

## SWT Community Governance Review Working Group

26.01.22 at 4pm

Attendees: Cllr D Perry (Chair), Cllr M Rigby (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Cllrs N Cavill, S Coles, J Hunt, L Lisgo, A Sully, L Whetlor.

Officers: K. Williams, J. Williams, P. Fitzgerald, P. McLean, A. Blom-Cooper, K. Murdoch, M Prouse

### 1. Survey Responses

The Vice Chair gave an overview of the responses to the survey, and the direct responses to the Council Survey were 201 in total of which 191 of those were local residents.

#### A summary of the discussion that took place on the survey responses:

- It was felt that there had been a fairly consistent response which was expected; however it was very important the Council had gone out and asked the questions they had.
- It was considered the feedback was an acceptance of an idea of a Town Council, and parts of the Town thought different things about its potential scope.
- It was commented that whilst the response to the official survey from residents of West Monkton supported the Unparished area being parished, the Council should take analysis of the 492 responses that West Monkton Parish Council collated which provided a much better representation of that argument.
- This was considered a fair comment and whilst the analysis was of the official responses this wasn't to demean the work of the parish surveys and the Vice-Chair was comfortable in taking the parish submissions into account equally.
- It was commented that the nature of the comments were predictable but we were where we were.
- It was considered that there was a clear view that the Unparished area needed to be parished and an overwhelming view that that needed to be as a single council. The survey had given public affirmation to the point the Group had edged toward before.
- The questions still to be answered were around the boundaries, e.g. the edge of Priorswood that butted onto Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton.
- It was suggested this group needed to focus on the edges and how people see themselves in those areas which supported the view of the guidance.
- It was commented that it would have been better to have had lots more responses, but we have got where we have.
- A question was posed that if the Group was going to recommend a Town Council, should it be just for the unparished area, or a wider area?

- The electoral consultant took the opportunity to restate the guidance and run through the main parts that were relevant to the Working Group and the task for this meeting.
- It was stated that essentially the consultation responses were very helpful in telling us what people had fed back.
- Councillors were informed that this was not just about the numbers but also the points they have made and how they relate to the criteria set out in the guidance.
- The consultant set out two key criteria as set out in the 2007 Act – s93 – when deciding on arrangements and these were the identity and interest of community and that local government should be effective and convenient.
- In turn it was commented that identity and interest of community were important in looking at the edges and where more appropriate for a particular area.
- It was stated that the kind of questions the Group needed to be asking were around where people identify as a resident of Taunton or a parish they live in or not, or where do they look to use their amenities?
- In terms of looking at public services, town and parish councils were increasingly providing services, and the group needed to consider who would likely to be using those services and would those particular residents look to a town council and any services it would be providing?
- The second criteria on being effective and convenient were more relevant at the next stage of the review and in considering the viability and convenience of a Local Authority to its residents.
- If the Working Group agreed on a Town Council boundary wider than the Unparished area – questions would arise as to what happens to a Parish Council in the surrounding area who may have lost part of their area to a town council? Do the remaining parishes remain viable?
- If it was questionable then potential grouping or merging parishes to come to a viable electorate could be looked at but that would be the next stage and the Working Group would need to have clear information on electorate population to do this work.
- Whilst the consultant had outlined the two main criteria, there were subsidiary ones such as Community Cohesion, and the Group should take into account any effects on community cohesion.
- It was stated that Page 40 of the guidance set out the key summary when looking at a CGR's possible outcomes and desirable outcomes.
- The Group now needed to carry out an exercise for each of the areas that are in doubt or where there appears there might be an argument for that to be in the town council area. The Group would then turn to the specifics of what this looked like in practical terms.
- The consultant stated that there was guidance on the boundaries themselves and where they should go, and these were permanent and fixed features in the landscape as far as possible. If not possible, then they could go between an area of open space if no fixtures were there.

- The Chair welcomed responses from Working Group members representing their areas and asked the Governance Specialist to hand out the maps of the area for the next exercise.

**RESOLVED** that the Working Group agreed that a single Town Council should be created for the area, based on the feedback to the Stage 1 Consultation.

**RESOLVED** that the Working Group agreed to look in turn at the boundary of the currently unparished area with each adjoining parish in the context of the statutory criteria and consider in each case whether any changes to the parish boundary should be recommended, and if so, any consequential changes to adjoining parishes that might be required.

2. Proposed inclusions for the preferred option of the Working Group to Full Council

Please see the decision sheets below.

## **SWT Community Governance Review Working Group**

01.02.22 at 3pm

Attendees: Cllr D Perry (Chair), Cllr M Rigby, Cllrs N Cavill, S Coles, J Hunt, L Lisgo, A Sully, L Whetlor.

Officers: J. Williams, P. Fitzgerald, P. McLean, M Prouse, M Bryant

1. Update Memo on Communications and Engagement Activity

The Chair referred to the Update Memo that had been circulated to the Working Group which outlined the issues with the postcard reminder. It was his view that the Working Group proceeded, with the postcard drop very much a bolt-on to the consultation. Councillors supported this and it was discussed that the postcard drop was not one of the main five strands of work identified in its Communications Plan. Other Councillors suggested that the offer of a reprint for Stage 2 consultation could be utilised to save the expense of legal officers seeking a full cost recovery. It was clear the fault was that of the contractor/Royal Mail who had a responsibility to ensure they did what they had been paid to do.

**RESOLVED** to agree to continue with the review, in light of the issue with the postcard reminder drop not being delivered.

2. Proposed inclusions for the preferred option of the Working Group to Full Council

Please see the decision sheets below.

3. AOB

- Councillors were advised that the proposed boundaries would create pressures on the revenues team to make the changes in the system that could have a cost pressure and impact on other unitary workstreams.
- In terms of a working up an indicative picture of Assets/spend and income, some Councillors looked to the example of Salisbury City. It was confirmed that for Stage 2 an indication of services and precept figures would need to be provided.

## **SWT Community Governance Review Working Group**

10.02.22 at 5pm

Attendees: Cllr D Perry (Chair), Cllr M Rigby, Cllrs N Cavill, S Coles, J Hunt, L Lisgo, L Whetlor.

Officers: J. Williams, P. McLean, M Prouse

### **1. Proposed inclusions for the preferred option of the Working Group to Full Council**

The Group discussed a few outstanding matters such as the inter-parish anomalies that had been discussed and how these could be addressed. It was agreed that the Working Group could write specifically to Cheddon Fitzpaine and other Parish Councils as would be effected by any inter-parish boundary changes to find out more information on particular changes and find out their particular views on tracts of land and how they best envisaged protecting and maintaining these in Stage 2.

**RESOLVED** that the Working Group had come to an agreed position on a single preferred option to submit to Full Council for the purposes of Stage 2 consultation

### **2. Polling Stations and Warding**

Officers confirmed that there was no statutory guidance or requirement for equality in ratios of electors per Councillor, though desirable. Some discussion was held on whether to have single member wards and the advantages/disadvantages of such.

