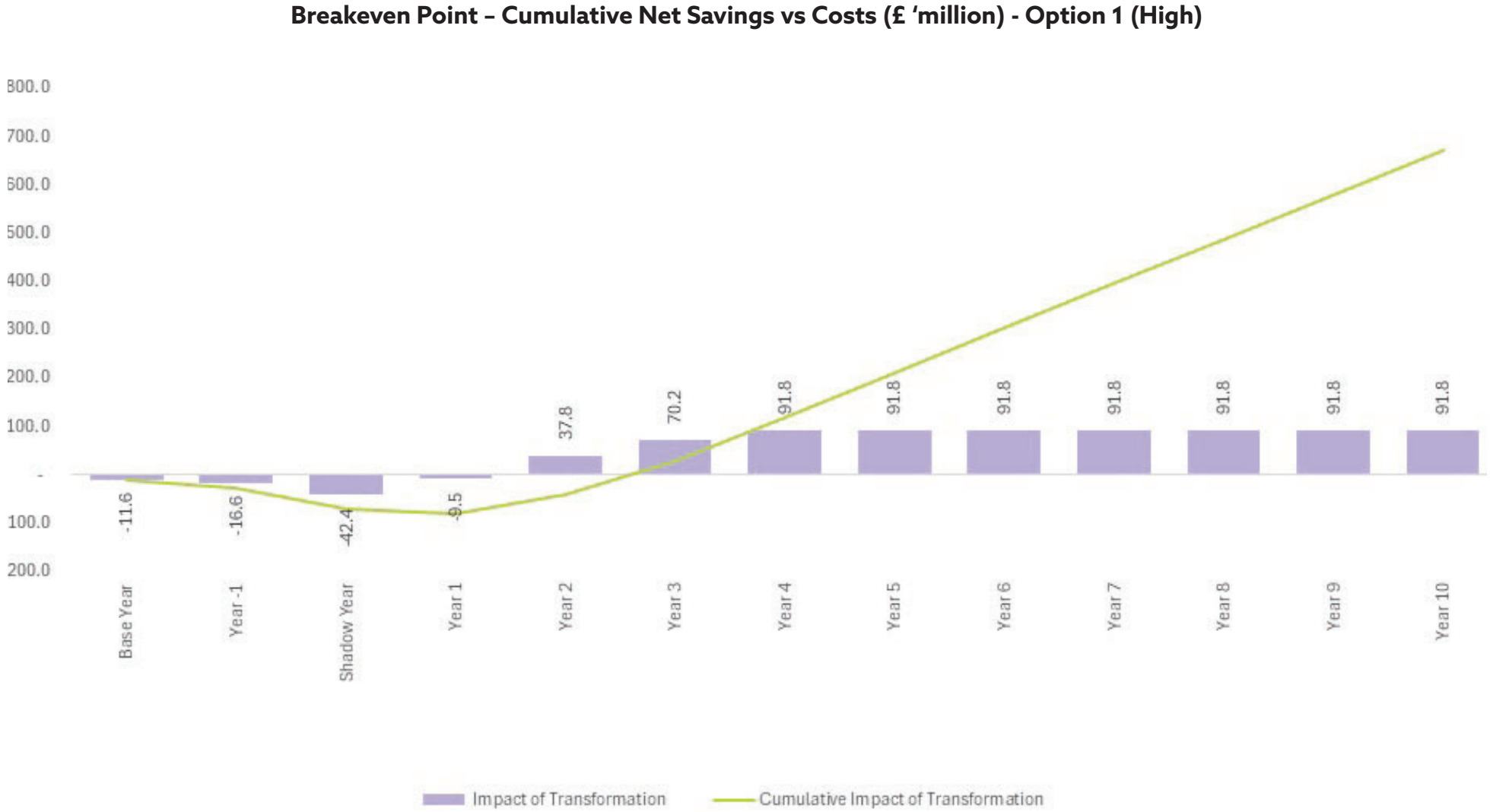
This subsection provides a breakeven analysis, assessing when cumulative savings from reorganisation outweigh the one-off implementation costs. It also presents a 10-year outlook of the net financial benefit. This forward-looking view demonstrates the long-term value of the option.

The financial analysis indicates that breakeven is achieved in **3.0 years** in the base scenario (**2.3 years** in High scenario), after which cumulative net savings exceed implementation costs. By Year 4, the reorganisation delivers a total net financial benefit per year of **£63.9 million** in the base scenario (**£91.8 million** in High scenario), supporting stronger long-term resilience. These benefits position the new authorities well to contribute to future budget gaps and reinvest in public services.

A cumulative net benefit line graph shows the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.



A cumulative net benefit line graph shows the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.



The summary tables include yearly savings, costs and annual net benefit.

Net Benefit by Year – 10-Year Profile - Option 1 (Base)													
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Savings													
Reorganisation & Transformation Savings	-	-	6,175	29,423	60,522	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787
Costs													
Disaggregation Costs	-	-	-	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913
Implementation Costs	- 9,565	- 13,652	- 41,876	- 24,676	- 20,625	- 17,847	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impact of Transformation	**- 9,565**	**- 13,652**	**- 35,701**	**- 13,166**	**21,984**	**46,027**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**

Net Benefit by Year – 10-Year Profile - Option 1 (High)													
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Savings													
Reorganisation & Transformation Savings	-	-	8,419	40,116	82,519	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512
Costs													
Disaggregation Costs	-	-	-	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705
Implementation Costs	- 11,599	- 16,556	- 50,781	- 29,923	- 25,012	- 21,642	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impact of Transformation	**- 11,599**	**- 16,556**	**- 42,362**	**- 9,511**	**37,803**	**70,165**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**

Evaluation of Option 2

Savings and efficiency opportunities from reorganisation – Option 2

The projected savings for Option 2 are identical to the savings (categories, quantum and phasing) assumed in Option 1 for both the Base scenario and High scenario.

Implementation and disaggregation cost estimates – Option 2

The projected implementation and disaggregation costs as previously described, for Option 2, are identical to the implementation and disaggregation costs (categories, quantum and phasing) assumed in Option 1 for both the Base scenario and High scenario.

Breakeven analysis and 10-Year financial outlook – Option 2

As the savings, implementation and disaggregation costs are identical between Option 1 and Option 2, the 10-year outlook of the net financial benefit, breakeven analysis (assessing when cumulative savings from reorganisation outweigh the one-off implementation costs) and forward-looking view for Option 2 is identical to Option 1 for both Base scenario and High scenario.

Evaluation of Option 3

Savings and efficiency opportunities from reorganisation – Option 3

The projected savings for Option 3 are identical to the savings (categories, quantum and phasing) assumed in Option 1 for both the Base scenario and High scenario.

Implementation and disaggregation cost estimates – Option 3

This subsection outlines the projected implementation and disaggregation costs, as previously described, for Option 3.

Due to the proposed boundary changes assumed in Option 3, there are additional one-off implementation costs associated with this change of splitting district boundaries assumed under this option. The disaggregation costs (categories, quantum and phasing) are identical to the costs assumed in Option 1 and Option 2 for both the Base scenario and High scenario.

The total estimated implementation cost (including boundary change costs) is **£133.0 million** (**£160.3 million** in High scenario) over a period of 6 years (including 2025/26 Base year, Year -1, Shadow Year and 3 years post implementation), with the majority incurred in 'workforce – exit' and 'transition – team'. These costs are essential to unlock recurring efficiencies. Where disaggregation is required, additional annual costs of **£17.9 million** (**£19.7 million** in High) are included – identical to the costs assumed in Option 1 and Option 2.

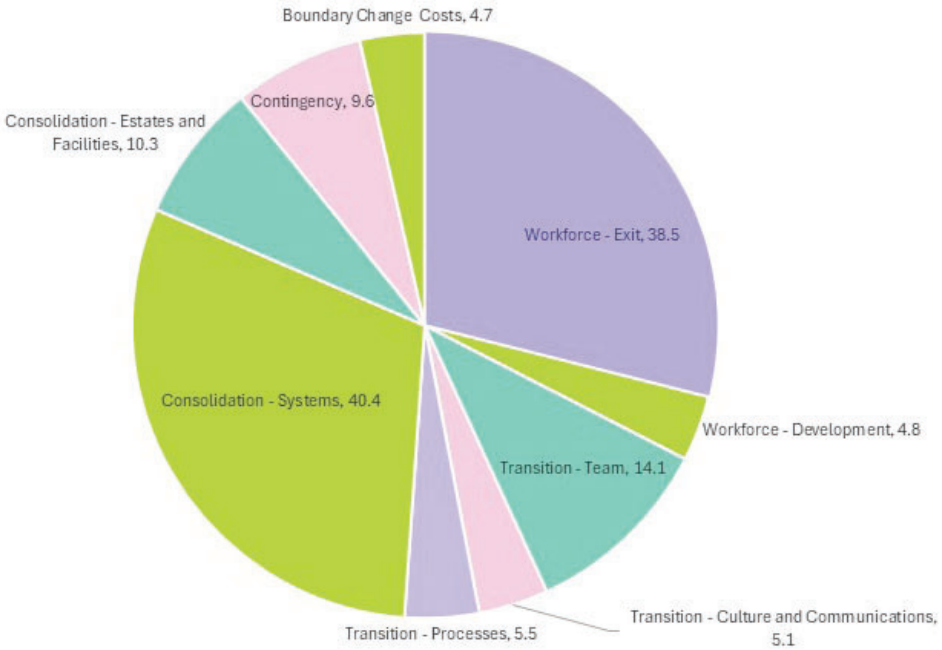
The below table outlines the total implementation and disaggregation costs by year and category.

Implementation and Disaggregation Costs by Year - Option 3 (Base)														
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
Implementation costs														
Workforce - Exit	-	-	3,847	7,694	11,542	15,389	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38,472
Workforce - Development	-	-	1,924	1,924	962	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,809
Transition - Team	2,821	4,937	4,937	1,411	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,106
Transition - Culture and Communications	1,026	1,795	1,795	513	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,130
Transition - Processes	1,090	1,908	1,908	545	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,450
Consolidation - Systems	4,040	4,040	24,237	8,079	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,396
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	-	-	1,539	3,591	5,130	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,259
Contingency	588	972	1,688	919	2,992	2,458	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,618
Total implementation costs	**9,565**	**13,652**	**41,876**	**24,676**	**20,625**	**17,847**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**128,240**
Disaggregation costs														
Adult Social Care Inefficiencies	-	-	-	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	10,221	102,213
Children's Services Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	2,910	29,095
Place Service Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	2,496	24,956
Corporate & Support Services to the Council Duplication	-	-	-	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	2,287	22,868
Total disaggregation costs	**-**	**-**	**-**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**179,132**
Boundary Change Costs	**-**	**1,424**	**3,323**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**4,747**
Total costs	**9,565**	**15,076**	**45,199**	**42,589**	**38,538**	**35,760**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**17,913**	**312,119**

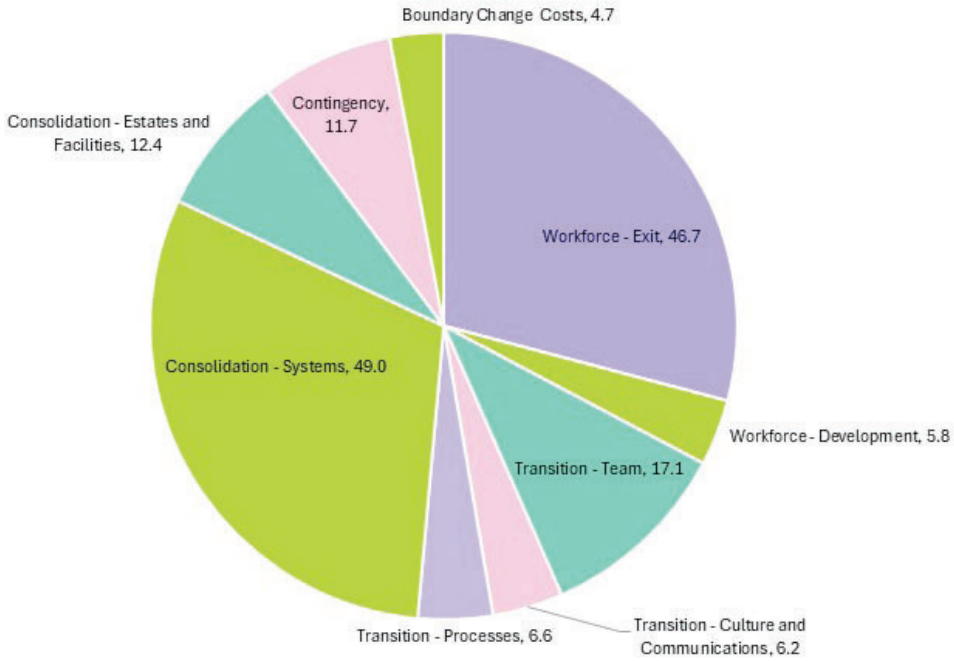
Implementation and Disaggregation Costs by Year - Option 3 (High)														
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
Implementation costs														
Workforce - Exit	-	-	4,665	9,331	13,996	18,661	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,654
Workforce - Development	-	-	2,333	2,333	1,166	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,832
Transition - Team	3,421	5,987	5,987	1,711	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,106
Transition - Culture and Communications	1,244	2,177	2,177	622	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,220
Transition - Processes	1,322	2,313	2,313	661	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,609
Consolidation - Systems	4,899	4,899	29,392	9,797	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,986
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	-	-	1,866	4,354	6,220	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,441
Contingency	713	1,179	2,048	1,115	3,629	2,981	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,663
Total implementation costs	**11,599**	**16,556**	**50,781**	**29,923**	**25,012**	**21,642**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**155,512**
Disaggregation costs														
Adult Social Care Inefficiencies	-	-	-	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	11,243	112,434
Children's Services Inefficiencies	-	-	-	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	32,005
Place Service Inefficiencies	-	-	-	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	2,745	27,452
Corporate & Support Services to the Council Duplication	-	-	-	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	2,515	25,155
Total disaggregation costs	-	-	-	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**197,045**
Boundary Change Costs	-	**1,424**	**3,323**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**4,747**
Total costs	**11,599**	**17,980**	**54,104**	**49,628**	**44,716**	**41,347**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**19,705**	**357,304**

The below pie charts show the cost composition for one-off costs, identifying the largest expenditure areas.

One-Off Costs by Category (£'million) - Option 1 (Base)



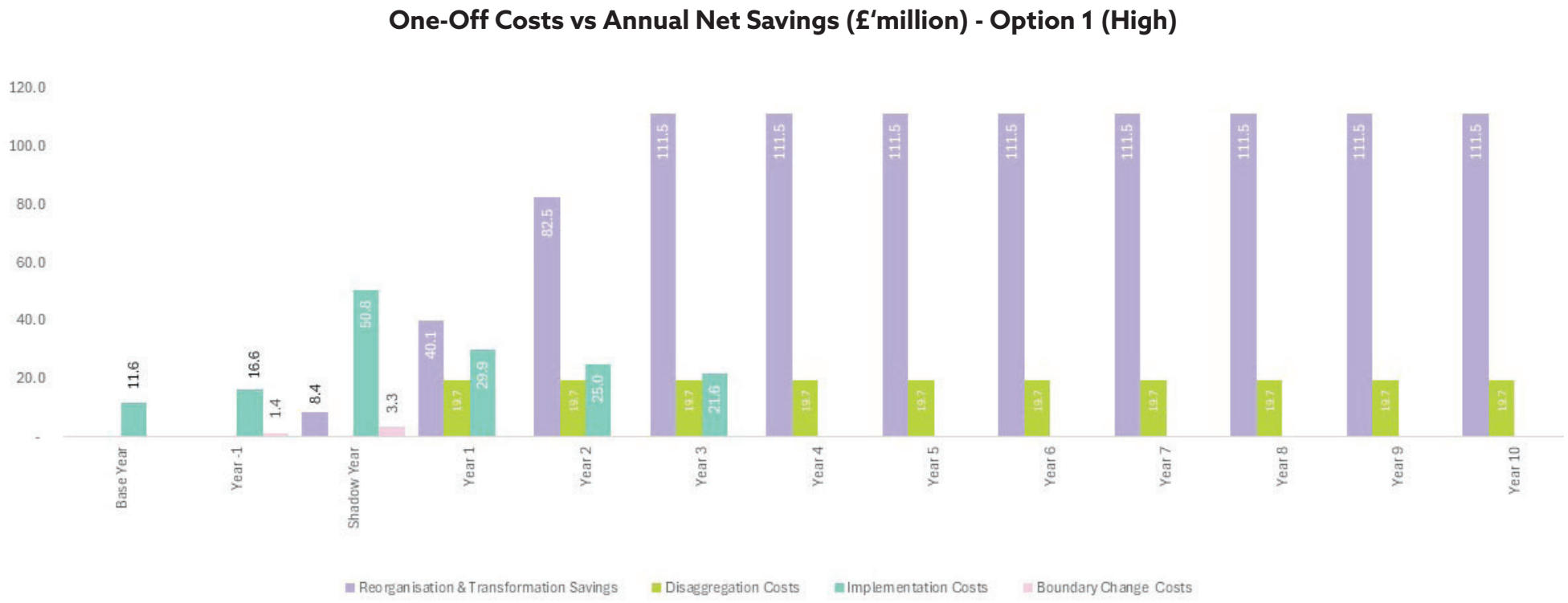
One-Off Costs by Category (£'million)- Option 1 (High)



The below bar charts compare one-off implementation costs (including boundary changes costs) against the estimated annual savings and annual disaggregation costs.

One-Off Costs vs Annual Net Savings (£'million) - Option 1 (Base)

The below bar charts compare one-off implementation costs (including boundary changes costs) against the estimated annual savings and annual disaggregation costs.



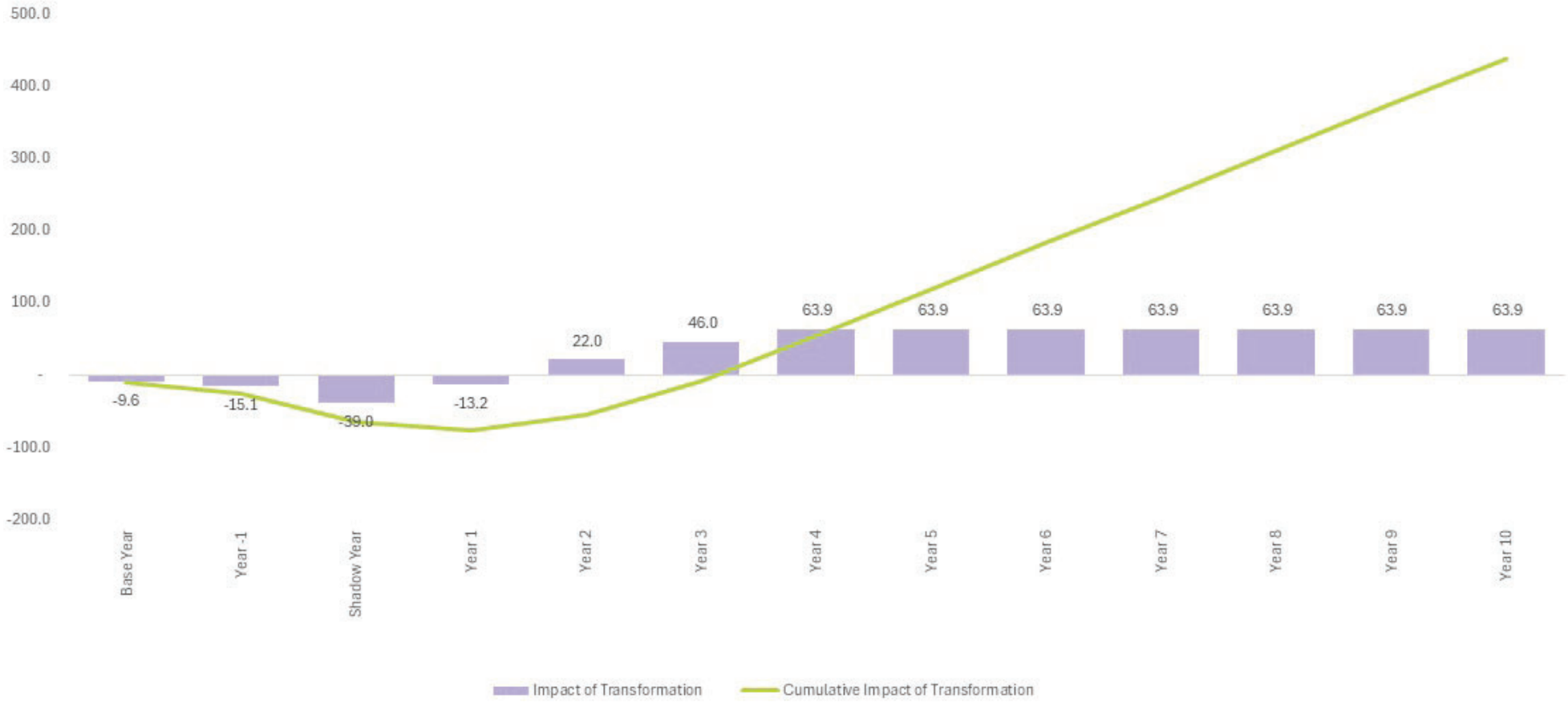
Breakeven analysis and 10-Year financial outlook – Option 3

This subsection provides a breakeven analysis, assessing when cumulative savings from reorganisation outweigh the one-off implementation costs (including the boundary change costs) for Option 3.

The additional boundary change costs assumed in Option 3 as compared to Option 1 and 2 means that overall payback analysis is marginally longer than Option 1 and 2. The financial analysis indicates that breakeven is achieved in **3.1 years** for the base scenario (**2.3 years** in High scenario), after which cumulative net savings exceed implementation costs. By Year 4, the reorganisation delivers a total net financial benefit of **£63.9 million** per year for the base scenario (**£91.8 million** in High scenario), supporting stronger long-term resilience – identical to Option 1 and 2. These benefits position the new authorities well to contribute to future budget gaps and reinvest in public services.

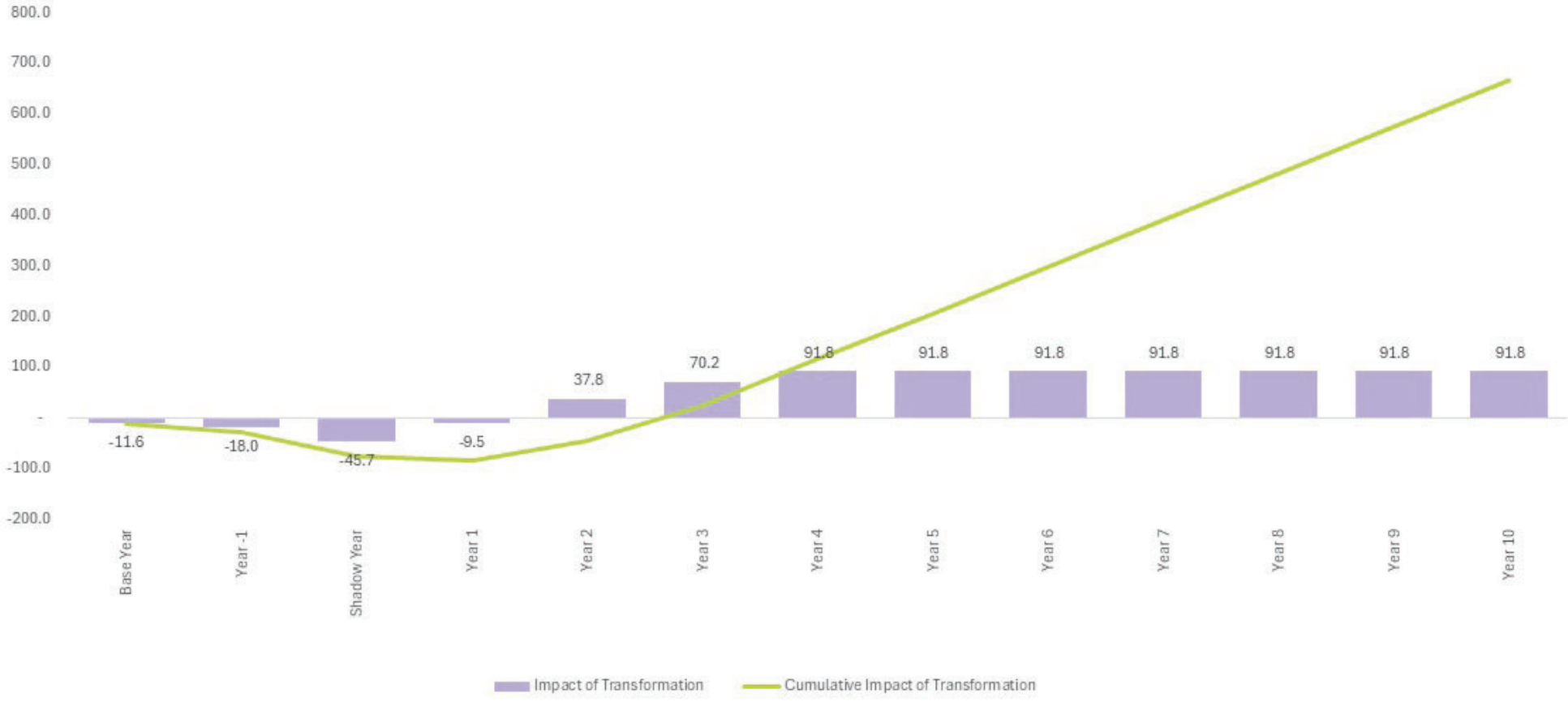
Cumulative net benefit line graphs show the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.

Breakeven Point – Cumulative Net Savings vs Costs (£ 'million) - Option 3 (Base)



Cumulative net benefit line graphs show the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.

Breakeven Point – Cumulative Net Savings vs Costs (£ 'million) - Option 3 (High)



The summary tables include yearly savings, costs and annual net benefit.

Net Benefit by Year – 10-Year Profile - Option 3 (Base)													
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Savings													
Reorganisation & Transformation Savings	-	-	6,175	29,423	60,522	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787	81,787
Costs													
Disaggregation Costs	-	-	-	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913	- 17,913
Implementation Costs	- 9,565	- 13,652	- 41,876	- 24,676	- 20,625	- 17,847	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boundary Change Costs		- 1,424	- 3,323	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impact of Transformation	**- 9,565**	**- 15,076**	**- 39,024**	**- 13,166**	**21,984**	**46,027**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**	**63,874**

Net Benefit by Year – 10-Year Profile - Option 3 (High)													
£'000	Base Year	Year -1	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Savings													
Reorganisation & Transformation Savings	-	-	8,419	40,116	82,519	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512	111,512
Costs													
Disaggregation Costs	-	-	-	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705	- 19,705
Implementation Costs	- 11,599	- 16,556	- 50,781	- 29,923	- 25,012	- 21,642	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boundary Change Costs		- 1,424	- 3,323	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Impact of Transformation	**- 11,599**	**- 17,980**	**- 45,685**	**- 9,511**	**37,803**	**70,165**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**	**91,807**

Other considerations

Gross budget gap of existing councils

The financial analysis assumes that all existing councils (including the county) will manage their ongoing gross budget gaps regardless of local government reorganisation, therefore the forecasted gross budget gaps of all councils totalling **£178m** (including the county council of **£136m**) by 2028/29, have not been included within the breakeven analysis of transformation. Hampshire County Council's MTFS budget gap of £136m faces pressures to increase to £281m in 2028/29, however, there is recognition that the significant savings from our proposal will contribute to any future gross budget gaps of the new authorities.

Reserves and funding the reorganisation

As of 31st March 2025, there are **£1,779m** of total usable reserves. It will be up to each new authority to determine how to use its resources to fund the cost of reorganisation which is likely to be through a mixture of use of reserves and capital receipts to support the transformation.

Council tax harmonisation

Due to the uncertainties of implementation, the impact of council tax harmonisation as a consequence of reorganisation has not been reflected within the breakeven analysis across all options. However, our financial analysis derived an expected additional council tax revenue of **£138m** over 10 years across the three variations of our proposal. The incremental impact on council tax revenue varies by new authority. Our analysis calculated the difference between the expected council tax revenue without reorganisation and the expected council tax revenue due to harmonisation of council tax rates per new authority, assumed at the weighted average rate of the component council tax rates.

8. Implementation plan

Throughout this business case, we have set out how our proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight would best meet the government's criteria and deliver sustainable councils for the future, built around transformation and collaboration.

Our implementation plan builds on this evidence-led process, setting out how these new councils would be delivered, including a detailed programme timeline, governance arrangements, shared principles and robust mitigation measures for risks that have been identified throughout the process.

8. Implementation plan

Our proposal not only reflects the best option in terms of maximising positive and sustainable outcomes for our residents, but also in terms of the efficiency of implementation to start delivering those outcomes as soon as possible. As a group of 12 councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we have carefully considered the practicalities and arrangements required to deliver on the changes and initiatives outlined in this case for change. We haven't just theorised the potential outcomes but planned in detail how this will work and how we will get there, building on the vast array of existing competence and experience we have as a group of unitary city, borough and district councils.

Change of this scale will require councils to continue working closely together. We have committed to doing this both in the context of local government reorganisation and devolution, building on some of the great work we have already done bringing together over 90 council service leads to think through the 'how' as well as the 'what' when it comes to transformation.

Our commitment also extends to the continuity of services through this time, ensuring we can continue to serve our residents and minimise any disruption. We are ambitious in the change we can make as part of this proposal and will be focussing on deriving maximum benefits through this period.

This implementation plan will detail our programme plan and robust governance structures which will enable delivery at pace. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this plan with MHCLG and commit to driving towards success by sharing key lessons learned with other areas.

An understanding of unitarisation

As previously stated, we have significant unitary experience within our group of 12 councils with Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council running as unitary councils for approaching three decades with all the learning and experience that provides in delivering tailored services to their communities. Similarly, within the district and borough councils we have Chief Executives, Deputy Chief Executives and Directors who have worked at the top of unitary councils in other areas of the country. In our advisers KPMG, we have external support who have supported recent local reorganisations elsewhere. The existing councils who would form the new North Hampshire Unitary and the new Mid Hampshire Unitary have each also recruited experienced Directors of Adult Social Care and Children's Services to provide additional specialist expertise. We are also already gathering best practice from other reorganisation processes carried out previously to ensure they inform our thinking. We will use this extensive range of skills, experience and learning in ensuring the most effective approach to transition, building on best practice and innovative models informed by local insight.

Our proposal builds on the main population centres and economic areas of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, reflecting the way people live, work and travel. As demonstrated, our councils have existing strong networks and relationships with neighbouring authorities and partners within our four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model that can be better utilised through local government reorganisation. Due to the natural alignment with our proposal and the way our authorities and partners already work together, transitioning through reorganisation will better enable seamless transition to the

new structures. We have already started on this journey, having brought together stakeholders from across the 12 councils, as well as our key partners, to kickstart the transformation required.

Principles

As a group of 12 of the 15 councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we have collectively agreed on several principles which will underpin our approach to implementation. These principles reflect our deep understanding of our distinct economies and populations while also demonstrating our aspirations to deliver maximum benefit through reorganisation to our communities.

Collaboration – maintain close cooperation among the 15 councils throughout the reorganisation and transition process, sharing expertise, resources, and lessons learned to drive effective implementation and transformation.

Partnership – strengthen and build on relationships with neighbouring authorities, community organisations, and key stakeholders, ensuring alignment through a total placed based approach to maximise benefits for residents.

Continuity of service delivery – place residents at the centre of transition planning, ensuring uninterrupted access to essential services and prioritising community needs throughout, with robust safeguards to prevent any disruption during change.

Local design for local people – service delivery will align with our distinct communities, engaging them upfront in the shaping of future services focussing on outcomes and improvement.

Clear accountability and risk management – comprehensive governance and risk management structures to ensure accountability and transparency.

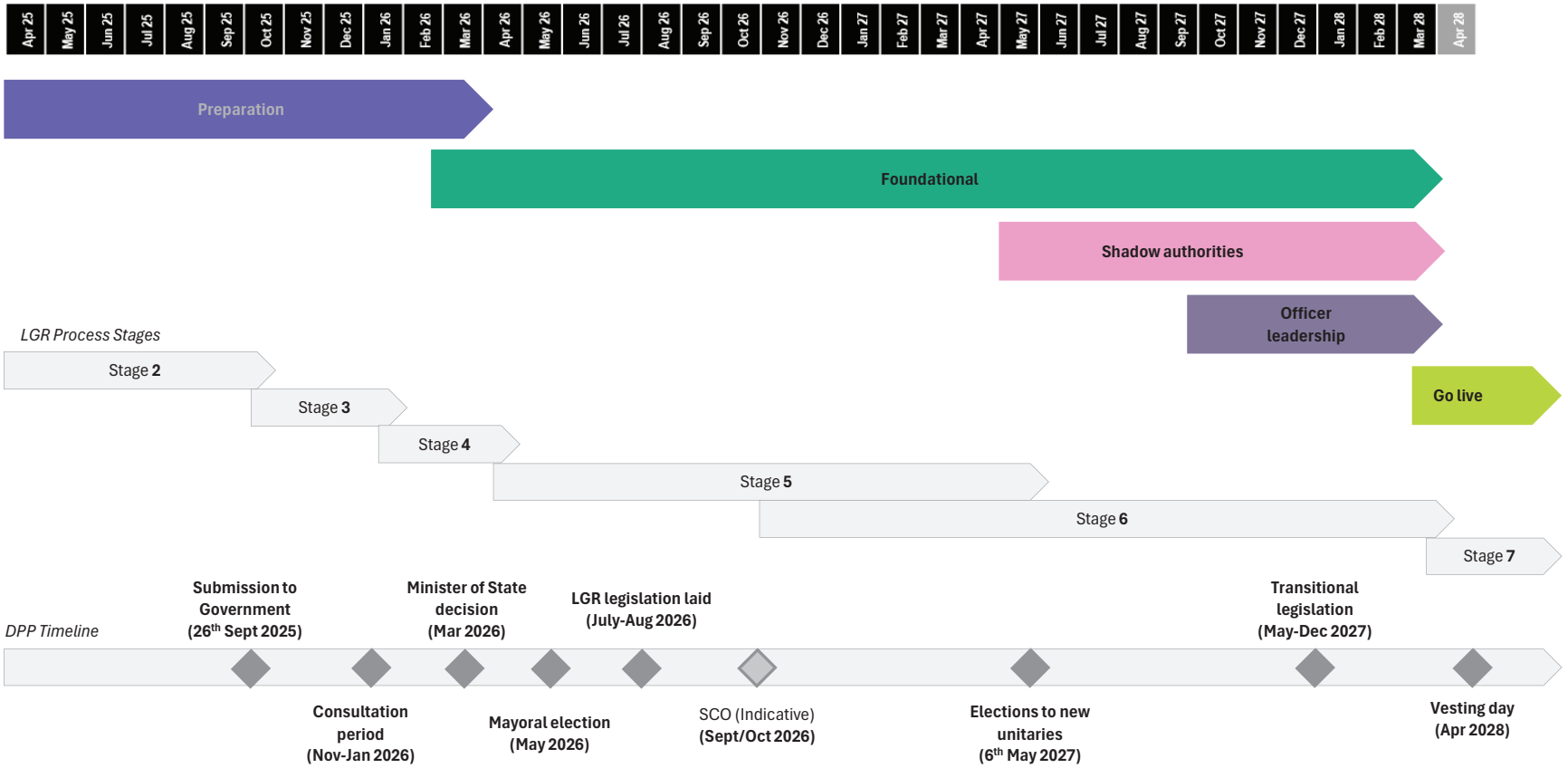
Financial sustainability – implementation will be focussed on building the foundations of strong and sustainable structures that deliver value for money.

Workforce and culture – a human-first approach to implementation which ensures the wellbeing of our staff through transformation and developing an inclusive culture.

Timeline to Day 1

Five distinct phases of LGR implementation have been outlined below. These phases are critical to ensure government milestones are met and services continue to be delivered to residents through this period. It is also the start of the transformation journey, and through these phases, we will make the best use of time to deliver reorganisation benefits at pace with a secure programme to ensure this is done within a safe environment.

A detailed programme and stakeholder engagement plan is currently in development alongside our proposal to outline the practical steps required under each phase. This will be refined in the early stages of preparation while we continue to work as group of 12 councils and continue to engage with our stakeholder groups. From March 2026, our expectation and ambition is that all 15 councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will begin to work collaboratively from foundation to go live and beyond.



Working together, we have identified the priorities and activities required under each of the five phases, aligning to government steps and the DPP timeline. The five phases include:

Phase	Priorities
Preparation: prior to government decision on proposal	• Set up the programme (governance, workstreams and finance) • Set up the plan, timeline and critical path • Set up a data hub - gather and maintain consistent programme data • Define and agree scope of LGR-related decisions with sovereign councils • Agree ambition and aims at a unitary and county-wide level
Foundational: prior to the election of shadow members or appointment of office leadership	• Appoint strategic partner • Progressing what is in appropriate scope of the programme e.g. ICT infrastructure, treatment of systems and contracts • Service alignment and transformation • Preparing for key decisions • Elections
Shadow authorities: members elected but only with programme or unofficial groupings of officers for capacity	• Appointing Chief Executives and statutory and leadership roles • Member inductions and service briefings • Key decision timetable • Approving the Council Plans, MTFS and operating models for each of the four new councils
Officer leadership: Tier 1-3 officers have been appointed and can prepare the new councils	• Tier 2 & Tier 3 leadership recruitment • Service Planning • Development of council plans, MTFS and budgets • Key policies and strategies • Operating models and staffing allocations • Preparing for day 1
Go live: post-vesting day when the new councils become operational	• Focus on seamless experience for residents and partners and stability for staff • Continued transformation and improvement

Governance and workstreams

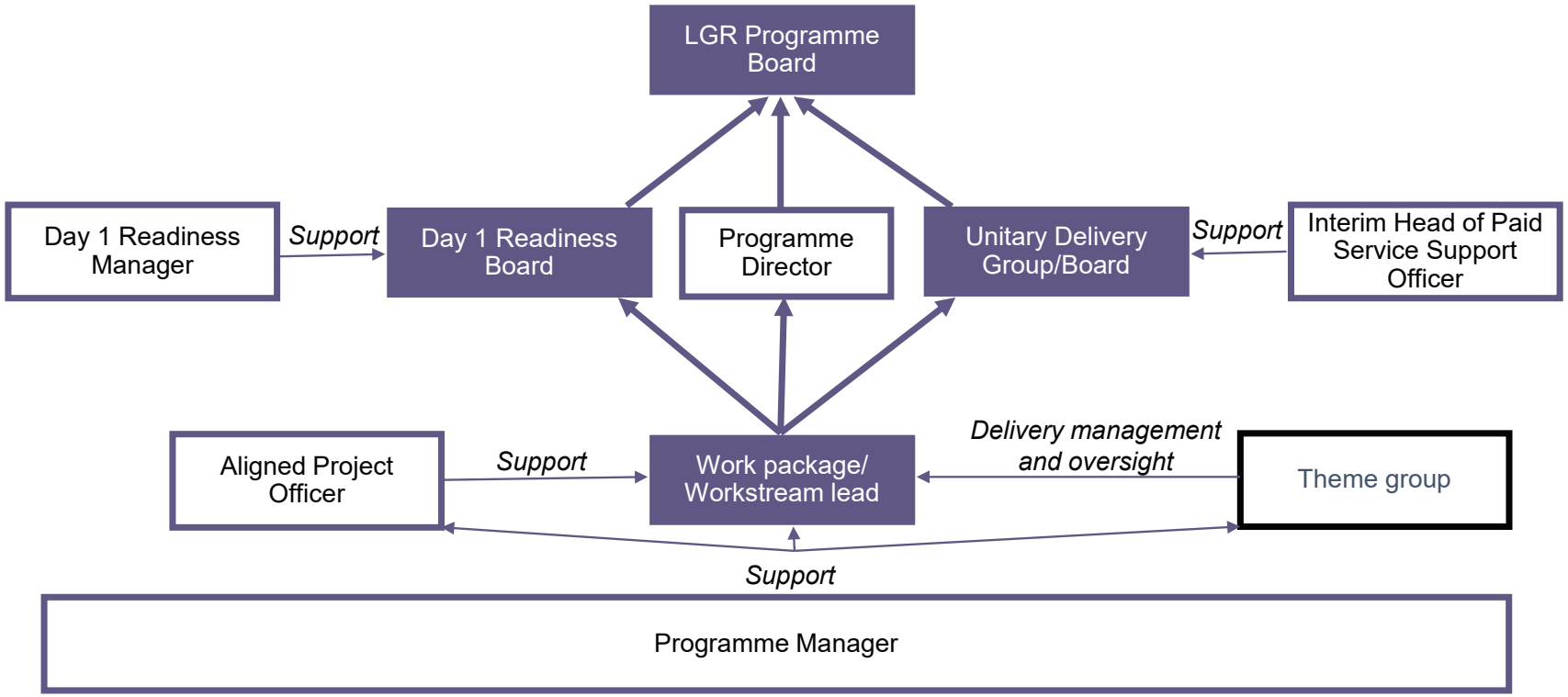
We will establish a Local Government Reorganisation Programme Board across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, reporting to the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Leaders' Group and ultimately the shadow authorities. This board will comprise of Chief Executives and the Programme Director, providing strategic oversight of the programme and addressing key risks and issues.

To ensure effective delivery, we will also set up a Day 1 Board focused on implementing the programme plan. This Board will monitor progress against key milestones and ensure all Day 1 requirements are met.

Beneath the overarching LGR programme, we will create unitary delivery groups dedicated to the specific needs of each new council. These groups will focus on critical areas such as elections, council plans, member induction, policies and organisational culture and service planning relating to the new unitaries.

These delivery groups will become increasingly important as we transition to Shadow Authorities and appoint Heads of Paid Service. By establishing them early, we are laying strong foundations for the success of the new unitary councils.

Escalation framework



Unitary Delivery Groups will focus on preparing for the new councils. These groups will operate collaboratively by design and remain agile, enabling them to respond to opportunities that may arise within individual unitary areas. As the programme progresses, these governance structures will evolve to support the Shadow Authorities and play a key role in establishing the new councils once permanent officers are in place.

We have proposed a number of workstreams and high-level activities to support delivery at pace.

	Preparation*	Foundational	Shadow Authorities	Officer Leadership	Go Live
People	• Communication with staff regarding timeline and plan • Gather and categorise single view of all staff and other delivery bodies • Skills and capability assessment	• Develop visions • Initial workforce modelling, including roles, accountabilities and ways of working • Understand skills and capability gaps and develop plan to address	• Delivery of agreed milestones • Staff and partner communication and support • Priority appointments (Interim Head of Paid Service, S151 and MO) • Other senior appointments	• Delivery of agreed milestones • Staff and partner communication and support	• Staff and partner communication and support
Technology	• Form technology working group • Review infrastructure (including security assessment and certification) and scenario planning • Gather and categorise single view of all systems • Identify core system contracts	• Identify treatment of systems and contracts • Delivery of agreed milestones • Infrastructure connectivity and security • Workplace (e-mail) collaboration including elections and Shadow authorities ICT • Contact centres • Digital presence and branding • Physical access • System integration and disaggregation	• Delivery of agreed milestones • Shadow authorities ICT support including councillors web presence	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Hypercare • Aftercare • Post-reorganisation transformation delivery

	Preparation*	Foundational	Shadow Authorities	Officer Leadership	Go Live
Finance	• Form working group of S151 Officers • Review of savings required prior to vesting day • Gathering data on companies, traded services, asset, policies and treasury including PFI • Identify key reporting requirements • Agree baseline budget • Identify pensions costs, risks and opportunities	• Develop service delivery models • Aligned charts of accounts • Baseline MTFPs align savings and scenario planning • Build reporting workstream • Define processes (MTFPs, Treasury management, capital, procurement) • Agree approach to pension scheme, council tax and business rates	• Delivery of agreed milestones • Independent oversight and assessing pension implications of decisions	• Delivery of agreed milestones • S151 initiation	• Delivery of agreed milestones
Contracts and Legal	• Data gathering and scenario planning	• Identify treatment of contracts • Legal support to key contracts and systems • Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones • MO initiation	• Delivery of agreed milestones
Property and Estates	• Data gathering and scenario planning	• Capital plan optimisation • Establishment of an integrated major projects pipeline • Develop headquarters and estates strategy • Asset rationalisation opportunities	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones

	Preparation*	Foundational	Shadow Authorities	Officer Leadership	Go Live
Data Hub	• Data cleansing and management • Set up a data hub to enable data sharing • Establish single taxonomy for service, budget and HR data • Gather data regarding staffing, infrastructure and systems, contracts, policies and strategies, property, estates and assets	• Support and model key decisions • Track progress • Maintain or update data	• Support and model key decisions • Track progress • Maintain or update data	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones
Comms and Engagement	• Stakeholder mapping and strategy • Identify or setup partner and providers forums • Identify communication channels • Identify branding requirements	• Engagement of staff and communities • Engagement with partners and suppliers • Development of the new unitary councils branding	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones	• Delivery of agreed milestones

*During preparation there are key activities that our sovereign councils, or groupings of councils across the unitary footprint, can undertake to prepare for LGR.

LGR risks and mitigations

We recognise and understand the risks associated with reorganisation and are proactively addressing them through our programme structure and approach. Transitioning to new structures in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight involves disaggregating and reorganising county, unitary and district council services and redefining boundaries. To navigate this complexity, we will work closely with the Local Government Boundary Commission, learning from previous local government reorganisation programmes, and start Day 1 planning early to ensure readiness.

ICT underpins every aspect of the programme and is vital to the legal and operational integrity of the new councils. We will bring together ICT managers from across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to share system data, licences and infrastructure insights, helping us streamline preparations and reduce pressure on capacity. This will build on our existing data sharing agreement across the 15 councils.

Reorganisation requires strong cooperation across councils, government tiers and political lines. We are building on existing partnerships, identifying shared initiatives that can be delivered now and establishing clear protocols for how we work together. Our approach will ensure that current services remain strong while we build the foundations for successful new authorities.

We have incorporated learning from previous local government programmes into our approach, such as Cumbria who reflected on having good collaboration, a dedicated PMO team and allocated Programme Managers, regular monitoring of delivery plans through Day 1 Board, early set up of Shadow Unitary Boards to support service development and engagement with elected members to understand their priorities. Our advisors, KPMG, supported Cumbria through that process and are bringing that expertise and learning to our approach.

We also recognise the importance and risks around service continuity in key areas such as social care through the transitional period and welcomed the letter from MHCLG on the 24th July 2025 with key considerations:

Service continuity: We will enhance collaboration between councils to maintain service delivery and improve outcomes for residents.

Partnership working: We will build on existing collaborative structures and engage with local residents, care providers, and the voluntary sector to enhance service delivery and innovation.

Leadership and workforce: We will plan effectively for leadership transition, building our talent pipeline, and build shared recruitment and retention strategies for social care staff.

Service planning and delivery: We will integrate service delivery with existing infrastructure and coordinate frontline services to minimise disruption.

Collaborative commissioning: We will focus on joint commissioning efforts to improve value for money and resilience against market shocks, including market shaping, capacity building, and using data to understand population needs and drive care quality improvements.

Strategic collaboration: We will build on our existing strong partnership working between our new unitary authorities, statutory and local partners.

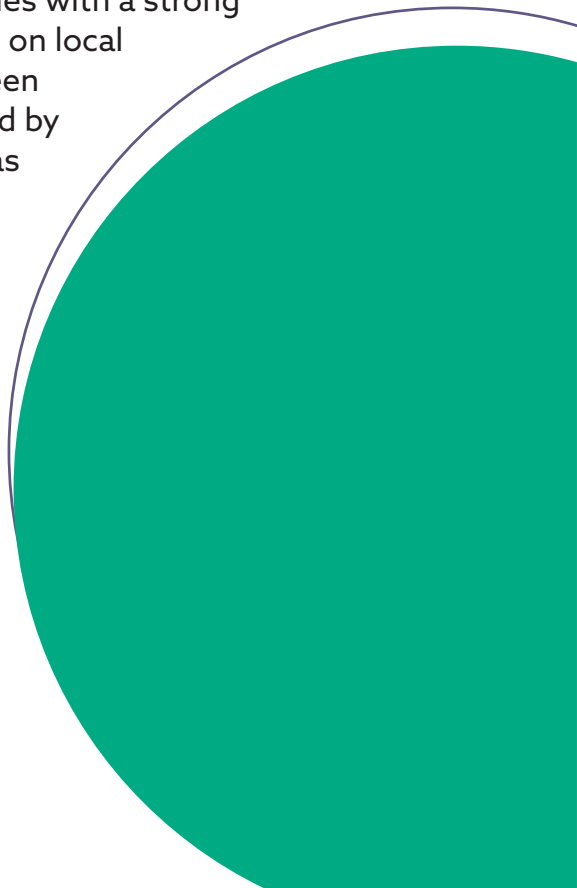
Risk of disaggregation and false claims about 'greenfield unitaries'

We recognise that Hampshire County Council (HCC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) have made misleading statements that you have to base a new unitary on an existing upper-tier council, even though we understand that their own proposal does not mirror the same boundaries as any existing upper-tier authority. Of course, establishing any new unitary authority carries potential risks regardless of boundary. However, our understanding of local government reorganisation is that while new unitaries will build on lessons learned and inherit certain aspects from existing sovereign councils, each newly created unitary is fundamentally and legally a new entity and so, to use the HCC and EHDC language, is a 'greenfield unitary' Historically, every local government reorganisation programme has resulted in the formation of greenfield authorities. For instance, prior to reorganisation in Cumbria, there was one upper-tier authority - Cumbria County Council. Following local government reorganisation, two new upper-tier authorities were established: Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council.

The primary risks associated with new unitary authorities typically relate to financial sustainability and the continuity of key services, particularly adults' and children's services. These risks are often driven by the disaggregation of large county councils, such as Hampshire. We have fully addressed these concerns through a robust financial case, including detailed modelling of disaggregation and implementation costs, benefits and payback periods, which incorporates transformation opportunities.

Evidence from the new Cumbrian authorities demonstrates that when county functions are disaggregated with a clear focus on transformation and the creation of right-sized authorities with distinct characteristics, it can lead to positive cultural change. This transformation is enabled by having the right resources, ambition, and local focus to improve outcomes for residents.

A notable example is the improvement in children's services. Prior to local government reorganisation, Ofsted rated Cumbria County Council's children's services as 'Requires Improvement' in their 2022 inspection. Since the establishment of the two new unitary authorities, both councils have been rated 'Good' by Ofsted in their 2024 inspections. This improvement reflects the benefits of creating new unitaries with a strong emphasis on transformation based on local needs. Similar progress has also been observed in adult services (as noted by the CQC), as well as in areas such as net zero initiatives, diversity and inclusion, housing and customer engagement.



Planning for Day 1 and beyond

We will ensure seamless continuity of services, setting up our new unitaries to be safe, legal and effective. Our focus is also transformational, and we will be identifying opportunities early on prior to Day 1 alongside existing agreed improvements in our sovereign councils ahead of vesting day (to be integrated with Day 1 Board).

We have already commenced our transformation journey, as highlighted through our service design work across eight major service areas. Our colleagues have an excitement and ambition to redesign services which reflect the distinct communities we serve. We recognise change is needed and the desire to build on this existing design work is evident. Collaboration has underpinned our process to develop this full proposal and will be continued to be maintained through to Day 1 and beyond, working together to:

- Establish Unitary Delivery Groups and a programme management office (PMO) to coordinate and oversee implementation.
- Bring together service leads to review and align policies, processes, and contracts, identifying opportunities for integration and improvement.
- Cleanse and standardise data across all councils to support seamless reorganisation and inform the development of a central data hub.
- Assess and address skills and capacity requirements, exploring opportunities for shared roles and skills exchange across councils.
- Develop and agree a charter guiding how sovereign councils will operate prior to vesting day, ensuring collective commitment and accountability.
- Establish robust governance structures, including a local government reorganisation programme board and supporting tools, to drive progress.

Further work will continue post implementation for our new unitaries to continue transformation, reflecting the unique populations and geographies they serve.

A collaborative approach to local government reorganisation

Basingstoke and Deane

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Hart DISTRICT COUNCIL

Havant BOROUGH COUNCIL

Isle of Wight Council

New Forest DISTRICT COUNCIL

Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Test Valley Borough Council

Winchester City Council

Appendices

Appendix 1: Options appraisal
Appendix 2: Option 1
Appendix 3: Option 2
Appendix 4: Option 3
Appendix 5: Financial technical appendices
Appendix 6: Report by Collaborate for Social Change
Appendix 7: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)
Appendix 8: Engagement report

Appendix 1:

Options appraisal

Appendix 1: Options appraisal

Mobilisation and stakeholder engagement (February 2025)

- Rapidly formed a collaborative way of working with all 15 councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to establish a baseline position around possible viable options around the place, prior to any analysis being undertaken. This included 22 core stakeholder meetings with Chief Executives, Leaders, S151 officers. Council Chief Executives and Leaders shared their initial views, requirements and key challenges relating to LGR.
- Held an initial session with our key partners, including representatives from Police, Fire, Health and National Parks, to understand their views on potential opportunities and challenges through LGR.

Development of the public databook (February 2025)

- Across each council area, the latest available data was gathered from public data sources to enable detailed analysis for shortlisting activity. The data was captured to align with government evaluation criteria:
    - Governance and efficiency: Population size, geographic area, council tax band D rates
    - Financial sustainability: non-earmarked reserves, Gross Value Added, homelessness rates and rough sleeper counts
    - Service delivery and outcomes: Life expectancy, Indices of multiple deprivation, unemployment rates
    - Economic and social impact: GVA per capita, crime rates
    - Geographic and demographic: Population by age group, population density
    - Strategic alignment: IMD and housing delivery data
    - Debt sustainability: Financing costs, gross external debt and capital financing requirement
    - Council tax equalisation: Council tax base and additional incomes, adjusted debt metrics and retained business rates
- Where relevant in analysis of unitaries, data was adjusted to account for Hampshire County Council allocation
- The data collected for this analysis is listed below.

Total population 2023

Council	Total population
Basingstoke and Deane	190,198
Rushmoor	102,908
Hart	101,542
Winchester	132,440
East Hampshire	128,440
Test Valley	134,461
New Forest	175,398
Southampton	256,110
Eastleigh	140,950
Fareham	114,155
Portsmouth	210,297
Havant	125,682
Gosport	82,385
Isle of Wight	140,906
Total	**2,035,872**

Council	Total population 0-19
Basingstoke and Deane	43,753
Rushmoor	23,631
Hart	23,593
Winchester	31,074
East Hampshire	27,911
Test Valley	29,920
New Forest	33,163
Southampton	59,627

Eastleigh	32,765
Fareham	23,071
Portsmouth	48,981
Havant	26,882
Gosport	18,170
Isle of Wight	25,838
Total	**448,384**

Council	Total population 20-64
Basingstoke and Deane	112,743
Rushmoor	63,587
Hart	57,155
Winchester	73,407
East Hampshire	69,519
Test Valley	75,346
New Forest	89,093
Southampton	161,407
Eastleigh	80,126
Fareham	61,903
Portsmouth	129,761
Havant	67,556
Gosport	45,873
Isle of Wight	73,021
Total	**1,160,497**

Council	Total population 65 and over
Basingstoke and Deane	33,702
Rushmoor	15,690
Hart	20,794
Winchester	27,959
East Hampshire	31,010
Test Valley	29,190
New Forest	53,142
Southampton	35,076
Eastleigh	28,059
Fareham	29,181
Portsmouth	31,555
Havant	31,244
Gosport	18,342
Isle of Wight	42,047
Total	**426,991**

Total population 2028

Council	Total population
Basingstoke and Deane	194,247
Rushmoor	106,754
Hart	106,464
Winchester	142,328
East Hampshire	134,583
Test Valley	140,248
New Forest	181,664
Southampton	274,539

Eastleigh	148,682
Fareham	122,677
Portsmouth	217,852
Havant	129,654
Gosport	84,558
Isle of Wight	146,351
Total	**2,130,601**

Geographical area

Council	Area (Square km)
Basingstoke and Deane	633.81
Rushmoor	39.05
Hart	215.25
Winchester	661.06
East Hampshire	514.41
Test Valley	627.68
New Forest	775.53
Southampton	56.39
Eastleigh	85.30
Fareham	77.85
Portsmouth	60.15
Havant	78.96
Gosport	27.61
Isle of Wight	392.83
Total	**4,245.88**

Population density

Council	Population density (per sq km)
Basingstoke and Deane	300.09
Rushmoor	2,635.33
Hart	471.73
Winchester	200.34
East Hampshire	249.68
Test Valley	214.22
New Forest	226.17
Southampton	4,542.13
Eastleigh	1,652.45
Fareham	1,466.25
Portsmouth	3,496.22
Havant	1,591.80
Gosport	2,984.21
Isle of Wight	358.70
Average	**1,456.38**

Council Tax Band D

Council	Band D rate (excluding parish)
Basingstoke and Deane	£2,119.55
Rushmoor	£2,212.83
Hart	£2,177.23
Winchester	£2,250.35
East Hampshire	£2,231.64

Test Valley	£2,142.04
New Forest	£2,178.90
Southampton	£2,159.99
Eastleigh	£2,235.17
Fareham	£2,164.55
Portsmouth	£2,180.92
Havant	£2,212.89
Gosport	£2,236.14
Isle of Wight	£2,367.00
Average	**£2,197.76**

Council tax base

Council	Council tax base
Basingstoke and Deane	70,025.30
Rushmoor	33,410.57
Hart	43,072.16
Winchester	54,886.50
East Hampshire	52,823.33
Test Valley	52,407.00
New Forest	73,355.00
Southampton	67,345.00
Eastleigh	49,576.31
Fareham	44,596.40
Portsmouth	59,340.00
Havant	43,147.40
Gosport	27,086.50
Isle of Wight	
Average	**671,071.47**

Non-earmarked reserves

Council	Non-earmarked reserves
Basingstoke and Deane	£85.2
Rushmoor	£30.2
Hart	£51.6
Winchester	£100.3
East Hampshire	£40.4
Test Valley	£70.7
New Forest	£52.0
Southampton	£127.5
Eastleigh	£50.2
Fareham	£46.4
Portsmouth	£337.4
Havant	£40.3
Gosport	£23.1
Isle of Wight	£133.9
Total	**£1,189.20**

Gross Value Added (GVA)

Council	GVA (£ million) 2022
Basingstoke and Deane	8,033.00
Rushmoor	6,667.00
Hart	3,437.00
Winchester	6,036.00
East Hampshire	2,994.00
Test Valley	4,013.00

New Forest	5,618.00
Southampton	10,023.00
Eastleigh	4,742.00
Fareham	3,530.00
Portsmouth	7,509.00
Havant	2,652.00
Gosport	1,222.00
Isle of Wight	3,067.00
Total	**69,543.00**

Rough sleeper count

Council	Rough sleeper count (Autumn 2023)
Basingstoke and Deane	4.00
Rushmoor	-
Hart	4.00
Winchester	5.00
East Hampshire	2.00
Test Valley	4.00
New Forest	2.00
Southampton	24.00
Eastleigh	2.00
Fareham	4.00
Portsmouth	11.00
Havant	2.00
Gosport	1.00
Isle of Wight	3.00
Total	**68.00**

Homelessness rate

Council	Homelessness rate (per 1,000 households) Apr-Jun 2024
Basingstoke and Deane	0.45
Rushmoor	1.41
Hart	0.71
Winchester	0.56
East Hampshire	0.46
Test Valley	0.85
New Forest	0.74
Southampton	1.17
Eastleigh	0.39
Fareham	1.02
Portsmouth	4.76
Havant	0.84
Gosport	0.87
Isle of Wight	1.13
Average	**1.10**

Life expectancy

Council	Male life expectancy
Basingstoke and Deane	81.45
Rushmoor	79.42
Hart	83.44
Winchester	82.00

East Hampshire	82.10
Test Valley	81.33
New Forest	81.62
Southampton	77.86
Eastleigh	81.39
Fareham	81.47
Portsmouth	77.54
Havant	79.88
Gosport	79.20
Isle of Wight	79.17
Average	**80.56**

Council	Female life expectancy
Basingstoke and Deane	83.97
Rushmoor	83.13
Hart	85.89
Winchester	86.11
East Hampshire	85.48
Test Valley	84.34
New Forest	85.38
Southampton	82.25
Eastleigh	84.80
Fareham	84.76
Portsmouth	82.19
Havant	83.29
Gosport	82.45
Isle of Wight	83.33
Average	**84.10**

Income deprivation

Council	Income deprivation average score
Basingstoke and Deane	0.07
Rushmoor	0.10
Hart	0.04
Winchester	0.06
East Hampshire	0.06
Test Valley	0.07
New Forest	0.08
Southampton	0.14
Eastleigh	0.07
Fareham	0.06
Portsmouth	0.13
Havant	0.13
Gosport	0.11
Isle of Wight	0.14
Average	**0.09**

Unemployment rates

Council	Unemployment rates (%)
Basingstoke and Deane	3.71
Rushmoor	3.13
Hart	2.65
Winchester	2.63
East Hampshire	3.14

Test Valley	2.48
New Forest	3.29
Southampton	5.40
Eastleigh	3.21
Fareham	2.88
Portsmouth	4.65
Havant	4.84
Gosport	3.38
Isle of Wight	4.46
Average	**3.56**

Crime rates

Council	Total crime rate per 1,000 population
Basingstoke and Deane	48.3
Rushmoor	93.3
Hart	49.5
Winchester	57.02
East Hampshire	48.34
Test Valley	56.68
New Forest	59.59
Southampton	126.16
Eastleigh	58.67
Fareham	50.67
Portsmouth	117.59
Havant	80.05
Gosport	80.73

Isle of Wight	76.67
Average	**71.66**

Housing delivery

Council	Housing delivery test - 2023 measurement
Basingstoke and Deane	131%
Rushmoor	147%
Hart	197%
Winchester	171%
East Hampshire	88%
Test Valley	144%
New Forest	75%
Southampton	50%
Eastleigh	122%
Fareham	55%
Portsmouth	26%
Havant	74%
Gosport	31%
Isle of Wight	76%
Average	**99%**

Net revenue expenditure (NRE)

Council	Net revenue (£k)
Basingstoke and Deane	19,071
Rushmoor	10,599

Hart	9,604
Winchester	15,499
East Hampshire	23,800
Test Valley	14,706
New Forest	26,245
Southampton	209,664
Eastleigh	15,558
Fareham	13,883
Portsmouth	145,536
Havant	14,133
Gosport	11,386
Isle of Wight	151,876
Total	**681,560**

Financing costs

Council	Financing costs as % of NRE
Basingstoke and Deane	0%
Rushmoor	65%
Hart	4%
Winchester	0%
East Hampshire	12%
Test Valley	1%
New Forest	15%
Southampton	2%
Eastleigh	81%
Fareham	19%
Portsmouth	15%

Havant	1%
Gosport	16%
Isle of Wight	11%
Average	**17%**

Gross external debt

Council	Gross external debt (31 March 2024) £k
Basingstoke and Deane	-
Rushmoor	142,500
Hart	14,170
Winchester	159,607
East Hampshire	117,421
Test Valley	6,173
New Forest	124,004
Southampton	316,297
Eastleigh	565,812
Fareham	59,589
Portsmouth	698,836
Havant	2,886
Gosport	52,350
Isle of Wight	170,733
Total	**2,430,378**

Capital financing requirement (CFR)

Council	CFR (1st April 2024) £k
Basingstoke and Deane	-
Rushmoor	154,628
Hart	40,665
Winchester	282,706
East Hampshire	156,541
Test Valley	5,585
New Forest	164,087
Southampton	527,410
Eastleigh	602,403
Fareham	123,386
Portsmouth	968,962
Havant	13,427
Gosport	81,155
Isle of Wight	385,814
Total	**3,506,769**

Retained business rates

Council	Retained business rates (£)
Basingstoke and Deane	32,002,930
Rushmoor	24,107,777
Hart	13,684,249
Winchester	26,565,683
East Hampshire	13,597,984
Test Valley	28,784,641

New Forest	30,902,242
Southampton	51,208,447
Eastleigh	26,157,401
Fareham	17,974,990
Portsmouth	42,006,006
Havant	14,203,359
Gosport	7,431,529
Total	**328,627,238**

Gross business rates

Council	Gross business rates (£)
Basingstoke and Deane	79,269,303
Rushmoor	57,634,430
Hart	33,559,217
Winchester	65,268,023
East Hampshire	32,401,279
Test Valley	70,924,178
New Forest	75,720,145
Southampton	102,829,879
Eastleigh	64,355,293
Fareham	44,740,386
Portsmouth	84,750,401
Havant	35,122,059
Gosport	18,713,451
Total	**765,288,044**

Gross council tax income

Council	Gross council tax income (£)
Basingstoke and Deane	141,378,279.69
Rushmoor	73,931,911.61
Hart	93,777,998.92
Winchester	123,513,835.28
East Hampshire	117,882,656.16
Test Valley	112,257,890.28
New Forest	159,833,209.50
Southampton	145,464,526.55
Eastleigh	110,811,480.82
Fareham	96,531,137.62
Portsmouth	129,415,792.80
Havant	95,480,449.99
Gosport	60,569,206.11
Total	**1,460,848,375.32**

Gross council tax and business rates income

Council	Gross council tax and business rates income (£)
Basingstoke and Deane	220,647,582.69
Rushmoor	131,566,341.61
Hart	127,337,215.92
Winchester	188,781,858.28
East Hampshire	150,283,935.16

Test Valley	183,182,068.28
New Forest	235,553,354.50
Southampton	248,294,405.55
Eastleigh	175,166,773.82
Fareham	141,271,523.62
Portsmouth	214,166,193.80
Havant	130,602,508.99
Gosport	79,282,657.11
Total	**2,226,136,419.32**

Total rateable value

Council	Total rateable value
Basingstoke and Deane	198,802,125
Rushmoor	144,177,237
Hart	78,772,540
Winchester	169,620,278
East Hampshire	98,329,591
Test Valley	168,162,703
New Forest	196,158,475
Southampton	270,163,577
Eastleigh	147,128,033
Fareham	114,072,431
Portsmouth	232,262,183
Havant	89,586,535
Gosport	49,695,122
Isle of Wight	117,281,206
Total	**2,074,212,036**

Gross disposable housing income

Council	GDHI per head of population (£)
Basingstoke and Deane	25,531
Rushmoor	20,955
Hart	30,226
Winchester	29,584
East Hampshire	28,944
Test Valley	26,074
New Forest	26,570
Southampton	18,758
Eastleigh	22,117
Fareham	24,075
Portsmouth	19,388
Havant	22,106
Gosport	20,007
Isle of Wight	20,749
Total	**335,084**

Initial longlist of potential options for LGR (February 2025):

- A longlist of potential options was consolidated from around the 15 councils, ranging two new mainland to four new mainland configurations. There was a unanimous agreement that the Isle of Wight should remain an existing unitary early on in the process due to their unique island complexities. This meant a total of 12 options (A-L) were initially considered.
- To assess the 12 options, information from the databook was consolidated at a unitary level to be used as an evidence-base for decision-making on initial refinement, aligning to government criteria 1-3 where initial quantitative analysis was most applicable. The aim of analysis was to demonstrate balance or imbalance across the unitary configurations. Each of the options, with initial data against government criteria 1-3, can be found below.

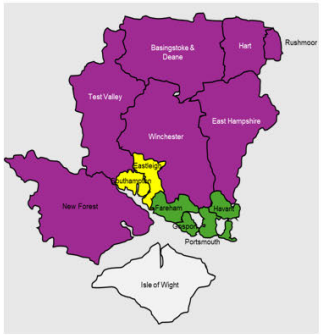
- This then informed a Leaders' session where we were able to determine which options councils wished to continue refining, informed by this initial analysis. This reduced a long list of 12 options down to seven for further detailed analysis. The approach to do this was agreed with all Leaders and Chief Executives. Six options (A, B, C, D, F, G) were removed due to significant imbalances across unitaries after majority agreement.

  The maps and tables below show the initial longlist of options outlining unitary datapoints for metrics agreed against government criteria 1 to 3.

Option A

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	60.15	56.39	3,736.51
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,180.92	2,159.99	2,187.34
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	35,706.64	39,135.53	34,261.10
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	26%	50%	118%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	337.40	127.50	590.40
	Population density	1,540.82	3,496.22	4,542.13	382.32
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	217,852	274,539	1,491,859
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	403.00	401.51	404.40
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	615.40	567.98	833.54
	Financing Costs as % NRE (Including County allocations)	5%	15%	2%	5%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.13	0.14	0.08
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	4.76	1.17	0.72
	Female life expectancy	84.16	82.19	82.25	84.51
	Unemployment rates	3.49	4.65	5.40	3.21
	Crime rates	71.3	117.59	126.16	43.82

Option B

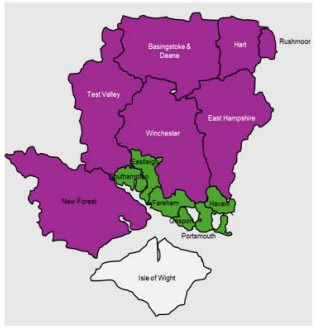


Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	244.57	141.68	3,466.80
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.63	2,197.58	2,173.14
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	28,004.63	37,185.82	38,117.36
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	44%	76%	135%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	447.20	177.70	430.40
	Population density	1,540.82	2,177.39	2,802.46	278.47
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	554,741	423,221	1,006,288
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	344.26	421.06	429.65
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	719.10	647.12	855.35
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	8%	6%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.43	0.89	0.70
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.17	83.53	84.90
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.93	4.31	3.00
	Crime rates	71.3	88.68	102.20	32.98

Option C

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	758.98	917.21	2,176.86
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,205.23	2,191.35	2,160.28
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	27,092.45	35,606.11	42,606.07
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	55%	76%	154%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	487.60	229.70	338.00
	Population density	1,540.82	870.85	624.13	303.90
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	689,324	604,885	690,041
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	326.39	424.32	463.54
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	757.34	728.37	828.79
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	7%	6%	3%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.05	0.84	0.74
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.63	84.14	84.69
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.77	3.97	2.92
	Crime rates	71.3	80.84	89.15	22.94

Option D



Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	386.25	3,466.80
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.28	2,173.14
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	31,926.28	38,117.36
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	60%	135%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	624.90	430.40
	Population density	1,540.82	2,406.68	278.47
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	977,962	1,006,288
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	377.06	429.65
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	688.38	855.35
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	7%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.10	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	1.77	0.70
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.29	84.90
	Unemployment rates	3.49	4.06	3.00
	Crime rates	71.3	94.46	32.98

Option E

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	244.57	141.68	2,064.27	1,402.53
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.63	2,197.58	2,190.43	2,160.17
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	28,004.63	37,185.82	35,421.74	40,396.64
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	44%	76%	140%	131%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	447.20	177.70	223.00	207.40
	Population density	1,540.82	2,177.39	2,802.46	214.26	372.96
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	554,741	423,221	464,240	542,048
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	344.26	421.06	479.12	387.82
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	719.10	647.12	894.64	823.17
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	8%	6%	3%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.07	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.43	0.89	0.72	0.69
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.17	83.53	85.28	84.62
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.93	4.31	2.80	3.16
	Crime rates	71.3	88.68	102.20	57.94	11.87

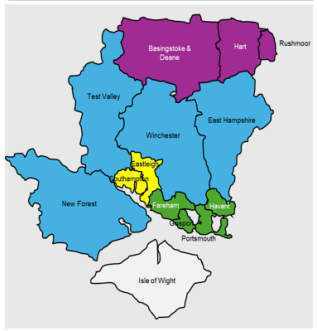
Option F

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	244.57	141.68	1,403.21	2,063.59
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.63	2,197.58	2,160.47	2,178.20
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	28,004.63	37,185.82	31,081.88	41,442.93
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	44%	76%	116%	141%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	447.20	177.70	122.70	307.70
	Population density	1,540.82	2,177.39	2,802.46	220.82	317.66
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	554,741	423,221	321,912	684,376
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	344.26	421.06	473.26	409.03
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	719.10	647.12	876.87	844.72
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	8%	6%	3%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.07	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.43	0.89	0.78	0.66
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.17	83.53	84.86	84.92
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.93	4.31	2.89	3.05
	Crime rates	71.3	88.68	102.20	58.33	20.99

Option G

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	87.76	1,481.48	219.54	2,064.27
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,208.53	2,170.71	2,186.57	2,190.43
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	29,831.01	36,658.60	35,787.29	35,421.74
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	27%	120%	73%	140%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	360.50	247.70	224.10	223.00
	Population density	1,540.82	3,335.15	437.92	2,328.60	214.26
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	302,410	671,702	545,898	464,240
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	353.50	366.83	414.55	479.12
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	652.16	811.31	690.84	894.64
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	11%	4%	6%	3%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.12	0.08	0.09	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	3.66	0.72	0.92	0.72
	Female life expectancy	84.16	82.32	84.35	83.94	85.28
	Unemployment rates	3.49	4.01	3.49	3.83	2.80
	Crime rates	71.3	107.22	25.08	90.69	57.94

Option H

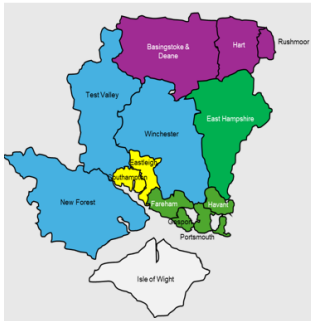


Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	2,578.69	888.11	141.68	244.57
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,200.73	2,136.34	2,197.58	2,198.63
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	32,696.21	45,957.41	37,185.82	28,004.63
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	126%	148%	76%	44%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	263.40	167.00	177.70	447.20
	Population density	1,540.82	221.33	444.37	2,802.46	2,177.39
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	598,823	407,465	423,221	554,741
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	428.07	431.94	421.06	344.26
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	900.25	793.09	647.12	719.10
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	3%	4%	6%	8%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.11
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	0.66	0.77	0.89	2.43
	Female life expectancy	84.16	85.33	84.33	83.53	83.17
	Unemployment rates	3.49	2.88	3.16	4.31	3.93
	Crime rates	71.3	55.78	-	102.20	88.68

Option I

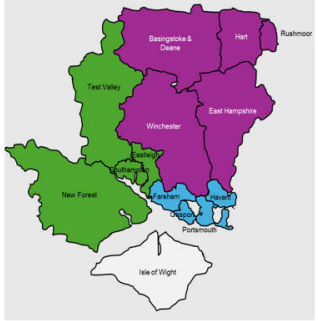
Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	917.21	1,803.15	888.11	244.57
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,191.35	2,208.01	2,136.34	2,198.63
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	35,606.11	32,991.77	45,957.41	28,004.63
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	76%	136%	148%	44%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	229.70	211.40	167.00	447.20
	Population density	1,540.82	624.13	219.25	444.37	2,177.39
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	604,885	417,159	407,465	554,741
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	424.32	426.45	431.94	344.26
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	728.37	894.26	793.09	719.10
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	6%	3%	4%	8%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.07	0.11
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	0.84	0.62	0.77	2.43
	Female life expectancy	84.16	84.14	85.31	84.33	83.17
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.97	2.75	3.16	3.93
	Crime rates	71.3	89.15	54.09	-	88.68

Option J



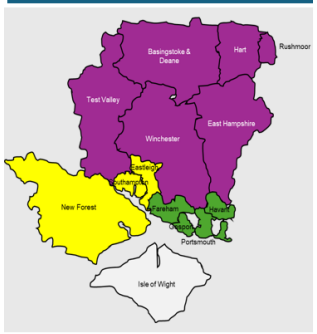
Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	758.98	2,064.27	141.68	888.11
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,205.23	2,190.43	2,197.58	2,136.34
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	27,092.45	35,421.74	37,185.82	45,957.41
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	55%	140%	76%	148%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	487.60	223.00	177.70	167.00
	Population density	1,540.82	870.85	214.26	2,802.46	444.37
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	689,324	464,240	423,221	407,465
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	326.39	479.12	421.06	431.94
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	757.34	894.64	647.12	793.09
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	7%	3%	6%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.05	0.72	0.89	0.77
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.63	85.28	83.53	84.33
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.77	2.80	4.31	3.16
	Crime rates	71.3	80.84	57.94	102.20	-

Option K



Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	1,544.89	244.57	2,063.59
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,179.03	2,198.63	2,178.20
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	34,510.32	28,004.63	41,442.93
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	89%	44%	141%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	300.40	447.20	307.70
	Population density	1,540.82	457.58	2177.39	317.66
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	745,133	554,741	684,376
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	443.94	344.26	409.03
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	748.05	719.10	844.72
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	5%	8%	4%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.09	0.11	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	0.84	2.43	0.66
	Female life expectancy	84.16	84.19	83.17	84.92
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.60	3.93	3.05
	Crime rates	71.3	82.97	88.68	20.99

Option L



Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	244.57	917.21	2,691.27
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.63	2,191.35	2,172.18
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	28,004.63	35,606.11	39,468.90
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	44%	76%	141%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	447.20	229.70	378.40
	Population density	1,540.82	2,177.39	624.13	293.54
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	554,741	604,885	824,624
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	344.26	424.32	429.19
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	719.10	728.37	843.10
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	8%	6%	3%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.11	0.09	0.07
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.43	0.84	0.70
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.17	84.14	84.82
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.93	3.97	2.96
	Crime rates	71.3	88.68	89.15	27.07

Option M

Government criteria	Unitary Option	Av	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	Geographic area (sq km)	-	244.57	141.68	1,403.21	888.11	1,175.47
	Council Tax band D	2,184.74	2,198.63	2,197.58	2,160.47	2,136.34	2,241.00
	GVA per capita (£)	34,382.45	28,004.63	37,185.82	31,081.88	45,957.41	34,613.62
	Housing Delivery (%)	101%	44%	76%	116%	148%	132%
	Non-Earmarked Reserves	81.2	447.20	177.70	122.70	167.00	140.70
	Population density	1,540.82	2,177.39	2,802.46	220.82	444.37	221.94
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	Population (2028 estimates)	-	554,741	423,221	321,912	407,465	276,911
	Business Rates (£) per unit population	397.78	344.26	421.06	473.26	431.94	374.38
	Council tax income (£) per unit population	791.68	719.10	647.12	876.87	793.09	925.24
	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream % (Including County allocations)	5%	8%	6%	3%	4%	3%
High quality and sustainable services	Deprivation score	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.07	0.07	0.06
	Homelessness Rate (per 1,000 Households) Apr-Jun 2024	1.09	2.43	0.89	0.78	0.77	0.51
	Female life expectancy	84.16	83.17	83.53	84.86	84.33	85.80
	Unemployment rates	3.49	3.93	4.31	2.89	3.16	2.88
	Crime rates	71.3	88.68	102.20	58.33	-	52.75

Interim proposal (March 2025)

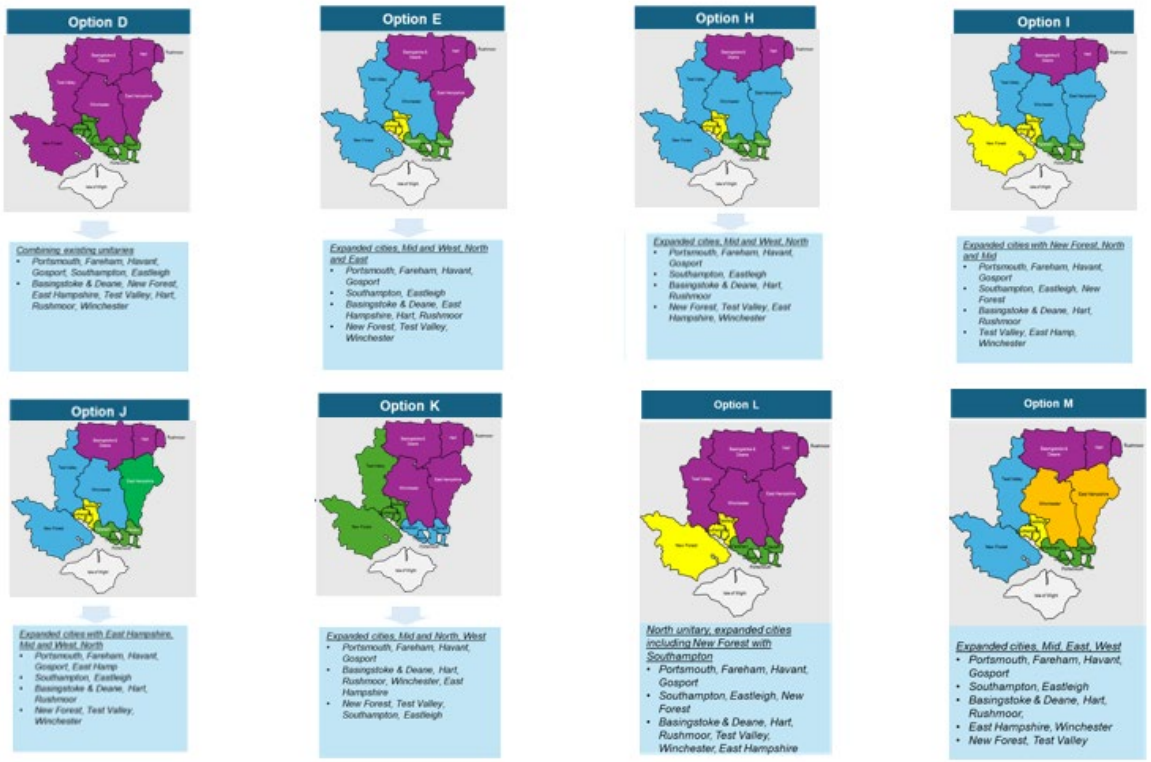
- At the interim proposal stage, there was agreement from each of the councils to not submit any of the options refined because of lack of full consensus at that stage and the need to further scrutinise each of the options through a detailed appraisal.
- In the meantime, all 15 councils agreed on the following guiding principles that would be used to underpin future decisions and incorporated into the interim proposal. A joint submission was made by the 15 councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, outlining the guiding principles, timelines, key areas and how councils are working together.
    1. Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries.
    2. Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies.
    3. To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes.
    4. Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission.
    5. Proposals will ensure there are sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with options retaining equitable representation and voting rights.
    6. Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services.
    7. Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes.
    8. New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks.

Preferred options by councils (March 2025)

- Post Interim submission, an activity was conducted whereby each council submitted their preferences on options based on their knowledge of the area and data considered to date. For completeness and transparency, this was done for each of the initial 12 options, with the seven refined options being taken forward for further analysis per the initial longlist section.
- Each council was also able to submit their preferences (below) related to boundary changes. Option M was added post-workshop after agreement from all councils that a five new mainland unitary model should also be considered as part of the options appraisal. Option D was also re-added due to council support and to ensure the detailed analysis covered options from two to five mainland unitaries. This meant that a total of eight options were taken forward to the detailed options appraisal stage (D, E, H, I, J, K, L, M).

The table and maps below show the preferred options by councils, along with boundary change details.

Council	Options													Boundary Changes
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	
Hampshire CC				✓							✓	✓		
Basingstoke & Deane								✓	✓	✓				**With and without** boundary changes.
Rushmoor								✓	✓	✓				**With and without** boundary changes.
Hart								✓	✓	✓				**With and without** boundary changes.
Winchester								✓						Boundary changes will only be considered at a Parish boundary level and the impact of any change must be evidenced by credible data. Any new boundary proposed must also be contiguous to existing neighbourhoods and have full resident support. Any change that damages the viability of a mid Hants unitary will not be supported.
East Hampshire				✓	✓						✓	✓		**Without** boundary changes. Would want to assess impact of New Forest going into a southern unitary and request to be modelled.
Test Valley					✓	✓		✓					✓	Councillors have asked if a **variation of Option F(M)** is worked up, that establishes 5 UAs. It would see Winchester and East Hampshire together and a northern UA of Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor. The rest of option F would remain as is.
New Forest					✓			✓						**Without** boundary changes.
Southampton								✓	✓					**With and without** boundary changes. A further option with boundary changes that is based around consolidating the urban areas to maximise the economic growth potential for the region- Southampton (all), Test Valley (Chilworth Nursling and Rownhams), Eastleigh (all), New Forest - (Waterside -Totton North, Totton Central, Totton South, Marchwood & Eling, Dibden & Dibden Purlieu, Hythe Central, Hythe South, Hardley Holbury & N Blackfield, Fawley Blackfield Calshot & Langley)
Eastleigh								✓	✓					I – **without** boundary changes. H – **with** boundary changes. Option H1: all of Southampton, all of Eastleigh, plus the following wards: Test Valley: Valley Park, North Baddesley, Chilworth Nursling & Rownhams, New Forest: Totton North, Totton Central, Totton South, Marchwood & Eling, Dibden & Dibden Purlieu, Hythe Central, Hythe South, Hardley Holbury & N Blackfield, Fawley Blackfield Calshot & Langley Option H2: as H1 plus additional Test Valley wards: Ampfield & Braishfield, Romsey Cupernham, Romsey Abbey, Romsey Tadburn.
Fareham					✓	✓		✓	✓					
Portsmouth								✓	✓					**With** boundary changes.
Havant								✓	✓	✓				H,I or J with boundary changes– Waterlooville – Newlands Parish. Would welcome discussion re Denmead Ward Ward boundaries around Rowlands Castle and Clanfield
Gosport							✓							If LGR was imposed, Option G only.
Isle of Wight			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Total	-	-	1	2	5	3	2	12	9	5	2	2	1	



Detailed options analysis process: Metrics (April 2025)

- The first activity as part of the detailed options analysis was to agree the metrics to be used to assess each of the remaining options. Each of the potential metrics were discussed with the Chief Executive group and refined based on which metrics would allow for Leaders to make an evidence-based informed decision.
- Each of the agreed upon metrics were aligned with government criteria and associated ‘assessment factors’, which were used to be more targeted for each criterion and guidance. The metrics were also aligned with the agreed upon guiding principles submitted as part of the Interim proposal.

- A combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics was agreed as part of this process, with relevant data sources identified. Some sources were available public, whereas other service demand and financial data was requested as part of the council s151 data request (used also to inform the financial case).

Assessment Factor	Guiding Principles	Metric	Data Source
Government Criteria 1.			
Sensible economic area	**1 3 8**	**Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita**	**ONS Regional gross domestic product: local authorities (2022)**
	1 3 8	**Unemployment Rates**	**ONS LI01 Regional labour market data**
	1 3 8	**Gross disposable household income per head**	**ONS GDHI 2024**
	1 3 4	**Transport connectivity**	**Local transport maps (rail and road)**
	1 2 3	**Alignment to major Hampshire and the Isle of Wight industries**	**Hampshire County Council Economic Dashboard**
	1 2 3	**Travel to work areas alignment (2011 & 2021 maps used)**	**Travel to Work Areas (December 2011) Boundaries UK BUC** **Travel to Work Areas (December 2021) Boundaries UK BUC**
Tax base	**1 3 8**	**Council Tax base**	**Council Websites / S151 data request**

	1 3 8	Business rates total rateable value	Total Rateable Value by Local Authority / S151 data request
Sensible economic area	1 3 8	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	ONS Regional gross domestic product: local authorities (2022)
	1 3 8	Unemployment Rates	ONS LI01 Regional labour market data
	1 3 8	Gross disposable household income per head	ONS GDHI 2024
	1 3 4	Transport connectivity	Local transport maps (rail and road)
	1 2 3	Alignment to major Hampshire and the Isle of Wight industries	Hampshire County Council Economic Dashboard
	1 2 3	Travel to work areas alignment (2011 & 2021 maps used)	Travel to Work Areas (December 2011) Boundaries UK BUC Travel to Work Areas (December 2021) Boundaries UK BUC
Tax base	1 3 8	Council Tax base	Council Websites / S151 data request
	1 3 8	Business rates total rateable value	Total Rateable Value by Local Authority / S151 data request
Sensible geography	1 2 3 5	Geographic Area (sqkm)	ONS Standard Area Measurements for

			Administrative Areas (December 2023) in the UK
Housing supply	1 3 7 8	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	Government Housing Delivery Test: 2023
	1 3 7 8	LA and private housing stock per head	ONS Number of dwellings by tenure and district
Local needs	6 7 8	Level of deprivation	ONS income deprivation at a local authority level 2019
	1 2 4 6 7	Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	Qualitative discussion of options
Government Criteria 2.			
Population size	1 2 3 5	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	ONS Estimates of the population for England and Wales 2023 local authority boundaries edition
Transition costs	7 8	Transition cost per head of population	Data Request from S151
Potential financial efficiencies	7 8	Gross Central Service Costs	Data Request from S151
	7 8	Gross Staff costs	Data Request from S151
	7 8	Gross Costs of IT licenses	Data Request from S151

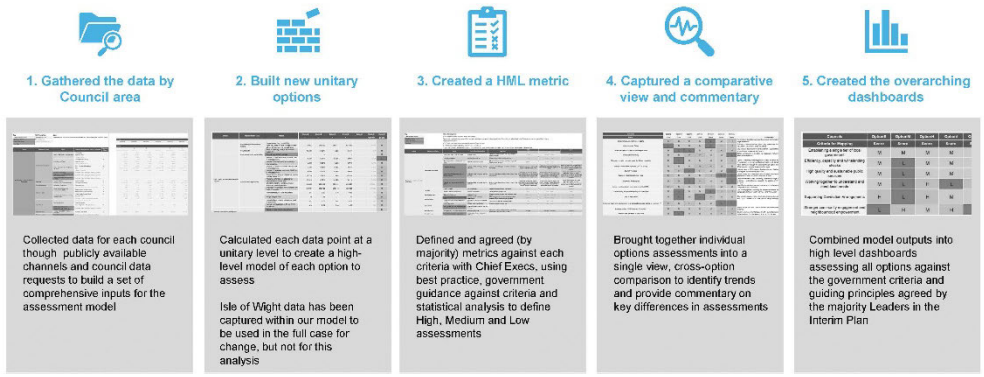
	7 8	Gross Costs of Third Party spend	Data Request from S151
	7 8	Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates	Data Request from S151
	7 8	Potential savings delivered from LGR	Data Request from S151
	7 8	Social Care Ratio	Social Care Ratio
Establishing firmer financial footing	7 8	Gross Budget Gap (2026/2027)	Latest published Council Financial Statements
Council debt	7 8	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	Data Request from S151
Government Criteria 3.			
Avoiding service fragmentation	6 7 8	Service fragmentation caused	Shortlisted options
Crucial service protection	6 7	Number of older adults in adult social care as % total population	Service Data Request from Corporate Strategy Teams
	6 7	Number of adults in adult social care as % total population	Service Data Request from Corporate Strategy Teams
	6 7	Number of children in children's social care as % total population	Service Data Request from Corporate Strategy Teams
	6 7	Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	Service Data Request from Corporate Strategy Teams

	6 7	Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	DHSC health profiles
	6 7	Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	DHSC health profiles
Government Criteria 4.			
Local Identity	1 2 3 4	Sense of place, community & identity	Community engagement activity outputs
	1 2 3 4 7	Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	Rural Urban Classification
Government Criteria 5			
Unlocking devolution	2 3 4 7	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment	Future unitary management structures and overheads
Population within a Strategic Authority	1 3 5	Representation within a future Combined Authority	Population 2028 balance, significant outliers
Government Criteria 6			
Engagement planning	4 5 7	The ability to maintain effective local engagement	Shortlisted options
Existing engagement arrangements	1 2 3 4 7	Level of existing local network structures (Town and Parish Councils)	Existing Parished and non-Parished areas

	1 2 3 4 7	**Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS**	**Existing initiatives across the current councils e.g. health and wellbeing, VCSE organisations**

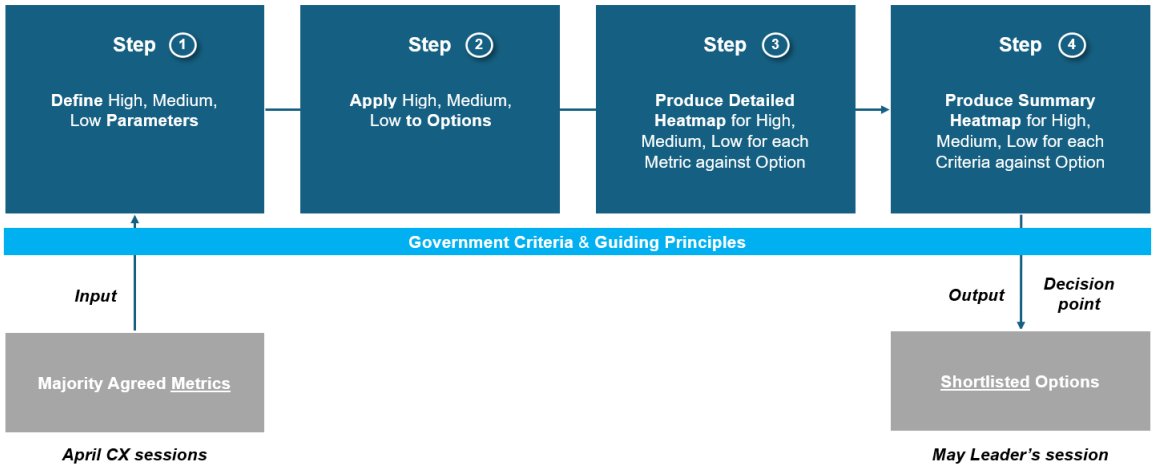
Detailed options analysis process: Modelling (April 2025)

- Data was gathered following agreement on the metrics for the detailed appraisal and entered into a model. This model focused on creating balanced and financially sustainable future unitary authorities that would deliver effective services for the communities. (For this analysis, Isle of Wight figures were excluded as a separate case for remaining as-is was under development, which would have skewed the analysis.) The image below provides an overview of the process from raw data to analysis outcomes of the options considered for refinement.
- Inputted and continuously validated financial information with s151s, as well as data collated by each council into the model. The finances captured from each council covered revenue budgets and medium-term forecasts, reserves and provisions, balance sheet, capital programme, statutory and ring-fenced accounts, existing shared services, pooled budgets, and contracts.



- Step 1 of the analysis process (shown in the tables below) was to define 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' parameters, created by averages based on the data received, split into third percentiles. In some cases, the difference between 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' parameters were miniscule due to small differences between unitary data.

Metric	Measurement		
	High	Medium	Low
Unemployment Rates	1.27%	1.27% - 1.74%	1.74%
Local authority and private housing stock per head	0.021	0.021 - 0.028	0.028
Level of deprivation	0.039	0.039 - 0.040	0.040
Social Care Ratio	4.478%	4.48% - 4.49%	4.493%
Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	0.98%	0.98% - 1.15%	1.15%
Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.31%	0.31% - 0.53%	0.53%
Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.37%	0.37% - 0.37%	0.37%
Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.29%	0.29% - 0.55%	0.55%
Proportion of children in relative low income families (under 16s)*	8.84%	8.84% - 9.02%	9.02%
Proportion of children in absolute low income families (under 16s)*	7.53%	7.53% - 7.58%	7.58%
Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.74	1.74 - 1.79	1.79
Rough sleeper count	16.97	16.97 - 19.88	19.88
Households on housing register per head of population	0.01599	0.02 - 0.02	0.02156
Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 households	2.90	2.90 - 3.37	3.37

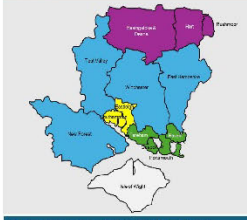


- Step 2 of the analysis was then to apply a ‘High’, ‘Medium’ or ‘Low’ to each of the options based on how many metrics were assessed as ‘High’, ‘Medium’ or ‘Low’. This meant that options could be assessed easily on a macro-level but also at a detailed metric-by-metric level. The result of this exercise can be seen on the series of images below.

