



Local Government Reorganisation

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Parish Briefing
23 September 2025

Local Government is changing

- Background to local government reorganisation (LGR)
- Why is Reading proposing an alternative boundary?
- What does this mean for Parish Councils?

Why reorganisation?

- Government has outlined a policy to abolish 'two-tier areas', and replace with a single unitary council*
 - Oxfordshire is two-tier
 - Berkshire is already unitary – including West Berkshire and Reading
- Proposals must meet Government criteria:
 - Be based around sensible economic areas and geography
 - Councils must be the right size (initially suggested 500k, but subsequent indications that 300-350k would be accepted)
 - Deliver sustainable high-quality services
 - Enable devolution
 - Enable strong community engagement and empowerment

** These are the common terms used – parish councils represent a separate tier of local councils*

What is the LGR decision process?

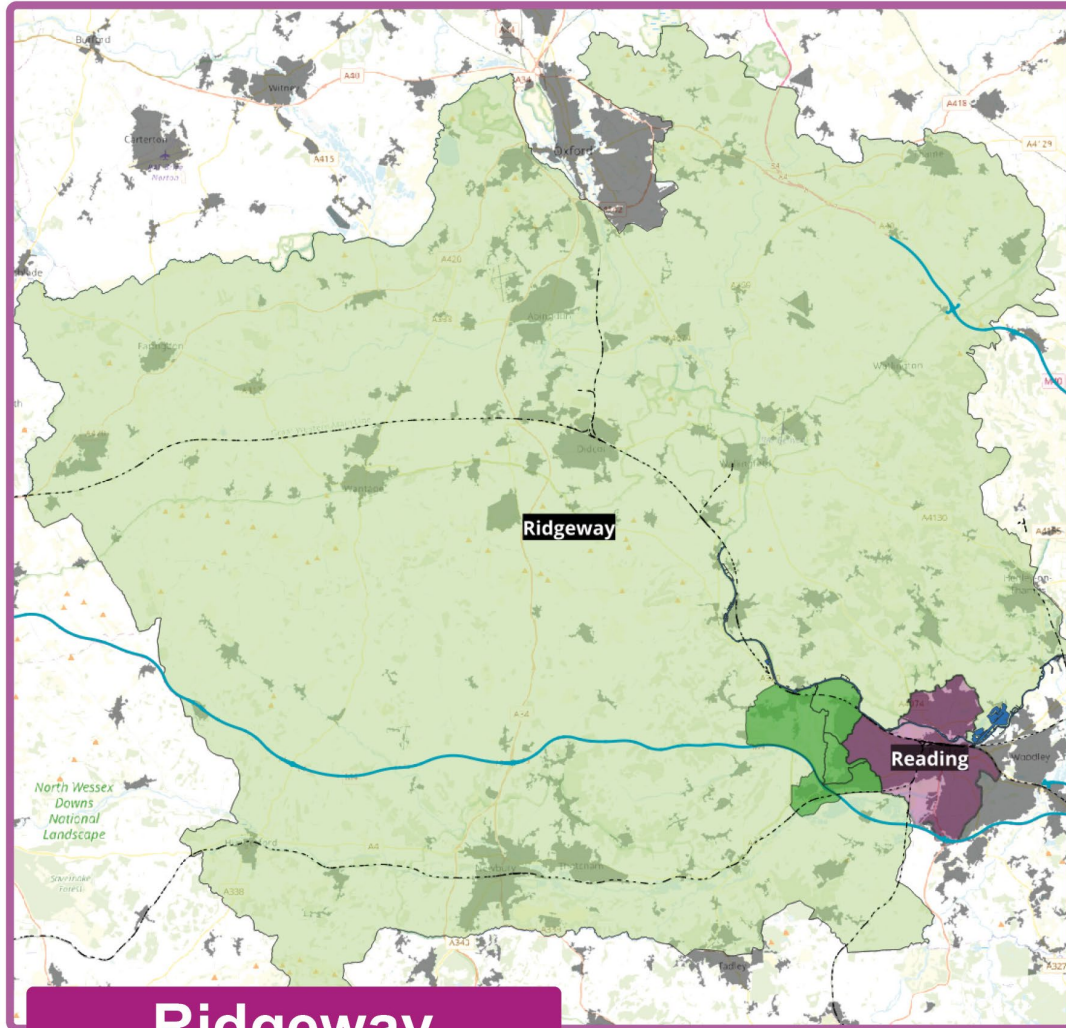
- Oxfordshire councils invited to submit final proposals by 28 November 2025
- On receiving proposals, Secretary of State can:
 - Implement a proposal as proposed;
 - Implement with ***modifications***; or
 - Not implement the proposal
- SoS must consult Councils, but consent is not required
- Anticipate a 6-8 week consultation period, but dates unknown at this stage
- Final decision will be made by the Secretary of State