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended that the proposed Town Council option be a warded Council.

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended that the Council established to serve the proposed new Taunton Parish should have a council size of at least 20 councillors, with the final number to be determined in the context of the proposals to be developed for warding arrangements within the new parish.

### 3. CIL payments

The Working Group were advised that legal advice was being sought on this matter and an update would be chased. It was raised that a Neighbourhood Plan may wished to be developed for the purported Town Council Area to be put in place as soon as possible after May 2023 and this should be raised with Somerset West and Taunton.

### 4. Appointment of Temporary Town Councillors – April – May 2023

Councillors were advised that in the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April and three days after the May Election, the Council would need to nominate persons to be Parish Councillors for that period. Traditionally during a process such as this these would be the District Councillors for the area, however, the District's cease to exist on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The Council could consider the appointment of the Somerset Council Councillors but it wouldn't have to be. The appointed persons would be a full Parish Council. The existing Charter Trustees would also dissolve upon the vesting of a Town Council covering the current Unparished Area, but the historic mayoralty would continue.

**RESOLVED** to agree to explore the involvement of those Somerset Councillors that would be elected in May 2022 representing the area being considered on this Working Group.

### 5. Draft Council report

A copy of the draft Council report that was being developed was shared on the screen. The Group were pleased to see this and the final version would be worked on following the discussions at this meeting and shared with the Working Group.

## **Recommendation Sheets of the Working Group – In numerical order matching the Full Council report**

That the Council adopts and agrees to the Community Governance Review Working Group's preferred option for Taunton and the area under review (as set out in 2.3 below) for the purposes of conducting the Stage 2 Consultation.

The draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group to be subject to a second round of consultation are as follows:

- A. That a single parish be created to serve the currently unparished areas of Taunton and that in addition:
  - (i) Comeytrowe Parish Council be abolished and the entire area of Comeytrowe Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
  - (ii) The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
  - (iii) The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that currently falls within Trull Parish should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

- (iv) The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.
  - (v) The area covered by the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, including several sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
  - (vi) The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
  - (vii) The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish.
  - (viii) If the proposed changes bring about a remaining Staplegrove Parish area of fewer than 150 electors, that remaining area be merged with Kingston St. Mary Parish.
  - (ix) A small southern portion of the Kingston St. Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
  - (x) With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish should become part of the proposed new Taunton Parish, and the small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, should become part of Bishops Hull Parish.
  - (xi) The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5.
  - (xii) The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line.
  - (xiii) Further consideration be given to whether the current boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park should be amended, for example by following the A3259 westwards to Maidenbrook Lane, in the light of any comments from the respective parish councils.
- C. That with the exception of the area described at A(xi) above, the area of West Monkton Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.
- D. That the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.

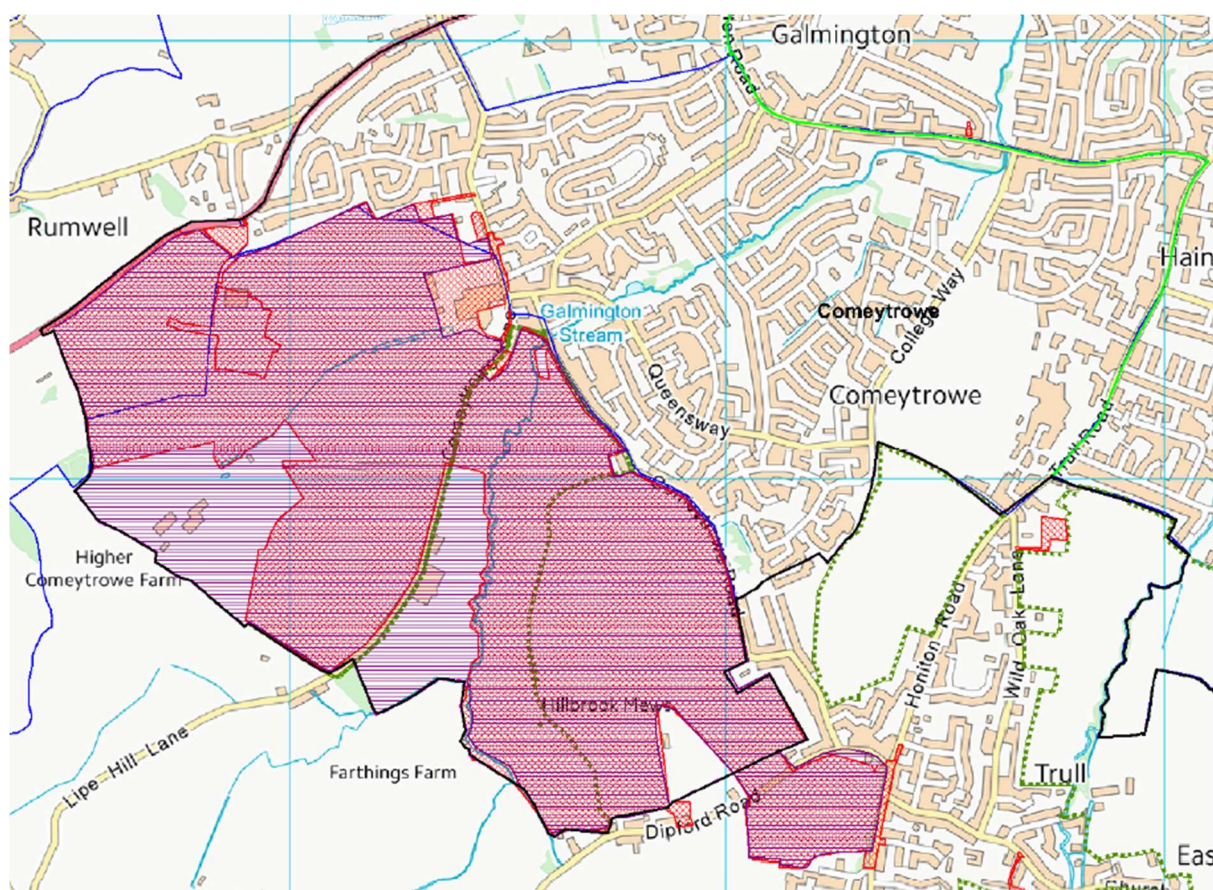
## **Recommendation #1 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*Comeytrove Parish Council be abolished and the entire area of Comeytrove Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Comeytrove Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



## **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

- The sense of place of those within Comeytrove as identified in the feedback and parish council response displays no strong feeling for local distinctiveness or local identity separate to that from Taunton.
- Also, the guidance is clear from Para 83 that the area should “*reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours.*”
- Comeytrove was considered a strong example of such an area. The new development of two thousand homes would strengthen this expansion and change the character of the area even further.



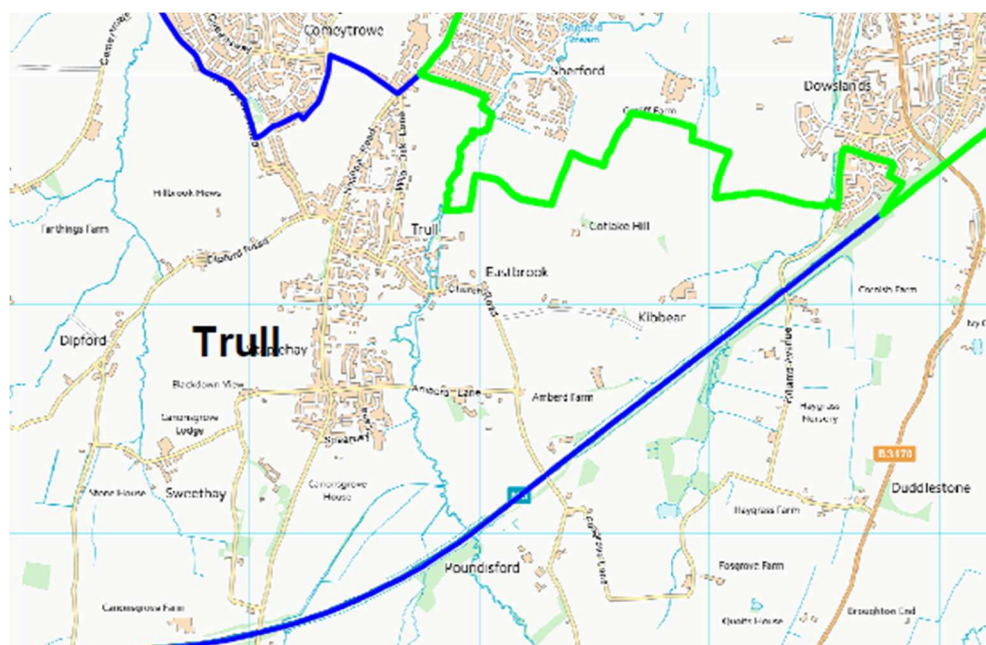
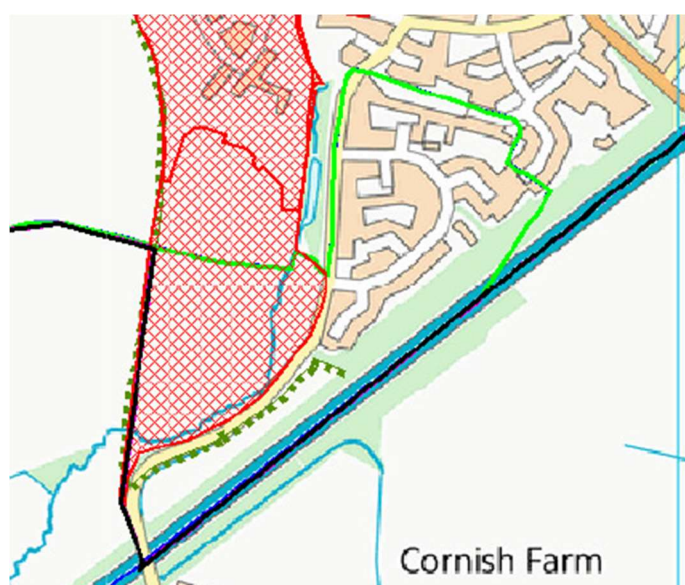
## **Recommendation #2 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



## **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

- The area of Killams Green has no logical geographic connection/sense of place with the village of Trull and in terms of community cohesion would be better grouped with the rest of the Killams area.



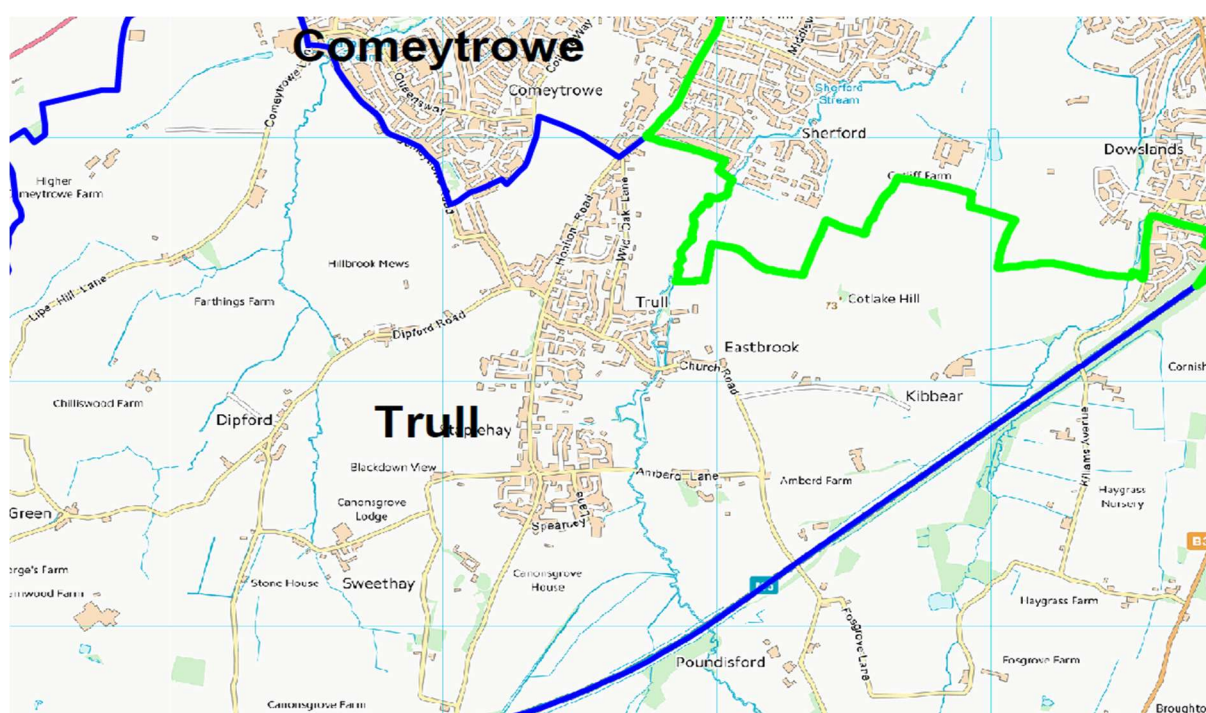
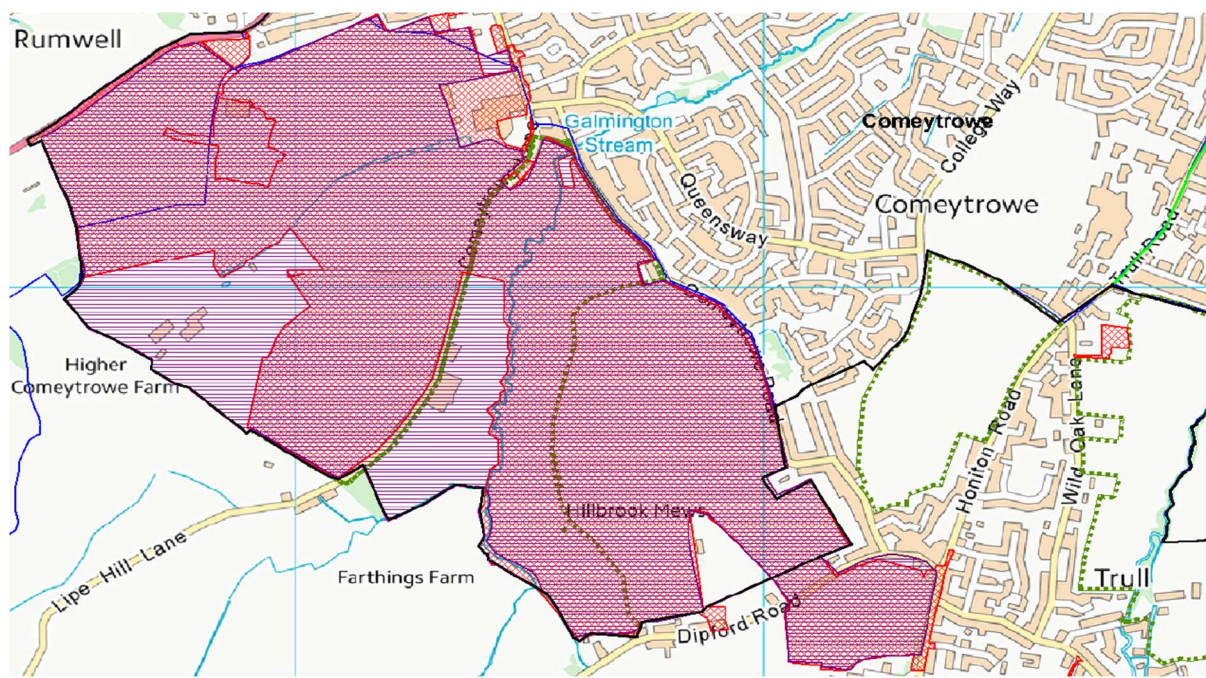
### **Recommendation #3 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that currently falls within Trull Parish should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council/Comeytrowe Parish Council/Bishop's Hull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Based on the considerations received the recommendation of the working group suggest that the boundary line was to be set on a sense of place, that of inclusion in Taunton and geographically contiguous and atypical of an urban area. The new development was considered to exacerbate the urban extension of the community in the Comeytrowe area and these residents, would like those in Comeytrowe, look to Taunton for carrying out their activities in the pattern of their daily life.
- Considered the detailed knowledge of the Planning Policy officers on the expected timescale of the completion of the development as well as its effect on the electoral arrangements on Trull Parish. The size, population and borders of this development would have a large impact on Trull Parish governance arrangements and community cohesion if left as is.
- The proposed change would be sufficient to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

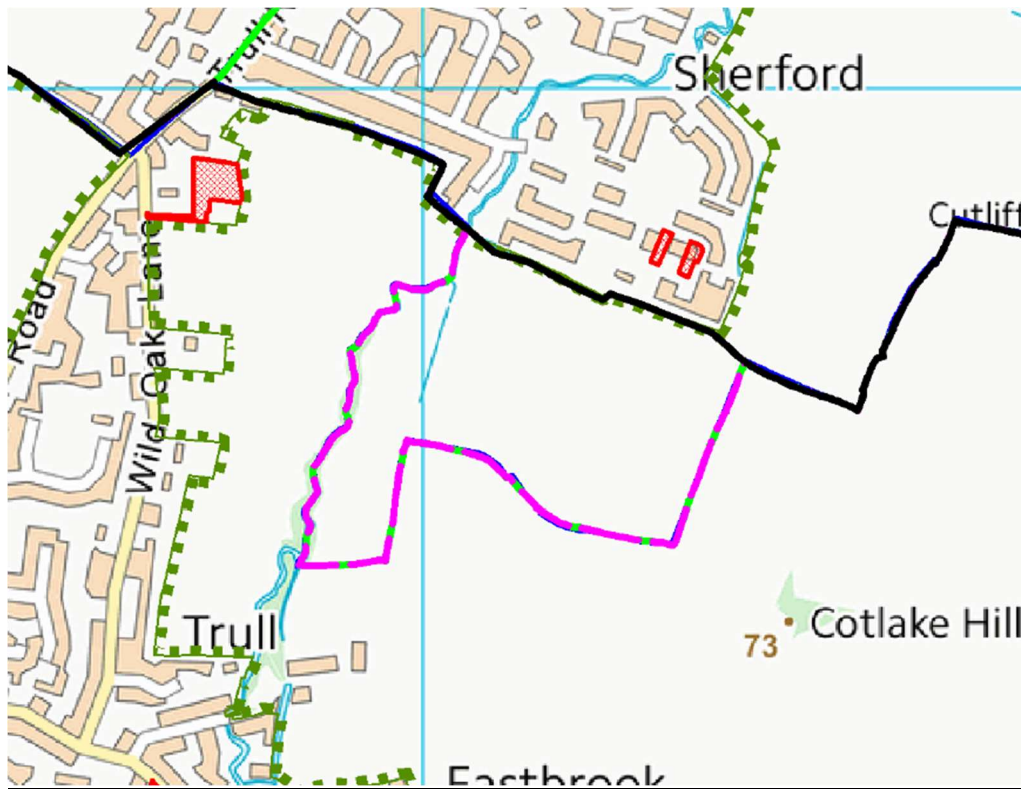
#### **Recommendation #4 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council/ Vivary Ward

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- By following the green wedge around the Sherford Urban area rather than following the Sherford Stream right up in to Trull village, this creates a clearer delineation of the boundary between Taunton and Trull that better reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area in a more logical boundary.