Option H

Option H

Expanded cities, Mid and West, North



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

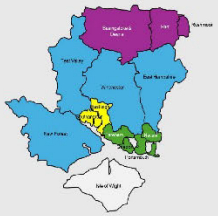
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	H
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	5	M
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	6	M
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£17,953	M	£32,696	£45,957	£37,186	£28,005
			Unemployment Rates	1.71%	M	2.91%	3.29%	4.62%	4.12%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,736	L	£27,687	£25,546	£19,950	£21,130
			Transport connectivity	-	H	Good transport connectivity alignment. Arguably East Hampshire faces into the South via the A3, and North / into London			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	M	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Tourism and Professional (although evenly dispersed), Maritime split across waterside with NF			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment, as well as U1 areas			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	116,551	L	233,472	146,508	116,921	174,170
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£77.13	M	£244.31	£170.46	£167.19	£183.33
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	2,437 km2	L	2,579 km2	888 km2	142 km2	245 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	105%	L	126%	148%	76%	44%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.03	L	0.45	0.42	0.43	0.44
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.041	L	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.11
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	H	Strong alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas			

Option H

Option H

Expanded cities, Mid and West, North

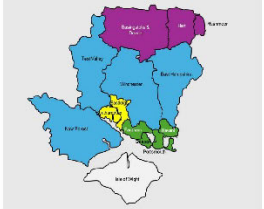


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	496,063 (ave)	M	598,823	407,465	423,221	554,741
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	4	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£10,735	H	£32,268	£29,231	£27,418	£21,533
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£132,683	M	£233,392	£160,045	£194,684	£292,728
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£2,877	M	£7,664	£6,097	£7,304	£8,974
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£178,066	M	£534,507	£360,555	£538,622	£451,513
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£180,109	L	-£413,739	-£283,198	-£233,629	-£348,846
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	4	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	86.84%	86.84%	87.43%	91.33%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£38,378	L	£55,047	£42,078	£16,869	£33,532
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	14.62%	M	2.77%	0.41%	15.03%	6.14%

Option H

Option H

Expanded cities, Mid and West, North



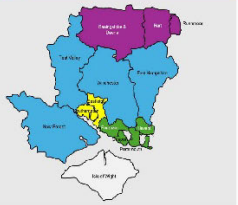
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	4	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	0.99%	M	6.10%	6.21%	5.31%	5.22%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.46%	M	1.10%	0.84%	0.96%	0.92%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.37%	M	0.57%	0.51%	0.88%	0.88%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.14%	H	4.84%	4.73%	4.80%	4.69%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.84%	M	11.74%	10.94%	19.78%	19.73%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.53%	M	9.91%	9.16%	16.69%	16.61%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£34,145	L	£67,563	£40,904	£33,418	£60,409
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£17,365	M	£23,984	£22,890	£15,796	£33,161
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.77	M	0.70	0.77	0.92	2.47
			Rough sleeper count	18.00	M	13	8	26	18
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	L	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.37	L	2.51	0.77	2.32	4.14

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option H

Option H

Expanded cities, Mid and West, North



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	H	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	35.53%	L	35.71%	20.22%	0.18%	0.50%
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	H	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	191,358	M	598,823	407,465	423,221	554,741
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U3 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	116	M	234	213	118	205

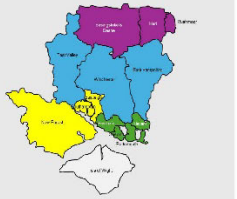
Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	H	N/A	N/A	M	M	M	M

Option I

Option I

Expanded cities with New Forest, North and Mid



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

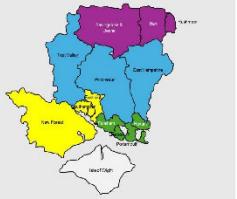
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	M
High quality and sustainable public services	-	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements		5	M
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	H	6	M
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£17,963	M	£35,606	£32,992	£45,957	£28,005
			Unemployment Rates	1.47%	M	4.21%	2.75%	3.29%	4.12%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,052	M	£21,979	£28,182	£25,546	£21,130
			Transport connectivity	-	H	Good transport connectivity alignment. Arguably East Hampshire faces into the South via the A3, and North / into London.			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	H	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, and Tourism. Partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Professional (although evenly dispersed), Maritime aligned with waterside including NF			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	H	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment with New Forest			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	43,768	H	190,276	160,117	146,508	174,170
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£74.31	M	£242.91	£168.59	£170.46	£183.33
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	1,559 km2	H	917 km2	1,803 km2	888 km2	245 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	105%	L	76%	136%	148%	44%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.03	M	0.44	0.43	0.42	0.44
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.044	L	0.09	0.06	0.07	0.11
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	M	Fair alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas. New Forest and Southampton potential misalignment.			

Option I

Option I

Expanded cities with New Forest, North and Mid

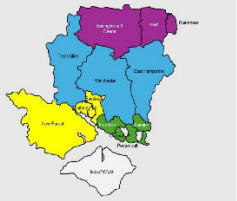


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	496,063 (ave)	M	604,885	417,159	407,465	554,741
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	4	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£14,326	M	£35,858	£23,827	£29,231	£21,533
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£132,683	M	£266,170	£161,906	£160,045	£292,728
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£4,507	L	£9,737	£5,230	£6,097	£8,974
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£345,010	L	£705,565	£367,563	£360,565	£451,513
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£79,710	H	-£362,908	-£284,460	-£283,198	-£348,846
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	4	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	87.37%	86.84%	86.84%	91.33%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£8,655	H	£33,423	£38,293	£42,078	£33,532
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	11.33%	M	11.74%	1.88%	0.41%	6.14%

Option I

Option I

Expanded cities with New Forest, North and Mid



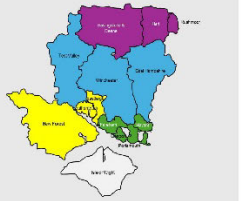
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	L	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	4	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	1.15%	L	5.46%	6.38%	6.21%	5.22%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.41%	M	1.05%	1.03%	0.64%	0.92%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.37%	M	0.83%	0.52%	0.51%	0.88%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.72%	L	5.13%	4.40%	4.73%	4.69%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	9.08%	L	18.40%	10.85%	10.94%	19.73%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.65%	L	15.55%	8.96%	9.16%	16.61%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£19,505	M	£57,286	£43,695	£40,904	£60,409
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£16,101	M	£22,720	£17,060	£22,890	£33,161
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.79	L	0.86	0.68	0.77	2.47
			Rough sleeper count	20	L	28	11	8	18
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	M	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.37	L	2.91	1.70	0.77	4.14

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option I

Option I

Expanded cities with New Forest, North and Mid



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	M	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place, potential mis-alignment with New Forest and Southampton communities			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	37.38%	L	9.56%	37.88%	20.22%	0.50%
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	M	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	197,420	M	604,885	417,159	407,465	554,741
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	H	Engagement planning	Population density enabling the ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	H	No significant imbalances in parish representation within unitaries			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	45	H	167	185	213	205

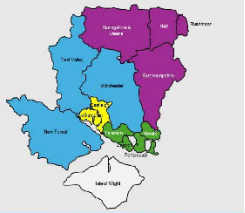
Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	M	N/A	N/A	M	M	M	M

Option E

Option E

Expanded cities Mid and West, North and East



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

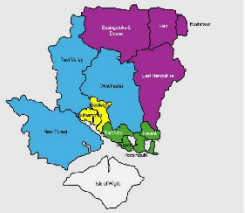
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	M
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	5	H
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	6	M
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£12,392	M	£28,005	£37,186	£35,422	£40,397
			Unemployment Rates	1.78%	L	4.12%	4.62%	2.85%	3.25%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,371	M	£21,130	£19,950	£27,322	£26,380
			Transport connectivity	-	M	Fair transport connectivity alignment. Arguably East Hampshire could better suit the South and potential misalignment with Winchester and New Forest			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	M	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Tourism and Professional (although evenly dispersed), Maritime aligned with waterside including NF			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows loan towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment, as well as U1 areas.			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	82,410	M	174,170	116,921	180,649	199,331
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£44.73	H	£183.33	£167.19	£211.91	£202.86
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	1,923 km2	M	245 km2	142 km2	2,064 km2	1,403 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	96%	M	44%	76%	140%	131%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.03	M	236,563	169,050	198,926	220,902
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.039	M	0.11	0.10	0.07	0.07
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	H	Strong alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas.			

Option E

Option E

Expanded cities Mid and West, North and East

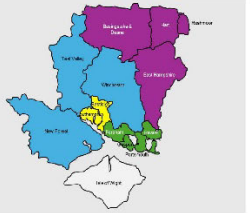


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	496,063 (ave)	M	554,741	423,221	464,240	542,048
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	4	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£18,244	L	£21,533	£27,418	£21,722	£39,777
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£110,702	M	£292,728	£194,684	£182,026	£211,410
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£2,940	M	£8,974	£7,304	£6,033	£7,727
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£124,044	H	£451,513	£538,622	£414,578	£480,484
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£141,050	M	-£348,846	-£233,629	-£322,258	-£374,679
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	4	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	91.33%	87.43%	86.84%	86.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£37,445	M	£33,532	£16,669	£43,011	£54,113
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	14.65%	L	6.14%	15.03%	3.46%	0.39%

Option E

Option E

Expanded cities Mid and West, North and East



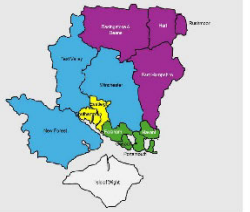
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	4	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	1.41%	L	5.22%	5.31%	6.63%	5.59%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.54%	L	0.92%	0.96%	1.20%	0.66%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.37%	M	0.88%	0.88%	0.58%	0.51%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.30%	M	4.69%	4.80%	4.96%	4.66%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.79%	H	19.73%	19.76%	11.91%	10.99%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.48%	H	16.61%	16.69%	10.06%	9.21%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£26,991	M	£60,409	£33,418	£53,181	£55,287
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£17,365	M	£33,161	£15,796	£18,746	£28,128
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.78	M	2.47	0.92	0.76	0.69
			Rough sleeper count	16	H	18	26	11	10
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	L	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.29	M	4.14	2.32	2.90	0.86

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option E

Option E

Expanded cities Mid and West, North and East



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	M	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place. East Hampshire communities potentially misaligned			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	35.24%	M	0.50%	0.18%	35.42%	24.27%
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	M	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	131,520	H	554,741	423,221	464,240	542,048
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	Population density enabling the ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (e.g. Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U2 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	150	L	205	118	179	268

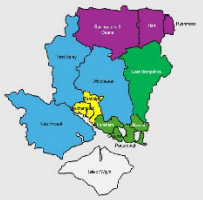
Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	M	N/A	N/A	H	M	M	M

Option J

Option J

Expanded cities with East Hampshire, Mid and West, North



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

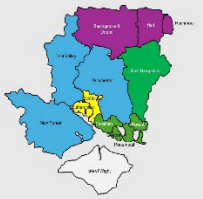
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	H
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	H	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	5	
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment		6	M
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£18,885	L	£27,092	£35,422	£37,186	£45,957
			Unemployment Rates	1.78%	L	3.93%	2.85%	4.62%	3.29%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,371	M	£22,648	£27,322	£19,950	£25,548
			Transport connectivity	-	M	Fair transport connectivity alignment with perhaps Winchester and New Forest misalignment			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	M	Fair alignment with Aerospace and defence (TV, Winchester and Portsmouth higher concentration), Digital technologies (Winchester better aligned with North), Finance and professional dispersed throughout. Maritime alignment between New Forest and Solent			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	H	East Hampshire aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	110,072	L	226,994	180,649	116,921	146,508
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£48.54	H	£215.73	£211.91	£167.19	£170.46
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	1,923 km2	M	759 km2	2,064 km2	142 km2	888 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	94%	H	55%	140%	78%	148%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.03	L	0.44	0.45	0.43	0.42
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.034	H	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.07
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	M	Fair alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas. West and North better aligned together with similar classification. Winchester and East Hampshire similar clarification.			

Option J

Option J

Expanded cities with East Hampshire, Mid and West, North

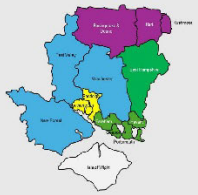


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	496,063 (ave)	M	689,324	464,240	423,221	407,465
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	4	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£10,356	H	£32,078	£21,722	£27,418	£29,231
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£184,049	L	£344,093	£182,026	£194,684	£160,045
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£4,571	L	£10,604	£6,033	£7,304	£6,097
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£210,887	M	£571,442	£414,578	£538,622	£380,555
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£206,698	L	-£440,327	-£322,258	-£233,629	-£283,198
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	4	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	3.98%	H	90.82%	86.84%	87.43%	86.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£28,899	M	£45,567	£43,011	£16,669	£42,078
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	14.62%	M	5.21%	3.46%	15.03%	0.41%

Option J

Option J

Expanded cities with East Hampshire, Mid and West, North



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	4	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	1.63%	L	5.00%	6.63%	5.31%	6.21%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.56%	L	0.89%	1.20%	0.96%	0.64%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.37%	M	0.81%	0.68%	0.88%	0.51%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.31%	M	4.64%	4.96%	4.80%	4.73%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.84%	M	18.07%	11.91%	19.78%	10.94%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.53%	M	15.21%	10.06%	16.69%	9.16%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£41,374	L	£74,792	£53,181	£33,418	£40,904
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£22,602	L	£38,398	£18,746	£15,796	£22,890
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.35	H	2.11	0.76	0.92	0.77
			Rough sleeper count	18	M	20	11	26	8
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	M	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	2.82	H	3.69	2.90	2.32	0.77

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option J

Option J

Expanded cities with East Hampshire, Mid and West, North

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	H	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity		H	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	35.24%	M	7.54%	35.42%	0.18%	20.22%
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*		H	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	281,859	L	689,324	464,240	423,221	407,465
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	Population density enabling the ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	L	U1 and U3 are imbalanced, combining parished and unparished councils and an unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	142	L	260	179	118	213

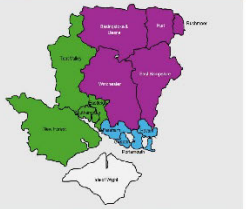
Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	H	N/A	N/A	L	M	M	M

Option K

Option K

Expanded cities, Mid and North, West



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

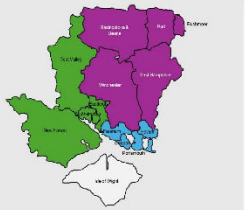
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	L
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	2	L
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	NA
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	NA
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	5	M
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	6	H
		7	M
		8	H

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£13,438	M	£34,510	£28,005	£41,443
			Unemployment Rates	0.99%	H	3.88%	4.12%	3.12%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£5,897	H	£22,758	£21,130	£27,027
			Transport connectivity	-	M	Fair alignment however potential issues with U3 not making practical sense for those communities on opposite sides who do not travel to one another		
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	M	Fair alignment with Aerospace and defence (TV, Winchester and Portsmouth higher concentration), Digital technologies (Winchester aligned with North), Finance and professional dispersed throughout. Maritime alignment between New Forest and Solent		
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to South. Winchester flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment		
		Tax base	Council Tax base	80,048	M	242,683	174,170	254,218
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£130.50	L	£313.83	£183.33	£268.13
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	1,819 km2	M	1,545 km2	245 km2	2,064 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	97%	M	89%	44%	141%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.02	M	0.44	0.44	0.42
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.039	M	0.09	0.11	0.07
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	L	Poor alignment with Rural / Urban classification across most areas, West and North better aligned together with similar classification. Winchester and East Hampshire similar clarification. The Solent region is a similar classification.		

Option K

Option K

Expanded cities, Mid and North, West

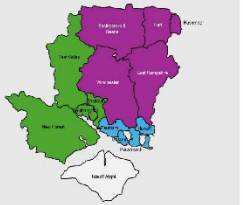


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	661,417 (ave)	H	745,133	554,741	684,376
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	3	H	3 unitaries		
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£25,958	L	£41,426	£21,533	£47,491
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£63,943	H	£326,032	£292,728	£262,089
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£2,187	H	£11,160	£8,974	£9,904
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£385,407	L	£836,920	£451,513	£596,763
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£122,261	M	-£459,458	-£348,846	-£471,107
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	3	H	3 unitaries		
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	87.34%	91.33%	86.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£33,190	M	£47,071	£33,532	£66,722
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	8.22%	H	9.58%	6.14%	1.36%

Option K

Option K

Expanded cities, Mid and North, West



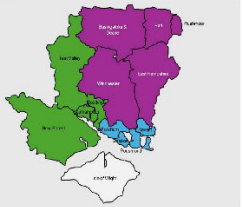
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	3	H	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 3 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation		
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	0.84%	H	5.84%	5.22%	6.06%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.31%	M	1.07%	0.92%	0.76%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.40%	L	0.81%	0.88%	0.48%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.50%	M	5.04%	4.69%	4.54%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	9.03%	L	16.97%	19.73%	10.71%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.58%	L	14.28%	16.61%	9.03%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£11,134	H	£70,343	£60,409	£71,543
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£3,021	H	£30,139	£33,161	£32,531
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.79	L	0.87	2.47	0.69
			Rough sleeper count	17	M	32.00	18.00	15.00
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	H	0.02	0.01	0.02
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.23	M	2.89	4.14	0.91

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option K

Option K

Expanded cities, Mid and North, West



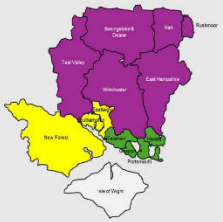
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	L	Mismatch of communities between NFTV and Southampton. Potential misalignment between Winchester and the North.		
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	27.89%	H	13.89%	0.50%	28.40%
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	L	Potential misalignment between communities and leadership of authorities making it difficult to empower citizens		
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	190,392	M	745,133	554,741	684,376
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	L	3 unitaries		
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U1 would be imbalanced, combining 3 parished districts with an unparished unitary		
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	126	M	234	205	331

Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
L	L	N/A	N/A	M	H	M	H

Option L

Option L



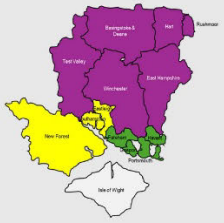
Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	L
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	L
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	5	L
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	6	H
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£11,464	H	£28,005	£35,606	£39,469
			Unemployment Rates	1.20%	H	4.12%	4.21%	3.02%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£5,735	H	£21,130	£21,979	£26,865
			Transport connectivity	-	L	Transport connectivity for U3 does not make practical sense for those communities on opposite sides who do not travel to one another		
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	H	Good alignment with Aerospace and defence (TV, Winchester and Portsmouth higher concentration), Digital technologies (Winchester aligned with North), Finance and professional dispersed throughout. Maritime alignment between New Forest and Solent		
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to South. Winchester flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment		
		Tax base	Council Tax base	132,455	L	174,170	190,276	306,625
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£156.73	L	£183.33	£242.91	£339.06
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	2,447 km2	L	245 km2	917 km2	2,691 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	98%	M	44%	76%	141%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.02	H	0.44	0.44	0.43
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.039	M	0.11	0.09	0.07
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	L	Rural requirements for U3 not balanced in the context of locality and access to local services		

Option L

Option L



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	861,417 (ave)	H	554,741	604,885	824,624
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	3	H	3 unitaries		
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£31,525	L	£21,533	£35,858	£53,058
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£55,781	H	£292,728	£266,170	£321,951
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£2,354	H	£8,974	£9,737	£11,327
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£276,606	M	£451,513	£705,565	£728,118
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£218,812	L	-348,846	-362,908	-567,658
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	3	H	3 unitaries		
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	91.33%	87.37%	86.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£46,948	L	£33,532	£33,423	£80,371
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	10.57%	M	6.14%	11.74%	1.17%

Option L

Option L

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	3	H	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 3 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation		
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	1.08%	M	5.22%	5.45%	6.30%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.22%	H	0.92%	1.05%	0.83%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.36%	H	0.88%	0.83%	0.52%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.55%	L	4.89%	5.13%	4.57%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.93%	M	19.73%	18.40%	10.80%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.55%	M	16.61%	15.55%	9.06%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£27,313	M	£60,409	£57,286	£84,599
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£17,231	M	£33,161	£22,720	£39,950
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.75	M	2.47	0.86	0.72
			Rough sleeper count	10	H	18	28	19
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	M	0.01	0.02	0.02
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	2.90	M	4.14	2.91	1.24

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option L

Option L

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	L	Mismatch of communities between NF and Southampton. Potential misalignment between Winchester and the North.		
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	28.66%	H	0.60%	9.56%	29.06%
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	L	Potential misalignment between communities and leadership of authorities making it difficult to empower citizens		
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	269,883	L	554,741	604,885	824,624
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	L	3 unitaries		
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	H	No significant imbalances in parish representation within unitaries		
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	230.49	L	205	167	398

Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries.	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
L	L	N/A	N/A	L	H	M	M

Option M

Option M

Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

Establishing a single tier of local government	L	1	M
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	L	2	M
High quality and sustainable public services	I	3	NA
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	4	NA
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	5	L
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	H	6	L
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	L	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£17,953	M	£28,005	£37,186	£31,082	£45,957	£34,614
			Unemployment Rates	1.74%	L	4.12%	4.62%	2.94%	3.29%	2.88%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£9,319	L	£21,130	£19,950	£26,355	£25,546	£29,269
			Transport connectivity	-	M	Fair alignment however potential issues with U5 not making practical sense for those communities				
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	L	Lack of alignment with Aerospace and Defence, fair alignment with Digital tech relative concentration, Finance and professional services dispersed throughout. Lack of alignment across Maritime across the Solent				
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment with New Forest				
		Tax base	Council Tax base	66,460	H	174,170	116,921	125,762	146,508	107,710
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£85.66	L	£183.33	£167.19	£146.64	£170.46	£97.67
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	1,262 km2	H	245 km2	142 km2	1,403 km2	888 km2	1,175 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	105%	L	44%	76%	116%	148%	132%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.04	L	0.44	0.43	0.46	0.42	0.43
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.047	L	0.11	0.10	0.07	0.07	0.06
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	M	Fair alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas, West and North better aligned together with similar classification. Winchester and East Hampshire similar clarification.				

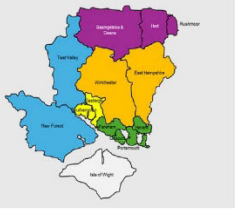
Option M

Option M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	426,835 (ave)	M	554,741	423,221	321,912	407,465	276,911
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	-	L	5 unitaries				
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£15,223	M	£21,533	£27,418	£14,008	£29,231	£18,260
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£190,683	L	£292,728	£194,684	£131,347	£160,045	£102,044
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£5,166	L	£8,974	£7,304	£3,857	£6,097	£3,807
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£302,414	L	£451,513	£538,622	£298,299	£360,555	£236,208
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£160,937	M	-£348,846	-£233,629	-£225,829	-£283,198	-£187,910
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	-	L	5 unitaries				
			Social Care Ratio	4.49%	M	91.33%	87.43%	88.84%	88.84%	88.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£25,409	H	£33,532	£16,669	£30,403	£42,078	£24,644
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	14.62%	M	6.14%	15.03%	2.85%	0.41%	2.67%

Option M

Option M



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5
High quality and sustainable public services	L	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	-	L	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 5 new upper-tier leading to a higher level of fragmentation				
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	1.02%	M	5.22%	5.31%	6.25%	6.21%	5.89%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.59%	L	0.92%	0.96%	1.22%	0.64%	0.96%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.46%	L	0.88%	0.88%	0.70%	0.51%	0.42%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	1.14%	L	4.69%	4.80%	5.38%	4.73%	4.24%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	9.46%	L	19.73%	19.78%	13.01%	10.94%	10.33%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.87%	L	16.61%	16.69%	10.89%	9.16%	8.62%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£29,770	L	£60,409	£33,418	£36,924	£40,904	£30,639
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£23,520	L	£33,161	£15,796	£14,343	£22,890	£9,840
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.91	L	2.47	0.92	0.80	0.77	0.66
			Rough sleeper count	20	L	18	26	6	8	7
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	L	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.37	L	4.14	2.32	3.67	0.77	1.12

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option M

Option M

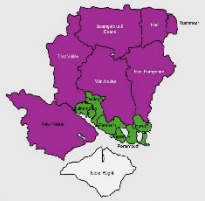
Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	M	Winchester and East Hampshire misalignment				
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	40.58%	L	0.50%	0.18%	31.45%	20.22%	40.76%
Supporting devolution arrangements	L	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	M	U5 and U3 imbalanced compared to other anchor unitaries				
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	277,830	L	554,741	423,221	321,912	407,465	276,911
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	H	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	H	5 unitaries				
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U2 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together				
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	97	H	205	118	116	213	118

Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
M	M	N/A	N/A	L	L	M	M

Option D

Option D



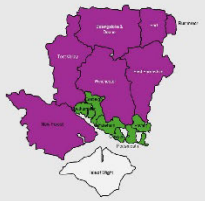
Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	L
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	2	L
High quality and sustainable public services	H	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	5	H
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	6	H
		7	M
		8	H

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita	£6,191	H	£31,926	£38,117
			Unemployment Rates	1.27%	M	4.33%	3.06%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£6,185	M	£20,626	£26,812
			Transport connectivity	-	L	Transport links are reasonable across both unitaries, although the large geographic span of U2 would limit practical connectivity. However there is the M27 motorways linking the south coast U1)	
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	L	Aerospace and defence dispersed across borders (TV, Winchester and Portsmouth higher concentration), Digital technologies (Winchester aligned with North), Finance and professional dispersed throughout. Maritime dispersed between New Forest and Solent	
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	M	East Hampshire better aligned to South. Winchester flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment	
		Tax base	Council Tax base	88888	M	291092	379980
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£64.27	M	£350.51	£414.78
		Sensible geography	Geographic Area (sqkm)	3,081 km2	L	386 km2	3,467 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	75.1	H	60%	135%
			LA and private housing stock per head	0.00	H	0.44	0.43
		Local needs	Level of deprivation	0.036	H	0.10	0.07
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	M	Urbanised areas together in U1. U2 has all rural areas but also connected to more urbanised areas (Rushmoor, Basingstoke & Deane)	

Option D

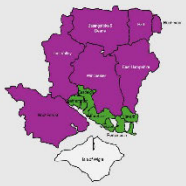
Option D



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	992,125 (ave)	H	977,962	1,006,288
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	-	H	2 unitaries	
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£12,548	M	£48,951	£61,498
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£93,976	M	£487,412	£393,436
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£2,517	M	£16,277	£13,761
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£95,073	H	£990,135	£895,062
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£114,461	H	-£582,476	-£696,936
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	-	H	2 unitaries	
			Social Care Ratio	2.35%	M	89.19%	86.84%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£40,924	L	£50,200	£97,125
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	7.54	H	9.40%	1.85%

Option D

Option D

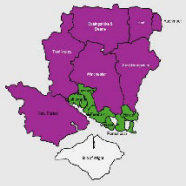


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2
High quality and sustainable public services	H	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	-	H	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 2 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation	
		Crucial service protection	Number of older adults in adult social care % total population	0.88%	H	5.25%	6.14%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.04%	H	0.94%	0.90%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.34%	H	0.88%	0.54%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.05%	H	4.74%	4.79%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.36%	H	19.75%	11.39%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.06%	H	16.65%	9.58%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£14,640	H	£93,828	£106,467
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£2,083	H	£48,957	£46,874
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.12	H	1.85	0.73
			Rough sleeper count	23	L	44	21
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.00	H	0.02	0.02
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	1.57	H	3.41	1.83

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between H/M/L as highlighted earlier in the session.

Option D

Option D



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	L	Potential mismatch of communities within U2 and between the existing unitary authorities within U1	
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	29.01%	M	0.36%	29.38%
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	L	The scale of this formation would not likely enable a focus on hyper-local issues and challenges that are important to residents	
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	28,326	H	977,962	1,006,288
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement*	-	L	2 unitaries	
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U1 is imbalanced, combining a parished council with a number of parished councils and unitary authorities	
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	124.11	M	323	447

Guiding Principles

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
L	L	N/A	N/A	H	H	M	H

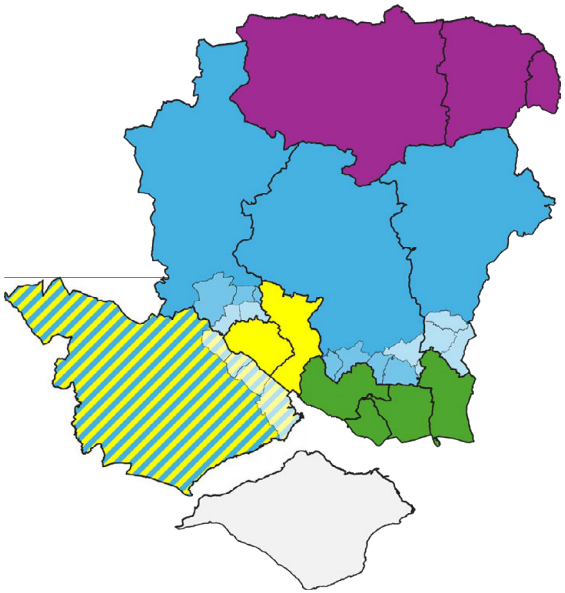
- Step 3 and 4 consolidated the information from Step 2 into a dashboard as seen below. The dashboards were produced to show how they assessed alongside both the government criteria, and the guiding principles agreed as part of the Interim proposal.

Government Criteria	Options							
	D	E	H (1)	I (2)	J	K	L	M
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	L
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	M	M	M	M	H	M	L
High quality and sustainable public services	H	M	M	L	M	M	M	L
Working together to understand and meet local needs	L	M	M	L	H	M	M	L
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	H	H	M	M	L	L	L
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	L	M	H	L	L	L	H

Principles	Assessment for H / M / L	Options							
		D	E	H (1)	I (2)	J	K	L	M
Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	• High: Each of the 4 principle economic areas are spread through different unitaries • Medium: There is a unitary with no principle economic areas • Low: If 2 principle economic areas exist in the same unitary	L	H	H	H	H	L	L	M
Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	High, Medium and Low calculated across the following metrics: • Transport Connectivity, TTW, Rural Requirements, sense of place, proportion of population in rural output areas, strength of leadership	L	M	H	M	H	L	L	M
To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	N/A as for this stage of evaluation we are using existing boundaries as building blocks	N/A							
Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	N/A as for this stage of evaluation we are using existing boundaries as building blocks	N/A							
Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	High, Medium and Low calculated across the following metrics: • Representation in a future combined authority	H	H	M	M	L	M	L	L
Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for high quality and sustainable public services	H	M	M	M	M	H	H	L
Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for establishing a single tier of local government	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	H	M	M	M	M	H	M	M

Detailed options analysis process: Leaders' Options Appraisal (May 2025)

- The above material was presented in a workshop to Leaders and Chief Executives to agree on the options to proceed with. Several key arguments were highlighted in favour of progressing with a four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model:
    - Larger unitary authorities may struggle to meet local needs, as the nuances of local areas could be lost.
    - A four new mainland unitary model creates a more balanced tax base (comprising council tax base and business rates total rateable value).
    - A four new mainland unitary model ensures relative balance in the future combined authority, allowing each representative council to have equal representation. All unitaries in this model would have a population between 400,000 and 600,000 (excluding the Isle of Wight), whereas a three new mainland unitary model would include unitaries with populations potentially exceeding 800,000.
- There was majority agreement to progress options 1 and 2 after being viewed favourably in the appraisal by Leaders and Chief Executives. The two options were agreed to be progressed, as well as a third option that includes boundary changes, particularly focusing on the New Forest and other city hinterlands around Portsmouth and Southampton that are currently within a district building block. The image and table below details the potential boundary changes across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



Options			Tier	Existing Council	Parishes	Unitary to include
BC3	BC2	BC1	1	New Forest	Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley	Southampton/Eastleigh
				Test Valley	Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth	Southampton/Eastleigh
				Winchester	Denmead and Newlands	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant
				East Hampshire	Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant
			2	Test Valley	Valley Park and North Baddesley	Southampton/Eastleigh
				Winchester	Boarhunt, Southwick & Widley, Wickham & Knowle and Whiteley	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant
			3	Test Valley	Romsey	Southampton/Eastleigh
				Fareham*	Sarisbury & Whiteley, Park Gate and Locks Heath	Southampton/Eastleigh

**Fareham is unparished; wards will be used to define boundaries*

Boundary change modelling (June 2025)

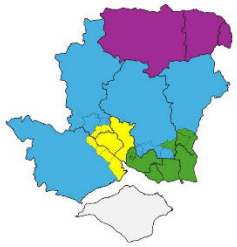
- A session was held with council Chief Executives at the end of June to agree the boundary change option to be progressed as part of the final proposal. The three boundary change options can be found in the section above.
- The same process was applied, in terms of applying 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' parameters at an option, metric and guiding principles level. The outputs from this exercise can be seen below. For the purposes of this proposal, BC1 is now referred to as Option 3.

The images below provide a breakdown of metric analysis across each boundary change option.

Option BC 1

Option BC 1

Tier 1 Boundary Changes



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

Establishing a single tier of local government	M	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	2	M
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	H	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	5	H
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	6	M
		7	M
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	***Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita****	£18,452	L	£32,035	£45,957	£38,034	£27,505
			Unemployment Rates	1.38%	M	3.09%	3.29%	4.48%	4.06%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,647	L	£28,944	£25,546	£21,297	£21,592
			Transport connectivity	-	H	Good transport connectivity alignment. Arguably parts of U1 East Hampshire face North / into London			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	H	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Tourism and Professional (although evenly dispersed)			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	H	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment, as well as U1 areas			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	84058	L	193318	109261	144123	187122
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£218.10	M	£491.05	£422.51	£277.30	£495.40
		Sensible geography	***Geographic Area (sqkm)***	2,191 km2	L	2,404 km2	888 km2	212 km2	265 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	99	M	130%	148%	77%	49%
			Council owned dwelling stock per head	38.76	L	18.24	0.45	39.21	30.84
		Local needs	***Level of deprivation****	0.025	M	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.09
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	H	Strong alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas			

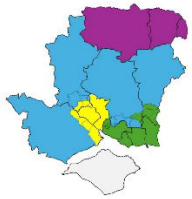
**In this Boundary Change Option, Newlands is not represented in the source data, so population data apportionment (GVA) and Winchester deprivation average have been used*

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted in the previous section.

Option BC 1

Option BC 1

Tier 1 Boundary Changes

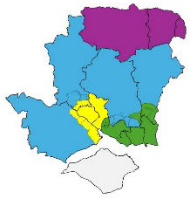


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2026 Predicted Population	496,063	M	484,636	407,465	502,273	589,876
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£7,014	M	£26,157	£29,231	£31,038	£24,024
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£145,815	M	£188,890	£160,045	£226,053	£305,860
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£3,337	M	£6,170	£6,097	£8,337	£9,434
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£250,851	M	£431,216	£360,555	£611,407	£482,019
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£89,507	M	-£333,806	-£283,198	-£289,703	-£372,705
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	-	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	4.56%	M	90.10%	86.84%	91.40%	91.20%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£20,584	L	£44,583	£42,078	£23,999	£36,665
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	12.81%	L	2.59%	0.41%	13.22%	5.93%

Option BC 1

Option BC 1

Tier 1 Boundary Changes



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	-	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	***Number of older adults in adult social care % total population***	1.01%	L	6.23%	6.21%	5.42%	5.22%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.45%	L	1.09%	0.64%	1.00%	0.92%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.35%	M	0.56%	0.51%	0.85%	0.85%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.28%	M	4.73%	4.73%	4.95%	4.67%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	8.25%	M	11.45%	10.94%	19.01%	19.19%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	7.00%	M	9.65%	9.16%	16.04%	16.16%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£23,340	M	£53,643	£40,904	£43,504	£64,244
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£15,516	H	£19,574	£22,890	£18,925	£34,442
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.67	M	0.70	0.77	0.89	2.37
			Rough sleeper count	19	M	11	8	27	19
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	L	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.21	M	2.34	0.77	2.62	3.98

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Option BC 1

Option BC 1

Tier 1 Boundary Changes

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	H	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	H	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	36.09%	M	36.25%	20.22%	0.16%	0.48%
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	H	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	182,411	H	484,636	407,465	502,273	589,876
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U3 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	78	M	197	213	141	220

Guiding Principles

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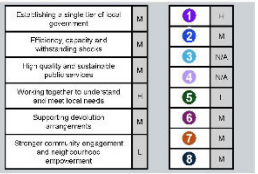
Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	M	N/A	N/A	H	M	M	M

Option BC 2

Option BC 2

Tier 1 & 2 boundary changes

Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	M	Sensible economic area	***Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita***	£17,580	H	£29,378	£45,957	£37,196	£28,377
			Unemployment Rates	1.30%	M	3.13%	3.29%	4.43%	3.98%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£7,436	M	£28,944	£25,546	£21,508	£22,147
			Transport connectivity	-	H	Good transport connectivity alignment. Arguably parts of U1 East Hampshire face North / into London			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries	-	H	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Tourism and Professional (although evenly dispersed)			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)	-	H	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment, as well as U1 areas			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	83434	M	182151	109261	149717	192695
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£250.46	L	£449.06	£422.51	£282.11	£532.57
		Sensible geography	***Geographic Area (sqkm)***	2,182 km2	M	2,382 km2	888 km2	200 km2	299 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	86.798	M	129%	148%	79%	62%
			Council owned dwelling stock per head	37.57	M	18.49	0.46	38.02	29.09
		Local needs	***Level of deprivation***	0.025	M	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.09
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)	-	H	Strong alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas			

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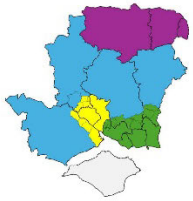
Option BC 2

Option BC 2

Tier 1 & 2 boundary changes

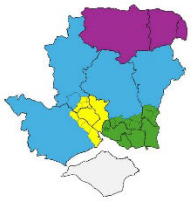


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	505,740	H	459,420	407,465	517,654	638,422
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£6,635	H	£25,013	£29,231	£31,648	£26,655
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£163,101	L	£178,823	£160,045	£232,618	£323,145
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£4,312	L	£5,864	£6,097	£8,493	£10,176
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£265,257	M	£408,776	£360,555	£625,812	£521,679
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£122,397	L	-£316,555	-£283,198	-£300,292	-£405,595
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	-	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	6.05%	L	92.89%	86.84%	90.69%	91.09%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£16,719	M	£42,215	£42,078	£25,496	£40,965
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	12.42%	M	2.61%	0.41%	12.83%	5.86%

Option BC 2

Option BC 2

Tier 1 & 2 boundary changes



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	-	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	***Number of older adults in adult social care % total population***	*0.80%*	M	6.17%	6.21%	5.49%	5.41%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	*0.45%*	M	1.09%	0.64%	1.01%	0.94%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	*0.34%*	M	0.56%	0.51%	0.85%	0.81%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	*0.32%*	L	4.74%	4.73%	4.94%	4.82%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	*7.82%*	H	11.50%	10.94%	18.76%	18.46%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	*6.67%*	M	9.70%	9.16%	15.83%	15.56%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	*£26,894*	L	£51,088	£40,904	£44,936	£69,789
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	*£17,487*	L	£18,456	£22,890	£19,739	£35,943
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	*1.56*	H	0.70	0.77	0.89	2.26
			Rough sleeper count	*19*	M	10	8	27	20
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	*0.02*	M	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	*3.02*	H	2.34	0.77	2.62	3.79

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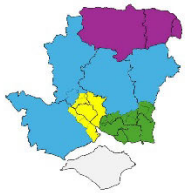
Option BC 2

Option BC 2

Tier 1 & 2 boundary changes



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	H	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	H	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	36.03%	M	36.20%	20.22%	0.17%	0.49%
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	H	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	230,957	L	459,420	407,465	517,654	638,422
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	L	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)	-	M	U3 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	93	L	186	213	149	241

Guiding Principles

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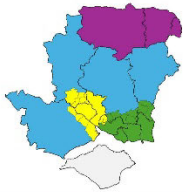
Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	M	N/A	N/A	L	M	M	M

Option BC 3

Option BC 3

Tier 1,2 & 3 boundary changes



Government criteria and guiding principles scoring overview

Establishing a single tier of local government	H	1	H
Efficiency, capacity and delivering at scale	M	2	M
High quality and sustainable public services	M	3	N/A
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	4	N/A
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	5	-
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	6	M
		7	H
		8	M

Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Establishing a single tier of Local Government	H	Sensible economic area	***Gross Value Added (GVA) per Capita***	£17,801	M	£28,962	£45,957	£37,148	£28,157
			Unemployment Rates	1.18%	H	3.16%	3.29%	4.34%	4.22%
			Gross disposable household income per head	£6,949	H	£28,944	£25,546	£21,995	£22,661
			Transport connectivity		H	Good transport connectivity alignment. Arguably parts of U1 East Hampshire face North / into London			
			Alignment to major Hampshire and the Solent industries		H	Good alignment to Defence and Aerospace, partial alignment to Digital tech, fair alignment to Finance and Tourism and Professional (although evenly dispersed)			
			Travel to Work Areas (2011 / 2021 maps)		H	East Hampshire better aligned to Havant and Portsmouth. Winchester, New Forest and Test Valley flows lean towards Southampton and Eastleigh. Strong Southampton and Eastleigh alignment, as well as U1 areas			
		Tax base	Council Tax base	72530	H	173771	109261	169001	181791
			Business rates total rateable value (£m)	£186.06	M	£426.57	£422.51	£325.56	£511.62
		Sensible geography	***Geographic Area (sqkm)***	2,117 km2	M	2,355 km2	888 km2	239 km2	287 km2
		Housing supply	Latest Housing delivery test measurements (2023)	86.626	H	128%	148%	80%	62%
			Council owned dwelling stock per head	35.71	H	19.12	0.45	36.16	29.44
		Local needs	***Level of deprivation***	0.025	M	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.09
			Ability to meet local rural requirements (e.g. access to services, sense of community)		H	Strong alignment with Rural / Urban classification across areas			

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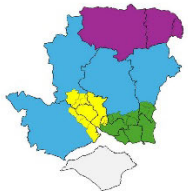
Option BC 3

Option BC 3

Tier 1,2 & 3 boundary changes

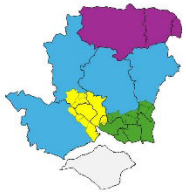


Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	Population size	Average unitary 2028 Predicted Population	505,740	H	443,800	407,465	559,287	612,409
		Transition costs	Transition cost per head of population	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Potential financial efficiencies	Gross Central Service Costs (000s)	£9,150	M	£24,393	£29,231	£33,543	£25,380
			Gross Staff costs (000s)	£151,998	L	£172,156	£160,045	£250,388	£312,043
			Gross Costs of IT licenses (000s)	£4,074	M	£5,705	£6,097	£9,049	£9,779
			Gross Costs of Third Party spend (000s)	£302,968	L	£394,146	£360,555	£663,524	£498,598
			Gross Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates (000s)	£104,833	M	-£305,801	-£283,198	-£328,610	-£388,030
			Potential savings delivered through LGR	-	M	4 unitaries			
			Social Care Ratio	9.99%	L	95.82%	86.84%	91.16%	96.83%
		Establishing firmer financial footing	Budget gap 26/27 (000s)	£12,757	M	£40,695	£42,078	£29,321	£38,661
		Council debt	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream %	11.69%	M	2.69%	0.41%	12.11%	5.89%

Option BC 3

Option BC 3

Tier 1,2 & 3 boundary changes



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
High quality and sustainable public services	M	Avoiding service fragmentation	Service fragmentation caused	-	M	Prior to LGR there are 3 upper-tier authorities, in this option there will be 4 new upper-tier leading to a lower level of fragmentation			
		Crucial service protection	***Number of older adults in adult social care % total population***	0.75%	H	6.13%	6.21%	5.49%	5.46%
			Number of adults in adult social care % total population	0.45%	M	1.08%	0.64%	1.01%	0.94%
			Number of children in children's social care % total population	0.32%	H	0.56%	0.51%	0.83%	0.83%
			Number of registered pupils with SEND as % total population	0.27%	M	4.74%	4.73%	4.91%	4.64%
			Proportion of children in relative low-income families (under 16s)	7.83%	M	11.50%	10.94%	18.19%	18.77%
			Proportion of children in absolute low-income families (under 16s)	6.65%	H	9.72%	9.16%	15.34%	15.82%
			Gross Environmental and regulatory services spend (000s)	£26,586	M	£49,634	£40,904	£48,689	£67,490
			Gross Highways and transport services spend (000s)	£17,221	M	£17,629	£22,890	£21,659	£34,850
			Homelessness per 1,000 households	1.62	M	0.69	0.77	0.90	2.31
			Rough sleeper count	21	L	10	8	29	20
			Households on housing register (or waiting list) per head of population	0.02	M	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01
			Numbers of households in TA per 1,000 population	3.06	M	2.33	0.77	2.65	3.82

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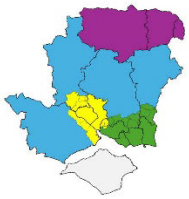
Option BC 3

Option BC 3

Tier 1,2 & 3 boundary changes



Government criteria	Criteria H/M/L	Assessment Factor	Metric	Diff.	H/M/L	U1	U2	U3	U4
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	Local identity	Sense of place, community and identity	-	H	Boundaries reflect established communities and resident sense of place			
			Proportion of population in rural Output areas (%)	36.19%	L	36.34%	20.22%	0.16%	0.48%
Supporting devolution arrangements	M	Unlocking devolution	Strength of local leadership and community empowerment*	-	H	Sense of place and community would be a good indicator of local leadership and community empowerment, although discussion would be required as to the community aspect regarding East Hampshire			
		Population within a Strategic Authority	Representation within a future Combined Authority	204,944	L	443,800	407,465	559,287	612,409
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	Engagement planning	The ability to maintain effective local engagement	-	M	4 unitaries			
		Existing engagement arrangements	Level of existing local network structures* (Town and Parish Councils)		M	U3 is imbalanced, combining a parished council and unparished unitary together			
			Level of existing community networks e.g. health, wellbeing and VCSEs/CVS*	58	M	177	213	169	228

Guiding Principles

Metrics highlighted in bold/italics have a minimal difference between HML as highlighted in the previous section.

Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks
H	M	N/A	N/A	L	M	H	M

- The boundary change options were assessed against the options taken forward as part of the May Leaders' session (H & I/Options 1 and 2). When assessing BC1-3 in our analysis against options H and I, the arrows indicate where BC options performed favourably or not. The analysis showed strong performance for BC1 when compared with options H and I.

The tables below show how each of the boundary change options have been assessed against options H and I, government criteria and the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight guiding principles.

Government Criteria	Options							
	H (1)	I (2)	BC1 (3)		BC2		BC3	
			Vs H	Vs I	Vs H	Vs I	Vs H	Vs I
Establishing a single tier of local government	M	M	-	-	-	-	↑	↑
Efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	M	-	-	-	-	-	-
High quality and sustainable public services	M	L	-	↑	-	↑	-	↑
Working together to understand and meet local needs	M	L	↑	↑	↑	↑	-	↑
Supporting devolution arrangements	H	M	-	↑	↓	-	↓	-
Stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	M	H	-	↓	↓	↓	-	↓

Principles	Assessment for H / M / L						
		H (1)	I (2)	BC1 (3)	BC2	BC3
Analysis will be based on economic geographies (principally Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth) that inform a sense of place, community, and economic growth. No decision has been made on the number of unitaries	• High: Each of the 4 principle economic areas are spread through different unitaries • Medium: There is a unitary with no principle economic areas • Low: If 2 principle economic areas exist in the same unitary	H	H	H	H	H
Sense of place and coherent identity, structure and local connections will shape geographies	High, Medium and Low calculated across the following metrics: • Transport Connectivity, TTW, Rural Requirements, sense of place, proportion of population in rural output areas, strength of leadership	M	M	M	M	M
To support the other principles, options considered will include those which have boundary changes, and those which do not have boundary changes	N/A as this principle covers the current process of boundary change appraisal as a whole and cannot be used to differentiate individual options	N/A				
Community engagement will be used to help shape final boundaries, prior to final submission	N/A as for this stage of evaluation community engagement has not commenced	N/A				
Sensible population ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	High, Medium and Low calculated across the following metrics: • Representation in a future combined authority	M	M	H	L	L
Consideration will be given to the impact on crucial services	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for high quality and sustainable public services	L	L	M	M	M
Proposals will show how new structures will improve local government, service delivery and outcomes	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for establishing a single tier of local government	L	M	M	M	H
New proposed authorities must also be able to form a platform for financial sustainability, and resilience to withstand financial shocks	High, Medium and Low calculated by using the overarching government criteria for efficiency, capacity and withstanding shocks	M	M	M	M	M

Resident feedback and case for change (June to September 2025)

Due to the complexity of boundary change modelling and the requirement to understand resident views, as part of the resident engagement activity, a survey ‘Our Place Our Future’ was launched. The series of images below show the questions that were asked as part of this survey. The findings of this survey can also be found in Appendix 8: engagement report.

1. How old are you?

Select one option

- [ ] 15 or under
- [ ] 16-24
- [ ] 25-34
- [ ] 35-44
- [ ] 45-54
- [ ] 55-64
- [ ] 65-74
- [ ] 75-84
- [ ] 85 or older
- [ ] Prefer not to say

2. What is your connection to the area? By area we mean the region of Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. Please select all that apply to you currently.

Select one or more options

- [ ] I live in the area
- [ ] I work in the area
- [ ] I study in the area
- [ ] I have a business in the area
- [ ] I work for a council in the area
- [ ] I am an elected representative

3. What year did you move to your local area? If you're not sure, please give us your best estimate.

Write your answer in the box below

4. Or

Select one option

- [ ] I have lived here my whole life
- [ ] I don't know
- [ ] Prefer not to say
- [ ] I do not live in the region of Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight

5. What is your postcode?

Write your answer in the box below

6. Which is your local council?

Select one option

- [ ] Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- [ ] Eastleigh Borough Council
- [ ] Fareham Borough Council
- [ ] Hart District Council
- [ ] Havant Borough Council
- [ ] Isle of Wight Council
- [ ] New Forest District Council
- [ ] Portsmouth City Council
- [ ] Rushmoor Borough Council
- [ ] Southampton City Council
- [ ] Test Valley Borough Council
- [ ] Winchester City Council
- [ ] None of the above

8. Thinking about Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, tell us the area you think of as your 'local area'.

Write your response in the box below

10. We would like to hear more about the places you go. Tell us where you go for work or education. It doesn't need to be exact, just the general area.

Write your response in the box below

12. Tell us where you access services or run errands (e.g. shopping, going to the library, going to the GP, hospital visits) in or near the area.

Write your response in the box below

14. Tell us where you spend time to relax, exercise or socialise (this could be indoors or outdoors).

Write your response in the box below

15. We want to understand how people feel about the area they live in. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Select one option per row

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
I feel connected to my local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel proud to say I live in my local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are plenty of things to do in my local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My area has a strong local identity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My local area is a nice place to spend time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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16. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your local area?

Select one option per row

	Don't know / I don't use this	Very dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Neutral	Quite satisfied	Very satisfied
Well located and connected	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public transport	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to parks and green spaces	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affordability of housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good local schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to shopping and services (banks, restaurants, supermarkets)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health facilities (GPs, pharmacists)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entertainment, arts and cultural facilities (e.g. cinema, theatres, galleries)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sports and exercise facilities (e.g. gym, swimming)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cleanliness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quietness and peacefulness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good work opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to community centres / village halls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. How important is it to you that your council...

Select one option per row

	Very important	Quite important	Neutral	Quite unimportant	Very unimportant	Don't know
Delivers high-quality services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Works to support a thriving local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supports local businesses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Represents local voices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Includes residents in decision-making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. What do you like most about your local area?

Write your response in the box below

19. What do you dislike most?

Write your response in the box below

Our Place Our Future - Section 2

Your response will be uploaded to https://ourplaceourfuture.commonplace.is/. Please do not mention any names or other personal information.

1. In the future, what would you like your council to prioritise?

Number each option in order of priority, with 1 being the highest

- [ ] Ensuring people have access to the care services they need
- [ ] Offering housing services
- [ ] Supporting businesses and encouraging economic development
- [ ] Providing planning and building services
- [ ] Providing waste and recycling services
- [ ] Keeping the area clean and tidy
- [ ] Maintaining roads
- [ ] Providing public transport routes
- [ ] Providing parks and leisure facilities
- [ ] Providing good quality education and learning services

2. What one thing would you like your council to focus on the most? Please be as specific as possible and explain your answer.

Write your response in the box below

Our Place Our Future - Section 3

Your response will be uploaded to https://ourplaceourfuture.commonplace.is/. Please do not mention any names or other personal information.

1. Here are some statements about local decision-making. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

Select one option per row

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
It is important that my council reflects the identity of my local community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decisions about my local area should be made near my community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decisions about my local area should be considered alongside other areas in the region	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local voices should have the strongest influence in decision making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Before taking part in this survey, did you hear about the government's plans to reorganise the councils in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight?

Select one option

- ☐ Yes, I have heard about it and understand what it involves
- ☐ Yes, I have heard about it but not sure what it involves
- ☐ No, I knew nothing about it before now

3. What do you like about option 1?

Write your response in the box below

4. What do you dislike about option 1?

Write your response in the box below

5. How do you feel option 1 might impact the way you use services locally?

Write your response in the box below

6. How do you feel option 1 might impact the way that decisions are made in your local area?

Write your response in the box below

7. How do you feel option 1 might impact the way that you engage with local decision-making?

Write your response in the box below

8. What do you like about option 2?

Write your response in the box below

9. What do you dislike about option 2?

Write your response in the box below

10. How do you feel option 2 might impact the way you use services locally?

Write your response in the box below

11. How do you feel option 2 might impact the way that decisions are made in your local area?

Write your response in the box below

12. How do you feel option 2 might impact the way that you engage with local decision-making?

Write your response in the box below

13. What do you like about option 3?

Write your response in the box below

14. What do you dislike about option 3?

Write your response in the box below

15. How do you feel option 3 might impact the way you use services locally?

Write your response in the box below

16. How do you feel option 3 might impact the way that decisions are made in your local area?

Write your response in the box below

17. How do you feel option 3 might impact the way that you engage with local decision-making?

Write your response in the box below

As shown in option 3, only some areas (shown in orange) would be affected by boundary changes. If the boundaries were to change in your area as set-out in option 3 what questions would you have?

Write your response in the box below

19. What would you want the councils to consider?

Write your response in the box below

20. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options

Select one option per row

	Strongly oppose	Oppose	Neutral	Support	Strongly support	Don't know
Option 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. Is there anything else you would like to share about the proposed changes?

Write your response in the box below

- Following some further analysis and targeted resident engagement it was agreed by council Leaders that a single boundary change option (Option 3) would be developed and submitted as one of the three options in this proposal, based on the four mainland and Isle of Wight unitary foundation. The details of the boundary changes for Option 3 are outlined below.

Existing Council	Parishes	Moving to unitary configuration
New Forest	Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley	Southampton/Eastleigh (South West)
Test Valley	Valley Park, Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth	Southampton/Eastleigh (South West)
Winchester	Newlands	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant (South East)
East Hampshire	Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle	Fareham/Portsmouth/Gosport/Havant (South East)

- The final step in determining the support for each option was a preferencing session with Leaders to understand which councils supported which option. The following table outlines the support from councils against each of the options.

Outline of the three option variations of the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model

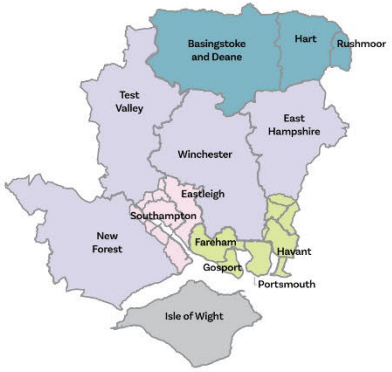
Option 1

North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**598,823**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, Southampton	**423,221**
South East Hampshire: Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**
Isle of Wight	**146,351**

Option 2

North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, Test Valley, Winchester	**417,159**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton	**604,885**
South East Hampshire: Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth	**554,741**
Isle of Wight	**146,351**

Option 3



North Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor	**407,465**
Mid Hampshire: East Hampshire, New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester	**484,546**
South West Hampshire: Eastleigh, New Forest*, Southampton, Test Valley*	**510,102**
South East Hampshire: East Hampshire*, Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Winchester*	**582,137**
Isle of Wight	**146,351**

East Hampshire*: Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle
New Forest*: Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley
Test Valley*: Valley Park, Nursling & Rownhams and Chilworth
Winchester*: Newlands

Modelling assumptions

The following assumptions were made when conducting the detailed options appraisal:

Disaggregation of county council figures

- There were some instances when county council data is Hampshire wide. Where this is the case, the data was disaggregated by district council population (these are predominantly financial metrics e.g. central service costs, staff costs and highways spend).

Assessment at an option level

- The assessment followed process whereby having balanced unitaries within an option is below the 33-percentile therefore scores highly. Creating an imbalance whereby a minority of unitaries has disproportionately positive or negative figures could lead to one unitary area of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight having much greater or worse outcomes than the others and therefore will score Low at an option level.
- At the moment in time when options appraisal was performed, we had not fully assessed the financial sustainability of any individual unitary in any of the options. As per the above, analysis had been conducted based on balance and a full financial model has since been developed for options progressed to a full case.

Generating H/M/L scores for metrics based on difference

- To generate a High, Medium or Low score, the following process was applied:
    - For each option, the difference between the lowest and highest unitary figures was identified.
    - The range of differences across options were then split into percentiles which were then used to determine High, Medium and Low scores, whereby Low is anything that is within a 66+ percentile difference, High is anything below a 33-percentile difference and Medium is anything between High and Low.

Additional boundary change options assumptions

- **Options Comparison:** Only options included in this appraisal (Options H, I and BC 1, 2 & 3) have been scored. As HML criteria are based on percentile ranges between options, scores were different to the previous Options appraisal which included different options; direct comparisons to the previous appraisal scores cannot be made.
- **Data Apportionment:** As noted in the data audit section of this report, any data where a new data source was not agreed has been apportioned based on Parish population percentages.

- **Data mapping:** Multiple resolutions of data (Parish, Ward, 2011 & 2021 LSOAs) was used for new boundary change data sources. 2021 LSOAs have been visually mapped to Parish Boundaries using ONS data, and 2011 LSOAs matched to 2021 LSOA boundaries using ONS records. These boundaries do not perfectly align with Parish boundaries; as such, new data sources are the greatest resolution approximation of Parish boundaries.

Option variation appendices

Our proposal for a four new mainland unitary configuration, with the Isle of Wight remaining an existing unitary authority, has been unanimously supported by all 12 councils working together as part of a collaborative process. This support has been achieved through a robust and evidence-based process, with all 12 councils committed to making informed decisions based on data, public feedback and financial case, and a clear rationale outlined in the main body of the case as to why our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal provides the best platform to unlock and sustain positive outcomes for our citizens.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary proposal not only benefits our citizens but also positively impacts all stakeholders, including businesses and partner organisations. It strongly aligns with government criteria and priorities, the LGOF, and the broader public sector reform agenda. To summarise, our proposal:

1. Aligns structures with economic geographies

- Aligns with the four major economic and population centres: Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth, and Southampton.
- Reflects how people live, work, and travel, supporting integrated transport, housing, and economic planning.
- Enables tailored strategies for growth, infrastructure, and skills development in each area.

2. Builds financially sustainable and efficient structures

- All three variations of our proposal (Options 1, 2 and 3) are financially viable with payback within 2.2-3.1 years.
- By Year 3, the reorganisation is projected to deliver annual recurring savings of £81.8 million in the Base Case and £111.5 million in the High Case across options 1, 2 and 3.

3. Improves public services

- Enables place-based service delivery tailored to local needs.
- Supports prevention-first models in adult and children's social care.
- Enhances integration with NHS and voluntary sector partners.
- Maintains strong local relationships that large "mega-unitaries" would dilute.

4. Promotes community identity and engagement

- Respects and preserves distinct local identities and geographies.
- Empowers neighbourhoods through local governance models and enhanced councillor representation.
- Avoids the democratic deficit and service detachment associated with larger, mass-aggregated councils.

5. Supports Devolution and Combined Authority Model

- Provides a balanced structure for a future MCA.
- Ensures equitable representation and avoids dominance by any single authority.
- Facilitates strategic planning at the regional level while maintaining local delivery.

There are variations whereby councils have differing views on the configuration of certain future unitaries, principally relating to the New Forest. As a commitment to remaining part of a jointly collaborative process, all 12 councils agreed to the process through which these variations would be presented in this case. Councils supporting each option have worked together, as well as remaining part of the main group supporting the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model, to draft the arguments for their preferred variation. To ensure fairness, several principles and a defined structure were agreed upon before drafting began.

The following councils have supported the development of the three options presented in this appendix:

Option 1 – Appendix 2	Option 2 – Appendix 3	Option 3 – Appendix 4

The following appendices outline the differences between each option, particularly regarding the position of New Forest (either wholly or partially through a boundary change). As each of the three options include a North Hampshire Unitary Council on the same boundary, the arguments and rationale for this is included in the main document and this is supported by all councils, and so this is not repeated in the three appendices on the different variations.

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Appendix 2:

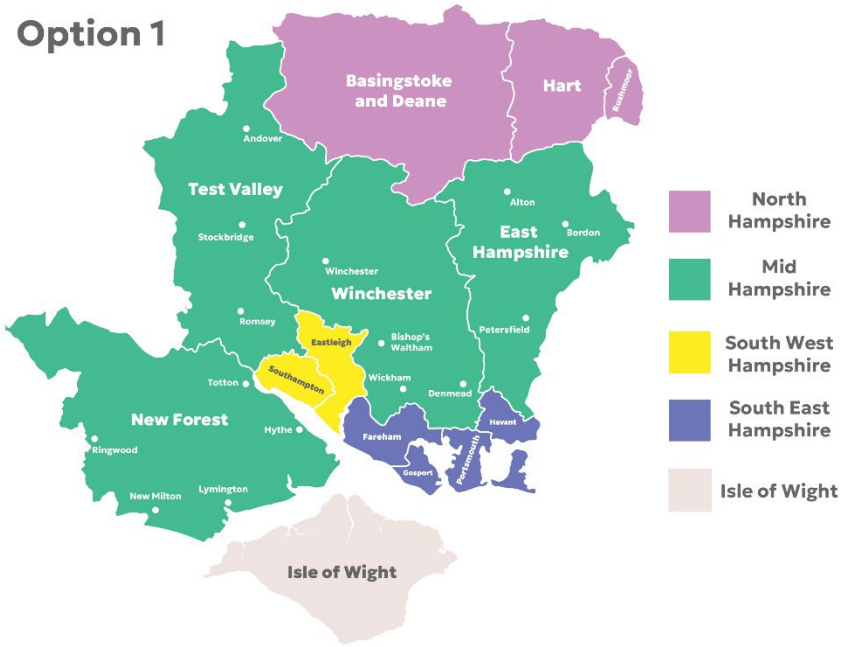
Option 1

Appendix 2: Option 1

The Power of Place: a transformative vision for local government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Introduction

This appendix builds upon the case for change and shows why Option 1, a new Mid Hampshire unitary authority, including the New Forest, is essential for the success of the overall proposal. Whilst Mid Hampshire is not a single place, its communities do share many similar characteristics and are economically and demographically highly aligned. Mid Hampshire is different from the mainly urban communities in the North, South East and South West of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



How is this option different

Option 1 differs from Option 2 as it proposes to establish a Mid Hampshire unitary authority on the current footprint of New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council. Option 2 removes the New Forest from this cluster and places it with the city of Southampton and Eastleigh borough.

The Isle of Wight unitary, the North Hampshire unitary and South East Hampshire unitary are unchanged between Option 1 and Option 2 and the benefits in these regions remain as set out in the main document.

Option 1 specifically differs from Option 3 in that Option 1 proposes to use existing administrative boundaries when the new authorities are formed, avoiding the complexity, disruption and costs involved in splitting existing districts.

Option 1 ensures a well-balanced mayoral combined authority of four mainland authorities plus the Isle of Wight where it can fulfil its strategic role in respect of the Freeport and the future of port development. It also allows the representation of wider local authority views, representing a greater geography in the development of key port infrastructure which is of national and regional economic significance where all strategic interests are represented.

In 2015, ONS produced travel to work areas (TTWA), based on 2011 census data for the whole country. Whilst these remain the latest available TTWA data set it does not reflect the changing nature of the economy and work patterns post Covid, and whilst commuting will inevitably still occur this shouldn't form the main basis for justifying proposals.

Our engagement exercise demonstrates that, in community terms, people look to their local facilities such as pubs and community buildings, before their location of employment and that's the basis of our preventative approach, directing services to the locations where people identify with, not their place of work. In fact, with populations (EIA Appendix 7) for those aged 55 and over of 28% and 21% for the New Forest and Test Valley respectively, and the population of 25 to 54-year-olds at 30.2% and 37.6%, compared with that of Southampton at 45.6% commuting numbers are a less relevant factor in community identity. Commuters will always only be a minority of the overall population and this, as a result, should not be the factor that shapes the new authorities.

Option 1 recognises and understands that the communities and economies of the building block areas share many similar characteristics and are ultimately very different to the mainly urban communities in the rest of mainland Hampshire. Option 1 provides four new mainland authorities that we are confident are right sized to deliver the annual estimated benefits and provide an excellent platform to build financially resilient and sustainable new unitary councils that can facilitate necessary public sector reform.

As such, this appendix focuses on the benefits of the proposed strong Mid Hampshire authority, including the entire New Forest, for the four new mainland unitaries with the Isle of Wight remaining independent, as set out in the Case for Change.

A summary of what this option delivers

The economy of the area is distinct and a Mid Hampshire authority established on the current footprint of New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire would be best placed to support the new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) to develop the unique economic potential of the area. The MSA will, as a result, benefit from a balanced membership of five constituent councils which collectively represent the full range of different economic interests in the region.

Establishing a single unitary authority to work with similar communities across Mid Hampshire and including the New Forest will enable an extension of our already strong place-based working with frontline local councillors supporting local communities to identify and deliver on their own aspirations and build their own resilience. This place-based approach will establish the conditions for transformative public service reform, that supports a preventative agenda to tackle demand, particularly in relation to adult and children's social care. This approach reflects the preferences of residents and local partners, who value strong local identity, coherent delivery, and collaborative governance rooted in place.

The proposal to create a Mid Hampshire Council brings together the unique natural geography of the New Forest, the Hampshire South Downs, the world-renowned chalk streams of the Test, Itchen and Meon, with, at its centre, the cathedral city of Winchester.

In summary, this option will:

- **Secure the benefits of devolution, including economic growth**, by ensuring that the MSA is set up for success with a balanced set of constituent authorities, with a united voice for the mid Hampshire communities which are distinctly different from the rest of the geography. This option is better able to represent the diversity of communities and place across the region.
- **Deliver a transformative vision for local government**, addressing the challenges within the Hampshire area by creating the conditions for a new council with a vision to move on from outdated models of service delivery towards more place and asset-based approaches with a focus on prevention and reducing demand, thereby enabling the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to all communities across the region.
- **Align closely with communities' views**, as expressed in our recent cross-Hampshire survey and wider insight gained from targeted deliberative engagement across the Mid Hampshire area and specific feedback from key Forest town and parish councils and communities including the Commoners.
- **Deliver new arrangements, and benefits to citizens, at pace** by avoiding additional risk and lengthy bureaucracy associated with boundary change and the disaggregation of key services at a district level such as housing, waste, revenues and benefits and elections.

Key reasons for support

The main point of difference between this option and others in this Case for Change – and the option put forward by Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council – is the proposal to establish a Mid Hampshire unitary authority on the current footprint of

New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council. This would operate alongside three new unitary authorities on the mainland to serve the more urban areas in and around the economic centres of Southampton, Portsmouth and Basingstoke in the South East, South West and North of the county. As such, this appendix focuses on the benefits of the proposed strong Mid Hampshire authority, including the entire New Forest, for the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model set out in the Case for Change.

Securing the benefits of devolution, including economic growth

This approach would establish a balanced group of five strong and collaborative unitary authorities able to advocate effectively for their communities and support the MSA to deliver on its new strategic functions. There is a track record of place-based leadership, public service reform, and economic delivery in the Mid Hampshire area, which a new Mid Hampshire unitary authority would build on to actively partner with and strengthen the MSA.

A Mid Hampshire unitary authority would bring substantial and complementary economic strength, and a strong platform for future growth to support the devolution agenda. With a GVA of £18.2bn, Mid Hampshire is a strategically positioned, high-performing economy that is already driving regional prosperity and national productivity. It forms the natural link between the Solent's coastal economy, anchored by Freeport tax sites in the New Forest, and the Midlands' industrial base, offering seamless access to regional and international markets. Its connectivity is underpinned by nationally significant infrastructure: the M3, A34, A303, and M27 form the backbone of freight and logistics across the region, while fast, frequent rail services connect key towns to London in around an hour, supporting labour mobility and access to talent. Proximity to Southampton International Airport and the Port of Southampton further enhances global reach. The rise of hybrid working patterns has also boosted the area's attractiveness to residents and businesses seeking high quality of life, digital connectivity, and proximity to major centres without urban congestion.

The area is home to global brands such as INEOS, IBM, Estée Lauder, Arqiva, and Stannah, alongside a vibrant ecosystem of high-growth SMEs in sectors such as green technology, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, and logistics. The Waterside area of New Forest, home of the internationally significant Fawley Oil Refinery, operated by ExxonMobil, anchors the area's strengths in energy as well as supporting service delivery in sparse rural areas through its tax base and business rate generation.

This diverse and resilient economic base offers significant headroom for further expansion, particularly in innovation-intensive, export-led industries. Nationally recognised higher education institutions and sixth forms contribute to a high-quality skills pipeline, while active public-private collaboration enables research, workforce development, and enterprise growth. The New Forest faces skills challenges that are aligned with Mid Hampshire councils, as opposed to an urban area. It recently produced with partners a Skills plan to tackle local challenges such as an ageing population, low-paid jobs, and limited access to training. It focuses on helping young people, women returning to work, over-50s, job changers, and aspiring entrepreneurs. The key goals of the plan include supporting lifelong learning and digital skills, helping people into better paid, higher skilled jobs, and strengthening sectors like health, tourism, and green industries, as well as promoting inclusive growth and equal access to training.

Option 1 enables bespoke economic infrastructure and skills solutions right for the area to be developed, enabling Mid Hampshire to accelerate economic development, attract inward investment, and support the wider growth ambitions of the Hampshire and Solent region.

This economic dynamism is deeply intertwined with the area's natural capital and landscape-led economy. Shaped by two National Parks and internationally protected environments, Mid Hampshire's geography enables sustainable economic development and housing growth that respects environmental constraints. Tourism is a cornerstone of this model, generating hundreds of millions in annual visitor spend, supporting thousands of jobs, and sustaining a thriving network of small businesses across hospitality, retail, food and leisure. Over eight million people visit the Winchester district every year, spending over £370 million and supporting over 5,760 jobs. The New Forest alone attracts over 15 million visitor days annually and underpins one of the UK's most valuable rural visitor economies. Its environmental role goes hand in hand with innovation in green tourism, decarbonisation, and nature-based enterprise. Keeping the district whole is not just about identity – it is about ensuring joined-up infrastructure, sustainability, and stewardship across one of England's most sensitive and economically vital landscapes.

In addition to its environmental and economic importance, Mid Hampshire plays a nationally strategic role in defence and security. It is home to British Army Headquarters and Middle Wallop Flying Station (home of the Army Air Corps Headquarters) in Test Valley, the Tri-Service Defence College in Winchester, and Marchwood Military Port in the New Forest. These nationally significant assets contribute materially to regional GVA, anchor long-term public investment, and provide high-value employment in defence and logistics sectors critical to UK resilience. Bringing them together in Option 1 will enable the future council to continue the long-established support for armed forces and the wider sector within Hampshire.

Delivering a transformative vision for local government

As set out in the main Case for Change, all the unitary authorities have been assessed to identify the most financially viable option. This option would build on the supporting councils' history of financial stability and resilience, and their record of place-based leadership and public service reform. By leveraging the economies of scale derived from operating across similar areas and communities, particularly in more sparsely populated rural areas, a new Mid Hampshire unitary authority would build on an already strong place-based and preventative way of working amongst districts and extend it into the unitary context. Central to this is an operational culture that puts frontline councillors at the heart of the authorities work with communities, building on their representative role to empower people to shape their futures, strengthening resilience and trust in public services. There is a clear opportunity to reshape the operating model for local government, focusing on rebuilding the relationship between local people and public systems through neighbourhood-based, preventative delivery.

Across Mid Hampshire, councils are already working in partnership with the NHS, voluntary sector, and communities to reduce pressure on acute services, support independent living, and improve health outcomes. From the nationally recognised Andover Health Hub to discharge and reablement models in New Forest, Winchester, and East Hampshire, the area is delivering the kind of hyper-local, person-centred public services promoted by the NHS Long Term Plan. These approaches are not isolated and reflect a shared ethos across all four councils. From co-designed regeneration projects like Andover Vision and the Totton Regeneration Partnership to East Hampshire's Whitehill & Bordon transformation, where community-led design has delivered integrated housing, health and green infrastructure, there is significant evidence in this area of how services and places can be shaped with and for residents.

By establishing the new unitary authorities based on similar areas and communities, the conditions will be set for these ways of working to become the mainstream in the new authorities, grounded in community empowerment and environmental stewardship, reducing demand, and delivering better services more cost effectively. This approach is a blueprint for stronger democracy, offering effective, financially sustainable, and accountable governance. It is a success story to be protected.

Aligning with communities' views

Transitioning to a unitary authority should protect local interests and identities. Our approach ensures that historical, cultural and community identity and the natural assets that matter to our communities are safeguarded.

Within the independent survey commissioned by the 12 councils this option is the preferred choice of those completing the survey, with 48% supporting or strongly supporting Test Valley, Winchester, New Forest and East Hampshire forming the building blocks of a new unitary authority.

Option 1 is strongly preferred by respondents from New Forest and Test Valley. Previous reorganisations have demonstrated that where there is community support for proposals this results in effective and sustainable governance.

Delivering benefits to citizens at pace

This option is the only proposal that both avoids the disruption of boundary change and keeps the New Forest intact within a coherent Mid Hampshire geography. This is critical to maintaining the functional and operational fit of the area, preserving how communities live, work, and access services. Indeed, residents, local councils, and district elected representatives across the New Forest have expressed unanimous concern about the risks of boundary change or splitting Waterside from the rest of New Forest. Both New Forest MPs have indicated their support for Option 1.

Reorganising with similar councils as building blocks will be more efficient than merging diverse areas with very different communities, service delivery models, governance structures and population needs.

Assessment against MHCLG criteria

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

Option 1 provides the most coherent and deliverable route to establishing a single-tier structure for Mid Hampshire. It brings together Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire and the New Forest - four councils with closely aligned operational models, shared priorities, and high-quality public service delivery across similar mixed rural-urban geographies. This commonality in approach, particularly around neighbourhood services, housing, and environmental management, offers a strong foundation for integrated, place-based governance.

A key strength of Option 1 is that it preserves both the integrity of the entire New Forest district, including the Waterside, as well as retaining it within a coherent Mid Hampshire geography. Its use of whole districts as the building blocks of reform enables a rapid transition without boundary change, minimising disruption to services, preserving community identity, and providing a stable foundation for future transformation. By working with the grain of existing partnerships, Option 1 avoids the overhead of complex structural adjustments and supports faster, simpler implementation, particularly relevant given likely LGBC boundary reviews post-reorganisation. Equally, retaining the entire New Forest district, geographically, administratively, and strategically, within a coherent Mid Hampshire geography is not just a matter of community preference, but a public policy imperative: preserving a nationally significant landscape, furthering the purposes of the New Forest National Park Authority, and protecting ancient commoning practices and environmental stewardship.

This configuration also delivers significant strategic value to the MSA. With a balanced population of just under 600,000, Mid Hampshire provides democratic parity and operational alignment with other unitary partners. It links two National Parks, significant natural capital, and national growth corridors such as the Solent Freeport's Waterside tax sites and strategic freight infrastructure (M3, A34, A303). This supports delivery of MSA-wide priorities including net zero, sustainable housing, and rural economic growth. Option 1 ensures rural priorities are properly represented without compromising the city-region focus, providing a completer and more resilient MSA footprint.

One of the most recent LGR processes saw the creation of North Yorkshire Council, which could be seen as a forerunner to the proposals contained in Option 1. North Yorkshire Council has a population of over 600,000 which is a similar sized population to that proposed for Mid Hampshire. North Yorkshire brings together communities covering a very large geographical area which are similar in nature, rather than claiming to be single place. This is very similar to the Mid-Hampshire proposal. North Yorkshire is bordered by larger urban areas such as the city of York which, itself, has a population of 210,000. This is around half the size of the proposed new unitary authority for Southampton and Eastleigh. North Yorkshire is made up of two National Parks which cover 40% of its geography and has market towns running the depth and breadth of what is the largest unitary council by geographical size, in England.

Finally, this model supports the MSA to deliver on the Government's ambition to maximise sustainable housing delivery across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The Mid Hampshire footprint includes areas of significant housing potential, delivered through sensitive, landscape-led models supported by partnerships with universities, Homes England and statutory environment agencies. The geography reflects real-world patterns of housing, employment, and infrastructure, making it an effective delivery platform for growth that is both ambitious and sustainable.

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

With a projected 2028 population of 598,823, Mid Hampshire is the right size to achieve the government's ambitions for local government reform: big enough to deliver transformation and economies of scale, while local enough to remain responsive and rooted in place. Its scale supports efficiency, strategic capacity, and resilience to financial shocks, while its geography and design allow services to be tailored to the distinct needs of rural, urban, and semi-rural communities.

The Mid Hampshire proposal brings together councils already shaped by a shared understanding of how to deliver for communities across a mixed rural/town landscape. This enables the new authority to maintain local relevance while achieving organisational efficiencies. By retaining the boundaries of existing authorities, Option 1 avoids the complexity, cost, and service disruption that would result from lower tier disaggregation allowing for a more seamless transition.

The Hampshire County Council forecast deficit to 2028 of £281m represents an enormity of financial challenge that proves why a different approach and scale of local authority across the county area is needed. The financial advantages of the four new mainland unitary model have been robustly tested during the building of this case for change and shows significant net budget improvements for all recommended authorities. Option 1 provides four new mainland authorities that we are confident are right sized to deliver the annual estimated benefits and provide an excellent platform to build financially resilient and sustainable new unitary councils.

Collectively, these councils have shown strong financial governance while investing in future efficiency, through retrofit programmes, nutrient-neutrality mitigation, and developer-funded infrastructure. This prudent, future-focused approach provides a strong platform for a financially sustainable unitary authority.

Mid Hampshire's well-connected infrastructure, anchored by the M3, A34, A303, M27 and fast rail links to London, enables seamless movement of goods, people, and services. These routes are vital for national freight logistics and underpin the success of key industries

in the region. The area also benefits from excellent access to international gateways including Heathrow, Gatwick and Southampton International Airport, further enhancing its strategic connectivity for business, trade and travel.

The area's economy further reinforces its resilience and growth potential. Mid Hampshire is home to global companies such as INEOS, IBM, Estée Lauder, and Arqiva, alongside a thriving ecosystem of high-growth SMEs. Its economy is defined by both scale and momentum, anchored in key sectors like advanced manufacturing, logistics, agri-tech, environmental services, and green technology. These sectors are not only high value but strategically aligned with national economic and net zero priorities. This blend of multinational investment and entrepreneurial energy creates a dynamic environment for jobs, exports, and inward investment. Tourism also plays a vital role in the region's economy. With millions of visitors each year to the New Forest, Winchester, South Downs National Park, and market towns such as Lymington, Romsey, Petersfield, and Alton, the area supports one of the UK's most valuable rural visitor economies. Tourism sustains thousands of jobs across hospitality, retail, culture, and heritage, while also reinforcing local identity and landscape stewardship.

In summary, Option 1 is right sized to meet the government's ambition for resilient and efficient local government. It combines scale with subsidiarity, builds on commonality in service delivery, and avoids the risk and disruption of boundary change. Its structure supports stronger partnerships, maintains close connections with residents, and delivers the long-term efficiency that reform is intended to unlock.

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

Mid Hampshire councils demonstrate a strong and consistent track record of delivering high-quality, sustainable public services, especially in housing, preventative health, and community infrastructure. They have a shared commitment to service models that are rooted in local communities, respectful of the natural environment, and responsive to the needs of rural and mixed geographies.

A particular strength of Option 1 is the design of services around the needs of rural populations, including isolated and less well served communities where deprivation is often less visible but no less acute. Mid Hampshire's model offers a credible, scalable route to tackling rural deprivation, one of the government's key priorities, through outreach-based public services, targeted investment, and inclusive community infrastructure. From mobile and outreach health provision to housing strategies tailored to smaller settlements, services are delivered at the scale of recognised community footprints. This ensures local relevance, service take-up, and social impact, while maintaining efficiency and accountability.

The area is also well positioned to deliver integrated adult social care. All four councils have invested in neighbourhood-based preventative models that promote independence, reduce pressure on acute services, and align with national NHS and social care objectives. These models provide a scalable blueprint for joined-up care:

- In the New Forest, initiatives like Independence Matters and Just Got Home support recovery at home, reduce delayed discharges, and enhance patient choice – especially in hard-to-reach rural areas.
- The Andover Health Hub is a nationally recognised example of multi-agency coordination, bringing together NHS services, local government, and voluntary sector partners to improve discharge, reablement, and early intervention. Winchester and East Hampshire deliver embedded neighbourhood support through voluntary and primary care networks. In Winchester, locality teams collaborate with GPs and VCSE partners to support frail and older residents, while East Hampshire integrates community development officers into local hubs, focusing on early intervention, carers, and those at risk of social isolation.

The broader Option 1 model allows for coordinated transformation of complex services, including adult social care. Shared NHS providers, overlapping community networks, and a culture of place-based practice enable a safe, phased disaggregation of county functions. Together, these new authorities can redesign services around local geographies, ensuring smoother transitions for residents and stronger alignment with primary care, mental health, and voluntary sector partners.

Support for children and families is also integrated. Across Mid Hampshire, shared community assets such as dual-use halls and children's centres support early years and family development. Joint work with schools, GPs, and VCSE partners enhances delivery of mental health and early help services.

Housing and infrastructure strategies demonstrate sustainable public service innovation. Across the region, councils have worked together, and with the Civic University Network, to plan and deliver homes that meet rural community needs while protecting environmental assets. This includes:

- Exception site housing for local people.
- Retrofit programmes to reduce fuel poverty and emissions.
- Nutrient neutrality mitigation to unlock stalled housing sites.
- Developer-funded infrastructure to support long-term public service integration.

Importantly, this geography supports simplification of planning and environmental governance. The New Forest National Park currently intersects four local planning authorities—creating complexity and fragmentation. Option 1 reduces this to three, streamlining delivery and strengthening the statutory role of the NPA. It also aligns strategic housing delivery with ecological stewardship, enabling services and infrastructure to be planned in harmony with the protected landscapes that define this area.

Option 1 presents the strongest alignment with the New Forest National Park Authority's statutory purposes and strategic priorities, undertaken in a recent assessment by the NPA. By retaining the integrity of the New Forest as a whole and combining it with other predominantly rural authorities - Test Valley, Winchester, and East Hampshire - the option safeguards vital landscape, ecological, and cultural heritage links. It supports collaborative delivery of national objectives such as nature recovery, climate resilience, and the 30x30 targets, while recognising the socio-economic value of the New Forest's natural capital. Crucially, it avoids fragmentation of the Waterside area, preserving the commoning system essential to the Park's management and identity.

This approach reinforces national policy duties under the Environment Act 1995 and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, supporting the statutory purposes of National Parks and preserving ancient commoning rights that are unique to the New Forest.

In summary, Mid Hampshire is already delivering high-quality services through preventative, environmentally respectful, and community-focused models. The proposed unitary would build on this foundation, scaling best practice, unlocking housing and health outcomes, and reducing the overheads associated with boundary reorganisation. Crucially, it offers one of the most coherent platforms to tackle rural deprivation and isolation, supporting inclusion, economic resilience, and improved outcomes in places often underserved by urban-led models.

Criteria four: 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.

While the four councils have not historically operated as a formal partnership, they each bring strong and complementary relationships with NHS partners, town and parish councils, community groups, and local businesses. Their shared strategic values and deep commitment to place-based working create a robust foundation for integration.

This option builds on community consensus. Each authority has engaged extensively with residents, town and parish councillors, and civic partners as part of the local government reorganisation process. This feedback consistently supports a model that:

- Retains existing district boundaries and avoids unnecessary structural change.

- Respects local identity and reflects the distinct character of rural communities.
- Maintains proximity between residents and the services they rely on.

There is a clear desire for governance that keeps decision-making local, responsive, and grounded in how communities already live, travel, and access support. Option 1 reflects these preferences. It is designed around natural functional geography, reinforced by travel-to-work flows and social connections between New Forest, Test Valley, East Hampshire and Winchester, and avoids boundary reorganisation that would weaken the alignment between local identity and governance.

This model also reinforces people's connection to rural life. It recognises that rural residents value distinct things, such as access to local services, landscape stewardship, and direct influence over neighbourhood priorities. There are key communities within the New Forest including the New Forest Gypsy, Romani and Traveller communities some of whom were historically resettled from roaming freely across the Forest to settled areas including Totton within the waterside area, Fawley Parish, and Hythe.

Also, the Commoners who have a demonstrable historical continuity in the New Forest going back over a thousand years in unbroken continuity and have maintained a sociocultural identity and traditional way of life which is distinct from any other group in the UK. The continuation of our traditional way of life including culture, identity and practice is vital to maintaining the New Forest's internationally important ecology and landscape.

By retaining whole districts and established footprints, Option 1 ensures that this relationship with place is maintained and strengthened into the future.

Mid Hampshire's geography also includes a network of vibrant towns, from Andover and Alton to Romsey, Lymington, Petersfield, Bordon, Stockbridge and Bishop's Waltham. These towns are more than service hubs; they are identity anchors for surrounding rural communities. The Mid Hampshire approach explicitly acknowledges their distinct needs and builds governance and delivery around them. It supports targeted economic growth, transport investment, and social infrastructure designed for market-town scale, something not always achievable in more urban-dominated unitary models.

Crucially, this proposal also protects and strengthens the role of town and parish councils. These local bodies play an essential role in shaping services, supporting vulnerable residents, and holding decision-makers to account. The councils within Mid Hampshire already operate highly localised governance structures, such as area planning committees, neighbourhood forums, and ward-led investment

models, that empower local voices and ensure that frontline councillors are at the centre of all work with communities. Under a Mid Hampshire unitary, these mechanisms would not only be retained but elevated, embedding neighbourhood democracy in the new authority's governance model.

Independent deliberative engagement commissioned from Thinks Insight & Strategy found that "most New Forest residents see the New Forest as their local area, including towns in the area such as Lymington, Lyndhurst and New Milton. While many travel to Southampton to access services and amenities, people are reluctant to identify it as part of their local area."

In summary, Option 1 is rooted in what communities have asked for. It:

- Builds on community consensus around boundaries, identity and local delivery.
- Supports people's connection to rural life and distinctive places.
- Recognises and empowers market towns and their surrounding settlements.
- Strengthens collaborative working with town and parish councils.
- Reflects lived experience and patterns of movement across Mid Hampshire.

It is not just a configuration that works on paper, it is a model shaped by people, place, and local ambition.

Criteria five: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

Mid Hampshire is well-positioned to support future devolution. Its size, strategic coherence, and delivery capability make it an ideal partner for taking on devolved powers and functions, ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level, aligned to the needs and aspirations of communities and businesses.

The region already demonstrates the capacity and credibility required to operate at a devolved level:

- Major regeneration leadership at Andover and Winchester, driven by local ambition and strong delivery capability.
- Strategic influence on the Solent Freeport Board, particularly through New Forest's Waterside sites with successful working through the Waterside Steering Group ensuring the business case delivers for local residents for example co-producing the New Forest Skills Plan.
- Collaborative housing and environmental planning, including joint solutions to challenges like nutrient neutrality and sustainable land use, with projects such as Whitehill & Bordon in East Hampshire exemplifying landscape-led regeneration and a proactive planning approach to Solent Freeport tax sites including Solent Gateway and Fawley Waterside.
- Successful attraction and deployment of Levelling Up Fund, UKSPF, Homes England, and DEFRA investment across all four districts, including targeted rural and market-town interventions in Petersfield and Alton.

In particular, the transformation of Andover, led by Test Valley through a nationally recognised co-design process, demonstrates Mid Hampshire's readiness to lead place-based change. The emerging health and wellbeing campus integrates health, planning, and infrastructure in a way that exemplifies the area's ability to align local innovation with regional priorities.

A Mid Hampshire unitary authority would also be well placed to maximise the economic and environmental opportunities available across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Its geography connects high-potential growth corridors with exceptional natural capital assets, such as the New Forest and South Downs National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and internationally renowned chalk rivers. These areas are not only environmental treasures but economic engines: supporting land-based enterprise, eco-tourism, and green innovation.

The scale and coherence of Mid Hampshire enable it to act as a strategic delivery vehicle, harnessing this natural capital to drive inclusive, environmentally responsible growth. This includes:

- Sensitive delivery of housing and infrastructure in protected and constrained landscapes.
- Investment in sustainable transport and clean energy.
- Stewardship of ecosystems and biodiversity in ways that also support economic resilience.

Option 1 ensures that this unique blend of landscape and economy is governed in an integrated, place-sensitive way, aligning environmental responsibility with productivity and growth.

As a partner within the MSA, Mid Hampshire would provide geographic and functional balance. It complements more urban unitary areas by representing the rural and town perspective, ensuring strategic priorities, such as housing, health, and net zero, are delivered across a full spectrum of places. Its presence would help shape a more balanced regional offer, grounded in diverse strengths and shared ambition.

In summary, Mid Hampshire including the New Forest:

- Has the scale and leadership maturity to absorb devolved powers.
- Offers a strategic geography that links coastal, rural, and inland economies.
- Maximises the potential of natural capital to deliver green growth.
- Supports balanced, inclusive regional development in partnership with the MSA.
- Keeps governance rooted in place, while aligning delivery with national policy.
- This is not just a unitary proposal, it is a ready-made platform for meaningful devolution, designed to unlock the full potential of the area and contribute to the prosperity and sustainability of the wider South East.

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

Mid Hampshire councils are national exemplars in neighbourhood-based engagement. Their democratic and community development models go beyond consultation, they are embedded in how places are shaped, and services are delivered. This collaborative, neighbourhood-first approach strengthens local democracy, resilience, and ownership, and provides a robust platform for future innovation.

Crucially, Option 1 builds on the strength of having well-established parish and town councils across the entire geography. These structures already provide a direct, trusted link between residents and governance, especially in rural areas. Under this model, Neighbourhood Area Committees would be established to bring together representatives from the new unitary authority and existing town and parish councils. This approach ensures continuity of local representation, while enhancing capacity for coordinated, responsive delivery.

This configuration maintains people's connection with rural life and supports the distinctiveness of market towns, which often require a different service focus from more urban centres. Rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model, Option 1 enables locally bespoke governance that reflects the diversity of communities across Mid Hampshire, empowering residents to shape solutions that meet their unique needs.

Option 1 fulfils the LGBCEs requirement for effective and convenient local government. A unified governance model ensures coherent service delivery, environmental regulation, and planning policy, all of which would be compromised by fragmentation. For example, in ecological stewardship the Waterside forms a vital corridor between the Forest and the Solent. Fragmenting governance would disrupt biodiversity management and climate resilience strategies. In terms of planning for the area the Waterside Vision, A326 upgrade, and Freeport development are coordinated through cross-agency partnerships rooted in the New Forest context. Across the geography, councils are already empowering communities to shape their futures and Option 1 brings together place-based partnership delivery:

- Test Valley's Andover Vision and Romsey Future partnerships are long-standing, community-led programmes that shape regeneration priorities and build consensus across sectors.
- Winchester's neighbourhood forums support the development of new communities by giving voice to residents, ensuring new places are shaped from the ground up.
- The Totton Regeneration Partnership in the New Forest exemplifies collaborative place-shaping involving councillors, residents, and local organisations.
- East Hampshire District Council, through the Whitehill & Bordon regeneration, has engaged residents via community forums and placemaking governance schemes, ensuring public input shaped health infrastructure, environmental design, and sustainable master planning.

These initiatives have been enhanced through award-winning engagement methods, such as citizens' assemblies and digital consultations, which reach a broader and more inclusive audience. Winchester's lockdown-era consultation won two national awards for its impact and reach, while Test Valley has built a national reputation for deliberative public engagement.

In addition to engagement, formal governance structures are already close to communities. Ward-level funding, area-based planning committees, and dedicated community support teams extend the council's presence and visibility on the ground. In New Forest,

councillor budgets along with a £350,000 annual grants scheme enables residents to lead on local priorities. In East Hampshire and Winchester, community governance is adapted to reflect the needs of growing settlements and new developments.

The new Mid Hampshire unitary authority would not only maintain these structures, but it would also scale and strengthen them, combining the local accountability of parish and town councils with the strategic capacity of a larger, financially resilient UA. The introduction of Neighbourhood Area Committees would enhance joined up working across tiers of governance and deepen the reach of local democracy.

In summary, Option 1 empowers local communities, protects local identity, and reinforces the structures that already support responsive, democratic governance. It delivers on the Government's ambitions for neighbourhood empowerment by rooting decision-making in place and extending trust and influence on the communities themselves.

Leaders' and other key stakeholder endorsements

Cllr Jill Cleary, Leader, New Forest District Council

"Option 1 delivers reorganisation that works for the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, creating a governance model that is efficient, locally responsive, and positioned to maximise our shared economic and environmental potential.

"The district of the New Forest is more than a location, it is a connected community with a shared identity and a clear sense of direction. Our residents have told us they want governance that reflects that reality. And our communities have spoken with clarity and conviction, speaking up for governance that feels rooted in who they are, where they live, and how they connect with one another. For the New Forest, Option 1 builds on existing partnerships, aligns areas with complementary priorities, and creates the conditions for stronger, more resilient public services.

"This is about building on the very best of what we have; harnessing the Waterside's economic potential within the wider region, championing the Forest's role in environmental leadership, and ensuring a strong voice in decisions that shape our future."

"Option 1 is the only configuration that can deliver LGR with community backing, regional coherence, and the credibility to make it work. It unlocks the full potential of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight while keeping the Forest whole."

Cllr Phil North, Leader, Test Valley Borough Council

"Our communities are very supportive of Option 1. Whilst nobody is claiming that Mid Hampshire is a single place, its communities and economies share many similar characteristics. Ultimately it is very different to the mainly urban communities in the rest of mainland Hampshire.

"As a result, it will provide the conditions for public service reform to succeed and offers hope of a sustainable future for all our communities. It will ensure a well-balanced mayoral combined authority where all strategic interests are represented."

Conclusion: Why Option 1 offers the strongest path forward

Option 1 presents the most coherent, deliverable, and future-ready model, with a coherent and strong Mid Hampshire unitary authority at its centre. It builds on existing boundaries as building blocks, bringing together similar areas currently governed by councils with aligned priorities, shared delivery models, and a strong culture of place-based innovation, creating the right conditions for better services, stronger communities, and long-term financial sustainability for all councils.

It brings forward a geography that reflects commonality, ensuring a rural voice in strategic decisions and avoiding placing a predominantly rural area into a governance structure designed around a city. It is designed to support an effective Mayoral Strategic Authority, bringing together two National Parks to provide environmental leadership across the region.

Crucially, Option 1 is the only configuration that both preserves the integrity of the entire New Forest district, including the Waterside, and retains it within a coherent Mid Hampshire geography. This ensures that rural identity, operational coherence, and environmental stewardship remain intact, vital in one of the UK's most sensitive and nationally significant landscapes. It produces coherent and effective local governance and builds on local identity, two key principles for shaping council boundaries.

Option 1 avoids both disruption and compromise. It offers:

- **No boundary change,** making it the least disruptive and most immediately deliverable option.
- **Continuity in public service delivery,** building on strong cross-sector partnerships already in place across health, housing, environment, and community services.
- **Economic strength and connectivity,** rooted in a high-performing £18.2bn GVA economy, key national infrastructure, and growing innovation clusters.

- **Balanced population and tax base,** enabling resilience and fair contribution within the MSA.
- **A strong public mandate,** reflecting resident and partner preferences for identity, coherence, and local empowerment.

Option 1 meets every one of the MHCLG criteria, not just on paper, but in practice. It supports national policy goals, aligns with how people live and work, and provides a credible, low-risk foundation for transformation. It is the option that delivers reform with consent, not disruption; a model that strengthens Mid Hampshire and contributes fully to the success of the wider Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Appendix 3:

Option 2

Appendix 3: Option 2

Introduction

Simple, balanced and locally supported. Option 2 delivers a coherent and balanced set of authorities for the mainland. It has strong local identity and does not require any boundary changes, thus ensuring it is simpler to implement, while configured to better deliver services and ensure devolved power with a community focus.

This proposal creates four new mainland councils built around sensible, proportionate, place-based geographies.

The proposed unitary configuration balances shared local identity and existing service, economic and transport links. Each council is designed to deliver effective leadership, streamlined services and improved accountability, while remaining recognisably local and at a scale that is manageable and effective.

How is this option different

Option 2 differs from Option 1 in one respect: New Forest district forms part of the South West Hampshire unitary instead being located in the Mid Hampshire unitary.

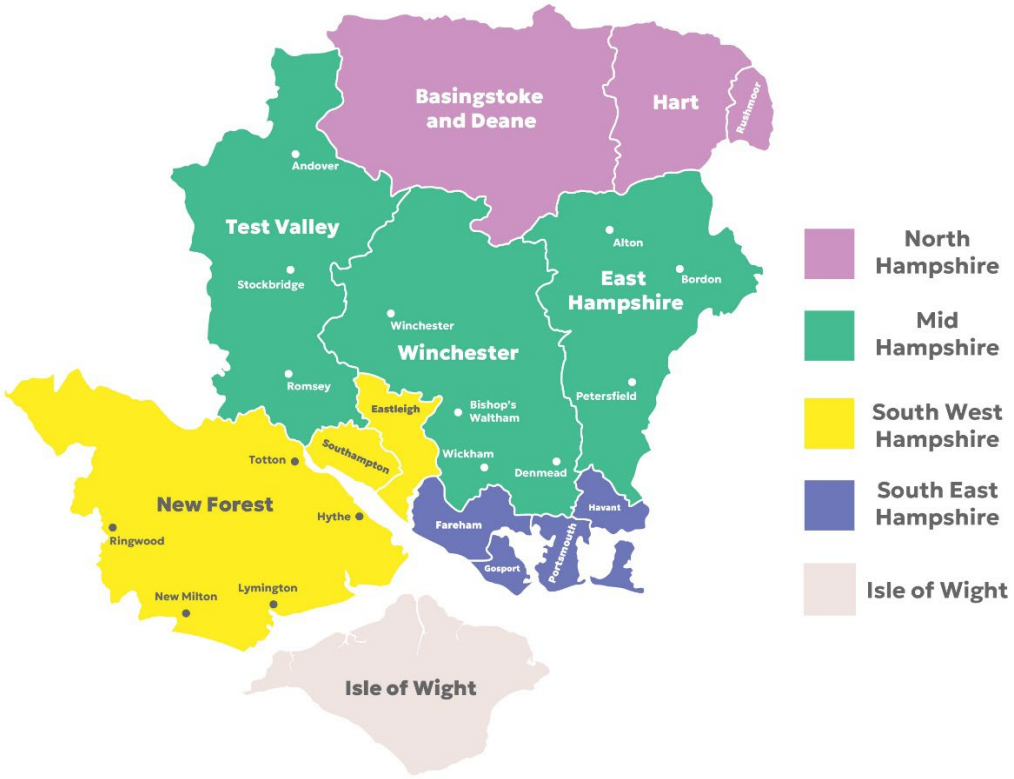
It differs from Option 3 in in that there are no boundary changes or splitting of existing district building blocks when the new authorities are established (we remain open to boundary adjustments at a later stage via Principal Authority Boundary Review).

The Isle of Wight unitary, the North Hampshire unitary and the South East Hampshire unitary are unchanged between Option 1 and Option 2 and the benefits in these regions remain as set out in the main document.

Option 2 also offers substantially similar features to Option 1 in terms of a balanced population and viable financial assessment for example but enables a more balanced approach to geography and tax base across the whole geography.

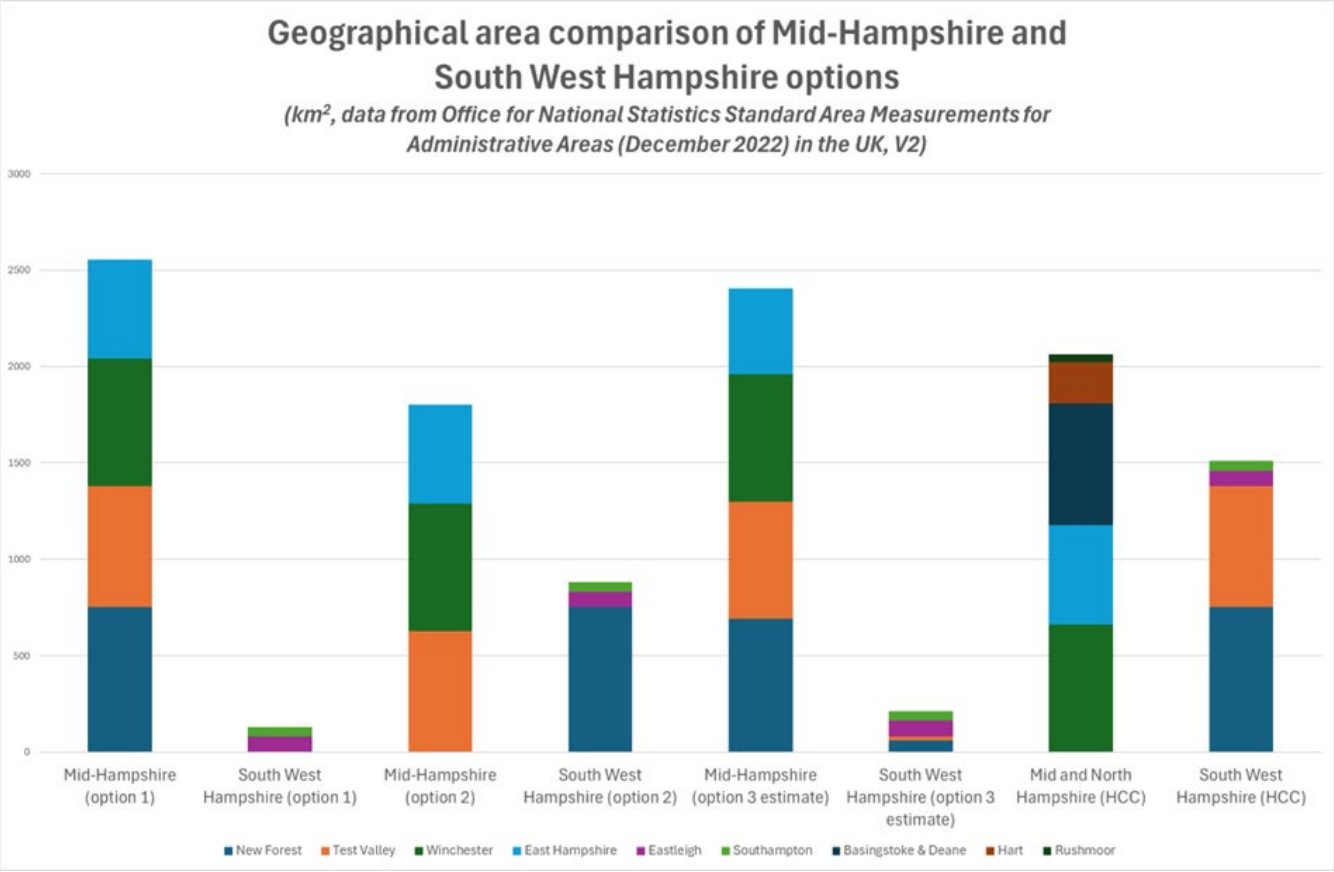
This is coupled with the benefits in Option 3 of having the New Forest waterside area in the South West unitary – while continuing to ensure a strong and sustainable Mid Hampshire authority.

The image below shows the proposed geography of unitary councils in Option 2.



The key additional benefit of Option 2 is that it offers the most balanced geographical unitary configuration for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It creates four new mainland unitaries of similar size and scale, avoiding the risk of excessively large geographies or constraining the county's largest settlement, Southampton, in the smallest unitary.

The chart below shows that under Option 2, Mid Hampshire is only twice as large as South West Hampshire, rather than 20 times larger as in Option 1.



Creating a coastal economic powerhouse

As well as being the most geographically balanced, Option 2 also offers substantial economic benefits to the South West Hampshire Unitary. Including the New Forest and its waterside area in the proposed South West Hampshire unitary offers a strategic opportunity to align governance with the region's real-world economic and social dynamics. The area has strong industrial and maritime links with Southampton, including major employers like the Fawley oil refinery and significant commuting flows to Southampton and Eastleigh. By

integrating this area into a single authority, the proposal supports more coherent planning across transport, housing, and infrastructure, enabling better service delivery and sustainable growth.

This unified approach would also bring together key economic assets, such as Southampton city centre, the docks, Southampton Airport, and Freeport investment zones, under one governance structure. This would streamline investment decisions, enhance coordination of skills and innovation strategies, and strengthen the region's ability to attract funding. Overall, the proposal aims to unlock the full potential of the Solent corridor and establish the South West as a coastal economic powerhouse.

Strong coherent and effective central authority for Mid Hampshire

Creating a Mid Hampshire authority from the area of Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire avoids the challenges and associated costs of service delivery that comes with excessive geographic size while bringing together authorities and services with similar challenges, demography and experience of delivery in a mixed rural area. It integrates communities which self-identify as rural around the principal settlements of Andover, Winchester, Romsey, Petersfield and Alton – and their associated market towns and villages – with an economy and housing market defined by professional services, technology, creative enterprises, tourism – combined with a continuously developing rural economy and a strong commitment to sustainability.

The net effect is a Mid Hampshire Unitary that is well-placed to transform and localise its services and ensure that its residents and businesses achieve maximum benefit from local government reorganisation in an effective unitary geography for the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Practical to deliver

Option 2 is practical to deliver, being constructed using existing district boundaries, with each new unitary clustered around the main settlements. This places likely service bases at the geographic centre, bringing services nearer to local people and improving access for vulnerable residents who may depend on being closer to support. Natural pyramids of schools will be retained, trust built between schools and community and the new council maintained effectively supporting those with special educational needs.

Although existing district boundaries will only ever be an approximation, there is good evidence to suggest that Option 2 offers the best approximation to the functional economic areas of Mid Hampshire and South West Hampshire, with New Forest being more closely aligned with Southampton than Winchester. A number of other public services already operate on similar geographies, such as the

criminal justice system, with the magistrate's court in Southampton covering Eastleigh and New Forest, and the crown court in Winchester covering the whole county.

Support for this option

- Respondents to a geography wide and local engagement exercise showed clear resistance to large, remote council models. Option 2 delivers the approach that best avoids this risk and is the only one delivering four mainland unitaries which are all geographically smaller than those proposed by Hampshire County Council.
- Although East Hampshire District Council withdrew from this proposal, the design of Option 2 has been mindful of the needs of the communities in East Hampshire as far as possible. It has been informed by the public engagement exercise undertaken, to which over 200 East Hampshire residents responded.
- Feedback prioritised local identity, access to decision-making, and visible leadership.
- Winchester City Council will make a decision as to its preferred option at its Council meeting on 25 September.
- Eastleigh Borough Council will make a decision as to its preferred option at its Council meeting on 25 September.

Leader's endorsement

Winchester strongly shares with the other councils the desire to create new unitary councils for our region that are close enough to be local and big enough to stay strong.

This four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary option delivers this and is:

- simpler to implement
- geographically and economically coherent and balanced
- creates strong councils that will deliver.

In this option, all five councils are constructed from existing district and unitary footprints without any boundary changes and all five councils make sense in their own right.

Our region's two great ports partner with their neighbours to create strong councils in the South East and the South West.

This proposal creates a coherent - and manageably sized – Mid Hampshire authority with its focus on the rural economy and professional services.

As with all other options, it supports a Northern council connecting together the high-tech industries of the M3 corridor and enabling close connection with similar economies in Surrey and Berkshire.

Finally, the unique and special nature of the Isle of Wight is reflected the continuation of its own separate council.

This option is right for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and all the councils created are coherent and make sense for the future.

Cllr Martin Tod – Leader of Winchester City Council

Assessment against MHCLG criteria

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

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.

Financially sustainable

Option 2 has the same financial benefits that have been demonstrated in the core case for change. The four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model in this variant continues to offer a streamlined governance model and opportunities to redesign and transform services to achieve significant efficiencies and savings through a place focused approach. The main case for change document quantifies the financial impact of the reorganisation model and demonstrates financial viability. It also demonstrates that Option 2 enables councils to pay back within 3 years, delivering annual savings of £63.8 million.

Specifically, Option 2 offers the most balanced financial position (based on current data and financial positions) across the mainland authorities.

Metric	Option 2				
	North	Mid	South-west	South-east	Variance
Combined Business rates & council tax per capita (£)	858	871	853	913	60
Proportion of NRE funded by business rates and council tax	42%	43%	43%	48%	6%

The table above shows combined business rates and council tax per capita and proportion of NRE funded by business rates and council tax position for Option 2.

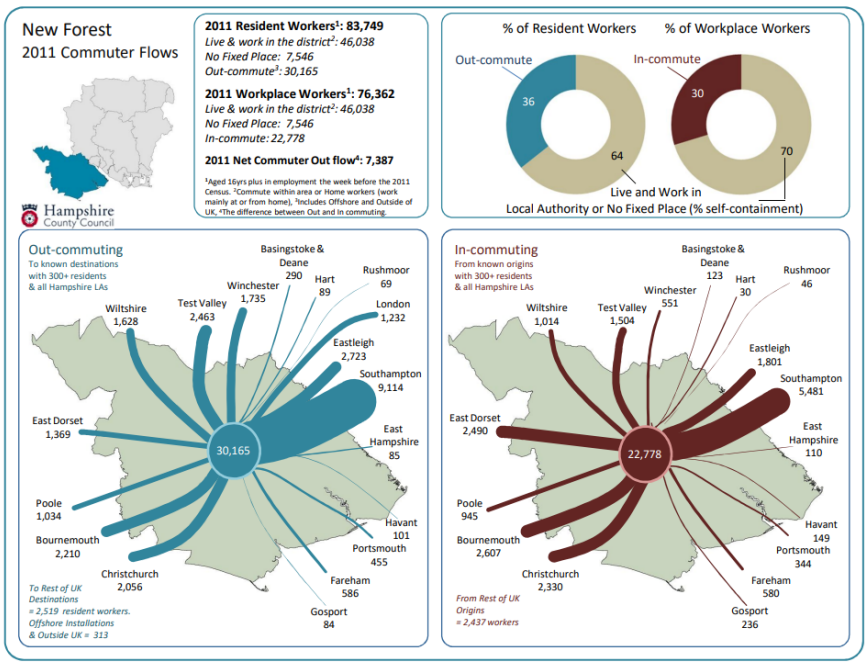
Economic alignment

Option 2 aligns the new council areas to reflect the functional economic areas and travel-to-work zones.

Hampshire County Council's Economic Intelligence Reports show a very strong relationship between Southampton, New Forest and Eastleigh in particular (shown in the figures above).

The same data for Test Valley, New Forest District's only neighbouring authority other than Southampton, indicates a stronger commuting relationship with Wiltshire, Winchester, Eastleigh and Southampton than with New Forest.

As such, the key transport data confirms that the best approximation of sensible economic geographies using existing district boundaries is to bring New Forest into the same unitary area as Southampton and Eastleigh, but to leave Test Valley in Mid Hampshire, as is done under Option 2.



The images above show the New Forest and Southampton 2011 commuter flows. It is noted that post pandemic hybrid working may have reduced the absolute numbers commuting but there is no data to suggest the work orientation between the New Forest to Southampton and Eastleigh has changed.

Economic sectors

As set out in the introduction, the Port of Southampton is a critical piece of national / international infrastructure, and the opportunities for growth spread across both sides of Southampton Water. The Port and marine-related industries extend across Southampton and the New Forest, including Solent Gateway / Marchwood Military port, Fawley refinery and the land identified in the Port Masterplan for

expansion at Dibden Bay. The Solent Freeport has its centre of gravity around Southampton Water, with key sites in New Forest, Southampton and Eastleigh.

There is a clear link between the largely urban Waterside and Southampton in economic, labour force and transport terms, but Option 2 reflects that wider rural area of New Forest also provides an attractive residential environment for many who work in the Waterside, Southampton and Eastleigh areas, contributing to the range of skills available to the city's economy, while also providing a significant recreational resource for residents of more urban areas. There are strong socio-economic links between urban and rural areas, reflecting the fact that cities are interdependent with their hinterlands of towns and villages.

In more general terms, Southampton is clearly a sub-regional centre which is the economic, retail / leisure, cultural and transport hub for the wider area, urban and rural. Geographically, all parts of the New Forest are closer to this hub than to any other hubs within Hampshire, such as Winchester.

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

Alignment to Housing Market Areas

The government has defined official local housing market areas (these date from 2010 but are still in use). The final report recommended the use of map 6 on page 25, which clearly shows the Southampton housing market area stretching across most of the rural New Forest.

Effective blending of urban and rural within unitary councils

The existing New Forest district benefits from a mix of rural national park and urban-fringe, industrially developed areas. This blend would be extended in Option 2, combining the current New Forest district with the predominantly urban and suburban areas of Eastleigh and Southampton. This avoids arbitrary urban/rural segregation and supports the mix of existing urban areas, market towns and parishes.

In planning terms, while rural New Forest is a very different type of area to Southampton, under Option 2 the National Park Authority would still undertake its local planning function, providing a continued focus for addressing the unique planning issues faced by rural areas. The National Park Authority would work closely with the wider unitary, with the new council providing the economic / housing / transport functions across the area, aligned to the direction provided by the mayoral strategic authority.

Housing Delivery Targets

Option 2 supports delivery of much-needed housing supply across the whole of the Hampshire and Solent area by balancing housing targets across the new unitary councils. Option 2 avoids having two National Parks in one single unitary authority (as in Option 1), which would create pressure on the amount of available land for development, thus threatening capability of the new unitary council to successfully deliver housing growth.

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

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

Option 2 has a more balanced geographical areas than Option 1 – therefore promoting greater agility and responsiveness and benefits of existing partnership working can be leveraged. Asset rationalisation in Option 2 is more deliverable due to moderate travel distances, offering a range of council hubs across the area in principal towns at reasonable cost to the tax payer.

Similarly with no boundary change required, this configuration of councils can move forward without additional work to redefine service boundaries, allowing immediate progress on integration and the early realisation of the benefits of unitary status.

Established partnership working can be amplified at pace to reap efficiencies, building on a strong track record of collaboration.

Mid Hampshire Council: Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

- Joint Planning approaches already in place (e.g. East Hampshire and SDNPA co-plan).
- Strong record of cross-border housing delivery: £12m funding secured jointly for affordable housing at the Winchester/Test Valley border.
- Shared geography for waste, leisure, countryside, and environmental services, including green space and depot planning.
- Opportunity to build on exiting, established shared services (such as the integrated IT service between TVBC and WCC) as well as historical shared service arrangements.
- Costs for large scale services such as waste can vary by **up to 50%** between urban and rural areas — geographic tailoring is essential for efficiency and can be best delivered by Option 2.

- And in addition, location of the New Forest with the South West council brings additional efficiency benefits.

South West Council: New Forest, Eastleigh, Southampton

- By including all of the New Forest, Option 2 ensures there are no areas at risk of geographical isolation from centralised services.
- Opportunity to place operational service hubs at the geographical centre of the new unitary, following the example of municipal waste from all three areas being disposed of at the Marchwood Energy Recovery Centre at the north end of the Waterside.
- Shared leisure partnerships with NHS and Active Partnerships across the footprint.
- Aligned ICS/health geography covering major hospital and community care services.
- All councils work together through Partnership for South Hampshire to deliver homes for the local South West housing market, while Eastleigh and Southampton have shared resources to deliver Local Plans for both authorities.
- Shared services between Eastleigh and Southampton include building control and licensing. Including all of the New Forest will add scale and resilience to these partnerships.

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

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

Opportunities to deliver public service reform

A Balanced Model for Public Service Reform

Option 2 offers highly practical geographies for public services, bringing together the most balanced combination of councils and residents for the efficient delivery of coordinated services. Distances to access services in the four main service and economic hubs are lower in Option 2.

This is important for continuing effective delivery of social care services with the present Hampshire adult social care domiciliary care zoned contracts coordinated by contract relationship managers CRM. Those zones and CRM do not map onto Option 1, requiring fragmentation of existing contracts and management and threatening vital services for vulnerable people. Option 2 offers a geography

that supports existing care contracts; whilst still positioning the unitary councils to transform care services as set out in the core document.

Children's and Adults' Social Care – Local Offer Examples

Delivering high-quality, sustainable care requires a deep understanding of the unique needs and dynamics of local communities. Smaller, place-based unitaries are better placed to:

- Tailor early intervention and safeguarding models around local schools and families.
- Build integrated health and care pathways with local NHS partners (e.g. Solent and Hampshire ICS geographies).
- Invest in trusted community hubs and voluntary sector partnerships.

For example:

- Jointly commissioned local supported living schemes, enabling transitions from residential care for example Chesil Lodge in Winchester.
- Top quartile performance in Homelessness prevention working with the third and voluntary sector to support early discharge from HMP Winchester and support asylum applications.
- Stock holding experience in Winchester, and integrated care services supported by the social care authority to maximise 'at home' care packages.

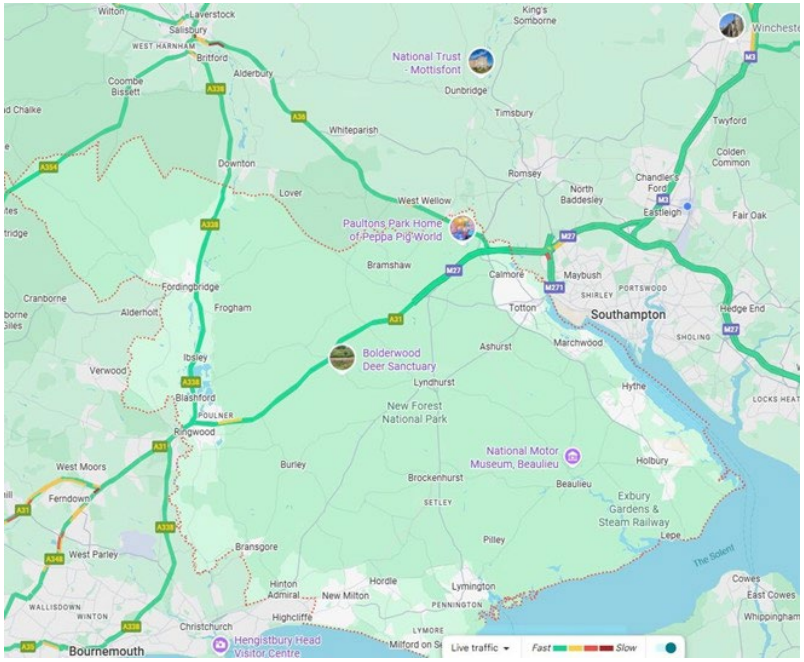
This model ensures that the Mid Hampshire Authority in Option 2 can amplify current approaches that that reflects its population profile, geographies, and partner landscape. If unitary councils were to cover vast, disparate geographies, they risk losing touch with specific community needs, especially in social care.

Transport Links

Transport links for service delivery are more clearly defined for Option 2.

As can be seen from the image below, the main road network in the New Forest area forms a triangle pointing towards three large settlements outside the district: Salisbury in Wiltshire, Bournemouth in Dorset, and Southampton in Hampshire. This illustrates the critical economic and social links between the district and its neighbours in other counties.

From a Hampshire and Solent perspective, the district is primarily oriented towards Southampton, with onward traffic progressing to the rest of the county and beyond. All rail traffic through the New Forest also passes through Southampton.



Likewise, the transport links in the Mid Hampshire area are focussed around the M3, A34, A303, A31.

Criteria four: 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.

From the geography wide engagement work, 54% of Winchester respondents and 51% of East Hampshire respondents favoured Option 2 - stating support or strong support for this configuration, compared to 29% and 24% supporting Option 1.

Only 20% and 17% of Winchester and East Hampshire respondents supported a boundary change option, with 60% and 51% against changing boundaries.

Option 2 was the second favoured preference for Test Valley residents at 31% support for this option, and there was a clear lack of support for boundary changes at 70% against this proposal.

Option 2 is felt to be a more manageable size of council, which respondents say is beneficial. Respondents expressed concern that services could become too stretched and decision making too far removed over a large geography. However, respondents said the merging of more rural councils would bring benefit.

In July 2025, a deliberative workshop was held with sample of residents across the Winchester district. A similar workshop was also held in Test Valley and a range of deliberative workshops took place in the New Forest.

In Test Valley, participants supported simplification and efficiency but emphasised the need for local decision-making and responsiveness. They valued the rural character and community spirit of their towns and villages.

This is similarly reflected in Winchester participant's feedback who expressed a need for a connected joined up approach, efficient services, ensuring local voices are meaningfully heard and that services are designed and rooted in the local area, to best serve local communities.

Local identity and culture, and community spirit in their local area was highly valued. Winchester participants support a centralised and simplified approach as long as local needs were met and community voices were heard in decision making.

Through a range of qualitative methods, New Forest residents, including those in Waterside, expressed a strong Forest rooted local identity.

And across all areas concerns were raised that services may not be tailored specifically enough for local populations in larger councils.

Several of the local parish councils in Winchester affected by boundary changes also sought the views of their members and residents in respect of potential boundary changes and potential geographies and their views have been incorporated.

This option supports community feedback and alleviates concerns that councils which are spread over too large a geography to be able to respond to local needs and local identity. It also alleviates the concerns that have been expressed about boundary changes as this option is based on existing boundaries.

Criteria five: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

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

Option 2 provides the best platform for successful devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:

- The five unitary authority model provides a stable platform for a pan-Hampshire devolution model.
- Option 2 presents the most equal balance of population and geography, ensuring fair representation for all at the strategic authority.
- With financial stability and maintenance of district boundaries in the Option 2 proposal there will be a stable set of partners for the elected Mayor from day 1.
- The two largest unitaries cover the two largest cities, enhancing the attractiveness of the area for investment in growth coupled with each new council large enough to participate in future Combined Authority arrangements.

Importantly Option 2 avoids the risk to growth posed by a very large rural unitary or the county's biggest settlement being constrained in a small unitary without sufficient additional land capacity.

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

Local representation at a community level is of critical importance. There are 49 town and parish councils in the Option 2 South West unitary and 144 in the Mid Hampshire unitary. This enables ready and effective community engagement at the most local level.

Option 1 would lead to 181 town and parish councils in the Mid Hampshire and only 12 in the South West Unitary comprising Eastleigh and Southampton. Neighbourhood and community engagement is the bedrock of the new unitary councils, therefore a more even split of towns and parish councils to best resource support and share expertise and experience is preferable.

Number of Parish Councils:

	Mid Hampshire Unitary	South West Unitary

Option 1	181	12
Option 2	144	49

Cultural factors that tend to support Option 2 include features of daily life such as the geographies served by the Southern Daily Echo, which lists the New Forest as one of its districts, and the Hampshire Chronicle, which lists Winchester, Romsey and Hampshire.

Public sentiment through a geography wide and local engagement exercise showed clear resistance to large, remote council models. Respondents prefer governance structures that retain local identity and clarity of purpose. This option avoids the creation of excessively large, remote unitaries and instead offers a more balanced population split across councils, making them more relatable and connected to the communities they serve.

Option 2 delivers the approach that best avoids this risk and is the only one delivering four new mainland unitaries which are all geographically smaller than those proposed by Hampshire County Council.

Option 2 enables each unitary to develop a single corporate plan shaped by local priorities and grounded in neighbourhood knowledge. This is particularly important in services like social care, housing, leisure, and public health, where local understanding, true connection and familiarity with communities allows for more targeted and responsive delivery in local place based on community needs and aspirations.

Locally focused councils are better equipped to:

- Integrate services with local NHS and VCS partners.
- Build trust through consistent presence and familiarity.
- Tailor their strategies to reflect coastal, urban, or rural needs.

In this way, community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment are not simply principles, but daily practices embedded in the design of this proposed structure.

For social care, this is vital: priorities for early years, SEND or elder care differ widely between coastal, rural and urban places. Locally rooted services for families, carers and vulnerable adults reinforce trust in the authority, increasing engagement with formal structures such as area boards and participatory budgeting with effective engagement with pyramids of schools.

Feedback prioritised local identity, access to decision-making, and visible leadership. This model delivers meaningful community engagement not as an afterthought, but as a central design principle. By keeping councils recognisable, place-based, and locally scaled, it empowers residents to participate, influence, and shape the places they live.

Conclusion: Option 2 offers the strongest path forward

Option 2 delivers a coherent and balanced set of authorities for the mainland. It has strong local identity and does not require any boundary changes, thus it is simpler to implement; is configured to better deliver services; and ensures devolved power with a community focus.

This proposal creates four new mainland councils built around sensible, proportionate, place-based geographies. With the unitary configuration balancing shared local identity and existing service, economic and transport links.

- **Balanced geography and population** across new mainland authorities.
- **Practical to deliver,** with no boundary change and close proximity to services.
- **Continuity and efficiency in public service delivery**, with practical geographies, building on strong cross-sector partnerships already in place across health, housing, environment, and community services.
- **Focused on natural economic areas**, good local connectivity and ability to focus housing delivery on a natural local market
- **Balanced tax base,** with a financial assessment as good as the other options, enabling resilience and fair contribution within the MCA.
- **A varied and natural local community**, with a vibrant combination of urban, suburban and rural areas and many shared cultural and economic interests.

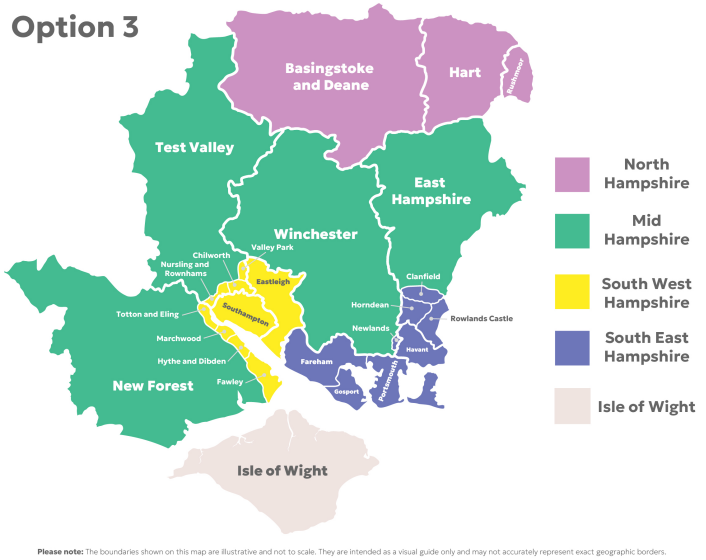
Appendix 4:

Option 3

Appendix 4: Option 3

Introduction

This proposal establishes two dynamic new unitary authorities along the south coast designed to unlock growth, strengthen local leadership, and better reflect the way people live, work, and travel today. The carefully considered boundary changes are minimal yet meaningful, aligning with real communities and economic geographies rather than outdated historic lines. This is a forward looking plan, growth-oriented that builds stronger, more resilient councils better equipped to tackle future challenges and seize new opportunities with confidence.



The proposed **South West unitary** boundary brings together Southampton, Eastleigh, the Waterside parishes of the New Forest as well as two parishes from Test Valley. This unifies the county's main trading gateways, key transport arteries, docks and industrial and related infrastructure both sides of Southampton Water.

The proposed boundary for the **South East unitary** option brings together Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham and adjacent Parishes currently in the districts of Winchester and East Hampshire, but where the clear economic and social centres of gravity for those areas are the city regions, rather than those areas where the characteristics are more obviously rural.

Communities in the parishes that would become part of the new unitary authorities would benefit from remaining with their aligned urban centres, with much more common community interests reflecting where they live their lives, rather than being part of a new large rural authority.

How is this option different?

Option 3 is a final proposal that uses the current districts as building blocks with a specific modification order from Option 1 or Option 2 with minimal but critical boundary changes; and in parallel as part of the submission, asks the Secretary of State to use their statutory powers to modify the boundaries as proposed to build stronger, more balanced unitary authorities that are set up to drive economic growth across the region.*

The Isle of Wight and North Hampshire remain the same in all three options as supported by the rationale outlined in the core document.

*Precise wording still subject to review

Support for option

This option is supported by:

Table to be completed following committee meetings	

‘’The creation of new unitary authorities on these proposed boundaries is more than an administrative change; it is a change to bring together a coherent economic area, remove long-standing barriers to growth, and enable better services. It is sensible to integrate places that are already economically and socially linked, and this proposal provides a platform to drive investment across existing city regions, deliver infrastructure more effectively, and plan services that reflect real-life’’.

Councillor Alex Winning – Leader of Southampton City Council

Cllr Keith House - Leader of Eastleigh Borough Council

Cllr Steve Pitt – Leader of Portsmouth City Council

Cllr Phillip Munday – Leader of Havant Borough Council

(Others tbc)

Key reasons for support

Driving growth through bold reform: a vision for our region’s future

Economic growth is central to the government’s national vision, and it is equally central to our vision for the future of our county. This proposal sets out what we believe to be the most effective local government arrangements to unlock and accelerate economic and housing growth across our region. Option 3’s strategic vision for city-region growth clearly meets the threshold set by Government for changes to administrative boundaries.

Southampton and Portsmouth are the beating hearts of our regional economy, historic cities with thriving communities and dynamic industries. Building on their strengths, our proposal for Option 3 outlines the creation of two new coastal powerhouse unitary councils. These councils will be rooted in economically and demographically connected communities, supported by a small number of targeted boundary changes to ensure coherence and impact.

We believe Option 3 is the preferred boundary configuration to deliver councils which:

- Deliver services across a geography that reflects practical realities of local people.
- Have balanced populations and council tax distribution.
- Are designed to deliver economic and housing growth.

This option reflects the real-world patterns of how people live, travel, and work today (not how they did when the current boundaries were drawn in 1972), and aligns with the existing economic footprint of our communities. The split between rural and primarily urban areas reflects the differing priorities and challenges for each. It is a pragmatic yet ambitious approach that supports both local identity and regional prosperity.

Option 3 also represents the most balanced in terms of population numbers, council tax base and business rates per capita across the county. This will ensure new unitaries are set up to succeed with sustainable finances to build from.

We acknowledge the complexities involved in altering existing district boundaries. However, we firmly believe that these changes are essential to unlock the full potential of our region that can better support the new Mayoral County Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

How this proposal meets government LGR criteria

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

Option 3 proposes four new unitary areas on the mainland plus the Isle of Wight remaining as an independent council:

1. **South West:** Southampton, Eastleigh and the Parishes of Totton and Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden, Fawley (New Forest) and Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams and Valley Park (Test Valley).

2. **South East:** Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, Havant, and the Parishes of Newlands, Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle.

3. **North Hampshire:** Basingstoke and Deane, Rushmoor and Hart.

4. **Mid Hampshire:** Winchester, Test Valley and the New Forest, excluding the Parishes specified above.

5. **Isle of Wight**

This proposal reflects how the community and demographic geography of our area has changed since the current councils were established in the 1970s. For example, the growth of Southampton, Hedge End, Chandler's Ford, Totton and other settlements has meant more people in the surrounding areas developing close links with the city, whether through work, leisure, shopping, education or accessing local services. The same is true for the area around Portsmouth where the investment in local transport and highways infrastructure over the last 50 years has led to new developments, across the wider area, which are better linked to the urban centre of Portsmouth. As a result, many of the communities in our proposal already have a close relationship with the cities and have similar challenges and ambitions for the area.

South West Unitary

In addition to Southampton and Eastleigh, this proposal includes wards from both the Waterside area of the New Forest, and the lower Test Valley area.

To the West, the A326 forms a clear physical boundary between Totton and Waterside and the rest of the New Forest. An economic study commissioned by New Forest District Council sets out that the New Forest economy can be sub-divided into three sub-areas, Totton and Waterside, Core Forest and Coastal Towns and Avon Valley. Totton and Waterside is the smallest area of the forest geographically, but also the largest by population reflecting its significantly higher population density.

The Waterside is also the most industrialised part of the current district, hosting manufacturing and marine activities in Totton and Hythe and the Fawley oil refinery which is a major industrial employer. As such, the area has strong economic ties to Southampton through industrial and maritime industry either side of Southampton Water, and significant out-commuting from the area, primarily to Southampton and Eastleigh to the east and Dorset authorities in the west. The area's economic profile is more reflective of the more urban area within the South West unitary, compared with the more rural makeup of the wider New Forest and proposed Mid Hampshire unitary.

To the north, the M27 marks a significant physical boundary for the proposed South West unitary. On a practical level, the urban areas of Rownhams and Nursling are directly connected to the Southampton city urban geography. Similarly, the Valley Park Parish is a continuation of the Chandler's Ford urban area. While much of the population Chilworth is part of the Southampton urban area, the rest of the existing Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams Parish also has close links.

South East Unitary

Parishes of East Hampshire proposed for inclusion in the South East unitary are those which lay south of the Butser Hill nature reserve, with all three parishes part of the continued urban geography along the A3(M) / A3 corridor.

The Parish of Newlands, currently located in Winchester, identifies strongly with Waterlooville as the closest town area, and serves two relatively new development areas with a strong connection to Waterlooville. Growth has meant that Newlands is a physical continuation of the Waterlooville area, giving a strong argument for bringing this Parish into the new South East unitary to ensure the local authority structure is harmonious and respects the local identity of those residents based around the Waterlooville area. Newlands Parish Council has stated that it is important that for any future unitary authority they should be in the same new authority as Havant Borough Council because of their natural links to Waterlooville.

The Parishes areas south of Butser Hill that have been proposed to be included in the new South East unitary authority align closely with the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire area. This is true for housing market area, for travel to work, for accessing major retail centres, accessing the health economy, education or the leisure and cultural offer. The characteristics of the area are much more similar to urban South East Hampshire than they are to the rural Mid Hampshire linked by the railway line and the A3(M) / A3 corridor.

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

A more equitable distribution of population across new council areas is an integral element of ensuring financial sustainability of new unitaries and relative parity of representation both locally and on the new Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA).

Excluding the proposed North Hampshire unitary as it is the same across all options, the Option 3 proposal offers the smallest population differences between the three remaining councils and aligns most closely with the government's stated criteria of councils of around 500,000.

The table below shows the population projections for proposed unitary councils for the three options.

	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
	2023 population	2028 population	2023 population	2028 population	2023 population	2028 population
North	394,648	407,465	394,648	407,465	394,648	407,465
Mid	570,739	598,823	395,341	417,159	461,194	484,636
South West	397,060	423,221	572,458	604,885	473,332	502,273
South East	532,519	554,741	532,519	554,741	565,792	589,876
Difference between the largest and smallest council populations	173,679	175,602	177,117	187,732	104,598	105,240

400

Creating unitaries with greater population parity also increases financial stability across the region by creating more equal tax bases and opportunities for economies of scale.

Analysis of council tax projections identifies Option 3 as the most balanced with the lowest variance between the council tax bases of the proposed unitaries. Similarly, Option 3 is projected to have the smallest difference in average band D council tax.

Together this means Option 3 provides the most equal council tax rates for local residents, and the most equal council tax base for each new council.

The same is true for business rates, with business rates funding per capita projected to be the most equal in Option 3.

	Option 1					Option 2					Option 3				
Metric	**North**	**Mid**	**South West**	**South East**	**Variance**	**North**	**Mid**	**South West**	**South East**	**Variance**	**North**	**Mid**	**South West**	**South East**	**Variance**
Council tax base	146,508	233,472	116,921	174,170	116,551	146,508	160,117	190,276	174,170	43,768	146,508	188,072	148,605	187,886	41,564
Council tax base per capita	0.37	0.41	0.29	0.33	0.11	0.37	0.41	0.33	0.33	0.08	0.37	0.41	0.31	0.33	0.09
Estimated Average council tax band D 28/29 (£)	2,078	2,060	2,050	2,083	33	2,078	2,051	2,051	2,083	32	2,078	2,060	2,060	2,072	18
Business rates funding per capita (£)	65	75	170	187	123	65	73	142	187	123	65	74	150	180	115

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

This proposal builds on the principles and detail of public service delivery set out in the main business case. As existing unitary councils both Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils' have the experience of the delivering the full range of high quality and sustainable public services. Underpinning both the existing councils is a commitment to driving local economic growth, not just to provide new skills, employment and housing for residents, but also to contribute to the financial sustainability of the cities and councils.

The proposed South West and South East unitaries are built on geographies with clear economic and social links with the existing cities and are designed to drive financial sustainability better able to withstand financial shocks.

South West

The South West unitary geography offers a strategically located, high-performing economic hub, uniquely positioned to drive growth across the wider region, while balancing the distinct needs of communities across the area. It benefits from a series of competitive advantages:

- Europe's busiest cruise port and the UK's second-largest container port.
- A maritime sector with 1.8 times the national average job concentration.
- An emerging life sciences hub centred around University Hospital Southampton.
- A coastal-industrial corridor delivering energy, advanced manufacturing, and green innovation.
- Access to two universities and a range of specialist training providers, underpinning a skilled workforce and innovation ecosystem.

The proposed South West boundary brings together several strategic economic nodes under one authority. These nodes are currently split across administrative lines in Southampton, Eastleigh and the New Forest, limiting their impact and complicating investment and planning decisions. These include:

- City Centre & Docks

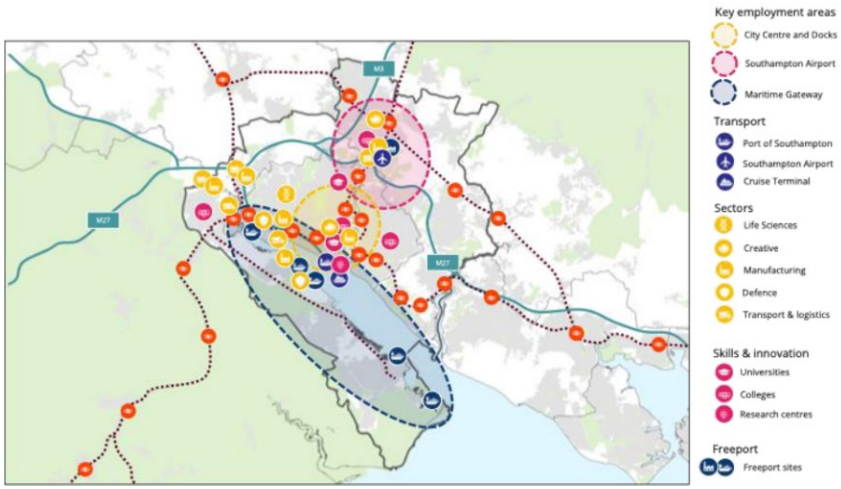
Southampton's docks are the UK's leading port for cruise and container freight, contributing over £2.5bn GVA annually to the UK economy. They support around 45,600 jobs nationwide, including significant supply-chain impacts in the West Midlands automotive sector. Bringing the port and its hinterland into one governance structure will unlock new efficiencies and growth.

- Southampton Airport

A key regional gateway and growth zone, the airport contributes £96m GVA and supports 1,390 jobs (2023). Its direct link to the Navigator Quarter Freeport site means improved coordination could unlock thousands of new jobs and millions in retained business rates.

- Maritime Gateway

Anchored by the Solent Freeport, this hub drives 26,000 jobs and £2bn into the local economy, with significant spillover benefits nationally. Over £1.35bn in private investment has already been committed, with plans to double cruise traffic to 4 million passengers by 2030. Importantly, the Freeport's footprint spans across the proposed geography; bringing these sites under a single unitary would resolve fragmented oversight, enabling a more joined-up approach to planning and delivery of innovation corridors and infrastructure.



The image above shows the key employment areas, assets and transport infrastructure across the Option 3 geography.

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South East

The proposed boundary for the South East option brings together Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham and adjacent Parishes currently in the districts of Winchester and East Hampshire, but where the clear economic and social centres of gravity for those areas are the city regions, rather than those areas where the characteristics are more obviously rural. The key benefits for the South East arrangements anchored around the Portsmouth region are:

- Bringing together a strong functioning economic cluster, and associated travel to work area.
- Following the natural geography of the region, linking those areas south of Butser Hill.
- Creating a region with opportunities for growth.
- Following the transport infrastructure corridors associated with the A3(M) / A3.
- Creating a cohesive area for local communities, linked in with provision of services including health services.
- Reflecting education catchment areas including for example the University Technical College and also with significant access to the University of Portsmouth.

The proposal for Option 3 reflects the extent to which Portsmouth functions as the engine-room of the local area with people in the surrounding areas developing close links with the city - whether through work, leisure, shopping, education or accessing local services.

As a result, many of the communities in our proposal already have a close relationship with the city and have similar challenges and wishes for the area.

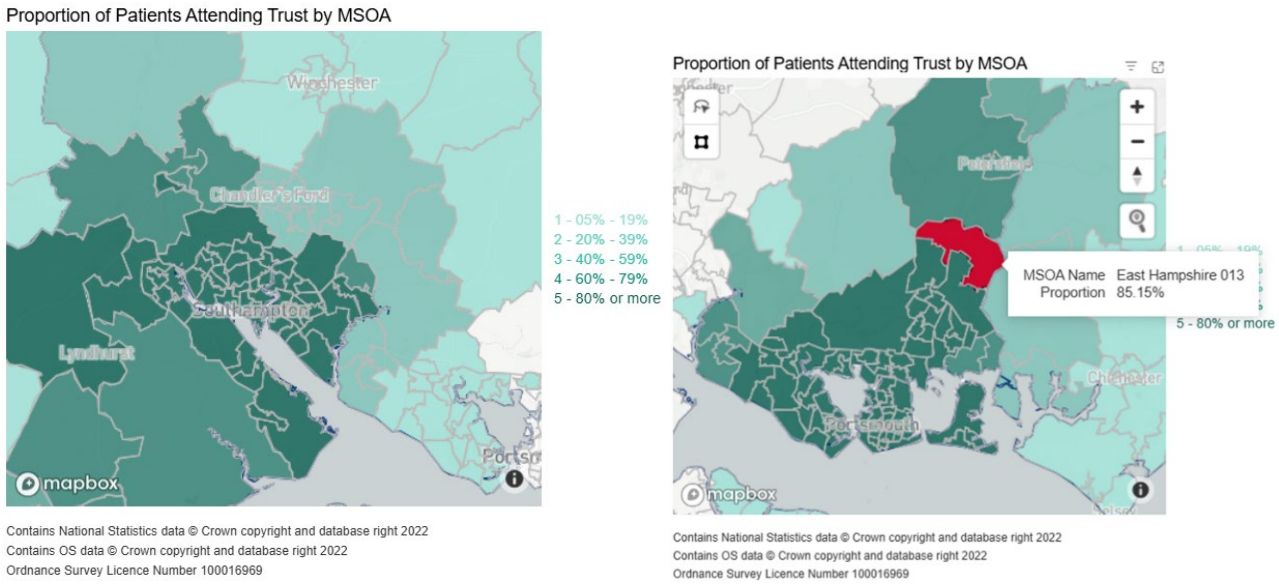
Delivering high-quality public services in the South West and South East

Both the proposed South West and South East unitaries incorporate an existing unitary authority (Southampton City Council and Portsmouth City Council) with experience of delivering adult social care, children's services and planning for changes in population and demand. Southampton and Portsmouth Children's Services were both rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2023. This experience will be directly transferable to the new unitaries, building on strong foundations to establish new services tailored to the needs of their communities.

Health

Across the region there are significant health inequalities, driven by similar determinants including poverty and deprivation. There is good evidence that residents in the proposed footprints already look to the major cities to access many public services, including the NHS. For example, analysis by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (data from 2020) shows that in the South East unitary area, 84-88% of patients in proposed additional wards attend Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust. This compares to 70% for the MSOA immediately to the north, 39% for the parish to the west, and 24% for the MSOA bordering to the east.

In the South West the same data suggests over 90% of patients in all of the Test Valley and New Forest wards proposed for inclusion in the new unitary attended the University Hospital Southampton NHS Trust, with lower levels in wards outside of the new proposed unitary boundary.



The two images above show the NHS Acute (hospital) Trust catchment populations – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID).

Education

Close relationships between the areas also exist in further and Higher Education provision. For example, 31.5% of 16 or 17 year-olds living in Southampton currently in education, employment or training are studying at a college outside the city but within the proposed South West proposed unitary, and these young people are using well established public transport links to do so. The link between the proposed geographies and existing service use demonstrates how people in proposed additional wards already access services within the new unitary boundaries.

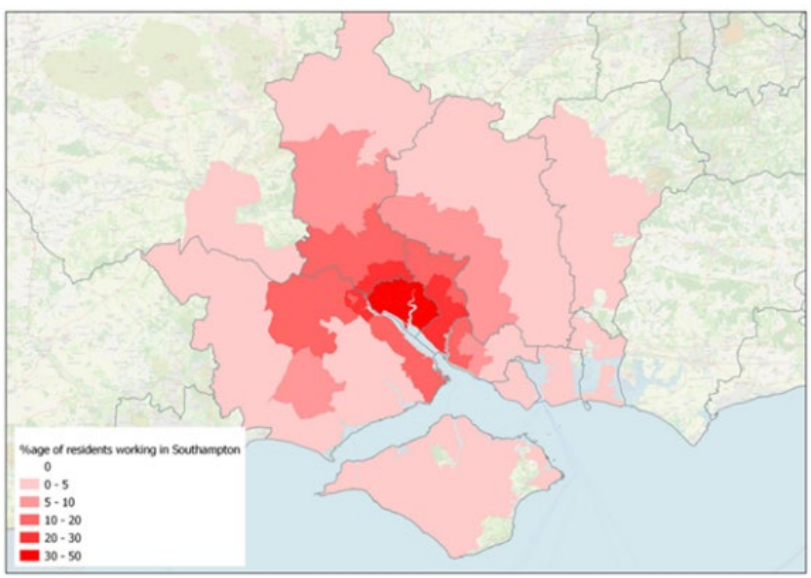
The closest Further Education College for students from the three East Hampshire Wards and Newlands are the two southern campuses of the Havant and South Downs Colleges which also have high student numbers from the rest of the South East Unitary area.

Travel

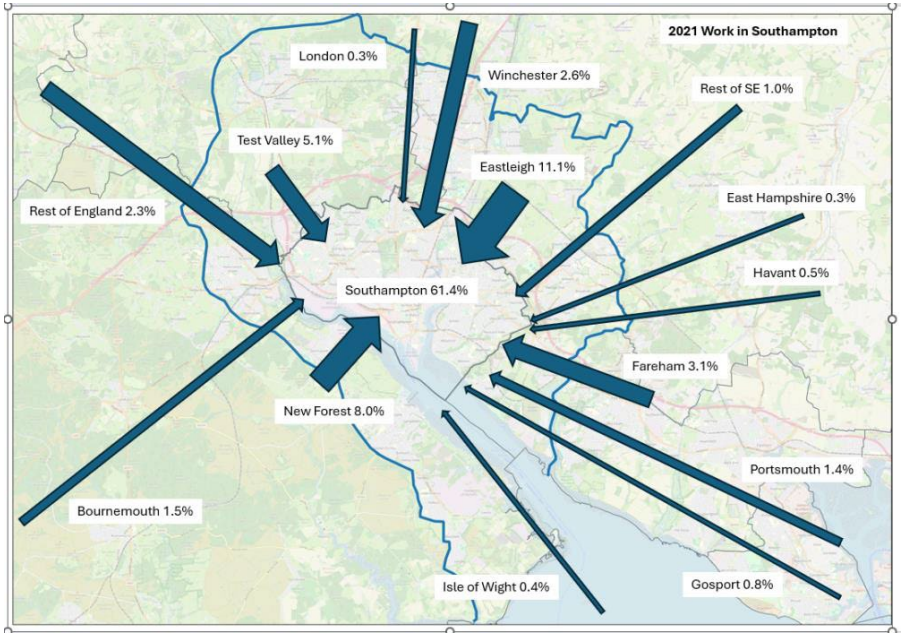
While new unitaries will seek to provide services close to communities, the availability of strong transport links across the proposed South East and South West unitary footprints, ensures residents are able to access services across the proposed unitaries. Strong travel to work patterns also drives economic and employment growth.

For example, in the South West, the existing bus network links all the proposed South West area configuration as shown below. Travel to work data also highlights close transport connectivity across the proposed South West unitary footprint.

The 2021 Census shows that 62.7% of people who commuted into Southampton travelled from the New Forest, Eastleigh, or Test Valley, reflecting close economic geography and location of jobs. While based on 2011 census data, the map below shows that there is a higher concentration of people from the relevant Waterside and Test Valley parishes travelling into Southampton than from the wider districts.



The images above show the travel to work patterns in Southampton, Map of existing bus network in South West covering all of the proposed new unitary area.



The image above shows travel to work patterns in Southampton.

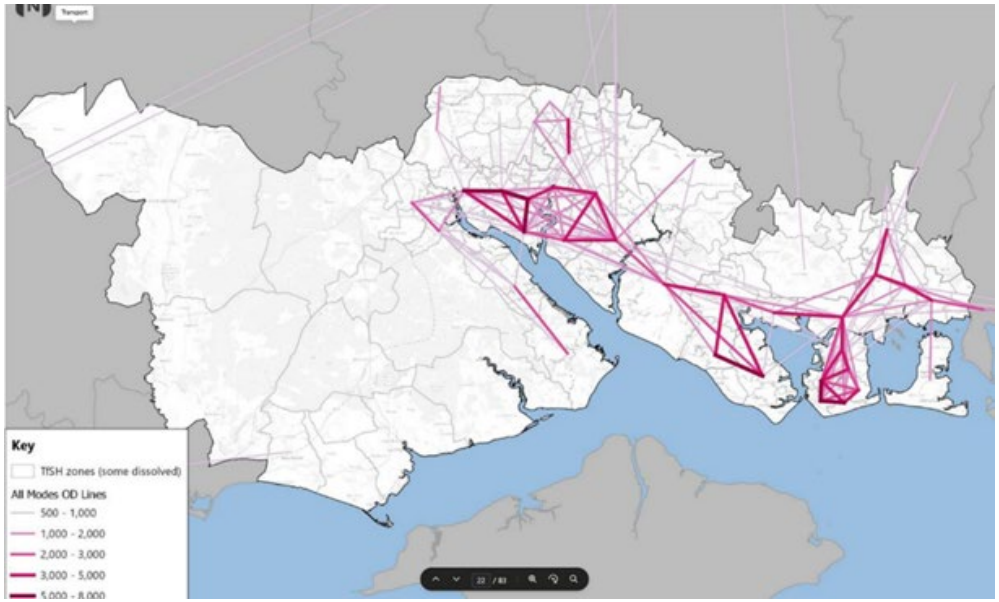
Similarly in the South East, overall patronage on routes bus routes (Portsmouth - Wecock Farm) and 8 (Portsmouth - Clanfield) linking the city with parishes proposed for inclusion in the new unitary, is in the order of 100,000 journeys per month (+/- 10-15k per month depending on seasonal demand etc) on each route, equating to around 200k journeys per month combined. Those originating at the far end of the route and travelling into Portsmouth is estimated to be 5-10% of this total, equating to around 20k journeys.

From the 2021 census that looked at the issue, we can also see that the typical daily commute flows (outbound journeys only, i.e. starting from census zones in the fringes of Waterlooville) to Portsmouth itself, and to the wider areas of Havant, Fareham & Gosport are around half of all journeys made.

The map below illustrates the largest overall travel flows and highlights significant travel demand from areas proposed for inclusion in the South East unitary. For example, there are an estimated 1,000-2,000 trips a day from Horndean/Cowplain to northern Portsmouth

and 400-600 highway trips a day from the Clanfield area. These areas also have higher interaction with central Havant and Waterlooville, which in turn have significant interaction with Portsmouth.

The image below shows a map of trip matrix from Solent Sub Regional Transport Model (Solent Transport).



Criteria four: 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.

The engagement activities outlined in criteria four of the core document outline the breadth of activity that that has been undertaken across the South East and the South West to date, recognising there is more to be done as we move forwards to understand and address concerns from across our communities and to articulate the benefits of the new unitary structures.

A survey that was undertaken on behalf of 12 of the region's authorities gave residents across the region the opportunity to share their views on LGR options. The overall response rate was <1% and from a relatively narrow demographic, and while the survey showed that

Option 3 was the least supported, it also highlighted that it was the least well understood. Whilst there was a higher response rate in New Forest and Test Valley, these were still low percentages of the population (c2%) and may have been impacted by the concurrent publicity campaign against the option.

It is also worth noting, that whilst the sample size was small, that more respondents from Newlands parish in Winchester supported than opposed the boundary change option.

The survey showed residents in the parishes that would be impacted by boundary change were concerned about losing their rural character, increased urbanisation, and reduced influence over decisions. These concerns are something that would need to be more clearly understood and addressed as we move forward.

Residents felt there were:

Positives around	**Negatives around**
Aligning more urban areas with Southampton/Portsmouth, which may mean better service delivery for those areas.	Disruption to those living in the affected areas.
Better reflecting reality for those who live in those areas and linking them to where they access services.	Fragmenting existing communities. Particularly when it comes to separating the New Forest from the Waterside, which is seen as integral to the identity of the area.
Those living in semi-urban areas being served by a council that better reflects their needs.	Residents in affected areas losing local representation and influence in decision-making.

Criteria five: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

The balanced population spread across the unitary authorities as proposed in this option helps ensure a fairer representation within the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) by creating governance structures that reflect the true demographic and economic diversity of the region representing urban and rural communities. This balance avoids dominance by any single area and ensures more equitable decision-making power across the MCCA.

This proposal is rooted in the existing economic areas across the South East and South West Hampshire, building on functional economic areas and grouping places with shared characteristics.

By creating unitary authorities that are predominantly urban (such as those encompassing Southampton, Portsmouth, and Basingstoke) alongside more rural and town-focused areas like mid-Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the MCCA can attract stronger and targeted investment. This approach reduces competition for funding within the region by aligning development priorities based on local needs and economic profiles. It also enables infrastructure decisions to reflect the diversity of the areas, for example, urban-focused investments where population density and economic activity are highest, alongside rural development initiatives that support sustainability and quality of life in less densely populated areas.

This balanced and cohesive approach supports the government's devolution goals by fostering stronger local leadership capable of driving tailored economic growth and prosperity. The Solent region, comprising these unitary authorities, has a strategic growth ambition aligned with national growth priorities as set out in the UK Industrial Strategy and UK Invest, highlighting the area's potential to become a globally significant maritime and economic hub. Coordination across these authorities fosters a unified identity and capacity for innovation and investment, amplifying local voices in negotiations with national government and other stakeholders.

In summary, this population-balanced, economically coherent proposal underpins the principles of devolution by ensuring fair representation, boosting economic growth in key urban centres, supporting rural communities, optimising investment, and enabling infrastructure development that reflects local realities. This ultimately empowers the MCCA to deliver sustainable, equitable, and regionally tailored outcomes for all communities across the region.

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

Given the existing place-based links, a new unitary would be well placed to develop strong arrangements to involve and empower local neighbourhoods.

As demonstrated in the response to criteria three above, there are clear similarities and links between the communities in Southampton, Eastleigh, the Waterside and lower Test Valley wards as areas with significant urban characteristics. Bringing these communities together gives the opportunity to address similar challenges and opportunities.

While varying in form, there are strong examples of good practice community involvement and empowerment in the area which could be built on across the Option 3 footprint. In Eastleigh, Local Area Committees work closely with a wide range of community partners

including schools, colleges, community groups, youth partnerships and business groups to champion the local area, determine local levels of council services and deliver local community priorities.

Similarly, Hythe and Dibden, Totton and Eling, Marchwood, and Fawley all operate town or parish councils ensuring local voices and perspectives area heard in decision making. Our proposed unitary would create a meaningful democratic forum for the Waterside area, ensuring that local voices continue to be heard. Similar arrangements are in place in the parishes proposed as part of the new South East unitary.

We will build on these existing arrangements and design any new community involvement and empowerment arrangements with communities, respecting local identity, history and needs.

Any arrangements would be developed to meet the government's neighbourhood governance ambitions as set out in the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and subsequent guidance.

Closing Statement

Option 3 presents a bold yet pragmatic vision for local government reform in Hampshire. It is one that reflects the realities of how communities live, work, and connect today. By aligning governance with functional economic geographies and travel-to-work patterns, this proposal offers a coherent framework for delivering sustainable public services, driving inclusive growth, and empowering local communities. It is a future-focused solution that balances ambition with practicality, ensuring that new unitary authorities are equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow while staying rooted in the identities and needs of the people they serve.

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Appendix 5:

Financial technical appendices

Appendix 5: Financial technical appendices

Introduction

This section provides the comprehensive technical evidence base that underpins the financial analysis presented in earlier sections of the proposal. It consolidates all supporting data, calculations, and assumptions used in constructing the financial model for the assessed local government reorganisation options, ensuring that the analysis is both transparent and auditable. The content here has been developed in close collaboration with finance teams from each existing council, reflecting shared understanding of local data and a jointly agreed methodology.

The purpose of this section is to serve as the detailed reference layer that supports the narrative and conclusions reached in the main body of this document. Each appendix clearly documents its source data, allocation approach, assumptions, and any material judgement applied in the modelling process. This ensures a clear audit trail from base data through to headline findings.

To support clarity and usability, the section is structured into four technical appendices, each aligned with a core element of the financial analysis:

- **Appendix A – Methodology and Assumption Log**: Captures the overarching modelling approach, data sources, macro assumptions, and the engagement steps taken to validate inputs with local finance leads.
- **Appendix B – Savings Assumptions**: Sets out the savings estimates in full, including baseline costs, percentage reductions, and rationale by category, as well as the modelling behind the base and high scenarios.
- **Appendix C – Implementation Cost Breakdown**: Breaks down one-off transition and disaggregation costs by year and type, with cost drivers and any contingency assumptions clearly noted.
- **Appendix D – Boundary Change Cost Breakdown**: Breaks down the one-off Boundary Change cost with cost drivers and other assumptions clearly noted.

Each appendix is structured for ease of navigation and aligned to the relevant sections of the main report. Where appropriate, appendices are supplemented with footnotes, citations, and version tracking to ensure reproducibility and clarity for external reviewers, auditors, and government stakeholders.

This section acts as the technical foundation upon which the financial case is built. It allows readers, particularly finance professionals, Section 151 Officers, and programme sponsors, to interrogate the detail behind each modelling decision and to have confidence in the robustness, transparency, and evidential basis of the conclusions drawn.

Appendix A – Methodology and Assumption Log:

The phased model has been prepared in three sections – assumptions, calculations and outputs. The outputs include the calculation of payback period, individual year impact of LGR and a cumulative impact of LGR. These outputs help in assessing the viability of the LGR options being assessed.

The model is based on the following four key assumptions:

1. Savings costs
2. One-off implementation costs
3. Disaggregation costs
4. Boundary change costs (Option 3 only)

The phased model projects the above across thirteen years, including three pre-implementation years (*Base Year, Year -1* .and *Shadow Year)* and ten post-implementation years.

The model is, however, based on 2025/26 prices and does not include any adjustment for future inflation for both costs as well as savings. The phased model also does not include the impact of any Council Tax Harmonisation due to uncertainty of implementation.

The inputs as well as outputs have been prepared and validated with Section 151 officers. These reflect the best estimates as of the writing of this case.

Appendix B – Savings Assumptions:

The overall savings assumptions have been prepared using a mix of top down and bottom-up savings approaches, as outlined below.

Top-down approach:

The overall savings assumptions for the current reorganisation has been calculated based on the outlined savings of unitary authorities as outlined within previous local government reorganisation documentation. These included 14 previous cases for change across England ranging from cases submitted between 2009 and 2023. The data included Low Case and High case savings.

For each individual previous case, an average savings per population base was calculated for Low and High case savings, with the average of these reflecting the Base case savings. These were subsequently indexed up from the relevant transition year (per the previous case for change) to April 2025 prices. A simple arithmetic average of indexed savings per population base informed the overall average indexed saving per population, which was used to calculate the total 'top-down' savings. The savings were reduced by 10% to reflect the erosion of benefits of having four new mainland unitaries.

The top-down savings were split into underlying savings categories (as reflected in table below) using a percentage allocation mix based on internal discussions and experience.

Saving Name	Description	Rationale and Assumptions	% of Total Savings
Optimising Leadership	Reviewing the number of managerial roles to eliminate duplication and enhance operational efficiency, by merging similar responsibilities into fewer and more impactful positions.	Assumes a single senior leadership team for each new unitary replaces multiple councils' executives (Chief Execs, Directors, S151s, Monitoring Officers). Assumes no significant delays from legal/TUPE or governance negotiations.	5%
Right Sizing the Organisation	Determining the right size of the organisation, proportionate to the services that are being delivered, offset by the costs of new technology and upskilling individuals. Reducing overall workforce through role consolidation and automation.	Assumes c. 5% of workforce (primarily back-office/admin roles) reduced through consolidation, automation and voluntary redundancy. Realisation depends on culture change, system integration and union engagement.	40%

Centralising Corporate Services	Consolidating back-office functions, such as Human Resources (HR), Finance and Information Technology (IT) to streamline operations, enhance efficiencies and unlock savings.	Merger of finance, HR, payroll, legal and comms into centralised functions for each new unitary. Requires effective digital systems, unified policies and process harmonisation.	1%
Service Contract Consolidation	Understanding current and joint service arrangements between Councils, and what savings (or costs) may be incurred on consolidation. Determining the optimum sourcing arrangements for contracts that are either currently outsourced or could be outsourced. This will need to consider both financial and operational efficiency and will consider existing arrangements with third parties.	Assumes merging of contracts (waste, highways, care) and renegotiation over time. Dependent on contract cycles, procurement capacity and provider cooperation.	30%
Proportionate Democratic Services	Reviewing the costs of democratic services (elections, committee support, etc.) to be proportionate to the new authorities. Reducing the number of councillors and governance costs (e.g. committees, elections).	Assumes reduction in number of councillors and associated committee and democratic support costs. Assumes new governance models implemented immediately post-reorganisation.	4%
Improved Digital & IT Systems	Implementing unified digital platforms, automating repetitive tasks, streamlining workflows, and eliminating manual processes, can lead to significant time and cost savings. Unified platforms and systems rationalisation reduce licensing, support, and admin overheads.	Streamlining systems and licenses, introducing self-service platforms, rationalising IT estate. Dependent on investment in digital infrastructure and culture shift to online services.	7%

Asset & Property Optimisation	Reviewing property portfolio to ensure alignment with the council's overall objectives and community needs.	Release of surplus office space, lease terminations, or revenue from letting/disposals. Contingent on lease terms, capital receipt strategy and local market conditions.	3%
Customer Engagement	Enhancing customer contact facilities, determining the needs of citizens in the new authorities and developing proportionate customer contact centres, where appropriate including self-service through digital channels, to improve customer engagement, satisfaction and drive operational efficiencies and cost savings.	Channel shift to digital, contact centre consolidation, and automation of transactions. Assumes digital access for residents, workforce reskilling, and strong comms.	6%
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes	Exploring consolidation of fleets and any route efficiencies, to reduce costs and minimise environmental impact. Reducing fleet size and improving vehicle routing to lower transport costs.	Integration of transport assets across services (e.g. waste, social care, facilities). Benefits depend on fleet management tools, depot locations and service redesign.	4%
Total			**100%**

Savings by category as calculated from the top-down approach was subsequently compared with the savings calculated using the bottom-up approach.

Bottom_up.approach¿

To estimate the potential savings using the bottom-up approach, an overall spend against each of the savings' categories (as per above table) was identified and a corresponding high-level saving against spend (in percentage terms) was made against each of the categories.

The total savings were then aligned across the bottom-up and top-down approaches to ensure a realistic savings assumption by category. The alignment continued to assume a 10% saving erosion due to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight local government

reorganisation having four new mainland unitaries, across all options. The savings were then allocated to individual unitaries based on the unitary's share of total population.

No savings from LGR have been assumed to be realised in Base Year and Year -1. However, they start to ramp up in Shadow Year and build up to be fully realised per annum by Year 3. The savings have then been phased based on expected realisation as per the below table:

	Shadow Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Optimising Leadership	10%	40%	50%	
Right Sizing the Organisation	10%	20%	40%	30%
Centralising Corporate Services		20%	40%	40%
Service Contract Consolidation	10%	35%	35%	20%
Proportionate Democratic Services		80%	20%	
Improved Digital & IT Systems		15%	35%	50%
Asset & Property Optimisation		40%	40%	20%
Customer Engagement		20%	40%	40%
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes		30%	40%	30%

The savings assumptions are consistent across all 3 options being assessed.

Appendix C – Implementation Cost Breakdown:

The overall implementation cost assumptions have been prepared using a top-down approach only, based on the implementation costs as outlined within previous Case for Change documentation. These included the same previous cases for change used to inform the top-down Savings assumptions, to ensure consistency. The data included Low Case and High case implementation costs.

These were calculated as One-off implementation costs and Disaggregation costs.

One_off.implementation.costs¿

For each individual previous case, an average one-off implementation cost per population base was calculated for both the Low case and High case, with the average of the two informing the Base case. These were subsequently indexed up from the relevant transition

year (per the previous case for change) to April 2025 prices. A simple arithmetic average of indexed one-off implementation cost per population base informed the overall average indexed one-off implementation per population.

These were subsequently adjusted for an increase of £11.8 million to reflect that there will be a total of four new mainland unitaries and that each new authority requires its own setup processes, including establishing governance structures, IT systems, and administrative frameworks, leading to higher cumulative transition costs. An additional 25% increase in costs were subsequently applied to reflect optimism bias risk of delivering the programme. These have been assumed consistently across all cases.

The final figure was then apportioned across the cost categories underpinning the one-off implementation costs (see below table).

Category	Description	Rationale and Assumptions	% of Total Costs
Workforce - Exit	Compensation paid to employees as a result of restructuring/redundancies, including redundancy payments, pension strain, TUPE, salary harmonisation, and other contract termination fees.	Redundancy and termination costs reflect staff length of service.	30%
Workforce - Development	Additional costs to upskill and reskill employees to adapt to new roles and responsibilities.	Cost allowed for retraining through redeployment of workforce.	4%
Transition - Team	Implementation programme team including Legal, Contract Negotiation, Project and Programme Management, and specialist support.	A significant transition team required for each unitary authority. Includes legal, HR, project support, public consultation. Some benchmarks include change management and creation of new councils.	11%
Transition - Culture and Communications	Costs to develop communications, branding, training, and public information in relation to new	Cost allowed for other culture and comms change. Includes all rebranding, change, and engagement.	4%

	authorities. This should inform the public, stakeholders, and employees of proposed changes and address concerns.		
Transition - Processes	Work required to harmonise processes and facilitate effective service transition. This includes specific constitutional changes and developments, democratic transition, and new policies and procedures.	Cost allowed for efforts to harmonise processes and procedures as part of the transition.	4%
Consolidation - Systems	Alignment of systems and digital infrastructure, including merging systems, data migration, commonality of cyber security, and training for new systems.	Costs reflect previous examples of system implementation. Some benchmarks do not include allowance for ERP and data migration, cleansing and interface development.	31%
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	Reconfiguration of buildings, costs of disposal, and termination fees on leases.	Some benchmarks do not include capital receipts, which can be used to fund, for example transformation or regeneration.	8%
Contingency	Additional 10% contingency to allow for prudence in estimates.	Standard across Cases to build out contingency.	8%
Total			**100%**

One-off implementation costs have been assumed to start ramping-up from Base Year and build up by Year 3. These have then been phased as per the below table:

	Base Year	**Year -1**	**Shadow Year**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
Workforce - Exit			10%	20%	30%	40%
Workforce - Development			40%	40%	20%	

Transition - Team	20%	35%	35%	10%		
Transition - Culture and Communications	20%	35%	35%	10%		
Transition - Processes	20%	35%	35%	10%		
Consolidation - Systems	10%	10%	60%	20%		
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities			15%	35%	50%	
Contingency	6%	10%	18%	10%	31%	26%

Disaggregation.costs¿

The disaggregation costs have been assumed due to the additional costs of providing Adult Social Care Services, Children Social Care Services, Place Services and Corporate & Support Services, resulting from the disaggregation of County's services. These have been quantified based on a percentage of the County's 2025/26 budget spend against each service (summarised in table below).

The high-level percentages assumed and rationale for the disaggregation costs across the services are outlined in the below table.

Cost Category	**Rationale and Assumptions**	**Calculation method**
Adult Social Care Inefficiencies	Management - Assumes additional DASS's and ADs, head of legal roles. ICT & Systems - Requires data segregation, integrations, separate instances and eventually separate case management systems. Performance & Strategy - Additional statutory reporting and strategic development.	+1.6% of budget
Children's Services Inefficiencies	Management - Requires additional DCS's and other new roles required. ICT & Systems - Requires data segregation, integrations, separate instances and eventually separate case management systems. Performance & Strategy - Additional statutory reporting and strategic development.	+0.9% of budget

Place Service Inefficiencies	Management - Assumes shared service for Emergency Planning but additional management roles. Could hold resilience and Emergency Planning County wide. Procurement / Third Party - New contracts required ICT costs - Small increase in systems costs through multiple contracts.	+1.4% of budget
Corporate & Support Services to the Council Duplication	Management - Small increase in management roles Staff - Increase in Finance, HR, legal and policy, ICT/digital and performance roles ICT costs - Requires data segregation and integrations	+3.8% of budget

These disaggregation costs are assumed to be validated for the Base case, while the High case assumes these to be 10% higher than Base case. These costs have been allocated to the individual unitaries based on the share of population within the new mainland unitaries, excluding the population of existing upper tier authorities.

These costs are all assumed to be reflected 100% from Year 1 of the implementation, without any ramp-up.

The implementation cost assumptions are consistent across all 3 options being assessed.

Appendix D – Boundary Change Costs Breakdown:

Boundary Change Costs reflect the additional one-off implementation costs associated with additional complexity due to splitting existing Districts. No Boundary Change costs have been assumed for Option 1 and Option 2. However, Option 3 assumes changes in boundary for Winchester, East Hampshire, Test Valley and New Forest and therefore assumes additional Boundary Change Costs.

The Boundary Change Costs have been quantified as 5% of the current total net revenue expenditure associated with client facing services. As there has not been a precedent for Boundary Changes within Local Government Reorganisation, the quantification assumption of 5% is based on Local Government judgement. Where a District is being split across two Unitaries, the associated Boundary Change Costs are assumed to be split equally among the new Unitaries, to support Unitary analysis.

				Boundary Change Costs by Unitary (£'000)			
Districts with Boundary Changes	Net Revenue Expenditure FY25/26 (£'000)	Boundary Change Cost % Net Revenue Expenditure	Boundary Change Cost (£'000)	Mid	North	South West	South East
Winchester	23,354	5%	1,168	584			584
East Hampshire	18,614	5%	931	465			465
Test Valley	26,052	5%	1,303	651		651	
New Forest	26,916	5%	1,346	673		673	
	94,936		4,747	2,373	0	1,324	1,049

These costs are assumed to be consistent across the Base and High scenarios and are phased to be incurred 30% incurred in Year -1 (2026/27) and 70% incurred in Shadow Year (2027/28).

Appendix 6:

Report by Collaborate for Social Change - The bigger you go, the less you know

collaborate
for social change

“The bigger you go, the less you know”

Why place-based, relational approaches to public services must be core to Local Government Reorganisation

Prepared for Test Valley Borough Council by Collaborate CIC May 2025

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Introduction

The English Devolution White Paper speaks of shifting power and resources from the centre and sets out a bold plan for Local Government Reorganisation to enable this.

Place-based and relational approaches can help rebuild the social contract between communities and the organisations that serve them. By working at a scale of place that people identify with, building better relationships with communities, giving them more power over the decisions that affect them, and investing in preventative, relational, and asset-based ways of working, local authorities can not only continue the spirit of devolution, they can reduce demand and deliver better services more cost effectively.

Based on a comprehensive literature review, interviews with practitioners and Collaborate's work in places across the country, this paper sets out the benefits produced by
place-based, relational approaches to public services. We outline the underlying conditions that enable these approaches to be effective and give examples of what the work looks like in practice, illustrated by brief case studies.

This evidence base has been created in support of an argument that place-based, relational working should be at the heart of the operating model for new strategic authorities.

The case for change

A golden opportunity

Local Government Reorganisation offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to re-examine and re-shape the operating model of local government.

The English Devolution White Paper set out the government's vision for simpler local government structures. It proposes that these structures can lead to better outcomes for residents, improved local accountability, and savings which can then be reinvested in public services. It doesn't say how this will be achieved. Instead, it is for each place to determine an effective organisational and administrative structure, based on what they know about the people who live there and the geography in which they live.

This process is an opportunity to remind ourselves and recommit to what local government is for, what it can do, and why it matters. It's an opportunity to put purpose at the heart of decisions about what new, old, and amalgamated institutions and their partners do, how they do it, and who they do it for.

We know what doesn't work, and what wrongs need to be righted

Decades of having to 'do more with less' has hollowed out services, increased thresholds for support, stripped out opportunities for early intervention and prevention, and decimated social infrastructure. There's a growing level of dissatisfaction, with many feeling that vital public services[1] don't meet their expectations, with this being felt most acutely in those places that have the least, highlighting entrenched geographic and social inequalities.

Those people that services are supposed to support feel they have to fight to get what they need and often the needs of the most vulnerable go unmet, leaving people bouncing around the system with unresolved problems and increasing costs with every contact. Not only is this not helping people, it negatively affects those who work in public services, contributing to poor staff recruitment and retention rates, high sickness levels, and decreasing productivity.

Service failures sit within a challenging context in which demand is increasing alongside a population that is growing, and ageing, and presenting with ever more complex and interrelated problems, far outstripping the ability of the current mode of delivering public services to effectively meet people's needs.

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[1] Can Labour deliver? Public services face inequality crisis, IPSOS

New Public Management has run out of road. The importation of private sector practices and the introduction of market concepts such as choice for 'consumers' and competition between providers has contributed to a system of managing services that is dehumanising, slow to learn, fragmented, and expensive, with commercial providers driving the costs up at every turn. It is part of a bureaucracy whose 'do to' mentality fails to see and lift up the assets of people and place and recognise communities' knowledge and abilities. A system of management where a focus on organisational boundaries, ring-fenced resources, competitive commissioning, goals, and targets block the ability of place-based systems to effectively work together to support their place and its people to thrive.

It all adds to the rising sense of dissatisfaction and loss of trust in public services, in the institutions that provide them, and in the politicians in charge.

We can see a better way

"No society has the money to buy, at market prices, what it takes to raise children, make a neighbourhood safe, care for the elderly, make democracy work or address systemic injustices… The only way the world is going to address social problems is by enlisting the very people who are now classified as 'clients' and 'consumers' and converting them into co-workers, partners and rebuilders."[2]

There is a growing movement towards a focus on neighbourhoods as an 'engine of change[3]', towards councils working alongside residents to build community capacity and capability and services co-locating to work together at a hyper-local scale. This movement is a direct response to rising demand, public service failure and an unmet appetite for people to have more influence over their own lives and the places that matter to them.

This different approach to local government and public services has been emerging for many years. The mounting body of evidence is captured in the overwhelming number of reports about neighbourhood and place-based approaches that are available. From the LSE's 1999 report 'Neighbourhood Management' to ICON's Neighbourhood Policy Green Paper published this month there is a long-term, escalating call to invest in building community capacity and social capital, backed up by data and insight from multiple initiatives across the country.

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[2] Edgar Cahn, US-based civil rights lawyer and inventor of Timebanks
[3] Neighbourhoods as engines of change, James Plunkett

Despite the proven promise of these approaches, they have tended to remain on the margins of organisations or systems, often struggling to get the support, investment or attention needed to be sustained or expanded beyond the pilot phase, or to survive political shifts.

Local Government Reorganisation provides the opportunity to take the great practice happening at the margins into the mainstream by embedding it within the operating model, culture, and practice of the new strategic authorities. To do so requires an understanding of scale.

Bigger isn't intrinsically better

Devolution and the transfer of power to a more local level is welcome, but the creation of new strategic authorities comes with an organisational design challenge. How can the model for the new organisations, serving larger populations, be built to enable the new, emergent practice and avoid replicating the same blockers to innovation, but at a larger scale?

Learning from places across the country, and the councils that serve them, means responding to evidence showing that within the current operating model, running services at ever larger scales, doesn't make them more efficient or cost effective. It means recognising that **the bigger they go the less they know** about the people they're serving. This lack of insight into people's lives – what their lives are like, and the ways that *where* and *how* they live affects them, and what a good life looks to them – makes it impossible to address the root causes of demand for public services.

Place-based and neighbourhood approaches can reduce demand and make services more effective through building better relationships with local people and communities, by giving them more power over the decisions that affect them and greater access to the resources local government and other partners hold. Focusing on a scale of place that people identify with, enabling community power, and investing in preventative, relational, and asset-based ways of working, all have the potential to improve outcomes as well as enable better use of resources and sustainable cost reductions for the long term.

This may seem challenging to an orthodoxy that sees increased scale as the best route to efficiency savings. But this movement has been emerging for many years, producing many examples of inspiring practice, a growing body of evidence and an understanding of the underlying enablers of success. Services that are failing to improve people's lives are not efficient, even if they cost less to deliver.

Close collaboration with communities and with local partners, systems leadership, developing new capabilities across the workforce, and local government taking on the role of enabler and place shaper are all key ingredients. This is happening in metropolitan boroughs like Wigan, London boroughs like Camden and Barking and Dagenham, in rural counties including Gloucestershire and Cumbria, and in districts and boroughs including Test Valley. There are plenty of stories, case studies, and evidence to learn from and help shape the next generation of public management.

Learning from Goldilocks

"Civil society grows proportionate not to the extent people's needs are addressed by institutions but by the strengths connected and addressed by citizens"[4]

Creating a new tier of large unitary councils with populations over 500,000 risks further disconnecting local communities from the decisions that affect them. This is especially so in rural communities which risk losing access to services and viable local democracy. The new organisations need to adopt an operating model that enables them to remain close to the diverse range of communities living within their boundaries, developing the local insight that enables them to be responsive, approachable, and trusted.

The danger is that reorganising local authorities to a larger scale and a 'higher altitude of operation' will have a homogenising effect, weakening the link to the specific nature and needs of the patchwork of neighbourhoods that make up local places.

Small can be beautiful. New strategic authorities need to be designed to find a balance and appropriate scale to operate at in order to support different activities. They can be bigger, if they can also connect effectively at different spatial levels with the diverse populations within them. They need to be able to work at the human scale, accommodating human needs and human relationships, and at a system scale, connecting, coordinating, and stewarding all the resources that will enable places to flourish. Organising principles could successfully borrow from the way networks operate rather than replicate the monoliths of the past. These are akin to the principles at play in the best of place-based working – a focus on relationships, collaboration, and interconnectedness and flexible structures that are adaptable to change and innovation.

Local councillors are generally seen as more trustworthy than national politicians[5], although there is evidence[6] that creating larger councils erodes local democracy with a negative impact on trust in councillors, public engagement, and voter turnout. The new operating model needs to place active councillors with deep local insight and trusted relationships at its heart to counteract this risk.

The 'democratic gap' will affect places in different ways[7]. Where there are effective parish and town councils, communities have a hyper local route to mobilising resources, managing local assets, and shaping the decisions that affect them most. But only 36% of England's population is covered by parish councils and even in places where they are present, there is no guarantee that they will be active or effective enough to make a difference without support to do so.

[4] Rekindling Democracy, Cormac Russell
[5] Trust and Confidence in Councils - What the public think, APSE
[6] English Devolution White Paper: DCN's briefing, DCN
[7] Local, Actually: Establishing hyperlocal governance in England, Re:State

New unitary councils must consider how to accommodate, enable and connect with hyper-local forms of governance that enable smaller places to exercise democratic control over public spaces and amenities in line with community needs and be genuinely democratically accountable. This will require key capabilities around participation and engagement. The role of local councillors will be core to closing the gap between communities, understanding the strengths and assets available to a place, and advocating for what they need.

In this way, LGR efforts can find the optimum scale – one that is not so big that the link with local people and places is lost, and one that is agile and flexible enough to enable and nurture the proliferation of the small, local initiatives that are key to flourishing neighbourhoods.

Culture eats structure for breakfast

The NHS reorganisation around Integrated Care Systems shows that structural changes alone do not guarantee a change in outcomes. For LGR to successfully shift public service delivery to operate at a neighbourhood scale, there must be a focus on developing a culture grounded in a mindset that is collaborative, systemic, long-term, and conscious of power and how it can be shared more equitably[8].

Core to this mindset shift is a renewed sense of the purpose of local government – the reason councils exist, and the outcomes they are trying to achieve. Many local authorities are reframing their purpose around creating the conditions for people and places to flourish, and identifying their role as an enabler of, or platform for, citizens and partners to address common challenges together.

This shift requires a bold, enabling approach to place leadership in which leaders embody the commitment to working in partnership with communities; entrusting staff with the freedom to innovate and enabling community power.

[8] Introducing New Operating Models for Local Government, Nesta & Collaborate

BUILDING BLOCKS OF PLACE-BASED WORKING (A WORK IN PROGRESS)

CC BY NC SA

Stronger local economy as flourishing micro- and community businesses create local job opportunities and keep service spend local.

Reduced demand for emergency services.

FINANCIAL SAVINGS

Reduction in cost of direct payments and home care through lower cost services from local micro-businesses.

Reduced missed appointments, hospital admissions & improved hospital discharge times.

Reduced demand for residential care homes.

Reduced costs as a result of lower staff sickness and turnover.

SERVICE OUTCOMES

DELAY, REDUCE, PREVENT DEMAND

People live **happier, healthier, independent lives** for longer.

People live in **safer communities** with fewer incidences of anti-social behaviour.

PREVENT FAILURE DEMAND

People receive more **personalised and flexible support that better meets their needs** & help to navigate the system.

REDUCED STAFF TURNOVER

Increased worker satisfaction and **reduction in staff turnover.**

EFFECTIVE COMMISSIONING

Stronger collaboration between VCSE and statutory partners enables collective action and problem-solving to **improve outcomes and make better use of resources.**

PLACE-BASED OUTCOMES

CIVIC PARTICIPATION & TRUST

People with the **power to change** what happens in their community, increases community-led decision-making and ownership of local initiatives and projects, **building civic and democratic participation** and **boosting trust.**

COMMUNITY COHESION

When there are **spaces and opportunities to come together**, people discover common ground, and drive aspirations for their communities, **building community cohesion** and **safety.**

WELLBEING & RESILIENCE

Increased **social connections** and **networks of support** within neighbourhoods **strengthen community wellbeing, reduce anti-social behaviour** and **build resilience.**

PLACE-BASED CONDITIONS

People have the **ability to influence** what happens in their community and shape the services and places that matter to them.

Strengthened spaces and **opportunities for people to come together** to develop collective goals and drive aspirations for their communities

Local **voluntary, community and faith organisations are strategic system partners**, working with public sector across organisational boundaries to create, pursue & implement opportunities for **collaborative working.**

Strategic focus on **local, relational neighbourhood-based working**, recognising the value of trusted connections within a community.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Strategic, intentional approach to partnership across a place Alignment of vision & principles; collaborative governance structures; sharing of resources, including data and insight.

Trusted, collaborative relationships and behaviours System partners invest in building mature, equal, & trusting relationships across the place.

Culture of learning that enables adaptation Partners collectively reflect and use their learning to shape decisions and adapt their approach.

Bold, enabling place leadership Leaders embody commitment to working in partnership with communities; entrusting staff with freedom to innovate and enabling community power

Outcomes: what improvements do place-based, relational approaches contribute to?

Understanding the size of the prize

Places are complex social systems. Any change in outcomes will be the product of many different variables interacting in a variety of ways, shaped by local context. The way that the impact of initiatives is understood needs to reflect this – it is unlikely to be the result of a series of traceable, measurable, causal actions.

However, new approaches suffer from an 'evidence paradox' in that the way impact is understood is governed by the rules and modes of the old system. "Community power practice, approaches and initiatives are required to demonstrate their own worth according to measures that are not set up to recognise their value. The value of community power is best captured qualitatively, yet the metrics are quantitative."[9]

This is something many places and organisations have been working to overcome, producing a growing, albeit dispersed, evidence base.

In reviewing neighbourhood approaches we observed a spectrum ranging from those that were seeking service delivery outcomes and those that focus on community development outcomes. Different approaches are more commonly seen at different scales of place, with those that are more service focused typically being seen within administrative boundaries and those that are community focused at the more hyper local level.

Place-based approaches can have different starting points:

1. Led by local authorities, health, or VCFSE organisations acting at place-shapers, designed to build connections within and between local people and place, getting upstream of social problems to create the conditions for people to flourish.
2. Led by services, designed to improve links between local people and services, engage people in shaping those services to best meet their needs and ultimately reduce or delay demand.
3. Led by communities themselves, designed to make their place better in a way that meets their needs. Local authorities can play a crucial role in enabling these initiatives, offering them active support including access to assets, skills, and resources.

This report focuses more on those initiatives that are started or led by local authorities and the services they provide. However, the distinctions between them are not hard and fast and all effective place-based, relational approaches contribute to creating the conditions for people and places to flourish.

[9] Community power: the evidence, New Local

Place-based outcomes

For communities to thrive and unlock their potential, there is strong evidence that many factors need to work together simultaneously. Social infrastructure is vital to social integration and community cohesion, helping communities to build meaningful and lasting relationships with each other. Social infrastructure is an ecosystem, made up of a mix of "hard infrastructure" – buildings and other spaces – and "soft infrastructure" – the groups, networks, online forums and individuals which bring the physical facilities to life[10].

It's not enough just to have a space, there needs to be activity to bring it to life. For bridges to be built between different communities they need to come into positive contact in shared spaces, enabling connections across differences. Higher levels of social capital[11] are beneficial and are associated with better outcomes in health, education, employment, and civic engagement[12]. Community or social cohesion can be seen as a product of bonding and bridging capital[13].

Community anchor organisations are a key ingredient in activating social infrastructure to generate social capital and creating a platform for associational life.

The following outcomes are strongly associated with place-based initiatives that help develop social infrastructure, bring people together to form connections and support active collaboration with and between communities themselves.

- **Civic participation and trust**: People having the power to change what happens in their community contributes to increased community-led decision-making and ownership of local initiatives and projects, building civic and democratic participation and boosting trust. People will identify more strongly with where they live and be prepared to contribute more.
- **Community cohesion**: When there are spaces and opportunities to come together, people discover common ground, and drive aspirations for their communities, building community cohesion and safety. Linked to higher levels of neighbourliness, lower levels of loneliness and isolation, more positive attitudes towards others, particularly those from other groups.
- **Wellbeing and resilience**: Increased social connections and networks of support within neighbourhoods can strengthen community wellbeing, reduce anti-social behaviour, and build resilience. Communities are better able to quickly mobilise and support each other in times of crisis and change, provide mutual support, and survive systemic shocks.

[10] Connective Social Infrastructure: How London's Social Spaces & Networks Can Help Us Live Well Together, Good Growth By Design
[11] What is social capital?, DEMOS
[12] Rapid evidence review of community initiatives, DCMS
[13] Social capital – what we mean by it and why it matters, Belong Network

Place-based outcomes: the evidence

Local Conversations[14]

The *Local Conversations* programme, was a long-term grant initiative supporting residents in 13 neighbourhoods to come together to identify and agree local priorities, and then take action to help address them, utilising the flexible funding model of the programme. Evaluation undertaken by the New Economics Foundation found that the programme:

- Led to improved social and personal wellbeing including greater social connectedness and sense of belonging
    - Survey results showed that **65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Local Conversation had helped them feel more confident**
    - **62% said their Local Conversation had helped them develop and learn new skills.**
    - Participants reported being more satisfied with life, less anxious, and more likely to feel that what they do is worthwhile – compared to both national averages and other similarly disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

  Supported residents to increase their engagement with local decision-makers by building their capacity for influence through stronger relationships with local organisations and institutions.
    - In 2019, **14 out of 16 neighbourhoods were attempting to influence people in power, including councillors, MPs, and NHS**

Somerset Local Community Networks[15]

There are 18 Local Community Networks (LCNs) covering the Somerset Council area, acting as the 'voice' of local communities and serving as hubs for engagement, partnerships and local decision-making. Their establishment is part of a move to ensure that all of Somerset is 'parished', involving the devolution of assets and services to town, city and parish councils (set out in their 2020 business case for moving to a single unitary council for Somerset, "One Somerset"). Somerset believes LCNs will contribute to:

- Effective local engagement, ensuring residents, businesses, and partners can influence council activity and service delivery.

[14] Evaluating the impact of Local Conversations 2016 - 2021, People's Health Trust
[15] Local Community Networks: Questions and answers, Somerset Council; One Somerset Business Case: Final Submission, Somerset County Council

- Democratic participation: promoting active community decision-making, scrutiny, and enhanced participation in local democracy
- Collaboration: bringing together representatives from partner organisations, city, town and parish councils, community groups, and others to share information, ideas, and solutions.
- Local influence: helping to ensure that local priorities across economic, social, and environmental issues shape council and public service activity.

Asset-based community development (ABCD) in Leeds[16]

ABCD is a core element of Leeds City Council's approach to public service. ABCD is a neighbourhood-based model that focuses on identifying and harnessing local strengths, relationships, and networks to support citizen-led change.

A co-produced evaluation by Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City Council and community organisations found that in Leeds, ABCD has **"supported better social connections and new friendships, with greater community cohesion: bridging differences in generations and neighbourhoods being more inclusive of people with disabilities."**

Barking and Dagenham Giving[17]

Through Barking and Dagenham Giving (BD Giving), the borough has created a model that challenges traditional grant-making and investment by shifting decision-making power directly into the hands of local people. BD Giving was established in 2020 as the UK's first 100% community led investment fund. BD Giving's approach is about more than distributing money; however, it is about building the capacity and confidence of residents to shape their neighbourhoods.

Residents who participate in BD Giving's work report feeling **more aware of local issues, more likely to engage in democratic processes, and more connected to their community**. As people participate, their confidence grows, prompting them to question existing systems and explore new approaches. The process aims to build sustained civic engagement, as participants become more likely to volunteer, support local initiatives, and take ownership of community outcomes.

[16] Asset-Based Community Development: Evaluation of Leeds ABCD Programme, Leeds Beckett University
[17] Barking & Dagenham Giving, BD Giving; Trustees' Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 for Barking and Dagenham Giving, UK Charity Commission

Local Area Coordination in Surrey[18]

In 2022, Surrey County Council introduced Local Area Coordination (LAC) as part of a broader strategy to support independence, promote prevention, and address health inequalities across the county. Residents supported by LAC have reported **improvements in their sense of confidence and wellbeing, as well as increased engagement in community life**. In some cases, individuals have gone on to take active roles in their communities, contributing to local initiatives and offering support to others.

Service-led outcomes

Many of the service-led initiatives we have explored contribute to the place-based outcomes listed above, being designed to move attention and resources upstream of direct service delivery to focus on creating the conditions for better outcomes with communities. However, these are longer term aspirations with a primary driver focused on more immediate goals – reducing, delaying, or preventing demand for services and service improvement.

Some councils have implemented a 'locality model', co-locating different services in centres that are closer to where people live, but still aligned with PCN footprints. These 'Integrated Locality (or Neighbourhood) Teams aim to make services more accessible and convenient and enable them to engage more with people who need support. Many are focused primarily on health and social care and aim to improve health and well-being in the area by working collaboratively with various services, agencies, and groups. There is an emphasis on:

- Being closer and more accessible to communities, and visible to residents
- Making better use of shared resources, reducing running costs through shared use of high quality, sustainable buildings.
- Working in partnership, using integrated working to create a simpler, more joined up system that offers the right support at the right time.
- Supporting a transformation in culture and practice, based on recognising strengths, networking, and being based in community.

Adult Social Care services are often drivers of innovation at the community level, working in partnership with health and VCSE colleagues to use methods including Asset Based

[18] An Analysis of 6 Stories of Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Positive Changes and Costs Avoided, Community Catalysts; Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Independent Evaluation 2024, Duggal Consultancy

Community Development, Local Area Coordination, and micro-business market development as investments in prevention.

Service level initiatives produce a wide range of outcomes, for service demand, for the system - and for individuals.

- Delay, reduce, prevent demand
  - People live happier, healthier, independent lives for longer.
  - People live in safer communities with fewer incidences of anti-social behaviour.
  - People find local solutions and use their own assets and strengths.
  - People volunteer and get involved in delivering local services.
- Prevent failure demand
  - People receive more personalised and flexible support that better meets their needs and supports them to navigate the system.
  - People can find the services they need on their doorstep, without navigating complex systems.
- Reduced staff turnover
  - Increased worker satisfaction and reduction in staff turnover.
- Effective commissioning
  - Stronger collaboration between VCSE and statutory partners enables collective problem-solving, driving progress on outcomes, not just outputs, to maximise value.
- Individual improvements to health and wellbeing
  - Increased independence, improved relationships, connections, and access to community resources, and improved personal safety, security, and stability[19].
  - Reduced reliance on prescription drugs, reduction in the number of visits to the GP, being signed off from treatment by a clinician[20]

[19] Transforming adult social care systems? A systematic review of the costs and outcomes of local area coordination in England and Wales
[20] Building Community: An evaluation of asset based community development (ABCD) in Ayrshire

Service-led outcomes: the evidence

Old Ford and Nest Estates Local Conversation (Gateshead)[21]

The Old Ford and Nest Estates Local Conversation in Gateshead led to partnerships with schools, universities, local authorities, a counselling organisation, and GPs. As a result of these partnerships, community development workers were based in GP surgeries to support patients with non-clinical issues. Their evidence showed that **patients accessing the scheme reduced their appointments by over 25%**, saving money and ensuring people were receiving the support they needed.

Wigan: Progress with Unity[22]

A key feature of Wigan's new ten-year approach, *Progress with Unity*, is its shift to smaller-scale, neighbourhood-based delivery. For example, adult social care has been recommissioned using a neighbourhood model, with teams empowered to deliver asset-based, relational support grounded in local knowledge and collaboration.

Seven 'service delivery footprints' have been established in the borough to reflect 'natural communities'. These footprints serve as the foundation for integrated, multi-agency teams working from shared neighbourhood hubs. Wigan has found that co-located working in these hubs enables rapid, place-sensitive responses to local needs and that working at a neighbourhood scale ensures that public services are better connected to the lived realities of communities, fostering trust, responsiveness and improved outcomes. Some of these improved outcomes outlined by the Kings Fund 2019 report include:

- **Increase in healthy life expectancy** between 2016 and 2019
- I**mproved school readiness** between 2016 and 2019
- **Increase in physical activity** between 2012 and 2015
- A **higher rate of older people still at home 91 days after discharge** than in England as a whole
- High rate of **care home quality improvement**
- **Lower emergency re-admissions from care homes** than England average
- **Low rates of delayed transfer of care from hospital**
- High rate of **decrease in rates of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease and of premature mortality from cancer**

[21] Evaluating the impact of Local Conversations 2016 - 2021, People's Health Trust

[22] A new era for Wigan Borough: from The Deal to Progress with Unity, Collaborate & Wigan BC; A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal, The King's Fund

In addition, underpinned by behaviours such as 'Be kind' and a culture which encourages staff to work differently, Wigan's approach gives staff the freedom to take relational and person-centred approaches which prioritise the wellbeing and independence of those they work with. Wigan's approach has resulted in improved staff satisfaction, stronger partnerships with the VCSE sector and a shared sense of purpose across their services.

Somerset Adult Social Care: micro-business market development[23]

Somerset's adult social care strategy prioritises prevention, early intervention, and strong connections with neighbourhoods and communities. A key part of Somerset's approach to adult social care is the support for micro-providers and since 2015, Somerset has supported the development of 1,250 new micro-providers, who deliver over 30,000 hours of care weekly to nearly 6,000 people in Somerset. The increased capacity of local, responsive support has enabled:

- Stronger local support: people are supported at home or in their communities by providers from their neighbourhoods, fostering trust, flexibility, and continuity of care.
- People and families know good support is available locally. As a result, **people come home earlier from hospital**.
- People-centred support: people design support together that is more personalised. "Creative people on both sides of the care equation find ways to do things differently".

Community Micro-enterprise programme: Westmorland and Furness[24]

Over 2022-24 Community Catalysts partnered with Westmorland and Furness Council to increase the number of community micro-enterprises in the area providing care and support. Outcomes included:

- An established network of responsive, high-quality, and sustainable community micro-enterprises that provide a wider choice of care and support to older and disabled people in their homes.
- **Increased the local care and support offer, with 125 people receiving 400 hours of support each week.** (25 using direct payments, 100 self-funded).

[23] Get help at home with micro-providers, Somerset Council
[24] Community micro-enterprise development in Westmorland and Furness, Community Catalysts

- Reduced unmet need – commissioners, local health and social care teams, and people seeking care and support know that good support is available. As a result, people can choose from a range of care and support options locally.
- Increased choice and control over the support they choose – there is more choice locally for people who draw on care and support and people can choose to have a Direct Payment to pay for their support from a community micro-enterprise.
- Improved quality of service – personal relationships are at the heart of the community micro-enterprises. They offer support that is flexible and responsive to the person's needs, and foster rich connection with others, which supports people's quality of life.

Local Area Coordination in Surrey[25]

Initial insights from the implementation of LAC in Surrey have highlighted a range of early outcomes and there are indications that the model is contributing to broader shifts in service delivery. Improved health and mental health outcomes among residents suggest that Local Area Coordinators may play a role in reducing demand for crisis intervention over time. Feedback also points to strengthened relationships with local NHS services and community partners, including improved pathways for GPs to introduce patients to LAC.

Nationally, the LAC model has been subject to 15 independent evaluations across England and Wales, with findings indicating positive outcomes for individuals, communities, and wider systems. These include **simplification of service pathways and greater cross-system collaboration and integration across agencies.**

Community Health and Wellbeing Workers[26]

Community Health and Wellbeing Workers (CHWWs) are recruited from the communities they serve. They are not medical professionals, but trusted local people selected for their empathy, integrity, cultural competence and persistence. Operating across small geographies of 120–150 households, they make monthly visits to every home (regardless of need) to build relationships and offer holistic, proportionate support.

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[25] An Analysis of 6 Stories of Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Positive Changes and Costs Avoided, Community Catalysts; Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Independent Evaluation 2024, Duggal Consultancy

[26] Community Health and Wellbeing Workers (CHWW) Programme, National Association of Primary Care

In Westminster, where the model was first implemented in the UK results have shown that:

- The households were **47% more likely to have immunisations** that they were eligible for and **82% more likely to have cancer screenings** and NHS health checks.
- There was a **7.3% reduction in unscheduled GP consultations** among these households.
- Residents were appreciative of the ease of access, support and comprehensive approach provided
- Engagement had been maintained with 60% of residents and increasing. Residents who engaged with CHWWs did not disengage
- Multiple instances of issues being unearthed around suicidal ideation, child carers, domestic violence and intractable housing.

Additionally, in Cornwall, the model showed a **90% improvement in resident wellbeing** (as measured by the MyCaw tool).

Social Prescribing[27]

Since it was included as part of the NHS Long Term Plan in 2019, social prescribing has become a key part of the move towards personalised care in England.

Evaluations across the country show that social prescribing can not only improve wellbeing but also significantly reduce pressure on health services:

- In Tameside and Glossop, an evaluation of 1,751 referrals showed a **42% drop in GP appointments**.
- In Kent, **A&E visits reduced by up to 23%** for the 5,908 people supported.
- In Kirklees, support for frequent service users led to **50% fewer GP appointments and 66% fewer A&E attendances**.
- In Rotherham, **frequent A&E use reduced by up to 43%, with cost reductions of up to 39%.**

[27] The Impact of Social Prescribing on Health Service Use and Costs: Examples of Local Evaluations in Practice, National Academy for Social Prescribing

Financial outcomes

Much of the evidence reviewed used one of three ways to assess the financial outcomes of particular initiatives - cost benefit analysis, social return on investment or diverted costs.
Money saved in one part of the system due to the action of another is problematic under current public sector accounting arrangements. It is often the case that investments made by local authorities save costs for the health system. Those developing an operating model for the new strategic authorities should consider how to take a 'total place' approach to assessing costs.

We identified the following outcomes that are likely to have financial benefits:

- Stronger local economy as flourishing micro- and community businesses create local job opportunities and keep service spend local.
- Reduced demand for emergency services.
- Reduction in cost of direct payments and home care through lower cost services from local micro-businesses.
- Reduction in missed appointments, hospital admissions & improved hospital discharge times.
- Reduced demand for residential care homes.
- Reduced use of unplanned hospital care.
- Reduced cost of temporary accommodation.
- Reduced costs as a result of lower staff sickness and turnover.

Financial outcomes: the evidence

The Wigan Deal[28]

The Wigan Deal reframed the relationship between Wigan council and residents, encouraging co-production and strengths-based support which necessitated services which are built around individuals and families. This movement for change has enabled Wigan council to deliver over **£180 million in efficiencies** whilst improving services and maintaining the lowest council tax rate in Greater Manchester.

[28] A new era for Wigan Borough: from The Deal to Progress with Unity, Collaborate & Wigan BC; A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal, The King's Fund

Changing Futures Northumbria[29]

Changing Futures Northumbria (CFN) is a collaboration across six local authority areas focussed on freeing up the creativity and compassion of front-line caseworkers,

delivering more focussed and effective support by co-creating solutions and approaches with citizens, and building towards sustainable outcomes that stand a greater chance of reducing demand into services into multiple services, thus reducing costs and by being more effective, reducing inequality.

Changing Futures Northumbria found that **a person they had been supporting, who had used over £450,000 of public service resource in the year prior to his engagement with their support, reduced his public service use to 0.3% of that level, within 18 months of being supported in a Human relational way, using only £1,932 in months 12 to 24 following the Changing Futures Northumbria intervention.**

ABCD in Leeds[30]

ABCD is a core element of Leeds City Council's approach to public service. A co-produced evaluation by Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City Council and
community organisations estimated up to **£14.02 of social value returned for every £1 invested.**

Somerset Adult Social Care[31]

Somerset's adult social care strategy prioritises prevention, early intervention, and strong connections with neighbourhoods and communities. A key part of Somerset's approach to adult social care is the support for micro-providers and since 2015, Somerset has supported the development of 1,250 new micro-providers, who deliver over 30,000 hours of care weekly to nearly 6,000 people in Somerset.

The increased capacity of local, responsive support has enabled more cost-effective services, as the **cost of care delivered by micro-providers is lower, and is associated with an increase in uptake of direct payments (which similarly have lower costs associated than commissioned care)** as people and families know good support is available locally and so people come home earlier from hospital.

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[29] Changing Futures Northumbria Example of Practice, Human Learning Systems
[30] Asset-Based Community Development: Evaluation of Leeds ABCD Programme, Leeds Beckett University
[31] Get help at home with micro-providers, Somerset Council

Local Area Coordination in Swansea[32]

Swansea's Local Area Coordination (LAC) programme is part of the council's Tackling Poverty Service based within Adult Services.

The Local Area Coordination model is explicitly designed to be place-based and relational. Its effectiveness is reflected in academic evaluations: a Swansea University study found that **for every £1 invested, LAC returns £2–3 of savings to the wider system.**

Local Area Coordinators also helped facilitate 28 new community groups and supported nearly 100 others to access funding – bringing over £85,000 into local communities via the council's Enabling Communities Fund.

Local Area Coordination in Surrey[33]

In 2022, Surrey County Council introduced Local Area Coordination (LAC) as part of a broader strategy to support independence, promote prevention, and address health inequalities across the county. A Community Catalyst report reviewing six individual stories estimated **£25,000 in likely immediate costs avoided from these six cases alone** as a result of preventative action taken before crises emerged.

Nationally, the model has been subject to 15 independent evaluations across England and Wales. Where social return on investment has been measured, findings suggest a **return of at least £4 in social value for every £1 invested** (LAC Network, 2024).

Social Prescribing[34]

Since it was included as part of the NHS Long Term Plan in 2019, social prescribing has become a key part of the move towards personalised care in England. Evaluations across the country have shown that social prescribing can have positive economic returns:

- In Newcastle, **secondary care costs were 9% lower** than in a matched control group.
- A national evaluation of the Green Social Prescribing programme found a **social return on investment of £2.42 for every £1 invested**, alongside significant improvements in wellbeing based on ONS wellbeing measures

[32] Local Area Coordination: Impact Report 2023, Swansea Council
[33] An Analysis of 6 Stories of Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Positive Changes and Costs Avoided, Community Catalysts; Local Area Coordination in Surrey: Independent Evaluation 2024, Duggal Consultancy
[34] The Impact of Social Prescribing on Health Service Use and Costs: Examples of Local Evaluations in Practice, National Academy for Social Prescribing

Barking and Dagenham Giving[35]

BD Giving was established in 2020 as the UK's first 100% community led investment fund. As of May 2025, BD Giving has distributed over £950,000, including ~£778,000 in grants and approximately £77,000 distributed to the residents involved in participatory decision-making processes.
The largest share of BD Giving's grant funding has gone towards Employment, Skills, and Enterprise, largely driven by their GROW Fund, which **supports local businesses in scaling up and seeking further investment**. Following this, funding is almost evenly distributed across arts, health, community cohesion, and education initiatives.

Local Conversations[36]

An evaluation by the New Economics Foundation found that the Local Conversations programme helped local lead organisations and residents access additional resources. On average, **lead organisations secured between £192,000 and £216,000 in additional funding**, which they attributed to their involvement in Local Conversations.

Community Micro-enterprise programme: Westmorland and Furness[37]

Over 2022-24 Community Catalysts partnered with Westmorland and Furness Council to increase the number of community micro-enterprises in the area providing care and support. Outcomes included:

- **26 local jobs created** - people can work locally, earn an income and make a positive difference.
- The **money flow stays within the local economy**.

Levenshulme Inspire Community Hub[38]

In Levenshulme, located four miles south-east of Manchester city centre, is the **Inspire Centre,** a community hub owned by the people of Levenshulme. **Through training, mentoring and enterprise activities, they have supported local residents into employment, started micro-businesses, and strengthened digital and social infrastructure.**

[35] Barking & Dagenham Giving, BD Giving; Impact Dashboard, BD Giving
[36] Evaluating the impact of Local Conversations 2016 - 2021, People's Health Trust
[37] Community micro-enterprise development in Westmorland and Furness, Community Catalysts
[38] COVID Impact Report 2020/2021, Levenshulme Inspire; How to Set Up, Run and Sustain a Community Hub to Transform Local Service Provision, Locality

The building blocks of place-based working

Conditions that enable effective place-based approaches

System conditions are the factors that influence how a system behaves. The relationships and interactions between them determine the system's performance, and ability to achieve positive outcomes. Addressing the underlying conditions creates a powerful lever for change.

Effective place-based approaches share a common set of underlying conditions that are reflected in multiple examples of practice. They provide the foundation on which the different approaches and methods are built. We have split them into (1) system conditions - speaking to the network of organisations and institutions that make up the governance of a large-scale place e.g. local authorities, health partners, constabulary, VCSE etc; and (2) place-based conditions within neighbourhoods.

System conditions

- **Strategic, intentional approach to partnership across a place**
  Alignment of vision & principles; collaborative governance structures; sharing of resources, including data and insight.
- **Trusted, collaborative relationships and behaviours**
  System partners invest in building mature, equal, & trusting relationships across the place.
- **Culture of learning that enables adaptation**
  Partners collectively reflect and use their learning to shape decisions and adapt their approach.
- **Bold, enabling place leadership**
  Leaders embody commitment to working in partnership with communities; entrusting staff with freedom to innovate and enabling community power

Place-based conditions

- **People have the ability to influence what happens in their community** and shape the services and places that matter to them.
- **Local voluntary, community and faith organisations are part of strategic system partnership**, working with the public sector across organisational boundaries to create, pursue and implement opportunities for collaborative working.
- **Strengthened spaces and opportunities for people to come together** to develop collective goals and drive aspirations for their communities
- **Strategic focus on local, relational neighbourhood-based working**, recognising the value of trusted connections within a community.

What place-based, relational approaches look like in practice

There are many different methods and modes of operating and a variety of component parts in use to enable place-based, relational approaches and places are innovating, adapting and combining continually. This is fertile ground. Below is a snapshot of what we see in play at different geographic scales. See Appendix 2 for more detailed examples.

Approaches and actors common at the neighbourhood level

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD): The work of building and sustaining positive relationships across different groups, organisations and networks and enabling people to participate and influence decisions, activities and services and create stronger and more connected communities.
👉 See case in practice.

Community anchors: Small, established, neighbourhood-based organisations deeply embedded in local communities. Rooted in place, there for the long term with a deep understanding of an area and strong connections with local people. E.g. Heart of BS13, Bristol[39].

Community asset transfer: The transfer of management and/or ownership of publicly-owned buildings or land or structures to local communities for less than the market value to promote social, economic and environmental well-being and empower communities.
👉 See case in practice[40]

Community business: A locally rooted business run by local people for the benefit of the community, and creating broad community impact. E.g. Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth Community Shop[41]

Community (or health) champions: Community members who volunteer to promote health and wellbeing or improve conditions in their local community. Champions use their social networks and life experience to address barriers to engagement and improve connections between services and disadvantaged communities. E.g. Camden Community Champions[42]

Community grants: Community-based funding and grants for projects like activities for young people, volunteer programmes and development of communal facilities.

[39] Heart of BS13, Bristol
[40] Bramley Baths, Leeds
[41] Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth Community Shop
[42] Camden Community Champions

👉 See case in practice[43]

Parish councils: Smallest, most localised tier of local government, delivering services to meet local needs, giving the community a voice and representation, and improving the quality of life and community wellbeing.
👉 See case in practice[44]

Social infrastructure: Framework of institutions and physical spaces where people can meet, engage, and build relationships; and the networks of formal and informal groups, organisations, partnerships and initiatives that sustain the social fabric of a place. E.g. Space for Community: Strengthening Our Social Infrastructure[45]

Approaches and actors common at the ward level

Community development workers & Local Area Coordinators: Work in communities to help improve health, wellbeing and resilience of the people who live there.
👉 See case in practice[46]

Councillors as community activists: Elected to represent their ward, to lead the local conversation and engage communities to make the area the best place it can be.
👉 See case in practice[47]

Participatory budgeting: A democratic process through which citizens decide directly how to spend part of a public budget, enabling them to have a greater say in how public money is used to improve their communities.
👉 See case in practice[48]

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[43] Barking & Dagenham Giving, BD Giving
[44] One Somerset Business Case: Final Submission, Somerset County Council
[45] Space for Community: Strengthening Our Social Infrastructure, Power to Change
[46] Local Area Coordination: Impact Report 2023, Swansea Council
[47] Your local area and ward, Barnsley Council;
[48] Barking & Dagenham Giving, BD Giving

Approaches and actors common at the locality level

Community hubs: Buildings or parts of buildings that provide and host community activities that local people need. Can be managed by a community-led organisation or by a public agency. Diverse range of possible services including activities that directly address community needs and provide opportunities for community engagement and social activities; and alternative approaches to service delivery – underpinned by the principles of community involvement and partnership.
👉 See case in practice[49]

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: Practitioners from health, social care, and the voluntary sector provide work with communities to understand what is important to them and co-design services that meet local needs, delivered in a way that works for the community. E.g. Creating Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: Learning from experience[50]

Libraries, community & public venues: Publicly owned spaces that can host formal services alongside community activity. E.g. Cumbria Libraries[51]

Social prescribers: Link workers who support people to connect to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.
👉 See case in practice[52]

Voluntary & community organisations: Third sector or civil society made up of a diverse range of groups and organisations focusing on social, environmental, or cultural goals. Typically non-profit and driven by volunteers, aiming to improve society or specific communities.
E.g. UK Civil Society Almanac 2024[53]

[49] Levenshulme Inspire
[50] Creating Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: Learning from experience, National Association of Primary Care
[51] Libraries as community hubs: Case studies and learning, Renaisi for Arts Council England
[52] The Impact of Social Prescribing on Health Service Use and Costs: Examples of Local Evaluations in Practice, National Academy for Social Prescribing
[53] UK Civil Society Almanac 2024, NCVO

Approaches and actors common at a whole-place level

Citizen assemblies: A type of participatory democracy in which a representative group of citizens selected at random from the population learn about, deliberate upon, and make recommendations about a particular issue or set of issues.
E.g. Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly[54]

Community wealth building: A framework for redirecting economic activity to benefit local communities and residents. It aims to create a more inclusive and sustainable economy by ensuring that wealth generated in a specific area is retained and distributed within it.
👉 See case in practice

Participatory democracy: A form of government in which citizens participate individually and directly in political decisions and policies that affect their lives, rather than through elected representatives. Can take different forms, including Citizen Assemblies. In East Ayrshire, communities have created 30 community-led action plans, supported by facilitation from the council.
E.g. Participatory democracy - what does it mean for elected members?[55]

[54] Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly
[55] Participatory democracy - what does it mean for elected members?

Conclusion

"We have everything we need, if we use what we have"[56]

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation present a once in a life-time opportunity to re-examine and re-shape the operating model for local government. To finally focus on building better relationships between local people and public systems, by giving them more power over the decisions that affect them and more equitable access to the resources local government and other partners hold. To work at a scale of place that people identify with, enabling community power, and investing in preventative, relational and asset-based ways of working. To move this practice into the mainstream by embedding it fully in the operating model, culture and core practice of the new strategic authorities.

Doing so promises better long-term outcomes for people and communities than our current top down, one-size-fits-all model. It allows places to have an identity that communities can engage with and responds to inequalities in assets, strengths and needs. It supports improvements for people and places through the focused efforts of the council, partners and residents on shared problems and builds local capacity, belonging and pride. It will support democratic renewal, rather than the disengagement we are experiencing today.

There is a wealth of good examples of place-based, relational practice happening across the country. We need to build new strategic authorities that can work at the human scale, accommodating human needs and human relationships, and at a system scale, connecting, coordinating and stewarding all the resources that will enable people and places to flourish.

Local Government Reorganisation has the potential to catalyse a step change into a different and better future and help repair the threadbare social fabric in our neighbourhoods.

This is a golden opportunity - let's not waste it!

[56] Edgar Cahn

Appendix A: What is place-based working?

"A place-based approach is a systems approach within a defined location, such as a suburb or small town. Restricting the scope of work to a geographic location can help in pinning a systemic issue down to a manageable size."[57]

As with all systems change approaches, place-based work tends to go beyond programmatic activities focused on specific outcomes and instead tries to address the deeper systemic causes of a problem. From a service perspective it is often about getting upstream of a problem and creating the conditions that will prevent a problem occurring or proliferating over the long term or addressing failures in the services that create more demand.

Place-based approaches centre communities rather than services. Community members are involved in decision-making, with their aspirations for their lives and their place anchoring the work.

Common characteristics of place-based approaches include:

- working with communities to identify and work on collective priorities, valuing local over professional/expert knowledge and building relationships within and between groups and with sources of power and resource (bonding, bridging, linking capital)
- working with VCFSE organisations and / or community anchors as a source of trusting relationships
- focusing on strengths (or assets) to build the conditions that prevent problems from happening, or reduce their impact, rather than just intervening at a point of crisis

'Community' in this context can be taken to mean people brought together by geographic boundaries. However, some place-based approaches target more specific populations within that geography, communities brought together by identity, experience, interest or action.

Place-based approaches can take in population sizes from 100,000 (the average for a London Borough) to 150 people at a hyper-local level. That population may live in dense urban areas or be more spread out across rural districts – geographical size is less important than whether there is a community of people that connects and identifies as a community.

[57] Dr Jess Dart, Clear Horizon

What is a neighbourhood?

Neighbourhood approaches are contained within this broader 'place-based' definition, along with many other scales of place, some defined geographically such as a street or village, some with boundaries constructed for administrative reasons like LSOAs, wards and localities.

Neighbourhoods are hyper-local communities of place. However, a "universal and generalisable definition of neighbourhood does not exist."[58]

Two different models for understanding 'neighbourhood' currently dominate – one based on top-down administrative boundaries, the other defined by residents or communities themselves.

Unhelpfully, the NHS Long Term Plan uses its own definitions of place, with three different levels at which decisions are made:

- **Neighbourhoods** (populations circa 30,000 to 50,000 people) – served by groups of GP practices (PCNs)
- **Places** (populations circa 250,000 to 500,000 people) – served by a set of health and care providers in a town or district, connecting primary care networks to broader services including those provided by local councils, community hospitals or voluntary organisations.
- Systems (populations circa 1 million to 3 million people) - in which the whole area's health and care partners in different sectors come together to set strategic direction and to develop economies of scale.

This definition of neighbourhood is significantly larger than others. Many local authorities have struggled with this, and the lack of coterminous boundaries – wards rarely map to PCN footprints and so have adopted the term 'locality'. Some London boroughs have created new administrative boundaries in which two localities exist with a single PCN boundary.

None of these fictitious boundaries map to what local communities might identify as their neighbourhood. Approaches based in community development rather than service delivery tend to start with an invitation to residents to define their own neighbourhood boundaries based on their personal experiences, perceptions and relationships.

This can surface valuable insights into neighbourhood dynamics, social networks, and local identities. However, as the boundaries captured are subjective and personal they are unlikely to be consistent across a whole community, which can be challenging for those hoping to target policy decisions or capture and compare data.

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[58] The evidence for neighbourhood focused regeneration, Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods (ICON)

Each model produces different results in determining how many people or households may live in a neighbourhood. However, there is some consensus that the primary school is the last neighbourhood-scale institution and central to the way families with young children may conceive of their neighbourhood. Other 'connecting places' such as a place of worship, a parade of shops or a park may serve the same purpose for other members of the community. Similar consensus was seen in the notion that a neighbourhood is a place where you can comfortably walk to local amenities within 15 minutes.

The model chosen is important "because it influences how policy is targeted, implemented and evaluated; it informs which groups/areas are subject to the intervention and how data is collected and analysed."[59]

Who chooses which model to use is also key to understanding where power lies and the extent to which the people any intervention may be aimed at will recognise and identify, or care about, the place being described.

This report focuses on the smaller end of the scale - localities, wards and neighbourhoods.

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[59] The evidence for neighbourhood focused regeneration, Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods (ICON)

Appendix B: Examples of Practice

Case in practice: Local Conversations, People's Health Trust (2014-2023)[60]

The *Local Conversations* programme, funded by People's Health Trust, was a long-term grant initiative supporting residents in 13 neighbourhoods across Great Britain experiencing high levels of disadvantage. Through Local Conversations, local people came together to identify and agree local priorities, and then take action to help address them, utilising the flexible funding model of the programme.

Evaluation undertaken by the New Economics Foundation found that the programme:

- led to improved social and personal wellbeing including greater social connectedness and sense of belonging
  - Survey results showed that 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Local Conversation had helped them feel more confident
  - 62% said their Local Conversation had helped them develop and learn new skills.
  - participants reported being more satisfied with life, less anxious, and more likely to feel that what they do is worthwhile – compared to both national averages and other similarly disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- helped local lead organisations and residents access additional resources.
  - On average, lead organisations secured between £192,000 and £216,000 in additional funding, which they attributed to their involvement in Local Conversations.
- supported residents to increase their engagement with local decision-makers by building their capacity for influence through stronger relationships with local organisations and institutions. In 2019, 14 out of 16 neighbourhoods were attempting to influence people in power, including councillors, MPs, and NHS leaders.

The Old Ford and Nest Estates Local Conversation (Gateshead) led to partnerships with schools, universities, local authorities, a counselling organisation, and GPs. As a result of these partnerships, community development workers were based in GP surgeries to support patients with non-clinical issues. Their evidence showed that patients accessing the scheme reduced their appointments by over 25%, saving money and ensuring people were receiving the support they needed.

[60] Evaluating the impact of Local Conversations 2016 - 2021, People's Health Trust

Case in practice: Community Health and Wellbeing Workers[61]

The Community Health and Wellbeing Worker (CHWW) model originated in Brazil – where it now forms the foundation of primary care for over 70% of the population. More recently, the model has been adapted in England to provide integrated, preventative support at the heart of neighbourhoods.

CHWWs are recruited from the communities they serve. They are not medical professionals, but **trusted local people** selected for their empathy, integrity, cultural competence and persistence. Operating across small geographies of 120–150 households, they make monthly visits to every home (regardless of need) to build relationships and offer holistic, proportionate support.

Working within the CHUI framework (Comprehensive, Hyperlocal, Universal and Integrated) CHWWs proactively address physical, mental and social wellbeing. Their role is to understand the whole household, build alliances with GPs, local authorities, and community services, and act as advocates, navigators, and early responders to a range of needs. In Westminster, where the model was first implemented in the UK results have shown that:

- The households were 47% more likely to have immunisations that they were eligible for and 82% more likely to have cancer screenings and NHS health checks.
- There was a **7.3% reduction in unscheduled GP consultations** among these households.
- Residents were appreciative of the ease of access, support and comprehensive approach provided
- Engagement had been maintained with 60% of residents and increasing. Residents who engaged with CHWWs did not disengage
- Multiple instances of issues being unearthed around suicidal ideation, child carers, domestic violence and intractable housing.

Additionally, in Cornwall, the model showed a 90% improvement in resident wellbeing (as measured by the MyCaw tool),

Now operating in **over** 25 sites across the UK, the CHWW model exemplifies what can happen when services shift from reactive to proactive, and from transactional to relational. By embedding trusted local connectors into neighbourhoods, councils and NHS partners can reduce pressure on services, uncover hidden and unmet needs, and rebuild trust in public systems.

[61] Community Health and Wellbeing Workers (CHWW) Programme, National Association of Primary Care

Case in practice: Local Community Networks[62] in Somerset[63]

Somerset's Local Community Networks (LCNs) are a central part of its place-based strategy. There are 18 LCNs covering the Somerset Council area, acting as the 'voice' of local communities and serving as hubs for engagement, partnerships and local decision-making. Key functions of Somerset's LCNs include:

- Community engagement: LCNs facilitate effective local engagement, ensuring residents, businesses, and partners can influence council activity and service delivery.
- Democratic participation: LCNs promote active community decision-making, scrutiny, and enhanced participation in local democracy.
- Collaboration: LCNs bring together representatives from partner organisations, city, town and parish councils, community groups, and others to share information, ideas, and solutions.
- Local influence: LCNs help to ensure that local priorities across economic, social, and environmental issues shape council and public service activity.
- Resource mobilisation: LCNs identify and secure resources for local projects.

The establishment of these community networks in Somerset is part of a move to ensure that all of Somerset is 'parished', involving the devolution of assets and services to town, city and parish councils.

A consultation conducted in Somerset (with representatives from the public sector, private sector and voluntary and community groups as well as some residents) to understand the level of support for change to Somerset's local authority structure to one unitary authority, found that *"there was recognition of the difficulty of reconciling scale with connection to localities, but an enhanced role for parish and town councils was seen as a possible solution".*

Somerset Council believes that devolving power and resources to the councils and organisations that are at the real heart of its communities will provide a focus for local engagement and become the channel for local views, feedback, consultation and communication. Beyond this, they see the move towards a more localised approach as holding value not just within the unitary authority, but also through the closer connections it will create with other local public services, notably the NHS, schools, and the voluntary sector.

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[62] Local Community Networks: Questions and answers, Somerset Council
[63] One Somerset Business Case: Final Submission, Somerset County Council

Case in practice: A New Era for Wigan[64]

Wigan Council is recognised nationally for its work in public service reform through the Wigan Deal: an asset-based approach launched in 2012 in response to austerity. The Deal reframed the relationship between Wigan council and residents, encouraging co-production and strengths-based support which necessitated services which are built around individuals and families. This movement for change has enabled Wigan council to deliver over £180 million in efficiencies whilst improving services and maintaining the lowest council tax rate in Greater Manchester.

Underpinned by behaviours such as 'Be kind' and a culture which encourages staff to work differently, Wigan's approach gives staff the freedom to take relational and person-centred approaches which prioritise the wellbeing and independence of those they work with. Wigan's approach has resulted in improved staff satisfaction, stronger partnerships with the VCSE sector and a shared sense of purpose across their services.

In 2024, Wigan launched its new ten-year vision: *Progress with Unity* which builds on the success of the Deal while intensifying the focus on collaboration, tackling inequality, and integrated place-based delivery.

A key feature of Wigan's new approach is its shift to smaller-scale, neighbourhood-based delivery. For example, adult social care has been recommissioned using a neighbourhood model, with teams empowered to deliver asset-based, relational support grounded in local knowledge and collaboration.

[64] A new era for Wigan Borough: from The Deal to Progress with Unity, Collaborate & Wigan BC; A citizen-led approach to health and care: Lessons from the Wigan Deal, The King's Fund

Seven ‘service delivery footprints’ have been established in the borough to reflect ‘natural communities’. These footprints serve as the foundation for integrated, multi-agency teams working from shared neighbourhood hubs. Wigan has found that co-located working in these hubs enables rapid, place-sensitive responses to local needs and that working at a neighbourhood scale ensures that public services are better connected to the lived realities of communities, fostering trust, responsiveness and improved outcomes. Some of these improved outcomes outlined by the Kings Fund 2019 report include:

- Increase in healthy life expectancy between 2016 and 2019
- Improved school readiness between 2016 and 2019
- Increase in physical activity between 2012 and 2015
- A higher rate of older people still at home 91 days after discharge than in England as a whole
- High rate of care home quality improvement
- Lower emergency re-admissions from care homes than England average
- Low rates of delayed transfer of care from hospital
- High rate of decrease in rates of premature mortality from cardiovascular disease and of premature mortality from cancer

Case in practice: Changing Futures Northumbria[65]

Gateshead Council has been experimenting with Public Service Reform prototypes since 2018, with its inaugural experiment focussing upon the use of council tax arrears as a signal of people requiring more holistic and bespoke support through relational approaches to public service.

Learning from these early prototypes led to the creation of the ‘‘Liberated Method’’ which is focussed on freeing up the creativity and compassion of front-line caseworkers, delivering more focussed and effective support by co-creating solutions and approaches with citizens, and building towards sustainable outcomes that stand a greater chance of reducing demand into services into multiple services, thus reducing costs and by being more effective, reducing inequality.

This approach has broadened beyond the initial Gateshead focussed prototypes in a regional programme. Changing Futures Northumbria (CFN) is a collaboration across six local authority areas (Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Sunderland and South Tyneside) and includes partners from voluntary and community sector, probation, police and CCGs/ Foundation trusts.

[65] Changing Futures Northumbria Example of Practice, Human Learning Systems

Case-by-case comparisons of the public service resource use of those they have supported, before and after the involvement of Human relational service.

Changing Futures Northumbria found that a person they had been supporting, who had used over £450,000 of public service resource in the year prior to his engagement with their support, reduced his public service use to 0.3% of that level, within 18 months of being supported in a Human relational way, using only £1,932 in months 12 to 24 following the Changing Futures Northumbria intervention.

Case in practice: Asset Based Community Development in Leeds[66]

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a core element of Leeds City Council's approach to public service. ABCD is a neighbourhood-based model that focuses on identifying and harnessing local strengths, relationships, and networks to support citizen-led change. By 2022, Leeds' ABCD programme included 14 'Pathfinder' communities each with access to a Community Builder to identify people active in the community and bring others together, and council-funded 'Small Sparks' grants to develop and deliver ideas.

ABCD has also informed Leeds' broader vision for adult social care, as expressed in its 'Better Lives Strategy' (2022-2027) which integrates housing, libraries, culture, parks and transport with care and support services. Central to this strategy is the belief that communities and the relationships within them are essential to people's wellbeing.

Leeds' commitment to relational, strength-based practice is also reflected in initiatives like "Talking Points," which embed social workers directly into neighbourhoods, and its long-standing Neighbourhood Networks programme for older people.

A co-produced evaluation by Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City Council and community organisations found that ABCD has "supported better social connections and new friendships, with greater community cohesion: bridging differences in generations and neighbourhoods being more inclusive of people with disabilities."[67] Financially, the evaluation estimated up to **£14.02 of social value returned for every £1 invested**.

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[66] Better Lives Strategy 2022–2027, Leeds City Council

[67] Asset Based Community Development and supporting the community response to Covid-19, Leeds City Council and Asset-Based Community Development: Evaluation of Leeds ABCD Programme, Leeds Beckett University

Case in practice: Participatory budgeting in Barking and Dagenham[68]

Barking and Dagenham is reshaping how local resources are allocated and how communities shape their future, placing participation, collaboration, and inclusion at the heart of its approach. Through Barking and Dagenham Giving (BD Giving), the borough has created a model that challenges traditional grant-making and investment by shifting decision-making power directly into the hands of local people.

BD Giving was established in 2020 as the UK's first 100% community led investment fund. It recognised that many residents feel excluded from the economy, financial sector, and funding systems, which are often seen as disconnected and technical. By providing a safe and supported environment for residents to engage in grant-making, investment, infrastructure development, research, and advocacy, BD Giving aims to open up new opportunities for people to lead and influence the systems that affect their lives.

A core feature of BD Giving's work is the Community Steering Group (CSG), a group of twelve local residents who meet regularly as a learning community and manage an investment fund. CSG members are paid for their time, underpinned by the belief that civic participation should be open to everyone, not just those who can afford to give their time for free.

As of May 2025, BD Giving has distributed over £950,000, including ~£778,000 in grants and approximately £77,000 distributed to the residents involved in participatory decision-making processes.

The largest share of BD Giving's grant funding has gone towards Employment, Skills, and Enterprise, largely driven by their GROW Fund, which supports local businesses in scaling up and seeking further investment. Following this, funding is almost evenly distributed across arts, health, community cohesion, and education initiatives.

BD Giving's approach is about more than distributing money however; it is about building the capacity and confidence of residents to shape their neighbourhoods. Residents who participate in BD Giving's work report feeling more aware of local issues, more likely to engage in democratic processes, and more connected to their community. As people participate, their confidence grows, prompting them to question existing systems and explore new approaches. The process aims to build sustained civic engagement, as participants become more likely to volunteer, support local initiatives, and take ownership of community outcomes.

By putting control over resources into the hands of local people, the borough is building capacity for long-term change, equipping communities to think deeply about how to address complex social issues, and ensuring that public services are better connected to the lived realities of residents.

[68] Barking & Dagenham Giving, BD Giving; Impact Dashboard, BD Giving; Strategy 2023–2026: Invested for the Long Haul, BD Giving and GROW Fund Year 1 Learning Report, BD Giving; Trustees' Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 for Barking and Dagenham Giving, UK Charity Commission

Case in practice: Community Wealth Building in Lewes[69]

With a population of around 100,000, the district of Lewes in East Sussex is a site of both prosperity (in the county town of Lewes and much of the countryside) and considerable deprivation (in the coastal towns of Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford, as well as in some rural areas).

Since 2019 the council have focussed on how they can use their advantages to build and strengthen the local economy through business growth and local job creation.

With flooding and coastal erosion a continual threat, the climate crisis is an all-too present reality in Lewes and has provided a focus for the work.

The council has committed to a sustainable approach to procurement as part of meeting the council's climate objectives and wider environmental ambitions, but it is also about generating local wealth for the economy and providing opportunities for community groups in a way that is interconnected.

Analysis of the council's spending on goods and services to measure what proportion of spending is within the district. The council has almost doubled its spending with local suppliers from £5.4 million in 2020-21 to 10.1 million in 2023-24, 25% of total spend.

The council owns a significant amount of buildings and land in the district. They are working to maximise community benefit and community wealth building opportunities, and have moved their offices to Newhaven and leased them to a local arts organisation, growing the visitor economy.

In Newhaven, several under-utilised buildings in the Town Centre are currently being developed to create a new health and wellbeing hub for the town.

The council's housing delivery programme has prioritised building on brownfield sites, which are typically ignored by the private sector due to the additional challenges and costs involved. Opportunities for apprenticeships and work placements are integrated and embedded within these building projects.

[69] Community Wealth Building in Lewes, CLES

Case in practice: Active councillors - Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council[70]

Barnsley MBC has created a structured approach to reshaping councillors' relationships with residents. 63 elected members, representing 21 wards, sit across six area councils. These area councils use local intelligence gathered directly from residents – alongside national datasets like the census – to set priorities and allocate localised funding through commissioning and grant-making.

Complementing this are Barnsley's **ward alliances**, which bring together councillors and active local citizens to jointly plan and deliver improvements in their neighbourhoods.

Anyone involved in a community group or project can apply to be part of a ward alliance. Each alliance develops its own **community plan** and manages a **Ward Alliance Fund**, providing small grants to grassroots initiatives that help deliver local priorities.

This structure is part of a shift that the Council are undertaking in how they work with communities. The council deliberately created a **space in every community** for people to come together, get involved, and co-produce solutions to local challenges.

[70] Your local area and ward. Barnsley Council;

Case in practice: Plymouth Family Hubs[71]

Plymouth's family hub programme was launched in 2022 following a consultation with families and practitioners across the city which highlighted how fragmented the system had become, and the challenges people had in navigating it.

Funded through the government, Plymouth's Family Hubs aim to integrate early help, health, education and community services into a single network that supports families locally. The Family Hub programme seeks to reorient support around each family's unique context, using trauma-informed, strengths-led and relational approaches, summed up as 'Right support, right place, right time'.

As part of the programme, Children's centres across the city are transformed into Family Hubs for children aged 0-19 (0-25 for SEND). Schools, GPs, Job Centres and other community partners become part of a shared network so that parents can access support with a 'no wrong door' approach.

Key to the programme is an asset based community development model which aims to connect people together locally, build on strengths and upskill communities. This approach also includes the appointment of a Community Builder for Family Hubs who works alongside the families supported by the Hub.

Between 2023 and 2024, Plymouth's Family Hubs were in contact with local families more than 29,000 times, covering everything from initial contact and signposting to group activities or 1 to 1 support.

[71] Plymouth Family Hubs: A Human Learning Systems Case Study, Human Learning Systems

Case in practice: Adult Social Care in Somerset[72]

Somerset's adult social care strategy prioritises prevention, early intervention, and strong connections with neighbourhoods and communities. This approach is grounded in their 2020 business case "One Somerset" which sets out their vision for a new single unitary council for Somerset and the approach is designed to support demand management, enable choice, and reduce long-term care needs.

A key part of Somerset's approach to adult social care is the support for micro-providers – small, community-based care and support services that are independent of larger organisations. Since 2015, Somerset has supported the development of 1,250 new micro-providers, who deliver over 30,000 hours of care weekly to nearly 6,000 people in Somerset. The increased capacity of local, responsive support has enabled:

- Local support: people are supported at home or in their communities by providers from their neighbourhoods, fostering trust, flexibility, and continuity of care.
- Cost-effective services: the cost of care delivered by community enterprises is lower.
- People and families know good support is available. As a result, people come home earlier from hospital and more people access direct payments (where families receive funds to arrange their own care), which similarly have lower costs associated with them than commissioned care.
- People-centred support: people design support together that is more personalised. "Creative people on both sides of the care equation find ways to do things differently".

  "The distinctive contribution of microenterprises appears to be the ability to offer more personalised and valued care without a high price tag." [73]

Somerset's adult social care strategy is also underpinned by strong partnerships with the voluntary and community sector, NHS, and local provider networks. Their collaborative ethos supports coproduction, shared learning, and system-wide improvement.

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[72] Get help at home with micro-providers, Somerset Council; One Somerset Business Case: Final Submission, Somerset County Council; Somerset Council Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance peer challenge report, Local Government Association
[73] Micro-enterprises: Small enough to care? Summary Report, University of Birmingham

Case in practice: Local Area Coordination in Swansea[74]

Swansea's Local Area Coordination (LAC) programme is part of the council's Tackling Poverty Service based within Adult Services. The programme covers the whole county and aims to ensure that every community has access to support grounded in trusted relationships and local knowledge.

Local Area Coordinators are embedded within specific neighbourhoods, and they work without referral thresholds, time limits, or rigid service criteria. They 'walk alongside' individuals and families to understand their strengths, relationships and hopes for a good life, helping them to make connections, build confidence and resilience, and reduce their reliance on formal services.

In 2023, over 1100 people in Swansea were introduced to a Local Area Coordinator, with 1,172 people supported on an ongoing basis. Nearly a third of these introductions were self-referrals or came through informal, community based routes, such as neighbours, friends, or local councillors, highlighting how these roles are embedded within the community. Local Area Coordinators also helped facilitate 28 new community groups and supported nearly 100 others to access funding – bringing over £85,000 into local communities via the council's Enabling Communities Fund.

The Local Area Coordination model is explicitly designed to be place-based and relational and it is recognised across Swansea as a key part of the delivery of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales). Its effectiveness is reflected in academic evaluations: a Swansea University study found that for every **£1 invested, LAC returns £2–3 of savings** to the wider system, and a comparative study funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research highlighted LAC's consistency across contexts and its unique ability to connect individuals, communities and services.

Swansea's Local Area Coordination model has won national awards for inclusion and cohesion and holds strong political and cross-sector support. Local councillors, GPs, social prescribers and community partners praise the model for enabling collaborative, responsive, and compassionate support that is grounded in the realities of people's lives.

[74] Local Area Coordination: Impact Report 2023, Swansea Council

Case in practice: Community Micro-enterprise Programme[75], South Lakes, Furness & Eden

The area of Westmorland and Furness is geographically the third largest local authority in England and home to approximately 225,000 people. Some of the county towns are in rural areas, which can limit the choice of local services and support available.

Over 2022-24 Community Catalysts partnered with Westmorland and Furness Council to increase the number of community micro-enterprises in the area providing care and support.

Outcomes

- Established network of responsive, high-quality, and sustainable community micro-enterprises that provide a wider choice of care and support to older and disabled people in their homes.
- 26 local jobs created - people can work locally, earn an income and make a positive difference.
- Increased the local care and support offer, with 125 people receiving 400 hours of support each week. (25 using direct payments, 100 self-funded).
- Reduced unmet need and - commissioners, local health and social care teams and people seeking care and support know that good support is available. As a result, people can choose from a range of care and support options locally.
- Increased choice and control over the support they choose - there is more choice locally for people who draw on care and support and people can choose to have a Direct Payment to pay for their support from a community micro-enterprise.
- Improved quality of service - personal relationships are at the heart of the community micro-enterprises. They offer support that is flexible and responsive to the person's needs, and foster rich connection with others, which supports people's quality of life.
- The money flow stays within the local economy.

A local social worker said:

"I have found the Community Catalyst and the community enterprises really useful, and I've used them a lot… there has 100% been a reduction in unmet need".

[75] Community micro-enterprise development in Westmorland and Furness, Community Catalysts

Case in practice: Levenshulme Inspire[76]

In Levenshulme, located four miles south-east of Manchester city centre, local residents and organisations came together to form **Levenshulme Inspire** – a not-for-profit community enterprise and place-based partnership dedicated to transforming the area through creativity, community, enterprise, and fun.

At the heart of the initiative is the **Inspire Centre**, a community hub owned by the people of Levenshulme. Developed from the redevelopment of a former United Reformed Church, the Centre was made possible through a collaborative £3 million investment involving the Homes and Communities Agency, Big Lottery Fund, Manchester City Council, and others. The result is a multi-use space comprising a café, community rooms, a business centre, and affordable apartments – all under one roof.

The Centre is more than a venue; it is a trusted local anchor. It brings together residents, local businesses, and voluntary sector partners to offer everything from warm spaces, food support, and creative projects, to enterprise mentoring and adult learning.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Inspire Centre became a lifeline for the community which supported local people in some of the following ways:

- 3,690 emergency meals and 2,000 food boxes were distributed in 14 weeks.
- ~44 tonnes of food were distributed via the centre.
- The Inspired Taskforce, a peer-led group of older people delivered meal buddies, phone support, and wellbeing packs
- New programmes like “Starting Plates” helped new parents learn cooking and nutrition skills in safe, supportive spaces.
- Inspire partnered with the NHS to train and deploy **Covid Connectors** who built vaccine confidence through peer-led conversations in marginalised communities.

Beyond this, Levenshulme Inspire has continued to drive recovery and local economic inclusion. Through training, mentoring and enterprise activities, they have supported local residents into employment, started micro-businesses, and strengthened digital and social infrastructure. Arts and community heritage projects such as the “Home Is Where the Hope Is” community quilt helped people reconnect and reflect on the emotional toll of the pandemic.

[76] COVID Impact Report 2020/2021, Levenshulme Inspire; How to Set Up, Run and Sustain a Community Hub to Transform Local Service Provision, Locality

Case in practice: Community Asset Transfer, Bramley Bath in Leeds[77]

Community Asset Transfer refers to the transfer of ownership or management of public land and buildings – typically from a local authority to a community organisation – at less than market value. This approach is based on the expectation that the asset will generate long-term local social, economic, or environmental benefits.

Bramley Baths, a Grade II listed Edwardian facility in Leeds, was transferred to community ownership through Community Asset Transfer and reopened in 2013 following threats of closure due to local authority budget cuts.

Since the transfer, Bramley Baths has developed into a sustainable, community-led facility. Opening hours have doubled, and the Baths now operate seven days a week. The organisation employs 38 staff and recorded a £63k surplus in 2016/17. Additionally, the number of children receiving weekly swimming lessons increased from 950 to 1,700.

The Baths also offer inclusive and targeted programming, such as tailored sessions for children with Down syndrome and safe spaces for transgender and non-binary adults. Additionally, a lifeguard training scheme supports skills development and job opportunities for local young people.

In recognition of its performance and sustainability, Leeds City Council granted the organisation a new 50-year lease in 2017.

[77] Building Powerful Communities Through Community Asset Transfer, Locality

Plymouth Octopus Project[78]

Plymouth Octopus Project Plymouth Octopus Project POP is a collective in Plymouth dedicated to supporting communities, citizen action, and grassroots activity. Their work is rooted in a decade of building networks, offering capacity support, experimenting with grant-making, and being a voice of strategic change. POP aims to fulfil two roles in Plymouth. As Grassroots Champion they connect, support, and amplify the voice of communities and the grassroots, so that people can shape and improve the places in which they live. As system stewards, or what they call System Convener, they 'bring together different sectors, opinions and perspectives into liminal space to find shared ways forward, with an aim for Plymouth to be able to demonstrate more just, fairer, and greener approaches in the work we do.' Over the last 3.5 years POP say they have been

learning how to collaborate and how to go from listening to influencing the 'system', which they define as Plymouth, the place.

For example, POP convenes 'Belong in Plymouth', which aims to create a movement to make Plymouth a city where no one feels forgotten, a city that is inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of all its residents. The goal is to bring people together to share ideas, resources, and experiences that will help build a stronger, more connected community. 'Belong in Plymouth' is a partnership between the health sector, the local authority and the voluntary sector. Its focus is on tackling loneliness and social isolation and creating a city where everybody feels like they belong. The work is very emergent, based around experimentation, building trust, learning and relationships.

[78] Plymouth Octopus Project, System Stewardship in Practice: What It Is and How to Get Started, Collaborate CIC

Case in practice: Social Prescribing[79]

Since it was included as part of the NHS Long Term Plan in 2019, social prescribing has become a key part of the move towards personalised care in England. The social prescribing model enables health professionals to refer people to Social Prescribing Link Workers who support them to access non-clinical services in their own neighbourhoods– such as community groups, financial advice, housing support, physical activity or befriending.

Over **3,500 Link Workers** are now embedded within primary care networks across England, receiving more than **2.7 million referrals** since 2019. Their role is to listen, build trust, and work with individuals to understand their personal circumstances and goals.
Link Workers then connect people with services and social support rooted in their local communities, helping to address the wider determinants of health.

Evaluations across the country show that social prescribing can not only improve wellbeing but also significantly reduce pressure on health services:

- In Tameside and Glossop, an evaluation of 1,751 referrals showed a 42% drop in GP appointments.
- In Kent, A&E visits reduced by up to **23%** for the 5,908 people supported.
- In Kirklees, support for frequent service users led to **5**0% fewer GP appointments and 66% fewer A&E attendances.
- In Rotherham, frequent A&E use reduced by **up to 43%**, with cost reductions of **up to 39%**.

Social prescribing has also shown positive economic returns:

- In Newcastle, secondary care costs were 9% lower than in a matched control group.
- A national evaluation of the Green Social Prescribing programme found a **social** return on investment of £2.42 for every £1 invested, alongside significant improvements in wellbeing based on ONS wellbeing measures.

[79] The Impact of Social Prescribing on Health Service Use and Costs: Examples of Local Evaluations in Practice, National Academy for Social Prescribing

Appendix C: References

With thanks to John Hitchin of Place Matters, Lewis Greenwood of Wigan Council, and Rhys Davies of Somerset County Council for taking the time to help us understand their work.

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Appendix 7:

Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

Equality Impact Assessment

Local Government Reorganisation Proposal

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Executive Summary

This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been written to support the shared vision of twelve unitary, district and borough councils for the future of local government in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will be the greatest change in local government in over 50 years, and we are committed to re-thinking how we deliver services and creating new local government structures that are built around our residents. LGR will impact individuals and communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, especially those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

This EIA is a high-level assessment, intended to consider and inform the strategic direction of the case for change, and the potential impacts our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model may have on residents. It is intended as the beginning of the consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion. As we progress through LGR, additional, more detailed and targeted EIAs will be developed to support our communities, and our staff through the transition and help us ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty at every stage of the process. These will incorporate updated data, community insights, and feedback from service users to ensure a deeper understanding of evolving impacts.

Scope

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is home to a diverse population, across urban, rural and coastal communities, each with unique identities and challenges. To properly assess the impact of our proposed approach may have on the population, this EIA includes all the protected characteristics, as well as the armed forces community, people experiencing socio-economic deprivation, and rural communities.

This assessment draws on data from the 2021 census and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, all of which is publicly available.

Key Findings

LGR presents the opportunity to design localised, responsive, inclusive and integrated services. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model leans into these opportunities, with services designed around how people live and work. Local governance would be tailored, coordinated and close, enabling improved responsiveness, robust local relationships, more inclusive engagement strategies and stronger partnerships. When designing services, the existing councils, who are already working together, would share good practice and learning, and ensure a balanced approach to rural and urban needs.

Potential risks identified apply to LGR and the period of transition ahead more broadly, such as disruption to service provision, loss of specialist knowledge, digital exclusion and loss of trusted relationships. Fragmentation of services is a risk that pertains to our approach. As the responsibility

of service delivery shifts from county to the unitaries, gaps in service integration may be temporarily exacerbated. To mitigate this risk, the existing council, partners and stakeholders will be co-designing future services, to ensure continuity and embed operational expertise.

This EIA also considers the workforces of the existing councils. LGR will likely bring substantial changes for staff, with potential new working practices, team structures and working environments. Potential risks identified at this stage are around staff wellbeing and support, and retention as well as the possibility of differing practices across the unitaries during the transition period. Clear and timely communication and engagement with staff will be increasingly important as LGR progresses and will help mitigate these risks.

Mitigations and Risks

The table below contains an overview of the risks and mitigations identified. Under each characteristic, risks are recognised, and all of the current mitigations can be found in section 16.

Risk Summaries	Mitigation Summaries
Disruption to trusted community relationships (e.g. LGBTQ+, faith groups, rural residents)	**Community engagement:** ongoing, inclusive engagement ensures continuity, trust and visibility of diverse community voices in shaping services.
Fragmentation of services during transition	**Stakeholder engagement and workshops:** co-design with service leads and partners embeds operational expertise and continuity into future models.
Workforce instability and loss of specialist knowledge	**Transition planning:** builds on existing unitary structures and proven delivery models. Guided by shared principles focused on workforce wellbeing and continuity.
Risk of exclusion or inaccessible services (e.g. digital exclusion and cultural sensitivity)	**Inclusive service design:** embeds local insight and co-production to ensure services are culturally competent, accessible and responsive to diverse needs.
Underrepresentation of groups in service design	**Community engagement:** ensures lived experience informs service transformation, particularly for groups at risk of being overlooked in structural change. A key principle of this proposal is that service delivery should align with distinct communities, engaging them upfront in the shaping of future service.
Disruption to characteristic specific or intersectional services	**Transition Planning & Inclusive Service Design:** maintains continuity of specialist services and ensures intersectional needs are embedded in future service models.

1. Introduction

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is home to a diverse population of approximately two million people, spread across a mix of urban centres, coastal communities, rural areas, and the Isle of Wight. The area includes major economic hubs such as Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester, and Basingstoke, each with distinct identities, strengths, and challenges.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) presents a significant opportunity to reshape how public services are delivered across this varied landscape, ensuring they are more responsive, resilient, and reflective of the way people live.

Twelve district, borough, and unitary councils across mainland Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have come together to propose a new model for local government: the creation of four new mainland unitary authorities, with the Isle of Wight retaining its existing unitary status.

Communities are at the heart of this proposal, aiming to provide high-quality, prevention focussed, financially sustainable and place-based services which are responsive to local needs. This structure is designed to align council boundaries with established economic areas and population centres, enabling more effective service delivery, stronger local leadership, and improved outcomes for communities.

This high-level Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken to explore how our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary authorities may affect individuals and communities, particularly those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Given the size and diversity of the region, the assessment will also consider the impact on the Armed Forces community and areas experiencing different types of deprivation.

Any change carries potential risk, this EIA aims to highlight the key opportunities for our communities with a four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model, as well as begin to identify and mitigate potential risks. Supporting informed decision making with communities in mind, ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded from the outset. This EIA also recognises the importance of the local government workforce in delivering high-quality, inclusive services. As the structure of local authorities change, so too will the working environments, patterns, and relationships that underpin effective service delivery. These high-level workforce factors will be explored further in the assessment to ensure that staff needs are considered alongside those of residents.

As the process to establish new unitary authorities progresses, more detailed and targeted Equality Impact Assessments will be developed, incorporating additional data and community insights to ensure a deeper understanding of potential impacts.

1.1 Insights and Data

To inform this EIA data has been drawn from the 2021 census, Hampshire's Joint Needs Assessment, Portsmouth's Joint Needs Assessment, Southampton's Joint Needs Assessment, the English Index of Multiple Deprivation. All of the data in this report, except where otherwise specified is from the 2021 census.[1]

In this report, the area that currently makes up the county of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Hampshire is referred to as 'Hampshire and the Isle of Wight' and 'Hampshire'. As such, when data refers to 'Hampshire' or 'Hampshire and the Isle of Wight', the data is the cumulative figure of the areas covered by the following local authorities:

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	East Hampshire District Council	Eastleigh Borough Council	Fareham Borough Council	Gosport Borough Council	Hart District Council	Havant Borough Council
Isle of Wight Council	New Forest District Council	Portsmouth City Council	Rushmoor Borough Council	Southampton City Council	Test Valley Borough Council	Winchester City Council

Alongside quantitative data, the twelve councils have undertaken extensive engagement with stakeholders and communities to ensure the proposals are shaped by local insight, shared priorities, and lived experience. Communication and engagement activities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have helped residents understand what local government reorganisation could mean for them and provided valuable perspectives on the options being considered. These conversations, through surveys, workshops, and deliberative sessions, have helped ensure that the voices of communities, particularly those most directly affected, are reflected in the development of the proposals, in this Equality Impact Assessment and future assessments going forward.

[1] Information about the 2021 census can be found here: About census - Office for National Statistics

2. Age

2.1 Data Analysis

2.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

According to the 2021 census, the population of Hampshire (including Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight) was 2,185,933. Overall, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has an ageing population compared to the UK as a whole, with people aged 55 and above making up a larger portion of the population – 34.3% in Hampshire compared to 23.8% in the UK.

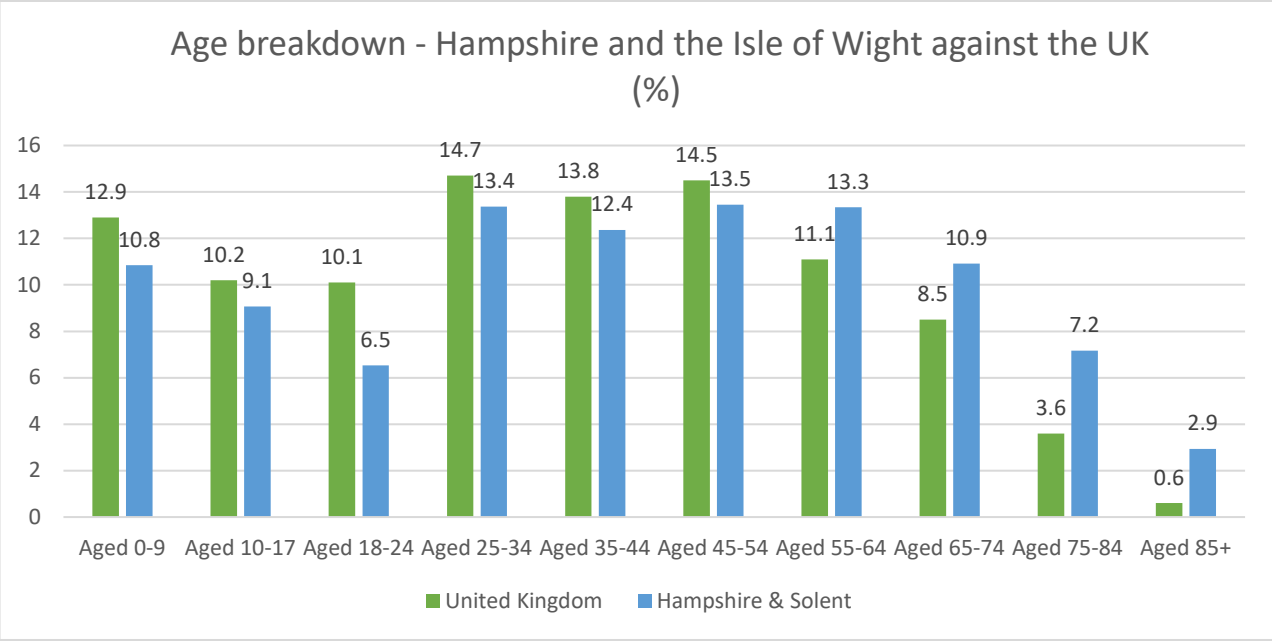
Those aged 75-85 and over make up a considerably larger proportion of the population, 7.2% compared 3.6% of the UK population. People aged 75 and over tend to be more reliant on council services than most of their younger counterparts.

Those aged 25-54 are represented relatively similarly in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight compared to the UK, though they make up a smaller portion of the population in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight – 39.3% compared to 43.0% in the UK.

Young people, between birth and aged 24 make up 26.4% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population, compared to 33.2% of the UK's population. Those aged 18-24 are particularly underrepresented when compared to the national figures, 6.5% compared to 10.1% in the UK. However, this is similar to other, more rural areas, which consistently see people aged 18-24 leave for more urban settings.

2.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight contains large areas of rurality, alongside smaller towns and more urban areas, so the districts that currently make up Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are very varied in their age profiles. The city unitaries of Southampton and Portsmouth, and the borough of Rushmoor have notably younger populations (aged 34 and under). The coastal borough of Fareham and the Isle of Wight have older populations (aged 55 and over). Winchester and Test Valley have incredibly similar age profiles; the largest difference is between those aged 25-34, 12.7% of the population of Winchester and 11.6% of the population of Test Valley. Basingstoke and Deane and Eastleigh also have similar age profiles, with the largest difference being between those aged 45-54,13.8% in Eastleigh and 14.8% in Basingstoke and Dean.



Children and young people (aged 0-17 years)

19.9% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population is aged 17 or under. Using this as a base figure, Eastleigh with a 0-17 population of 19.9%, Hart with 22.2%, Rushmoor with 25.8% and Test Valley at 20.3% have the largest proportion of children and young adults. The boroughs of Basingstoke and Dean 19.5, and Winchester 19.6%, both home to large towns also have a large population of children and young people, at 19.5%

and 19.6% respectively. Meanwhile, the populations of the city unitaries of Portsmouth and Southampton consist of 17.6% and 18.1% 0–17-year-olds respectively.

Young adults (aged 18-34)

20.1% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population is aged 18-34. Young adults tend to leave more rural areas for urban areas in search of job opportunities and appropriate housing. Rushmoor has the largest percentage of young adults at 29.6%, likely in part due to its status as a Garrison town. The populations of Basingstoke and Winchester consist of 20.4% and 21.0% people aged 18-34 respectively. 28.1% of Southampton's population and 25.8% of Portsmouth's population are aged 18-34.

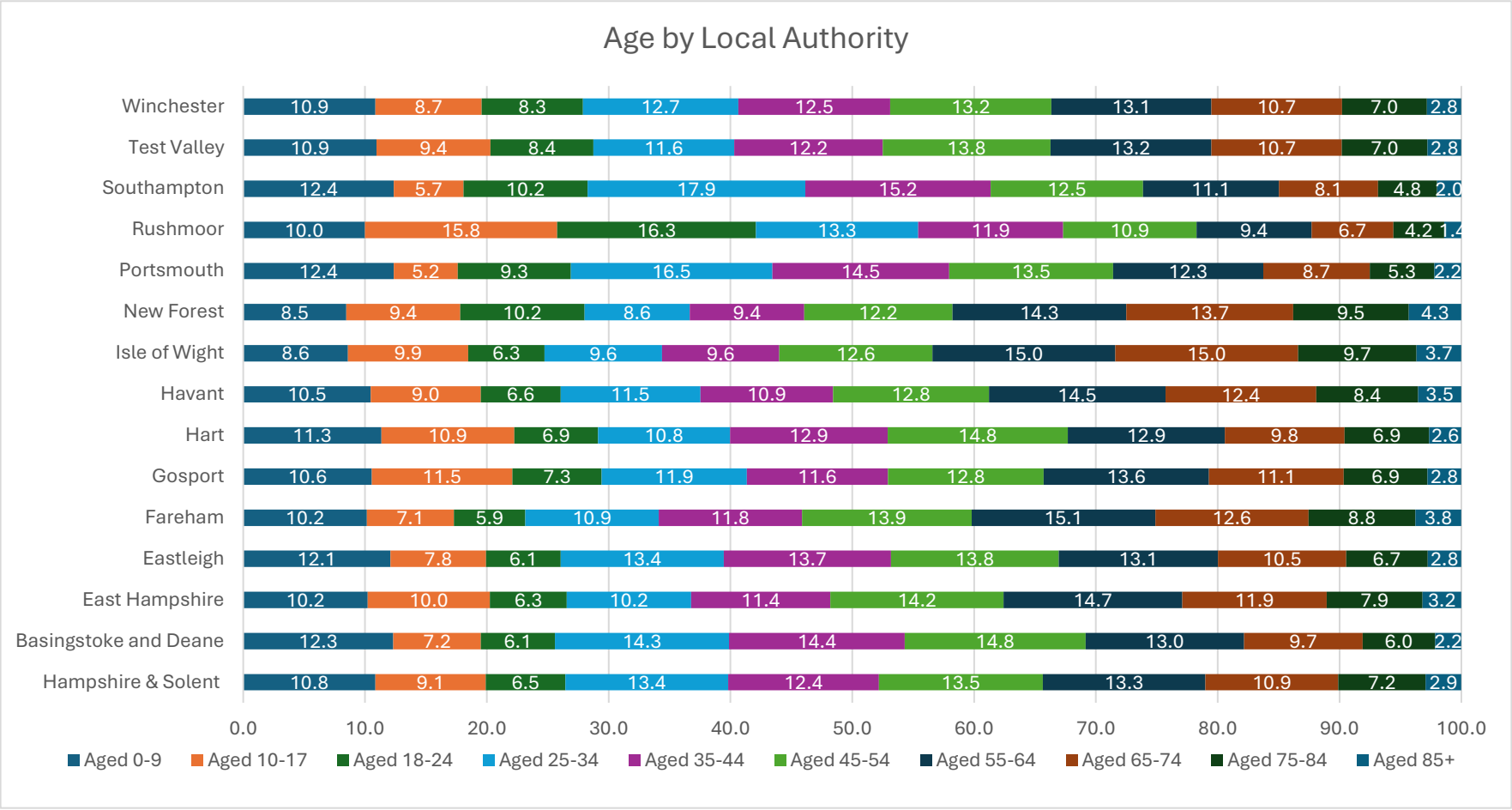
Adults (35-54)

25.9% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population is aged 35-54. In Test Valley, where there is a mix of rural and more urban towns, 26.0% of the population are 35-54, just above the figure for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. With its continuous urban area, 27.5% of Eastleigh's population is 35-54. Hart's population consists of 27.7% people aged 35-44, the figure for Basingstoke is 29.2%. As urban centres, both Southampton and Portsmouth have large 35-54 groups, at 27.7% and 28.0% respectively.

Older adults (aged 55-74)

24.2% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population is aged 55-64. Six of the districts that currently make up mainland Hampshire have larger proportions of 55-64 than Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as a whole. The populations of the costal boroughs of Gosport and Fareham contain 24.7% and 27.7% people aged 55-64 respectively. 26.9% of Havant's population, and 26.6% of East Hampshire's population are within this age bracket. The two areas home to the largest percentage of people aged 55-64 are New Forest at 28.0% and the Isle of Wight at 30.0%.

Elderly Adults (75+) 9.9% of the Isle of Wight's population is aged 75-85+. New Forest has the largest number of people aged 75+ at 13.8%, followed by the Isle of Wight at 13.4%. The bordering districts of Havant and East Hampshire consist of 11.9% and 11.1% of the population aged 75 and over. Finally, Fareham's population is 12.5% people aged 75+.



2.2 Community Impact- Age

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, people engage with local authorities across different stages of their lives. This is often shaped by age, circumstances, and community context.

For older adults, key touchpoints include adult social care, housing support, health and wellbeing services, transport, and community safety. This is particularly true for those aged 75–85, who are likely to interact with a wide range of services — from waste management and housing to health and social care — and whose needs must be carefully considered when designing future services and their locations.

Working-age adults engage with services such as employment support, transport and infrastructure, housing, digital access, and family-related services. Those aged 25–54 often use a broad mix of services, including housing provision, business and employment support, highways and transport, and digital services. Many in this group are also parents, guardians, or carers, making children and young people's services, adult social care, and education particularly relevant.

Young people interact with local authorities through education, youth services, early intervention and safeguarding, and community and leisure activities. For those aged 0–17, education and children's services are central, while 18–24-year-olds may focus more on housing, employment support, and transitions into adulthood.

In addition to statutory services, access to cultural opportunities and green spaces plays a vital role in supporting wellbeing across all age groups. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight benefit from a rich cultural offer, including museums, heritage sites, and community events, as well as significant natural assets such as Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Itchen Valley Country Park, and many local parks and open spaces. Our proposed four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enables each new authority to draw on a mix of urban and rural environments, helping to promote healthier lives and stronger communities. These assets contribute to physical and mental wellbeing, social connection, and a sense of place. All of which are essential to inclusive, age-responsive service delivery.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers a strong foundation for tailoring services to these life stages. By aligning governance with real economic and social geographies, the model supports more locally responsive service delivery, enabling authorities to better understand and meet the needs of residents at different ages. This includes supporting preventative approaches in adult social care, improving transitions for young people, and ensuring services are rooted in community identity.

In contrast, fewer or larger unitary authorities risk diluting these connections. Larger geographies may struggle to reflect the lived experiences of residents, particularly where age-related needs vary significantly between communities. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model

enables a more place-based approach, fostering collaboration between local partners and ensuring services remain accessible, relevant, and responsive across all age groups.

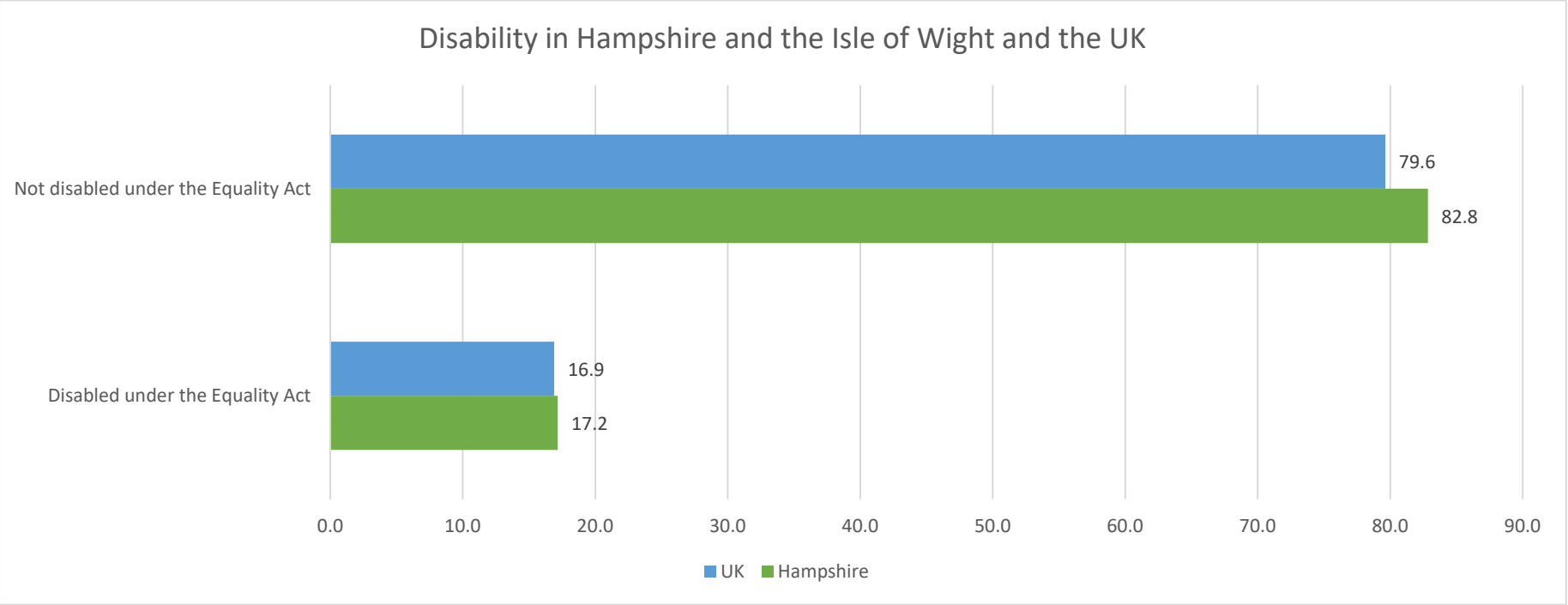
Positive Impacts
Localised Neighbourhood Service Delivery: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model ensures that services are designed around how people live and work. Enabling services to be closer to where people live, which is especially important for older adults who may rely more on local networks or connections or struggle with access or transport. As well as enable continuity of care to build on existing community relationships. **Alignment with NHS 10-year plan:** The NHS 10-year plan prioritises prevention, integration and community resilience, all of which benefit older adults be reducing hospital admissions and promote independent living. This alignment between NHS, four new unitary authorities and local health systems, means existing well-functioning operation models can be built on. Especially in areas like Mid Hampshire where place-based care is already embedded. **Balanced scale and proximity:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model combines strategic capacity with closeness to communities, enabling services to be more person centred and reduces risk of over-centralisation of larger models
Negative Impacts
Transition planning must ensure continuity of care and workforce stability to avoid exacerbating existing gaps. Transitioning to a new structure may disrupt existing arrangements in adult social care and children's services which could result in delays or inconsistencies in care and service delivery. **Fragmentation:** Although our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model aims to reduce fragmentation, the transition from county-district arrangements could temporarily exacerbate gaps in service integration. **Disruption in local relationships and informal networks:** Even with place-based interventions, structural change can disrupt long-standing relationships between older residents and local service providers. Which could result in a loss of trust or familiarity which in turn could reduce engagement during transition.

3. Disability

3.1 Data Analysis

3.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

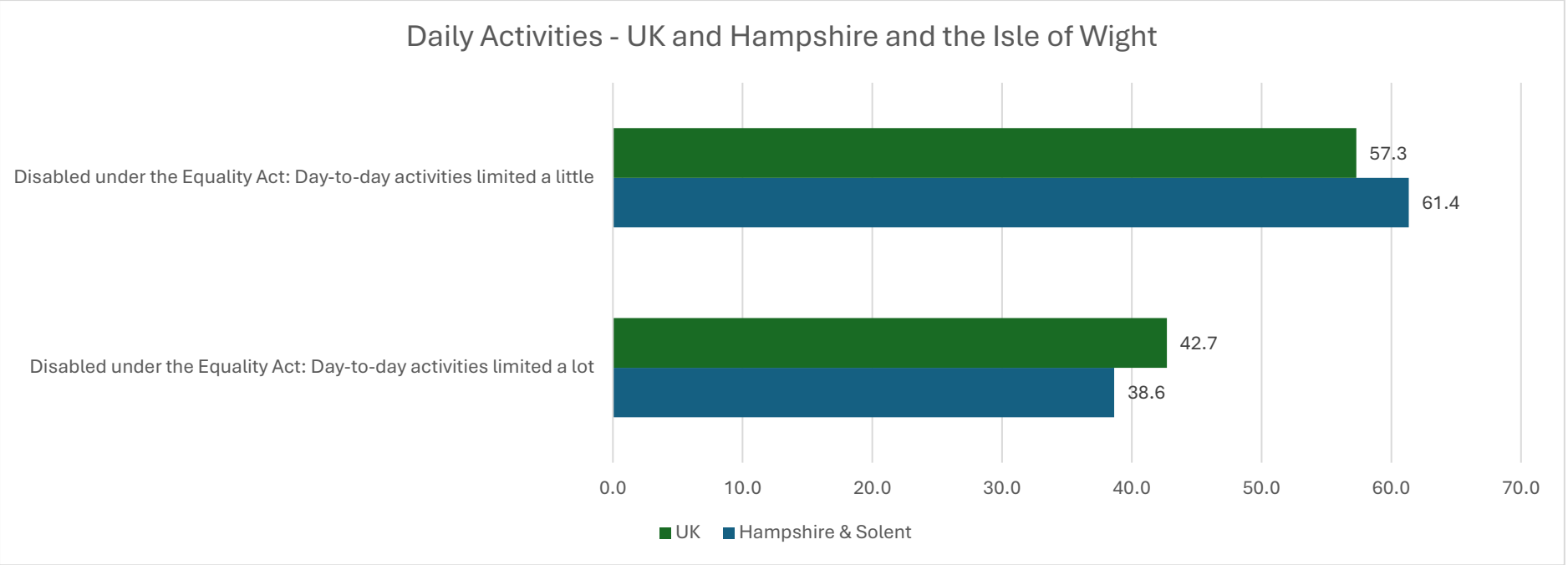
At the time of the 2021 Census, 17.2% of the population of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight identified themselves as disabled under the 2010 Equality Act. The equivalent figure for the UK is 16.90%, and 17.3% for England. While on the surface, these figures are similar, the day-to-day impact people experience, and often the types of support required, varies.



Daily Activities

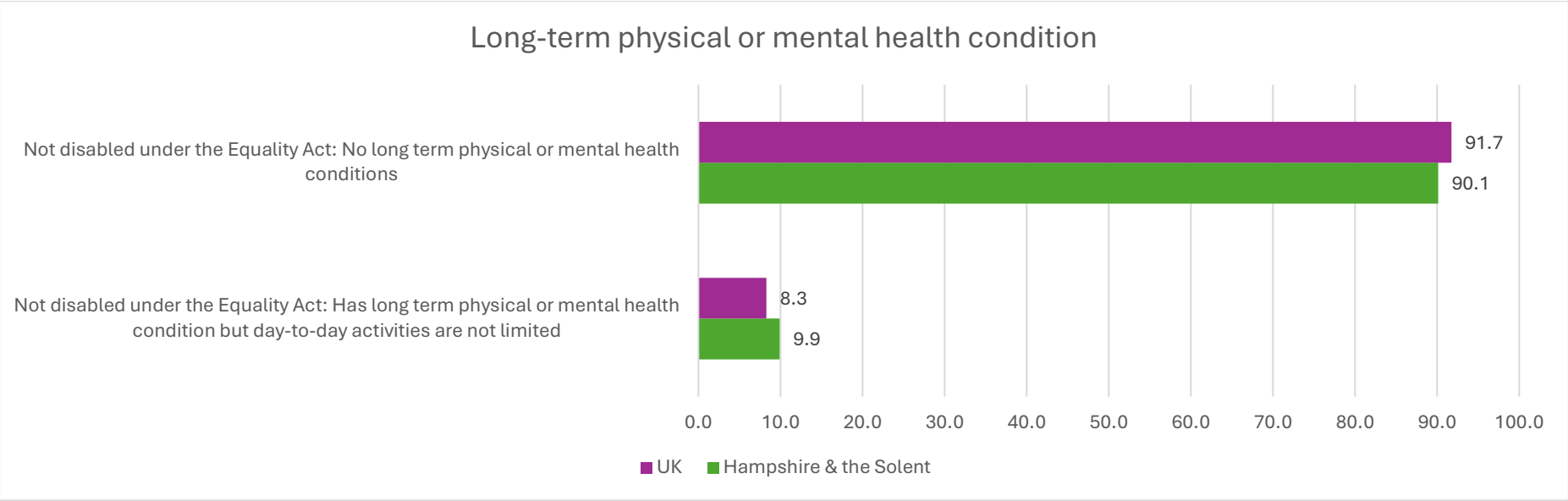
Of the population in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight who are disabled, 61.4% said that their disability impacts their daily activities a little, the equivalent figure for the UK is 57.3%. Comparatively, across the UK, people who are disabled experience more limitations when going about daily activities – 42.7%, compared to 38.6% in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Overall, disabled people in Hampsire and the Solent experience less impact on their daily activities than the disabled population in the UK more widely.

While this data is useful, it should be noted that in the census, there is no description or example, making people's answers entirely subjective.



Long-term conditions

Of the population who are not disabled under the Equality Act, some recorded a long term physical or mental health condition which does not limit their daily activities. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, this group accounts for 9.9% of the population who aren't disabled, compared to 8.3% in the UK. While daily activities are not limited, this group may require more assistance from health and wellbeing services.

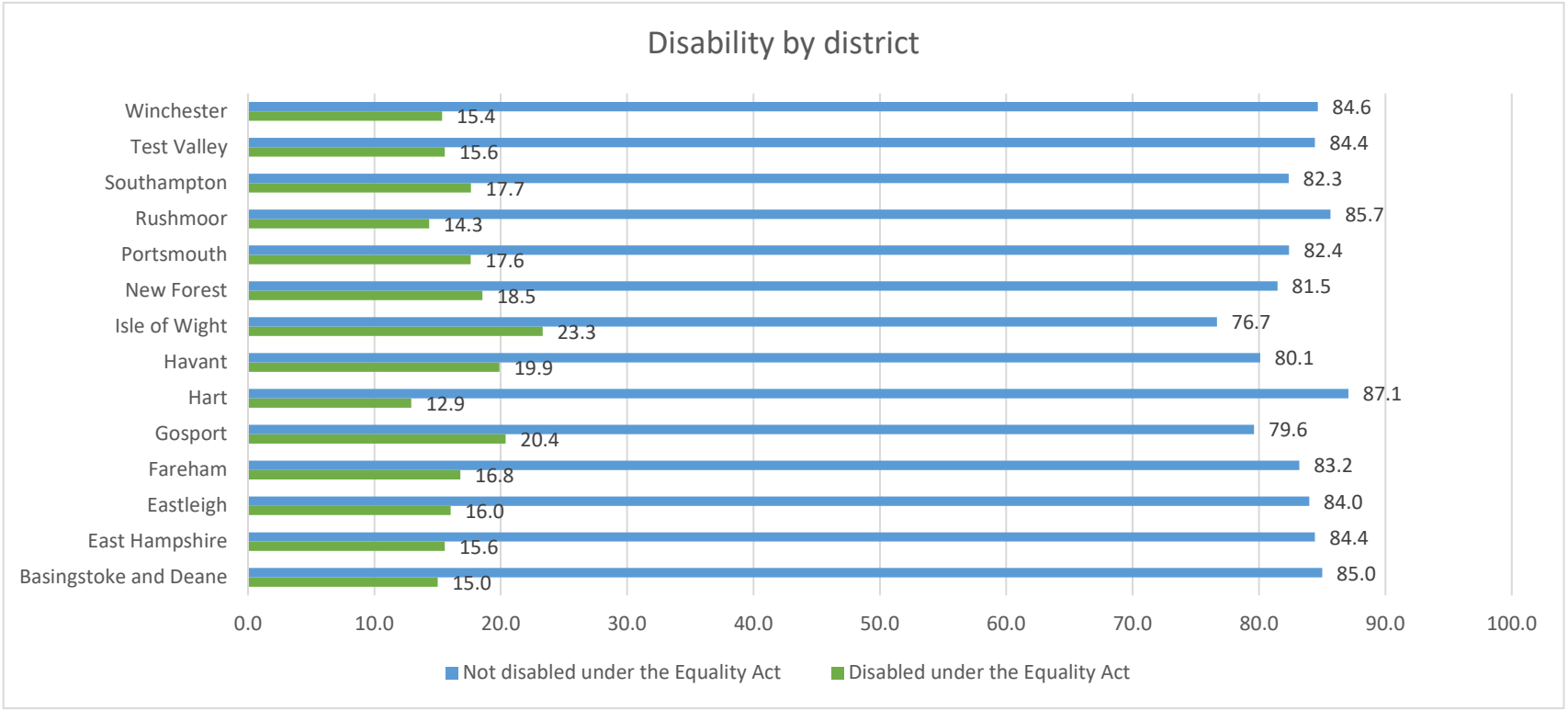


3.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

The percentage of people who are disabled in each district varies massively, by over 10.0%. Six of the districts that currently make up Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have larger disabled populations than in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and the UK as a whole. Hart's disabled population is the lowest, at 12.9%, which equates to 12,850 people.

Seven of the districts sit between 14.0-17.0% of the population identifying as disabled. In Rushmoor, 14.3% of the population are disabled, this equates to 14,309 people. 15.0% of Basingstoke's population are disabled – 27,778 people, and 15.4% of Winchester's population are disabled –

19,566 people. Test Valley and East Hampshire's populations consist of 15.6%, or 20,316 and 19,579 disabled people respectfully. In Eastleigh, 16.0% of the population, 21,869 are disabled, and 16.8% of Fareham's population are disabled – 19,252 people.



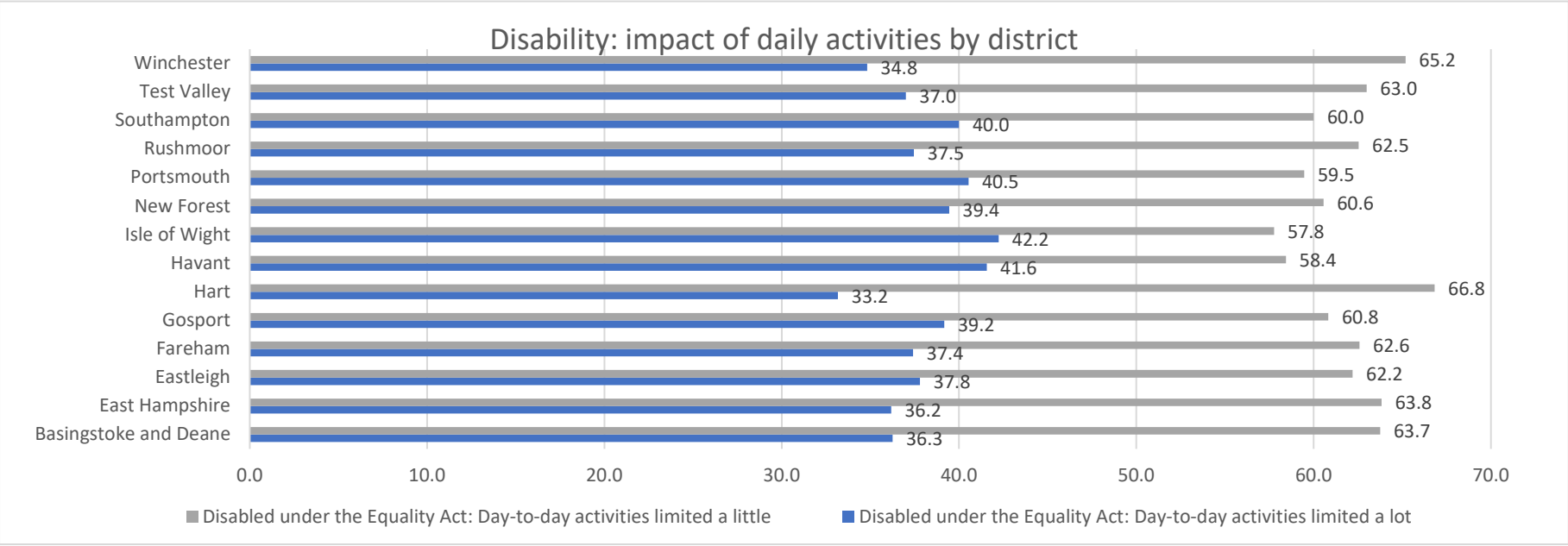
Areas with slightly higher percentages of disabled people include the city unitaries of Southampton (17.7%) and Portsmouth (17.6%), equating to 43,937 and 36,648 people respectively and the New Forest, where 19.9% of the population, or 32,591 are disabled.

The coastal communities of Gosport and Havant, both of which have older age profiles than the majority of the other districts, have higher percentages of disabled people. 19.9% of Gosport's population (16,714 people) and 20.4% of Havant's population (24,718 people) are disabled.

The Isle of Wight has the highest disabled population, at 23.3%, which equates to 32,755. While this raw figure is similar to the number of people with disabilities in the New Forest, Southampton, and Portsmouth, each area is distinct, with its own geographical challenges and community networks.

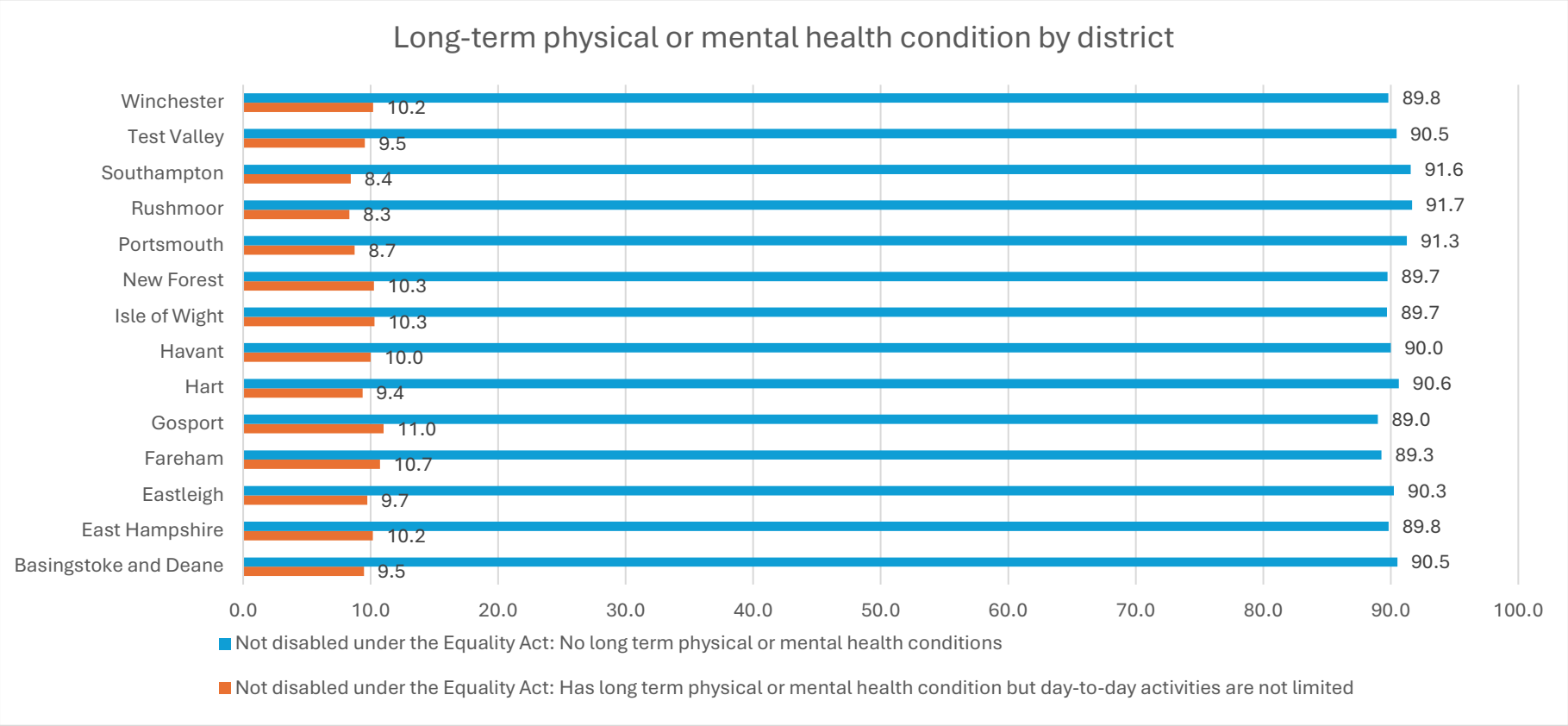
Daily Activities

The impact disabilities can have on people's daily lives and activities is, in this case broadly similar to the disabled populations. Hart, which has the lowest population of disabled people, has the lowest percentage of people whose disability impact their daily activities a lot. The Isle of Wight, which has the largest disabled population in the area has the highest percentage of people whose disability impact their daily activities a lot. With the exception of the Isle of Wight, all of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has a lower percentage of people whose daily activities are limited a lot than the UK as a whole. Meanwhile eight of the districts have a lower percentage of people whose daily activities are limited a lot than Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



Long term conditions

The highest percentage of those who are not disabled but do have a long term physical or mental health condition is in Gosport where the figure is 11.0%. All of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have a higher percentage of people with a long term physical or mental health condition than the UK (at 8.3%), with the exception of Rushmoor, which has the same percentage of 8.3%.



3.2 Community Impact- Disability

Individuals with disabilities may engage with local authorities through a wide range of services, including those that support independence, wellbeing, and inclusion. These touchpoints often include adult social care, housing adaptations, transport and mobility support, education and SEND provision, employment services, and digital accessibility. Local authorities also play a vital role in coordinating with health and voluntary sector partners to ensure joined-up, person-centred support.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers an opportunity to strengthen these connections by embedding services within local communities and aligning delivery with the way people live. This approach enables more responsive and inclusive service design, ensuring that the diverse needs of disabled residents are understood and met at a local level. It also supports the development of integrated, community-based delivery models that can better respond to complex needs and reduce reliance on crisis interventions.

In contrast, fewer or larger unitary authorities risk creating more distant and standardised service models, which may overlook local variation in need and reduce opportunities for co-production with disabled residents and their representative groups. This could also reduce opportunities for coproduction and weaken visibility of specific challenges.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model's emphasis on collaborative working, local representation and community engagement helps mitigate these risks by ensuring services are shaped by those who use them. It also supports investment through transformation, digital inclusion and workforce development. All of which are essential to delivering high-quality, person-centred support for residents with disabilities.

Positive Impacts
More responsive, localised service design: Embedding services within communities allows for better understanding of local needs and lived experiences of disabled residents. Services such as housing adaptions, mobility support and adult social care can be tailored more effectively to localised contexts. **Improved accessibility through place-based planning:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enables authorities to better understand the physical and digital accessibility of local infrastructure and service design. Which in turn enhances inclusion in public life for disabled residents. **Stronger integration with health and voluntary sector partners:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model supports joined up, person centred care through closer collaboration between Councils, health partners and community organisations. Reducing duplication and improving continuity of care.

Negative Impacts
Risk of disruption during transition: Reorganisation may temporarily disrupt services which could result in delays or confusion in accessing support for disabled residents. **Loss of specialist expertise and relationships:** If not carefully managed, the transition could lead to temporary fragmentation of specialist teams with localised knowledge and relationships. Which could impact the quality of support for individuals with a disability or complex needs. **A digital first approach may exclude some** residents who struggle to use or access technology. Without robust offline alternatives and inclusive design, digital self-service could become a barrier for disabled residents.

4. Gender reassignment

4.1 Data Analysis

4.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

The below data on gender identity is taken from the 2021 census. The Office for National Statistics notes that they are 'statistics in development', as the first time the census featured questions on gender identity was 2021.

95.0% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area's population gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. This is lower than in the UK, where the figure is 93.5%. 4.6% of people in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight did not answer this question, meaning 0.4% of people have a gender identity different to the sex they were assigned at birth, compared to 0.8% in the UK. Of this 0.4%, 0.1% had a gender identity different to the sex they were assigned at birth. 0.2% were transgender (0.1% were trans women, 0.1% were trans men) and 0.1% had other gender identities, such as non-binary.

Area	Gender identity the same as sex assigned at birth (%)	Gender identity different from sex assigned at birth but no specific identity given (%)	Transgender (Trans man or Trans woman) (%)	All other gender identities (including non-binary)	Not answered
Hampshire and the Isle of Wight	95.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.6
UK	93.5	0.2	0.5	0.1	6.0

4.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

People aged 18-24 are more likely to report that their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight broadly follows this national trend, as the areas with the youngest age profiles have the highest percentage of people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Southampton is the highest, with 0.9% of people having a gender identity different to the sex they were assigned at birth. The figure for Rushmoor is 0.7%, and for Portsmouth, 0.6%. For eleven areas, 0.4% of the population has a different gender identity than sex assigned at birth, and in the New Forest, the figure is 0.3%.

Area	Gender identity the same as sex assigned at birth (%)	Gender identity different from sex assigned at birth but no specific identity given (%)	Transgender (Trans man or Trans woman) (%)	All other gender identities (including non-binary)	Not answered
Portsmouth	93.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	6.2
Southampton	92.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	6.9
Isle of Wight	93.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	6.0
Basingstoke and Deane	95.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.5
East Hampshire	95.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.7
Eastleigh	95.5	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.2
Fareham	95.4	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.3
Gosport	95.4	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.2
Hart	95.8	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.0

Havant	94.9	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.7
New Forest	94.7	0.1	0.2	0.1	5.1
Rushmoor	93.9	0.4	0.2	0.1	5.3
Test Valley	95.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.7
Winchester	94.8	0.1	0.2	0.1	4.8

4.2 Community Impact- Gender Reassignment

Individuals undergoing or having undergone gender reassignment may engage with local authorities through a range of services where inclusion, privacy, and respectful treatment are essential. These touchpoints may include housing, community safety, health and wellbeing services, and access to inclusive digital platforms. Local authorities also play a vital role in fostering inclusive environments through staff training, service design, and community engagement.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers an opportunity to strengthen these approaches by embedding inclusive practices at a local level. More locally connected authorities are better placed to build trusted relationships, respond to community-specific needs and codesign services with trans and non-binary residents and respective organisations. This place-based approach supports visibility, dignity and responsiveness in everyday service delivery.

In contrast, fewer or larger unitary authorities may struggle to maintain visibility and responsiveness, particularly for communities whose needs may be less prominent within broader structures. A place-based approach supports meaningful engagement and ensures that inclusion is not only embedded in policy but reflected in everyday service delivery.

Positive Impacts
More localised and inclusive service design: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model means authorities are better positioned to embed inclusive practices in everyday service delivery and designed with greater sensitivity to privacy, dignity and respectful treatment. **Stronger relationships and trust:** Localised governance fosters closer relationships between authorities and communities, enabling more meaningful engagement with trans and non-binary residents. Building trust may encourage individuals to seek support earlier with less fear of discrimination or misunderstanding. **Enhanced visibility and responsiveness:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model allows for more tailored approaches that reflect local demographics and need. Ensuring that the needs of trans individuals are not lost within broader, standardised service models.

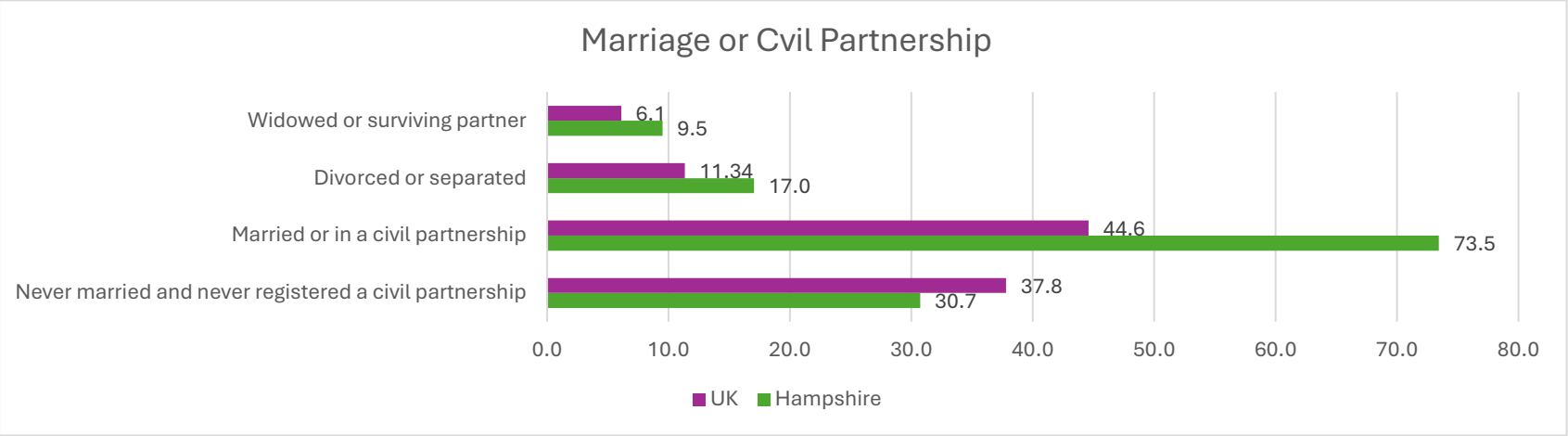
Negative Impacts
Transition planning must ensure continuity of care and workforce stability to avoid exacerbating existing gaps. Transitioning to a new structure may disrupt existing arrangements in adult social care and children's services which could result in delays or inconsistencies in care and service delivery. **Fragmentation:** Although our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model aims to reduce fragmentation, the transition from county-district arrangements could temporarily exacerbate gaps in service integration.

5. Marriage and Civil Partnership

5.1 Data Analysis

5.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 73.5% of the population aged 18 and over are married or in a civil partnership, compared to 44.6% of the UK's population. In the UK, the proportion of adults who are not married has been rising since 1991 across all age groups, and the percentage of people who are divorced is similar, though divorce is on the rise for older adults.

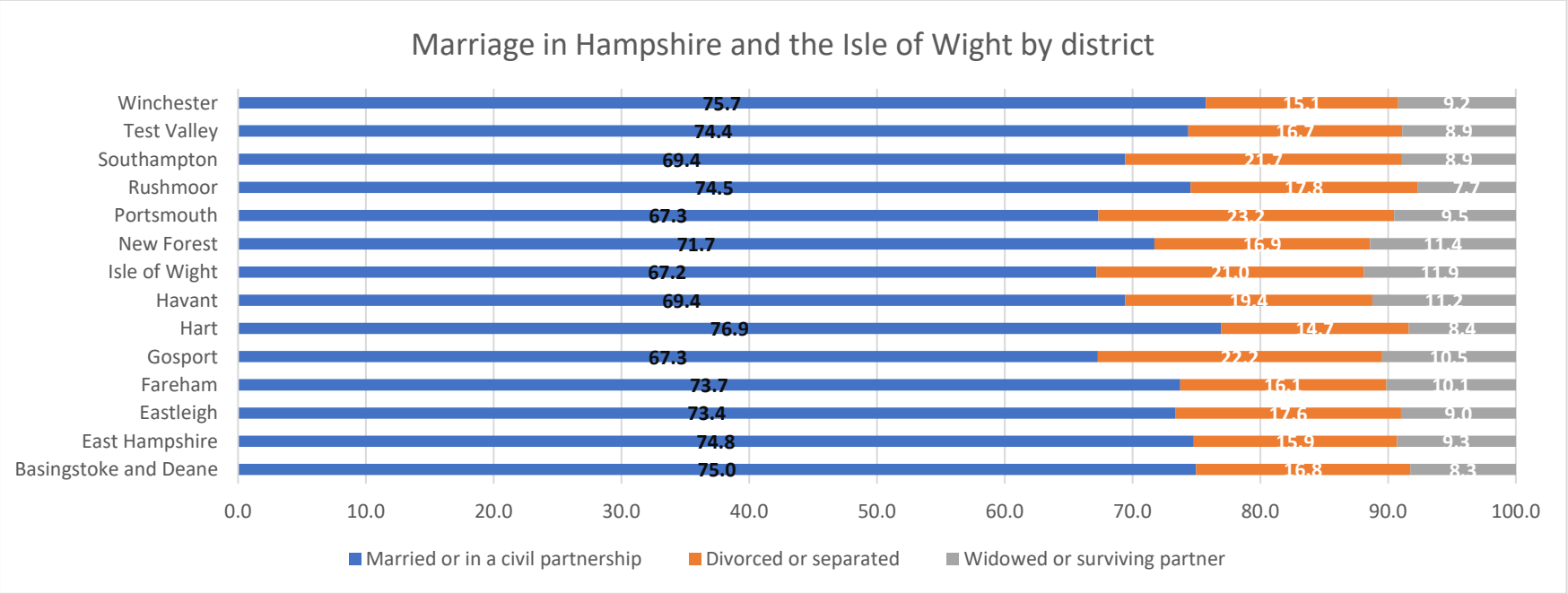


Perhaps due to the older age profile of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as well as the high percentage of marriages, the percentage of divorces or separations is higher than the UK – 17.0% compared to 11.3% in the UK. Additionally, the percentage of people who are widowed, or the surviving partner is higher – 9.5% in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and 6.1% in the UK.

5.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

All of the districts that currently make up Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have a higher percentage of people who are married or in a civil partnership than the UK. Hart has the highest percentage at 76.9%, followed by Winchester at 75.7% and the Solent has the lowest percentage at 67.2%.

Portsmouth has the highest percentage of divorced or separated people at 23.3%, followed by Gosport at 22.2% and Hart has the lowest at 14.7%. The Isle of Wight has the highest percentage of widows or surviving partners at 11.9%, followed by the New Forest at 11.4% and Rushmoor has the lowest at 7.7%.



5.2 Community Impact- Marriage and civil partnership

Individuals who are married or in a civil partnership may engage with local authorities through a range of services that support family life and household stability. These touchpoints can include housing services, council tax and benefits, registration services, and access to family support or mediation. While this characteristic may not always result in distinct service needs, it remains important that services are delivered in a way that recognises and respects diverse family structures.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers an opportunity to strengthen this approach by enabling more locally responsive and inclusive service delivery. By aligning governance with established community and economic geographies, councils will be better placed to understand and reflect the needs of residents who are married or in a civil partnership and throughout different stages of life. The model also supports enhanced neighbourhood working, enabling decision-making at the lowest effective level and fostering more personalised engagement with residents. Through tailored governance and leadership, councils can develop strategies that reflect the unique social and economic contexts of their areas, improving outcomes for people in marriages and civil partnerships.

In contrast, fewer or larger authorities may risk standardising services in ways that overlook the nuances of relationship diversity. Larger, less locally connected structures could dilute community identity and reduce opportunities for personalised support, particularly in areas with distinct cultural and demographic profiles. This could impact the visibility of different relationship arrangements and limit the ability of councils to respond to specific needs. Such as housing for older couples, support for same sex partnerships or when navigating complex life events.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model's emphasis on collaborative working, local representation and community engagement helps mitigate these risks by embedding services within communities and ensuring they are shaped by lived experience.

Positive Impacts
Enhanced neighbourhood working: Decision making at the lowest effective level allows councils to engage more personally with residents in marriage or civil partnerships. Supporting nuanced service design and delivery which may be particularly beneficial for those navigating complex life events that may involve multiple services support. **Tailored governance and leadership:** Councils can develop strategies that reflect the unique social and economic contexts of their areas, in ways which are reflective of how people live their lives. Improving outcomes across different life stages e.g. young adults forming households to older couples requiring care or support.
Negative Impacts

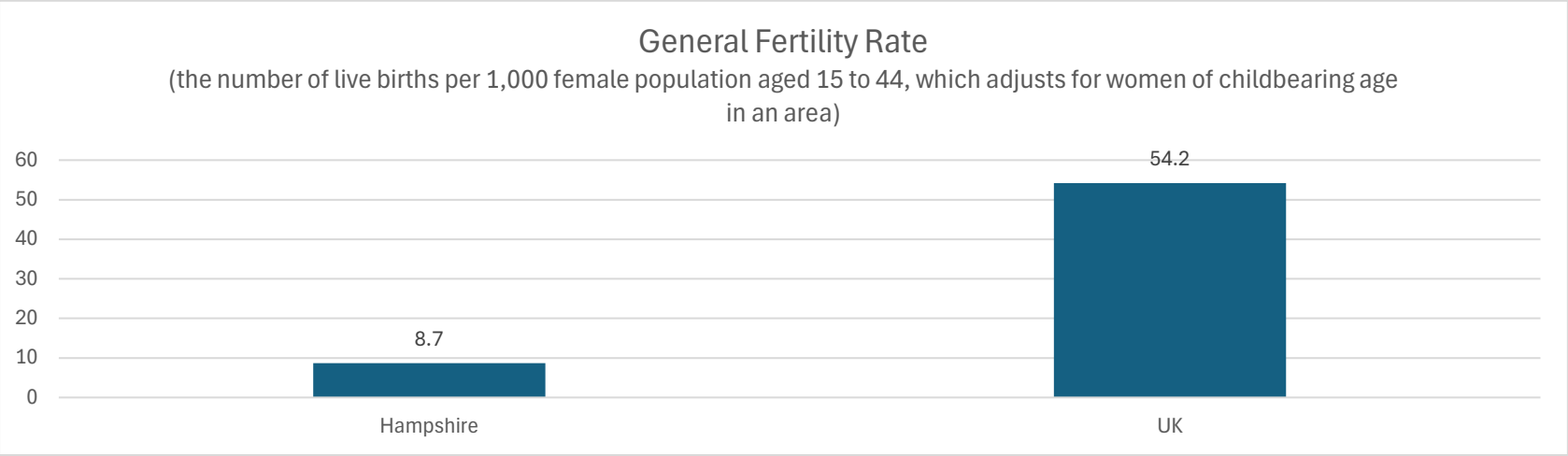
Complexity during transition: The shift to new local authorities may temporarily disrupt services that support household stability, such as benefits processing, housing allocation or registration services. Particularly if systems and staff structures are being reorganised.

6. Pregnancy and maternity

6.1 Data Analysis

6.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

The UK census does not directly ask any questions on pregnancy, so for this data analysis, the general fertility rate (GFR) will be used, taken from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton. The GFR is the number of live births per 1,000 of the female population aged 15-44, as this age bracket is considered to be 'childbearing age'. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the GFR is 8.7, considerably lower than the GFR for the UK, which is 54.2. This is likely due to the older age profile of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, as well as national pressures such as the cost of living.

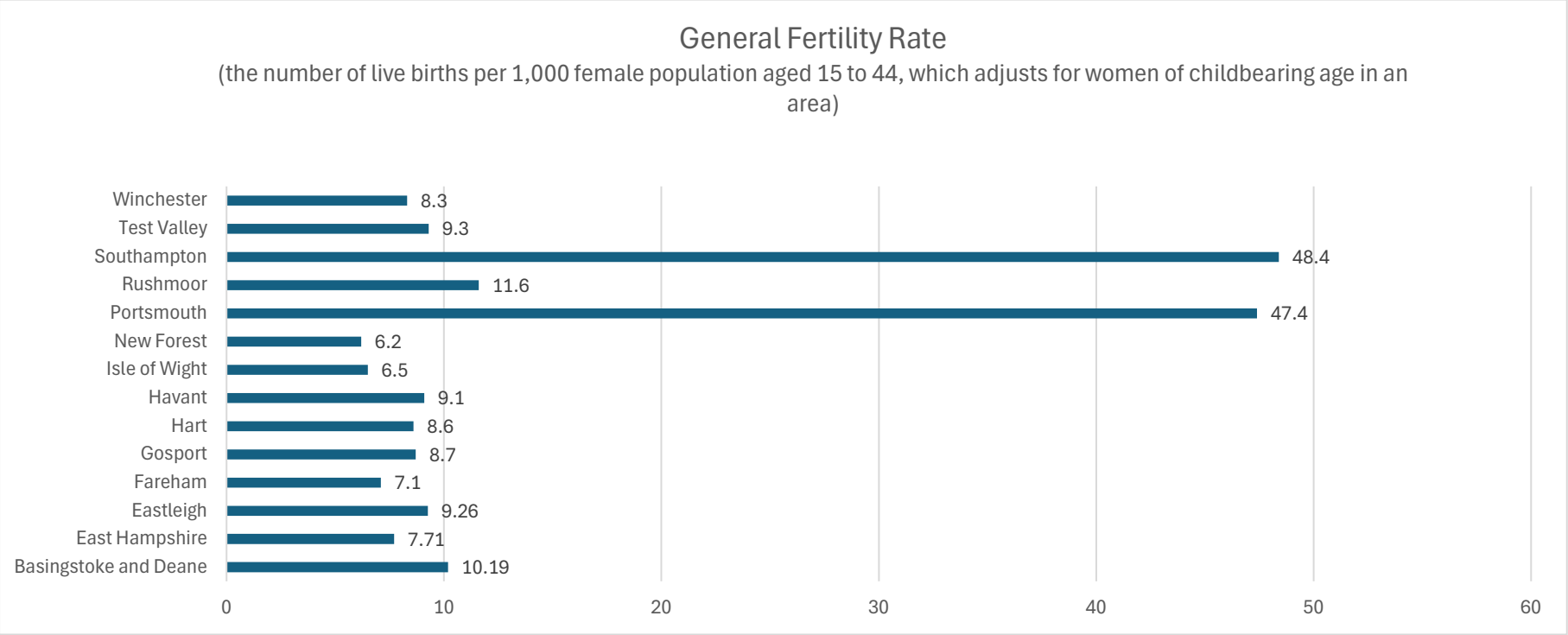


[2]

[2] GFR rates are taken from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton available here:

6.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

At the local level, GFR varies greatly. In the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, the GFR is much closer to the national figure – 48.4 for Southampton and 47.4 for Portsmouth. Rushmoor, with a comparatively younger age profile than Hampshire and the Isle of Wight overall has the GFR of 11.6 and Basingstoke and Dean, with the large town of Basingstoke has the GRF of 11.16. Six of the districts have a GFR between 8.3 and 9.3, they are: Winchester (8.3), Hart (8.6), Gosport (8.7) Havant (9.1), Eastleigh (9.26), and Test Valley (9.3). The four districts with the lowest GFR are East Hampshire (7.71), Fareham (7.1), the Isle of Wight (6.5) and the New Forest with a GFR of 6.2.



Hampshire: Microsoft Power BI
Southampton: https://data.southampton.gov.uk/population/births/
Portsmouth: Portsmouth births - JSNA report - Portsmouth City Council

6.2 Community Impact- pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy and maternity represent key life stages where individuals may engage with a range of local authority services. These touchpoints often include access to housing and benefits support, early years and childcare provision, public health services, and community-based support networks. Local authorities also play a role in coordinating with health partners to ensure wraparound care and safeguarding for both parent and child.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers an opportunity to strengthen support for pregnant individuals and new parents by embedding services within communities and aligning delivery with how people live. This place-based approach enables more responsive and inclusive service design tailored to local demographic. As well as improved coordination across services (such as housing, early years and social care), where current challenges can be exacerbated for those also experiencing deprivation, rural isolation or complex needs. It also created the opportunity for stronger relationships with community organisations, which are often key in supporting families during pregnancy and early parenthood.

In contrast, a model with three or fewer mainland authorities' risks creating larger, less connected structures that may dilute visibility of local needs. Standardised service models could overlook the nuances of pregnancy and maternity. Particularly in areas with distinct cultural, economic and geographic profiles. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model's emphasis on local representation, neighbourhood working, and collaborative leadership helps ensure that services are shaped by lived experience and delivered in ways that promote dignity, continuity, and inclusion at a critical life stage.

Positive Impacts
Enhanced coordination between services: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model allows for closer alignment with local NHS trusts and boundaries, which supports more integrated and wraparound care and support. **Improved responsiveness to local needs**: Authorities aligned to the way people live their lives with clearer geographic and demographic focus, may be more agile in responding to local emerging issues. Localised data can inform targeted interventions that may support (for example) young parents, or pregnant people experiencing homelessness. **Stronger community-based support networks:** Embedding services within communities enabled councils to strengthen relationships with voluntary and community organisations that support families, improving access to informal and preventative support.
Negative Impacts

Disruption during transition: Structural change may temporarily disrupt existing arrangements in adult social care, children's services and early years provision. This could result in delays or inconsistencies in care, particularly for families navigating multiple services.

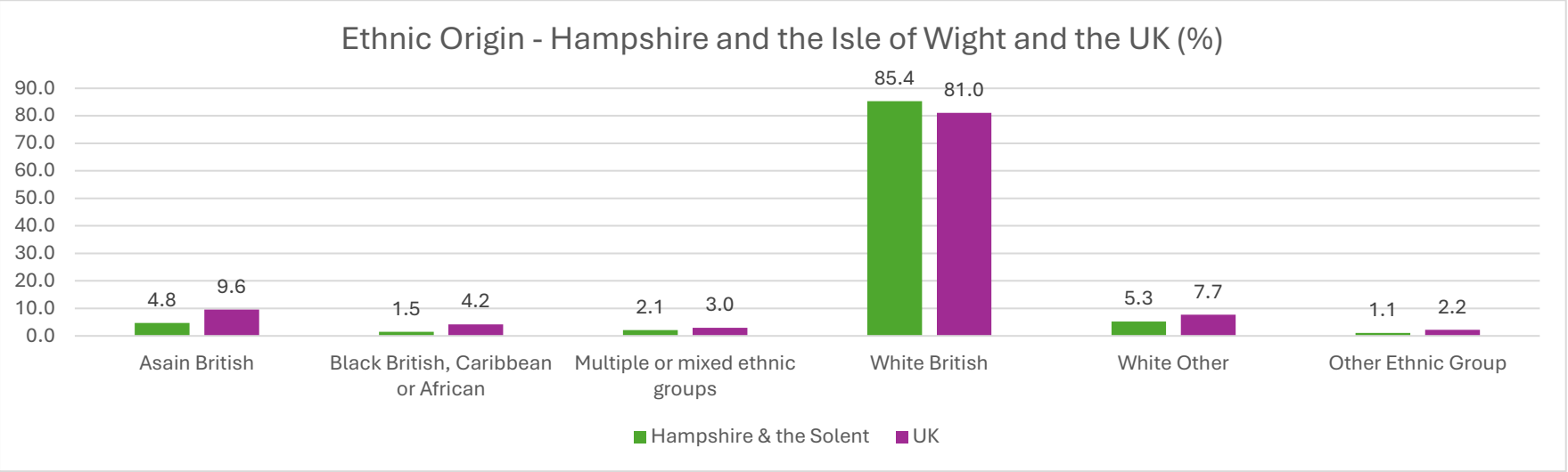
Disruption to informal or trusted relationships: Structural change can disrupt long standing relationships between individuals and service providers which could reduce engagement, particularly among vulnerable or marginalised groups who rely on trusted contacts.

7. Ethnicity

7.1 Data Analysis

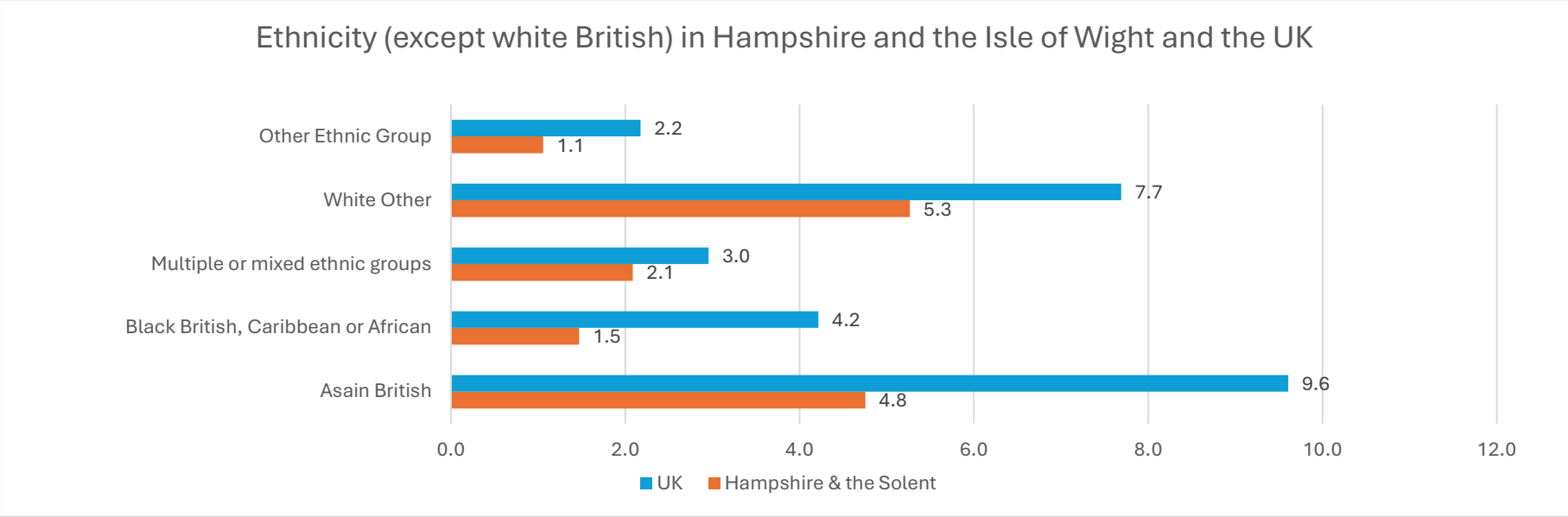
7.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

As with the UK, the most common ethnicity for residents in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is white. In this data analysis, white has been separated into white British and white other. This is because white other includes people who are Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller, a group which are often disadvantaged. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 85.4% of the population is white British, and 5.3% are white other. The population of the UK is slightly more diverse, with 81.0% identifying as white British, and 7.7% are white other.



The next most populous group in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is Asian British, at 4.8% of the population, the same is true for the UK, where the figure is 9.6%. Black British, Caribbean, or African people make up 1.5% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population and 4.2% of the UK's population. People who have multiple or mixed ethnic groups makeup 2.1% of the population in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, compared to 3.0% in the UK, and other ethnic groups make up 1.1% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population, compared to 2.2% in the UK.

The graph below shows the ethnicities of people in the UK and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, without white British, for a clearer comparison. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with the exception of white British, the most common ethnicity is white other at 7.7%, in the UK it's Asian British at 9.6%.



7.1.2 District Analysis

As with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight as a whole, within the districts the most common ethnicity is white British, though the percentage of the population varies. The Isle of Wight has the largest percentage of white British people at 94.4%, followed by the New Forest at 93.7%. The city of Southampton has the lowest percentage of white British people at 68.7%, preceded by Rushmoor with 71.7% white British.

Twelve of the districts share white other as their second most populous group, though in Basingstoke and Dean white other makes up the same percentage as Asian or Asian British at 5.9%. In Eastleigh and Rushmoor, the second largest ethnic group is Asian or Asian British, accounting for 3.9% of Eastleigh's population and 14.7% of Rushmoor's.

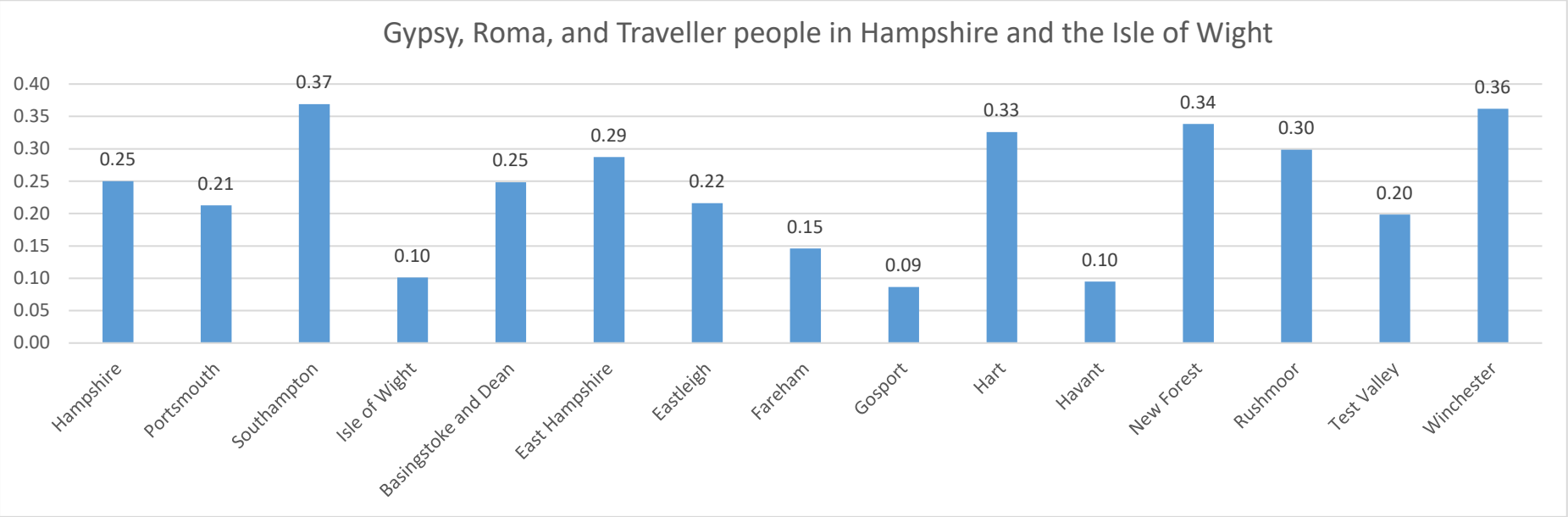
Other ethnic groups account for the smallest amount of the population in twelve of the districts, though in East Hampshire, Hart, the Isle of Wight and the New Forest Black, Black British, Caribbean or African people share the same percentage as other ethnic groups. In Rushmoor and Winchester, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African people account for the smallest percentage of the population – 0.6% in Winchester and 2.5% in Rushmoor.

Key	Largest group	Second largest group	Smallest Group			
AREA	Asian or Asian British (%)	Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African (%)	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (%)	White British (%)	White Other (%)	Other ethnic group (%)
Basingstoke and Deane	5.9	2.0	2.5	82.6	5.9	1.1
East Hampshire	1.9	0.5	1.7	91.1	4.3	0.5
Eastleigh	3.9	1	2.1	88.6	3.8	0.7
Fareham	1.8	0.6	1.5	93.2	2.4	0.4
Gosport	1.4	1.2	1.5	92.8	2.5	0.5
Hart	3.6	0.8	2.2	87.7	4.8	0.8
Havant	1.7	0.6	1.4	93.6	2.3	0.4
Isle of Wight	1.2	0.3	1.2	94.4	2.6	0.3
New Forest	1.2	0.4	1.3	93.7	3.1	0.4
Portsmouth	6.9	3.4	2.6	78.2	7.0	1.8
Rushmoor	14.7	2.5	2.6	71.7	5.7	2.8
Southampton	10.6	3	3.3	68.7	11.9	2.3
Test Valley	3.3	1.1	1.8	88.5	4.6	0.8

Winchester	3.1	0.6	2.0	88.8	4.8	0.7

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) people

At the time of the 2021 census, 4,911 GRT people were recorded in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight accounting for 0.25% of the population. The needs and challenges of GRT people are unique. GRT people tend to have poorer health and as a result, lower life expectancies. GRT people are twice as likely to live in social rented accommodation and live in overcrowded conditions. Self-employment is more common among GRT people, as is provision of over 50 hour a week of unpaid care.



7.2 Community Impact- Ethnicity

Individuals from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds engage with local authorities across a broad spectrum of services, including housing, education, health and wellbeing, community safety, and employment support. To ensure equitable outcomes, it is essential that these services are not only accessible but also culturally competent, inclusive, and responsive to the specific needs of diverse communities.

Local authorities have a critical role in fostering community cohesion, addressing racial discrimination, and ensuring meaningful representation in decision-making processes. This includes actively addressing structural inequalities and ensuring that engagement mechanisms are designed to reach and empower underrepresented groups.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model strengthens the ability to meet these responsibilities by enabling more locally informed service design and delivery. By aligning governance with established community and economic geographies, councils can better reflect the lived experiences of residents and tailor services to local demographic profiles. This supports targeted interventions, inclusive planning, and stronger partnerships with community-led organisations, many of which are best placed to build trust and deliver effective support.

The model also enhances local leadership and accountability, allowing each authority to develop bespoke strategies that reflect the cultural diversity and economic potential of their areas. This includes promoting inclusive regeneration, supporting diverse business communities, and ensuring that cultural and community assets are protected and celebrated.

In contrast, a model with three or fewer mainland authorities' risks diluting the visibility of ethnically diverse communities, particularly in areas where populations are smaller or more dispersed. Larger, less connected structures may lead to standardised service delivery that overlooks cultural nuance, reduces opportunities for co-design, and weakens local representation. This could result in poorer outcomes in areas such as education, health, housing, and economic inclusion.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model helps mitigate these risks by embedding services within communities, supporting inclusive engagement, and ensuring that diversity is recognised as a strength in shaping future governance and service delivery.

Positive Impacts
Greater responsiveness to diverse needs: Place-based authorities can better reflect the demographic makeup of their communities, allowing for more culturally competent service design and delivery. This is particularly beneficial in urban centres like Southampton and Portsmouth, which have higher proportions of racially and ethnically diverse residents. **Improved community engagement and representation:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will enable more targeted and inclusive engagement strategies, increasing visibility and voice of underrepresented groups in decision making. Due to the place-based nature of the authorities, the most appropriate methods can be used to engage with communities, addressing barriers like rurality or isolation. **Stronger partnerships:** Authorities which are more connected to their local populations supports collaboration with grassroots and culturally specific organisations that are trusted within communities and can deliver effective, targeted support.

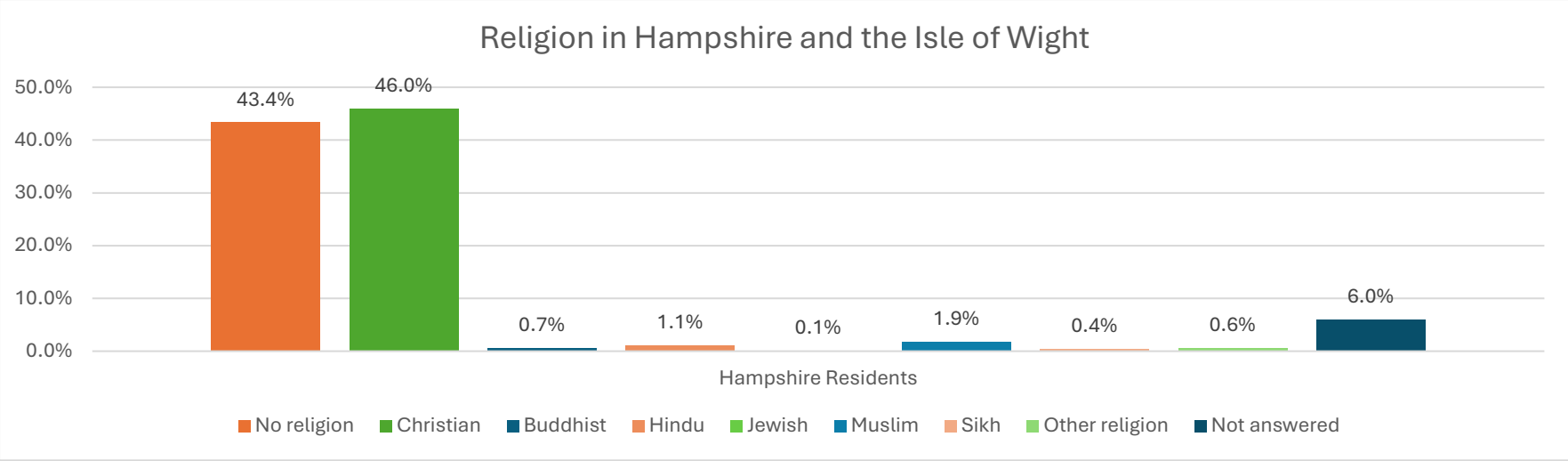
Ability to address inequalities: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model means authorities will be better equipped to identify and respond to disparities in service delivery for diverse communities. This includes tailoring interventions to address inequalities and promote equity.
Negative Impacts
Disruption to community relationships: Reorganisation may affect established partnerships between councils and ethnic minority communities, especially if staff or structures change. **Access barriers:** Diverse communities may be disproportionately affected by digital exclusion, particularly in areas of deprivation. Transitioning to new digital systems or platforms should be carefully managed to avoid creating new barriers to access.

8. Religion or Belief

8.1 Data Analysis

8.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

According to the 2021 Census, Christianity is the most common religion in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight with 46% of residents identifying as Christian. The second largest group are those who follow no religion, accounting for 43.4% of the population. Out of those who do adhere to a religion, Islam is the next most common religion being followed by 1.9% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's population.

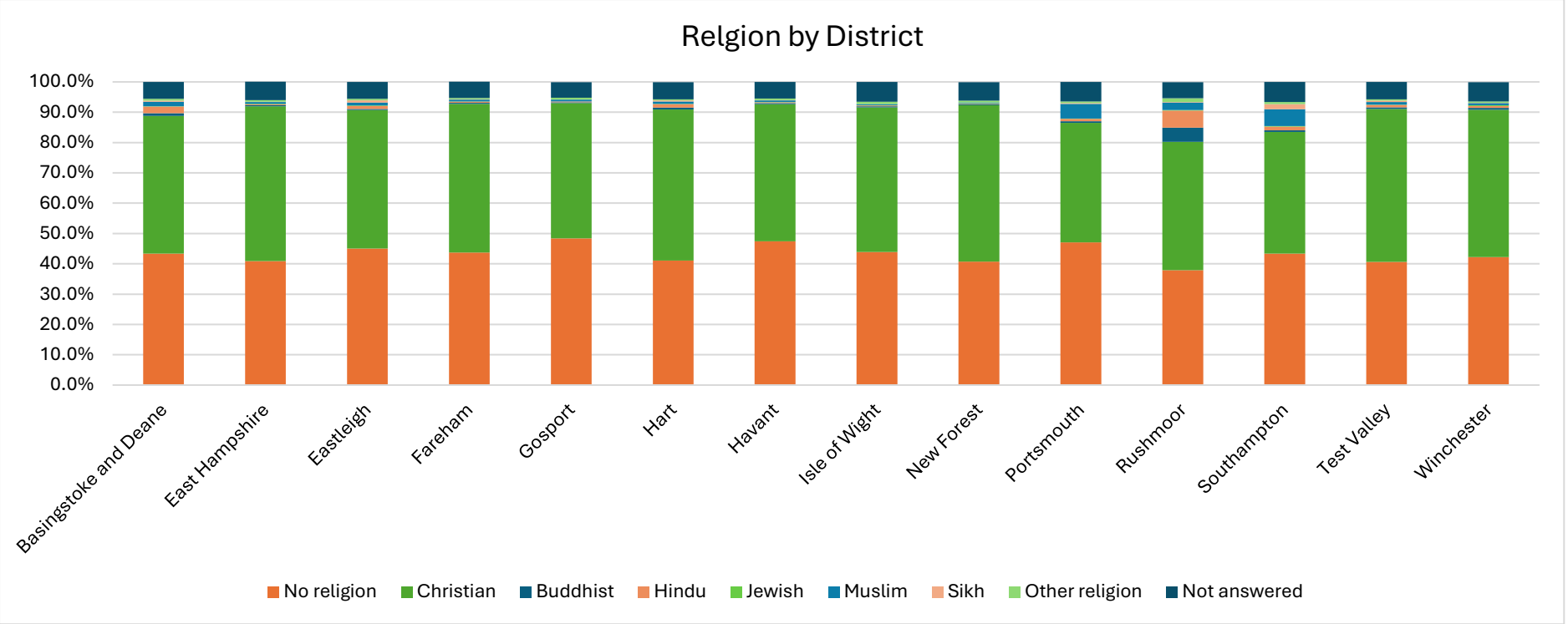


8.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

When examining religion throughout Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's Local Authorities, Christianity is the most common religion in ten out of the fourteen district and unitary councils. In the remaining four council's, the largest group is those who don't follow a religion.

Whilst this is reflective of the county level data, it is important to note variations in the second most common religions followed throughout the districts. For example, in Rushmoor 5.7% of the population identify as Hindu, compared with the county average of 1.1%, making it the second most followed religion in the district. This can be linked to the sizable Gurka population that can be found in Aldershot Town. Hinduism was also the second most common religion in Basingstoke and Deane (2.2%) and Hart (1.2%) both of which are higher than the county average. In Eastleigh and Winchester Hinduism was the second most common religion alongside Islam.

Additionally, in both the populations of Portsmouth and Southampton, Islam is the second most followed religion, with 4.9% of Portsmouth's population and 5.6% of Southampton's population identifying as Muslim, as opposed to 1.9% of the total Hampshire and the Isle of Wight population. This equates to a Muslim population of 10,147 in Portsmouth and 13,893 in Southampton. In the context of Local Government Reorganisation, this data highlights the benefit of analysing smaller populations as it provides more specific community insights allowing for more inclusive service design that is reflective of local needs.



Key	Largest group	Most Common Secondary Religion

Area	No religion (%)	Christian (%)	Buddhist (%)	Hindu (%)	Jewish (%)	Muslim (%)	Sikh (%)	Other religion (%)	Not answered (%)
Hampshire	43.4	**46.0**	0.7	1.1	0.1	**1.9**	0.4	0.6	6.0
Basingstoke and Deane	43.4	**45.4**	0.9	**2.2**	0.1	1.5	0.3	0.6	5.6
East Hampshire	40.9	**51.1**	0.3	0.3	0.2	**0.6**	0.1	0.5	6.1
Eastleigh	45.0	**45.7**	0.4	**1.0**	0.1	1.0	0.7	0.5	5.6
Fareham	43.7	**49.1**	0.3	0.4	0.1	**0.6**	0.1	0.4	5.4

Gosport	**48.4**	44.6	0.3	0.3	0.0	**0.6**	0.0	**0.6**	5.1
Hart	41.1	**49.8**	0.6	**1.2**	0.1	0.8	0.3	0.4	5.6
Havant	**47.4**	45.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	**0.5**	0.1	**0.5**	5.5
Isle of Wight	43.9	**47.7**	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.0	**0.8**	6.5
New Forest	40.7	**51.6**	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.0	**0.6**	6.1
Portsmouth	**47.1**	39.4	0.5	0.8	0.1	**4.9**	0.2	0.6	6.4
Rushmoor	37.9	**42.3**	4.7	**5.7**	0.1	2.5	0.2	1.2	5.3
Southampton	**43.4**	40.1	0.5	1.3	0.1	**5.6**	1.7	0.7	6.6
Test Valley	40.6	**50.5**	0.5	0.8	0.1	**0.9**	0.4	0.5	5.7
Winchester	42.2	**48.6**	0.6	**0.7**	0.2	**0.7**	0.1	0.5	6.3
Source: Census 2021									

8.2 Community Impact- Religion or Belief

Individuals of different religions or beliefs engage with local authorities through a wide variety of services, including education, public health, community safety, and civic participation. Delivering these services in ways that respect religious practices, promote inclusion, and uphold freedom of belief is essential to fostering trust and equity.

Local authorities are uniquely positioned to support interfaith dialogue and ensure that diverse belief systems are represented and able to access decision-making processes. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model strengthens this role by embedding service design within communities, enabling councils to build on established relationships with faith groups and community leaders.

This approach supports co-designed, locally relevant services that reflect religious and cultural diversity. In contrast, fewer, larger authorities risk weakening these connections and reducing visibility for smaller or less prominent faith communities, potentially limiting inclusive engagement and representation.

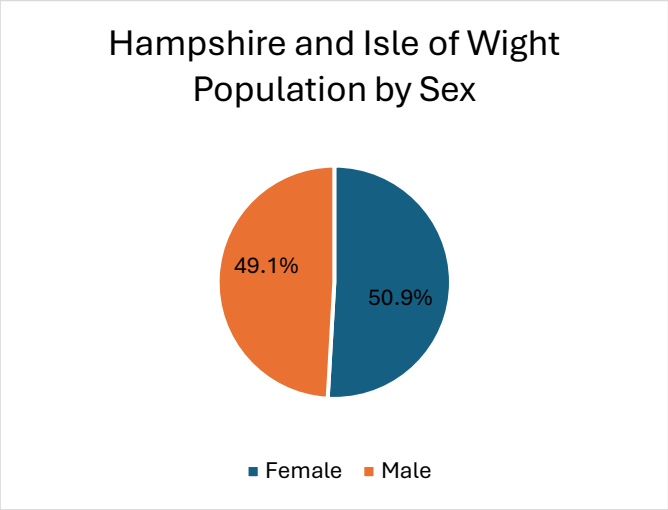
Positive Impacts
Stronger local relationships with faith communities: Smaller, place-based authorities are more likely to maintain and deepen relationships with local faith groups, enabling culturally sensitive service delivery and inclusive civic participation. **Enabling community cohesion:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model allows for more tailored interfaith initiatives where needed or aspired to locally. Promoting community cohesion and mutual understanding based on more localised geographies. Councils can support forums and partnerships that reflect the religious diversity of their specific areas. **Improved representation in decision making:** Place-based governance may increase opportunities for faith-based organisations and individuals to contribute to policy development and service design. This is particularly important for smaller or minority faith communities that may be overlooked in larger administrative structures. **Culturally competent service design:** Embedding services within communities enables councils to better understand and respond to the needs of residents with different beliefs. Building an understanding of barriers in place and actively seeking to improve outcomes in areas of community priority.
Negative Impacts
Weakened local networks: Reorganisation may disrupt established relationships between councils and faith groups, particularly if staff roles or structures change. This loss of continuity could impact trust and collaboration, especially in areas where faith groups play a key role in community support.

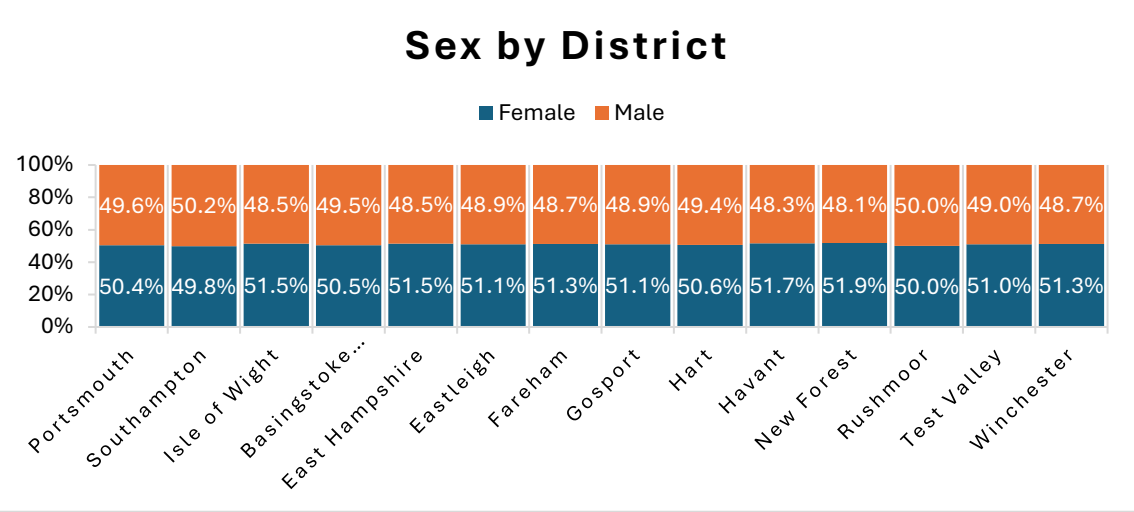
9. Sex

9.1 Data Analysis

9.1.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Unitary and District Analysis

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight 50.9% of the population is female and the other 49.1% is male. This trend is broadly reflected throughout the unitary and district councils. In twelve of the fourteen unitaries and districts the female population is slightly higher than the male population. Southampton is the only district where the male population, at 50.2%, is higher than the female population at 49.8%. Additionally, in Rushmoor the male and female population is evenly split.

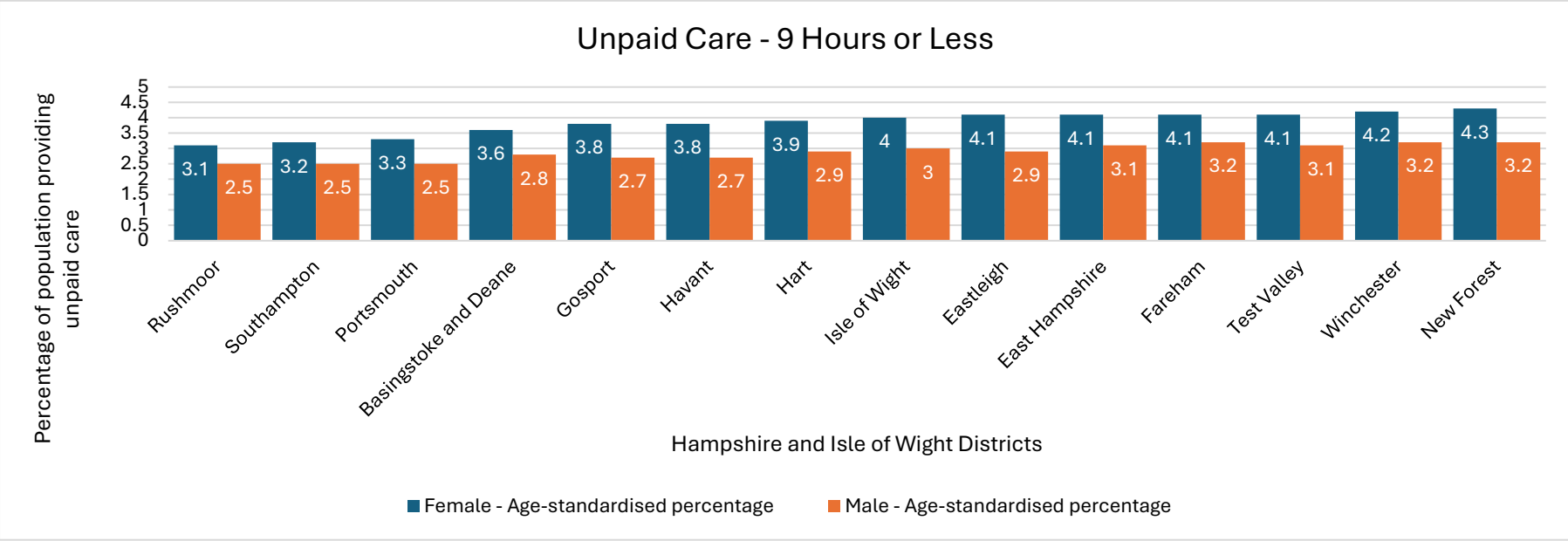




Example – Unpaid Care

Despite the population of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight being split almost evenly by sex, it is important to consider the ways sex impacts an individual's experience of services. When looking at the provision of unpaid care, the 2021 census shows that more female individuals provide unpaid care compared to male individuals. For example, in Eastleigh 4.1% of female individuals provide 9 hours or less of unpaid care a week as opposed to 2.9% of men. This trend is reflected in the 2021 Census data for all the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight districts and unitaries in each level of unpaid work, ranging from 9 hours to 50 hours. In turn this may lead to increased interactions with services such as Adult Social Care,

Children's services and Health and Wellbeing Services. Therefore, it important to consider these differences when designing services to ensure they are inclusive and supportive of the varying needs of residents.



9.2 Community Impact- Sex

Individuals of different sexes may interact with local authorities in ways shaped by social, economic, and cultural factors. These services may include education, social care, housing, public health, community safety, and employment support, and may be experienced differently depending on gender.

For example, patterns of engagement can be seen in areas such as childcare provision, domestic abuse support and mental health services. Women may be disproportionately represented among unpaid carers or survivors of domestic abuse, while men may face barriers in access mental health support or parenting services. Recognising and responding to these gendered patterns is essential to ensuring services are inclusive, equitable and meet the needs of all residents.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model supports this by enabling more locally informed service delivery. This allows councils to better understand and respond to gendered needs within each community, ensuring that services are shaped by lived experience and local insight.

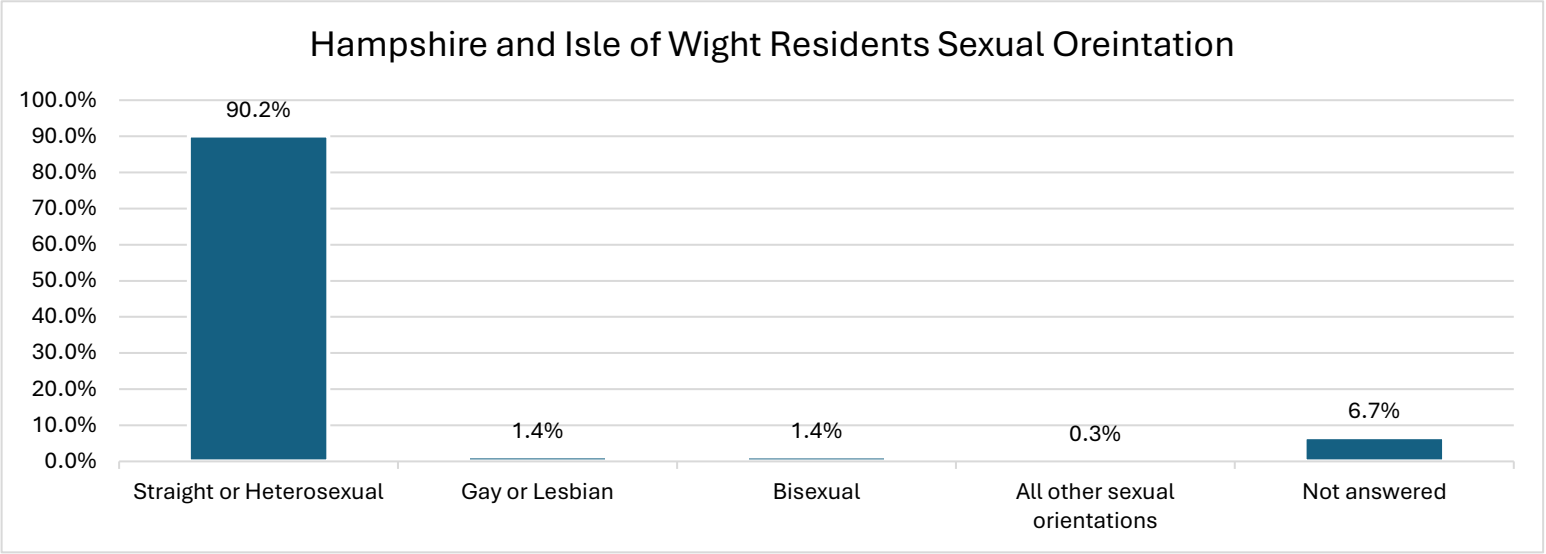
This enables services to be designed and delivered in ways that reflect the realities of residents' lives. In contrast, fewer, larger authorities may risk overlooking these nuances, reducing the visibility of gender-specific issues and limiting opportunities for targeted interventions.

Positive Impacts
Improved responsiveness to gendered needs: Place-based authorities are better positioned to understand and respond to gendered patterns of service use. Enabling more tailored interventions to address underlying need and better resource allocation. **Enhanced support for gender-specific services:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model allows for more targeted investment in services that may disproportionately affect one sex. Building on local insight based on communities' geographies and the way they access services can help identify gaps and emerging needs more effectively. **Stronger community engagement:** Place-based governance structures may foster better engagement with gender-focused organisations or advocacy groups, supporting co-design and service delivery. This is particularly important for addressing intersectional issues.
Negative Impacts
Disruption to specialist services: Reorganisation may affect continuity of gender-specific services, such as domestic abuse support or gender-based violence prevention programmes. Changes in staffing, funding or commissioning arrangements could impact service quality and accessibility.

10. Sexual orientation

10.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

At the time of the 2021 Census, 90.2% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight residents identified as straight. 1.4% of residents identified as gay or lesbian and 1.4% of residents identified as bisexual. 0.3% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight residents identified as other sexual orientations.



10.1.2 District and Unitary Analysis

The data reflecting the sexual orientation of residents varies across the different Hampshire and the Isle of Wight districts and unitaries. For example, Rushmoor (90.1%), Winchester (90.1%), Isle of Wight (89.5%), Southampton (86.8%), and Portsmouth (87.7%) have a lower percentage of residents that identify as straight in comparison to the county data. The district with the highest percentage of residents who identify as straight is Hart at 92.4%, whilst the lowest is Southampton at 86.8% meaning the percentage of residents who identify as straight across the districts varies by 5.6%.

In comparison to the county average of 1.4%, Southampton (2%), Portsmouth (2%) and Gosport (1.6%) all have a higher percentage of residents who identify as gay or lesbian. In contrast of New Forest is the district with the lowest proportion of residents who identify as gay or lesbian at 1%.

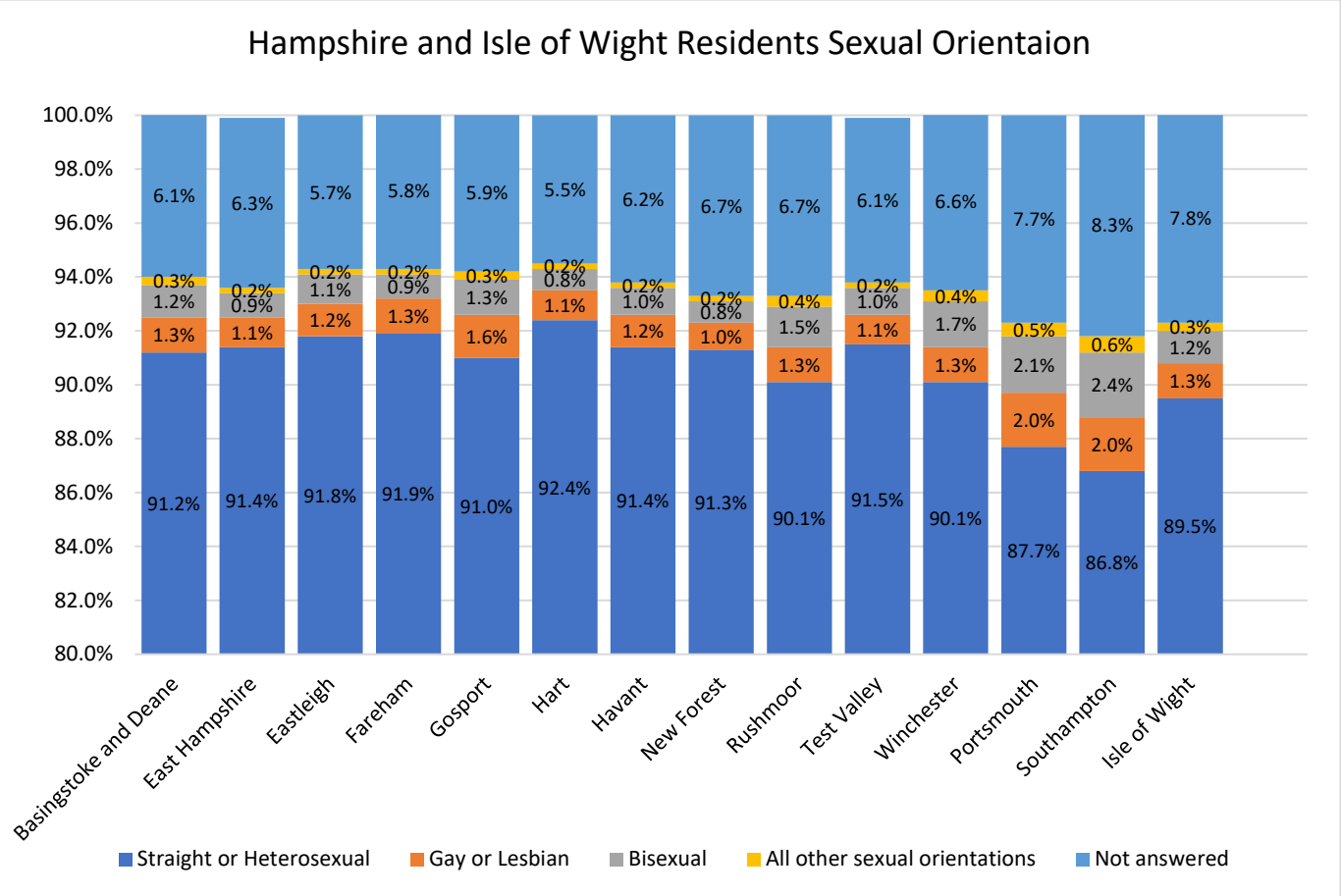
When looking at the data for residents who identify as bisexual, Southampton has the highest proportion of residents at 2.4%, this is closely followed by Portsmouth where 2.1% of residents identify as bisexual, then by Winchester where 1.7% of residents identify as bisexual. Hart and the New Forest have the lowest proportion of residents who identify as bisexual both with 0.8%. This means that there is a variation of 1.6% across the district and unitary councils.

Across the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight districts and unitaries the percentage of residents that identify as other sexual orientation ranges from 0.6% in Southampton and 0.2% in Eastleigh, Test Valley, Havant, East Hampshire, Fareham, New Forest and Hart.

10.2 Community Impact- Sexual Orientation

Individuals of all sexual orientations engage with local authorities through a wide range of services, including housing, health and wellbeing, community safety, and youth or family support. It is essential that these services are inclusive, respectful, and free from discrimination, with staff equipped to understand and respond to the needs of LGBTQ+ residents across all age groups.

Local authorities also play a vital role in promoting equality, tackling prejudice, and creating safe, welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enhances this by embedding inclusive practices at a more local level, enabling services to be shaped by community insight and lived experience.



Place-based authorities are better positioned to engage with LGBTQ+ communities, understand local challenges and co-design services that are trusted and accessible. This approach supports stronger relationships with LGBTQ+ organisations, networks and advocacy groups, fostering collaboration and ensuring services are shared by lived experience and local insight.

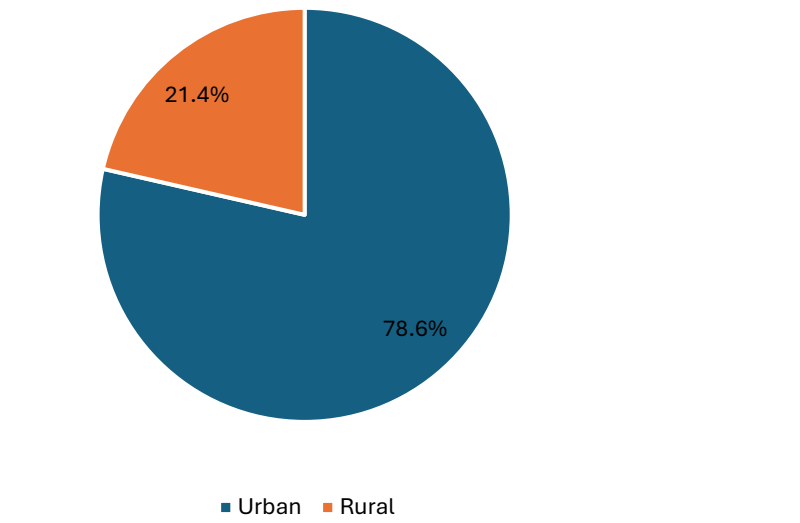
In contrast, fewer or larger authorities may risk diluting local insight and reducing visibility of LGBTQ+ experiences, potentially leading to less responsive and inclusive provision. By taking a place-based focus to commissioning and intervention, local authorities are able to respond to unique challenges and opportunities of each area, which can also better address intersectional needs.

Positive Impacts
Stronger local relationships with LGBTQ+ communities: Place-based local authorities are better positioned to build and maintain relationships with LGBTQ+ organisations, support groups and networks. Fostering trust and ensuring services are shaped by local lived experience and community insight. **Inclusive and responsive service design:** Localised governance allows authorities to tailor services to the needs of LGBTQ+ organisations and residents, including in areas like housing, mental health support and youth services. **Improved visibility and representation**: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will enhance the visibility of LGBTQ+ issues within local decision making, enabling more inclusive civic participation and policy development. Councils can more easily support local events, campaigns or initiatives that support LGBTQ+ communities due to the closer proximity to communities.
Negative Impacts
Disruption to informal or trusted relationships: Structural change can disrupt long standing relationships between individuals and service providers which could reduce engagement, particularly among vulnerable or marginalised groups who rely on trusted contacts.

11. Rurality

11.1 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Analysis

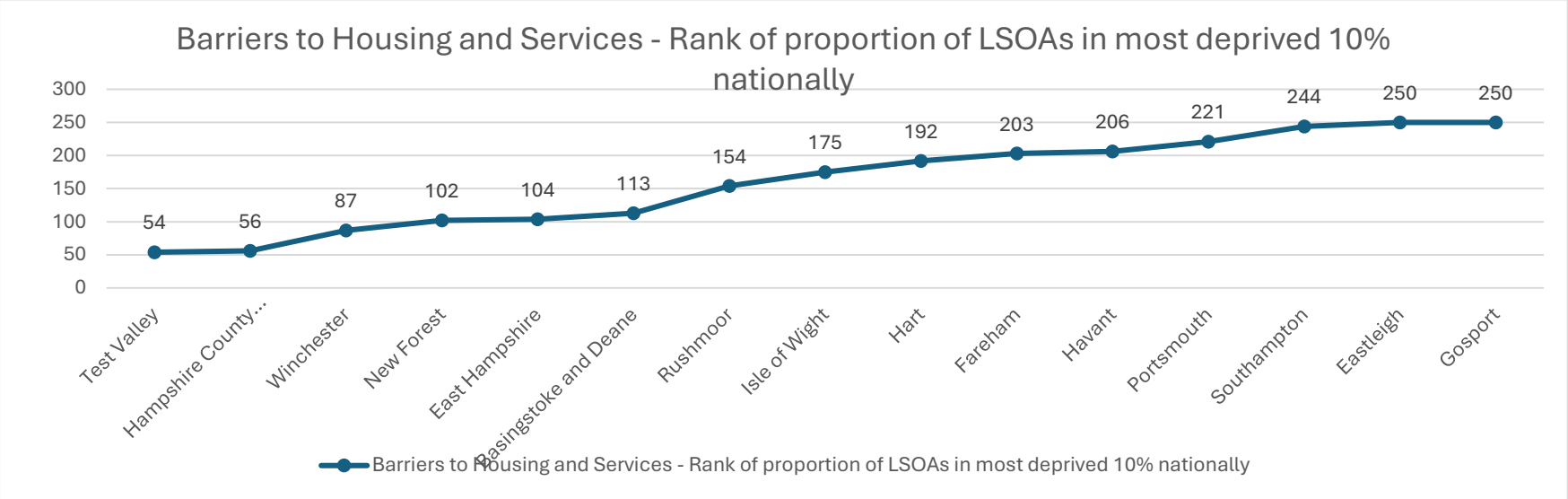
According to the 2021 Census Rural Urban Classification, 78.6% of the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight district and unitary councils are classified as Urban whilst 21.4% of districts are classified as rural. The local authorities classified as rural include the Isle of Wight, East Hampshire, and Winchester. The Classification defines Urban areas 'as settlements with populations of 10,000 or more, based on the 2021 Census' and Rural areas as 'everywhere else' including 'rural towns, villages, hamlets, isolated dwellings and open countryside'.



Area	Rural/ Urban Classification
Portsmouth	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Southampton	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Isle of Wight	Intermediate rural: Majority further from a major town or city
Basingstoke and Deane	Intermediate urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
East Hampshire	Intermediate rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Fareham	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Gosport	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Hart	Intermediate urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Havant	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
New Forest	Intermediate urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Rushmoor	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city

Test Valley	Intermediate urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Winchester	Intermediate rural: Majority nearer to a major town or city
Eastleigh	Urban: Majority nearer to a major town or city

Whilst this data in beneficial in providing an overview of the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight population it does not identify for rural communities within districts classified as Urban. Alternatively, rurality can be viewed through the lens of deprivation. The Barriers to Housing and Services domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019[3] measures the physical and financial accessibility of services, looking at geographical barriers, which relate to the physical proximity of local services, and 'wider barriers' which includes access to housing such as affordability.

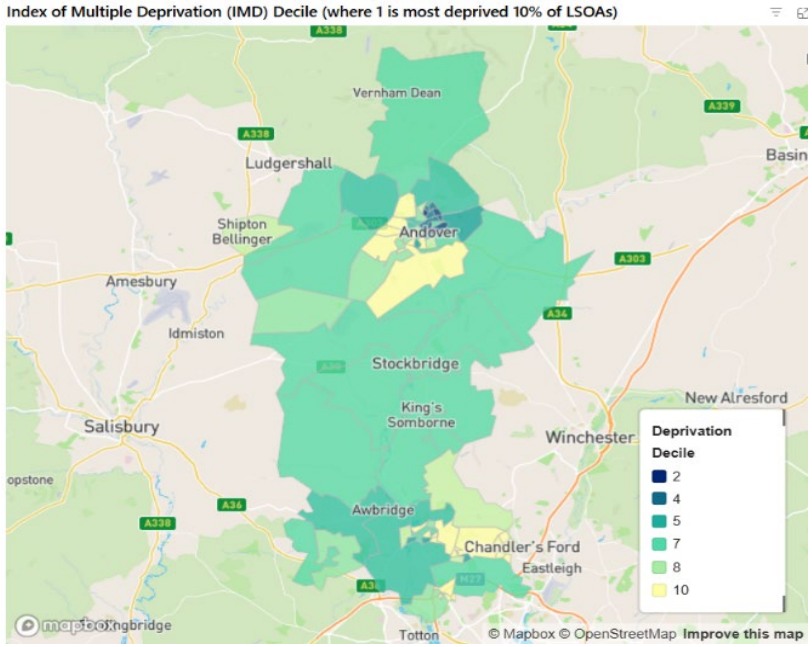


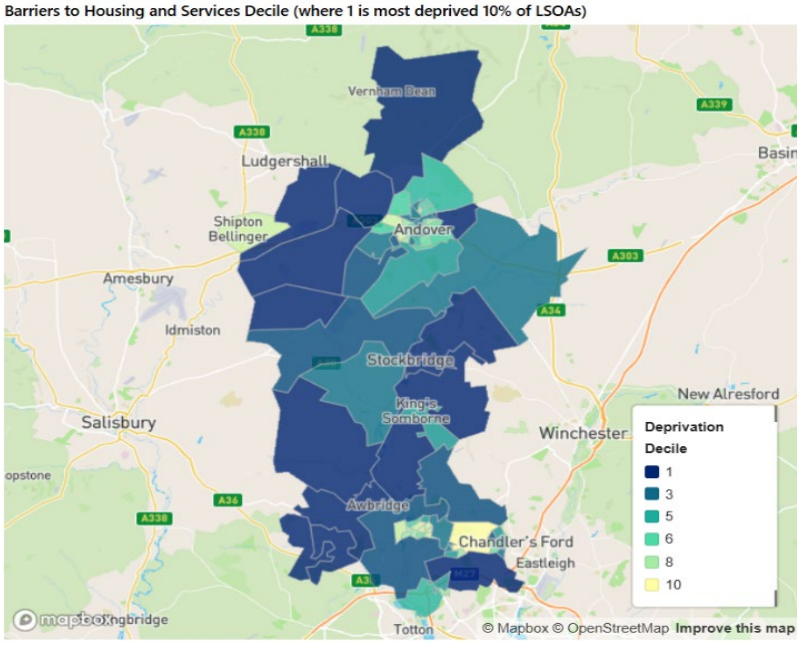
For example, Test Valley despite being classified as an urban district encompasses many rural towns and villages where access to services may be limited. Among all the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Districts- where rank 1 is the most deprived - Test Valley ranks as the most deprived district

[3] More information about the Index of Multiple Depravation can be found here - The English Indices of Deprivation 2019

when considering the Barries to Housing and Services decile. The maps below illustrate both the overall IMD and the specific decile for Barriers to Housing and Services within Test Valley.

When assessing the IMD, Test Valley appears relatively less deprived, ranking 262. However, urban areas such as Andover show higher levels of deprivation. Conversely, when looking at Barriers to Housing and Services, rural areas located away from the main towns of Andover and Romsey exhibit higher levels of deprivation. The trend can be identified in other districts such as Basingstoke and Dean and East Hampshire.





Source: Hampshire JSNA

This example highlights that by assessing areas at a more localised level—as would be possible under a four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model —the distinct needs of communities, particularly in rural areas, can be more effectively identified and addressed.

11.2 Community Impact- Rurality

Rural communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight face a distinct set of challenges that shape how residents engage with local authorities. In the current two-tier system, key touchpoints include access to transport, health and social care, housing, digital connectivity, and community safety. Geographic isolation limited public transport, and reduced service coverage can create barriers to accessing support—particularly for older adults, young people, and those with additional needs.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers a more responsive and locally connected approach. By aligning governance with local geographies and maintaining strong community links, this model enables rural-focused decision-making and service design. This is particularly key in rural areas where local knowledge and resilience is key, supporting more equitable access to services which address specific rural pressures such as social inclusion, digital access and affordable housing.

This model enables decision making that ensures voices of rural residents are heard and reflected in local priorities. It also supports a total place approach, allowing councils to work with communities and partners to design services that are rooted in local assets, needs and opportunities, which may be lost in larger more centralised models.

A model with three or fewer mainland authorities in Hampshire may risk diluting the visibility of rural issues within broader strategic planning. Larger authorities covering more diverse geographies may struggle to prioritise rural needs, leading to less responsive service design. This could exacerbate existing inequalities and weaken relationships with rural communities.

Positive Impacts
Balancing urban and rural needs: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enables proportionate, tailored and effective service delivery across different population densities and types of communities. Grouping rural areas together (e.g. Mid Hampshire) ensures services reflect the needs of smaller towns and dispersed populations. While creating urban focused authorities around major centres like Southampton, Portsmouth and Basingstoke allows targeted responses to urban deprivation and need. **Locally responsive decision making:** Where governance is aligned with geographies it enables authorities to prioritise rural specific needs. Supporting tailored service design for transport, housing, health and social care. **Opportunity to build on existing good practice:** Local authorities with strong rural engagement and service models are better enabled to scale up successful approaches. As such, our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model promotes continuity and innovation in areas of particular importance for rural communities in areas like transport, digital inclusion and preventative health.
Negative Impacts

Digital exclusion risks: Despite ambitions for digital transformation, rural areas may continue to face connectivity challenges. If digital-first service models are not carefully designed, they could inadvertently exclude residents with limited access to reliable broadband or digital skills.

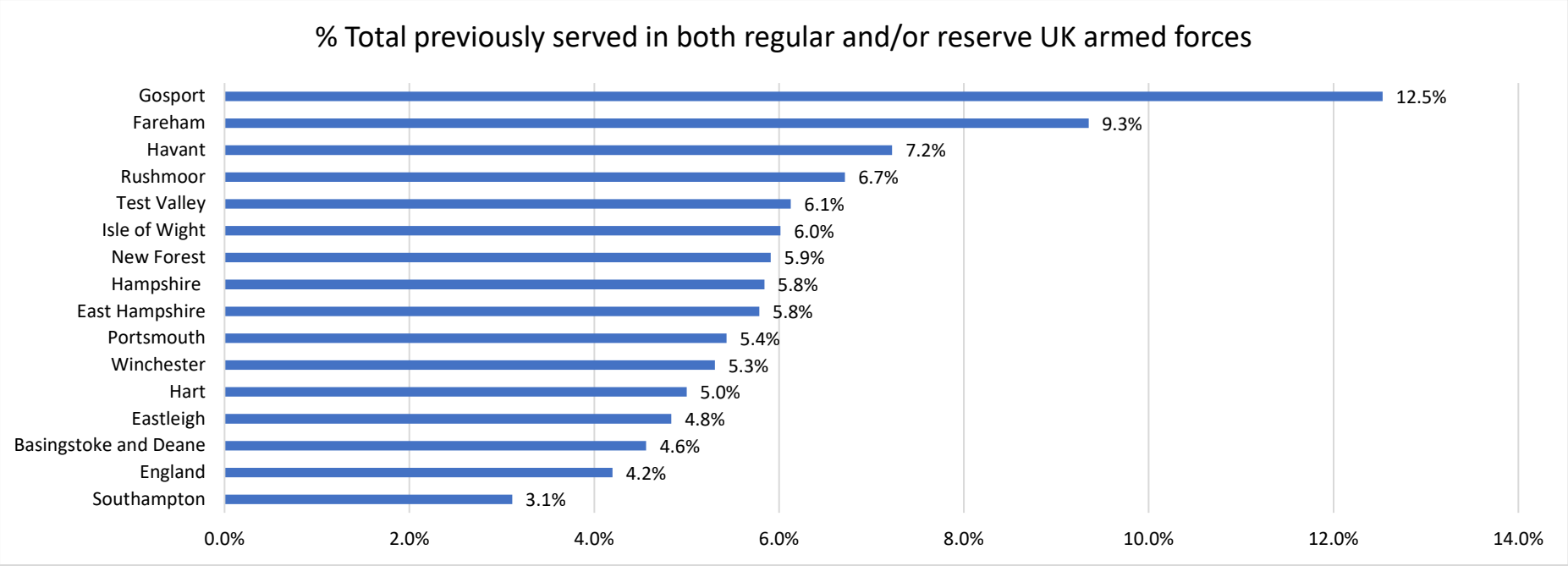
12. Armed forces

12.1 Data Analysis

As a county, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is unique in that it is home to all three branches of the Armed Forces – the Army, the Royal Air Force, and the Royal Navy. Notable military establishments include HMNB Portsmouth, RAF Odiham, and Army Headquarters in Andover. Out of the fourteen districts and unitaries all but Eastleigh and East Hampshire are home to a military base and/or reserves.

Due to the large military presence in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, it is unsurprising that many service leavers decide to settle in the county. Out of all Hampshire and the Isle of Wight residents, in both unitary and district councils, 5.8% have previously served in both regular and/or reserve UK Armed Forces, totalling 96,139 individuals. Thirteen of the fourteen districts and unitaries have a higher proportion for service leavers than the English average of 4.2%, Southampton is the only district that falls below this average with 3.1% of the population previously serving.

Notably with 12.5% of their population previously serving in both regular and/or reserve UK Armed Forces, Gosport has the highest proportion of Veterans out of all Local authorities in England and Wales (Census 2021).



12.2 Community Impact- Armed Forces

With there being many military bases with current serving personnel, veterans and military families across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight it is important that this community is considered when moving to new local authorities.

Armed Forces communities, including serving personnel, veterans, and their families, engage with local authorities through a range of services such as housing, health and wellbeing, education, employment support, and community integration. These communities often face distinct challenges, including frequent relocation, access to specialist support, and the need for continuity in services like schooling and healthcare.

For example, according to the Hampshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA[4]) (2019), veterans aged 16- 64 are more likely to have long term health problems with their arms, hands, legs, feet back or necks than the general population. Additionally, common mental health issues for both veterans include depression, anxiety, and alcohol misuse, with working age veterans more likely to report suffering with depression than the public.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers an opportunity to strengthen support for Armed Forces communities by enabling more locally responsive and coordinated service delivery. By aligning governance with established community and economic geographies, this model allows councils to build on existing relationships with military bases, garrisons, and veteran networks. It ensures services are tailored, accessible, and reflective of local needs. Crucially, it helps maintain visibility and continuity for Armed Forces families. Factors that could be diluted in larger, less locally connected structures.

Positive Impacts
Stronger local coordination with military infrastructure: Aligning governance with established community and economic geographies allows councils to build on existing relationships with military bases, garrisons and networks. Supporting more joined up service delivery and better integration of Armed Forces families into local communities. **Improved continuity of services:** Frequent relocation is a common challenge for Armed Forces families. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will offer more consistent and locally responsive services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Authorities can better coordinate across neighbouring areas to support transitions and maintain continuity. **Enhanced visibility and representation**: Place-based authorities will be able to build on existing local partnerships and connections to be more aware of the needs of Armed Forces communities. Ensuring they are considered in local decision making and service design. This includes recognising the unique needs of veterans, reservists and families.
Negative Impacts
Disruption to established support networks: Reorganisation may affect existing partnerships and service pathways, particularly if staff roles or commissioning arrangements change. This could impact access to specialist support or areas of work such as Armed Forces Covenant delivery.

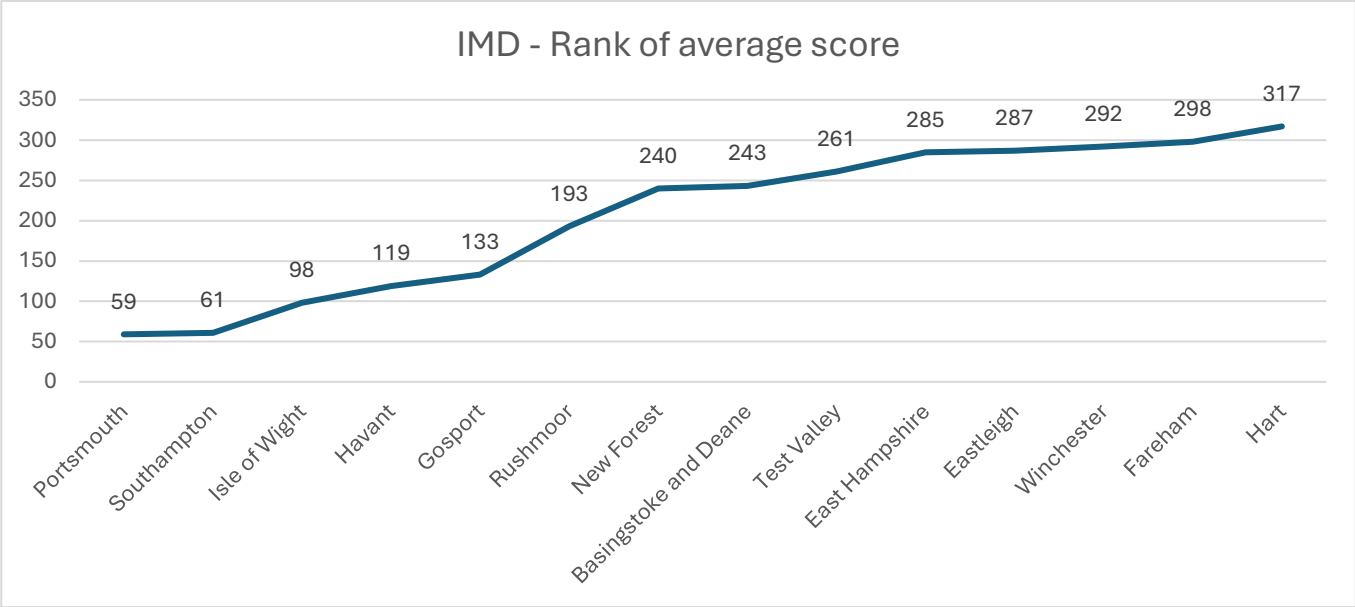
[4] More information about the Hampshire Joint Strategic Needs assessment can be found here - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council

13. Socio-economic / Deprivation

13.1 Data Analysis

Deprivation can be measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which is the official measure of relative deprivation in England. It ranks all local authorities from least deprived to most deprived – 1 being the most deprived. The 7 domains of deprivation, which combine to create the Index of Multiple Deprivation involve income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing & services and living environment.

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight deprivation varies widely across the county. Portsmouth is the most deprived Local Authority in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ranking 59th out 319 Local Authorities according to the IMD rank of average score. This is closely followed by Southampton which ranks as 61st. Comparatively at a district level Hart ranks as the least deprived area in England as the 317th deprived Local Authority.



The data demonstrates the range of deprivation across the county. However, within each Local Authority deprivation varies even further. For example, despite Havant and Gosport being ranked as 119th and 133rd most deprived local authorities they both have communities ranked in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs. Similarly, despite being ranked 193rd most deprived and above, Basingstoke and Deane, Rushmoor, Test Valley, Eastleigh and Rushmoor all have communities in the top 20% most deprived LSOA's.

What is evidenced here is the value of a localised focus, offering deeper insight into specific community challenges. Given the wide variation in deprivation levels across existing local authorities, it is essential that the creation of new authorities reflects and responds to these local needs. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model provides the necessary scope to achieve this.

13.2 Community Impact- Socio-economic/ Deprivation

Individuals living in areas of deprivation may engage with local authorities through a wide range of services aimed at addressing social and economic disadvantage. These touchpoints include housing and homelessness support, employment and skills programmes, public health services, early intervention and family support, and access to benefits and financial assistance. Deprivation is often linked to poorer health outcomes, lower educational attainment, and reduced access to opportunities and intergenerational poverty, making coordinated and targeted service delivery essential.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers a unique opportunity to address entrenched deprivation by aligning governance with lived economic geographies. By aligning governance with lived economic geographies, councils can better understand local challenges and build on existing partnerships and good practice. This enables more targeted investment, integrated prevention strategies, and locally tailored services that respond to the specific challenges faced by communities.

Through strong local leadership, tailored to distinct opportunities and challenges of each area, councils can develop bespoke strategies to drive inclusive economic growth, improve health outcomes and raise living standards. The model also supports enhanced neighbourhood working, enabling decision making at the lowest effective level and fostering meaningful engagement with communities experiencing deprivation. This is particularly important for ensuring services are accessible, trusted and responsive to local need.

In contrast, a model with three or fewer mainland authorities' risks creating larger, less connected structures that may dilute the visibility of deprived communities. Broader geographies could lead to standardised service delivery, reducing ability to tailor services and interventions to specific local contexts. Large authorities may also risk uneven resource allocation when balancing urban and rural needs, reducing responsiveness to complex socio-economic challenges.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model's emphasis on collaborative working, community engagement and local representation helps mitigate these risks by embedding services within communities and ensuring they are shaped by lived experience.

Positive Impacts
Targeted investment and integrated prevention: Aligning governance with lived economic and social footprints can enable more precise targeting of investment in areas of deprivation. Supporting coordinated service delivery and integrated prevention strategies which are rooted in communities to begin to address some of the root causes of socio-economic deprivation. **Building on existing partnerships and good practice:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model builds on established local partnership, including those that address inequalities and deprivation. Enabling the scaling of successful local initiatives ensuring good practice is not lost and local challenges are understood and addressed. **Strengthening local economic leadership:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enables bespoke economic strategies to be tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of each area. Underpinned by local knowledge, context and insight to enhance the ability to coordinate strategies that address the systemic causes of socio-economic exclusion.
Negative Impacts
Potential disruption to existing support networks: Reorganisation may temporarily affect partnerships and programmes that support deprived communities, especially if funding, commissioning, or staffing structures change. This could impact continuity of support for vulnerable residents during transition.

14. Workforce

The implementation of LGR will bring substantial changes for staff with the potential of new working practices, team structures and working environments. Such large-scale transformation has the potential to affect staff wellbeing, service delivery and collaborative working. As the details of the transition become clearer, subsequent EIAs will be undertaken to explore these impacts for staff in greater depth, including detailed analysis of staff demographics. As implementation plans and EIAs are developed, we will ensure that appropriate mitigations are identified and implemented to prevent any disproportionate or detrimental impact on staff with protected characteristics.

The impact on staff terms and conditions arising from LGR implementation will be significant and harmonisation of such will require extensive engagement with recognised trades unions and staff representatives. Central to that engagement will be a focus on ensuring equity, especially in respect of pay, and ensuring that there are no detrimental effects on staff with protected characteristics. Pay equity will be an area where specific EIAs will be undertaken throughout the implementation process. In addition, all of the local authorities in Hampshire and Isle of Wight already have a

legislative obligation to publish pay policies, including gender pay gaps and this will soon include ethnicity and disability pay gaps. These data sets will continue to be produced, and the accompanying analysis will act as a barometer of equitable practice. This will enable each of the four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitaries to monitor both pay and total reward equity, making changes and adjustments as required in the process of harmonisation, as well as taking account of the issues arising from the specific EIA.

From a workforce perspective, our proposed four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers the opportunity for a more inclusive approach. Smaller, more locally focused organisations are better positioned to understand and respond to the specific needs of their employees. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will offer a more manageable and consistent approach to embedding inclusive practices whereas larger organisations, with multiple locations, teams and services, could have difficulties in maintaining uniformity in how equality, diversity and inclusion is understood and applied. For example, preserving and maintaining a consistent and inclusive approach to reasonable adjustments for staff is more achievable in smaller, more locally focused organisations.

In recognition of the recruitment and retention challenges being faced within the sector, the changes that LGR will bring will have both challenges and opportunities from a change management perspective. Supporting staff through change will be paramount to ensure retention of staff and continuity of service delivery throughout the implementation phase and beyond. In addition to more specific EIAs, change impact assessments will also be used identify and to mitigate the impact of change on the workforce. Our proposed four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will ensure that leadership of the change (a critical success factor) and its impact on the workforce can be more effectively delivered through smaller organisations and a closer and more direct relationship between leaders, managers and staff. A model of three or fewer mainland unitary authorities would create much larger organisations and therefore a greater distance (physically, figuratively and culturally) and lesser connection between leadership and the workforce, making it more challenging to effectively lead and implement change, thus adding risk to service delivery and business continuity.

Our proposed four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model will support the development of agile, responsive HR policies that are reflective of workforce profiles and needs, enabling more tailored approaches to aspects such as staff wellbeing, recruitment and retention. This approach will also enable more effective engagement with staff, through staff networks and support groups, ensuring diverse voices from across the organisations are heard and reflected in decision making. With fewer, larger organisations, there is the potential for a lack of connection between leadership and staff which can impact how valued, engaged and supported staff feel.

The LGA Equality Framework emphasises the importance of providing equality of opportunity for all staff and employing a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local population. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model would allow for more focused implementation of EDI strategies and initiatives, ensuring that equality considerations are embedded in aspects such as workforce planning and development, enabling more equitable outcomes for staff. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model would also provide the opportunity for new authorities to

take a more targeted approach to recruitment from the local population. Through a greater understanding of the make-up of the local population, strong links to local communities and targeted positive action initiatives, authorities could ensure their workforce is representative of the local community and is reflective of their needs in inclusive service delivery.

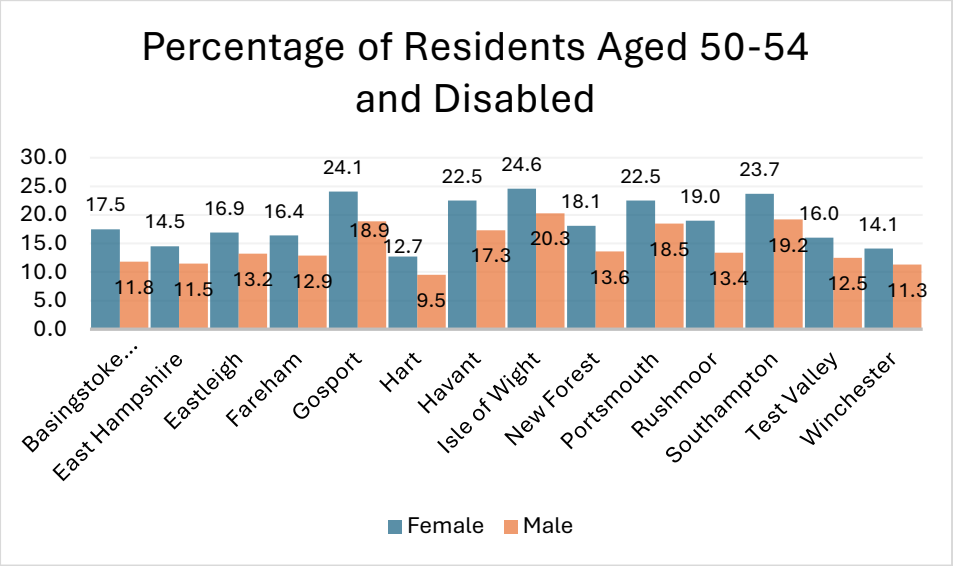
Positive Impacts
Consistency in implementing EDI: Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model gives the opportunity to embed inclusive practices and policies across locations and teams with greater consistency, meaning more equitable outcomes for staff cross the organisations. **Representative workforce:** There is the potential for the workforce to more closely reflect the local population with our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model. This model would provide clearer understanding of local demographics so that organisations can tailor approaches to recruitment to address underrepresentation. The workforce would be reflective of the communities they serve and have greater understanding of their needs. **Enhanced staff engagement:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers the opportunity for greater staff engagement, enabling organisations to better understand the experiences of staff and create closer connections between leadership and staff. This offers the opportunity to be more responsive to staff needs and create a culture where staff feel valued and heard.
Negative Impacts
Disruption to staff support: Current support in place, such as individual reasonable adjustments or staff networks and support groups, could be impacted during the transition period of reorganisation which could affect staff morale and wellbeing. **Risk of fragmentation:** Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model aims to reduce fragmentation but in the transition period, without strong co-ordination, there is a risk that policies and practices differ between organisations.

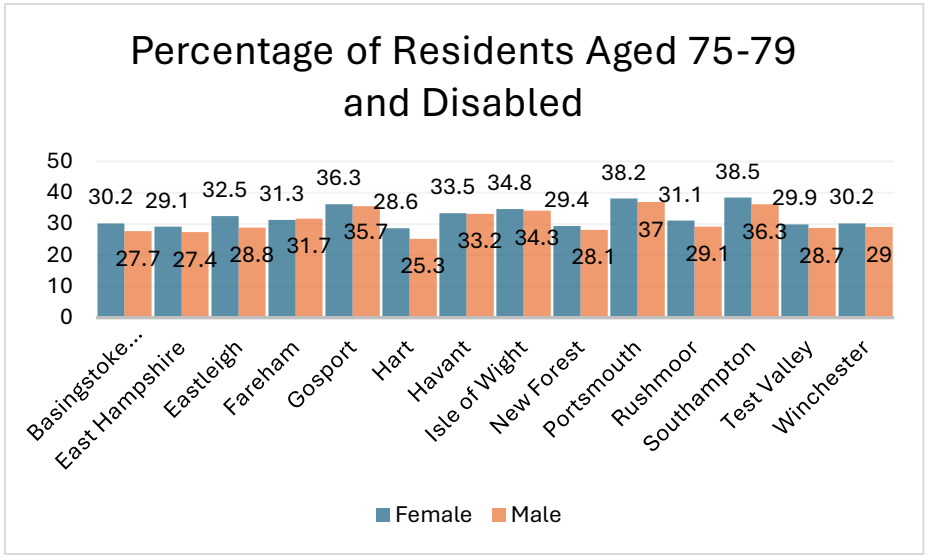
15. Intersectionality

While each of the characteristics provide a lens through which to assess potential impacts of LGR and how our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model may affect individuals and communities, it is essential to recognise that individuals do not experience these characteristics in isolation.

Many residents live at the intersection of multiple identities, for example an older disabled woman living in a rural area may experience the compounded impacts of these overlapping characteristics and this can shape how people engage with local authority services.

This example is supported by existing data. Demographic factors such as age and sex significantly influence individuals lived experiences. The data below, taken from the 2021 Census, highlights a correlation between age, sex, and disability. For example, both the 50–54 and 75–79 age groups, women are more likely to report a disability than men. Furthermore, disability prevalence increases with age across all sexes, meaning older adults—particularly older women—are disproportionately affected. When this is considered alongside the deprivation faced by rural communities, especially in terms of barriers to housing and services (as outlined in section 11.1), it becomes evident that an older disabled woman living in a rural area may face compounded challenges. These intersecting characteristics can create significant barriers to accessing services—barriers that may be overlooked if protected characteristics are considered in isolation.





Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, intersectionality is particularly relevant given the region's diverse population and varied geography. Urban centres, coastal communities and rural areas each present distinct challenges and opportunities, and the way services are accessed and experienced can vary significantly depending on a person's combined characteristics and circumstances.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model offers a more responsive framework for recognising and addressing these complexities. By aligning governance with real economic and social geographies, the model supports place-based service design that is informed by lived experience. This enables councils to better understand how overlapping factors (such as age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status) interact to affect access to housing, education, health, transport and cultural opportunities.

The proposal's emphasis on enhanced neighbourhood working, local representation and community engagement creates space for more inclusive decision making and co-design. It also supports the development of targeted interventions that reflect the realities of residents' lives.

In contrast, a model with three or fewer mainland authorities' risks creating larger, less connected structures that may dilute the visibility of marginalised groups and reduce the ability to respond to nuanced, intersectional needs. Standardised service delivery across broader geographies could result in poorer outcomes for those facing multiple barriers, particularly in areas with distinct cultural, demographic, or geographic profiles.

By recognising and responding to intersectionality within communities as well as the workforce, our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model can help create a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient local government system. One that reflects the full diversity of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and delivers better outcomes for all.

16. Mitigations

We recognise that delivering Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) at this scale brings complexity and risk, particularly in ensuring continuity, equity, and responsiveness during transition. That is why we are taking a proactive and structured approach to mitigation—embedding safeguards across every stage. From planning and ICT integration to workforce engagement and community co-design, our approach is grounded in collaboration, learning from previous LGR programmes, and a shared commitment to protecting and enhancing outcomes for all.

To ensure continuous monitoring, regular reviews and analysis of workforce and community data, and feedback from staff, communities and service users, will take place throughout transition planning and implementation with regular reporting to new authority leadership and community stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability. A monitoring framework, with key indicators, as well as subsequent EIAs will be used to identify any emerging risks and where negative impacts are identified, mitigating actions will be taken to ensure that equality considerations remain central to decision making.

These mitigations are not standalone measures, they are woven into the fabric of our programme to ensure that the new unitary authorities are not only safe and legal, but also inclusive, resilient, and rooted in the communities they serve. Mitigations taken in developing the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight case for change includes:

Community Engagement

Residents have played a crucial role in shaping the future design of local government across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Ensuring that our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model effectively serves communities and delivers improved outcomes is our top priority. To gather public perspectives, a region-wide engagement survey was conducted throughout July, capturing feedback on the proposed options.

Alongside this, workshops were held with key partner organisations, including police, fire and health services, Coastal Partners, National Parks, businesses, town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector, to explore opportunities and challenges linked to reorganisation.

Further engagement has also taken place within the proposed new unitary areas, involving residents, members of parliament, higher and further education providers, businesses, town and parish councils, and voluntary and community groups to gather more localised views. This comprehensive engagement process helps ensure that the new authorities are shaped by those they serve, mitigating risks of reduced visibility and promoting inclusive, place-based governance.

Community engagement plays a vital role in mitigating the risk of reduced visibility and weakened relationships during any transition. By involving communities' voices from the onset of proposal development it ensures the voices and needs of those most directly affected are recognised. This also builds trust within different community demographics and the feeling of continuity. Which is particularly important for groups such as LGBTQ+ communities, ethnically diverse communities, faith groups and rural residents who rely on local networks and informal support. Engagement activities ensure that services remain responsive to lived experiences and are designed with these views in mind so as not to be lost in structural changes.

Across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight authorities have a strong, proven track record for meaningful engagement with residents and involving communities in decision making. For example, in Portsmouth a community-centred approach is being taken to digital inclusion with audience groups including Local Authority housing tenants, people with disabilities, low-income households and people who are unemployed and seeking work. This demographic profile for community-centred approaches has been identified via Government's digital inclusion action plan and through research conducted in Portsmouth by the local authority in conjunction with the VCS. Providing strong foundations to build on throughout the next phases of LGR. Community engagement will remain a central pilar throughout LGR implementation. With a key principle of the proposal being that service delivery should align with distinct communities, engaging them upfront in the shaping of future service.

Stakeholder Engagement and Workshops

We have embedded extensive stakeholder engagement into the LGR process, including focused workshops with service leads, external advisers, and key partners such as police, fire, health, and coastal authorities. These sessions have helped shape service models in high-demand areas and

ensure that future delivery is informed by operational expertise and strategic insight. This collaborative approach strengthens the resilience and inclusivity of new service structures.

Focused workshops with service leads, external advisers, and key partners help mitigate risks of fragmentation and service disruption, especially in high-demand areas like adult social care, children's services, and housing. These sessions support continuity for older adults, disabled residents, pregnant people, and those experiencing socio-economic deprivation by embedding operational expertise into future service models. They also strengthen relationships with specialist providers and advocacy groups, reducing the risk of losing local knowledge and trusted contacts.

Transition Planning

Transition panning for LGR in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is informed by prior experience of unitarisation within the region, including the establishment of unitary councils in Portsmouth, Southampton and the Solent. The expansion of Portsmouth and Southampton unitaries will make LGR transition easier as both councils already deliver a full range of services with established systems, staff, governance and partnerships in place. Expanding existing unitaries will allow for service continuity, lower transition costs and faster implementation. While also building on proven delivery models and local knowledge.

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model aligns with existing economic geographies and patterns of movement, reflecting the way people live, work and travel. Early transformation work has already commenced, with collaboration across 12 councils and key partners. A set of shared implementation principles focused on collaboration continuity, local design, financial sustainability and workforce wellbeing, will guide the transition process and help ensure the new structures are inclusive, resilient and responsive to community need.

Transition planning is essential to managing risks of disruption, fragmentation, and workforce instability. By building on existing unitary structures and aligning with economic and social geographies, this mitigation supports continuity in services that are critical for older adults, disabled people, trans residents, and families. It also helps maintain stability in gender-specific services, Armed Forces support networks, and programmes addressing deprivation. The use of shared implementation principles ensures that transition is guided by collaboration, local design, and workforce wellbeing while building on existing proven delivery models and local knowledge.

Inclusive Service Design

Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model places emphasis on designing services that are inclusive, locally responsive and informed by evidence. To support this, the 12 councils in the proposal prioritised high-cost, high demand and strategically significant service areas. Including adult social care, children's services, waste, highways and transport, strategic planning, economic development and regeneration, education, housing and homelessness and customer and digital.

A series of focused workshops were held with council leads and external advisers to examine current service provision, identify challenge, good practice and existing collaboration and explore transformation opportunities.

These sessions contributed to shaping future service models that reflect the distinct needs of communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This inclusive design approach aims to mitigate risks of exclusion or inequity by embedding local insight, collaboration and innovation into the development of new service structures.

Inclusive service design directly addresses risks of exclusion, digital barriers and loss of specialist expertise. By embedding local insight and evidence into service transformation, this approach ensures services are culturally competent, accessible and tailored to diverse needs. This could include residents with disabilities being supported to share their views on accessibility planning, diverse communities inputting on culturally sensitive design, and LGBTQ+ communities on respectful and inclusive service delivery.

Staff engagement and communications

Keeping staff well-informed and engaged has been a focus throughout the initial stages of LGR to ensure transparency and understanding of the process. Regular updates have been communicated with staff via internal communications, including messages from Chief Execs and dedicated intranet pages. Staff have been encouraged to participate in surveys on the shaping of LGR and have been invited to attend staff briefing sessions to ensure their views are heard and questions are answered, reducing staff anxieties around potential changes as much as possible. This transparent and inclusive approach will continue to build understanding of proposed changes and foster a sense of involvement in LGR.

Transparent and inclusive staff engagement mitigates risks related to workforce disruption, loss of specialist knowledge and reduced service quality. By keeping staff informed and involved this mitigation supports continuity in services for vulnerable groups. It also helps preserve trusted relationships between service providers and communities, which is especially important for the groups discussed throughout this EIA during periods of change.

17. Reflections

Any decision about the future of local government will have real and lasting impacts on the communities it serves. This EIA has explored how our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model may affect individuals and groups across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, recognising both the opportunities and the risks. What emerges clearly is that our proposed model of the creation of four new mainland unitary authorities with the Isle of

Wight remaining independent offers a transformative opportunity to reshape local government in a way that is more responsive, inclusive, and rooted in place.

By aligning governance with real economic and social geographies, our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model enables councils to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of their communities. It supports tailored service design, stronger local leadership, and more meaningful engagement, particularly for groups whose needs may be overlooked in larger, more centralised structures.

The assessment also acknowledges that change brings complexity. Transitioning to new authorities may disrupt existing relationships, services, and systems. However, the mitigations embedded throughout the proposal, including inclusive service design, community and stakeholder engagement, and robust transition planning, are designed to address these risks directly. These measures are not generic; they are targeted responses to the specific challenges faced by different groups, ensuring that equity and inclusion are central to the transformation process.

Importantly, this assessment recognises that individuals do not experience their identities in isolation. Intersectionality shapes how people engage with services and experience public life. Our four new mainland and Isle of Wight unitary model provides a framework for recognising and responding to these complexities, enabling councils to design services that reflect the realities of residents' lives.

A model with three or fewer mainland authorities presents a risk of reducing the visibility and influence of certain communities, particularly those with distinct geographic, demographic, or socio-economic profiles. Larger administrative areas may struggle to reflect the nuanced needs of smaller towns, rural communities, or marginalised groups, leading to more standardised service delivery that overlooks local variation. This could result in under-resourcing of services in areas with complex or less prominent needs, weakening the ability to deliver targeted interventions and diminishing opportunities for community-led design. In turn, this risks exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining the responsiveness, trust, and inclusivity that are central to effective local governance.

As Local Government Reorganisation progresses, future Equality Impact Assessments will be developed to provide more detailed and targeted analysis. These will incorporate updated data, community insights, and feedback from service users to ensure a deeper understanding of evolving impacts. Monitoring and implementation of this and subsequent EIAs will be embedded into transition planning from day one, with regular reporting to new unitary authority leadership and community stakeholders. This will help ensure accountability, transparency, and that equality, diversity and inclusion remain central to decision-making throughout and beyond the reorganisation process.

The proposal put forward aims to build a future where every community thrives. Where services are designed with and for the people they serve. Where councils are close enough to understand local needs, but strong enough to deliver lasting change. By embracing this opportunity, we can create a modern, resilient, and inclusive local government system that reflects the full diversity of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and delivers better outcomes for all.

EIA writers(s) and authoriser

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Appendix 8:

Our Place, Our Future: Shaping council services in Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight – Local Government Reorganisation engagement report

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Our Place, Our Future: Shaping council services in Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight

Local Government Reorganisation engagement report

Thinks
Insight & Strategy

20 August, 2025

Appendix 8: Engagement report

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1. Introduction
2. Executive summary
3. Views of the local area
4. Views of the local council
5. Views of local government reorganisation
6. Council-specific reports

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Introduction

Background and overview of approach

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Background to the engagement

In December 2024, the Government announced its intentions for a large-scale reorganisation of local government. It has asked two-tier local authorities across England to review how local government is organised. In Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, that means local councils are being asked to consider options for replacing the current county, borough, district and unitary authority arrangements.

A group of 12 of the 15 councils* in the area are collaborating on options for reorganising the council boundaries. They have commissioned Thinks Insight & Strategy to conduct large-scale resident engagement to understand what matters most to residents about their area, to ensure that future councils reflect real places, priorities, and people.

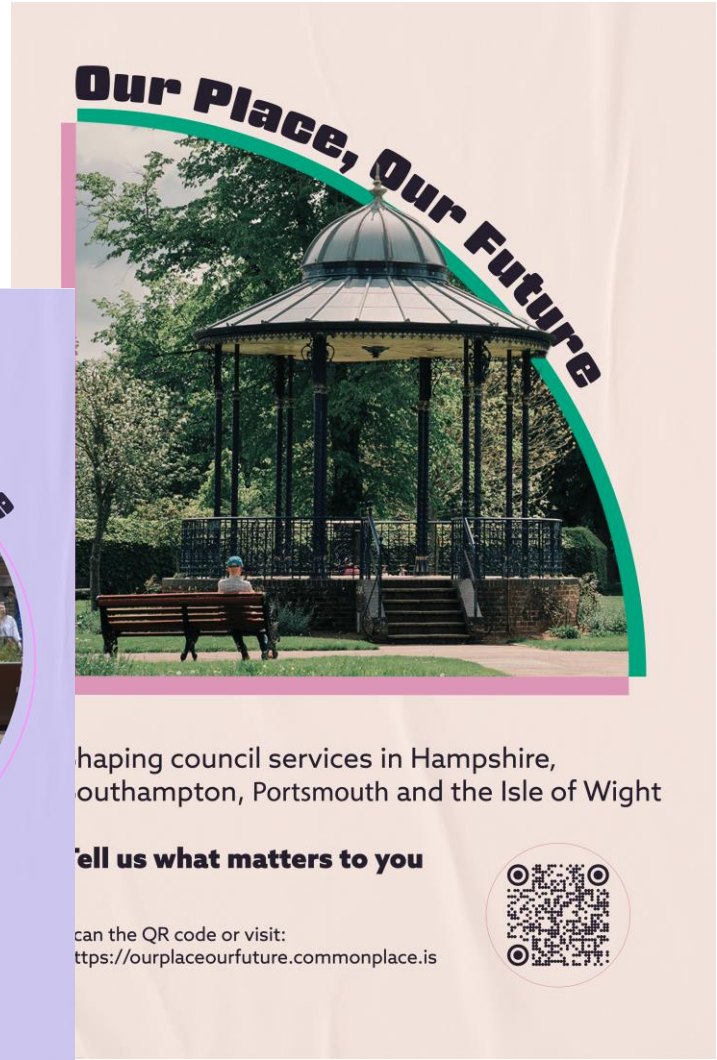
This engagement will inform and support these councils' submissions to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

* Hampshire County Council is working on its own proposal and is consulting on this separately. East Hampshire District Council opted not to participate in commissioning or promoting this engagement, while Gosport Borough Council commissioned a separate survey within this engagement.

Engagement approach

- Working with the 12 commissioning councils, Thinks Insight & Strategy developed a **questionnaire** including a mix of open-ended and closed (e.g. multiple choice, scale questions) questions, as well as supporting materials such as FAQs and background information for respondents. The survey and information about LGR and the engagement were hosted on specialist engagement platform **Commonplace**. The engagement was live between **30th June and 27th July.**
- The survey was disseminated via social media channels, email, and out-of-home advertising (e.g. posters, flyers, paper tags on domestic waste bins) including QR links.
- The survey was designed to be easily **accessible**, with options to request a paper copy or telephone interview for greater inclusion.
- Anyone could respond, with no restrictions or quotas. This means the survey is not necessarily representative of the views of the population as a whole. Rather it shows the views of residents who were keen to have their say on the issue of local government reorganisation.

Example social media post



Example bus stop poster

Notes on approach and how to read this report

- **Survey dissemination:** This survey was publicised and promoted by the commissioning councils via their social media, email, and other channels (including physical posters with QR codes). In East Hampshire, where the District Council did not take part in the engagement, the survey was promoted by Thinks Insight via marketing channels (email and Meta adverts).
- **Other engagement activity:** Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor together promoted a north Hampshire specific self-selection survey alongside this survey. This is likely to have reduced response rates from those areas, especially as all the Hampshire mainland options people were asked for feedback on proposed the same north Hampshire council. Similarly, Portsmouth City Council ran its own, localised survey which closed 29th June (the day before this consultation launched), likely affecting numbers on this survey. In addition, Hampshire County Council launched its own engagement on 21st July (about a week before this engagement closed).
- **Sample selection, quantitative representation and weighting:** This engagement sought the views of as broad a selection of residents as possible, looking to hear from everyone who has something to say on the question of LGR. However, as with any opt-in or self-selected sample, the data reported here should not be treated as representative of the wider Hampshire population. Most importantly, those who chose to participate in the engagement are likely to be more engaged and more vocal than the average resident. Demographically, the sample skews towards older, white participants compared to census data. This type of data is not suitable for weighting (i.e. making it more representative through statistical manipulation) as it could result in biased and inaccurate data. Proportionally, there is a much a higher response rate from areas such as the New Forest, Test Valley and Winchester. This means these councils have a larger impact on average values than others. We have also reported on each council separately to avoid this bias.

Notes on approach and how to read this report

- **Incomplete data/responses:** Unlike a representative research survey, almost all questions in this engagement were optional and we included responses from participants who only answered a small number of questions in our analysis. This means the base size for analysis varies between questions.
- **Statistical significance:** By default, a p-value of 0.05 was used for significance testing, in line with industry standards. Differences by sub-groups have been explored throughout the report and those which were statistically significant have been highlighted in red and green. Where statistical significance is mentioned, this refers to a difference *within* the sample, e.g. where respondents from one council are significantly more or less supportive of an option than the average respondent in the engagement.
- **NETs and rounding:** NET, or aggregate, scores have been used in this engagement report to group together responses that are similar (e.g. a NET for satisfaction would show very satisfied + fairly satisfied). These NET scores have been calculated based on *exact values,* while the charts show *rounded values for individual scores.* Because rounding replaces exact values with approximations, i.e. every number becomes a little higher or a little lower than the exact value, small differences can accumulate when adding or subtracting several rounded numbers. As a result, the total of rounded figures may not exactly match the rounded total of the original values.

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Survey overview

Completed

1. Start here: Proposals for new councils

In this first section we are going to ask you some questions about local decision-

10325 Have your say

Part 1 of the survey introduced LGR, as well as the three options under consideration by the commissioning councils (see next slide)*. Residents were asked to share their views and preferences for the new unitary authorities.

Completed

2. Local area and community

In this section we will ask you some questions about your local area, your connection to it, what you like and what ...

5858 Have your say

Part 2 of the survey focused on residents' feelings about their local area – the places they go, the services they use, and what they would like to see from their local council.

In addition, we collected demographic information (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, etc.) to support analysis and monitor uptake.

NB. When we initially launched the survey, it was not split into two parts and included a map-based activity which some participants found difficult to use. We removed the map activity after 8th July, and changed the order in which people were directed to the survey (to prioritise the options tile) on 11th July. We received almost twice as many responses to Part 1 (the survey focussed on the options) as we did to Part 2 (with a focus on their local area).

* In the separate survey commissioned by Gosport Borough Council, residents were not shown the three options and instead asked open questions about their preferences for local government more generally.

Respondents were asked about 3 potential options for reorganisation:

Council 1: Basingstoke, Hart, Rushmoor

Council 2: New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3: Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4: Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5: Isle of Wight

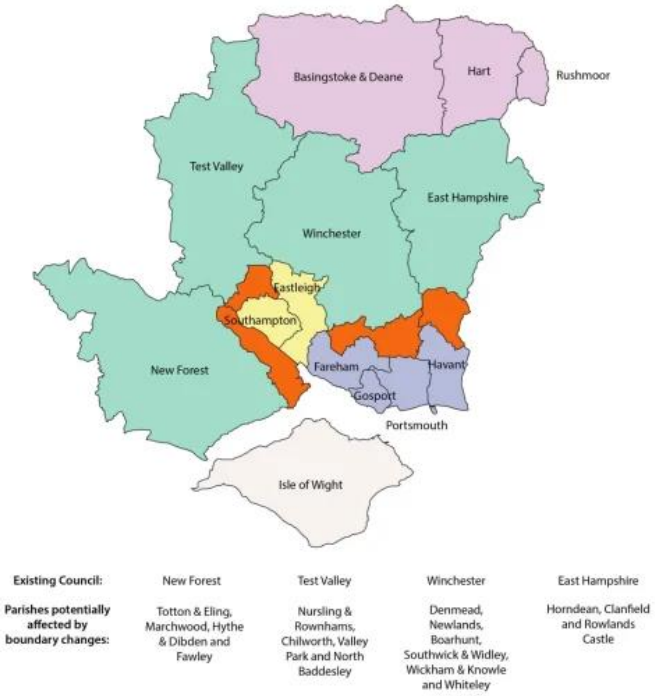
Council 1: Basingstoke, Hart, Rushmoor

Council 2: Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3: New Forest, Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4: Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5: Isle of Wight



Potential boundary changes, affecting parishes in the New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire.

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Sample overview

Council	Number of respondents	Responses as % of population
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	205	0.11%
East Hampshire District Council	213	0.17%
Eastleigh Borough Council	933	0.67%
Fareham Borough Council	370	0.32%
Gosport Borough Council	304	0.37%
Hart District Council	75	0.07%
Havant Borough Council	271	0.22%
Isle of Wight Council	340	0.24%
New Forest District Council	3,141	1.79%
Portsmouth City Council	755	0.36%
Rushmoor Borough Council	156	0.15%
Southampton City Council	812	0.32%
Test Valley Borough Council	2,773	2.09%
Winchester City Council	1,750	1.34%
Unassigned*	1,236	
Total	**13,334**	

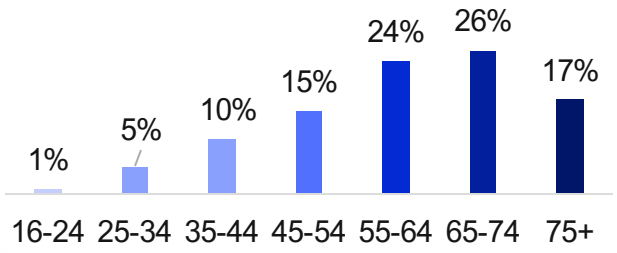
*Most unassigned respondents did not provide a postcode or select a council. A very small number (n < 20) of respondents provided a postcode from outside the area, primarily from Wiltshire.

Sample observations

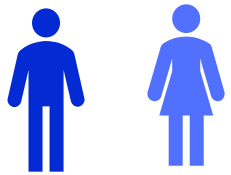
- Compared to similar engagements that have been hosted on Commonplace, this is a very high response rate.
- In proportion to their populations, New Forest (1.79%), Test Valley (2.09%) and Winchester (1.34%) achieved the highest response rate.
- In council areas where other engagements were also promoted, or where there is less of a difference between proposed options, the response rate was significantly lower (e.g. 0.07% in Hart, 0.11% in Basingstoke).
- Demographically (see more on the next slide), the sample skews older, when compared with census data.
- Almost half of respondents are retired and the sample leans towards respondents from a higher socioeconomic background.

Demographic sample overview

Age



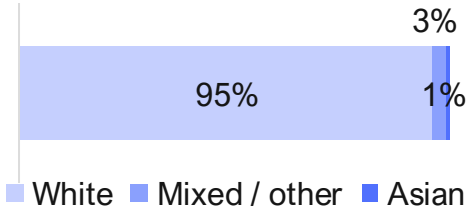
Gender



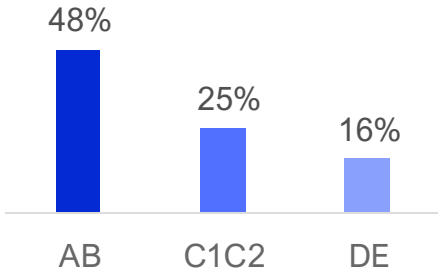
46% 50%

4% identify as non-binary, other or prefer not to say

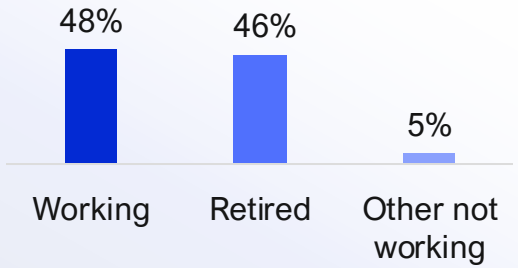
Ethnicity



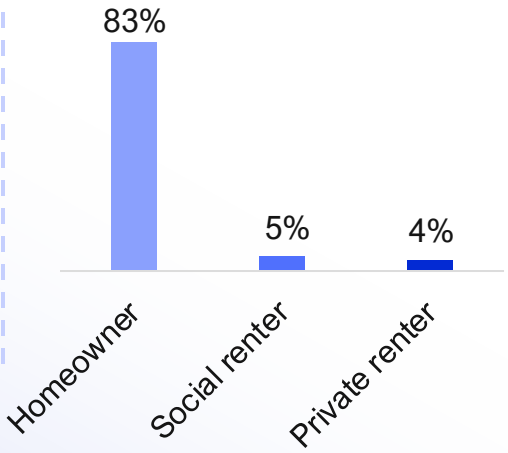
Socioeconomic grade



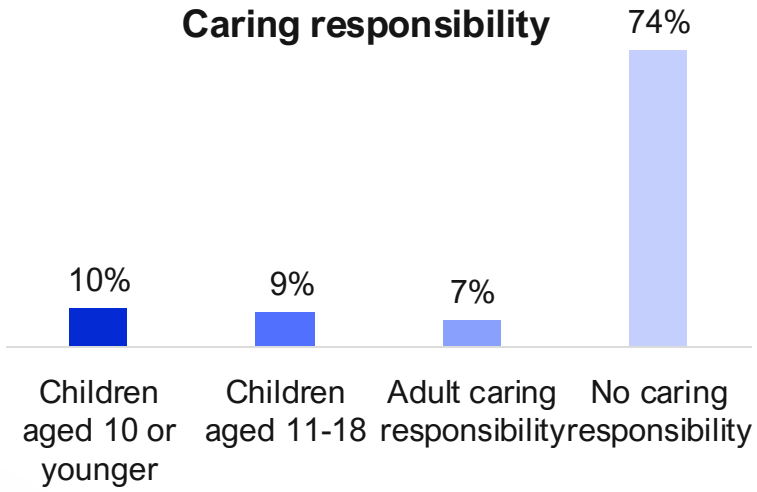
Working status



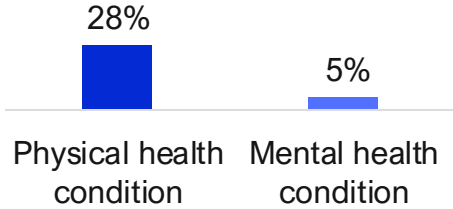
Tenure type



Caring responsibility



Health



556

293

Various questions. Varying sample size.

Executive summary

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Overarching reflections

1. Respondents to this survey are largely highly engaged residents. Only 7% had not heard of LGR before taking part, and most have also taken a range of actions in the past (e.g. signing petitions, writing to their MP) that suggest they are more politically engaged than the average citizen. Older residents were more likely to respond to this survey than younger people.

2. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the response rate is highest in areas where the options for new unitary authorities vary significantly or where there are potential boundary changes (in particular the New Forest, Test Valley, and Winchester). For these residents, the stakes can feel higher than for residents of areas where the options do not differ, such as those in North Hampshire.

3. Across respondents, the case for reorganisation is not clear. Although only 1 in 10 (9%) residents in the engagement strongly opposes all three options for LGR, qualitatively, respondents tend to support an option which they feel is the “best of a bad bunch”. Most feel that the proposed unitary authorities are too big, impacting local decision-making and service delivery. Many doubt that LGR will help to save money or deliver services more efficiently. Almost all assume that they will lose out in some way as a result of reorganisation.

4. When considering the options, respondents are most likely to refer to what they feel makes most sense for a county that includes very rural areas such as the New Forest alongside conurbations such as Southampton or Portsmouth. This urban-rural divide is seen to be about culture and way of life, but also about relatively wealthy rural councils having to ‘subsidise’ indebted city councils. Rural respondents tend to be more worried about losing their voice as a result of LGR, while urban respondents tend to be more open to decisions being made more centrally on behalf of a wider area.

5. Responses to this engagement suggest that there are deeper concerns about urbanisation, overdevelopment, and immigration which underlie these considerations. These combine with a perception of overstretched and underfunded public services and infrastructure – from social care to roads, education and GP surgeries.

Key findings on Option 1

- Even if the area feels very large, Option 1 is strongly preferred by respondents from Test Valley and New Forest, based on a sense that rural councils should stick together to preserve their way of life. These respondents also argue that services would be easier to administer as these areas have more similar needs.
- Their preference is also based on a mutual rejection of Southampton, which respondents in this engagement visit regularly but do not feel culturally aligned with.
- Respondents from East Hampshire and Winchester residents do not agree – they feel Council 2 is too large an area to effectively govern under this proposal.
- Those in other areas have less strongly held views on the options overall, but make similar points regarding the urban-rural alignment and worry about the size of the new unitary authorities.

With it covering such a large area I believe we would lose some of identity and as a result an understanding in community needs. Issues in the New Forest are not he same as issues in East Hampshire seeing as the density of population is more.
Winchester, 75-84

It links together the rural communities better than the other options. This is very important for Totton and the New Forest. The South Downs national park and the new forest have much in common.
New Forest, 55-64

Option 1

Council 1: Basingstoke & Deane, Hart, Rushmoor

Council 2: New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3: Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4: Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5: Isle of Wight

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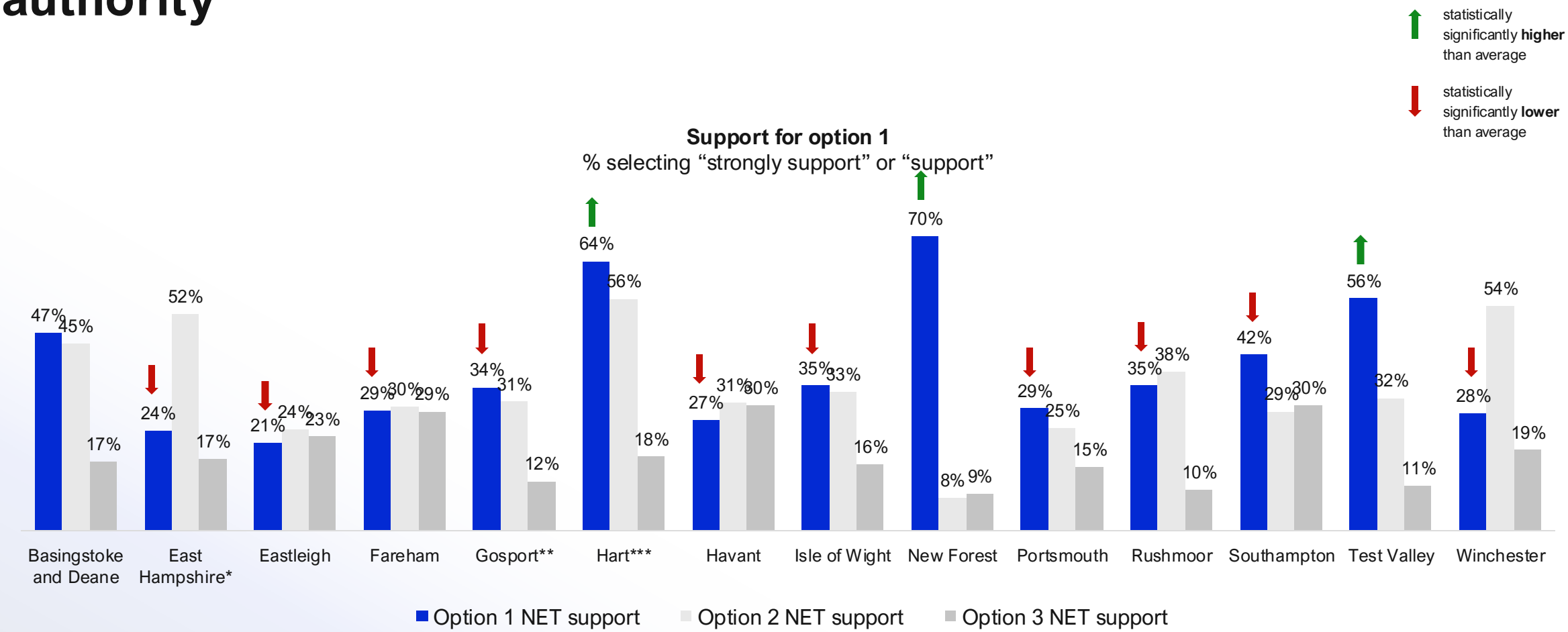
Test Valley and New Forest have a clear preference for Option 1, which would see them form a larger, majority rural unitary authority



Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All respondents who answered this question in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (n=154), East Hampshire District Council (n=154)*, Eastleigh Borough Council (n=662), Fareham Borough Council (n=264), Gosport Borough Council (n=67)**, Hart District Council (n=45)***, Havant Borough Council (n=166), Isle of Wight Council (n=184), New Forest District Council (n=2,585), Portsmouth City Council (n=515), Rushmoor Borough Council (n=95), Southampton City Council (n=198), Test Valley Borough Council (n=2,278), Winchester City Council (n=1,496)

*Note that East Hampshire District Council did not co-commission this project or promote this engagement.
**The majority of respondents from Gosport did not answer this question, as they were routed to a different survey.
*** Caution: low base size of n < 50.

Key findings on Option 2

- Those who responded from the New Forest are strongly opposed to Option 2, and worry about losing their identity and access to services, fearing that the needs of Southampton would be prioritised.
- Respondents from Eastleigh and Southampton also have reservations about being joined in a larger unitary authority they perceive as quite disparate.
- However, this is the preferred option for respondents in East Hampshire and Winchester. While they express concerns about impacts for the New Forest, geographically this is seen to make more sense. While the area still feels very large under this option, to many respondents from those eastern areas, Option 1 is simply too big.
- As with Option 1, In the areas where there is no difference between the two options, opinions are split but less strongly held.

I like that the cities Southampton, Portsmouth and areas such as Havant are separate from EH & Winchester. I prefer that New Forest is in a council closer to it geographically and that council 4 covers more of the area that is local to me (by taking away the New Forest).
East Hampshire, 45-54

Would the New Forest want to be linked with Southampton?
Eastleigh, 75-84

Option 2

Council 1: Basingstoke & Deane, Hart, Rushmoor

Council 2: Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3: New Forest, Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4: Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5: Isle of Wight

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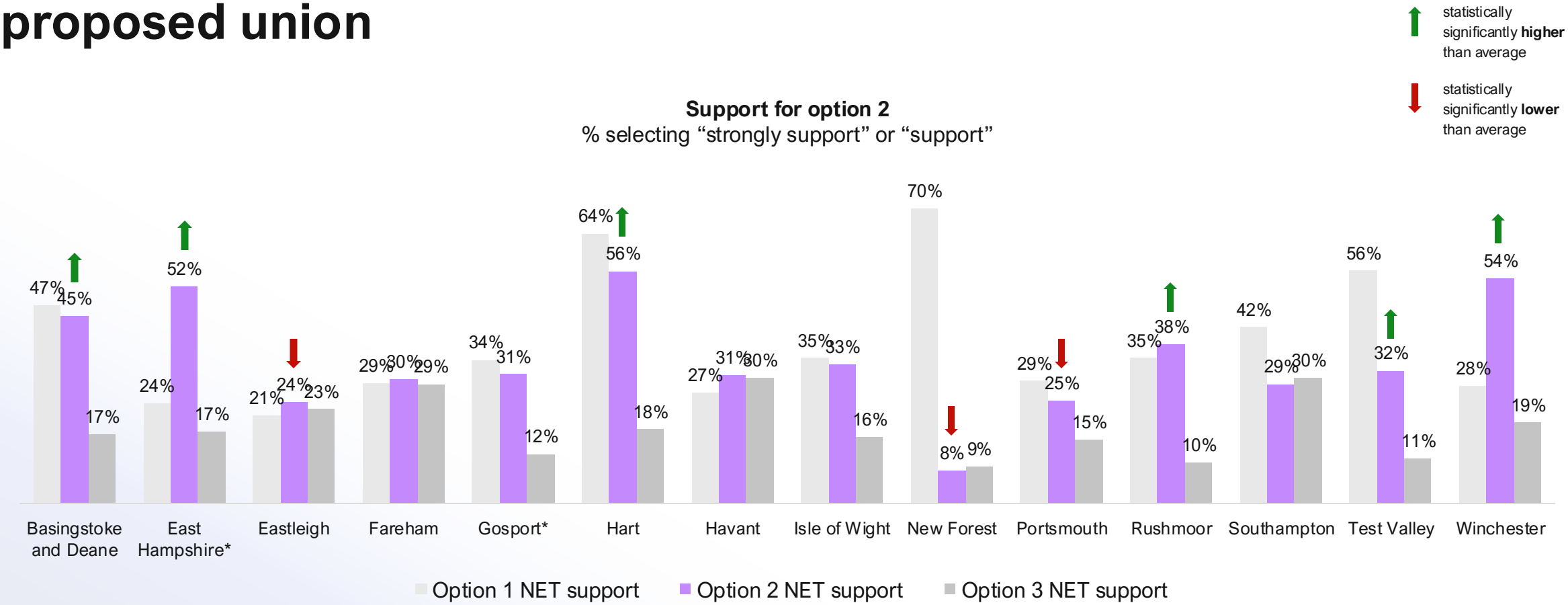
East Hampshire and Winchester respondents lean towards Option 2, which they feel is preferably to the larger Option 1. New Forest and Southampton respondents are both sceptical about the proposed union



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*Note that East Hampshire District Council did not co-commission this project or promote this engagement.
**The majority of respondents from Gosport did not answer this question, as they were routed to a different survey.
*** Caution: low base size of n < 50.

Key findings on Option 3 – boundary changes

- This option is most disliked and considered controversial by many respondents. It is also the most poorly understood, with respondents wondering whether the affected areas will be split out into smaller separate councils, or joined to the proposed larger councils. This would need to be carefully explained to residents in affected parishes.
- Across all areas, those unaffected, i.e. not living in one of the parishes, are relatively more likely to see benefits to this; however, only very few in the potentially affected parishes agree.
- Across councils, respondents argue against their parishes being absorbed into more urban unitary authorities, which they see as threatening their rural way of life and paving the way to urbanisation, overdevelopment, and deprivation. These respondents also worry about their voice being trumped by those of city residents in decision-making. This is felt more strongly in the New Forest and Test Valley, compared to East Hampshire and Winchester.
- Only a small minority in these parishes agree that this could lead to a better representation of how people already live, work and access services. These views are more common in the southern parishes of East Hampshire and Winchester than New Forest or Test Valley.

This matches areas to the larger areas they serve. I think it presents a more realistic picture
Winchester, Not affected, 25-34

The Waterside is NOT a suburb of Southampton. We would be peeled away from our longstanding community in the New Forest.
New Forest, Affected, 55-64

Option 3

Potential boundary changes, affecting parishes in the New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire:

- Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley.
- Nursling & Rownhams, Chilworth, Valley Park and North Baddesley.
- Denmead, Newlands, Boarhunt, Southwick & Widley, Wickham & Knowle and Whiteley.
- Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle.

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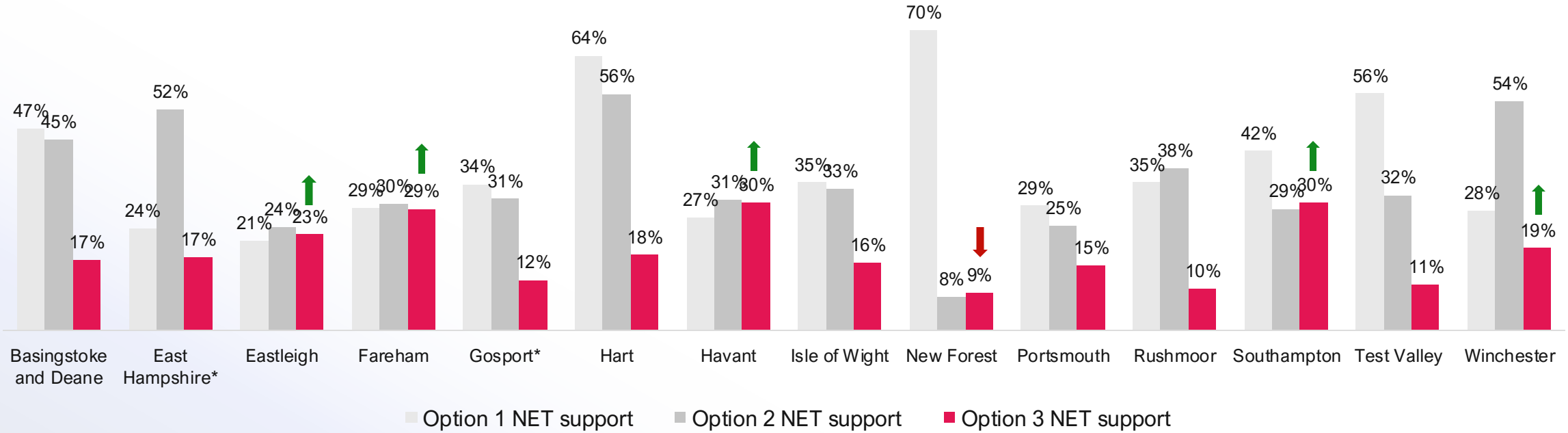
Option 3 is almost universally disliked, particularly among those potentially affected by boundary changes. However, this rejection is more pronounced in Test Valley and New Forest than in Winchester and East Hampshire

statistically significantly **higher** than average

statistically significantly **lower** than average

Support for Option 3
% selecting "strongly support" or "support"



Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All respondents who answered this question in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (n=154), East Hampshire District Council (n=154)*, Eastleigh Borough Council (n=662), Fareham Borough Council (n=264), Gosport Borough Council (n=67)**, Hart District Council (n=45)***, Havant Borough Council (n=166), Isle of Wight Council (n=184), New Forest District Council (n=2,585), Portsmouth City Council (n=515), Rushmoor Borough Council (n=95), Southampton City Council (n=198), Test Valley Borough Council (n=2,278), Winchester City Council (n=1,496)

*Note that East Hampshire District Council did not co-commission this project or promote this engagement.
**The majority of respondents from Gosport did not answer this question, as they were routed to a different survey.
*** Caution: low base size of n < 50.

565

Overarching findings from the engagement

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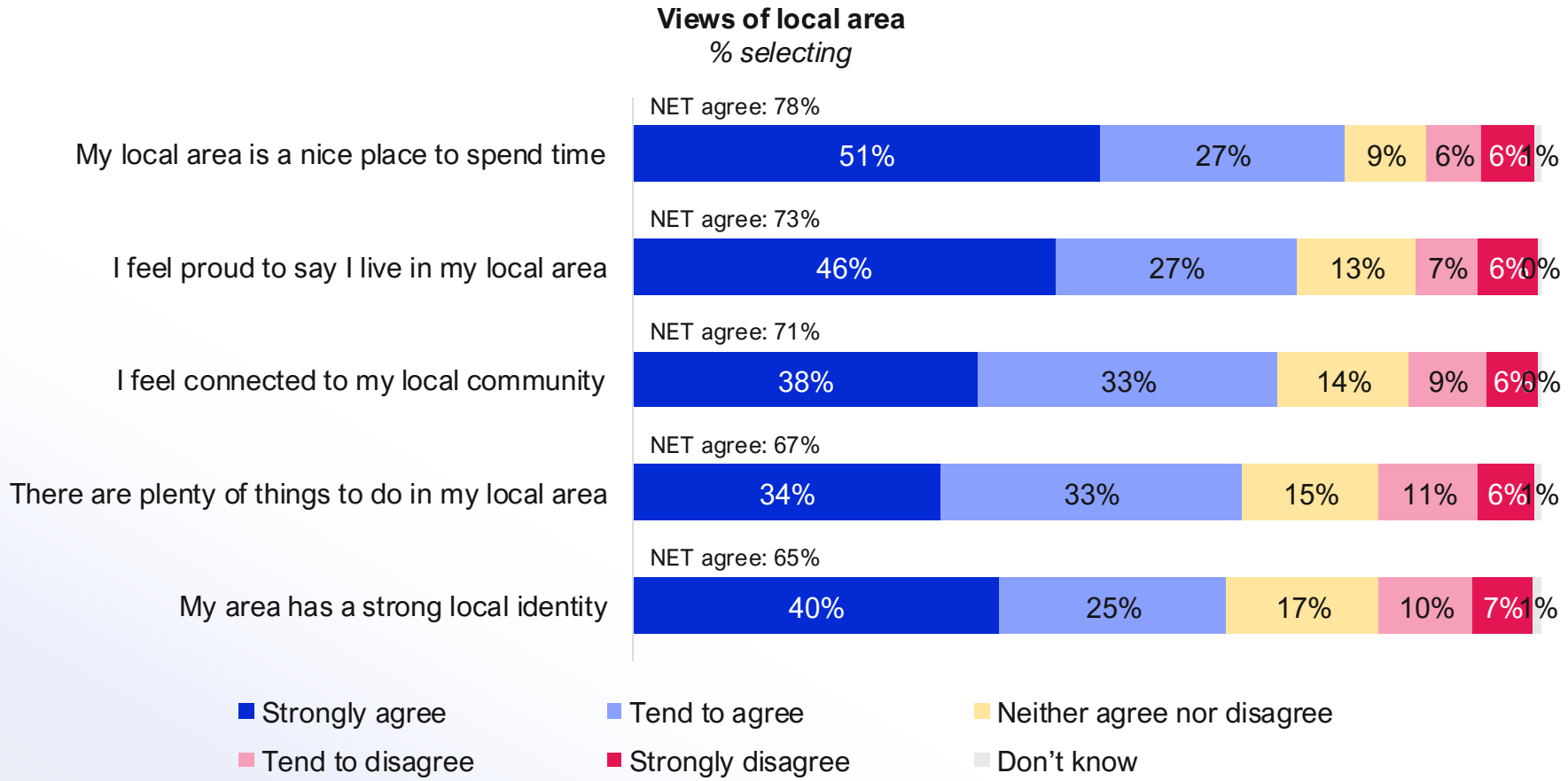
566

Views of the local area

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

The majority of residents engaged in this survey enjoy living in their local area and feel connected to their community



At more than 8 in 10 **(87%),** respondents in **New Forest** are most likely to say they feel proud of their local area, especially compared to **Southampton** respondents (**52%** of whom agree). Respondents in **New Forest (81%)**, **Portsmouth (77%),** and **Winchester (73%)** are most likely to say there are plenty of things to do in their local area.

Q4. We want to understand how people feel about the area they live in. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All who responded to this question (n=5,855-5,862), in New Forest (n=942), Southampton (n=516), Portsmouth (n=384), and Winchester (n=466)

Respondents in this engagement value easy access to green spaces and the seaside, and active local communities

- **Access to green spaces**, with the seafront, New Forest, AONBs and nice landscapes nearby
- **Active communities**, with clubs, groups and things to do and a friendly environment
- **Access to amenities and nearby towns or** cities for shops and things to do
- **Transport hubs** nearby by car, train or plane
- **Peace and quiet**, particularly in rural areas
- **Good schools** for younger people

Welcoming community. Easy to get involved and feel part of the village. Really good pubs and great walking. Disused railway line is a real bonus.
Winchester, 65-74

Peaceful and plenty of green outdoor space. Sense of community in the village. Not too far from a few city centres if you want to go out to restaurants or shopping.
Winchester, 35-44

The road system allows for easy access to all parts of the area. Plenty of nice open spaces and parks which are all well maintained.
Eastleigh, 85+

The countryside, the friendliness of people, good schools, good access to London and major roads to other cities.
East Hampshire, 25-34

Q7. What do you like most about your local area?

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Respondents also agree on the negatives: over-development, issues with traffic and transport, high house prices

- **Overdevelopment**, which is causing strain on existing infrastructure
- An increase in **crime, anti-social behaviour** which is making residents feel unsafe
- **Inaccessible transport**, with poor links in rural areas, expensive bus or ferry tickets and expensive parking
- **Heavy traffic** in towns and on main roads (A326, M27), and associated noise and pollution
- **Unaffordable housing**, making it difficult for younger people to find homes
- **Few shops or activities**, particularly for younger groups
- **Littering** and limited maintenance

TOO CROWDED. Too many new homes with no supporting infrastructure. Traffic is a nightmare.
Eastleigh, 65-74

The public transport is poor, there is effectively no option to travel any great distance but to drive.
New Forest, 25-34

I wish there was more to do in town socially, like nice places to eat or drink for my age group.
Test Valley, 35-44

Those who do not treat our surroundings with respect, poor quality of roads and general littering, unsatisfactory police presence.
New Forest, 75-84

Q7. What do you like most about your local area? What do you dislike most?

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Despite these similarities, not everyone has the same experience of life in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight

Urban / rural

Urban residents in the area are usually more satisfied with their ability to access services, activities and entertainment. They are also most likely to be satisfied with their access to public transport. However, even though many can access green spaces relatively easily, they experience challenges around traffic, noise, pollution and crime.

Rural residents are more likely to be satisfied and proud of where they live. However, this group is often older, and are more likely to experience issues getting around the wider Hampshire area and accessing services.

Older / younger

Older residents are more likely to be satisfied with the activities and community life that is available, even when living in villages or rural areas. However, the oldest generations often experience challenges getting around on public transport, and feel that it isn't always accessible to them or well connected enough.

Younger people express more frustration around the range of activities and events that are available near them – especially those living in rural areas. Those living in cities are more likely to be excited by the range of events, shops and restaurants on offer.

Rich / deprived

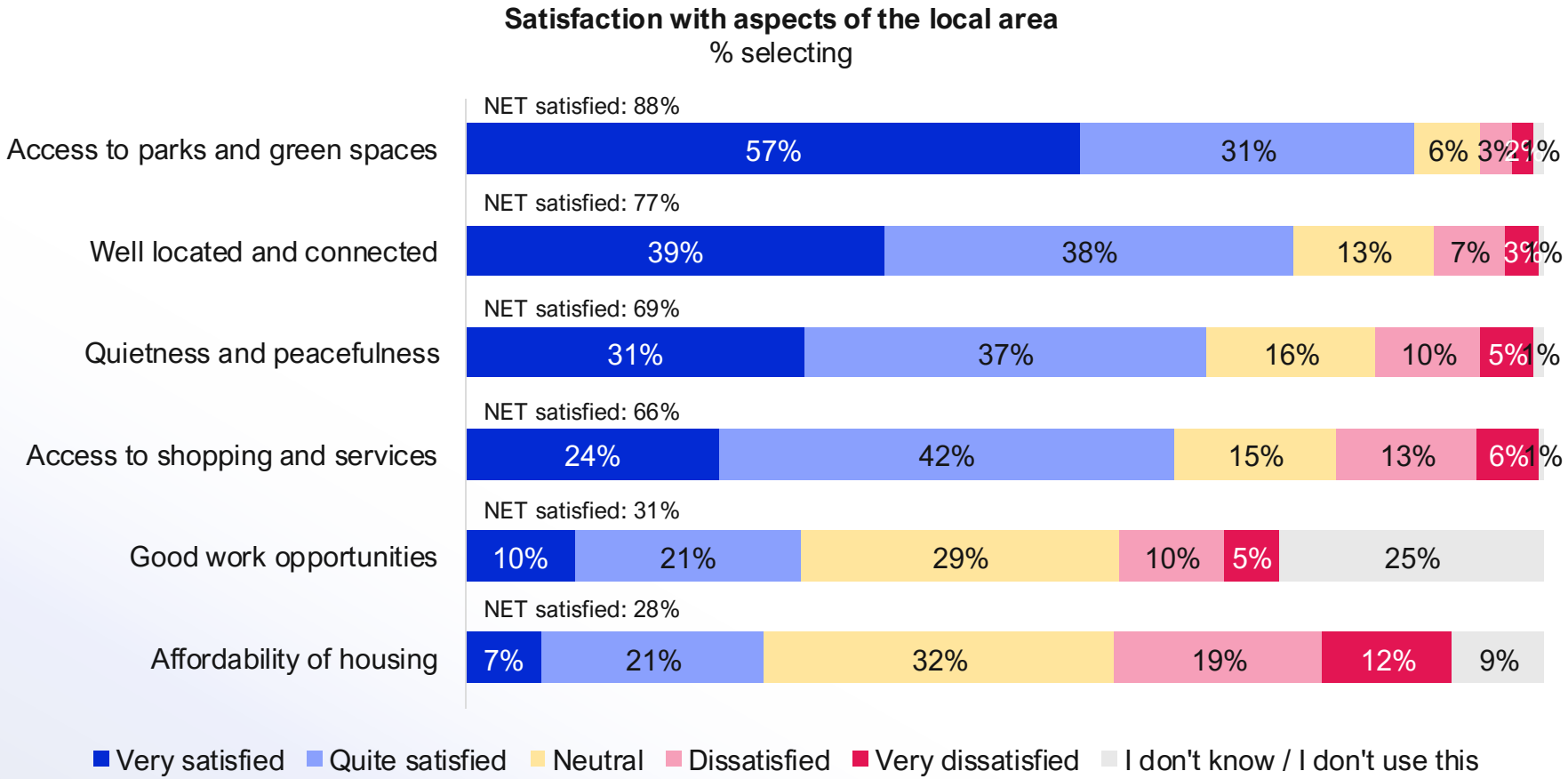
Residents across the sample talk about differences between 'richer' and 'poorer' areas, often raising concerns about how the two might interact when it comes to decision-making and service delivery.

While most name urban areas as more likely to be poorer, have social housing and more people experiencing deprivation, residents also raise concerns around deprived rural communities being forgotten. There is a sense that support and services for this group are largely available in cities, and are inaccessible to those living rurally.

Q7. What do you like most about your local area? What do you dislike most?

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Respondents generally feel their area is well located and peaceful, but housing is expensive and work opportunities can be limited



Access to parks and green spaces: Those living in the New Forest (95%), Winchester (92%) East Hampshire and Hart* (both 95%) are most likely to be satisfied.

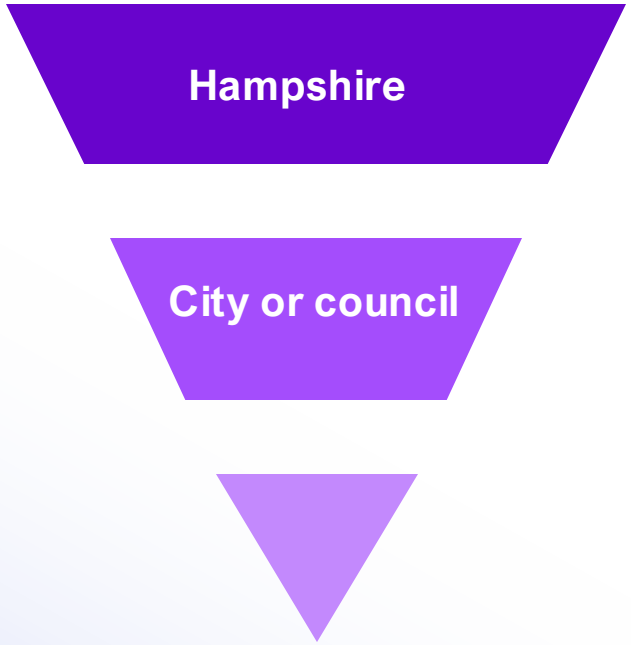
Access to shopping and services: Those living in the New Forest (75%) and near cities in Winchester (72%) and Portsmouth (71%) are most likely to be satisfied.

Work opportunities: Those living on the Isle of Wight (15%), Gosport (20%) and East Hampshire (25%) are least likely to be satisfied.

Affordability of housing: Those living in Gosport (35%) and Portsmouth (34%) are most likely to be satisfied, while those in Winchester are least satisfied (20%).

Q5. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your local area? Base: All who responded to this question (n=5822)

Residents in this engagement identify differently with their local area, but many are accessing services in their nearby city



Some see the whole of Hampshire as their local area, often because they travel around the wider area for work or for leisure. These people have often lived in multiple places around Hampshire, or have friends and family spread around the wider area.

Many mention their town, city or current council area, such as ‘Test Valley’ or ‘Winchester’ as it is the main place they work, access services and spend their leisure time. Even those who don’t see the whole city as their local area tend to say they have to go there to access services.

Other define their local area as specific villages or neighbourhoods, such as ‘Bishops Waltham’ or ‘Waterside’, even if they have to leave regularly to access facilities and services nearby. These are most often people living rurally, who identify strongly with their community.

Working adults are generally more mobile, often commuting to hubs such as Southampton, Winchester, or Portsmouth, but also London. Many are going to urban centres across Hampshire to access services. Retired residents, especially those who make more use of public services, are likely to travel in their immediate local area for most of their needs, but sometimes find they have to go quite far for specific needs (e.g. for hospital appointments, better shopping options, etc.).

Q3. Thinking about Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, tell us the area you think of as your 'local area'

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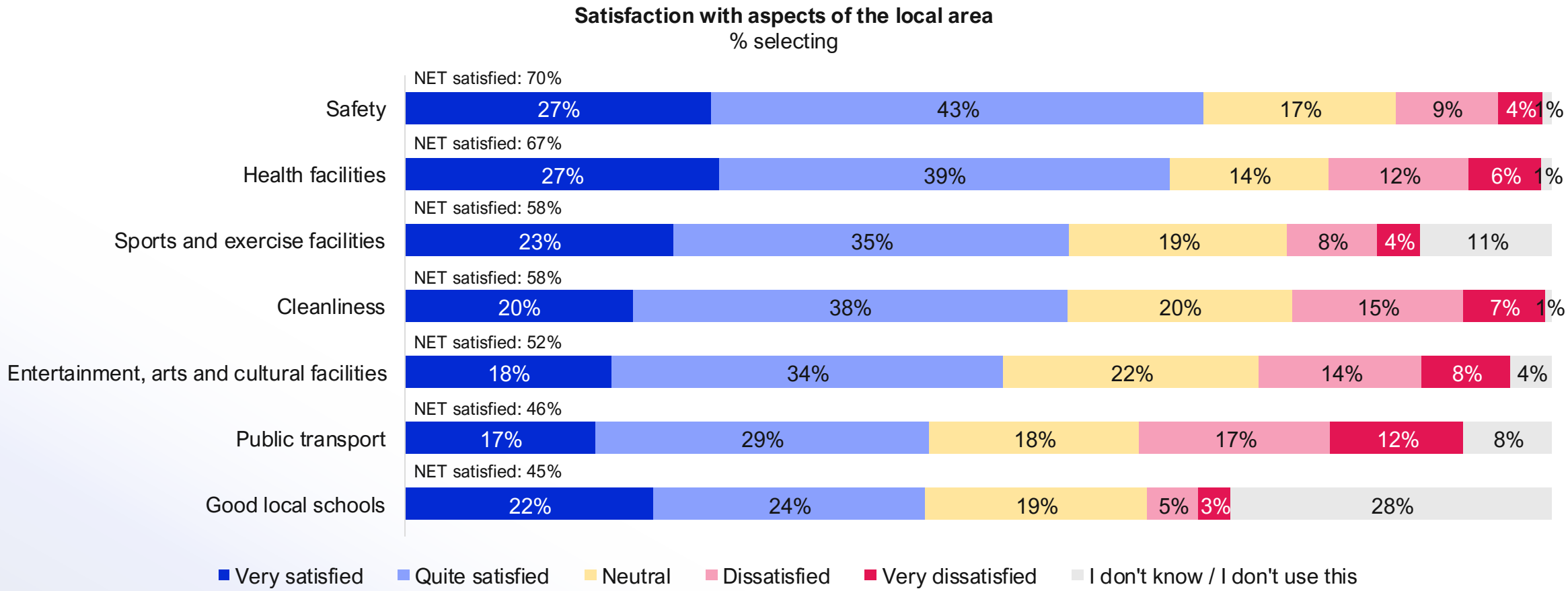
Views of the local council

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Across the county, respondents agree that their areas are green and safe, though access to services is more variable



Q5. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your local area? Base: All who responded to this question (n=5822)

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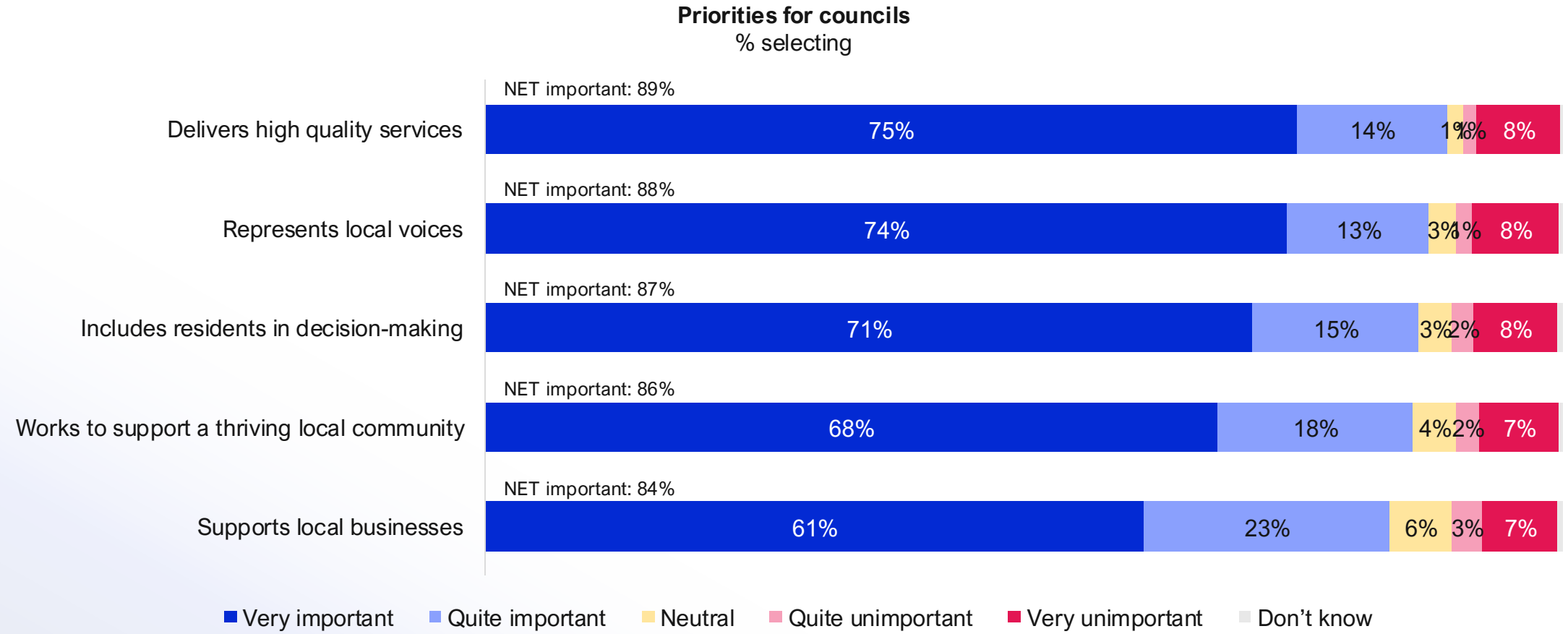
Rural respondents tend to be more satisfied with safety and cleanliness, while those in urban areas benefit from better infrastructure and public transport

	More satisfied	Less satisfied
Safety	Respondents in rural councils are most satisfied: Hart* (84% satisfied), New Forest (82%) as well as those living in Winchester City Council (82%).	Those living in Southampton (48% satisfied), Rushmoor (54%), Gosport (55%) and Portsmouth (60%) are least likely to be satisfied.
Cleanliness	Those more likely to be rural are most satisfied with this: those living in Hart* (82%), New Forest (77%), Test Valley (70%) and East Hampshire* (69%) but also those living in Winchester (73%).	On the other hand, those living in Southampton are least likely to be satisfied (26% satisfied), followed by Rushmoor (30%) and Havant (36%).
Public transport	Respondents living in cities such as Portsmouth are most satisfied (72%), followed by Southampton (64%) and Rushmoor (63%).	Those living in Hart* are least satisfied with public transport (16%), followed by East Hampshire* (35%) and Winchester (35%).
Entertainment and things to do	Those living in Portsmouth are most likely to be satisfied (71%), followed by those living in Basingstoke & Deane (65%) and Fareham (62%). Many of those living in cities feel more neutrally, with 57% feeling satisfied in Southampton and Winchester.	Less than a quarter of those living in Gosport are least satisfied (23%), followed by East Hampshire (26%) and Havant (34%).

Q5. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your local area? Base: All who responded to this question (n=5822)

The vast majority of respondents feel the council should prioritise delivering high-quality services, and representing local voices

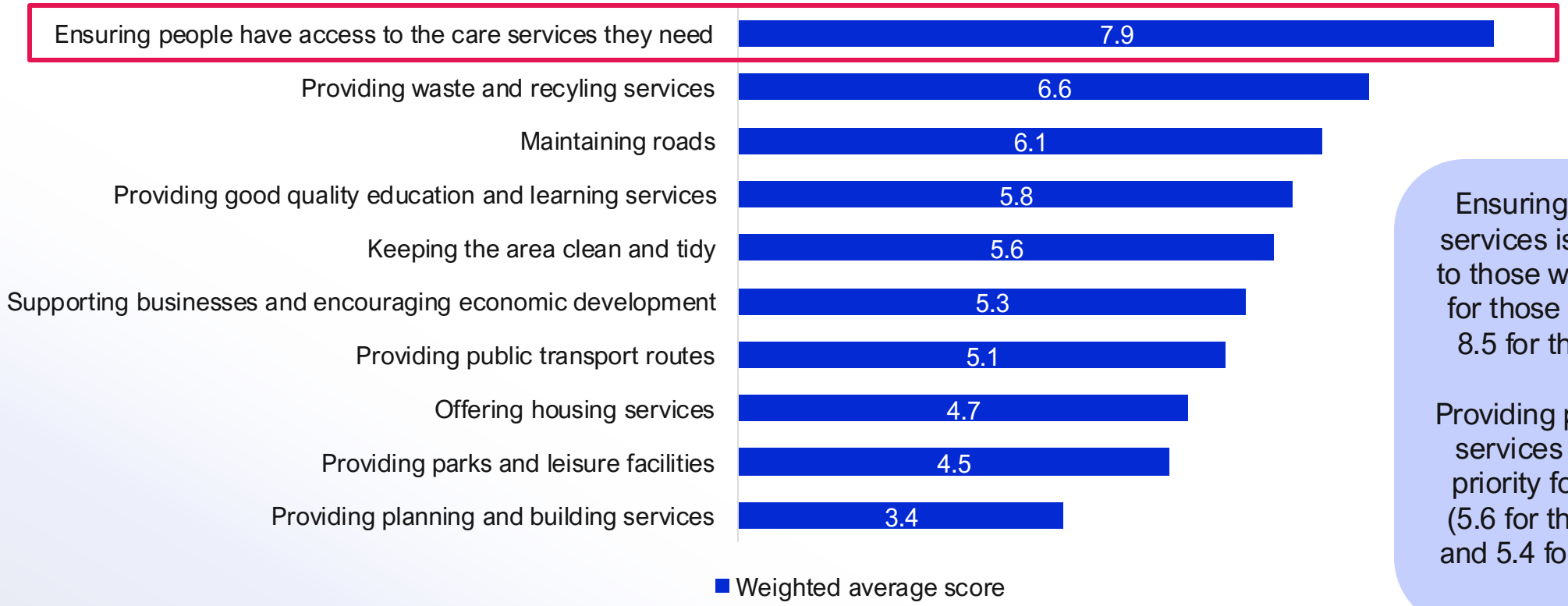


Q6. How important is it to you that your council… Base: All who responded to this question (n=5834)

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Access to care services is a clear priority across the county, reflecting one of the most prominent concerns about service provision after LGR

What councils should prioritise in the future
*Showing weighted average score for each option out of 10**



Ensuring access to care services is most important to those who are older (8.1 for those aged 65-74 and 8.5 for those ages 75+).

Providing parks and leisure services is also a higher priority for young people (5.6 for those aged 25-34 and 5.4 for those aged 35-44).

314

Q8. In the future, what would you like your council to prioritise? Number each option in order of priority, with 1 being the highest.
* Responses were ranked using a weighted scoring system where Rank 1 = 10 points, Rank 2 = 9 points, … Rank 10 = 1 point. Base: All who responded to this question (n=1785)

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Residents express similar priorities and areas for improvement, connected to the negative aspects of their local areas

Overdevelopment	Improving infrastructure in areas that are being further developed. Also ensuring that green spaces are cared for and protected, with a focus on biodiversity and making them attractive.
Crime and anti-social behaviour	Improving social cohesion and activities for younger people to build a stronger sense of community. Also increasing policing and surveillance, and targeting areas where anti-social behaviour is worst.
Inaccessible transport	Improving and integrating public transport routes, as well as ensuring they are all accessible – particularly on the Isle of Wight, and providing better bus services in the evenings.
Heavy traffic	Encouraging more public transport and active travel, as well as rethinking major roads to ensure they are able to cope with the volume of traffic.
Unaffordable housing	Improving housing stock, building more social housing, and ensuring that there are options for younger local people (in strong tension with fears and perceptions of overdevelopment).
Few shops or activities	Supporting businesses (especially independent ones) to make town centres more lively and vibrant, and attractive to all different age groups. Also providing better access to services such as banks.
Vandalism and littering	Providing more proactive maintenance and repairs, and increasing policing or fines for littering and vandalism.

Q9. What one thing would you like your council to focus on the most? Please be as specific as possible.

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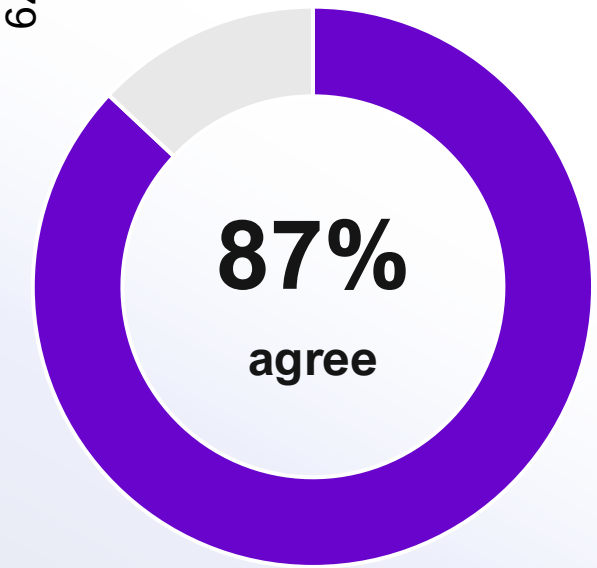
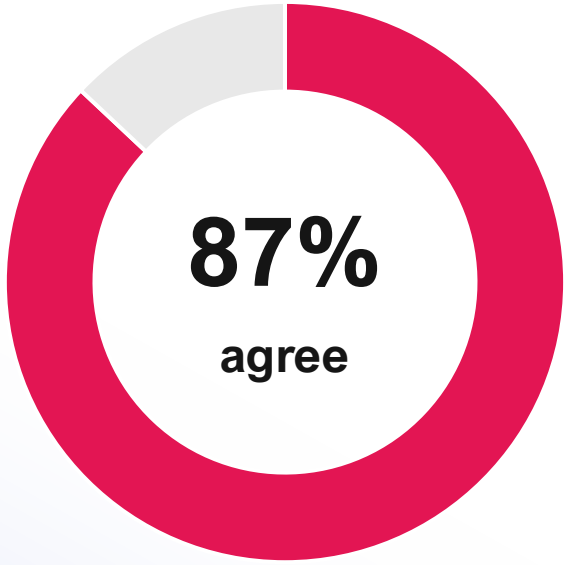
While more than half agree that other areas' needs should be considered, they strongly feel that decision-making should be local

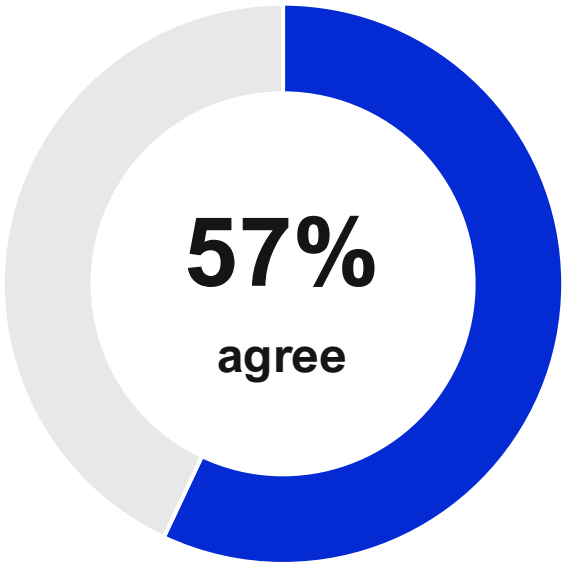
"It is important that my council reflects the identity of my local community"



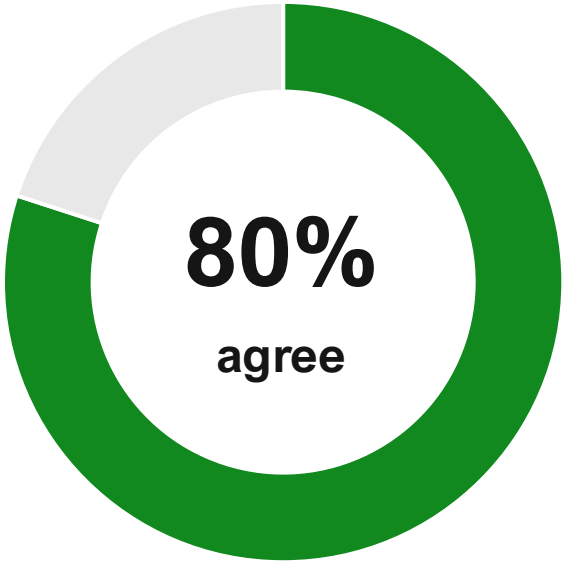
"Decisions about my local area should be made near my community"



"Decisions about my local area should be considered alongside other areas"



"Local voices should have the strongest influence in decision making"



Q10. Here are some statements about local decision-making. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the statements. Base: All who responded to this question (n=11410)

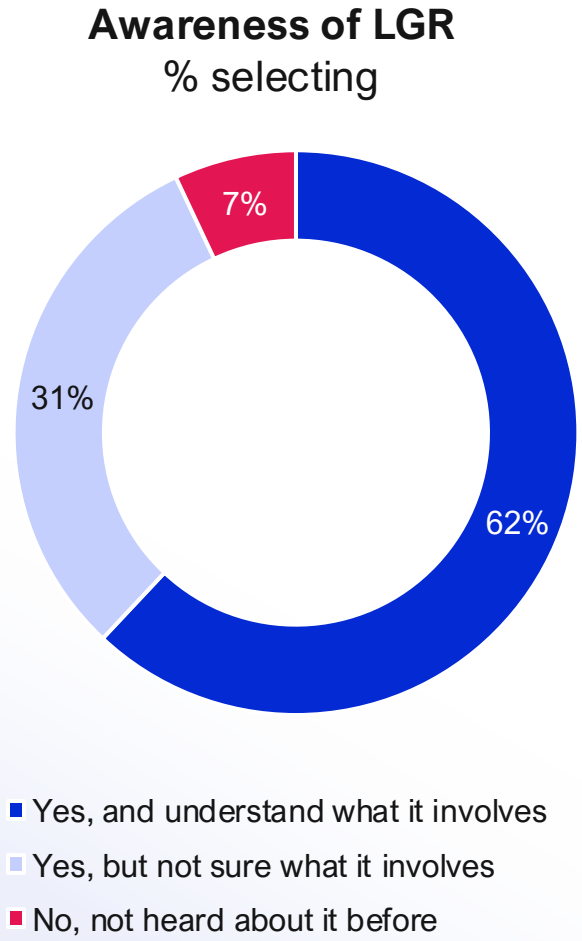
PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

580

Views of local government reorganisation

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Most say they had heard of LGR prior to taking part in the engagement, with 6 in 10 claiming to be well informed



Those living in areas that are most likely to be affected – so where Options 1 and 2 would involve them being part of differing councils, or those living in parishes affected by Option 3 – are most likely to be well informed about local government reorganisation.

318

Q11. Have you heard about the government's plans to reorganise councils in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight? Base: All who responded to this question (n=11065)

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These relatively engaged residents express a high level of concern and scepticism about LGR in principle

Generally, there is a high level of concern around Local Government Reorganisation as a whole. Although only 1 in 10 (9%) of respondents in the engagement say they "strongly oppose" all three options included for consideration, many feel forced to pick the "best of a bad bunch" of options.

Residents struggle to understand why a change is needed and have a strong sense that they will ultimately lose out:

Losing the local touch	Losing funding	Losing services	Losing influence
With councils covering a larger area, many are worried that councils will lose their understanding of the local area, and a 'local touch'. They raise fears around council staff and councillors becoming too generalised as they will be spread too thin.	Funding allocation may change – which for many suggests that less will be spent on their area. There are also concerns about how this will impact council tax, and how debt held by different councils will be spread.	Services being moved away from them, with many raising issues around ease of access. They worry about the way decisions will be made about where services are provided, and that urban areas will always be prioritised over rural locations.	Concern that they will have less power to influence local decision-making – for example, if local meetings happen further away from their homes, or if a local councillor has a lesser understanding of their needs.

Why go through all this disruption instead of putting the time and resources into improving public services?
Winchester, 55-64

Decision-making and funding will be biased towards wherever the bureaucratic centre of the council is (eg - Winchester for Council 2) as that's where most of the council employees will live. The places on the edge of those councils, or far from the bureaucratic centres will be marginalised.
Test Valley, 45-54

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Those living in rural areas tend to be more sensitive to the perceived risk LGR poses to local decision-making

Decisions being made near their community is most important for those living in predominantly rural councils:

- 81% of respondents in the New Forest and Hart* strongly agree this is important
- 73% in Test Valley strongly agree

This is less important to those living in urban and city councils:

- 53% of respondents in Southampton strongly agree
- 61% in Winchester and in Havant strongly agree

Because of the suggested shift of my Parish into a large urban area I believe that decisions will be driven by the urban majority view and we will become just another densely built area of a very large conurbation where decisions will not regard the rural aspects of my area with any sense of importance in the whole new Unitary Council area. Simply put I believe bad decisions are more likely if this option [3] was to be implemented.

East Hampshire, 65-74

Those living in rural areas are more likely to express concerns that they will be forgotten about when it comes to decision-making and service delivery. They worry that more populated urban areas and cities will be prioritised, and that larger numbers of voters will take precedence over relatively smaller rural populations.

However, some recognise that LGR may have some positive effects on service delivery and decision-making

Efficiencies

Larger authorities may help councils deliver efficiencies of scale, by offering similar services to a larger number of people. It also feels like an opportunity to provide better coverage of services, especially for places which are geographically more distant from the majority of their current council.

Centralisation can bring organisational benefits such as purchasing efficiencies, facilities provision and streamlining of decision-making.
Portsmouth, 65-74

Connecting communities

Avoiding over-fragmenting communities in different council boundaries, which feel arbitrary to some, and better recognising the way that people travel and use services in the Hampshire area.
Some are keen to see this address some issues about particular villages or neighbourhoods they feel have been in the wrong council all along e.g. Chilworth or Denmead.

Would be both cheaper to run and allow better coordination of transport networks, an increase in job opportunities and collaboration on climate change initiatives.
Portsmouth, 75-84

Better decisions

Different councils will be able to learn from each other, challenging each other to make better decisions.
For some, this as an opportunity to address specific concerns and frustrations they have around the running of their own council.

Better decision making - affecting larger areas rather than lots of smaller decisions.
Winchester, 25-34

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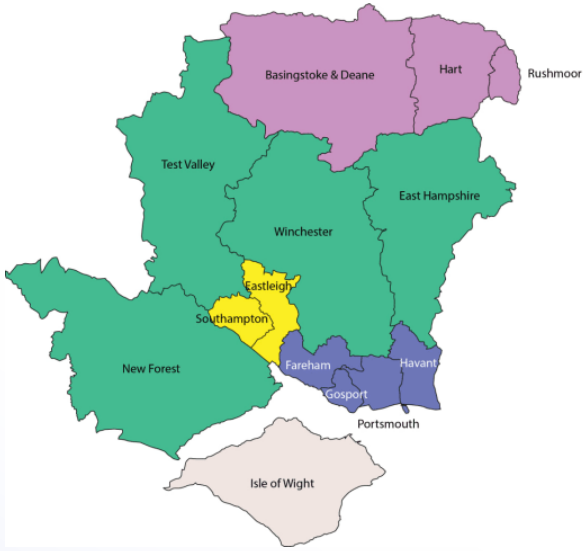
Residents were asked specifically about 3 potential options…

Option 1



Council 1 (Pink): Basingstoke, Hart, Rushmoor

Council 2 (Green): New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3 (Yellow): Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4 (Blue): Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5 (Grey): Isle of Wight

Option 2

Council 1 (Pink): Basingstoke, Hart, Rushmoor

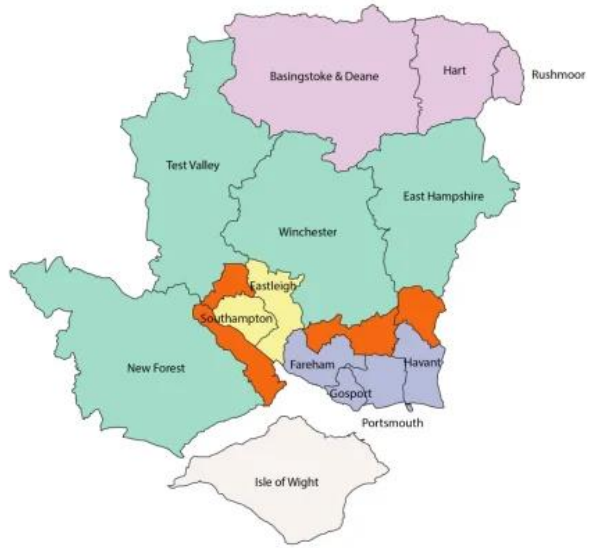
Council 2 (Green): Test Valley, Winchester, East Hampshire

Council 3 (Yellow): New Forest, Eastleigh, Southampton

Council 4 (Blue): Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham

Council 5 (Grey): Isle of Wight

Option 3



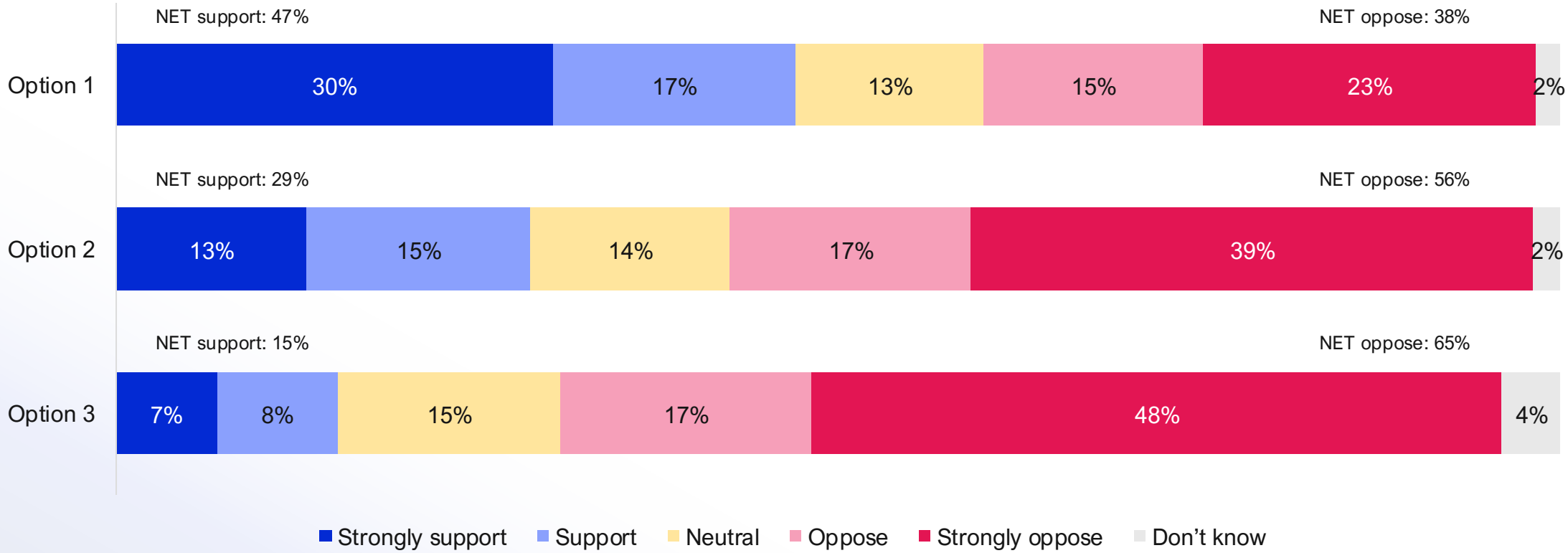
Existing Council:	New Forest	Test Valley	Winchester	East Hampshire
Parishes potentially affected by boundary changes:	Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley	Nursling & Rownhams, Chilworth, Valley Park and North Baddesley	Denmead, Newlands, Boarhunt, Southwick & Widley, Wickham & Knowle and Whiteley	Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle

Potential boundary changes, affecting wards highlighted (Orange) in the New Forest, Test Valley, Winchester and East Hampshire

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Option 1 is most popular, while Option 3 is considered highly controversial, especially by those in affected parishes

Support for each of the options
% selecting



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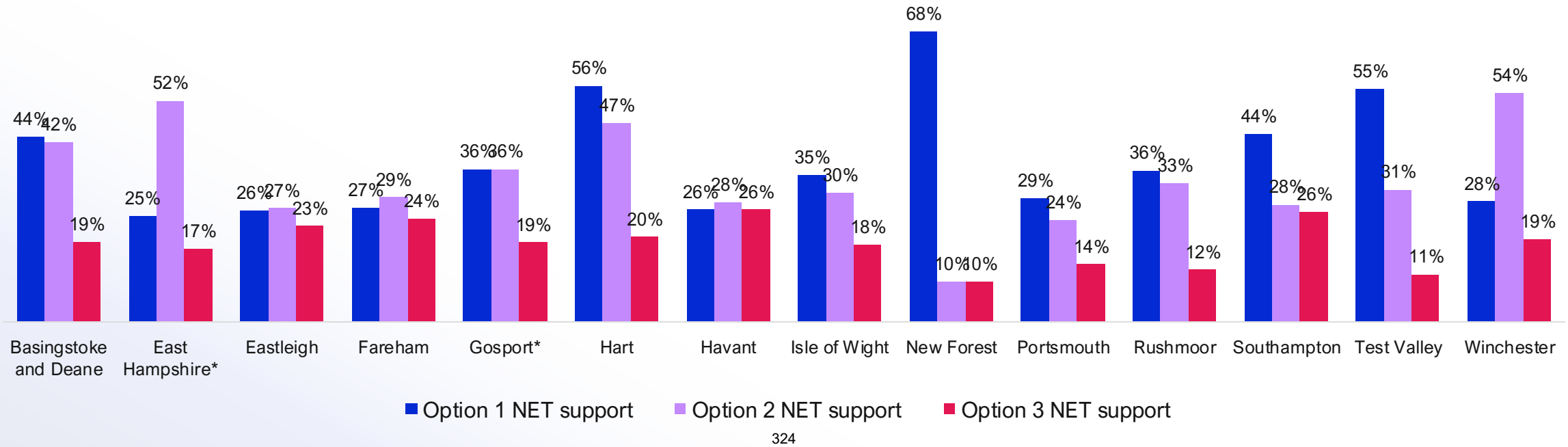
323

Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All who responded to this question (n=10476)

Residents who feel they have more at stake tend to have a stronger preference for an option, but they do not always agree

While Option 3 is almost universally disliked, residents are more split on Options 1 and 2. Most significantly, Test Valley and New Forest have a clear preference for Option 1, while East Hampshire and Winchester lean towards Option 2.

Support for each of the options
% selecting “strongly support” or “support”



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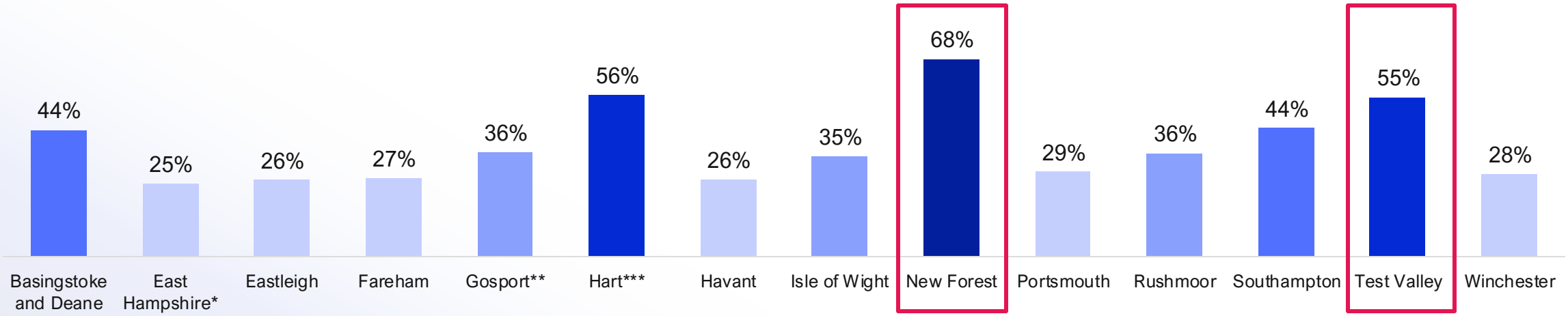
Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All who responded to this question (n=10476), in Basingstoke and Deane (n=154), East Hampshire (n=154), Eastleigh (n=662), Fareham (n=262), Gosport (n=67), Hart (n=45), Havant (n=166), Isle of Wight (n=184), New Forest (n=2585), Portsmouth (n=515), Rushmoor (n=95), Southampton (n=498), Test Valley (n=2278), Winchester (n=1496)

Option 1 is seen as making the most sense politically, socially and demographically, though not geographically

This option is strongly preferred by residents in New Forest and Test Valley, who feel most threatened by the proposal to merge New Forest and Southampton.

Support for Option 1
% selecting “strongly support” or “support”



Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All respondents who answered this question in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (n=154), East Hampshire District Council (n=154)*, Eastleigh Borough Council (n=662), Fareham Borough Council (n=264), Gosport Borough Council (n=67)**, Hart District Council (n=45)***, Havant Borough Council (n=166), Isle of Wight Council (n=184), New Forest District Council (n=2,585), Portsmouth City Council (n=515), Rushmoor Borough Council (n=95), Southampton City Council (n=198), Test Valley Borough Council (n=2,278), Winchester City Council (n=1,496)

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*Note that East Hampshire District Council did not co-commission this project or promote this engagement.
**The majority of respondents from Gosport did not answer this question, as they were routed to a different survey.
*** Caution: low base size of n < 50.

Residents like that Option 1 groups councils that *feel* similar, but worry about creating overly large councils

Residents feel there are positives around…

- Grouping similar councils, with similar characteristics, who will have experience providing services for similar types of areas.
- Grouping people around cities.
- Preserving the rural identities and focus for areas like the New Forest and Test Valley.
- Keeping urban centres like Southampton and Eastleigh together.
- Leads to councils which feel smaller in terms of population size.

But drawbacks around…

- The large geographic area for council 2, potentially diluting council services, funding and powers.
- Grouping together councils because they are rural, ignoring their identified and differences – with particular concerns around the uniqueness of the New Forest.
- Concern that the new councils are being split between 'rich' and 'poor' areas.

What council plans would need to address: Residents struggle to picture how a local authority would work in practice across such a large geographical area – council plans would need to show how the needs of different neighbourhoods would be met, and how services will be delivered and spread across a wider geographical area.

Q14. How do you feel option 1 might… Impact the way you use services locally? Impact the way that decisions are made in your local area? Impact the way you engage with local decision-making?

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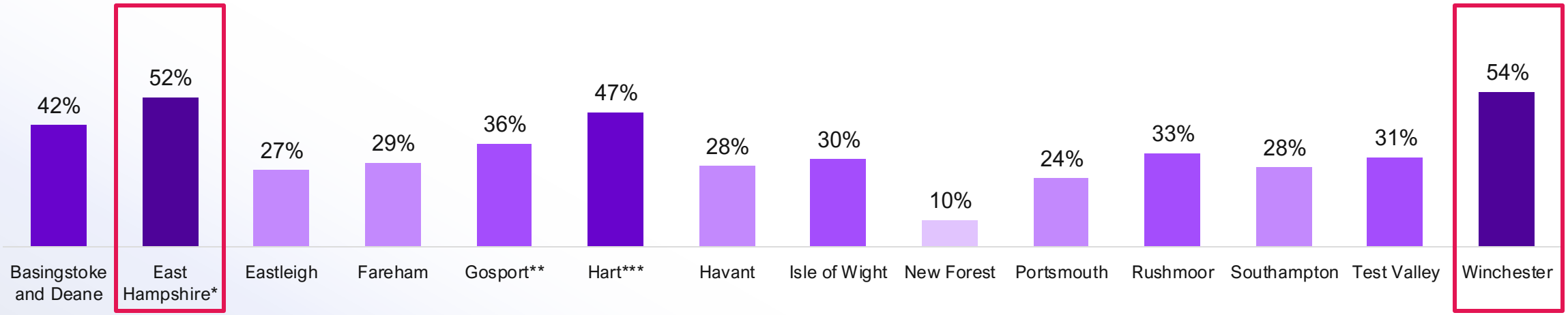
Winchester and East Hants are most in support of Option 2, while those most affected, the New Forest, are least supportive

Those supporting Option 2 mostly consider Option 1 too large a geographical area to administer effectively. Across the county, there is also a sense of "solidarity" with the New Forest, which many feel should not be merged with Southampton.

Support for Option 2
% selecting



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Residents express strong concerns about linking urban and rural areas together, but recognise that it makes geographic sense

Residents feel there are positives around…

- The geographic logic of linking the New Forest with Southampton and Eastleigh, as many are already accessing services there.
- Avoiding creating one very large council.
- Provides balance between rural and urban areas, and may even out population across the five proposed councils.

But drawbacks around…

- Merging areas that are very different to each other, with concerns that either rural or urban areas will be left behind.
- The potential risk of urban areas being prioritised over rural areas, and the way funding will be allocated. Those in rural areas also worry that urban centres will want to develop and urbanise them.
- Concerns around services being centralised in urban areas.
- Concerns around financial strain.

What council plans would need to address: Residents need more reassurance that any model combining historically rural areas with cities will still be able to cater to their needs, and that provision of services will account for differing needs in different areas. They particularly want to know whether services will all be centralised into urban hubs, or whether provision will be spread across the larger unitary authorities.

This looks like it makes more sense for the New Forest. Closer to those making the decisions. No one in Winchester should be decision making for the New Forest.

Rushmoor, 35-44

Southampton's priorities will absolutely swallow up all the time, energy, focus (and money!) from all our rural areas in the New Forest. We all know local councils are horribly underfunded - there will be "needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few" decisions and we will lose out I'm afraid.

New Forest, 55-64

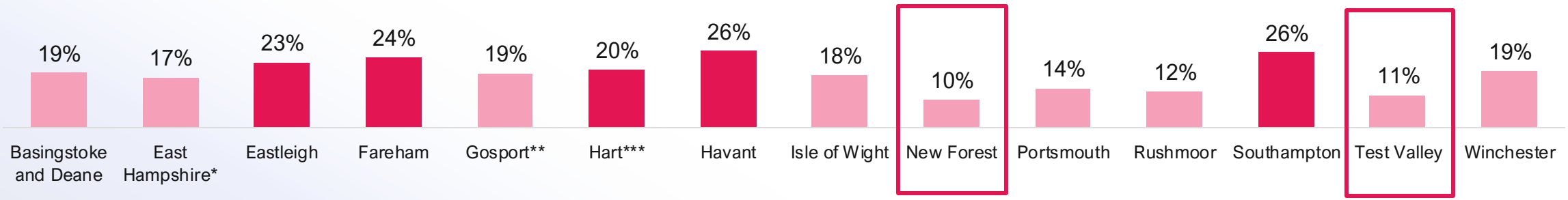
Q145 How do you feel option 2 might… Impact the way you use services locally? Impact the way that decisions are made in your local area? Impact the way you engage with local decision-making?

Support for Option 3 is low overall, and lowest in New Forest and Test Valley, where residents are most concerned about boundary changes

Option 3 is slightly more popular in areas that stand to gain from the inclusion of new parishes (i.e. Southampton, Havant and Fareham), but very unpopular in areas that are directly affected such as the New Forest and Test Valley. Respondents in Winchester and East Hampshire, who would also be affected, do not feel as strongly and can see some benefits.

592

Support for Option 3
% selecting



Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All respondents who answered this question in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (n=154), East Hampshire District Council (n=154)*, Eastleigh Borough Council (n=662), Fareham Borough Council (n=264), Gosport Borough Council (n=67)**, Hart District Council (n=45)***, Havant Borough Council (n=166), Isle of Wight Council (n=184), New Forest District Council (n=2,585), Portsmouth City Council (n=515), Rushmoor Borough Council (n=95), Southampton City Council (n=198), Test Valley Borough Council (n=2,278), Winchester City Council (n=1,496)

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*** Caution: low base size of n < 50.

Residents are concerned about boundary changes fragmenting communities and are unsure what it will mean for services

Residents feel there are positives around…

- Aligning more urban areas with Southampton/Portsmouth, which may mean better service delivery for those areas.
- Better reflecting reality for those who live in those areas, and linking them to where they access services.
- Those living in semi-urban areas being served by a council that better reflects their needs.

But drawbacks around…

- Disruption to those living in the affected areas.
- Fragmenting existing communities. Particularly when it comes to separating the New Forest from the Waterside, which is seen as integral to the identity of the area.
- Residents in affected areas losing local representation and influence in decision-making.

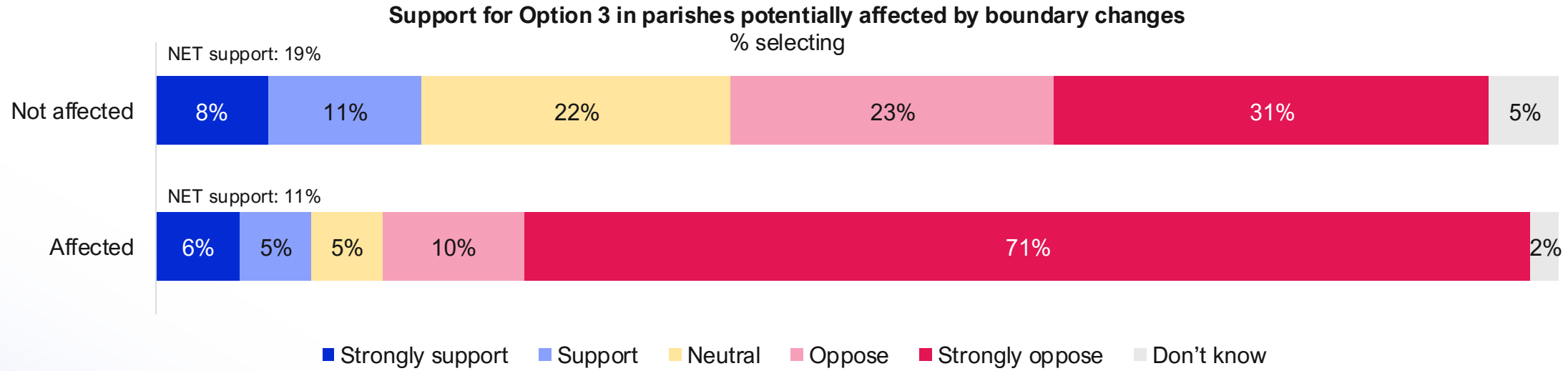
What council plans would need to address: Residents want more information about what the changes will entail – they are looking for more certainty about how the boundaries will change, and how this will impact the services they receive from the council, but also from other providers (schools, GPs). There is also a need for more clarity around affected areas joining a larger council, as some respondent assumed they would remain as a small council area rather than joining a larger unitary authority.

Might be better grouping semiurban dormitary areas with the conurbations they serve. Some (not all) are effectively part of the conurbations now and look towards them for services rather to further away more smaller towns/cities.
Test Valley, not affected, 65-74

I live in the parish of Fawley and strongly dislike splitting the New Forest area - many New Forest commoners live in this area and have a very strong attachment to the New Forest. My own family have been commoners for over 300 years. People who live in the Waterside parishes regard it as part of the New Forest (historically ponies/cattle also roamed in these areas).
New Forest, affected, 45-54

Q16. How do you feel option 3 might… Impact the way you use services locally? Impact the way that decisions are made in your local area? Impact the way you engage with local decision-making?

Respondents from potentially affected parishes are most opposed to boundary changes, driven primarily by those in New Forest and Test Valley



Option 3 is more strongly opposed in New Forest and Test Valley than Winchester and East Hampshire:

- Among those respondents whose parishes may be affected in the **New Forest**, three quarters **(75%) strongly oppose** Option 3, rising to **81%** among respondents from potentially affected **Test Valley** parishes.
- In **Winchester**, meanwhile, just over half **(54%) strongly oppose** this proposal, and in **East Hampshire** it is even fewer respondents (46 of 90 potentially affected respondents - **51%**).

See a breakdown by parish on the next slide.

Q12. To what extent do you support or oppose each of these options? Base: All who responded to this question who are affected (n=1842) Not affected (n=7152). Those in affected parishes in New Forest (n=1302), Test Valley (n=809), Winchester (n=402) and East Hampshire (n=90).

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Preferences of those living in parishes potentially affected by boundary changes

District/ Borough	Parish potentially affected by boundary changes	N	Preferred option	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
				Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
East Hampshire	Horndean	31-32	Option 2	6 (19%)	**16 (52%)**	**14 (45%)**	10 (32%)	8 (25%)	**15 (47%)**
	Clanfield	14	Option 2	1 (7%)	**12 (86%)**	**9 (64%)**	4 (29%)	4 (29%)	**5 (36%)**
	Rowland's Castle	38-40	Option 2	**16 (42%)**	11 (29%)	**22 (56%)**	12 (31%)	3 (8%)	**32 (80%)**
New Forest	Fawley	280	Option 1	**191 (68%)**	69 (25%)	19 (7%)	**251 (90%)**	18 (6%)	**244 (87%)**
	Hythe and Dibden	460	Option 1	**327 (71%)**	108 (23%)	32 (7%)	**399 (88%)**	36 (8%)	**381 (84%)**
	Marchwood	168	Option 1	**122 (73%)**	37 (22%)	11 (7%)	**151 (90%)**	7 (4%)	**149 (90%)**
	Totton and Eling	403	Option 1	**295 (73%)**	78 (19%)	27 (7%)	**353 (89%)**	28 (7%)	**346(87%)**
Test Valley	Chilworth	54-56	Option 1	**48 (86%)**	6 (11%)	5 (9%)	**44 (81%)**	3 (5%)	**51 (93%)**
	North Baddesley	72-79	Option 1	**38 (48%)**	29 (37%)	30 (39%)	**37 (48%)**	13 (18%)	**51 (71%)**
	Nursling and Rownhams	602-619	Option 1	**561 (91%)**	42 (7%)	73 (12%)	**430 (71%)**	14 (2%)	**573 (95%)**
	Valley Park	75-77	Option 1	**35 (47%)**	25 (33%)	26 (35%)	**33 (44%)**	21 (27%)	**45 (58%)**
Winchester	Boarhunt	10-11	N/A	3 (27%)	**7 (64%)**	3 (27%)	**7 (64%)**	3 (27%)	**6 (55%)**
	Denmead	170-174	Option 2	**76 (44%)**	65 (38%)	**102 (59%)**	37 (22%)	35 (20%)	**128 (74%)**
	Newlands	36-38	Option 3	6 (16%)	**24 (65%)**	14 (38%)	**16 (43%)**	**19 (50%)**	14 (37%)
	Southwick and Widley	10-11	N/A	4 (36%)	**5 (45%)**	4 (40%)	**5 (50%)**	**6 (55%)**	5 (45%)
	Whiteley	95-96	Option 2	34 (35%)	**49 (51%)**	**49 (51%)**	28 (29%)	31 (32%)	**55 (57%)**
	Wickham and Knowle	66-72	Option 2	23 (32%)	**28 (39%)**	**36 (51%)**	21 (30%)	19 (26%)	**48 (67%)**

NB. The scores shown here are the combined NETs (strongly support + support and strongly oppose + oppose), not including those who feel neutrally or answered "don't know" to this question.

Preferences of those living in wards potentially affected by boundary changes

District/ Borough	Ward	N	Preferred option (ward level)	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
				Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
East Hampshire	Horndean Catherington	11	Option 2	2 (18%)	**6 (55%)**	**5 (45%)**	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	**6 (55%)**
	Horndean Downs	6	Option 2	2 (33%)	**4 (67%)**	2 (33%)	**3 (50%)**	1 (17%)	**2 (33%)**
	Horndean Kings & Blendworth	9	Option 2	1 11%)	**5 (56%)**	**4 (44%)**	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	**4 (44%)**
	Horndean Murray	6-7	Option 2	1 (17%)	**2 (33%)**	**3 (50%)**	2 (33%)	2 (29%)	**4 (57%)**
	Clanfield	16	Option 2	1 (6%)	**14 (88%)**	**9 (56%)**	6 (38%)	4 (25%)	**7 (44%)**
	Rowlands Castle	38-41	Option 2	**16 (41%)**	12 (31%)	**22 (55%)**	13 (33%)	3 (7%)	**33 (80%)**
New Forest	Fawley, Blackfield, Calshot & Langley	154-156	Option 1	**107 (69%)**	38 (24%)	9 (6%)	**139 (90%)**	9 (6%)	**135 (88%)**
	Hardley, Holbury & North Blackfield	124-127	Option 1	**84 (68%)**	31 (25%)	10 (8%)	**112 (89%)**	9 (7%)	**109 (86%)**
	Hythe Central	160-162	Option 1	**110 (68%)**	47 (29%)	10 (6%)	**141 (88%)**	10 (6%)	**137 (85%)**
	Hythe South	134-138	Option 1	**98 (71%)**	35 (25%)	9 (7%)	**122 (91%)**	18 (13%)	**106 (79%)**
	Marchwood & Eling	208-210	Option 1	**152 (72%)**	45 (21%)	13 (6%)	**188 (90%)**	10 (5%)	**186 (89%)**
	Totton Central	92-95	Option 1	**67 (71%)**	22 (23%)	7 (8%)	**81 (88%)**	9 (10%)	**78 (85%)**
	Totton North	146-148	Option 1	108 (73%)	25 (17%)	9 (6%)	**129 (88%)**	11 (8%)	**123 (85%)**
	Totton South	119-120	Option 1	**90 (76%)**	23 (19%)	9 (8%)	**106 (89%)**	5 (4%)	**108 (90%)**
Test Valley	Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams	663-682	Option 1	**612 (90%)**	52 (8%)	80 (12%)	**479 (72%)**	20 (3%)	**626 (94%)**
	North Baddesley	85-87	Option 1	**41 (47%)**	31 (36%)	32 (38%)	**40 (47%)**	17 (21%)	**55 (69%)**
	Valley Park	61-62	Option 1	**30 (49%)**	19 (31%)	22 (36%)	**26 (43%)**	14 (23%)	**39 (63%)**
Winchester	Southwick & Wickham	110-113	Option 2	32 (29%)	**52 (47%)**	**49 (45%)**	42 (38%)	39 (35%)	**65 (58%)**
	Denmead	191-193	Option 2	**80 (42%)**	77 (40%)	**110 (58%)**	44 (23%)	43 (22%)	**136 (70%)**
	Whiteley & Shedfield	125-126	Option 2	46 (37%)	**58 (46%)**	**58 (46%)**	34 (27%)	36 (29%)	**76 (61%)**

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APPENDIX 5

Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Summary of engagement by

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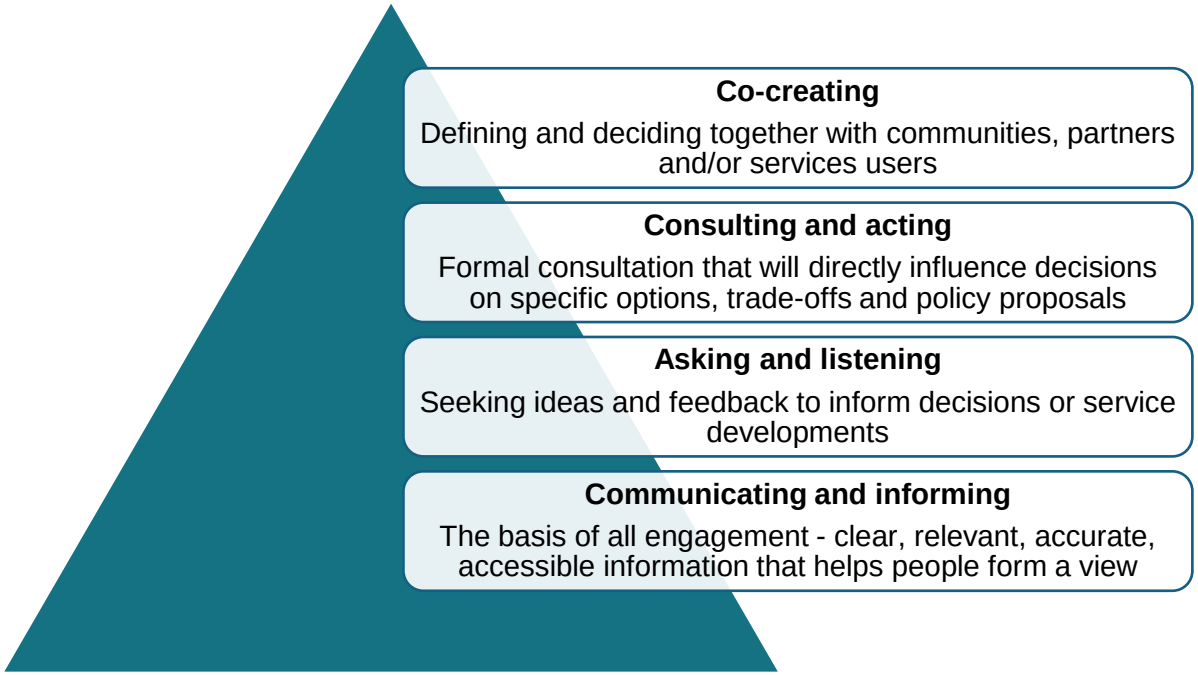
1. Background and summary of methodology

New Forest District Council (NFDC) worked with 11 other councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (all except the county council and East Hampshire) to agree three potentially acceptable options for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

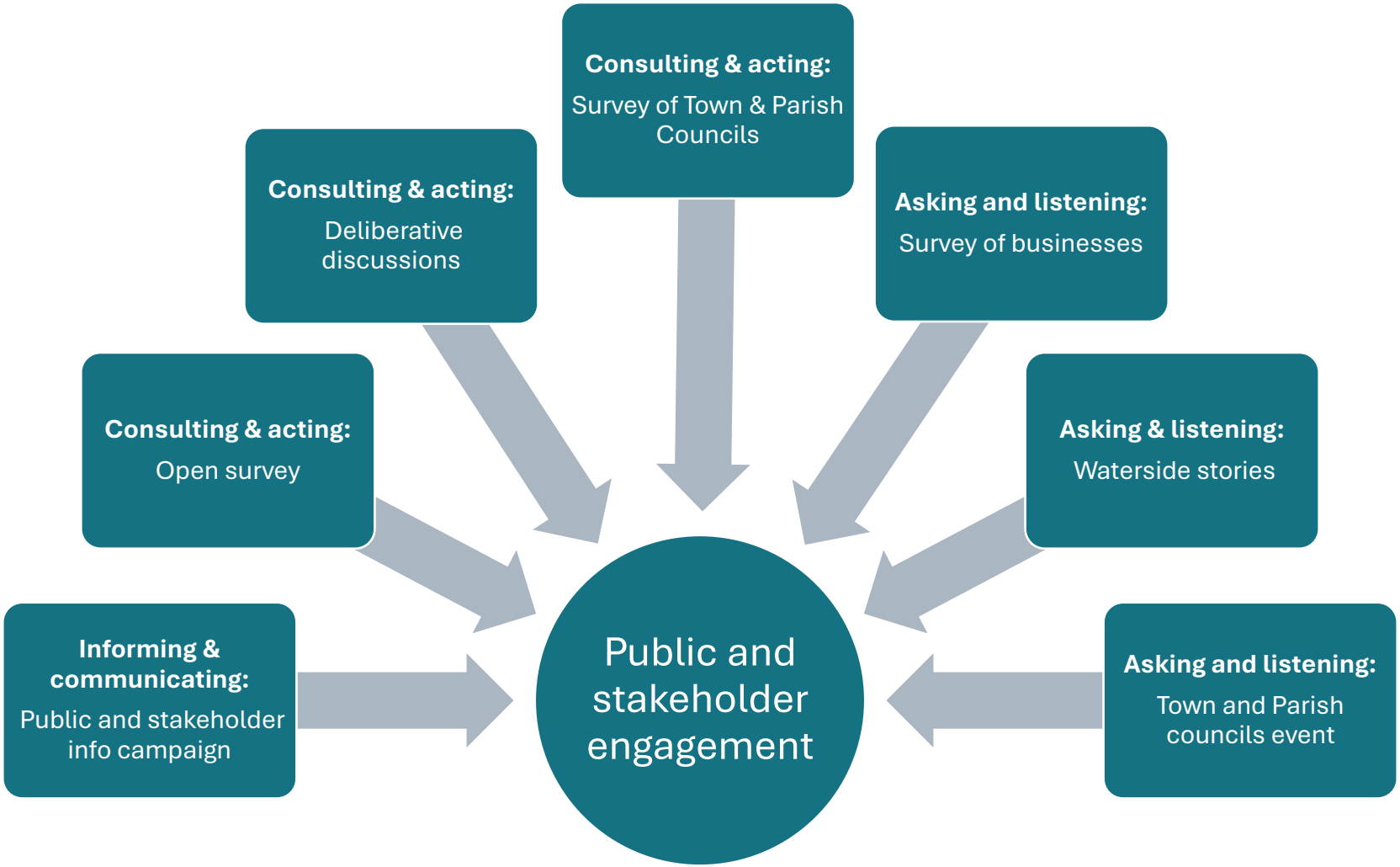
The LGA's LGR engagement toolkit recommends consideration is given to each of the following levels of involvement when planning engagement:



NFDC undertook a robust approach to engagement, consistent with three of the LGA's suggested levels:

- **Asking and listening:** to inform our approach and seek broad views early on and throughout
- **Consulting and acting:** to seek opinions on specific options under consideration in Hampshire, and so influence our final proposal
- **Communicating and informing**: to explain options in detail and encourage participation in the consultation

Specific activities are shown visually as follows:



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2. Summary of outcomes and key themes

The outcomes of this extensive engagement are:

- **Robust representation of voice from local people:** 3,141 responses to the survey from New Forest district residents (1.79% of the district's population). Every single ward was represented. Online boosting achieved 4,124 click throughs resulting in 1,175 survey submissions.
- **The ability to reflect stakeholder views in NFDC's final proposal to government:** we are confident that we have captured local priorities, concerns and aspirations well, broadly and deeply, providing a strong evidence base of public opinion to inform our final submission.
- **Clear messages and themes across all stakeholder groups**: the key themes for New Forest District Council residents and stakeholders, across all or the majority of engagement findings are:

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To supplement the comprehensive appendices (Residents' Survey findings, deliberative discussion findings, Waterside narrative work, town and parish councils meetings and survey, and business engagement), this engagement summary provides an aggregated set of headline findings, that are consistent across all groups. Evidence is presented using these identifying icons.

Residents' survey

Deliberative workshops

Waterside engagement

Business survey

Town, Parish councils and community correspondence

Commoners' views

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3. Key themes

The following section sets out the key consistent themes of the combined 'consulting and acting' and 'asking and listening' phase of engagement activity. A short narrative is accompanied by supporting quotes and references from each engagement source where the theme features.

a) Identity & Place: *The New Forest is who we are*

There is a strong, almost palpable, connection to the rural environment. People overwhelmingly see the New Forest as central to their identity, and are deeply concerned about any potential dilution of that. They are protective and proud of the forest and its environs, and genuinely fearful of overdevelopment pressures and the impact these could have on precious landscapes. The combination of forest, estuary and coast is inherent within people's sense of who they are and where they belong.

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b) **Service design and democratic representation:** ***We want services designed for and with us, and decisions made by people who understand us, our heritage and our place***

People report relatively high satisfaction with local services (with the exception of transport / transport infrastructure). They express a desire for efficient, place-based, embedded services, that understand the requirements of stewardship and are designed around the needs of rural communities.

There is a strong appetite for truly local voices to be genuinely influential in local decision-making. Residents are concerned that any governance including areas that do not share similar characteristics, risks a reduction in care for the Forest and a lessening of consideration for their own service provision and access needs, as well as being and feeling remote and disconnected.

c) **Overdevelopment is a significant concern: *Our place is not overspill for city housing needs and the issues that brings***

People are concerned about overdevelopment, in particular in relation to housing and the impacts that that, and associated other infrastructure needs, would have on the natural environment and community identity. They acknowledge housing and transport pressures exist already in the NFDC area, and see these as a reason to restrict any new boundaries to similar areas, with rural communities, to preserve the integrity of decision-making around development siting and local need.

There is a deep worry that too much housing occupied by those without longstanding connection to the area dilutes community identity and cohesion, and worries about potential impact on the national park area remain prevalent for many, Commoners especially.

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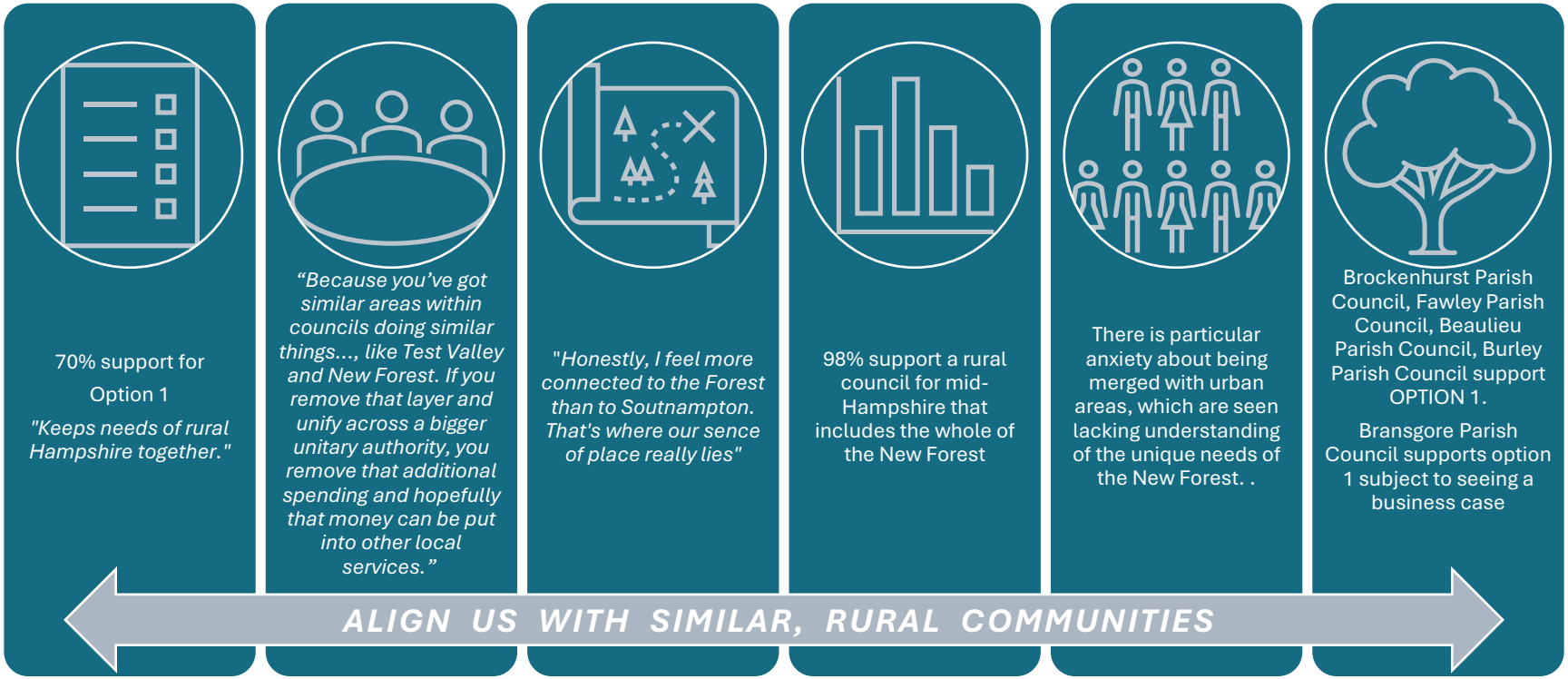
d) Support for Option 1: *Align us with similar, rural communities*

For reasons of community culture, heritage and identity, service design & delivery, local voice and governance, residents consistently support option 1 – a new rural council for mid-Hampshire.

People feel an affinity with other rural communities and that retaining this would help to maintain identity and traditions. There is consistent belief that this approach would lend itself to place-based service design and decision-making, and continue to protect the identity of the New Forest and the way of life if its communities.



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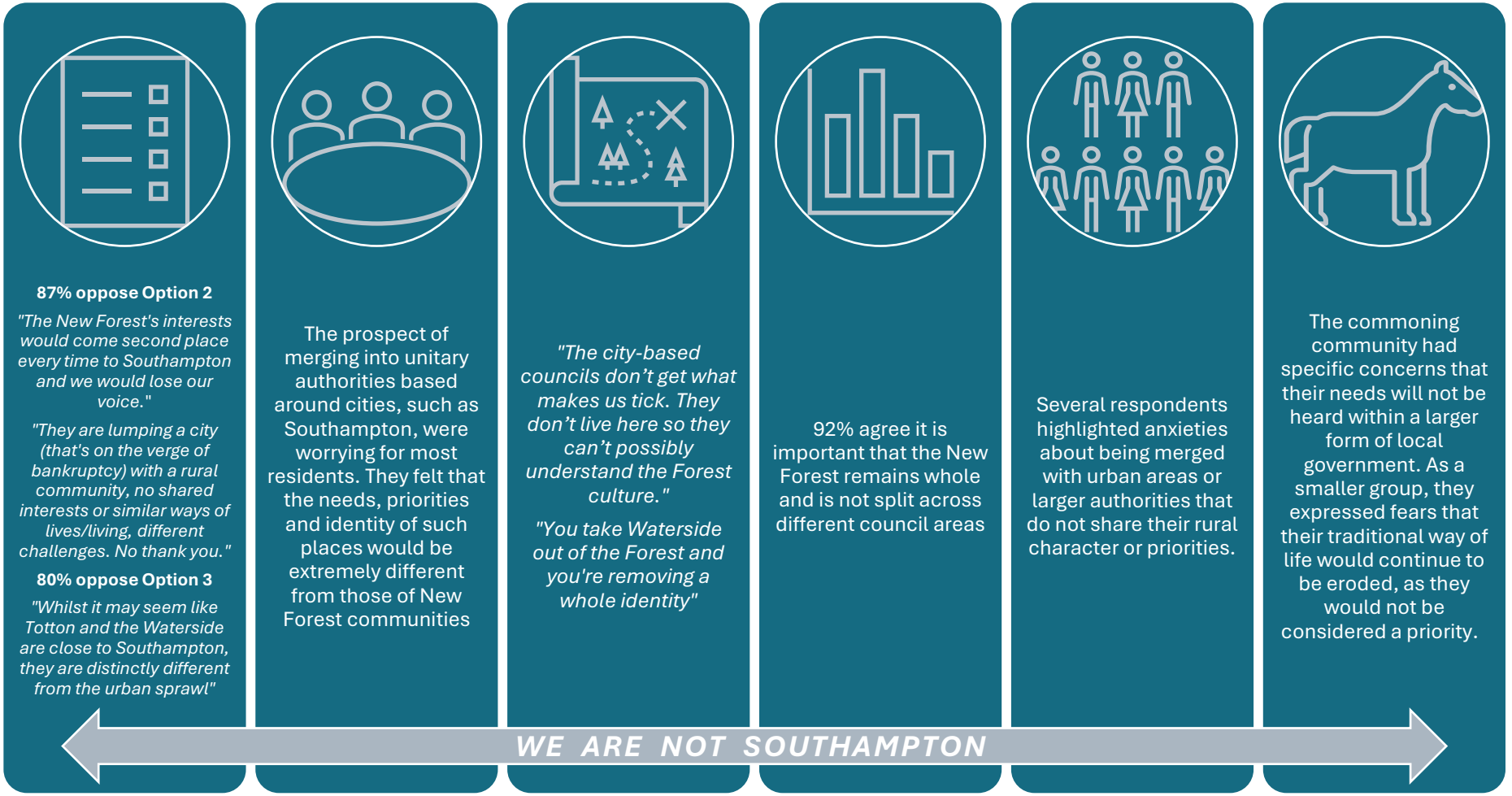
e) Opposition to Options 2 and 3: *We are not Southampton*

Respondents have significant concerns about the New Forest being merged with Southampton. Reasons include lack of cultural identity with the city, fear of being overshadowed, concern over Southampton's financial issues, and desire to preserve the area's distinct rural and forest character. This emerges as the most consistent negative red line across responses.



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4. METHODOLOGY

a) Consulting and acting

Along with the other 12 councils committed to working together, NFDC collaborated to procure and develop robust and meaningful, primarily quantitative, engagement with residents in the form of a survey.

In addition, NFDC commissioned dedicated additional, independently-run qualitative engagement with their own residents to gain deeper understanding of their views, hopes and concerns.

This work involved:

<u>The quantitative survey</u>

- ensuring NFDC's interests were fully represented when contributing to survey content, subject matter and design of the quantitative survey, and extensively promoting completion via the communications activities above.
- Fieldwork for the survey took place from 30th June to 27th July, primarily online with option for paper or telephone completion. Since the survey sampling was elf-selecting, it is reasonable to assume that those who took the time to complete it feel significantly strongly to opt in to responding.
- The survey asked residents about council priorities, local connection, and the three options agreed by all 13 participating councils.
- NFDC achieved the highest number of responses across all of Hampshire – 3,141 responses, 1.79% of the population. Every single ward was represented. Online boosting achieved 4,124 click throughs resulting in 1,175 survey submissions.

Deliberative sessions

- Independently designed and facilitated, involving 59 residents from across all wards. Two sessions took place online and two were in person. Residents were recruited to largely be reflective of the local population in terms of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity), with over-sampling of key groups who tend not to participate in other forms of engagement (e.g. young people).
- This research also included the voices of Commoners in the New Forest, as well as certain groups, including social renters, those with long term health conditions, and the financially vulnerable).

Business survey

- Internally delivered by the economic development team
- Five closed response (yes/no) questions
- Fieldwork period from 13.08.2025 until midnight on 05.09.2025
- 51 responses received
- Promotion via digital platforms and local media

b) Asking and listening:

Extensive listening informed NFDC's position from early on and throughout, as residents and stakeholders expressed their opinions, clearly articulating worries and concerns about any potential option that would see the Forest district's unique and special identity compromised.

Waterside narrative

- The research was designed to capture and articulate the identity, character and personality of the Waterside communities, including Totton, Marchwood, Dibden Purlieu, Hythe, Holbury, Fawley and Calshot.
- This involved field-based and desk-based research to capture the visual and spatial identity of the area, and a series of qualitative conversations with individuals and representative groups from across the Waterside, where local people to described their experiences.

Town and Parish council event and direct correspondence from residents

- An event for Town and Parish councils was held in April 2025, as well as a short survey to capture views. Town and Parish councils from across the NFDC area shared their resolutions directly with us.
- 22 emails were received from members of the public, one from a charity, as well as a copy of a letter from Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

c) Communicating and informing

This work was informed by direct contact and feedback from stakeholders and residents, and involved:

- Creation of an appropriate and appealing look & feel and narrative ('keep the Forest whole') and call to action ('support a new rural council for mid-Hampshire').
- Production of an implementation plan and accompanying comprehensive set of assets including Leader's promise postcards, community posters, detailed web and Q&A content, Members' briefing pack, graphics & messaging for social media and email marketing, and establishing a dedicated LGR email inbox.
- Regular email content from Cllr Jill Cleary to over 250 stakeholders, sharing information, encouraging participation and providing updates.

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- Targeted online boosting in three phases, linked to live response levels across the district (phase 1, 16-21 July: 18–45 year olds in Forest & Solent, Hardley, Holbury & North Blackfield, Hythe South, Sway and Totton Central wards; phase 2, 21 – 23 July: 18–25 year olds in the above wards plus also Ashurst, Bramshaw, Copythorne & Netley Marsh, Dibden & Dibden Purlieu, Fawley, Blackfield, Calshot & Langley, Hythe Central, Marchwood & Eling, Totton North, Totton South; phase 3, 23 – 27 July: all residents, all age groups).

A copy of this report and accompanying background papers can be found at https://www.newforest.gov.uk/LGRengagement

Protecting the Integrity of the New Forest through Local Government Reorganisation: Why the District Must Remain Whole

Executive Summary

Local government reorganisation in Hampshire presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape governance. But proposals to fragment the New Forest District – particularly by removing the Waterside area – pose a significant risk to service delivery, community identity, and statutory obligations, and fail to meet the government's own criteria for boundary change, which should be in exceptional circumstances, locally led, strategically justified, and subject to consultation.

Proposals must demonstrate how changes will improve outcomes, strengthen accountability, and respect community identity.

The Scale of Impact:

- The Waterside accounts for 37% of all homes in New Forest District – over 30,000 households.
- It contains 40% of the council's housing stock, including 2,108 local authority-owned homes.
- The area currently contributes £1.24 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) annually, hosting nationally significant assets like:
    - The UK's largest oil refinery (Fawley)
    - Marchwood Military Port
    - Solent Freeport sites with multi-billion pound investment with potential for significant increased contribution to GVA
    - Lepe Country Park, which would be split between two councils under current proposals

The Risk of Fragmentation:

- Service disruption: Splitting the district would fragment housing, waste, coastal protection, and electoral services – undermining economies of scale and operational resilience.
- Environmental harm: The Waterside is ecologically integrated with the New Forest National Park. Fragmentation would breach statutory duties under the Environment Act 1995 and Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The ecology of the New Forest

depends on Commoning, which in turn depends on the Waterside both for accommodation for commoners and back-up grazing for livestock.
- Democratic instability: Electoral services would be compromised ahead of the 2026 Mayoral Combined Authority elections, risking legal challenge and public confidence.

Community views:

- 65% of Hampshire-wide respondents oppose splitting the district.
- 98% of New Forest business respondents support the keeping the forest whole.
- 87% of New Forest respondents reject boundary changes, whilst 70% support a new rural council for Mid Hampshire.
- Engagement shows deep emotional and cultural ties to the Forest in the Waterside – not to urban neighbours, including from the New Forest Commoner community.

A Coherent, Unified District:

The New Forest is not a fragmented collection of communities – it is a functionally, culturally, and ecologically whole landscape. The Waterside is not an urban fringe but a distinct rural geography with shared values, traditions, and governance needs.

The Ask:

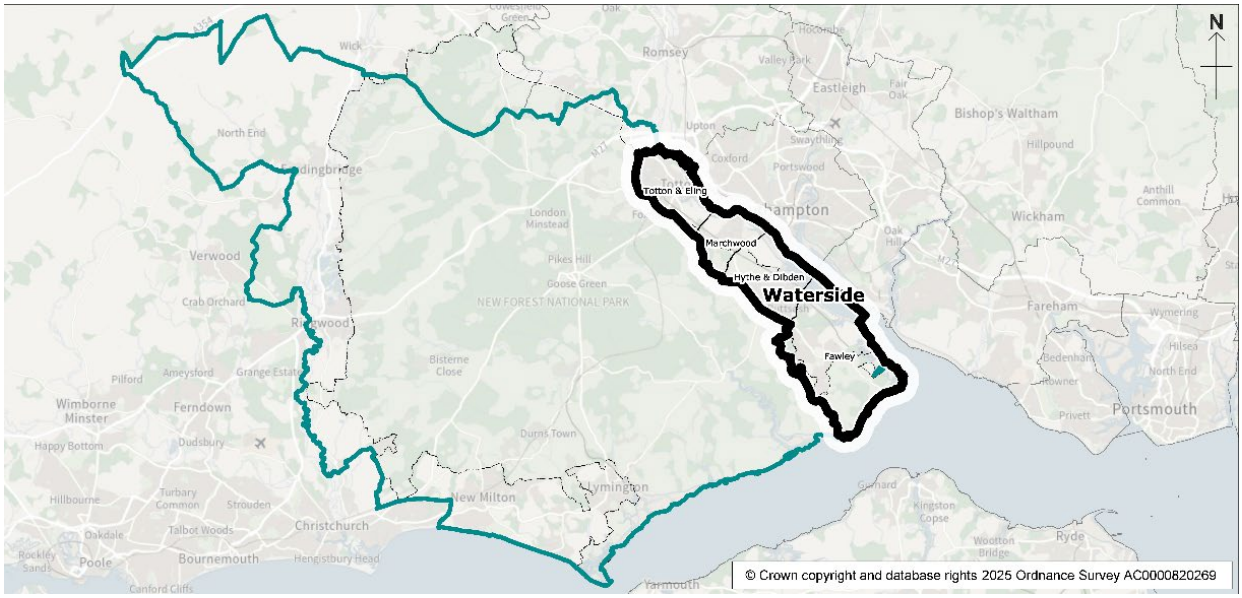
We urge the government to:

1. **Reject proposals** that remove the Waterside from New Forest District.

2. **Reject proposals** that create a 'rural bolt on' of the New Forest District, to the City of Southampton.

3. **Back the creation of a 'Forest Mid Hampshire' Council** – a model that protects the integrity of the New Forest, strengthens local democracy, aligns with statutory criteria and ensures sustainable service delivery for generations to come.

4. **Commit to a full and independent review** by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, should any model with boundary changes be taken forward by the Government for consultation, given the scale and impact of such changes.



Introduction

1. Local government reorganisation presents a rare and valuable opportunity to reshape governance in ways that are more responsive, efficient, financially sustainable and locally attuned. If designed well the new unitary councils better reflect the places they serve, these new structures can unlock better service delivery, stronger democratic representation and neighbourhood empowerment, and more coherent planning across functional geographies.

2. However, these benefits can only be realised if reorganisation respects the lived identities of communities, the logic of place, and the environmental and cultural assets that define them. In the case of the New Forest, this means a local authority that takes opportunities to reflect the area's unique character and coherence, not a fragmentation of it. This includes recognising the New Forest's distinct business identity - rooted in its rural economy, visitor appeal, strong local enterprise networks, and vibrant marine sector. This requires governance that understands and supports its unique economic landscape.

3. The Waterside; comprising Totton and Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden, and Fawley parishes, is not a peripheral extension of the City of Southampton. It is a distinct, coherent, and deeply rooted community that forms an integral and historic part of the New Forest. Proposals to split the district and absorb these parishes into

a new urban unitary authority risk undermining centuries of cultural identity, ecological stewardship, and functional governance.

4. This document draws on:-

- Extensive place-based research
- A county wide survey of local government reorganisation options
- Extensive deliberative engagement with New Forest communities
- A service delivery analysis
- Assessment of environmental stewardship and protected landscapes
- The government's criteria for local government reorganisation
- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's statutory criteria

A Distinct Identity, Not an Urban Fringe

5. The Waterside is defined by its geography - where the New Forest meets Southampton Water and by a cultural identity that is deeply rooted in Forest traditions, not urban life. Residents describe the Forest not as a backdrop, but as a living presence that shapes their values, rhythms, and sense of belonging.

6. Any future local government reorganisation must protect the New Forest Commoners' culture, which is central to the area's identity and environmental stewardship as described in more detail in the appendices. For devolution to succeed, commoners must be able to engage with and hold a future administration to account. Local identity is key to this democratic connection and should remain a core criterion when establishing new unitary authorities.

7. The New Forest's strong sense of place directly supports the LGBCE's criterion of reflecting community identity. The Waterside is not a transitional zone - it is a coherent cultural landscape with shared customs, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational continuity. Redrawing boundaries to align it with urban authorities would sever these ties and impose a governance model that does not reflect lived reality.

8. The Waterside Engagement Project (Appendix 1) captured a powerful narrative of place attachment and civic pride. Residents

are not resistant to change - they want change to be meaningful, proportionate, and locally led. Highlights include:

- 97% of Fawley residents surveyed in May 2025 supported a rural identity and rejected urban alignment.
- Qualitative engagement across all parishes revealed deep concern about being absorbed into a city-led authority.
- Emotional Geography: The Forest is not just a location - it is a source of identity, memory, and belonging.

9. This evidence strongly supports the LGBCE's requirement to reflect community identity. The Waterside is not a statistical anomaly, it is a cultural and ecological whole that must be respected in any boundary review.

Governance That Reflects Reality

10. The Waterside functions as a self-contained geography that is seen as 'belonging' to the New Forest. From school catchments and healthcare access to day-to-day retail patterns and transport infrastructure, daily life orients inward and towards the Forest - not outward to the City of Southampton.

- Ecological Stewardship: The Waterside forms an ecologically valuable interface and transition between the Forest and the Solent. Fragmenting governance would disrupt existing established and effective working arrangements with statutory and non-statutory organisations, land owners and managers in biodiversity management and climate resilience strategies.
- Planning Integration: The vision and strategy for the future development of the Waterside, A326 upgrade project, and Freeport development are all coordinated through cross-agency partnerships rooted in the New Forest context and helped to be funded from developer contributions generated from developments across the wider New Forest area.
- Democratic Representation: Residents, including commoners, expect governance that understands Forest culture and rural priorities, not urban bureaucracy with a fragment of a unique rural area bolted on.

11. These factors align with the LGBCE's requirement for effective and convenient local government. A unified governance model ensures

coherent service delivery, environmental regulation, and planning policy – all of which would be compromised by fragmentation.

"If Southampton ran this area, they'd flatten the nuance. We're not just 'on the edge' – we're our own place with our own values."

Service Realities

12. The Waterside's infrastructure is already under pressure:

- Transport: The A326 is a single arterial route with limited public transport and unsafe active travel options.
- Healthcare: GP access is stretched, with long wait times and limited local provision.
- Social Infrastructure: Youth centres, theatres, and pubs have closed, weakening community life and civic cohesion.

13. These challenges are best addressed through integrated, place-sensitive governance, not by absorbing the area into a larger urban authority with different priorities. This supports the LGBCE's emphasis on convenient and effective governance, ensuring that services are planned and delivered in ways that reflect local needs.

14. Splitting the operating geography of New Forest District would have significant implications for the delivery and coordination of operational services. Services such as housing, waste collection, street scene management, parking enforcement, and coastal protection are currently managed across a unified geography, allowing for economies of scale, consistent service standards, and streamlined governance.

15. A division of the area could lead to fragmentation in service delivery, requiring the establishment of separate operational teams, infrastructure, and administrative systems for each new geography. This would likely increase overhead costs, reduce flexibility in resource deployment, and complicate strategic planning, particularly for services that benefit from integrated approaches, such as coastal management and waste.

16. Local authorities have a statutory duty to manage their housing stock under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which includes over 2,100 local authority-owned homes in the Waterside – representing 40% of the district's total council housing. These

homes are not just assets; they are the foundation of secure, affordable living for thousands of residents. Fragmenting the district would disrupt the governance and financial integrity of the HRA, requiring complex disaggregation of housing assets, tenancy agreements, maintenance contracts, and rent accounts. This loss of housing stock to the wider district is particularly significant, given the constraints on new housing development across much of the New Forest, including areas within the National Park and other protected landscapes, where planning restrictions severely limit the ability to meet local housing need through new provision.

17. This risks undermining service continuity, increasing administrative costs, and creating disparities in housing standards and tenant support. It is also an approach that is at odds with the objectives of social housing regulation, which places the tenant voice at the heart of service design and provision. Such a significant change to the services they receive should require appropriate levels of direct engagement with those 2,100 tenants affected, particularly where there is such incongruity in the proposed service provision they may experience in future.

18. New Forest District Council's role as a landlord is rooted in local accountability, place-based service delivery, and long-term stewardship of housing communities. Any boundary change through local government reorganisation must demonstrate how these responsibilities will be upheld without compromising tenant rights, housing quality, or financial sustainability. The absence of a clear and credible plan for HRA division presents a material risk to tenants and to the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations.

19. Given its existing geography, New Forest has three operational depots at Hardley (in Fawley parish), Ringwood and Lymington. Any splitting of the Waterside from the remainder of the Waterside would need to clearly demonstrate that the Waterside could continue to be serviced effectively and efficiently from the existing operating infrastructure of the authority it moves to. This is especially critical given the Waterside currently accommodates 30,958 (37%) homes and 2,108 (40%) local authority owned homes within the Waterside geography, identified under by the LGR boundary change option.

20. A practical example of service delivery changes presented by the splitting of the Waterside from the wider New Forest can be found at Lepe Country Park which is on southern coast of the New Forest. Under the boundary change option, the administration of this Park would be required to be split, with one new unitary council responsible for the visitor centre building, lower car park and shoreline, and another unitary council responsible for the nature reserve and upper car park. This unnecessarily fragments service delivery. There are many other examples that can be provided on request, including significant new developments currently under construction north of Totton which would be split into two separate administrations under the boundary change option.

21. Furthermore, the reorganisation could impact service equity and resilience. Differences in demographic profiles, housing needs, coastal vulnerabilities, and infrastructure across the newly defined areas may necessitate tailored service models, potentially leading to disparities in service levels and investment. Parking and street scene services, for example, may face challenges in maintaining consistent enforcement and maintenance standards across boundaries, while housing services could encounter difficulties in managing waiting lists, allocations, and homelessness support without a shared framework. The transition would also require careful stakeholder engagement, legal restructuring, and digital system reconfiguration to ensure continuity and minimise disruption to residents and businesses.

22. Splitting the district also presents a material risk to the safe and effective delivery of statutory elections. The complexity of disaggregating electoral services, systems, and data - particularly during a period of national electoral significance, could compromise preparations for the 2027 Shadow Authority elections and quadrennial town and parish council elections. Fragmentation would disrupt established electoral infrastructure, reduce resilience in staffing and governance, and increase the likelihood of administrative error or legal challenge. Continuity of electoral delivery is essential to uphold public confidence and ensure compliance with statutory duties during this critical democratic transition.

Community Voice: Clear and Consistent

23. Independently facilitated deliberative engagement (see Appendix 3) has revealed that New Forest District is not a fragmented collection of communities, but a deeply interconnected and cohesive district. Residents across the Forest and Waterside areas share:

- A strong place-based identity rooted in the natural landscape, cultural heritage, and shared values.
- A sense of community that transcends individual towns, with many residents identifying as part of a wider New Forest community.
- A protective attitude toward the Forest, its traditions, and its way of life, especially among commoners and long-standing residents.

24. This cohesion stands in stark contrast to the urban character and priorities of neighbouring authorities like the City of Southampton and Eastleigh.

25. Inclusive and representative samples provided robust evidence that residents in the Waterside areas see themselves as part of the New Forest, not as extensions of the City of Southampton or Eastleigh. Their concerns, values, and aspirations align with those of the wider district.

26. Residents express clear and consistent opposition to any reorganisation that would split the district or merge parts of it with urban authorities:

- Loss of local representation: Fear that decision-makers in the City of Southampton or Eastleigh would not understand or prioritise the needs of New Forest communities.
- Erosion of identity: Concern that the unique character of the Forest and its communities would be diluted or overridden.
- Threats to the natural environment: Worries that urban-led planning would accelerate development and harm the Forest's ecology and heritage.

27. Waterside residents, in particular, voiced concerns about spillover effects from urban areas, such as crime and antisocial behaviour,

and stressed the importance of retaining local control to address these challenges effectively.

28. Maintaining the integrity of New Forest District is not just a matter of administrative convenience - it is a democratic imperative, grounded in the lived experiences and expressed will of its people.

29. Hampshire wide engagement has also identified that 65% of respondents strongly oppose or oppose the option to split the district at the Waterside.

A National Testbed for Sustainable Growth

30. The Waterside is vital to the New Forest's long-term economy prosperity and resilience and a significant contributor to the national economy, generating approximately £1.24 billion Gross Value Added annually. It has unique geographic strategic advantages serving as a key driver of employment, innovation, and investment across the district. It is already positioned as a national exemplar of how economic regeneration can align with environmental stewardship to generate further significant economic value for the benefit of the New Forest, the wider region and national economy. The area hosts:

- The UK's largest oil refinery (Fawley);
- Calshot village;
- A unique military port (Marchwood);
- The former Fawley Power Station site which represents a significant regeneration opportunity; and
- The majority of the Solent Freeport sites, with related multi-billion pound investment into the economy.

31. But this vision depends on governance that understands the landscape, not just the ledger. Fragmentation would undermine the delivery of nationally significant outcomes, from Freeport growth to biodiversity net gain and strategic nature recovery – and contradict the LGBCE's goals of community identity and effective governance.

"This is not just green space — it is green memory, green need."

Policy Alignment and Legal Duties

32. The New Forest National Park is not just a landscape designation – it is a living, breathing system of ecological, cultural, and

community value. Under Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995, and reinforced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, all relevant authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to the purposes of National Parks in exercising or performing any functions in relation to or so as to affect land within a National Park.

33. This includes the duty to:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.

34. The Waterside's proximity and functional integration with the New Forest National Park – ecologically, economically, and socially, means that any governance model must actively support these statutory purposes. Fragmenting the district and aligning parts of it with a city focussed authority that does not share this duty would:

- Dilute accountability for National Park outcomes;
- Undermine cross-boundary planning for biodiversity, access, and landscape and cultural heritage protection; and
- Contradict national policy on protected landscapes and climate resilience.

35. The current governance structure, rooted in the New Forest context, is uniquely positioned to uphold these duties. It ensures that opportunities for planning, service delivery, and community engagement are maximised to align with the Park's statutory purposes – something that would be lost under a fragmented model.

36. The principles adopted by other authorities considering local government reorganisation in relation to national parks, including in Devon, set a clear precedent: proposals are being shaped to minimise impacts on the governance and integrity of national parks.

37. The same principle must apply in the New Forest - any reorganisation must protect the statutory independence and environmental stewardship of the New Forest National Park

Authority. National Parks are not negotiable assets; they are protected landscapes with national significance.

38. This is particularly important for the New Forest in relation to the role of commoning, and commoners in the cultural identify and management of the area.

Conclusion: A Statutory Fit for Unity

39. The case for retaining the New Forest as a whole clearly aligns with all six of the government's criteria for local government reorganisation. It demonstrates that a unified New Forest ensures coherent governance, operational efficiency, high-quality services, strong community engagement, balanced devolution, and empowered local representation. Fragmentation would undermine these strengths and risk the integrity of service delivery and democratic accountability across the district.

40. Elsewhere in England, early engagement, technical appraisal, and public consultation were used to assess a range of boundary options across all reasonable geographies. However the current proposals affecting the New Forest, particularly the suggestion to remove the Waterside, have not been subject to any comparable process.

41. No equivalent work has been undertaken in Hampshire to explore whether alternative boundary changes, such as those to the east of the City of Southampton, might better reflect functional geographies, service integration, or community identity. This absence of structured engagement and evidence gathering undermines the legitimacy of proposals to fragment the New Forest District and risks overlooking more coherent and locally supported options.

42. The evidence presented aligns directly with two particular elements of the LGBCE's statutory criteria:

- Community Identity: Strong, coherent, and deeply rooted as a single 'New Forest' identity.
- Effective and Convenient Local Government: Dependent on integrated service delivery and ecological stewardship.

43. We therefore urge the government to:

1. **Reject proposals** that remove the Waterside from New Forest District.
2. **Reject proposals** that create a 'rural bolt on' of the New Forest District, to the City of Southampton.
3. **Back the creation of a 'Forest Mid Hampshire' Council** – a model that protects the integrity of the New Forest, strengthens local democracy, aligns with statutory criteria and ensures sustainable service delivery for generations to come.
4. **Commit to a full and independent review** by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, should any model with boundary changes be taken forward by the Government for consultation, given the scale and impact of such changes.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Waterside Engagement Report

Appendix 2 – Officer summary of key characteristics of New Forest, including commoning

Appendix 3 – Deliberative engagement outputs

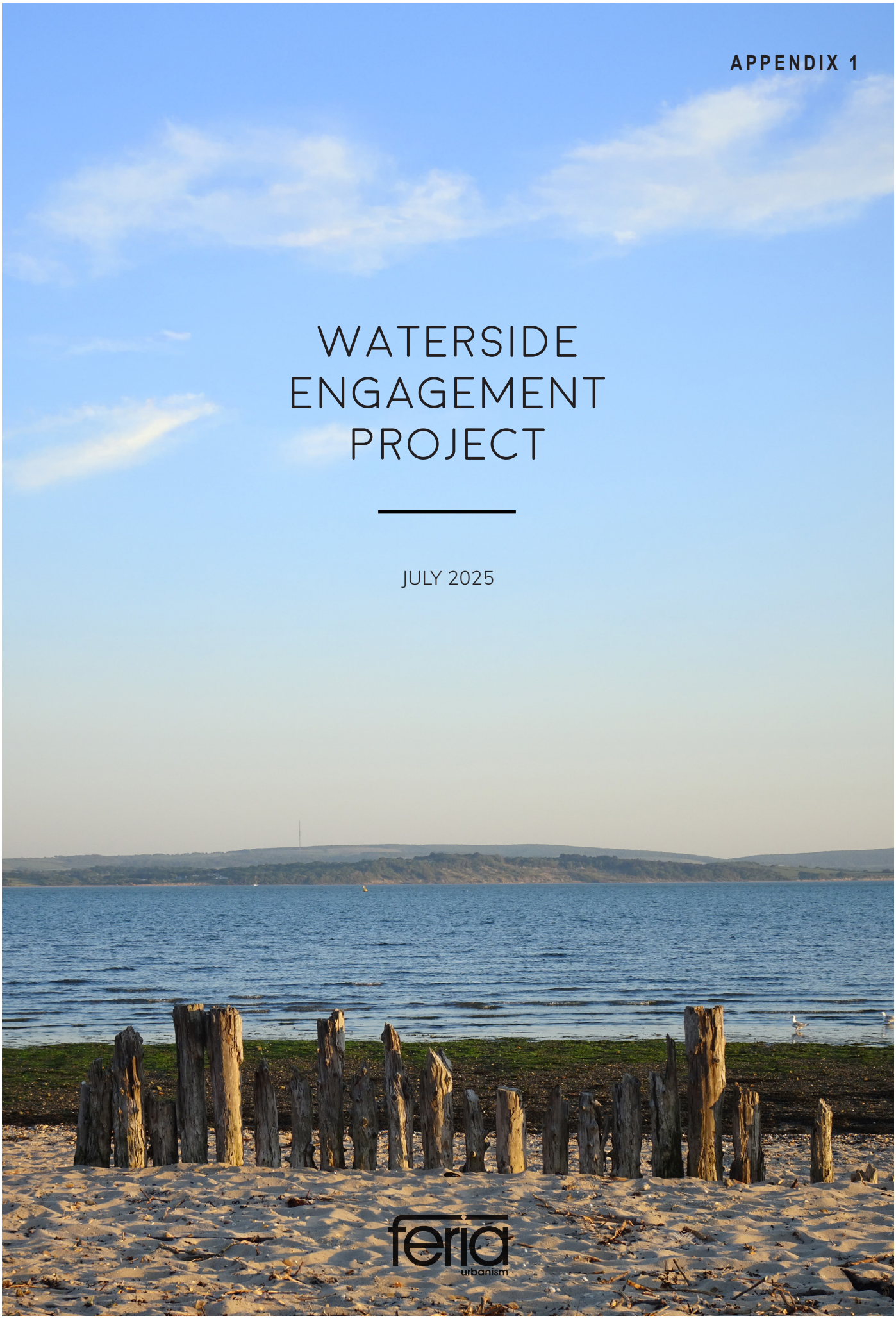
Background papers

Summary of engagement undertaken, including county wide engagement outcomes and full reports

APPENDIX 1

WATERSIDE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

JULY 2025



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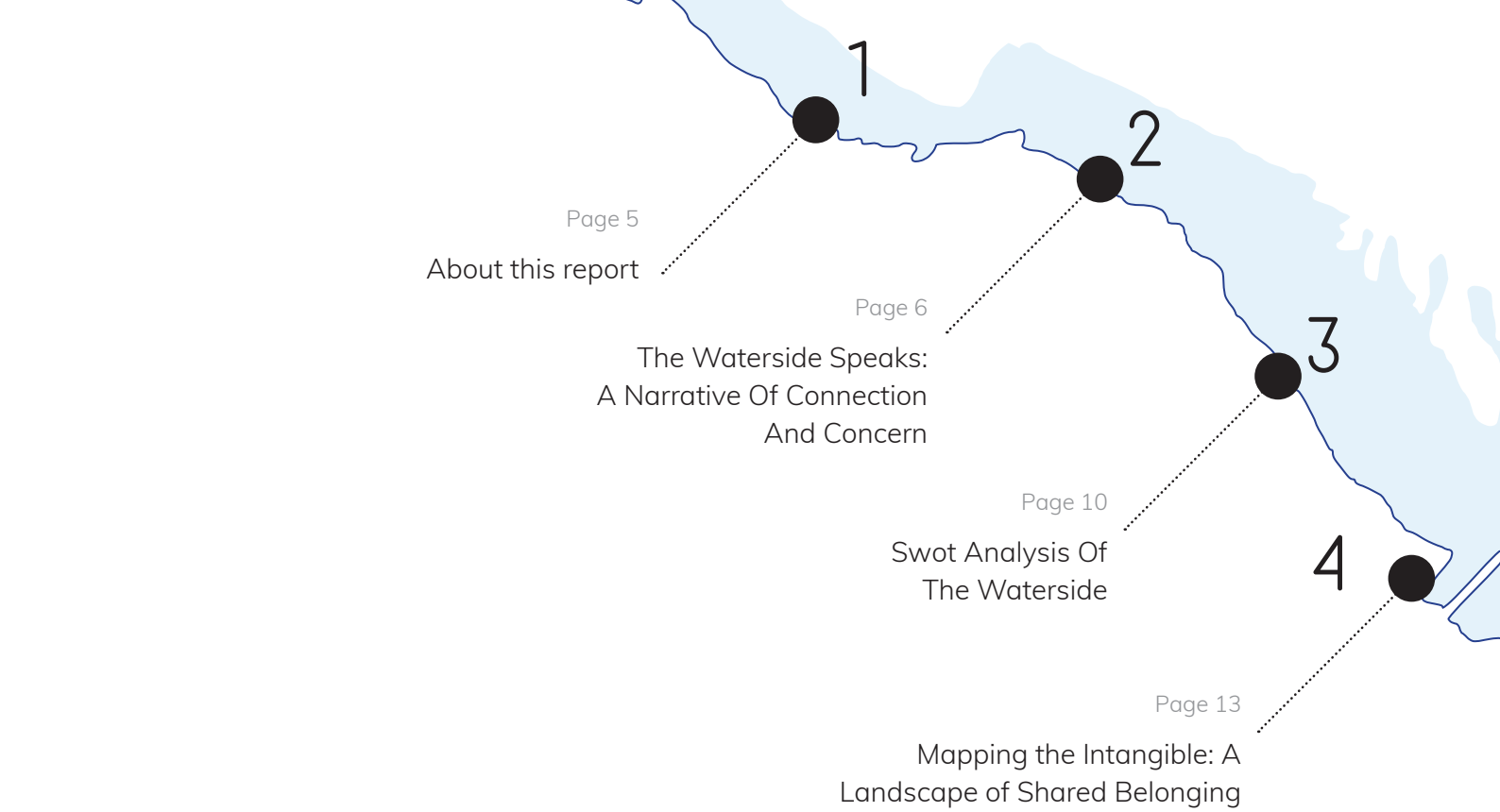

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Waterside Engagement Project is a place-focused research initiative designed to capture and articulate the identity, character and personality of the Waterside communities, including Totton, Marchwood, Dibden Purlieu, Hythe, Holbury, Fawley and Calshot. Commissioned by New Forest District Council as part of the current Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process, the project was designed and delivered by Feria Urbanism. It sets out to produce a rich, locally grounded understanding of these areas, beyond statistics or quantitative data.

The project's objectives are to develop an evidence base that is expressive, place-sensitive and resonant with local values; to inform both policy and engagement practice; and to showcase the diversity and distinctiveness of the Waterside communities in a manner that is both professional and poetic.

Its overarching aim is to gather qualitative insights and visual material that can inform future planning, governance or development work, ensuring that any LGR strategic decisions regarding new administrative boundaries reflect the lived realities and distinctive features of the Waterside communities themselves. Rather than imposing a top-down framework, the project draws from conversations, observations, and creative documentation to build a textured, respectful account of place and context.

The research process was organised into two main phases:

The first involved field-based and desk-based research, using photography and film, to capture the visual and spatial identity of the area.

The second phase centred on a series of qualitative conversations with individuals and representative groups from across the Waterside, allowing local people to describe their experiences in their own words.

These have been recorded, transcribed and annotated to draw out key themes.

THE WATERSIDE SPEAKS: A NARRATIVE OF CONNECTION AND CONCERN

The research has allowed for the creation of a place-based narrative of the Waterside, shaped through in-depth, qualitative engagement with those who know it best. Over several weeks, focus group-style conversations were held with a range of parish councils and invited community representatives, from across the area. This allowed a deep-rooted knowledge of their communities, landscapes, and challenges to be shared. These structured discussions explored themes of housing, social cohesion, environmental identity, infrastructure and local governance, creating space for reflection as well as critique.

In the weeks before these sessions began, the researcher conducted a series of one-to-one and small-group conversations with local residents, capturing a broader spectrum of lived experience across ages, backgrounds, and places. These conversations were born out of informal but purposeful encounters while he explored the area on foot and by bicycle. The conversations were grounded in listening and allowing people to speak in their own terms, sharing not only practical concerns, but stories, memories, and aspirations. The process prioritised depth over breadth, enabling a textured understanding of what life on the Waterside truly feels like from the inside.

The narrative that follows is not a literal transcript of quotes, nor a summary of statistics. Instead, it is a synthesis: a carefully crafted account that brings together the emotional, cultural and practical dimensions of local life on the Waterside. It aims to reflect not just what was said, but the atmosphere in which it was shared.

Life on the Waterside unfolds between the quiet rhythms of nature and the pressing demands of modern transport infrastructure, shaped by a powerful sense of place that is both enduring and challenged. Framed by the New Forest on one side and the tidal expanse of Southampton Water on the other, the area retains a distinct identity: self-contained, deeply rooted, and emotionally aligned more with the Forest than the nearby City.

The community's attachment to its setting is profound. Residents describe the Forest not merely as an amenity but as a defining element of who they are. This connection runs deep through generations, traditions of commoning, and a lived understanding of the land. Southampton lies close by to the east, but cultural and emotional orientation remains fixed towards the west. The Waterside is not perceived as an appendage to the city but as an entity in its own right. A whole, that is coherent, and quietly resistant to imposed reclassifications.

Yet beneath this continuity, the challenges facing the Waterside are mounting. There is an acute perception that transport infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth and evolving needs. The area's transport network is under strain: the single arterial route of the A326 can feel overburdened, public transport options are limited, and in some areas, basic active travel provision – such as cycle paths, footways and pavements – can feel unsafe, or in some instance are simply absent. Long-standing concerns around unspent financial development contributions for transport investment and unfulfilled improvement active travel plans contribute to frustrations and a sense of being overlooked when wider strategic investment decisions are taken.

> "The area's really under pressure. It's like we've outgrown the infrastructure that was never quite right to begin with."

Like transport, the healthcare system can sometimes feel stretched, with reports of long waits for GP appointments. Residents expressed a disillusionment with current decision-making structures, describing consultation processes that feel repetitive and unresponsive. There is a growing view that traditional governance models do not adequately reflect the distinct values, practices, and expectations of the Waterside's communities. As a result, some view LGR as an opportunity to shake things up and improve the situation.

That said, there is an acute anxiety about LGR and what this might mean. Local people remain fiercely protective of their Forest identity and fear its erosion should administrative boundaries be redrawn, pulling them formally into the orbit of Southampton and the urban areas.

Like healthcare, housing pressures on the Waterside reflect national trends but are felt intensely here. There is widespread concern about the lack of affordable, family-oriented homes, with demand outstripping supply and significant numbers on waiting lists. At the same time, there is a clear call to protect the environmental and cultural integrity of the area, particularly the landscape edges where development pressures are most pronounced. Residents articulate a strong desire for growth that is locally sensitive: prioritising local people, respecting settlement character, and avoiding encroachment both beyond the A336 into the Forest and into the green gaps between settlements, that are considered to make a valuable contribution to place identity.

Social infrastructure has also been diminished. The closure of youth facilities, theatres, Sure Start centres and several local pubs has led to what can be called a "thinning" of community life, particularly for teenagers and young adults who now find themselves without meaningful spaces for gathering, creativity or growth. While some social and outdoor assets remain, such as libraries, parks, beaches, and a community cinema, they are perceived as fragmented and disconnected, lacking the coherence required for a vibrant civic life.

> I know somebody with two boys, eleven and thirteen, and she won't let them out on their own in the parks in Southampton anymore. It's not safe, there's too much of that gang culture creeping in, and you never know what they'll come across. The only time they really get out and about, run free like kids should, is when they visit here and take them into the Forest. Out there, they can be themselves. It's the one place I know they're safe.

Economic opportunities remains fragile. Despite initiatives such as the recent Freeport designation, benefits have yet to materialise at the local level, and job creation has been limited. There is a scepticism that the Freeport will deliver what has been promised. While major employers, such as Exxon Mobil, have reduced their direct engagement in community activity, small independent businesses continue to act as the backbone of local resilience. The series of welcoming independent shops in Hythe were celebrated, with Black Wax, the record shop and café an example of recent high street innovations that have proved popular. There is strong appetite for the return of skilled employment and for local regeneration strategies that align economic growth with community and environmental priorities.

Finally, the Waterside's natural assets are not just valued, they are considered foundational. The confluence of Forest, sea, and estuary creates a rare environmental interface that informs the area's identity. There are rich ecosystems, including seagrass beds, salt marshes, and heaths and woodland that extend from east to west as fingers towards the water. A diverse bird life co-exists alongside long-established human practices. Yet development pressure threatens this balance. Calls to protect and integrate this landscape into future plans are not simply about conservation, they are about respecting a way of life.

In summary, the Waterside represents a community defined by deep place attachment, environmental sensitivity, and a strong civic ethos. The area's challenges – while significant – are not rooted in resistance to change, but in a desire for change that is meaningful, proportionate and locally led. Any future interventions must engage with this ethos directly, recognising that successful planning is not merely about infrastructure delivery, but about sustaining the relationships between people, place, and belonging.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE WATERSIDE

The information contained in the narrative has been represented here as a more formal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis.

Strengths:

Distinct identity rooted in strong place attachment to the New Forest and estuarine landscape.

Rich environmental setting including salt marshes and seagrass beds, the Forest edge and diverse wildlife.

Community cohesion through generational ties, small businesses, and local cultural and sporting traditions.

Proximity to employment centres in Southampton while offering a quieter, more balanced lifestyle.

Weaknesses:

Strained transport infrastructure with a limited “one way in, one way out” A326 road access, limited public transport services, and unsafe pedestrian and cycle routes.

Under-provision of healthcare, with long waits and service access issues.

Insufficient social infrastructure, the loss of theatres, youth centres, and pubs has weakened community life.

Housing pressure experiences through a lack of affordable family homes, long waits for social housing, and limited development options.

> “Biggest problem? You need a car. The bus service is appalling, and there’s no rail link – it’s isolating for people who don’t drive.”

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE WATERSIDE

The information contained in the narrative has been represented here as a more formal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis.

Opportunities:

Sensitive intensification of existing settlements with new landscape-led development around the edges, respecting natural boundaries.

LGR offers the potential for stronger local governance structures that reflect local values and identity.

Reinvestment in social and cultural amenities to help rebuild youth and civic life.

Harnessing environmental assets (e.g. estuary ecology and the Forest tradition) as part of economic and ecological renewal.

Threats:

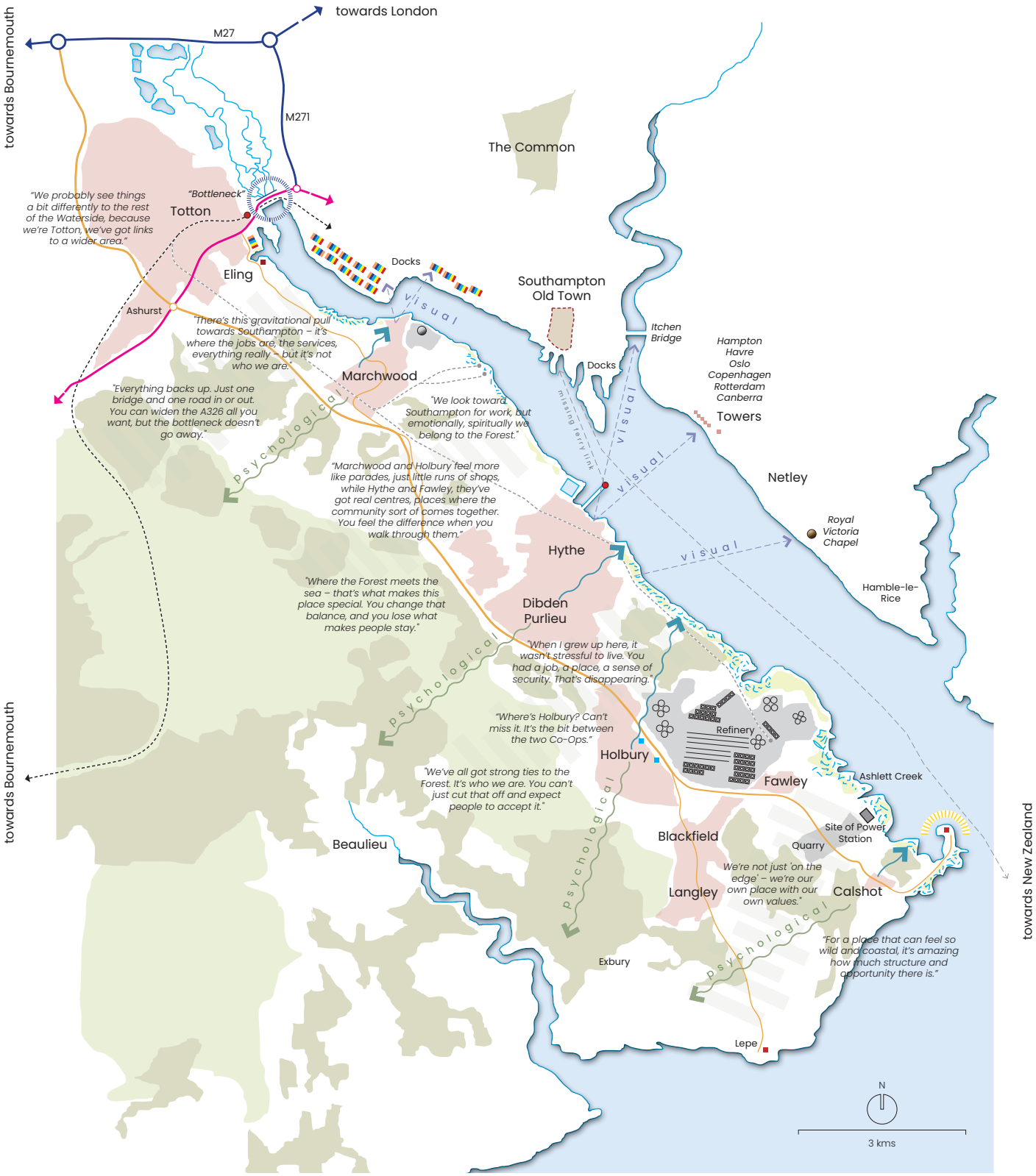
Over development or inappropriate growth could erode landscape character and cultural integrity.

Disconnect between new governance structures and local identity risks loss of trust and civic engagement.

Unrealised economic initiatives (e.g. Freeport) may result in disillusionment and stagnation.

Environmental degradation due to creeping pressures at the Forest's edge and lack of stewardship platforms.

> I didn't stay because it's perfect. I stayed because I love it. Forest on one side, water on the other – there's nowhere else like it.



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MAPPING THE INTANGIBLE: A LANDSCAPE OF SHARED BELONGING

This is not just a map. It is a living archive of memory and meaning, drawn not in borders, but in emotions, habits, and the rhythms of daily life. Here, where the water meets the woods, each word on the map is more than a visual record. The annotations – some tentative, others bold – reveal a region deeply known by the people who live there, not just described by cartographers.

It is an emotional landscape, where geography becomes biography. Every marked location is layered with memory, with voice, with the residue of first hand research conversations that were never quite finished.

Taken together, the map reveals a network of connections that are not just spatial. They are emotional, cultural, and temporal. This is a place moving forward, while not forgetting.

Each annotation and feature on this map captures the way people experience place: not as coordinates, but as continuity.

The labels are not destinations. They are moments paused in digital lines taken from people's voice:

- Totton reaches outwards with confidence, not as a satellite, but as a gateway, its town centre rediscovered. It reveals itself as quietly dynamic, a place in motion without needing spectacle, but the bottleneck threat is ever present.

- Eling leans in and listens more than it speaks. Positioned close to the tide, it embodies a gentle attentiveness, where water and memory shape the land together. The medieval church, rooted for centuries gazes across the water to the stack of multicolour global containers, flowing from all over the world.

MAPPING THE INTANGIBLE: A LANDSCAPE OF SHARED BELONGING

Marchwood is poised in contrast: forest stillness on one shoulder, industrial murmurs on the other. It does not resist change but calibrates it. The silver dome hums as the clank of loading and unloading reverberates across the water.

Hythe knows how to hold space: for community, for ritual, for memory. Its rootedness feels deliberate, confident. Its high street always changing but ever present.

Further inland, places like Dibden Purlieu, Holbury, and Blackfield are more anchored to the Forest. They unfold through the language of familiarity. They are places of rhythm and landscape, morning routines, shared paths, quiet acknowledgments. They remind us that stability is its own kind of transformation.

Fawley, often seen as utilitarian, reveals a deeper texture here. It speaks with layered voices: one industrial, yes but also communal, persistent, and proud. The stacks, pipes and towers glimpses through the trees. A mechanical forest within the ancient and organic version.

And at the far edge, Calshot gazes out, not as departure, but as horizon. It holds clarity and space that comes from facing open water. Its openness is not emptiness, but invitation. The castle and the lighthouse, both welcome and marker.

Together, these places form a network of emotional topographies, defined not by infrastructure alone, but by belonging. This map reads as a shared gesture forward, grounded in the ordinary beauty of continuity.

WATERSIDE. OR THE EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD

Based on the consultation findings, and using an artificial intelligence platform, the Waterside narrative is represented here in the vein of The Waste Land by T.S. Eliot, framed in a haunted, fragmentary, layered way, using memory and disquiet.

This evokes the area's spirit through myth, lament, and lived experience.

The following pages share this seven verse poem, "Waterside, or the Edge of the Known World", set alongside photographs that helped inspire it.

Early spring reveals itself not in blossoms,
but in the tireless groan of the A326
a road stretched too thin across
decades of indecision.
Grey hedgerows tremble under diesel breath.
One bridge, one artery. The rest is pressure.

I saw commuters moving eastward
figures under sodium light,
faces lit by phones, not sun
toward Southampton,
the City of Certainty,
where work pulses in towers and terminals,
but belonging refuses to follow.
"This is not where I end,"
the trees mutter behind iron fences,
"though the map says otherwise."
But the maps lie.

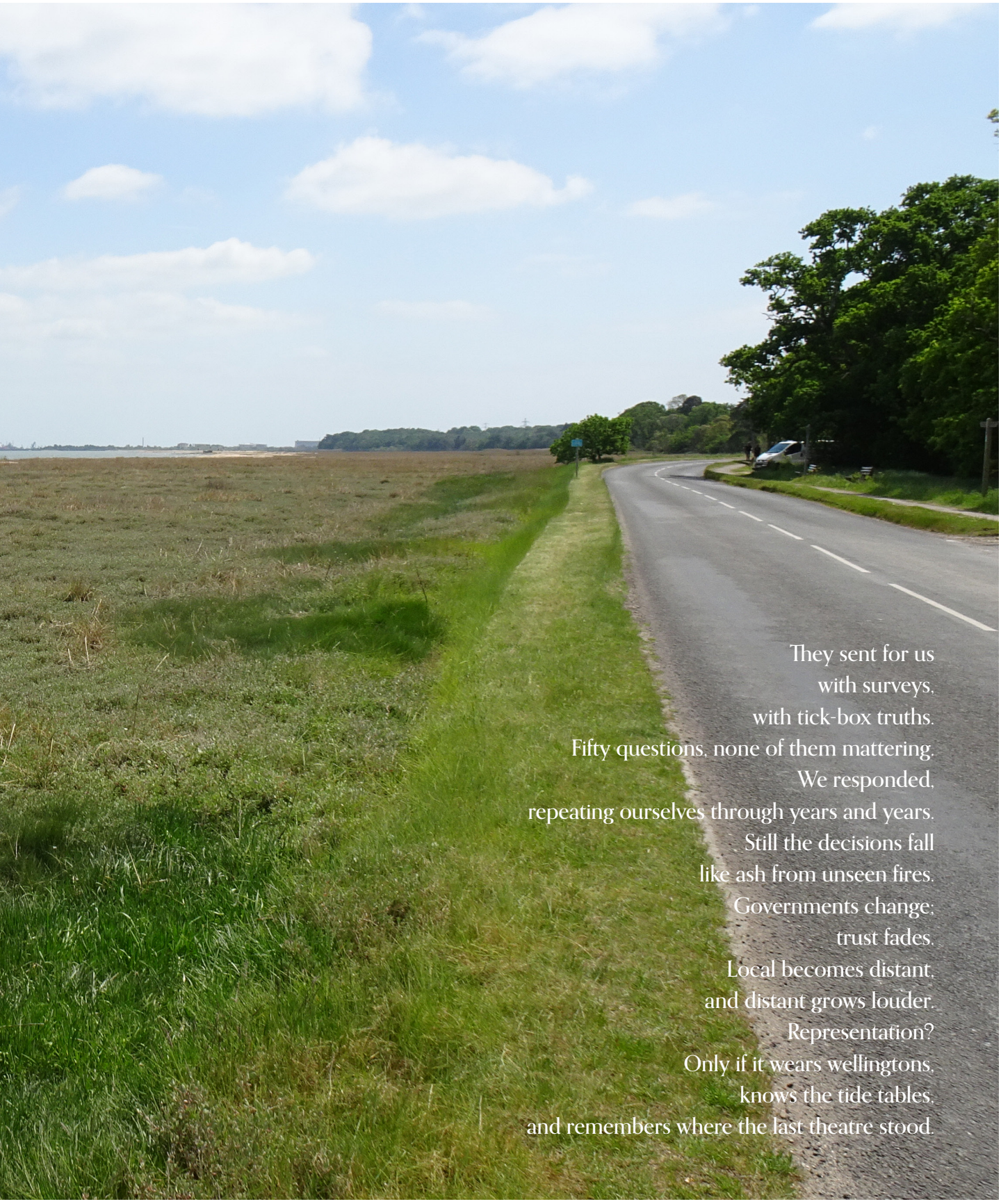
I. The Approach

We gathered once
where the footpath meets the ferry.
Now the signs are weather worn,
and the handrails rust unnoticed.
In Marchwood, a child weaves between traffic,
where pavement should be.
Funds were promised,
Thousand pound dreams but plans delay,
mired in process, in procurement,
in someone else's priority.

At the café, teenagers hover,
not patrons but ghosts
of youth clubs long shuttered
no stage, no pitch,
just a car park lit in flickers.
What rituals remain?
The closing of pubs,
the quiet burial of shared space.
We mourn not just places,
but the time when we knew
why we stayed.

Between Calshot and Beaulieu,
a different time persists
when grazing was not regulation
but rhythm,
when commoners walked
with more rights than titles.
The verderers remember
they speak in the language of bracken
and hooves
but few listen.

Policy deafens itself with plans.
The boundaries redraw,
the soul stays unshaken.
This is Forest,
not fiction.
And to strip Waterside from it
is to amputate quietly,
expecting function to persist.



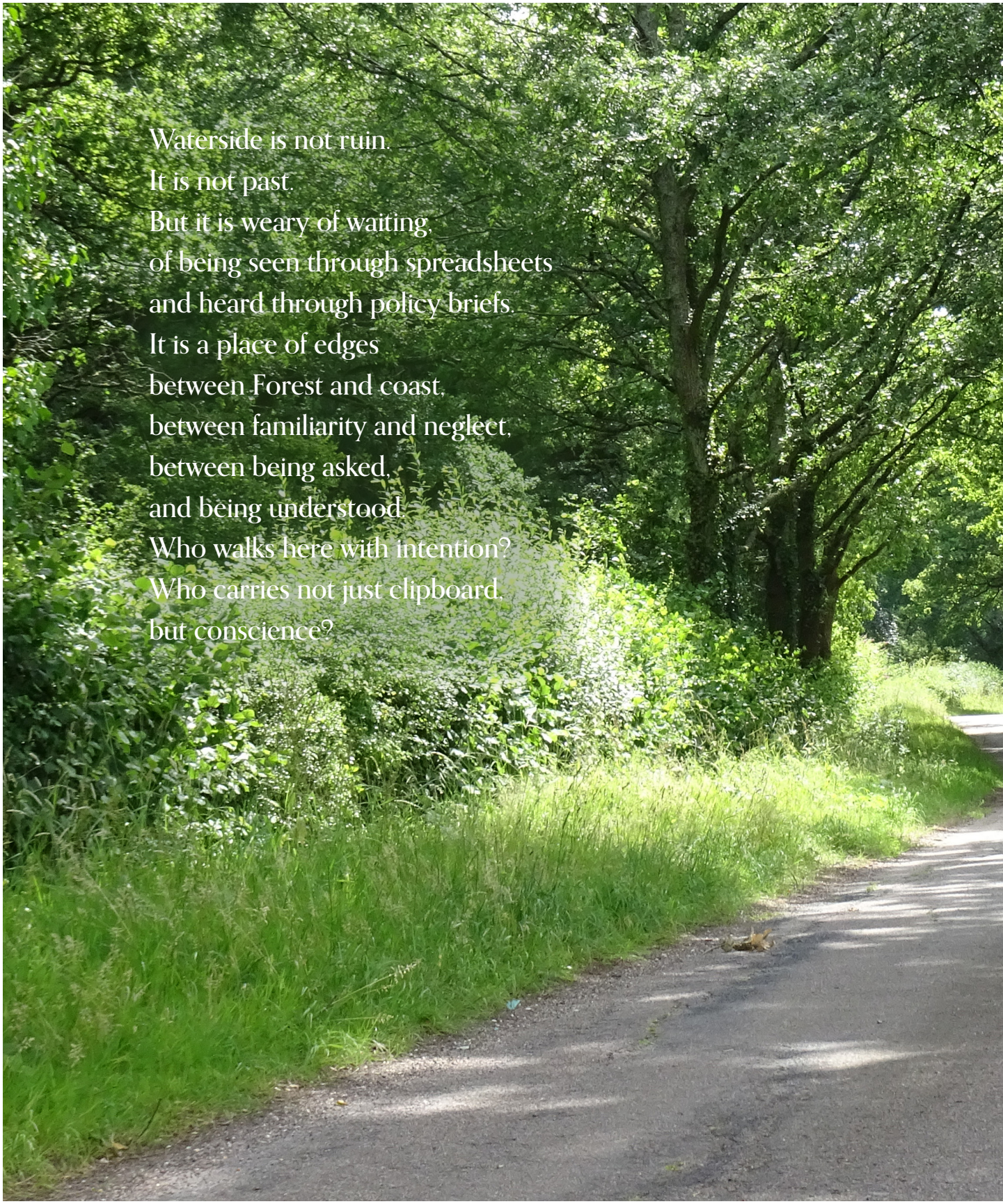
IV. Consultation

Along the waterside,
the word *Freeport* echoes
a promise on a billboard,
but not yet in the shop till.
Growth measured in rumours
figures murmured like ghost tides
what the streets already know.
The trades persist,
barbers and bakers,
takeaways with handwritten signs
they hold the line
not for profit,
but for presence.

They remember Esso
not just the name in boldface
but the handshake at the gate
pipes humming, windows lit against the dusk.
The shift horn a rhythm, part of the weather.
A belonging breathed, not branded.

Seagrass sways below waterline
home to life,
delicate as understanding.
The birds move with instinct
that the planners can't model.
Where the Forest meets the salt,
there is no metric,
only meaning.
This is not green space
it is green memory,
green need.

VI. In The Estuary's Dream


Waterside is not ruin.
It is not past.
But it is weary of waiting,
of being seen through spreadsheets
and heard through policy briefs.
It is a place of edges
between Forest and coast,
between familiarity and neglect,
between being asked,
and being understood.
Who walks here with intention?
Who carries not just clipboard,
but conscience?

Speak plainly,
for the ground remembers
every silence.

WATERSIDE. OR THE EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD

Here is an annotated version of Waterside, or the Edge of the Known World, linking each poetic section to relevant planning concerns and community engagement insights gathered by the research that underpins this report. This annotated format allows the consultation summaries to be embedded into policy framing documents, or reports that aim to create poetic bridge between the emotive and the evidential.

I. The Approach

Planning Concern: Transport infrastructure capacity and resilience

Insight: This section foregrounds the psychological weight of what is perceived as a failing road system and reliance on a single corridor (A326). It reflects lived experience of over-concentration and access constraints, suggesting that improvements should be about resilience, not just capacity.

II. Broken Lines

Planning Concern: Social infrastructure and local investment delivery

Insight: Here the imagery of decaying footways, ghostly youth spaces and unspent planning contributions speaks to both material and symbolic disconnection. It conveys a narrative of broken trust and unmet expectations, signalling a need for transparency in how planning gain funds are to be spent and the need for reinvestment in civic-focused amenities.

III. The Forest Remembers

Planning Concern: Cultural heritage and environmental identity

Insight: This section addresses the deep-rooted identity of the Waterside within the New Forest tradition, including practices like commoning. It raises the issue that policy language often fails to account for intangible cultural ties, and that potential changes to administrative boundaries resulting from LGR risk undermining place attachment.

IV. Consultation

Planning Concern: Democratic engagement and representation

Insight: The depiction of consultation fatigue and performative listening underscores residents' disenchantment with current methods. It highlights the mismatch between formal consultation processes and local expectations of recognition, trust, and genuinely responsive governance.

V. Work Without Place

Planning Concern: Economic regeneration and employment strategy

Insight: The disjuncture between national initiatives (the Freeport status) and local realities (rumours of low job creation) is made visible here. The poetic lament of 'promise on a billboard' critiques the gap between policy branding and ground-level benefit, pointing to the need for place-based economic planning and meaningful local employment, such as that as offered by Exxon Mobil.

VI. In the Estuary's Dream

Planning Concern: Environmental sensitivity and landscape-led policy

Insight: This section conveys the ecological fragility of the estuary-Forest interface and the importance of preserving natural identity, not just as scenery but as lived, meaningful environment. It lends weight to community advocacy for landscape-informed development frameworks, the need for climate resilient designs and highlights the limits of quantitative valuation.

VII. Closing

Planning Concern: Integrated planning and holistic visioning

Insight: The final section distils a call for joined up thinking that values memory, belonging, and emotional landscapes alongside physical infrastructure. It demands not just action but being in tune with the landscape and the culture, urging planners and decision-makers to enter as listeners, not just technicians.

> Where the Forest meets the sea – that's what makes this place special. You change that balance, and you lose what makes people stay.

WHAT MAKES THE WATERSIDE SPECIAL

This cannot be not captured in statistics alone. It resides in the convergence of place, memory, and identity. To understand this area is to recognise its texture: the particular blend of rootedness, environmental richness, and cultural coherence that shapes both how people live and why they stay.

Waterside Place

The Waterside's identity emerges first from its geography. Flanked by the New Forest's ancient landscape on one side and the shifting tides of Southampton Water on the other. This duality offers more than scenic backdrop; it forms the emotional and ecological core of the place. The land and sea meet in a dialogue of past and present, where grazing rights are passed through generations and tidal rhythms echo in local knowledge. This is not suburban fringe. It is a self-contained geography, deeply understood and fiercely valued by those who live within it.

Quality of life here is anchored in this unique environmental relationship. This is not merely about access to green space but about living in rhythm with it. The Forest is a living presence, shaping community character, traditions, and outlook. The wildlife that is found along the Forest edge and estuary are not ornamental, they are part of the everyday fabric. Residents speak not only of beauty, but of peace, of safety, and of a gentler pace of life that cities increasingly struggle to offer.

> We've all got strong ties to the Forest. It's who we are. You can't just cut that off and expect people to accept it.

WHAT MAKES THE WATERSIDE SPECIAL

Waterside Memory

This sense of coherence extends into social life. While some civic infrastructure has frayed, the remaining threads tie people to each other with purpose and care. Local businesses, long-standing customs, and familiar faces at the school gate reinforce belonging. There is a quiet civility here, a neighbourliness born not of nostalgia but of place-rooted continuity.

Even as many commute outwards for work, the emotional orientation remains inward. Southampton may draw economic flows eastwards, but the gravitational centre of identity pulls westward, back toward the Forest, the commons, and the sense of wholeness that comes from knowing where you are. Attempts to redefine the Waterside in administrative or functional terms, treating it as merely adjacent to somewhere else, risk missing this fundamental truth.

Waterside Identity

In the Waterside, identity and quality of life are inseparable. The land informs culture, the culture sustains community, and the community – in turn – defends what it knows to be rare.

What makes this place special is not that it resists change, but that it understands deeply what it has to protect. Planning here requires more than delivery; it requires understanding.

WHAT PEOPLE WANT

Environmental & Landscape Interventions

Protection of grazing rights and commons that tie local traditions to the land

Support for commoners' practices through stewardship and local governance recognition

Habitat conservation projects for estuary and Forest wildlife as part of daily life, not as a distant or abstract ecological idea

Imaginative access to Forest and shoreline – such as quiet trails, viewpoints, and bird hides – that respect rhythm and pace

Maintain and enhance the visual connections across the water to the city, as these can help emphasis the difference between east and west.

Place-Based Infrastructure

Investment in quiet, low-impact travel (e.g. cycle paths, green buses) that blend into the landscape

Place-specific signage and interpretation that can reflect local heritage and ecology, not generic branding)

Sheltered, informal gathering spots near schools, shops, or green ways to nurture neighbourliness – Holbury is an example of place lacking such a civic heart

Sensitive enhancement of key civic buildings (e.g. libraries, community halls, pubs) as anchors of shared identity.

WHAT PEOPLE WANT

Social & Cultural Revitalisation

Support for local businesses with deep roots, especially those tied to heritage trades or services

Revival of hyper-local traditions or festivals that express continuity, not nostalgia

Funding for schools and youth clubs that encourage intergenerational connection and local pride

Shared storytelling spaces (e.g. community arts, oral history, archives) to document and honour the lived experience.

Planning & Governance Approaches

Planning strategies that start with identity, not zoning, to safeguard the emotional geography

Design codes and planning applications shaped by the Forest–water relationship, not suburban templates

Decision-making models with community guardianship at heart, giving residents custodial voices over future developments

Communications that frame Waterside as whole and distinct, not merely “adjacent to” Southampton.

> The city-based councils don’t get what makes us tick. They don’t live here so they can’t possibly understand the Forest culture.

ARTICULATION & APPLICATION OF THIS IDENTITY

The identity and quality of life of the Waterside are not abstract concepts; they are lived realities woven through place, landscape, and community. This narrative, that has emerged from the in-depth engagement process comprising reflective listening and extended conversations – a synthesis of resident voices – reveals a rich tapestry of meaning that extends far beyond traditional metrics. What distinguishes the Waterside is a sense of belonging that arises from its interface with the New Forest and Southampton Water, its cultural coherence, and the continuity of local knowledge passed between generations.

These qualities must not remain anecdotal or peripheral in planning. They should directly shape how policy is conceived, implemented and communicated.

In this section, this narrative is re-framed through four distinct but interrelated policy lenses: Design Codes, Conservation Area Reviews, the NFDC Local Plan, and Community Engagement framing. Each represents a critical avenue through which planning can either uphold – or undermine – the identity and lived experience of local people. By interpreting the Waterside's values through these focused perspectives, this section demonstrates how technical frameworks can become more attuned to place, more aligned with community, and more accountable to context. In doing so, it offers a roadmap for policy approaches that are not only spatially effective but also culturally responsive and emotionally resonant.

1. Design Codes

The Waterside's identity is not an aesthetic overlay but an embedded way of life, shaped by its interface with Forest and estuary. Any future design codes in this setting must draw from the language of place: the materials, form, rhythm and scale that reflect not generic typologies, but the particular character of a "wooded coastal fringe." For example, new development should evolve a settlement grain that respects ancient tracks, views to tree lines, and the fluid movement between built form and landscape. Architecture is not neutral here. It is expected to listen and to express itself. In this context, design coding must protect continuity of community while allowing for contemporary expression that feels born of the place, not imposed upon it from outside.

2. Conservation Area Reviews

These can empower communities to articulate the unique character of their Waterside built environment. Through research, mapping, and local workshops, residents can identify architectural features, historic views, landscape settings, and cultural associations that shape a place's special interest. Documenting these assets in updated appraisal documents will inform planning policies that can protect what matters most. Engaging people in the review process gives them a genuine voice in shaping policies that guide future development. Public exhibition of proposals, collaborative design guidance, and clear management priorities allow residents to influence decisions about change, repair, or new design. This authentic shared ownership strengthens community cohesion, and preserves heritage legacies for coming generations.

3. The NFDC Local Plan

The vision for the Waterside must begin with what already exists: a community defined by a deep affinity to its environment, a landscape of lived meaning, and a quiet civility that stems from long-standing social coherence. Rather than treating the area as "room for growth" the NFDC Local Plan should articulate a narrative of "curated belonging" – where growth is conditional on environmental sensitivity, job creation, affordability for local families, and the reinforcement of social infrastructure. The Local Plan's legitimacy will hinge on its ability to reflect not just land availability, but cultural values. The vision here must express not aspiration in abstract terms, but commitment to stewardship.

4. Community Engagement Framing

Engagement with the Waterside must recognise that the community is not fatigued by consultation but has previously been consulted poorly. Residents want to be heard as experts in their own environment. Listened to as custodians of knowledge that is experiential, not just anecdotal. The framing of engagement must respect this by asking fewer questions with greater depth, and by creating processes that return value in the form of visible influence. The tone should be invitational, rooted in respect for place and practice. Ultimately, engagement here is less about harvesting opinion and more about reaffirming the community's rightful place at the centre of decisions that shape their future. The qualitative approach to engagement used to produce this report was seen as innovative, unusual and was seen as a welcome development.

What this means for LGR and future administrative boundaries

To respond meaningfully to the identity and quality of life findings from the Waterside narrative, any future local government reorganisation must first acknowledge that this is a place where boundaries are lived, not just drawn. The Waterside's coherence emerges not from statutory divisions but from cultural, ecological and emotional unity – a rhythm attuned to both land and tide, and a deep resistance to being re-categorised as part of large city bureaucracy.

Therefore, any future administrative realignment should preserve and reinforce the Waterside's distinct New Forest identity rather than fragment it or absorb it into a broader urban typology that fails to reflect its character.

What is needed is a governance model that groups Totton, Marchwood, Hythe, Holbury, Fawley, Calshot and the surrounding settlements into a wider New Forest administrative entity, one that also recognises an intertwined relationship with the New Forest National Park Authority. This approach would best support coherent policy delivery, planning, and community engagement. This boundary should trace the social landscape as much as the physical one.

Where new boundaries are required, they should:

Align with functional geographies of daily life, such as school catchments, local healthcare access, and retail patterns, which typically orient inward toward the Waterside rather than outward to Southampton.

Respect ecological cohesion, particularly the "coast–forest" continuum which underpins the Waterside's environmental identity. Administrative fragmentation of this corridor risks inconsistent landscape management.

Ensure democratic representation that reflects place-based knowledge. Decision-makers must understand the nuances of Forest culture, environmental stewardship, and rural-urban interdependence.

Allow flexibility for collaboration across boundaries, particularly where shared infrastructure (like the A326 corridor or the delivery of the Freeport) requires regional solutions.

Any boundary reorganisation must also be accompanied by a shift in tone from extraction to stewardship. Governance here should not merely oversee services but cultivate a sense of guardianship: of community voice, of environmental balance, and of cultural narrative. Doing this well means redrawing boundaries not to divide but to respect what already holds the Waterside together.

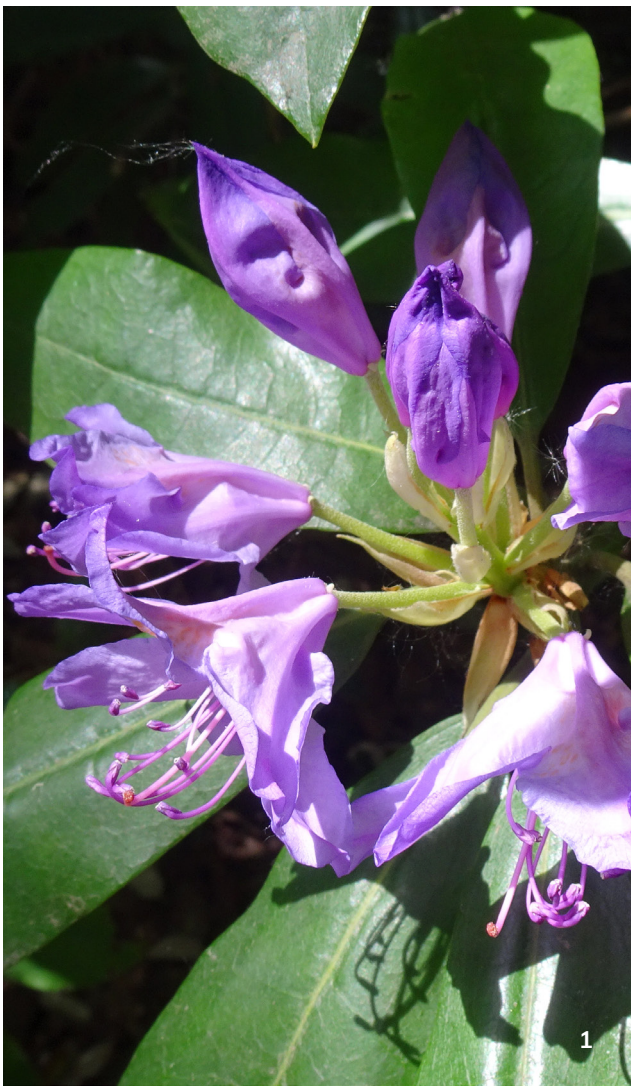
Image 3 Radar tower at Hythe Shipyard with the Itchen Bridge in the background

Image 4 Beach huts and shingle beach at Calshot

Functional Waterside

Image 1 Visitor centre at Lepe

Image 2 Boat storage Marchwood



Connecting to its Green Roots

Image 1 and 2 Woodland near Frost Lane Hythe

Image 3 Land behind the Church of St John the Apostle Marchwood

Image 4 Signpost at Ipley Cross with directions to the Waterside

Image 1 The Pilgrim Inn Marchwood

Image 2 Shops and community uses on Pylewell Road Hythe

Image 3 Flags flutter over Hythe High Street

Image 4 Beach huts and ice cream van in Calshot

Image 4 Painted door on the Attic Comedy Club in Totton

Image 5 Sculpture formed from a fallen tree in Marchwood

Creativity & Personality

Image 1 Jellyfish mural Calshot

Image 2 Bespoke utility cover and bicycle shadow at Hythe Marina

Image 3 Metalwork on the gates of St Mary's Church Eling

Image 3 Window details on Eling Tide Mill

Image 4 The train on Hythe Pier

Connecting to its History

Image 1 Calshot Castle

Image 2 All Saints Church Dibden

Industry & Nature

Image 1 Cargo ship as seen from Marchwood Beach

Image 2 Cruise ship and fishing boy

Image 3 The silver dome of the Marchwood ERF

Image 4 The ERF dome as viewed across the yard of Marchwood Yacht club

Image 3 Hythe Promenade

Image 4 Where road and rail intersect

Connecting to its Surroundings

Image 1 Hythe Pier

Image 2 England Coast Path signpost on Shore Road Hythe

APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES TO OTHER WORK

Report #1

The Historic and Environmental Context for Local Government Reorganisation in the New Forest and Waterside Area

This document provides an extensive evidence base to inform decisions relating to potential local government reorganisation (LGR) affecting the New Forest District and the Waterside area. It articulates the intertwined historical, geographical, ecological and socio-cultural characteristics that underpin the uniqueness of the area and argues strongly for coherent governance that reflects this distinctive identity. The material is framed around five interrelated themes: landscape, ecology, history, cultural identity, and function.

Landscape Character & Spatial Integration

The New Forest's landscape comprises a mosaic of ancient woodlands, unenclosed pasture, heathland, valley mires, and coastal salt marshes. The area's historic evolution through commoning and pastoral management has produced a visually and functionally distinctive landscape with a high degree of enclosure, irregular field patterns, and winding lanes. This extends into the Waterside, where many parts retain the character of "Ancient Forest Farmlands", especially between Dibden and Fawley.

A defining spatial attribute is the physical and perceptual continuity between the New Forest's core and its eastern edge along Southampton Water. Despite the presence of urbanised strips and industrial installations (e.g. the oil refinery and military port), remnants of the historic forest landscape extend into these areas, underscoring their embeddedness within the broader Forest geography. This relationship has been formally recognised through National Park boundary designations and further reinforced by landscape character assessments. The landscape setting is not simply visual; it informs ecological function, cultural practice, and policy delivery, demanding governance structures that uphold this continuity rather than segment it.

Ecology & Environmental Function

The New Forest is nationally and internationally important for its ecological diversity, with habitats ranging from ancient woodlands and heathlands to estuarine wetlands. Waterside settlements form a critical ecological corridor linking the New Forest to the Solent, the River Test, and the wider coastal environment. The transitions between terrestrial and marine ecosystems in this area support a wide range of protected species and form part of a strategic green infrastructure network.

The ecological significance of the Waterside lies not just in static designations but in dynamic ecological flows: animal movement, habitat connectivity, and climate adaptation. The land here provides crucial "Alternative Natural Recreation Greenspace" and ecological buffers that help manage recreational pressure on core habitat areas. Furthermore, the need for permeability and landscape-scale restoration is increasingly urgent given threats from climate change, habitat fragmentation and invasive species. The area has strong potential for local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) such as through the creation of wildlife corridors that link areas of high nature value, e.g. the Forest to the coast. This requires a joined-up governance that treats the Waterside as an extension – not an adjunct – of the New Forest's ecological matrix.

Historical Context & Governance Legacy

Historically, the Waterside has always been aligned with the New Forest, both administratively and functionally. Evidence from Domesday Book entries, medieval parish formations, manorial systems and historical cartography all demonstrate a shared governance lineage between settlements such as Eling, Fawley, Marchwood and Beaulieu and the wider New Forest territory. Conversely, there is little evidence of a meaningful historical association between these areas and Southampton.

The development of Totton, Hythe, Dibden and Fawley in the 19th and 20th centuries stemmed from pressures internal to the Forest, particularly housing shortages, and from national industrial and military developments (e.g. the construction of Fawley Refinery and Power Station). These growth dynamics did not sever the historical ties to the Forest but rather reinforced the role of the Waterside as a Forest hinterland, supporting settlement, employment and infrastructure without loss of identity.

The New Forest District Council and its predecessors have historically acted as a buffer and integrator between the Forest core and outlying areas, helping to manage sensitive planning issues while supporting sustainable development. This integrated approach has proven effective in protecting landscape character, enabling appropriate housing and employment growth, and delivering shared public services.

Cultural Identity & Place Attachment

A defining feature of the New Forest and its periphery is the enduring cultural identity tied to the land. For communities along the Waterside, this identity is not symbolic, it is lived. Many residents have direct or familial ties to the commoning system, forestry work, or farming traditions. Memories of open grazing in Totton, ponies in village centres, and education in "Forest schools" reinforce this heritage.

This lived identity persists even where formal perambulation boundaries (the legal Forest edge) do not extend. Commoning rights remain attached to properties outside the current boundary, with examples in Holbury, western Totton, and parts of Hythe. These rights are centuries old and form a critical part of the New Forest's governance and land-use system. Their continuation depends on the availability of back-up grazing land, much of which lies in the Waterside.

Attempts to administratively disconnect the Waterside from the rest of the New Forest risk eroding this shared identity, undermining local confidence in governance, and exacerbating social fragmentation. Cultural geography, when ignored in boundary-making, leads to functional and symbolic misalignment. The report emphasises that communities do not perceive themselves as an extension of Southampton but as integral to the wider Forest region.

Functional Role & Environmental Stewardship

The function of the New Forest ecosystem relies on the continuation of commoning, with freely roaming animals (e.g. ponies, cattle, pigs) shaping landscape structure, suppressing invasive vegetation, and creating the open woodland and heathland character for which the Forest is valued. The role of the Waterside in this system is essential. It provides back-up grazing land, seasonal relief areas, and supporting infrastructure for animal management.

In addition to its agricultural role, the area provides important recreational functions, contributes to biodiversity connectivity, and helps buffer development pressures away from sensitive core areas. The interplay between function and form is central to the argument for spatial integrity. Disaggregating governance structures could disrupt this delicate system, resulting in fragmented service delivery, inconsistent environmental regulation, and policy misalignment.

Implications for Local Government Reorganisation

The evidence base presented in this document firmly supports a governance model that maintains the unity of the Waterside and New Forest areas under a single administrative structure. Key principles emerging from the document include:

- Geographical coherence: Boundaries should reflect landscape, ecological and settlement continuity, rather than arbitrary lines or population modelling.
- Ecological integrity: Biodiversity management and nature recovery require consistent and place-aware governance.
- Cultural alignment: Identity and heritage should not be sacrificed for administrative convenience.
- Functional integration: Commoning, planning and service delivery work best when designed with a shared environmental and spatial logic.
- Historic precedent: Over centuries, political boundaries have evolved to reflect the realities of landscape and community. There is no historical justification for splitting the Waterside from the New Forest.

The strengthened "duty to further" the purposes of protected landscapes under the 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act places additional weight on governance bodies to protect and enhance the setting of National Parks. A realignment that weakens the Waterside–Forest connection would be difficult to reconcile with this duty.

Conclusion

This document provides a detailed, multi-dimensional rationale for keeping the Waterside within the same local government framework as the wider New Forest. Any proposal that seeks to divide them would run counter to the area's landscape character, ecological interdependence, cultural cohesion and functional needs. Moving forward, reorganisation efforts should build governance models that reflect this integrity, not bypass it.

APPENDIX 2: REFERENCES TO OTHER WORK

Report #2

A Vision for the Waterside: An Integrated Environmental Infrastructure Vision

This report presents a bold, collaborative strategy to guide sustainable growth across the Totton and Waterside area on the western shore of Southampton Water. Spearheaded by New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, and Hampshire County Council – alongside major stakeholders including ABP, Exxon Mobil, Solent Gateway, and Fawley Waterside – the vision seeks to deliver economic regeneration while enhancing the area's sensitive natural environment.

At the heart of this proposal is the understanding that the Waterside holds nationally significant infrastructure, including the Fawley Refinery (20% of UK capacity), Marchwood Military Port (a unique dual-use facility), the Port of Southampton's expansion landholdings, and the regeneration of the Fawley Power Station into a new sustainable marine-focused community. Alongside these economic assets, the area includes areas of international environmental importance such as the New Forest National Park and the Solent's protected coastal ecosystems.

The vision proposes the delivery of around 5,000 new homes and 18 hectares of employment land, underpinned by a package of key investments. These include enhancements to the A326 corridor to reduce congestion, improved multi-modal transport connectivity, and critical green infrastructure to ensure net environmental gains and community wellbeing.

The strategy embraces an "environmental infrastructure" approach, treating nature as a core asset, not a constraint. This involves creating a connected ecological network, improving water and land management to build resilience, enhancing green public spaces, and linking the coast to the Forest. The goal is to produce multifunctional landscapes that deliver health, biodiversity, accessibility, and climate adaptation benefits.

Economically, the proposals anticipate the creation of 6,700 new jobs, a £566 million increase in annual Gross Value Added (GVA), and the attraction of over £3 billion in private sector investment. The plan seeks to upskill local residents, create knowledge-intensive employment opportunities, and strengthen the region's maritime economy.

Social outcomes are central to the vision. These include housing diversity, improved access to education and training, healthier lifestyles through walkable neighbourhoods, and reuse of brownfield sites like the former power station. Enhancing Totton as the area's key urban centre is a priority, as is delivering a shift away from car dependence through better cycling, walking and public transport options.

Crucially, this is not simply a development plan but a shared spatial commitment to deliver growth in harmony with place. The Waterside is presented as a national testbed for how economic vitality can be achieved alongside ecological stewardship and community inclusion. The vision frames a future where people, environment and economy are integrated, not traded off, delivering not only local but nationally significant outcomes through coordinated investment and policy alignment.

APPENDIX 3: REFERENCES TO OTHER WORK

Report #3

The A326 (North) Large Local Major Scheme Information Pack

This report outlines Hampshire County Council's (HCC) proposal to upgrade a critical transport corridor between Totton and the Waterside. The A326 is the primary route connecting Waterside communities to Southampton, the M27, and national transport networks. However, the corridor currently suffers from chronic congestion, unreliable journey times, and poor provision for walking, cycling, and public transport. It also acts as a barrier between communities and the New Forest National Park, and widening the road will exacerbate the barrier effect, especially in places away from designated crossing points.

The scheme is a central component of the wider Waterside Transport Strategy and Action Plan, adopted in 2022, and aligns with the broader Waterside Vision, a strategic initiative supported by local authorities, developers, and stakeholders to unlock up to 6,700 new jobs, 5,000 new homes, and £3 billion in private investment while protecting the area's sensitive environment.

The proposal focuses on two key sections. The North Section, between Michigan Way and Cocklydown Lane, includes 2.5 km of new dual carriageway, upgraded junctions, four new pedestrian and cycle crossings, and two new bridges. The South Section, from the Marchwood Bypass to Staplewood Lane, delivers a new southbound lane with targeted widening, improved access for public transport, and safer cycling infrastructure. Specific design options are under consideration at junctions such as Staplewood Lane and Twiggs Lane, balancing traffic improvements with landscape and heritage protection.

The overarching objectives are to improve accessibility, reduce congestion, support economic development, and protect the New Forest. The scheme is designed to relieve pressure on smaller local roads and encourage traffic back onto the A326, allowing for broader investments in cycling and walking infrastructure throughout the Waterside.

Environmental sensitivity is a core theme. Designs favour western side widening to preserve mature tree belts and mitigate landscape, biodiversity, and noise impacts. A minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is required, and a full Environmental Statement will assess effects on woodland, watercourses, bat roosts, invertebrates, fish, and other protected species.

The scheme, estimated to cost over £100 million, is being progressed under the Department for Transport's Large Local Majors programme. HCC are due to submit a planning application and outline business case, with full construction targeted for late 2026. The preferred scheme is subject to further public engagement and design refinement.

Ultimately, the A326 North Scheme seeks to enable strategic growth across the Solent Freeport and Waterside regeneration zones while respecting the area's ecological and cultural integrity. It is framed not simply as a road upgrade, but as a catalyst for integrated transport, economic renewal, and landscape stewardship.

APPENDIX 4: FAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL CONSULTATION

As part of its own LGR consultation process, in May 2025 Fawley Parish Council presented two strategic options to the local community:

1. Option 1 proposed identifying the area as more rural, with a view to exploring merger opportunities with other rural councils.

2. Option 2 suggested identifying as more urban, initiating potential alignment with urban neighbours such as Southampton and Eastleigh.

To ensure local representation and data integrity, the survey was made available to residents through local channels for a limited 24-hour window. This brief availability was a deliberate measure to prevent the results being influenced by out-of-area submissions.

In total, 316 responses were received during the 24 hour period. The overwhelming majority of respondents – 307 individuals (97%) – expressed support for the rural identity and the corresponding strategic direction outlined in Option 1.

Only 9 respondents (3%) favoured the more urban alternative outlined in the second option.

This strong preference for the rural alignment provides a clear mandate for next steps, signalling widespread community support for a rural-based collaborative future.

FALCON INN

APPENDIX 5: QUOTES FROM THE WATERFRONT COMMUNITY

These quotes were recorded and transcribed from the empirical research phase and were used to inform the narrative in the main body of the report, and subsequent interpretations.

General Quotes

“The area’s really under pressure. It’s like we’ve outgrown the infrastructure that was never quite right to begin with.”

“We struggle terribly for doctors. You wait weeks just for an appointment – it’s not what it used to be.”

“The road system’s poor, and the buses are even worse. It’s like if you don’t drive, you’re stuck.”

“Honestly, I feel more connected to the Forest than to Southampton. That’s where our sense of place really lies.”

“Infrastructure is just… lacking. Whether it’s roads, healthcare, or even things like youth services, it feels like we’re always the afterthought.”

“With the Local Plan, people are worried – it’s all about the River Test and Southampton Water, but no one’s really asking us how it feels to live here. Until now.”

“There’s this gravitational pull towards Southampton – it’s where the jobs are, the services, everything really – but it’s not who we are.”

“It’s pleasant to live here because we’re so close to the Forest, but most of us commute into Southampton or even further. You have to.”

“Entertainment in the Forest used to be something special but it’s kind of vanished.”
“There’s just not much for people to do now.”

“Leisure? It’s seriously lacking. Our young people, especially as there’s just nowhere to go, nothing to get involved in.”

“People used to come to Hythe and make a day of it. It was part of the fun. Park up, jump on the ferry across to Southampton, grab a coffee, walk the streets a bit, then come back. We miss that. We miss the way the ferry made us feel connected.”

“I didn’t grow up here. I’m from Essex originally, but what drew me was the Forest. It’s that feeling you get when you’re close to something ancient, something that’s still breathing. That’s why I wanted to be here.”

“She was about to set sail from Southampton on a cruise, but first, she took the Hythe ferry to visit us and buy some wool for her journey, she had a knitting project to complete while on holiday. And she chose our most expensive wool, a special issue from New Zealand. As we’re chatting at the till, making the sale, I ask where her cruise is heading. She says, ‘Southampton to New Zealand.’ So she’ll be taking the wool all the way back again, via Southampton and Hythe. We are all so connected in a way.”

“I was born in Hythe Hospital back in 1950, and I’ve always liked it here. I was brought up on a smallholding, not a farm exactly, but enough land to grow things, keep animals, live close to nature. That semi-rural feel, you can still sense it around the area. It hasn’t got too big, not like some places. There’s space here, space to breathe.”

“I know somebody with two boys, eleven and thirteen, and she won’t let them out on their own in the parks in Southampton anymore. It’s not safe, there’s too much of that gang culture creeping in, and you never know what they’ll come across. The only time they really get out and about, run free like kids should, is when they visit here and take them into the Forest. Out there, they can be themselves. It’s the one place I know they’re safe.”

“Marchwood and Holbury feel more like parades, just little runs of shops, while Hythe and Fawley, they’ve got real centres, places where the community sort of comes together. You feel the difference when you walk through them.”

“I was born in Holbury – home birth, second child – at number 11, Westbourne Avenue. My mum still lives there. And you know, when it was mentioned Holbury being, ‘... the bit between the two Co-Ops’ that really stuck with me. It hit a nerve. It wasn’t always like that. That place used to have a heart.”

“Long before the bypass and the service road, there was just Long Lane. That was the main road. My grandparents lived at number 155, just next to where the big Co-Op stands now. And back then, instead of the store, there were Nissen huts left over from the war. That was our village centre. That was life.”

“Across the road, where the smaller Co-Op stands now, that used to be the Holbury Inn. My nan worked there during the war, 1943, ‘44, around the time of D-Day build-up. She also worked down at The Falcon in Fawley. The road would’ve been packed with trucks, jeeps, tanks and everything lined up for Normandy. And next door to her house? There was a big Mess Hall Tent for the troops.”

“There’s this story my family tells… the American soldiers loved my nan, and for her birthday one year, they managed to get the Catering Corps to bake her a cake. During rationing! It should’ve been this amazing thing, a real gift. But when she realised it had been baked by a Black soldier, she wouldn’t eat it. She thought it was somehow tainted. I still feel ashamed of that. I carry that. It’s a reminder of how far we’ve come, and how much further we need to go.”

“Holbury might look a bit rough around the edges these days, but it has stories. It had character. It wasn’t just bookended by two supermarkets. And sure, it could use some love, some new investment, but that shouldn’t mean erasing what makes it what it is. I don’t want to see it swallowed into Greater Southampton. It deserves better than that.”

“We are a virtual peninsula, the Forest on one side and water on the other.”

“The peninsula brings a sense of isolation, but it also brings quality of life. We haven’t got that hustle and bustle.”

“Totton isn’t like those smaller coastal places with the cul-de-sac effect, we’re properly connected. But there’s a worry about how that plays out, especially with things like the port getting bigger, more industrial estates, more lorries. It’s just a different situation for us.”

Transport, Connectivity & Infrastructure

“Biggest problem? You need a car. The bus service is appalling, and there’s no rail link – it’s isolating for people who don’t drive.”

“We’ve had £100,000 of Section 106 money earmarked to improve the footways, but it hasn’t been spent and there’s still no proper plan.”

“We probably see things a bit differently to the rest of the Waterside, because we’re Totton. We’ve got links to a wider area.”

“Walking in Marchwood’s a joke. Hythe and Dibden have pavements, but here? You’re dodging traffic.”

“Those 40 mph limits don’t make sense in built-up areas. It’s dangerous, especially for kids and older folks trying to cross. We need it to be slower.”

“Everything backs up. Just one bridge and one road in or out. You can widen the

A326 all you want, but the bottleneck doesn't go away."

"What we've heard is, when the parking charges came in here, people were already in their cars, so they just carried on through to Shirley. They can buy the same sort of stuff there, but park for free or a lot cheaper."

"Quality of life around here is measured in infrastructure and right now, it's not measuring up."

"We've got really good transport connections, easy access to the M27, straight to London, and the trains too."

"We used to catch the ferry over for football matches in Southampton."

"The buses into the Forest are practically non-existent. And with car parks being taken out to reduce the pressure, it's harder for all of us to get in. Which maybe is the point?"

Sense of Place, Identity & Attachment

"I didn't stay because it's perfect. I stayed because I love it. Forest on one side, water on the other – there's nowhere else like it."

"We've all got strong ties to the Forest. It's who we are. You can't just cut that off and expect people to accept it."

"When we needed to shop, it is always Lymington or Lyndhurst. Southampton? No, we wouldn't go there. That isn't our direction. Our direction is the Forest, not the city."

"We've got all sorts of people here. Some families have been here for generations, and they've always looked to the Forest. That connection has become more complicated over time. Then you've got the people who've moved here more recently, they're usually drawn here by the Forest too. So we've got that in common."

"We can often look toward Southampton for work, but emotionally, spiritually we belong to the Forest."

"You take Waterside out of the Forest and you're removing a whole identity. It's like taking Fremantle out of Southampton, it doesn't make sense."

"We're a complete unit down here. Trying to shift us into someone else's jurisdiction? That's not just bad planning, it's disrespectful."

"Bridges take you somewhere else, across rivers, over boundaries, they take you into a different world."

“Totton’s got the bridge; it connects us in a way the rest of the Waterside isn’t. But we’re not Southampton, no matter what the postcode says or what autofill on a form tries to tell you.”

Housing & Affordability

“There’s a massive housing issue – 2,000 families on the social housing waiting list, and we’re still talking about where to put them.”

“We know you can’t build right in the Forest, but you’ve got to be smart. Building on the edges of settlements make sense, if it’s done right.”

“We desperately need more affordable family housing. But keep it for local people. Don’t let the city swallow up the list.”

“When I grew up here, it wasn’t stressful to live. You had a job, a place, a sense of security. That’s disappearing.”

“A lot of people who’ve moved in over the last ten years, they’ve come for a more rural way of life.”

“Our countryside used to be the fields at Calmore. That’s gone now, lost to development.”

“Totton had about 10,000 people in the 1940s, now it’s up to 30,000. It started with Totton and Eling, then from Rushington grew, and it’s just carried on growing from there.”

“People who couldn’t afford to live in Romsey or Southampton ended up in Totton. And we’ve got commoners and Romany gypsies too, who’ve been priced out of the Forest.”

Youth & Community Life

“There used to be so many clubs, youth centres, places to go but now, teenagers are left hanging around cafés or stuck indoors.”

“Our older teens, kids in their early 20s, they’re the ones that are struggling. There’s no night-life, no social spaces, nothing to make them feel they belong.”

“Sure Start was a huge loss, and local families really felt that one. You can’t remove these lifelines and not expect consequences.”

“We’ve got lovely parks, beaches, even a community cinema now but the cycle tracks don’t link up, and it all feels a bit patchy.”

“When the pub goes, the cohesion goes with it. These places aren’t just for a drinking. They’re the heart of the community.”

“We used to have a theatre in Hythe, but it got knocked down. There’s a plan to bring one back, but we’ve lost more than we’ve gained.”

“There’s not a huge amount of arts and culture across the Waterside, but it’s coming, I can feel it’s on the way.”

“Most of the culture happens in Southampton. We need more here, to serve the Forest. But there’s a risk that if we get absorbed into Southampton, all the funding will go straight there, not here. It’ll be about hierarchies, priorities.”

“Young people head into Southampton because there’s no night-life here, or anywhere along the Waterside really. We do have pubs and restaurants though, and a meal out in the Forest is actually pretty good these days.”

Governance, Decision-Making & Representation

“Southampton’s close, and so’s BCP, but a lot of people don’t actually work in Southampton. They go to Winchester and BCP as well. So it’s not all about Southampton. A lot of people here don’t have much to do with it.”

“We’ve always had a strong relationship with the Forest, but also with Southampton. Both matter to us. That said, even though the city’s useful, it’s really all about the New Forest for us.”

“To be honest, I don’t see what benefit we get from NFDC anymore. I’ve got an open mind about a new local government role.”

“The city-based councils don’t get what makes us tick. They don’t live here so they can’t possibly understand the Forest culture.”

“There’s been loads of consultations, but sometimes it feels like they’re asking 50 questions without getting to the one that really matters.”

“If Southampton ran this area, they’d flatten the nuance. We’re not just ‘on the edge’ – we’re our own place with our own values.”

Work & Local Economy

“Marchwood might be a Freeport, but no one’s really telling us how that’s going to benefit local people. Jobs haven’t materialised, and the community’s still waiting.”

“We’ve only had 16 new jobs in 8 years. That’s not regeneration, that’s stagnation.”

“Far as I’ve heard, there’s only been one new business from the Freeport, and that’s in Havant. It hasn’t benefitted us here. This area runs on small businesses, start-ups, freelancers, things that can grow if given the chance. Freeport and

ABP are focused on big business and big growth, and if it's not managed well, it could damage what we already have. If the boundary moves, that relationship's not in our favour. It doesn't feel like the decision-making includes us."

"It's the skilled jobs we need. People want to work, but they can't just settle for anything. And those kinds of roles aren't coming here."

"There's so many small businesses trying to make it work – independent shops, takeaways, local services – it's that spirit that keeps this place alive."

"Esso used to really invest in the area. It wasn't just handing out grants, it was part of the community. That's changed."

"You can hear the docks more clearly here. You can actually tell what the weather's going to be like by how the sound carries."

"There's big potential for green jobs here, we've got so many habitats. This place could become a training ground for eco-jobs, like the Biosphere over on the Isle of Wight."

Local Environment & Land Connection

"You've got this incredible wildlife along the waterfronts – seagrass beds, birds, all kinds of species – but we're not making the most of it."

"The Forest isn't just a backdrop. It's part of our identity. The commoners, the grazing, the traditions. It's all stitched into how we live."

"The verderers and commoners have so much knowledge, but they don't have a platform. It's like they're invisible to the decision-makers."

"You can't build housing in the heart of the Forest, and rightly so but this means that there's pressure creeping in around the edges, and it has to be done carefully."

"Where the Forest meets the sea – that's what makes this place special. You change that balance, and you lose what makes people stay."

"Some families have commoners' rights, but they can't actually use them anymore because access is more restricted."

"Our relationship with the National Park is difficult. It's not really about countryside access anymore. It's more like a nature reserve now, and that shift has made it a difficult space for us."

Sports & The Water

“You get lads coming down from all over, Marchwood, even as far as Fordingbridge, because Fawley Rugby Club, and the whole Waterside really, has this inclusive feel. It’s not just about how well you play; it’s about being welcomed, being part of something. That’s why they choose to be here.”

“Calshot’s always been more than just a centre, it’s where my kids learnt to kayak, where I first got on a windsurf”

“The thing about this community is, we don’t just watch sport, we live it. From early-morning paddle-boarders to indoor climbers, there’s something going on every day. It’s part of the way of life around here.”

“I still remember the first time I stood in the centre of the velodrome at Calshot. And then that banked wood under your wheels, it’s addictive. And knowing it’s right here, in our corner of Hampshire? That’s something special.”

“For a place that can feel so wild and coastal, it’s amazing how much structure and opportunity there is. Calshot offers possibility. You see kids turn into confident young adults out there on the water.”

“What I love is the mix. One moment someone’s learning to boulder indoors, and outside there’s a group heading off in sea kayaks. There are also lots of organised team sports.

“This isn’t a place where you have to be elite. You can be just starting out or working towards something big. Sport here doesn’t judge”

“Oh, the sporting rivalry goes way beyond just the pitch. I’m from Holbury, and I tell you what, back in the day I daren’t set foot in Hythe on match days. It’s all in good fun… mostly!”

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APPENDIX 2

Key characteristics of New Forest Waterside

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Executive Summary

i. The key characteristics of New Forest Waterside can be grouped into 5 key areas, namely:

- History
- Function and commoning
- Cultural Identity
- Landscape; and
- Ecology

ii. Each of which are summarised below with further information provided in the main body of the report. Further historical background is included in the appendix.

History

iii. The New Forest and its connection to the Waterside have a history dating back millennia. Even before its proclamation as a royal hunting ground by William the Conqueror, it had an established system of governance all confirming historic administrations within the New Forest and northwards towards Romsey, but none into Southampton. Historic drovers' routes still show links between the Forest and the Waterside.

iv. More recent development across the Waterside was a response to demand for housing not capable of being met within the core New Forest and homes provided to serve Fawley Oil Refinery and Power Station and the ports at Marchwood and Hythe.

Function and commoning

v. The historic Forest landscape of close-cropped verges, lawns and commons is in part maintained by free-roaming Commoners' animals (including the iconic ponies). The grazing animals suppress brambles, gorse and other coarse vegetation, thereby creating the landscape of open lawns and trees. Backup grazing land outside of the Forest is important to Commoners to accommodate depastured animals when necessary. The cost of land is often prohibitive and a serious constraint to the functional operation of commoning.

Cultural Identity

vi. For residents across the New Forest, both within the National Park and those in the wider district, there is a strong shared cultural identity.

vii. People living in Totton, Waterside and Ringwood moved there as they become unable to obtain housing in the central core of the New Forest. Many residents are from commoning families or work in associated trades, such as farming or forestry, with historic and familial links to the Forest. They have living memories of an indelible link with the Forest, including growing-up on farms in the Forest, education in Forest schools, or regularly seeing ponies grazing in the centres of Totton, Marchwood, Hythe and Fawley.

Landscape

viii. The New Forest is a mixture of ancient woodland, heathland, rivers and mires, connected to a coastline of mudflats and saltmarshes. It has been shaped by man and by the grazing of animals over many hundreds of years. The Waterside landscape retains a strong sense of enclosure created by ancient woodlands and a network of winding, leafy lanes and drove roads linking small areas of remnant wayside common. In combination, these create a feeling of being 'in the Forest[1]'.

Ecology

ix. There are valuable green infrastructure links connecting the Waterside and the Forest. The habitats and associated species assemblages are under pressure from climate change, recreation, fragmentation, development, new diseases and invasive species. It is essential to build resilience and ensure permeability through the landscape to enable effective adaptation to these threats. Substantial parts of the district, including its coastline, are covered by statutory national, European and international designations[2]. In addition, there are many locally designated sites and priority habitats and species, not all of which will be within designated sites.

[1] This inter-relationship with the rest of the New Forest was recognised in the formal designation of parts of the Waterside within the National Park as outlined in the Report of the Inquiry published Dec 2003. Further more recent studies by both the National Park Authority and the District Council confirm that key routes remain between Southampton Water and the New Forest (both inside and outside of NP) which should be strengthened as Green Infrastructure/links

[2] Find protected areas of countryside - GOV.UK

x. Effective and joined-up management and decision-making, particularly in relation to infrastructure, is essential to enable landscape scale nature recovery, linking the New Forest biodiversity 'hotspot' out into the wider countryside. Green links to the Waterside, and the transitions of habitats must be protected to ensure the New Forest retains its value.

Introduction

1. This briefing note outlines the significance of the Waterside to the wider New Forest. It provides evidence-based context for assessing the implications of proposed local government reorganisation (LGR), specifically the potential separation of the Waterside from the rest of New Forest District.

History and organisation

2. The New Forest has a history dating back millennia, including its relationship to the Waterside. Even before its formation as a royal hunting ground it had an established manorial system with power vested in landowners, with the subsequent Hundreds system of governance and then Ecclesiastical Parishes all confirming historic administrations within the New Forest and northwards towards Romsey, but none into Southampton.
3. Key drovers' routes within the New Forest towards Southampton Water (at Bury Farm) and Romsey (through Wade Hill Drove) are still identifiable, reflecting again the history of the New Forest as having important connections to the coast and to Romsey and Winchester. There is little evidence of any substantive relationship to Southampton during these times.
4. The Domesday Book (1086) first refers to the area as the New Forest (Nova Foresta) and it is thought the royal Forest was created, possibly about 1079 by William I, 'The Conqueror' (1066-1087). There was already an established manorial system here from the late Saxon period (See Appendix).
5. Under William I, as under the English kings, vills were grouped together into 'hundreds'. Redbridge Hundred, which includes the northern Waterside, extended to include Romsey. Southampton is in Waltham Hundred. See Speed's Map of 1611 (figure 1).

Figure 1 Speed's map of 1611 showing the Waterside Hundred of Redbridge stretching northwards to include Romsey, but excluding Southampton.

6. The ecclesiastical parish boundaries here date from the 14th century, the earliest and largest is that of Eling (1537) which is contiguous with Romsey Parish (1569) (figures 2 and 3).

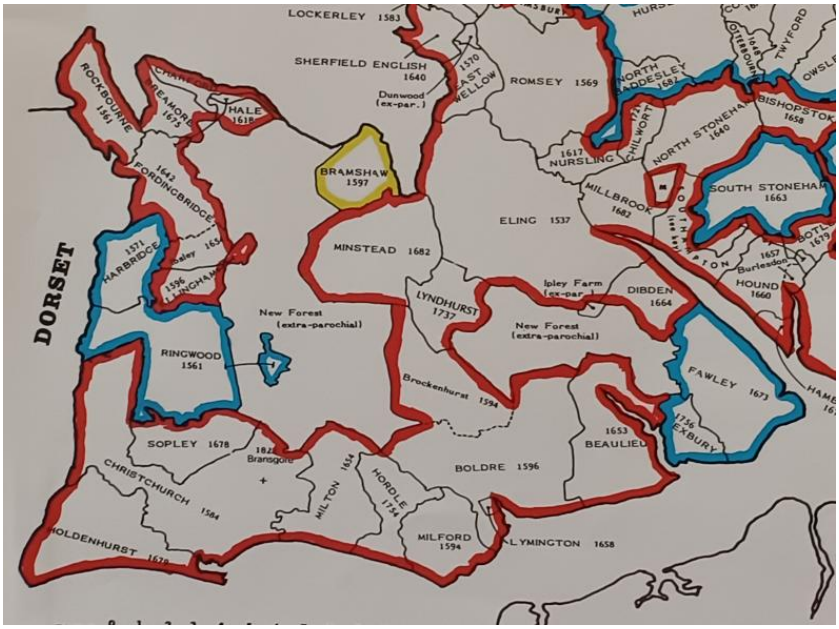

Figure 2 Ecclesiastical parishes in Hampshire, with date of commencement of parish registers. Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies 2000. (Bramshaw; Exbury; Fawley; Harbridge and; Ringwood were Peculiars)

Figure 3 1 Taylor 1759 Map with history boundary of Eling Parish overlaid.

7. The Poor Law Unions of 1834 developed out of the Parish System and formed the basis of the boundaries of the Sanitary Districts, which in turn formed the basis for the Rural and Urban Districts established under the 1894 Local Government Act (figure 4).

Figure 4 1888 Poor Law Union Map – Showing Southampton as part of Stoneham Union which included Eastleigh.

8. The 1927 Poor Law Union Map shows historic Poor Law arrangements for Southampton were still within the Stoneham Union and there were no historic shared organisational relationships with the New Forest area. Poor Law Unions were abolished under the 1929 Local Government Act with responsibilities passed to county councils.

9. New Forest Rural District Council (NFRDC) was formed in 1894 and included the Waterside parishes of Dibden, Eling, Fawley and Marchwood. NFRDC was dissolved in 1974, when responsibilities transferred to New Forest District Council which included Ringwood and Fordingbridge Rural District Councils.
10. The 1964 New Forest Act introduced the current perambulation (boundary) notably introducing cattle-grids and fencing, to prevent traffic accidents and property damage from animals freely strayed off the Forest into the surrounding land. The New Forest became a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1971 and was granted special status as the New Forest Heritage Area in 1985. In 2005, the central core of the New Forest was designated a National Park.

Function and commoning

11. The New Forest National Park remains one of the few places in England where the ancient tradition of commoning is still widely practise, directly contributing to the landscape character of the New Forest. Commoning is a way of life with a long history in the New Forest with rights confirmed by statute in 1698. It consists of using the resources of the Forest for stock grazing and therefore reduces the amount of land required to practise subsistence farming, often undertaken with part-time working in woodland industries. Backup grazing land outside of the New Forest is vitally important for Commoners, providing support for livestock off the open Forest. The cost of land is often prohibitive and a serious constraint to functional operation of Commoning. In recent years development pressure for land outside the National Park has reduced the amount of back-up grazing land available for commoning.
12. The function of the Forest is in part helped by the role of free-roaming Commoners' stock animals (donkeys, mules, ponies, cattle, pigs and sheep). The grazing animals help suppress brambles, gorse and other coarse vegetation, thereby creating the landscape of open lawns and trees. Commoners rights[3] are attached to land or property (rather than an individual) and commoning rights extend to properties outside of the Forest perambulation, notably into areas of the Waterside.
13. The ancient landscape, created by this grazing, creates a common visual characteristic, along the Forest settlements' roadsides of close-cropped verges, lawns and commons which run through some of some of the Forest settlements. The district, outside the National Park perambulation, functions as an economic hinterland and has long supported employment and work associated with the land.
14. Alongside this, backup grazing land outside of the open Forest is important to Commoners to accommodate winter grazing, animal welfare and forage production when necessary. The cost of such land, in reasonable proximity to the open Forest, is often very high and a significant constraint to functional operation of Commoning. Waterside parishes offer more accessible and extensive grazing land than that available within the National Park, making

[3] Commoning rights were introduced in the Chart of the Forest 1225 Charter of the Forest,1225 - The National Archives

them indispensable to the viability of communing, particularly for the eastern parts of the New Forest.

15. Backup-grazing needs to be planned for and managed on the hinterland with very real connections to the perambulation. Even now that connection is in danger of getting forgotten in important decisions about land use and is seriously under pressure from development. Splitting the Waterside from the New Forest would fragment oversight, risking weakening protections for, and the understanding of, grazing land.
16. Historically there has been no published map of where backup grazing land is, which makes it difficult to protect. The dependency of the New Forest on these parishes for back-up grazing to support commoning is supported by evidence presented in a report published by the New Forest Association in June 2025 titled Commoners' back-up grazing in the New Forest: extent and distribution https://newforestassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Final_back-up_land_report.pdf).
17. Eligibility for commoning rights also exists in western Totton (built out for residential development in the 1980s) and potentially a number of other areas (the rights run with certain land parcels and therefore a field built on doesn't extinguish the rights).
18. This unusual governance is a factor that has largely shaped and preserved the present form of the landscape in and around the National Park area. Historic trackways and drovers' tracks further evidence these important connections, for example, at Bury Farm. This is one of the large farms described as typical in the landscape and historic settlement and farmstead assessments with Commoners' Rights. The Tithe map shows Bury Farm on the edge of Southampton Water with large tracts of relatively open ground to the west and this route is still visible on a modern OS map (figure 5).

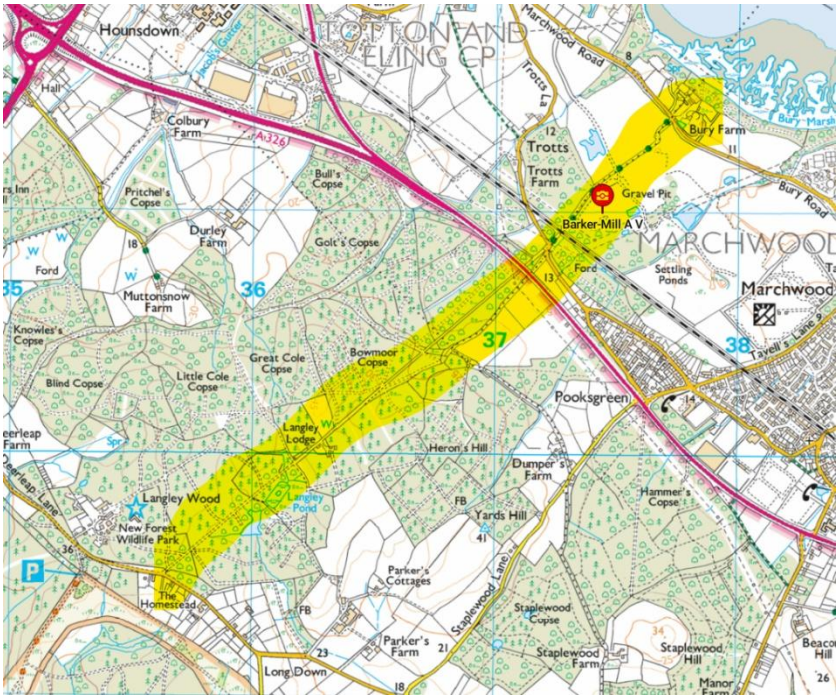

Figure 5 Historic droving link between the Forest and Waterside at Bury Farm.

19. A further historic trackway which evidences historic land uses and connections is the Wade Hill Drove, leading from Moorcourt, the site of the southernmost holding of Romsey Abbey, to common grazing land in the Forest (figure 6).

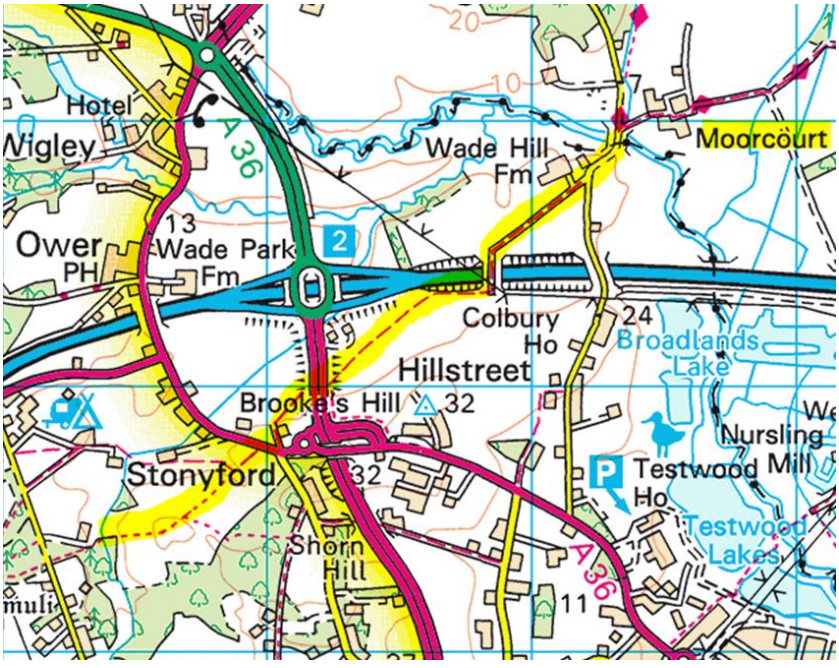

Figure 6 The route of Wade Hill Drove leading from the southernmost holding of Romsey Abbey into the Forest

20. Historic Commoners' Right of Pasture, Pannage etc were regularised in 1851. Commoners' Rights were then recorded in the 'Atlas.'. Commoners were required to re-register at Winchester Court in 1949. The 1964 New Forest Act

introduced the current perambulation (boundary) notably introducing cattle-grids and fencing, to prevent traffic accidents and property damage from animals freely strayed off the Forest into the surrounding land. Prior to this Denny Lodge Walk (see figure 7 below) connected to the western waterfront.

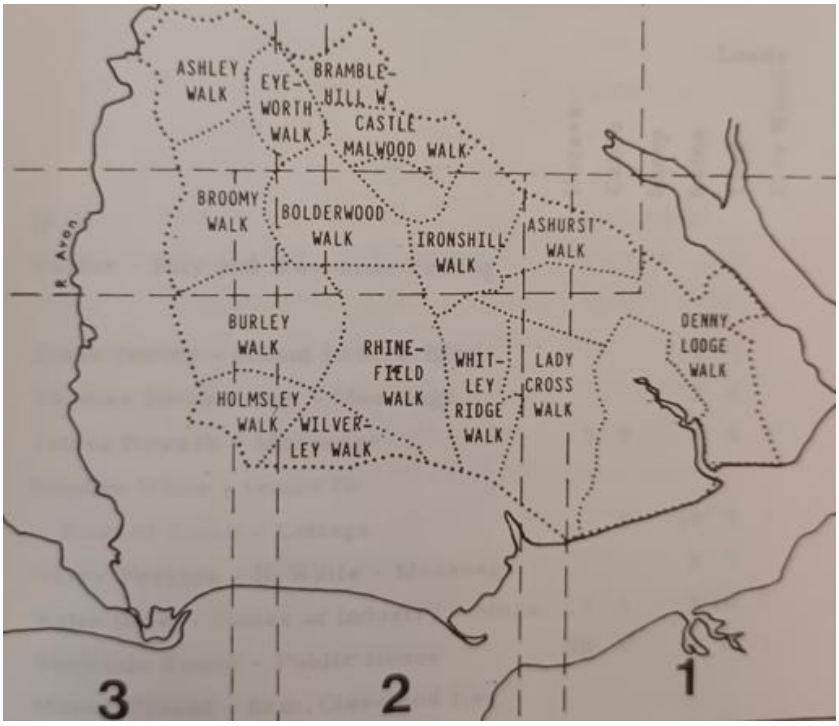

Figure 7 2 Administrative 'Walks' in the New Forest Cook, H.F. (2018). New Forest : the forging of a landscape. Oxford ; Havertown, Pa: Windgather Press, An Imprint Of Oxbow Books

21. These walks were preceded by nine Bailiwicks (figure 8), an administrative and jurisdictional area overseen by bailiffs working alongside verderers and foresters

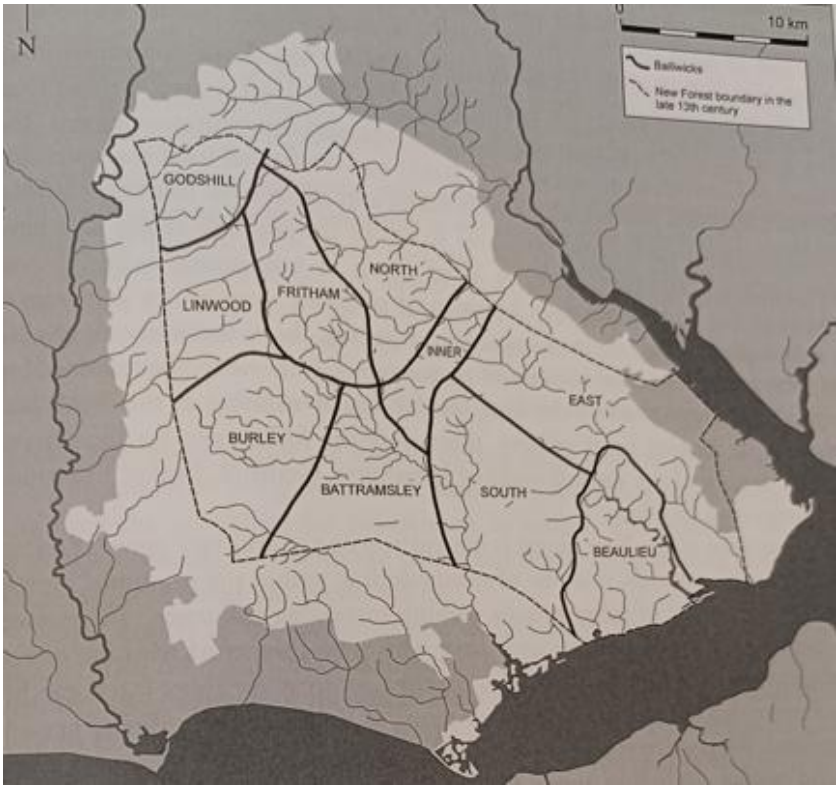

Figure 83 Bailiwicks in the New Forest in the late 13th century Cook, H.F. (2018). New Forest : the forging of a landscape. Oxford ; Havertown, Pa: Windgather Press, An Imprint Of Oxbow Books.

22. The commoning way of life has been under pressure in more recent times but residents today, still remember when it was possible to graze their stock right to the Waterside as this recent recollection testifies:

> I had a chat with an older commoner yesterday, he was telling me there was a pound in Brokenford Lane, Totton, which is quite central location, the ponies were herded to this pound when Totton was open Forest. The marshes at Eling were grazed and two landowners sold out for building, which was required to house the families of the Forest people. Marchwood was also open Forest. The same thing happened here.

Cultural identity

23. For residents across the New Forest, both within the National Park and those in the wider district, there is a strong cultural identity of 'living in the New Forest'.
24. People of the New Forest living in Totton, Waterside and Ringwood moved there as they become unable to build or acquire properties in the central core of the New Forest. They live there as part of that 'place' that was delivered in the 11th century. Many are from commoning families, or people who work in forestry or farming within the Forest. There continues to be a strong emotional connection with the Forest and living memories of an indelible link, including growing up on farms in the Forest, education in Forest schools, regularly seeing ponies grazing in Waterside settlements of Totton, Marchwood, Hythe and Fawley.
25. Historic uses and activities based upon Forest ways of life have shaped the landscape but also the 'sense of place' including, parish church connections (borne out of the historic parish boundaries), backup grazing, markets and social and cultural activities such as the New Forest Show, held annually since 1920.
26. The New Forest and its environs, with some exceptions, is a place of scattered rather than nucleated development this makes it particularly sensitive to large scale infill development.
27. A large portion of the Waterside was originally in one ownership, forming part of the Cadland Estate (dating back to c. 1772), stretching from Fawley in the south to Hythe pier in the north. in 1947 1,500 acres on Southampton Water were compulsorily purchased by the government to create the Fawley Power Station and Fawley Oil Refinery which provides much-needed employment in the area.
28. The industrial presence of the Fawley Oil Refinery plays a vital role in supporting the New Forest community by providing stable employment opportunities and contributing to the region's economic resilience. In 2021 they launched a new initiative helping to address the issue of expensive or hard to find backup grazing. ExxonMobil Fawley, which owns land on the edge of the New Forest, is renting some of its untenanted grazing land to young commoners at a reduced rate.

29. In 2021 Simon Downing, ExxonMobil Fawley Refinery Manager, said:

> This year marks 100 years of a refinery on this site and is the 70th anniversary of the opening of the new Esso refinery. As far back as 1951 the commitment to supporting the local community and to being a good neighbour has been a priority for Fawley. That has not altered over the last 70 years and I can't think of a more appropriate way of celebrating this special anniversary than by supporting a centuries-old New Forest tradition right on our doorstep."

Landscape

30. As part of its responsibilities under key environmental frameworks, Natural England maintains profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These areas are defined by shared natural features rather than administrative boundaries (figure 9).

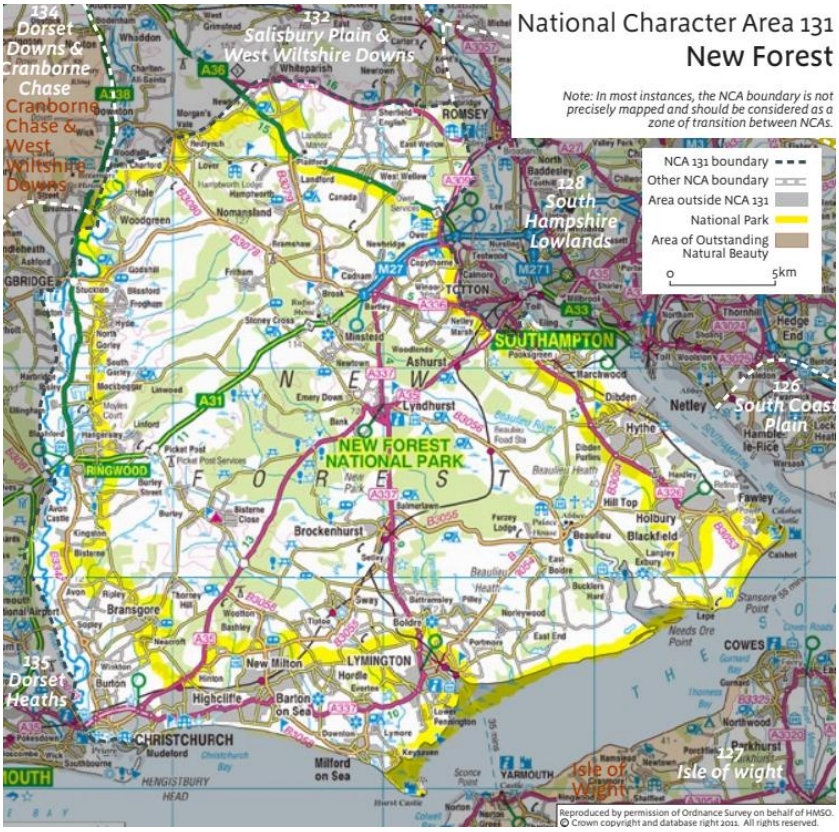

Figure 9 National Character Area 131: New Forest extends eastwards from the National Park, to the Waterside.

31. NCA profiles provide guidance to communities and stakeholders on managing landscapes sustainably. They support conservation efforts, inform Nature Improvement Areas, and promote collaboration through Local Nature Partnerships.
32. The key relevant characteristics of the New Forest NCA as described include:

- *The 'Waterside' an urbanised and industrialised strip east of the A326 trunk road, including Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden, Fawley oil refinery and power station, and the Southampton Water/Test Estuary shoreline of salt marsh and mudflats. Remnants of the Forest stretch through the urbanised area to the coast and have been protected from development as 'strategic' or 'local' gaps*

33. At a more local level the New Forest District Council Landscape Character Assessment (NFDCLCA) (2000) provides a more detailed study of the landscape.
34. Although developed in parts, the coastline has a predominantly natural edge along Southampton Water which is important to the setting of the New Forest backdrop when viewed from the east (figure 10).

Figure 10 The northern edge of Southampton Water showing the predominantly rural edge in contrast with the industrial character of the southern side.

35. The coastal edge between the Waterside settlements is relatively remote and inaccessible, with a mixture of Waterside industry and reclaimed land. It is often open in character, contrasting with inland areas containing remnant ancient enclosures, treed hedges, small ancient woodlands, lanes, and footpaths leading to the open Forest.
36. As described in the New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment, the underlying landscape type from Totton south to Fawley is 'Ancient Forest Farmlands', which extends up to the coastal fringe landscape type (along the estuary) to the east and to the north the valley floor of the River Test. Ancient Forest Farmlands is a farmed Forest landscape with a strong sense of enclosure and an ancient irregular enclosure pattern. Ancient woodlands are a feature of the landscape and create a feeling of being 'in the Forest'. A network of winding

leafy lanes and drove roads with roadside oaks and wide verges, links small areas of remnant wayside common.

37. The 1942 Land Utilisation survey (below) shows a clear distinction in pattern of usage between the north-east and south-west of Southampton Water. Land to the south-west, in the New Forest Waterside is predominantly given over to meadowland and permanent grass, in comparison with urban and arable uses on the north-eastern side of the Water (figure 11).

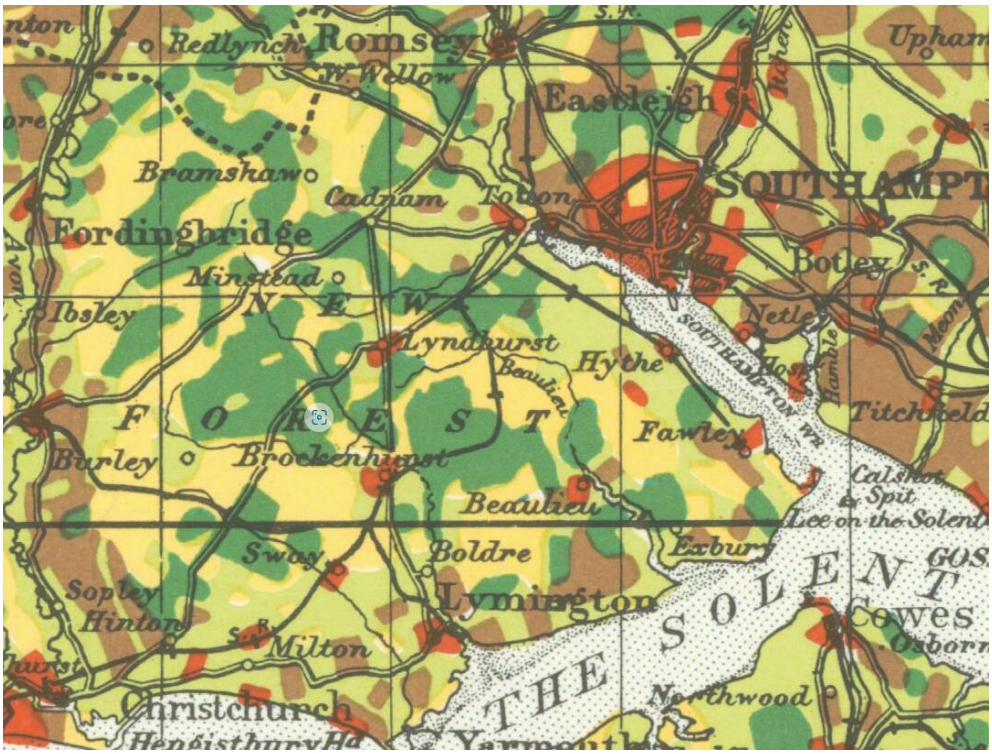

Figure 11 The 1942 Land Utilisation Survey showing different land use on north and south side of Southampton Water

38. Landscape character has evolved through combinations of all the above, to form what is valued in the wider New Forest.

39. Distinct areas shaped by historical farming practices are linked not only through their shared agricultural heritage within the National Park, but also by common features such as geology, soil types, climate, watersheds, and interconnected ecosystems. Together, these elements form a landscape that extends beyond the boundaries of the National Park, contributing to a broader ecological and cultural 'Place'.

New Forest National Park

40. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), significant weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks, the Broads, and National Landscapes. Development within these designated areas must be carefully limited in scale and extent.
41. The December 2024 revision to the NPPF introduces a strengthened requirement to ensure that proposals within the setting of protected landscapes must be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on their character and significance.
42. This principle is not new. A statutory duty already exists for all relevant authorities to consider the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, including in areas outside the formal boundaries of designated landscapes. This duty originates from the Environment Act 1995 and was extended to National Parks under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
43. New Forest District forms part of the setting of the New Forest National Park. Section 245 of the 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) amended the duty on relevant authorities, required in the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act), in respect of their functions which affect land and the setting of land in National Parks and protected landscapes.
44. Under the strengthened duty, which came into force on 26 December 2023, relevant authorities are required to “seek to further” the statutory purposes of protected landscapes, replacing the previous legal duty on them to merely ‘have regard to’ such purposes.
45. In planning terms, the “setting” refers to the surroundings in which a heritage asset or landscape is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may evolve over time. Elements within a setting may positively or negatively influence the significance of the asset, affect its appreciation, or have a neutral impact.
46. The Green Halo Partnership was established by New Forest National Park to bring together businesses, universities, and charities and to work together to ensure the world class environment in and around the New Forest National Park flourishes as an integral part of our wider area’s thriving economy and society. The New Forest is one of Europe’s best sanctuaries for nature, situated in the busy south-east of England and close to the significant urban areas of Southampton, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole and Salisbury. Beyond the National Park’s boundaries, from Cranborne Chase to Purbeck, the South Downs

to the Solent, much of this part of southern England is internationally valued because of the quality and quantity of the natural environment.

47. The Green Halo Partnership was born in the New Forest National Park, but the partnership seeks to identify, value, protect and improve those services across a much wider geography, including land and habitats around the National Park. A large proportion of this land lies within New Forest District and as such it has a key role to play in protecting the National Park and its setting.
48. The Green Halo Partnership wants to ensure that the natural environment is seen as an integral part of how people work and live. By recognising the contribution the natural environment makes to the local economy and society, the Partnership wants to ensure that both the National Park and its surroundings work to protect and improve that environment.
49. The character of the Forest is inseparable from its setting, it demands stewardship rooted in collaboration between professionals and community representatives who hold a genuine stake in its future and share ownership of the decisions that shape it. What the Forest does not need is to be fragmented or treated as a peripheral extension of another place—especially one whose history and landscape are fundamentally distinct. Subjecting it to external pressures and priorities risks eroding its identity and undermining the very qualities that make the National Park unique and special.

Ecology

50. Green corridors connecting the Waterside, the Solent, and the River Avon are vital. These transitional habitats play a key role in preserving the ecological integrity of the New Forest and must be cared for as a distinct and interconnected landscape. Separating the Forest from its coastline would be detrimental to ecology, activity and a sense of where one is.
51. The important Waterside and hinterland to the Forest have existing strong green infrastructure and habitat connections and vital Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace is provided within them. Significant opportunities exist to further enhance these links via the local nature recovery strategy delivered in part via biodiversity net gain.
52. There are existing valuable green infrastructure links from and between Waterside settlements to the Forest, and further initiatives are in progress to

improve access to nature, connectivity and these are informed by a recent review of open spaces.

53. Our habitats and associated species assemblages are under pressure from climate change, recreation pressure, fragmentation, new diseases and invasive species. It is essential to build resilience and ensure permeability through the landscape to enable effective adaptation to change. Effective and joined-up management and decision-making, particularly in relation to infrastructure, is essential to enable landscape scale nature recovery, enhancing the New Forest biodiversity 'hotspot' and taking opportunities to expand this into the wider countryside.

54. Substantial parts of the district, including its coastline, are covered by statutory national, European and international designations[4] nature conservation designations. Outside these, there are many locally designated sites and priority habitats and species, not all of which will be within designated sites.

55. Protecting and enhancing our natural environment in the area is fundamental to delivering a sustainable development strategy for the wider area. The natural environment is an essential and precious asset that underpins our wellbeing and prosperity. The natural environment is at the core of the approach to the spatial strategy in the current Local Plan and is expected to be a key element of our emerging Local Plan Review. There are legislative requirements to ensure that protected habitats are not harmed.

[4] Find protected areas of countryside - GOV.UK

Appendix - Background information

Historic Organisational and Legislative Separation from Southampton

Figure 12 4 Presumed Anglo-Saxon Manors at Domesday within the New Forest Cook, H.F. (2018). New Forest : the forging of a landscape. Oxford ; Havertown, Pa: Windgather Press, An Imprint Of Oxbow Books.

a. The history of association of Fawley and Exbury within Bishops Waltham Hundred appears limited. At the time of Domesday the manors of Fawley, Langley, Hardley, Stone and Stanswood are recorded as being in Redbridge Hundred (i.e. the same as Eling (and all the rest of the Waterside)) (figure 12).
b. The initial association of Fawley with Bishops Waltham appears to date from an attempt to enlarge the Hundred in 1284 when it was determined that the men of the Bishop of Winchester's holdings in Bitterne, Fawley, Ower, and Stoneham should attend hundred court at Bishops Waltham. However, there is no evidence that the inhabitants of Fawley ever attended hundred court at Bishops Waltham. Indeed, in 1316 Holbury, Hardley, Butsash and Langley (all Fawley Parish) were recorded as being attached to the New Forest Hundred as was Exbury and Lepe. Fawley and Exbury continued to be absent from any of the court rolls up to the

final extant court roll of 1785. However by 1831 the manors of Fawley and Exbury had been formerly incorporated in the Bishops Waltham hundred. Although by this point the role of the hundred court appears largely redundant.

c. The evidence would suggest that any legal connection between Bishops Waltham and the Waterside parishes is very slight.

d. The Speed Map 1611 (figure 13) showing New Forest Hundred stretching from Fritham and Burley in the north and west to Waterside and Calshot. Eling Parish was part of the Redbridge Hundred which, with exception of Redbridge included the Lower Test Valley and Romsey. Southampton is in Waltham Hundred. The pattern of Hundreds is as shown on the Norden Map of 1595.

Figure 13 Speed's map of 1611 showing the waterside hundred of Redbridge stretching northwards to include Romsey, but excluding Southampton.

e. A large portion of the Waterside was originally in one ownership, forming part of the Cadland Estate (dating back to c. 1772), stretching from Fawley in the south to Hythe pier in the north and including grounds by Capability Brown (figure 14). Land was sold off around Hythe in 1895 and then in 1947 1,500 acres on Southampton Water were compulsorily purchased by the

government to create the Fawley Power station and Oil Refinery.

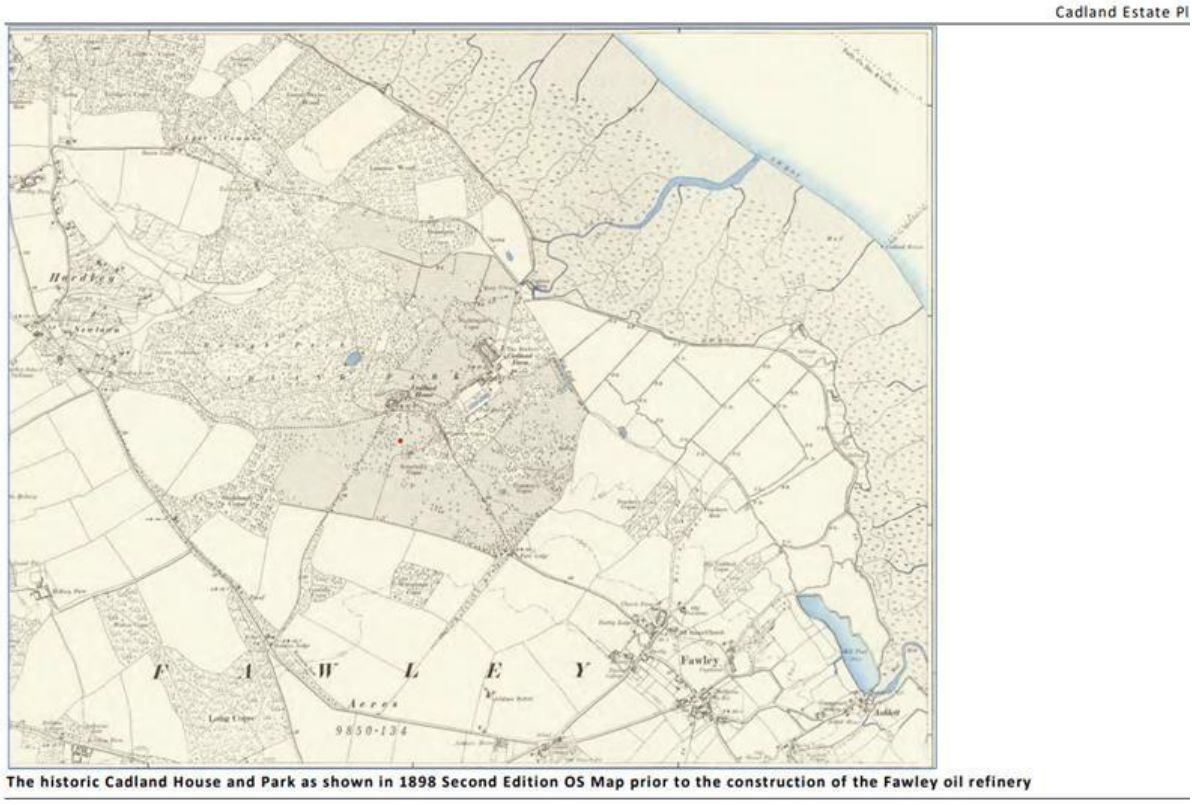

Figure 514 A picture of the Cadland Estate - which stretched to Hythe pier.

f. The Victoria County History (VCH) is one of the longest-running historical research projects in the world, established in 1899 and originally dedicated to Queen Victoria. Its aim is to produce authoritative, encyclopaedic histories of every county in England, covering topics from early archaeology to modern-day developments. The VCH serves as a vital resource for understanding England's local history and continues to evolve, with new volumes and digital initiatives supporting place-based research and community engagement.

[The borough of Southampton: General historical account | British History Online]

g. There is no obvious reference in Victoria County History (VCH) entries for Southampton demonstrating any historic links with New Forest. Annual fees for farms were associated with lands to the north of Southampton, not to the west along the River Test.
h. The Poor Law Unions were developed out of the Parish System, which formed the basis of the boundaries of the Sanitary Districts. These in turn formed the basis for the Rural and Urban districts established under the 1894 Act (figure 15). Poor Law Unions were abolished under the 1929 LG Act with responsibilities passed to county councils.

Figure 15 6 1888 Poor Law Union Map – Showing Southampton as part of Stoneham Union which included Eastleigh.

Ordnance Survey Sanitary Districts, showing Civil Parishes, Hampshire

i. The 1927 Poor Law Union Map shows historic Poor Law arrangements for Southampton were still within the Stoneham Union and there were no historic shared relationships with the New Forest area.

Ordnance Survey County Diagrams of England and Wales, Hampshire

j. The 1882 Parliamentary Boundary Commission Report maps show the Lymington parliamentary area division, including Romsey, with the area subdivided by its petty session divisions (later forming the basis of Ringwood, Lymington, and Romsey Rural District Councils). All the Waterside is part of this historic political entity with Lymington, Ringwood, and Romsey.

H.M.S.O. Boundary Commission Report 1885, Hampshire

k. Boundaries for the New Forest Rural District maintained in 1917 parliamentary division continued to encompass Lower Test Valley and New Forest area.

H.M.S.O. Boundary Commission Report 1917, Hampshire

l. The 1922 Map of County division shows consistency of Poor Law Union and Rural district Council boundaries. Southampton political and poor law overlaps are with Stoneham in Eastleigh, rather than to the west.

Thinks
Insight & Strategy

15 August 2025

Local Government Reorganisation

Deliberative engagement findings

Report prepared for New Forest District Council

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1. Background and objectives

The UK Government has announced that it will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation. Where possible, there was a desire for existing two-tier areas – where services are delivered by both county and district councils – to be reorganised into unitary authorities. Councils are required to submit their proposals to the government regarding reorganisation later this year.

New Forest District Council (NFDC) want to ensure its proposal reflects and is grounded in 'human' lives, interests, and needs when it comes to reorganisation. Therefore, to support wider quantitative and technical research, it commissioned deliberative engagement with its residents. The aims of the deliberative engagement, were to:

- Explore residents' experiences of their local area;
- Understand residents' wants, needs and aspirations from local government;
- Generate a set of guiding principles which should underpin the proposal.

This research was designed to prompt residents to think about and answer the key question of **"How can your local government best work with and for communities in the future?".**

2. Our approach

2.1. What did we do?

Thinks Insight & Strategy (Thinks) delivered deliberative engagement with 59 residents of New Forest District Council. This was conducted via:

- 2x 3-hour online workshops, with 43x residents in total
- 2x 90-minute in-person focus groups, each with 16x residents in total

The table below gives an overview of the fieldwork agenda.

Pre-task	All residents completed a short questionnaire before the workshop. Questions encouraged them to reflect on their local area and community (e.g. how would they describe their local area; what makes a great place to live; what makes a bad place to live).
Welcome	Introduction to the workshop, each other and the aims of the session.
What does 'local' mean	In breakout groups, residents: • Mapped their local area using Google Maps, highlighting places that were important to them and where they spent time; • Discussed what makes a great and a bad place to live; • Discussed what community means and how, if at all, this is different to their local area.
Local challenges and reflections	In plenary, a representative from NFDC gave a short presentation about the New Forest district including facts about its geography, economy, key strengths and challenges. In breakout groups, residents reflected on the presentation including anything that stood out to them or felt surprising.
Local Government and what 'good' looks like	In plenary, a representative from NFDC gave a short presentation about how local government works at the moment. It included information about how services are delivered and how decisions are made. In breakout groups, residents discussed what the 'ideal' local government looks and feels like by 3 dimensions: • Service delivery; • Decision making; • Place.

Reflections on reorganisation	In plenary, a representative from NFDC gave a short presentation about the plan for reorganisation and what impact it will have on residents. He then answered questions from residents. In breakout groups, residents reflected on the plan for reorganisation including what stood out to them and anything which felt surprising. They then focussed discussion on 2 considerations: • The benefits of a more localised vs. a more centralised approach; • The benefits of delivering services online vs. in person.
Guiding principles	Finally, residents worked together to come up with guiding principles for the reorganisation proposals. These were shared in a final plenary session.

We adapted this workshop plan for the 90-minute focus groups by removing plenary reflections and shortening presentations, Q&A, and the mapping activity time to reflect the different the smaller number of residents.

2.2. Who did we hear from?

59 residents from the New Forest district took part in this research. Residents were recruited to largely be reflective of the local population in terms of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity), with over-sampling of key groups who tend not to participate in other forms of engagement (e.g. young people). It was also important that this research include the voices of Commoners in the New Forest, as well as certain groups, such as older or digitally disengaged residents.

The sample of those who took part was:

Age	• 5 x 16 – 24 • 12 x 25 – 39 • 30 x 40 – 69 • 10 x 70+
Gender	• 25 x Men • 31 x Women
Ethnicity	• 53 x White • 4 x Ethnic minority
Housing	• 38 x Homeowner • 6 x Social renter • 5 x Living with parents / other family

Household composition	• 18 x Live with a child aged 0 – 18 at least half the time
Health	• 16 x Living with a long-term health condition and / or disability
Service usage	• 3 x Users of adult social care (either directly or managed on behalf of a loved one)
Commoners	• 4 x Commoners
Digital engagement	• 1x digitally disengaged
Financial vulnerability	• 24 x Financially more vulnerable (e.g. feel unable to cope with an unexpected £300 bill)
Ward	• 1 x Ashley, Bashley, and Fernhill • 1 x Ballard • 2 x Bransgore, Burley, Sopley and Ringwood East • 3 x Brockenhurst and Denny Lodge • 4 x Dibden and Dibden Purlieu • 6 x Fawley, Blackfield, Calshot and Langley • 1 x Fordingbridge, Godshill and Hyde • 3 x Forest and Solent • 1 x Hardley, Holbury and North Blackfield • 2 x Hythe Central • 2 x Hythe South • 4 x Lymington • 8 x Marchwood and Eling • 1 x Milford and Hordle • 1 x Milton • 1 x New Milton • 3 x Pennington • 3 x Ringwood North and Ellingham • 5 x Ringwood South • 3 x Totton Central • 1 x Totton North • 1 x Totten South

3. Residents' experiences of their local area

3.1. How do residents think about their 'local area'

Residents were encouraged to reflect and think about their local area. Many residents emphasised the importance of nature and the large role it plays in their concept of their local area. Unsurprisingly, the Forest itself constitutes a significant part of most residents' identity, both for those living within the bounds of the national park and those in the towns on its periphery. The majority of residents include within their 'local' area the rural and forested locations throughout the district, and feel especially connected to these natural spaces.

> *"A lot of people who live in the New Forest consider it almost part of their like identity…people like to identify as being all part of [the] New Forest."*
>
> *In person focus group*

> *"[We have] a common love for the Forest…we may all have different views, but we're all protective of the Forest."*
>
> *Online workshop*

While a wide variety of themes emerged across the workshops and focus groups, three were felt most strongly by New Forest residents:

- **The New Forest itself is a strong driver of local identity** and sets the area apart from other areas in the UK. The importance of environmental stewardship, respecting the local area, and preserving its unique cultural heritage was felt particularly strongly by those residing in the New Forest and by Commoners. These values are shared by residents in more built-up waterside communities fringing the New Forest, though they are balanced against other local considerations felt to impact urban areas more, like crime and policing.

> *"Everybody uses the word 'unique'…there's nowhere else you can go where you're going to walk up the high street with a donkey. There's so much in the Forest that's unique, that you're not going to get somewhere else."*
>
> *In person focus group, Commoner*

- **New Forest residents were highly concerned by increasing development,** which is seen to be encroaching on the natural environment. Residents felt that as the settlements surrounding the national park continue to grow, this is likely to have a negative impact on the natural spaces they treasure, and especially those in the Forest.

    - Additionally, despite new housing being built, many residents express concern that it is not affordable for locals, making their ability to live in the New Forest more precarious.
- **Residents often identify their local area by the differences they see with more urban areas like Southampton and Bournemouth.** Many residents expressed a sense that the way of life in Southampton, specifically, is distinctly different from that of their own. They therefore felt that those living in, and involved in governing, Southampton cannot fully understand the local context within the New Forest, nor the needs of its residents.
    - Residents also perceived higher levels of wider societal issues in these urban spaces, such as crime and antisocial behaviour. As a result, they viewed the New Forest as a 'safer' and 'nicer' place to live. However, for some living in closer proximity to Southampton, such as the Waterside communities, there is a perception that some of these issues have begun to spill over into their areas – in part, linked to expanding urban/suburban development.

"You certainly don't see uniformed police officers in the Waterside unless they're attending an emergency and one might show up three hours late. The police presence is virtually non-existent... There's a lot of like crime and antisocial behaviour where this was previously a very safe, very low-crime area."

Online workshop

Residents were asked to think about the aspects of their local area that they consider good and bad. On the whole, New Forest residents took great pride in their local areas. Things which made the New Forest a 'good' place to live included:

- **The scenic environment and access to nature.** Residents value having nature on their doorstep. This is not limited to the forest; residents emphasised the variety of offerings in their local areas, including easy access to beaches and scenic spots on the coast. Residents enjoy taking part in activities associated with being outdoors, such as hiking, swimming, dog-walking, riding horses, and for Commoners, turning out their animals. With these opportunities for recreation, socialising, and cultural enrichment, New Forest residents can immerse themselves in the natural environment which forms such a large part of their identity.
- **A strong sense of community.** Local fetes, social clubs, park runs, cricket clubs and charity events are just a few ways that residents' communities come together. These social activities reinforce community bonds which are highly valued by New Forest residents, as well as friendly neighbours and a general sense of camaraderie.

- **A distinct local identity.** Many New Forest residents stressed that their local area is unique, with its own unique set of needs. They felt their life and identity are shaped in large part by the Forest, with some having multi-generational roots in their towns and villages. This is especially felt by Commoners, a cultural minority who are highly protective, and proud, of their customs. This strong sense of identity tied to the Forest is seen to set this area apart from other places around the UK.
- **Tourism in the local area.** Residents acknowledged the vital role that tourism plays in keeping the New Forest alive. It brings income to their local areas and provides job opportunities, while also incentivising the continued care and preservation of the Forest. Although it's important that visitors are respectful of the environment, the pride that residents have in the New Forest means they are generally happy sharing it with others.
- **Access to larger towns and transport links.** Despite mixed feelings towards cities like Southampton and Bournemouth, many residents appreciated the New Forest's proximity to larger towns, which is useful for shopping and transport. Additionally, some residents felt that the London commuter belt now encompasses parts of the New Forest, making travel to London easier.

"As far as where we're situated, we're on the coast, we're quite near London, we've got Southampton Airport, Bournemouth Airport, we've got the motorways and reasonably good access out of the area."

In person focus group

"You can walk as far as you can. You can go for long walks, cycles in a beautiful unspoiled area where to me it's safe."

Online workshop

While residents identified many of the things which make the New Forest a 'good' place to live, this was balanced against other more negative aspects of their local area. **Crime** emerged as a key concern for those living in the New Forest, along with associated activities like drug use, antisocial behaviour, and insufficient policing. While praising the peaceful and idyllic nature of the New Forest, residents acknowledged pockets of hidden deprivation, with strong disparities between communities in close proximity to one another. There is a perception among New Forest residents that these issues are worsening as the area becomes more developed, particularly in the waterside communities closer to Southampton.

"It feels to me a lot less safe than where I live in Ringwood. I feel there's a lot more crime, possibly drug use."

In person focus group

These views link with broader concerns around **overdevelopment**, which many residents see as placing the character and prosperity of their local areas under threat. Residents raised four key concerns associated with overdevelopment:

- **Strain on local infrastructure:** New housing developments are felt to be straining local infrastructure which is already seen as insufficient. Residents felt that this is making accessing services across the Forest increasingly difficult, while also leading to increases in traffic throughout the Forest.
- **Lack of affordable housing:** Residents explain that there are not enough affordable housing options for them and worry about being priced out of the area. Although residents are not opposed to newcomers, they perceive most of them as wealthy transplants who can afford to buy property or maintain second homes in the New Forest. Residents therefore point out that the area is becoming increasingly expensive and some Commoners can no longer afford to live in the New Forest where they turn out their animals.
- **Eroding sense of community:** For instance contributing to the closure of independent high street shops in favour of larger retail outlets, or increasing urbanisation along the edges of the forest. This is particularly alarming for Commoners, who feel the threat of overdevelopment more acutely, and consider it in the context of their culture, common land, and way of life.

> *"The open forest is really important to Commoners – unfenced, open forest, so the animals can roam free. As a whole, that's a really important asset."*
>
> *In person focus group, Commoner*

In addition, residents of all ages pointed out **diminishing opportunities for young people** in the New Forest. Limited recreational and job opportunities are encouraging younger generations to leave the New Forest for cities like Southampton, Bournemouth, and London. Residents emphasise the value of encouraging young people to remain in the area, as a way of preserving its character and securing its longevity.

> *"If we are losing this big cohort of people who have nothing for them once they leave university and they don't then come back, or you've got your cohort of 16 year old leavers, that's when it creates some social disparity."*
>
> *Online workshop*

3.2. How do residents define and think about community

Residents were asked to consider whether their 'community' and their 'local area' held any different meaning for them. For many residents, their community is heavily focussed on their local area, such as their respective village or town. This is due in part to the rurality of the Forest and deep roots that some residents have in their towns. Living in and near the New Forest results in a highly place-based identity; residents point out that while they associate community with the towns where they live, they also conceive of a wider community across the New Forest. A similar balance is seen among Commoners, whose community firstly includes other Commoners, stemming from a shared identity, practices, and values.

For residents living outside the national park, particularly those in larger towns and in waterside communities, 'community' is thought of in broader terms and they are less likely to view their community as being limited to the town they live in.

However, for all residents, a sense of community is strongly influenced by socialising with and supporting one another, having similar values and experiences, and working towards a shared set of goals. Residents speak fondly about local community-organised clubs and events, like park runs, drinking clubs and fetes; however, there is a growing sense that this, and the character of the New Forest, is slowly changing as it becomes more developed.

"There are community initiatives [in the Forest] that you can get involved in... So, you know, not only is the New Forest National Park a beautiful thing to be able to visit, but there are also things that bring people together."

Online workshop

"I find most of the people around here are really friendly, always happy to say hello, if not stop for a chat. And everybody seems to want the best for the area. So, I think that's sort of a really good community spirit."

Online workshop

4. Perceptions of an 'ideal' local government

Following an introduction to how local government services are delivered in the New Forest District Council from a council representative, residents spent time discussing what 'ideal' local government looks and feels like for their area. This conversation was focused on:

- Good service delivery;
- Good decision making;
- Good 'place' based services.

Residents were asked to focus less on the specifics of these areas and instead think about how the experience of these areas should feel for residents.

4.1. What does 'good' service delivery look and feel like

Residents' views of 'good' service delivery was focussed on the practical delivery of functional council services. These discussions broadly centred on delivering these functional services well, and in a way that makes it easy for residents of the New Forest to access them. The core themes that emerged as part of this are:

- **Efficient:** Residents characterised 'good' delivery of services as that which works quickly and smoothly. For residents this looked like a local government that works collaboratively internally to deliver a seamless experience for its communities in how it delivers services. In terms of how residents would experience this, they described issues being dealt with quickly by the local council (i.e. potholes filled quickly following initial complaints), and those who need help from social care services receive it when they need it. Several residents said that, if services were being delivered efficiently, you would ideally not 'notice' local government was there.
- **Accessible:** Residents emphasised the need for services to be easily accessed for all. This means meeting people where they are to deliver services. For example, having touchpoints online or at in-person hubs where the public can speak to someone who can help them or at least point them in the right direction. Residents felt that a truly accessible council service is also proactively involved with the local community – in particular, having councillors who are active in local society and events. Many cited already knowing a member of a local council, and how that is a valued relationship in feeling connected to services. This was important to residents because these councillors will have a better understanding of the local area. Residents also felt reassured that they had a direct point of contact for any issues.
- **Communicative:** Building on discussions around accessibility, residents felt that council services should communicate frequently and in a timely manner with those accessing services. Residents described feeling that when they engage with the local council they often feel they are not well

updated by the council and that they are kept out of the loop. For a local government service to be described as 'good' residents felt it is important for them to provide updates and responses quickly.
    - Further to this, residents also felt that if communication from local government was better, it would encourage them to feel services are being delivered with more transparency. For some, the lack of communication builds towards a feeling that information is being hidden, or kept secret from them.
- **Cost effective:** Value for money was front of mind for the residents we heard from. Broadly, this was about making sure that money was managed responsibly by the council. As taxpayers, it was important that local government spends its money wisely and effectively. For residents this meant not duplicating efforts across services, and is rigorously scrutinising spending.

"I am sure they [the Council] are working as hard as they can with the provisions they are given, … I know you're really busy, but people need to be heard and the best way to do that is to go and speak to them and be accessible."

Online workshop

"Transparency on budgeting, actual upfront transparency and saying this is our plan for the year."

Online workshop

"A really good system would be inclusive, you can access the services you need to and it takes into account the demographic of the area, not the reverse of that."

Online workshop

4.2. What does 'good' decision-making look and feel like

Across the engagement, residents were clear that any decision-making about or for the New Forest should be driven by and rooted in the needs of the New Forest. For residents this means both:

- For the local communities living in the area
- And for the natural space of the forest itself

Resident's, and especially those with commoning rights, felt it is the community's job to protect the natural landscape of the forest and the traditional way of life in the area. Therefore, with the unique nature of the landscape and population, good decisions have to be built on local, personal experience and understanding of the New Forest.

Residents were clear that 'good' decision making involves local people to ensure they are based on a solid foundation of local knowledge, its individuality and the needs of the community. For this to be delivered, residents emphasised the importance of:

- **Local decision-making that empowers local communities.** Whether through locally elected decision-makers, or through regular and frequent engagement with local communities, residents wanted to see clear routes established for local voices to be heard in decision making.
- **Evidence based decisions, made with local knowledge**. Residents felt it important that all decisions are grounded in the reality of life in the New Forest. This should be achieved through research and engagement with local people, and a detailed understanding of the Forest.

"If you're going to retain services that are meaningful to people and where they live, the voice further down the ladder needs to be greater than some central person that hasn't got a clue about localised issues."

In-person focus groups

Beyond this, residents also emphasised the need for **accountability** in decision making. Residents reiterated throughout the engagement, that mechanisms are needed to hold decision makers to account. They wanted clear measures in place to judge how cost-effective decisions were, and the impact of any made.

"They should be accountable, their decision should be cost effective and they should be measured with some form of KPIs."

In-person focus group

"I think it is really important to know who made what decision and why, because we see some decisions that get made that end up with thousands of pounds lost"

Online Workshop

4.3. What do 'good' place-based services look and feel like

As reflected on above, residents felt it is important that all services are thoroughly embedded in the place of the New Forest. There was a clear focus on both the natural landscape and the communities that live in and around the forest itself – which anchored their views on how services should be designed and delivered.

For services to be truly place based, they should involve the local community, be designed around them and their needs, and focus on protecting the natural landscape of the forest.

"It's important to be locally based. It's probably quite important to have local people on roads, on the bins, maybe even social welfare things to a certain extent. Because they'll know that there's certain issues in certain areas."

Online workshop

5. Considerations for Local Government Reorganisation

We shared a presentation with residents about the plans for local government reorganisation (LGR) and what this would mean for how services are delivered. Residents returned to their breakout groups and discussed the benefits of:

- A more centralised vs. a more localised approach
- Delivering services online vs. via local hubs

5.1. Initial reactions and overall considerations for the Local Government Reorganisation

Residents had a mixed response to the proposed LGR, with many approaching the topic with a sense of apprehension. This was broadly rooted in concerns about the loss of a local council that understands the needs of local people delivering services. For example, the prospect of merging into unitary authorities based around cities, such as Southampton, were worrying for most residents. They felt that the needs, priorities and identity of such places would be extremely different from those of New Forest communities – and that they, as the 'smaller' party would be at risk of being disregarded or overridden in decision making.

However, there were residents who recognised there would be some clear benefits to a more centralised and simplified system. Both sets of views are outlined below.

5.1.1. Consideration 1: Local vs. centralised delivery of services

Many residents expressed immediate concerns that with a larger unitary government, it is more likely that decision makers will be based further away from the New Forest. They worried that this would mean decision makers no longer have a direct connection with the communities of the New Forest and the environment. This was raised as a significant concern by residents because of the uniqueness of their area, which they feel is distinct within Hampshire. There were several specific concerns raised by residents:

- **Loss of local representation.** Residents felt that with government centralised 'further away' from their local area, they would lose their ability to speak directly to those who make decisions about them and represent them. This would negatively impact the decisions made about the local area, as these decision makers will not be as connected to local needs and issues.
- **Potential loss of focus on the natural landscape.** Residents assumed that decision makers based further away are less likely to prioritise the protection of the Forest and natural landscape. With less direct knowledge of the area, residents felt they would not be able to deliver the appropriate services, or implement the needed protection to preserve the Forest from potential development.

- **Loss of traditional way of life.** The commoning community had specific concerns that their needs will not be heard within a larger form of local government. As a smaller group, they expressed fears that their traditional way of life would continue to be eroded, as they would not be considered a priority.

> *"We'd still need to have, like, local offices that need to still be real feeling that local issues are being considered because the needs and wants of people in different areas are so different."*
>
> *Online workshop*

> *"If we merged into this super authority maybe the local planning would change. The New Forest might get whacked with a target of having 20,000 houses or something, then that might all just like appear in our neighbourhood. At the moment we've got the local councillors that will fight for us."*
>
> *Online workshop*

However, there were those who felt that a more centralised system could potentially deliver better, more efficient services. Residents felt that the potential positive impacts of the LGR could be:

- **Less replication of work across different teams,** councils and regions, leading to more streamlined service delivery and better value for money.
- **Improved communication across teams and regions**, with council staff better connected and in more frequent contact. Residents felt this would improve service delivery and efficiencies.
- **Clarity as to who delivers what services.** In the New Forest especially, there are many different local authorities currently delivering overlapping services. Residents felt that with a more centralised local government, it would be easier to reach the right person for a specific issue, and hold them to account.

> *"Because you've got similar areas within councils doing similar things. If you've got district councils, like Test Valley and New Forest, they're doing this exactly the same thing but in two different areas. If you remove that layer and unify across a bigger unitary authority, you remove that additional spending and hopefully that money can be put into other local services."*
>
> *Online workshop*

> *"Better communication between organisations and services is always great. ... The centralisation of records and organisations speaking to each other… They're all sharing ideas, resources, budgetary ideas."*

Online workshop

5.1.2. Consideration 2: Online vs. local hubs to access services

Residents felt that an online only approach to accessing services would not work for the New Forest, and that it would be important to incorporate in-person delivery as well. This is due to several reasons:

- The rural nature of the New Forest means that connectivity is not guaranteed in the area. With connectivity or digital provision patchy in different areas of the district, not everyone will be able to access services online effectively.
- With the New Forest's large older population, residents were concerned about lower levels of digital literacy. They felt that if local government services were only accessible online, this would exclude this group from getting the help they might need. Residents expressed worries that as one of the more vulnerable groups in the community, older residents are more likely to need to access services like adult social care, which can already be a challenge. Therefore they felt it important that barriers to access should be limited, especially for this group.

Residents recognised that in the future more people would be digitally literate and able to access services online. However, for the time being it would be essential that services are not delivered with a one-size fits all, online first approach. Therefore, residents felt it is important for future local government to ensure there is a balance of online and in-person services going forward.

"And it's about opening up those accessibility options and just, you know, making it so that we can do online. But also that there is a centralized hub still that people can contact easily and not made overly complicated."

Online workshop, Commoner

"There are merits in centralising for sure, but you've still got to consider the local need."

Online workshop

6. Guiding principles

At the end of the workshop, residents brought together the underlying guiding principles which sit beneath all of the discussions throughout the session. These guiding principles were centred around the core question of the research which was **"How can your local government best work with and for communities in the future?".**

Residents were first asked to reflect individually, then as a group on what they felt should guide NFDC as it looks to develop its proposals for the Local Government Reorganisation.

These guiding principles are summarized below. These reflect the discussions from residents, consolidating and reflecting the consistent themes and priorities.

01 **Rooted in place,** with a true understanding of the New Forest, its people, traditions and unique needs, to ensure it is protected for future generations.

02 **Empowers local voices** to ensure that the needs of communities are heard and that decisions serve the local population in principle and in practice.

03 **Accessibility,** to ensure the needs of all residents are met and everyone can access local services equally.

04 **Accountability,** to ensure residents feel they can challenge things they feel are wrong, and trust their local government to do the right thing for their community.

05 **Efficiency,** so that local services are delivered with value for money for the taxpayer, and to a high standard for those all need them.

If the new unitary council followed these principles, then residents expected they would feel supported, heard and optimistic about the future.

7. Appendix

Throughout the wider consultation process into the Local Government Reorganisation, the New Forest District council has also received direct contact from residents, organisations and councils in the district to share their views. These are summarised in the table below:

Category	Submitted by	Summary of Submission
Resolutions from Town or Council Parishes	Brockenhurst Parish Council	Resolution in favour of Option 1
	Fawley Parish Council	Resolution in favour of Option 1
	Beaulieu Parish Council	Resolution in favour of Option 1
	Bransgore Parish Council	Resolution in favour of Option 1 with the condition that there should be evidence on costing before full support. They do not anticipate receiving this until the Reorganisation takes place, and therefore cannot give full support.
	Burley Parish Council	Resolution in favour of Option 1
Public statements of preference for Reorganisation options	Roy Farmers	Preference for Option 1 as it is important that the New Forest be brought together with other rural districts, which are more similar. Also expresses a need for decision making in the New Forest to still be delivered from a hub within the Forest.
	The Crossings (homelessness charity based in Hythe), via Andy Clarke	Preference for Option 1
	Catherine Shepherd	Preference for Option 1, driven by a desire for the New Forest to be brought together with other rural councils, who are more likely to understand the needs of the area.
	Christopher Sturgess	Preference for Option 1
	Sophie Vandermeeren	Preference for Option 1, with caveat that the New Forest National Park maintains it's decision making authority.

Additional comments on the Local Government Reorganisation	Rosemary Hosier	Significant concerns raised about the Waterside being merged with Southampton. These concerns are driven by: • A lack of shared cultural identity with Southampton • A sense of connection with forest life that should be preserved.
	Gary Lynch	Expresses a desire for no change to the current system, and concerns about the process to introduce and implement LGR as undemocratic.
	Helen Wilkinson	Expresses concern about New Forest being joined with Southampton City Council as the outcome of the LGR.
	R D Neary	Expresses concern about any change to the current system, but especially concerned about the New Forest being merged with Southampton City Council due to perceived financial issues within that council.
	Colin Boulain	Expresses concerns about the New Forest losing its voice in its local governance as a result of the LGR process and outcomes.
	Sandra Crawford	Feels that NFDC in its current configuration does a good job, and is a "workable size", and integration with other councils will lead to unnecessary chaos.
	Captain Neil Evans	Expresses a desire for a fourth option to be offered to residents for those who feel NFDC should not participate or enact the Local Government Reorganisation.
Miscellaneous	Margaret Gore	Expresses challenges with completing the online Commonplace survey.
	Phil Naldrett	Querying to confirm Commonplace survey submission was complete and received.
	Anthony Miller	Querying the detail of Option 3, and how the boundary changes could potentially impact the New Forest.
	Caz Flood	Written submission following completion of the Commonplace survey to re-emphasise their desire for the New Forest to remain as a separate council.
	Eileen West	Written response alongside the completion of the Commonplace survey in support for Option 1.