Oxfordshire's Interim Proposals – submitted in March

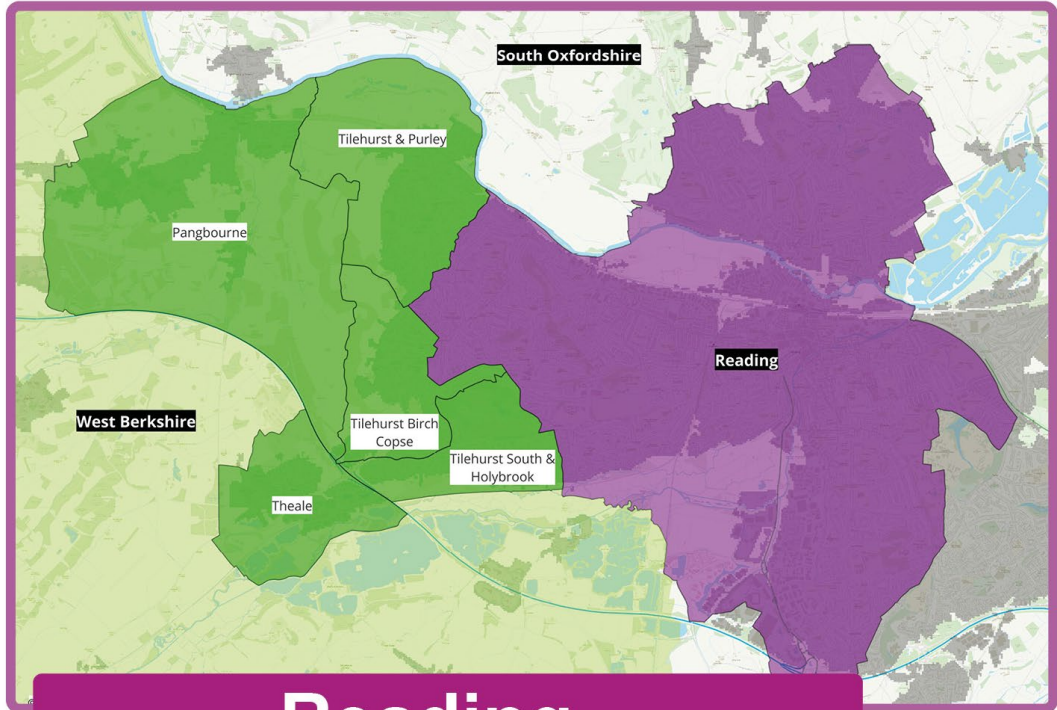
Option	West Berkshire?	Proposed Councils	Current Population (K)	Future Population (K)+
Single County Unitary	N	Oxfordshire	750	-
Two Unitary Councils	Y	Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell	451	509 – 601
		Ridgeway	463	524 – 658
Three Unitary Councils	Y	Greater Oxford	234	344
		Northern Oxfordshire	259	337
		Ridgeway	419	545

+ Options have been developed by different lead local authority/ies, using different population forecasts

What's being proposed?

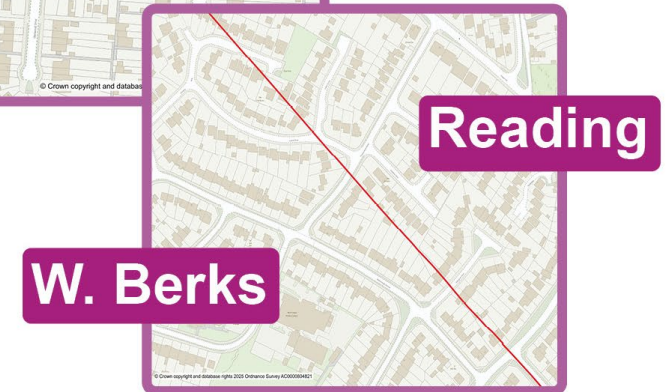
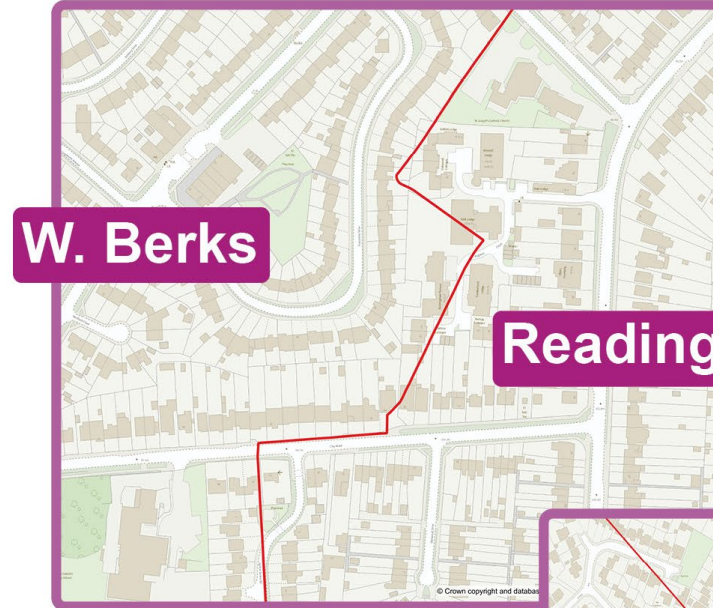
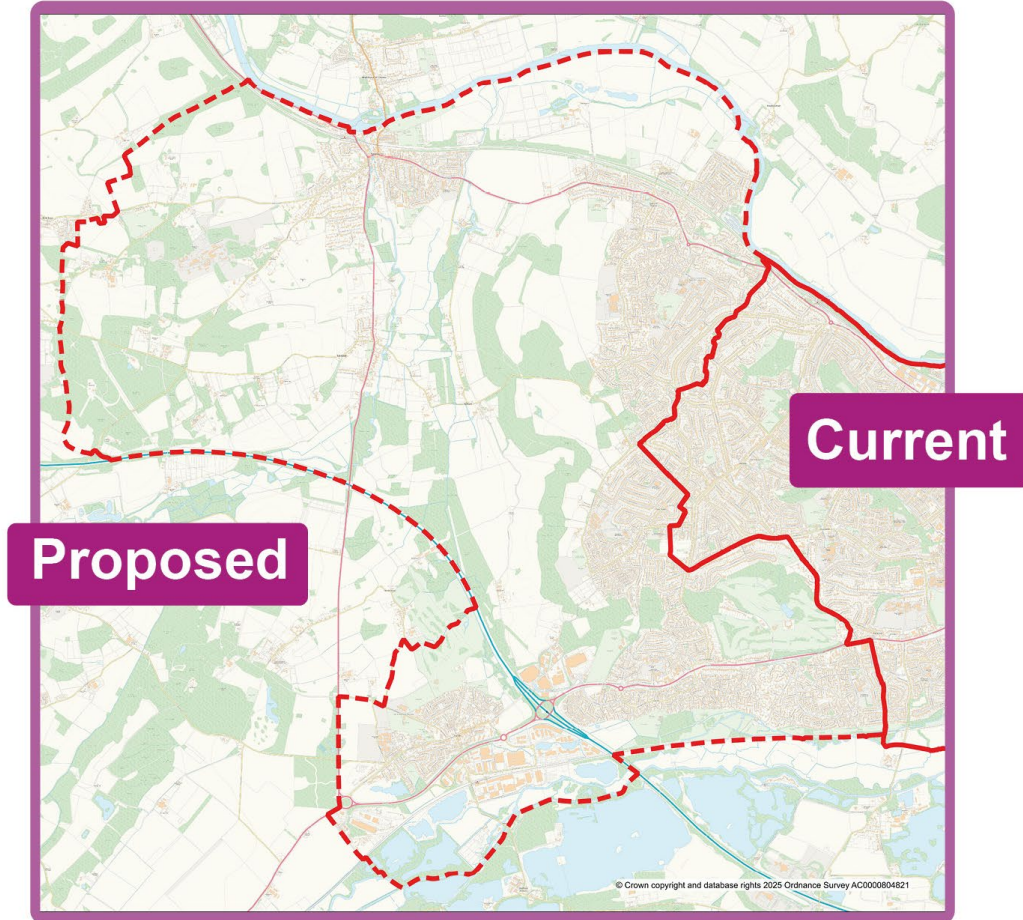


Ridgeway
Estimated population 463,000



Reading
Current population 174,000
Total with boundary change 207,000

The current boundary between West Berkshire and Reading is not a 'sensible' economic area and geography



Examples
of current
boundary

Rationale for Revised Boundary for Reading

- Sensible economic geography
 - Proximity to Reading
 - Transport corridors
 - Recognising communities - whole wards and parishes
- Still enabling wider LGR across Oxfordshire
- Efficiency of delivering services from Reading

What does this mean for Parish Councils

- Parish Councils would remain as they are
- Reading has not proposed to abolish any Parish Council under these proposals
- Parish Councils would continue to deliver their services as now
- Reading would become the Council Tax collecting authority
- Reading would establish a joint protocol with Parish Councils, ensuring we provide support where needed and have strong communication between the Councils