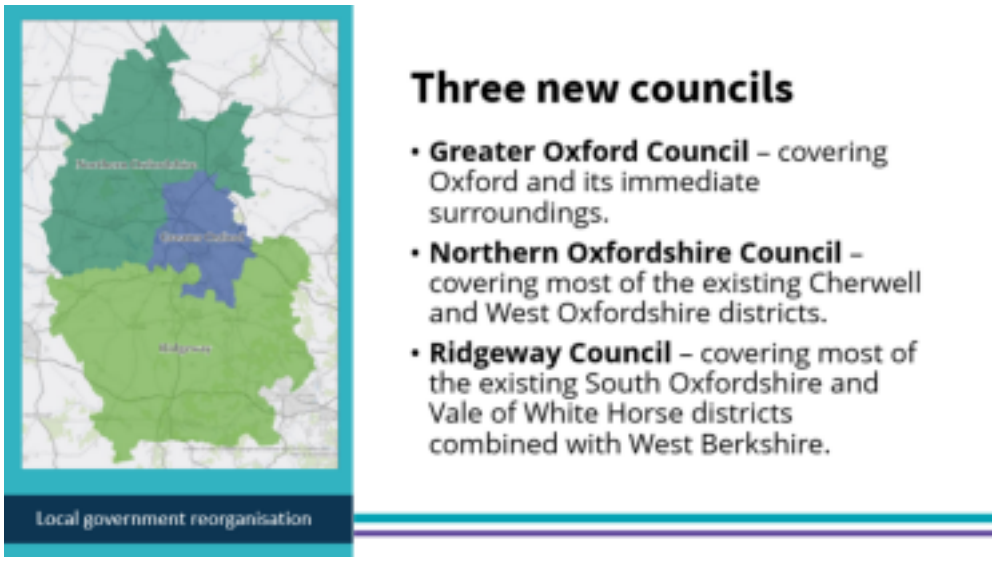
Oxfordshire County Council News July/August 2026

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Local Government Reorganisation

After a lot of speculation and preparation, the government disclosed its 'minded-to' decision for the unitary authority format for Oxfordshire's local government on 16th July.

From 1st April (ahem - yes, that is the date), 2028, the County will have three unitary authorities as above.

The Greater Oxford Council boundary (proposed by the current Labour-controlled City Council) closely follows the line of Oxford's Green Belt. Currently, almost all of Oxford's Green Belt – which was created in 1975 – sits outside the city's administrative boundaries.

Greater Oxford would cover a region with a population of about 240,000 people today, rising to about 345,000 by 2040.

The 3councils.org website says: *"The Greater Oxford proposals would give local residents control of the Green Belt for the first time. The government has been clear that some of the 'Grey Belt' – defined as "poor quality" areas of the Green Belt – in England should be developed to help deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years. This will be a big change for Oxfordshire.*

Rather than incrementally building around every town and village across the county, as is currently the case, Greater Oxford can ensure

that high-quality, suitably dense and sustainable developments are built near to existing jobs and community facilities, with good public transport."

This includes the entirety of this Division. It amounts to a huge land grab by the City Council in order to build.

Currently, we have been told that there will be no challenge possible to this structure. If so, the government proceeds to an SCO (Structural Change Order) in the Autumn of this year when this will become official.

Elections for councillors for the three bodies will take place in May 2027 when they become shadow authorities which will take over services in April 2028.

Tim Bearder (the new Leader of the Lib Dem-controlled County Council) has written to Andrew Burnham firmly stating that he does not think this plan a good one.

It is worth pointing out that small Unitaries are known to fail financially and with Oxfordshire being split into three, each of the Unitaries is under the governmentally desired level of 500,000 residents – Northern Oxfordshire (265,000) and Greater Oxford (240,000k) substantially so. The Ridgeway unitary will be larger with 430,000 residents, but Berinsfield and Garsington Division will no longer be part of that.

List of South Oxfordshire parishes that would become part of Greater Oxford under the reorganisation:

- Beckley and Stowood
- Berinsfield
- Clifton Hampden
- Cuddesdon and Denton
- Culham
- Dorchester
- Drayton St. Leonard
- Elsfield
- Forest Hill with Shotover
- Garsington
- Great Milton
- Holton
- Horspath
- Little Milton
- Marsh Baldon
- Nuneham Courtenay
- Sandford-on-Thames
- Stadhampton
- Stanton St. John
- Toot Baldon
- Warborough
- Waterperry with Thomley
- Waterstock
- Wheatley
- Woodeaton.