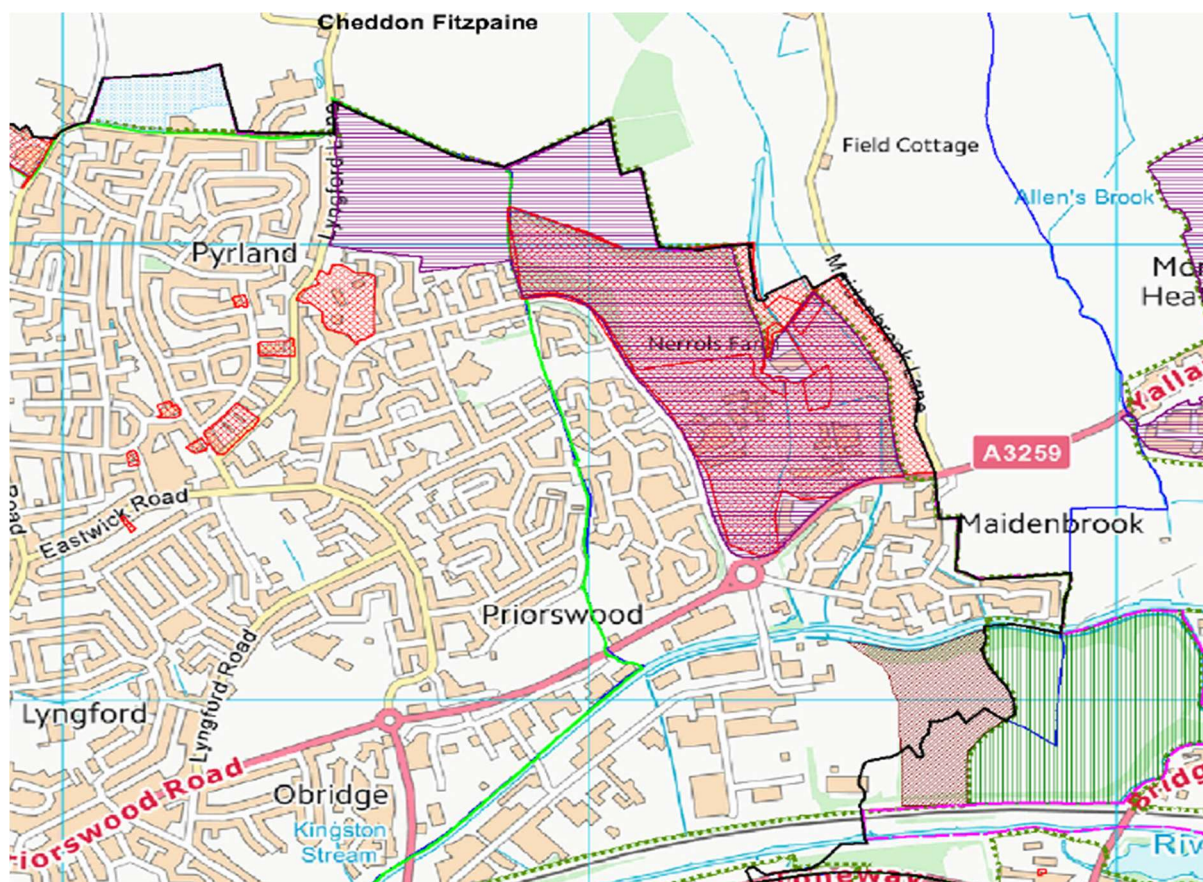
### **Recommendation #5 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

The area covered by the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, including several sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

- Based on the criteria of sense of place, the currently urban area of Nerrols Farm felt part of Taunton and in reflecting the identities and interests of these residents these areas should be included within the proposed Town Council area.
- The influence of development in this particular area on the population of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council over the past twenty years would restore that Parish back its previous identity as a village parish. This was another strong example whereby the guidance around Para 83 came into play with the urban growth of Taunton meaning that neighbours lived in different parishes.
- Planning Policy Officers gave guidance on the detailed knowledge of the expected timescale of the completion of developments which would have an effect on Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish.

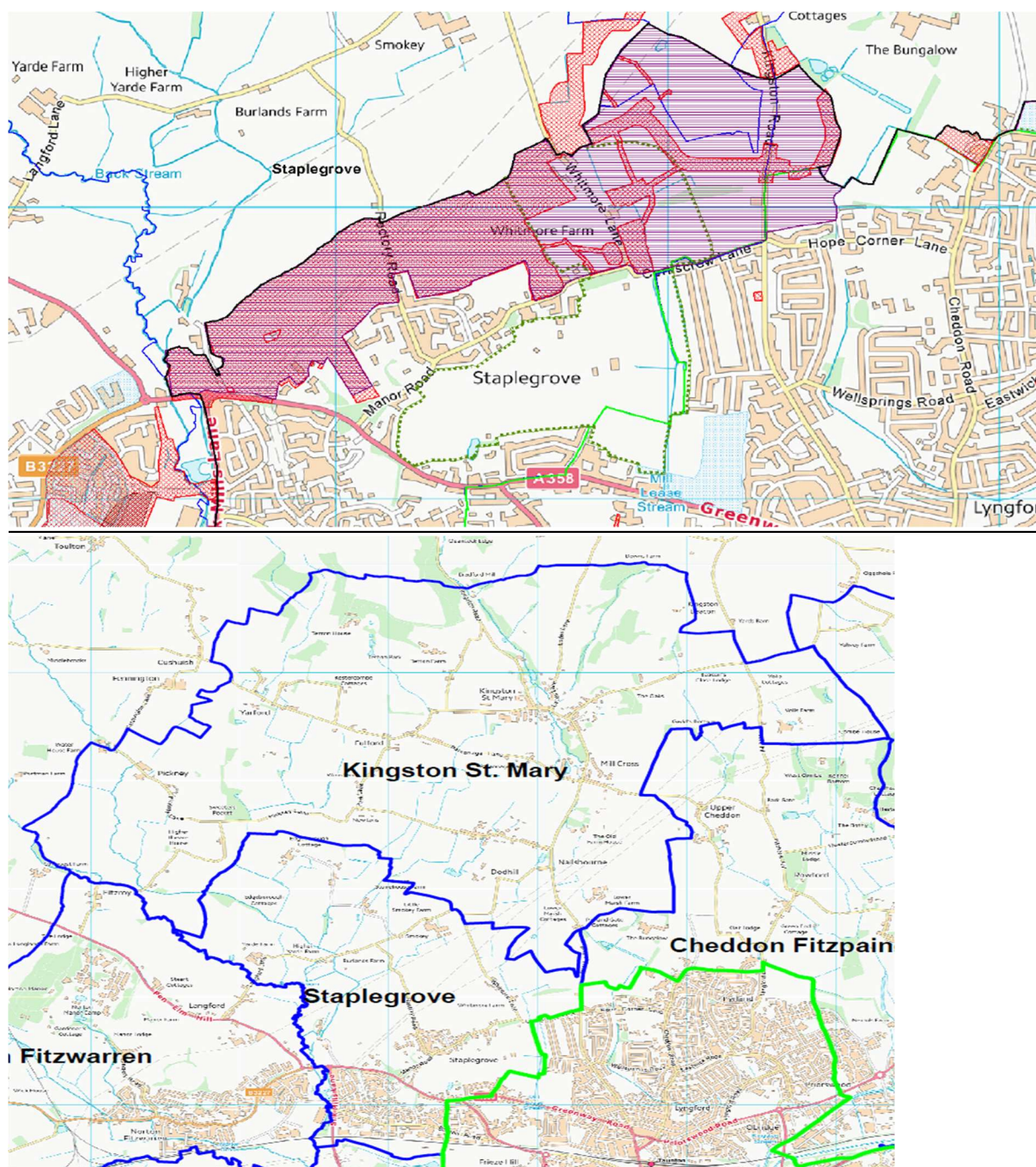
## **Recommendation #6, 7 and 8 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish. The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish. If the proposed changes bring about a remaining Staplegrove Parish area of fewer than 150 electors, that remaining area be merged with Kingston St. Mary Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Staplegrove Parish Council/Kingston St. Mary Parish Council/ Norton Fitzwarren

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:





### Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Through conducting the review and considering all of the evidence it was clear that the sense of place, identities and interests and for local government to remain effective and convenient, this area would be better reflected in being within the proposed Town Council boundary. The application of Para 83 in terms of growth outside the boundary of the UPA very much applied and this would be exacerbated by the new development of the urban growth.
- There was not felt to be a strong local distinctive character from the feedback in the response (which was very low in this area).
- The viability of Staplegrove Parish would be affected by this proposed boundary change and the recommendation to merge it with Kingston St. Mary was based on the more rural character of the remaining areas as opposed to the more urban Norton Fitzwarren settlement.
- As part of this proposal, the slim remainder of Staplegrove Parish jutting the other side of the Silk Mills Road would proposed to be included within the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council (see below map).





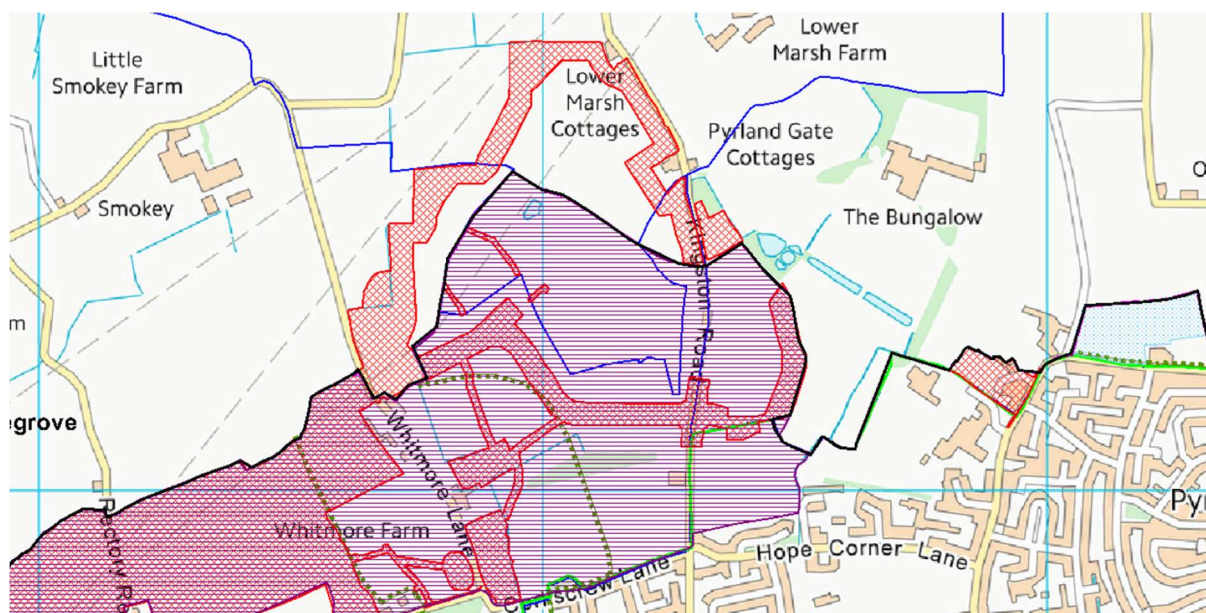
### **Recommendation #9 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

A small southern portion of the Kingston St. Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Kingston St. Mary Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

- Based on the sense of place and to reflect the identities and interests of the area, this was recommended to be included within the Town Council boundary.
- The impact of the Staplegrove East development on the cohesion and character of the Kingston St. Mary village was considered as part of the feedback from the Parish Council and was agreed with in coming to a conclusion to include it within the Town Council boundary.

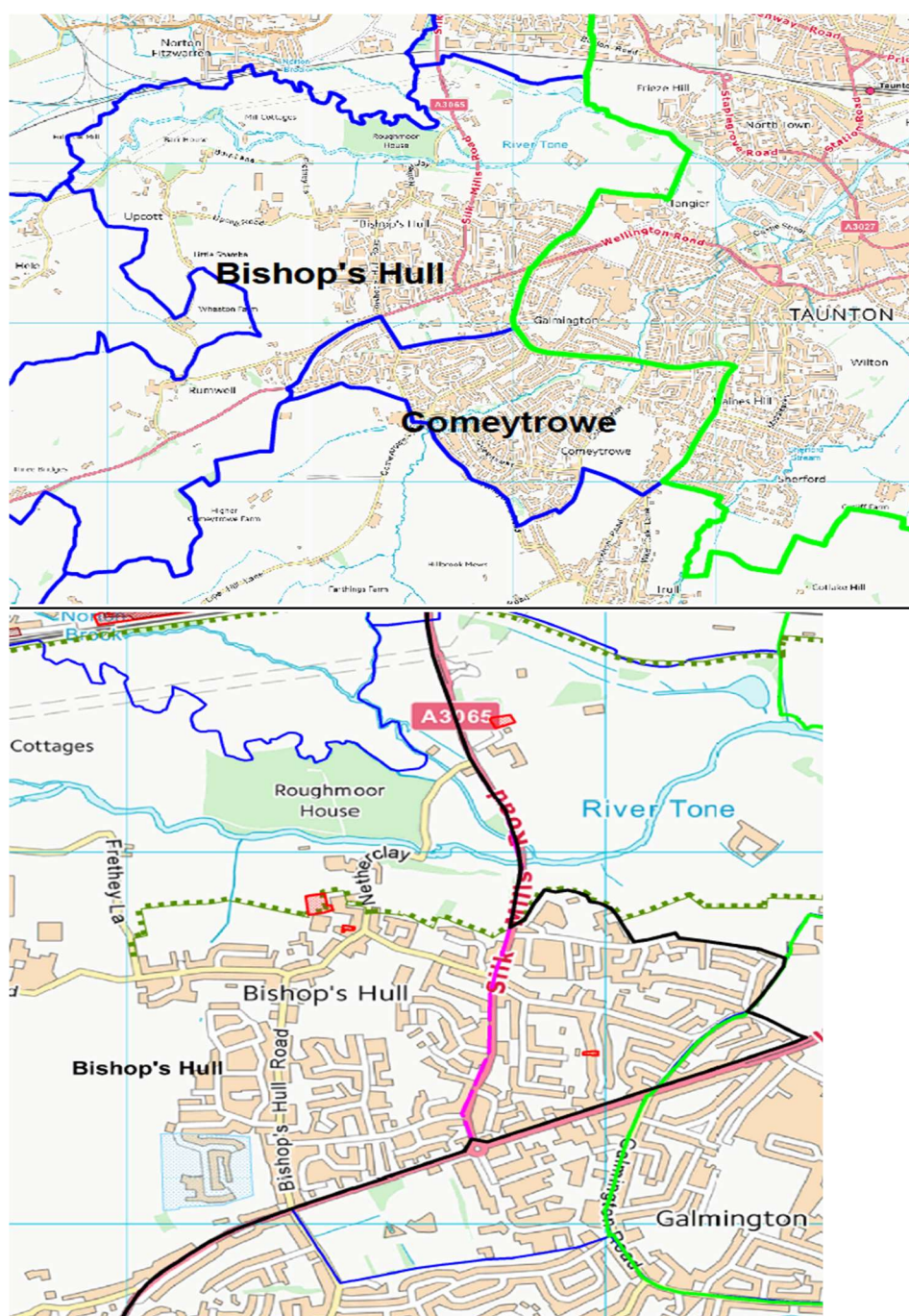
## **Recommendation #10 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish should become part of the proposed new Taunton Parish, and the small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, should become part of Bishops Hull Parish.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Manor and Tangier Ward/ Bishops Hull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Councillors discussed the inclusion of Bishops Hull within the area under review, with discussion held in particular regard to services and amenities residents used and the Silk Mills Road and its effect on the community. The splitting of the parish was disregarded as an option.
- It was considered that the area south of Wellington Road (Galmington Trading Estate) had no sense of identification with Bishop's Hull, yet at a small triangle in the Unparished Area at the cross-section with Wellington Road and the current Unparished Area boundary, these residents did feel part of Bishop's Hull and not Taunton and the triangle was part of the electoral ward for the County division, so this would also align with other electoral arrangements which had developed.



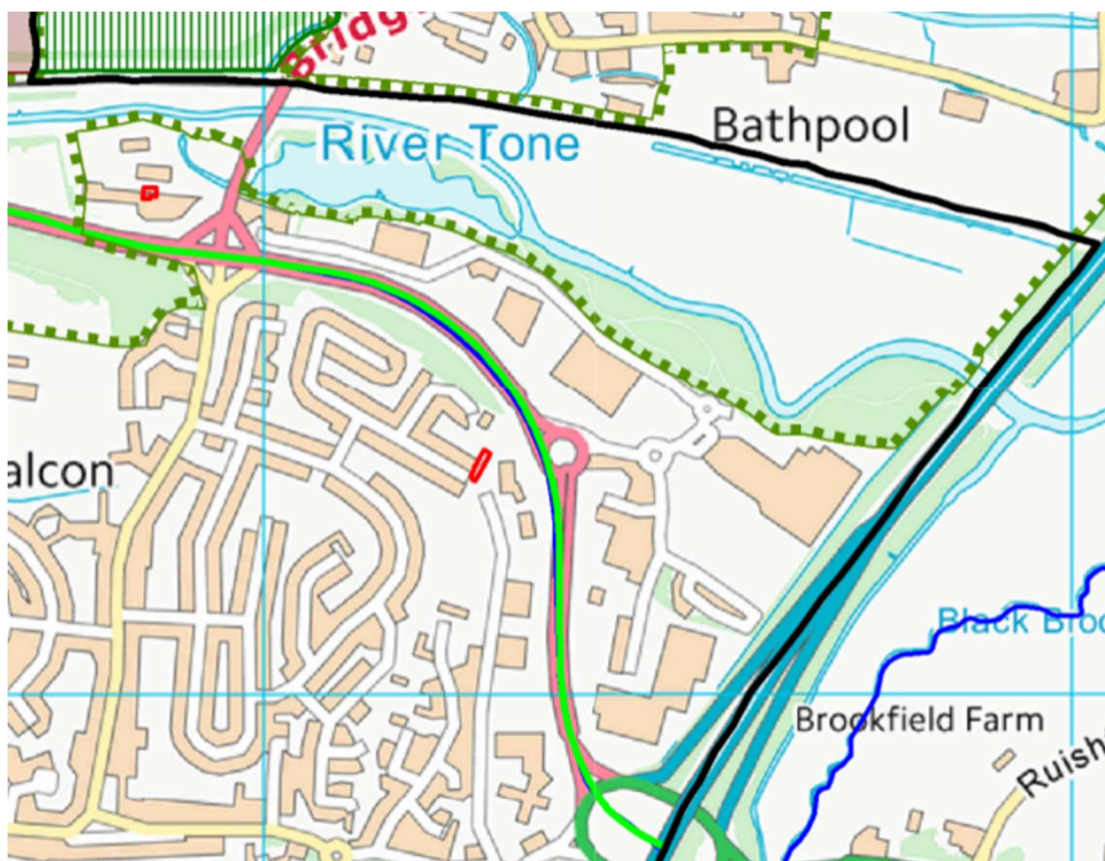
### **Recommendation #11 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

West Monkton Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

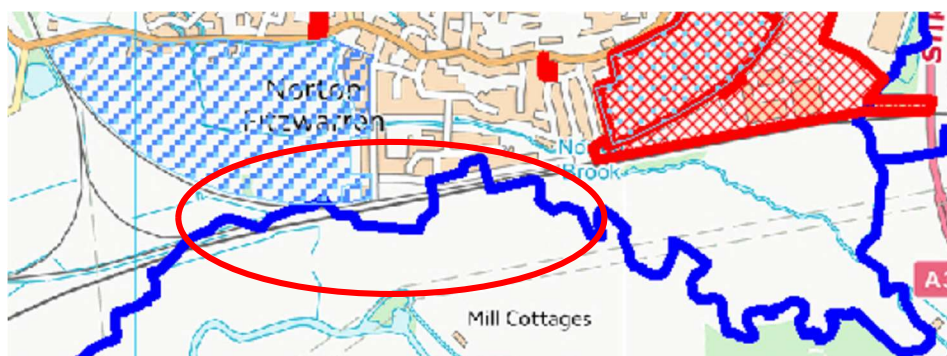
- This area was a key shopping area for the whole town due its key location near the Motorway junction.
- The Working Group considered that the governance of this area was felt to be more effective and convenient in being placed within the Town Council area, especially when considering the proximity of the Halcon Estate just on the left hand side of the Toneway, which was part of the Unparished Area/Town. In terms of sense of place it was felt that the Toneway was part of the Town when you left the Motorway.
- Whilst designated as an out of town shopping area for planning purposes, it was suggested that it was better to include both elements within the Town Council area.

## **Ancillary inter-Parish Boundary Issues discussed by the Working Group**

### **12. Boundary between Norton Fitzwarren and Bishops Hull Parish Councils**

- The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line.

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



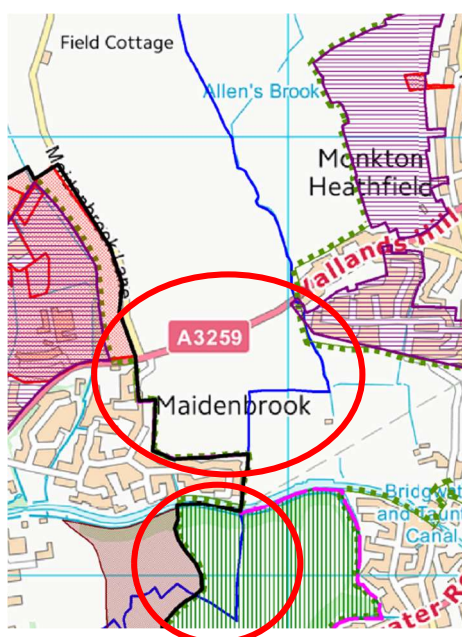
Reasons for the highlighting in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- It was highlighted that the boundary of Bishops Hull Parish did not follow the logical boundary of the railway line but jumped over each side. It was felt that this should be corrected and made no sense from a community cohesion perspective.

### **13. Boundary between West Monkton and Cheddton Fitzpaine Parish Councils-**

*Further consideration be given to whether the current boundary between West Monkton and Cheddton Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park should be amended, for example by following the A3259 westwards to Maidenbrook Lane, in the light of any comments from the respective parish councils.*

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



### Reasons for the highlighting in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- It was considered that the boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish may wish to be revised to remove two anomalous zig-zags that had no relation to the geography of the area and for these two areas abutting the proposed Taunton Town Council area be transferred into West Monkton Parish.
- These minor revisions would be more effective and convenient to maintain and protect these areas for the future. It was agreed to request to write to Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council to include them in these discussions.



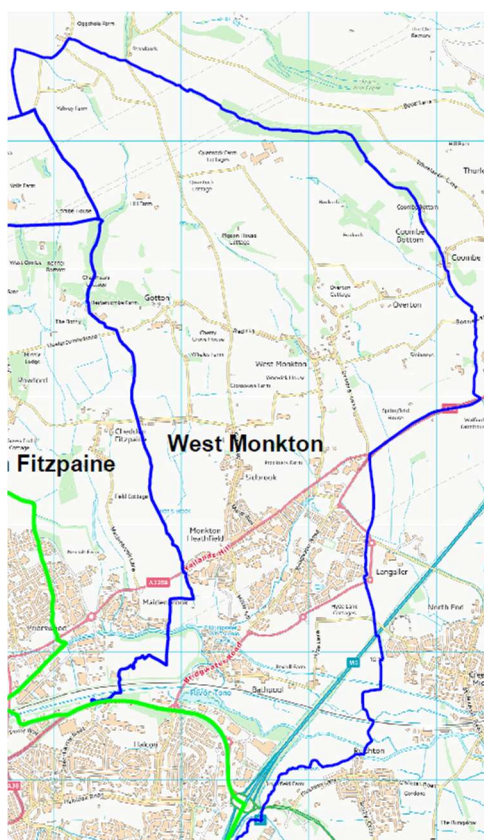
## **Recommendation C on boundary for Taunton Town Council area**

*That with the exception of the area described at Recommendation 11 above, the area of West Monkton Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

West Monkton Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



## **Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance**

- Based on the feedback from the Parish Councils and local residents, it was clear that the Parish of West Monkton had a distinctive sense of place and the existing arrangements reflected the identities and interests of the community in that area.

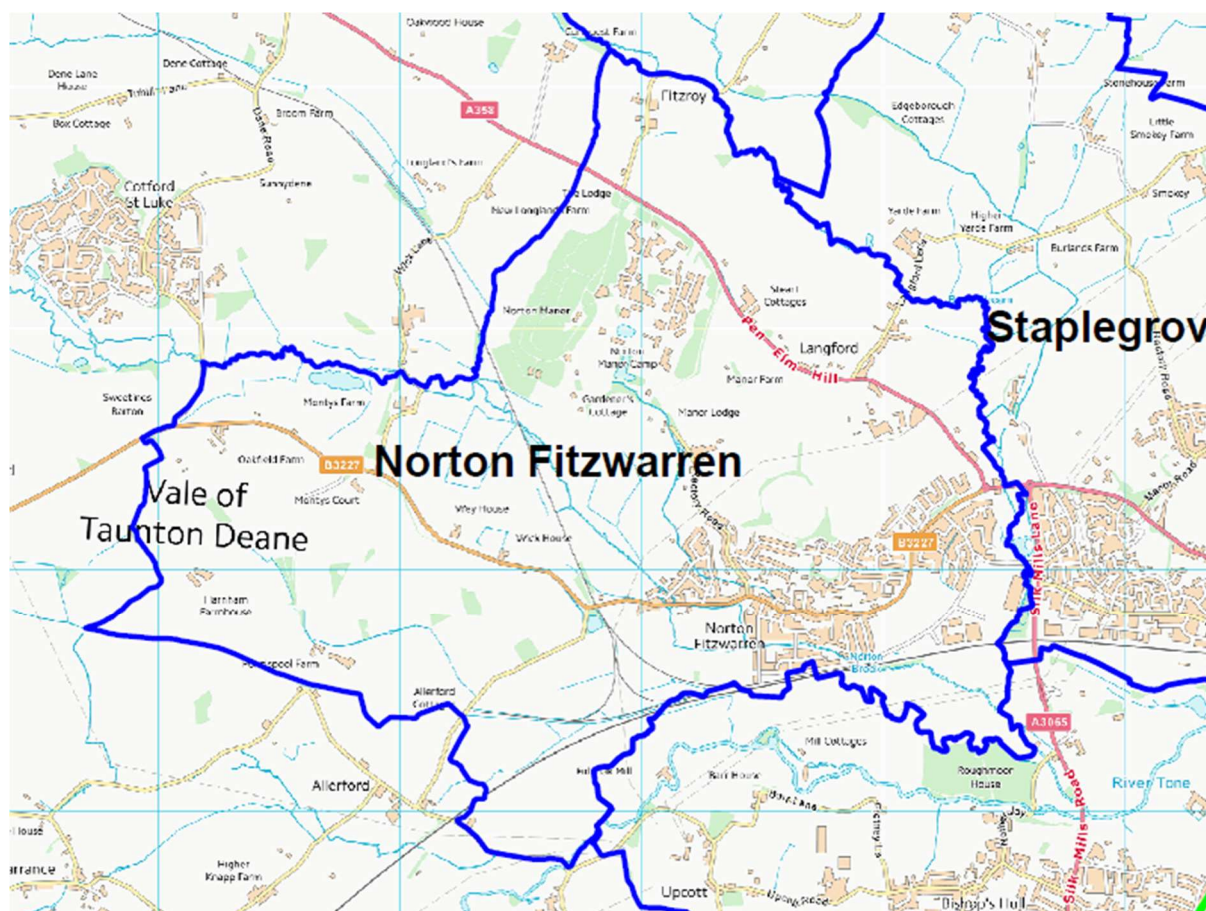
### **Recommendation D on boundary for Taunton Town Council area:**

*That the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.*

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with of the Statutory Guidance:

- Based on the feedback from the Parish Councils and local residents, it was clear that the Parish of Norton Fitzwarren had a distinctive sense of place and the existing arrangements reflected the identities and interests of the community in that area.