Councillor Numbers

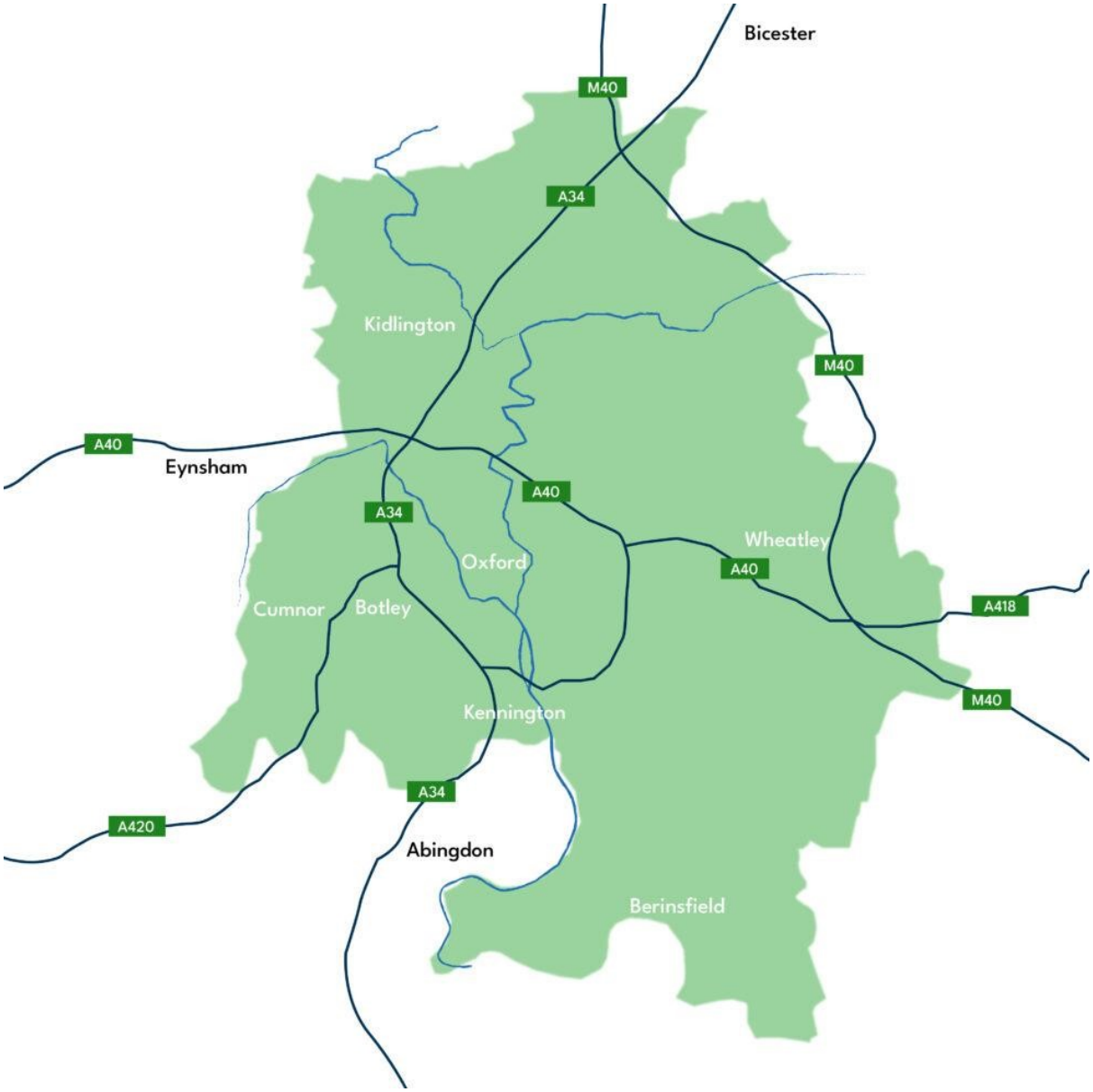
The numbers of Councillors planned to represent residents under this arrangement is currently under review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in order to create 'electoral equality'.

The ward boundaries are also under review to the same end.

Estimates based on standard unitary ratios of one councillor per 4-5,000 residents are currently:

72 for Ridgeway Council
60-65 for Northern Oxford Council
54-60 for Greater Oxford Council.

Map of Greater Oxford (below)



Other News

Water Safety: Guidance has been issued by the County Council on staying safe during hot weather (can be found **here**). Thames Water has announced a hosepipe ban effective Thursday 23rd July.

National Highways and Transport survey: The National Highways and Transport Network is the UK's leading benchmarking and service improvement partnership for Local Highway Authorities. The survey can be found **here**. This is a national survey which helps guide councils and is based on residents' responses.

For access to all consultations visit: **https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk**