

ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP
Wednesday 22 June 2022 at 3.00 pm
Committee Room 1 - Civic Centre

AGENDA

1. Confirmation of the Chair
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 2 - 3)
5. Issues Arising from the Workshop
6. Response to LGBCE Warding Consultation (Pages 4 - 17)
7. Wider Member Consultation
8. Timescales/Future Meetings

**MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP
HELD ON**

31 March 2022

11.00 am - 12.13 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Simon Carter (Chair)
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor James Leppard
Councillor Chris Vince

Officers

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services
Alison Hodgson, Electoral Services Manager
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer
Natasha Terrell, Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal

13. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

15. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Agreed.

16. **MATTERS ARISING**

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services, gave an update following the last meeting. The proposals on council size had been submitted to the LGBCE. The LGBCE would be considering the proposals on 19 April.

The Council would be required to be submit its ward proposals in July and these would have to be approved by Full Council.

17. **MAPPING OF NEW WARD BOUNDARIES**

The Working Group noted the guide included in the supplementary agenda. They considered initial proposals on the basis that the Council would have an additional ward.

It was agreed that A0 copies of Harlow with street names (one with, and one without ward boundaries) would be sent to Councillors. Councillors would also be sent ward numbers and a breakdown of new developments by street.

The Working Group agreed that a two week consultation on the warding proposals would take place with other Councillors.

18. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be arranged for Thursday 21 April.

CHAIR OF THE WORKING GROUP

REPORT TO: ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 22 JUNE 2022

TITLE: RESPONSE TO LGBCE WARDING CONSULTATION

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE SUPPORT (01279) 446099

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: ALISON HODGSON, ELECTORAL SERVICES MANAGER (01279) 446038

JANET JACKSON, CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE SUPPORT MANAGER (01279) 446004

ADAM REES, SENIOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORT OFFICER (01279) 446057

NATASHA TERRELL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - GOVERNANCE, HR AND LEGAL (01279) 446022

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Working Group considers proposals for revised ward boundaries based on Harlow having either 11 or 12 wards.

BACKGROUND

1. To comply with the statutory requirement to carry out an electoral review, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has a legal requirement to review all local authorities from time to time. An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements and Harlow was last reviewed 22 years ago. There are two stages to the LGBCE review process; the first being the decision on Council size; and the second being the Warding arrangements.
2. The LGBCE issued the Council a 'minded-to' decision on 26 April 2022 following its stage one considerations, that Harlow should continue to have 33 Councillors. This followed the co-operation of the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group comprising of both Conservative and Labour members which resulted in a Council submission that the number be increased to 36.
3. The LGBCE is now running a public consultation on warding proposals for Harlow. This consultation is now due to run to the 28 July. At this stage, as well as for the initial submission stage, any interested party may submit a proposal in

response to the consultation. They have set out three criteria that any proposals should follow. These are that:

- i) There should be equality of electorate across all wards (meaning councillors in each ward should represent approximately the same number of voters);
 - ii) Ward patterns should, as far as possible, reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable; and
 - iii) Electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government.
4. A guide on proposing warding patterns has been put together for the benefit of Councillors and this is attached as Appendix A. A workshop has also been arranged to take place immediately before this meeting.
 5. The LGBCE has said the Council can submit more than one proposal if it wishes. There will be a presumption in favour of proposals that comply with the 'minded-to' decision. However, the LGBCE have stated they will be led by the evidence and can change their recommendation on council size based on the evidence they receive.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

6. In considering future warding patterns it is necessary to consider:
 - i) The total number of wards;
 - ii) Ward boundaries; and
 - iii) The number of councillors elected to each ward
7. Whilst the council could submit a proposal which meant council size was not a multiple of three, the LGBCE is highly unlikely to accept any such proposal unless there were hugely compelling reasons. This is because the Council has elections by thirds and the LGBCE wants to ensure electors have the same number of opportunities to participate in the democratic process. It is recommended that the Council submits two proposals: One that provides 33 Councillors and one which provides 36 Councillors. These would produce 11 or 12 wards respectively.
8. No proposal will perfectly meet the LGBCE's criteria, and the focus should be on a proposal that best meets the criteria. This may involve some balancing of electorate sizes against community cohesion.

11 Wards

9. Members will be aware of the challenges that exist in creating an 11-ward proposal that meets criteria a and b. The town has many well-defined communities, as a result of the Gibberd principles which have governed the town's development.
10. Using the Electoral Forecast of 74,056 an 11-ward proposal should be aiming for 6,732 electors per ward, +/- 10% (therefore an electorate between 6058 and 7,405 will be in balance and acceptable).
11. Officers have drawn boundaries which provide electoral equality and the most appropriate community cohesion possible as well as boundaries purely based on communities however these versions do not provide electoral equality. It is recommended that Councillors use these as starting points to produce a single 11 ward proposal for inclusion in the Council's consultation response. The maps are attached as appendices B and C to the report.

12 Wards

12. There is political consensus that 12 wards would best meet the LGBCE's criteria. There is also consensus that the additional ward should include the developments at Gildea Way and Newhall.
13. Using the Electoral Forecast of 74,056 a 12-ward proposal should be aiming for 6,171 electors per ward, +/- 10% (therefore an electorate between 5553 and 6,788 will be in balance and acceptable).
14. Both Councillors and Officers have produced draft 12-ward maps on this basis. The final proposal will need to show that it better meets the LGBCE's criteria compared to possible 11 ward solutions, focus on ward names will assist in supporting the community identities and boundaries building on the Gibberd new town plan.

Next Steps

15. The Working Group is recommended to discuss proposals and agree on a response to the consultation. This should include the number of ward proposals it wishes to submit.
16. Full Council will approve the Council's response to the consultation at its meeting on 28 July. The LGBCE will then consider all the consultation responses and produce draft ward recommendations.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Communities and Environment

As contained in the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance and Corporate Services

Legal Consideration:

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (Sec 56) provides that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England must from time to time conduct a review of electoral arrangements of each principal council in England.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Appendices

Appendix A – Guide on Warding Patterns

Appendix B – 11 Ward Maps (Community Cohesion)

Appendix C – 11 Ward Map (Electoral Equality)

Appendix D – Councillor Leppard 12 Ward Map

Appendix E – Councillor Vince 12 Ward Map

Appendix F – Councillor Leppard 11 Ward Map

Appendix G – Councillor Vince 11 Ward Map (to follow)

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LGBCE – Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Appendix A

How to propose a pattern of wards

This is a brief guide based on the Local Government Boundary Commission's guide.

Important things to remember:

- **Give your reasoning – explain your opinion using evidence and examples.**

It is important to tell the commission why you are putting forward your view.

- **Make it relevant**

The commission has three main criteria (set out in law) which it must follow when it produces a new pattern of wards:

1. Electoral Equality.
2. Reflecting community interests and identities.
3. Promote effective and convenient local government.

1. Electoral Equality

This means ensuring each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters. Note: the commission base their decisions on the number of electors in a ward NOT the total population.

The commission recognize that perfect electoral equality is unlikely to be exactly achieved. If a proposed boundary is over or under the target the commission you will need to provide sufficient evidence using the 2nd and 3rd criteria detailed below.

The greater the level of electoral imbalance which would result from the proposals, the more persuasive the evidence will need to be.

2. Reflecting community interests and identities.

This means establishing electoral arrangements which maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable. The best evidence is normally a combination of factual information, such as the existence of communication links, facilities and organisations and an explanation of how people use those facilities.

Below are some issues often used to assess community interests and identity:

- Transport links
- Community groups – is there a residents group or other local organisation that represents the area? What area and activities do they cover? A well-argued representation containing detailed factual information is likely to carry more weight.
- Facilities – where do local people go for shopping, medical services, schools, leisure, parks? The location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community. The commission would be looking for evidence that such facilities stimulate or provide a focus for community interaction.
- Identifiable boundaries – e.g. rivers, valleys, woodland, major roads, railway lines. The commission will not seek to include areas on either side of a river, railway line with no crossing points within the same ward. It may be argued that major roads provide a natural divide between communities but in some instances they may also link them.

- Shared interests

3. Promote effective and convenient local government

This means ensuring that the new wards can be represented effectively and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

The commission will only seek to propose three-member wards if we elect in thirds.

‘Doughnut’ wards are not recommended.

Ward names – the commission will usually use names which have been put to them by local people. They will also see to ensure names are not too long and are distinct from others in the area to avoid confusion.

Other things to note:

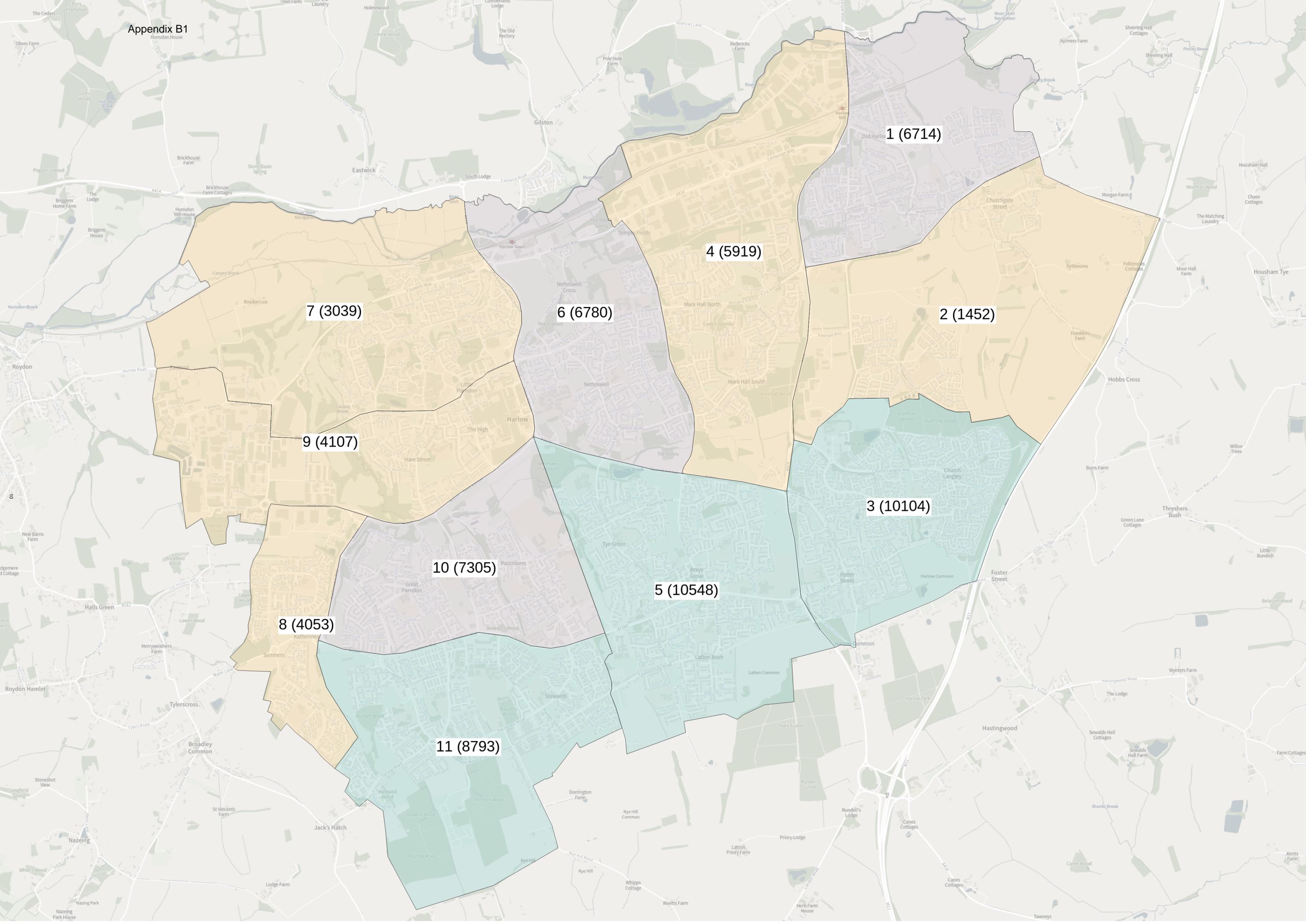
- The commission will not usually consider history and tradition. Communities change over time and perceptions can vary between individuals as to the nature of those ties. The commission would need to hear how those traditional arrangements reflect communities now.
- The commission considers that census (social and economic) data can provide useful background information but will treat with caution when proposing new wards.

It may be beneficial to look at current and recent reviews which can be found online here:

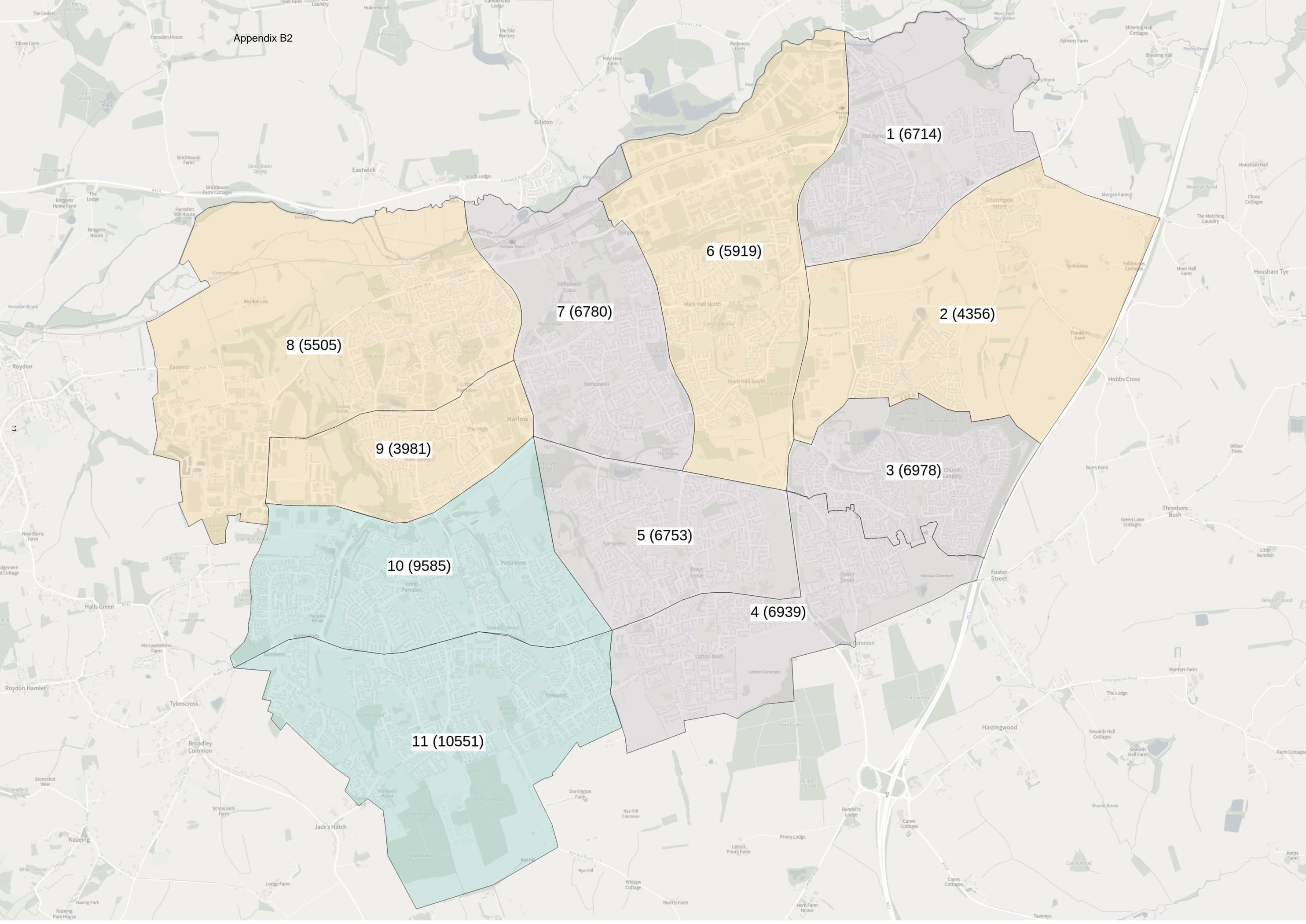
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews>

Appendix B1

Hunsdon House



Appendix B2



1 (6714)

6 (5919)

2 (4356)

7 (6780)

8 (5505)

9 (3981)

3 (6978)

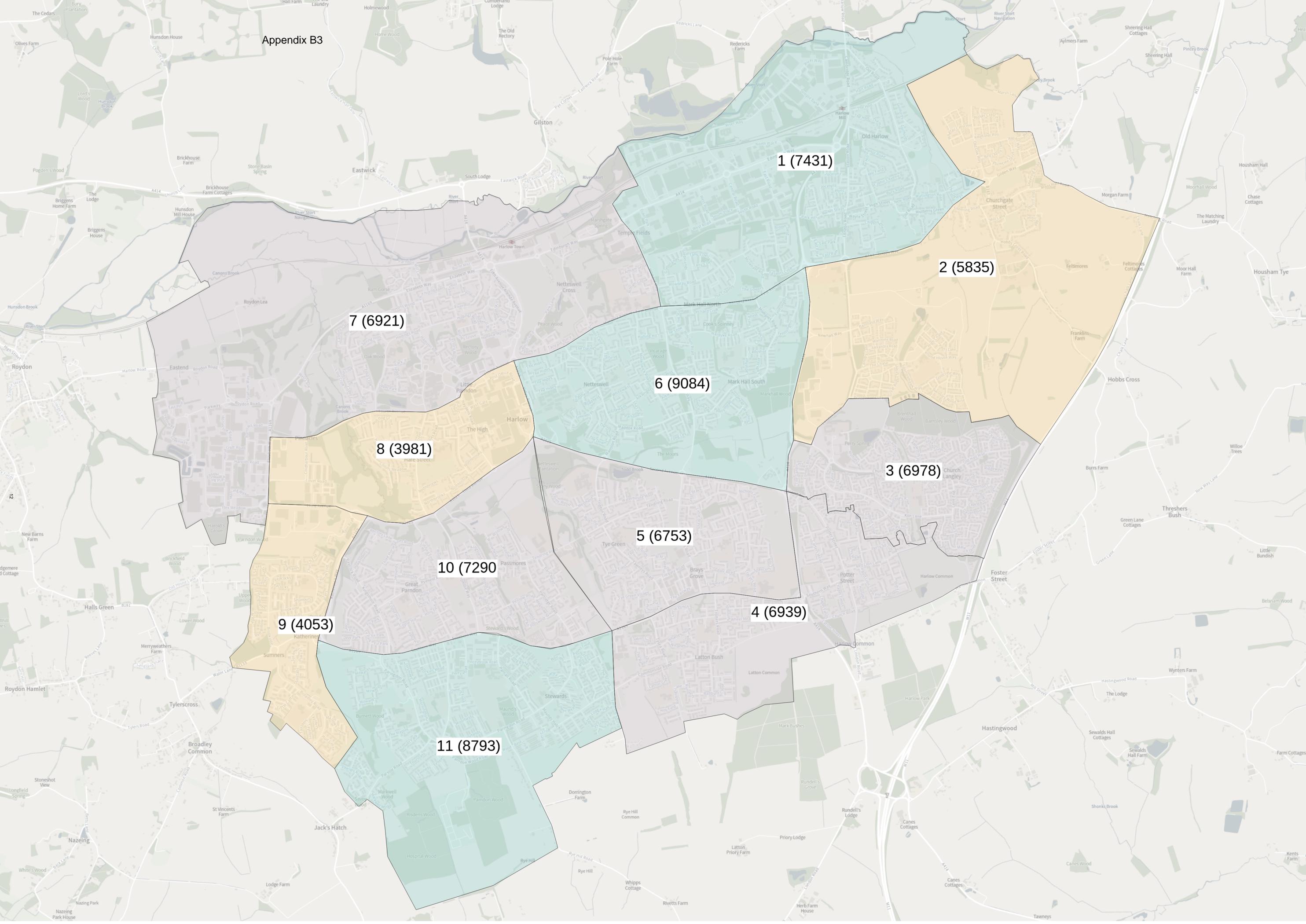
5 (6753)

10 (9585)

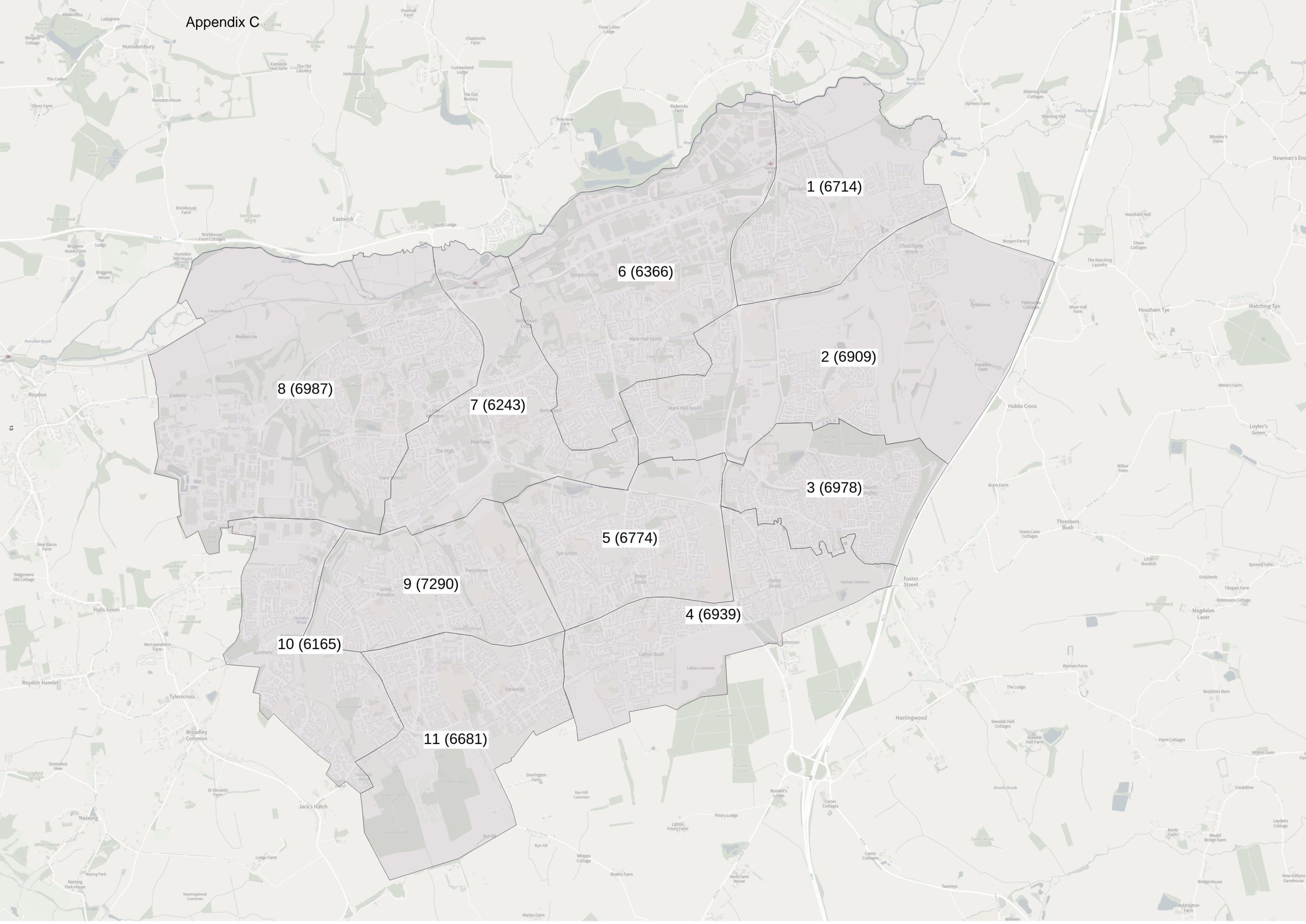
4 (6939)

11 (10551)

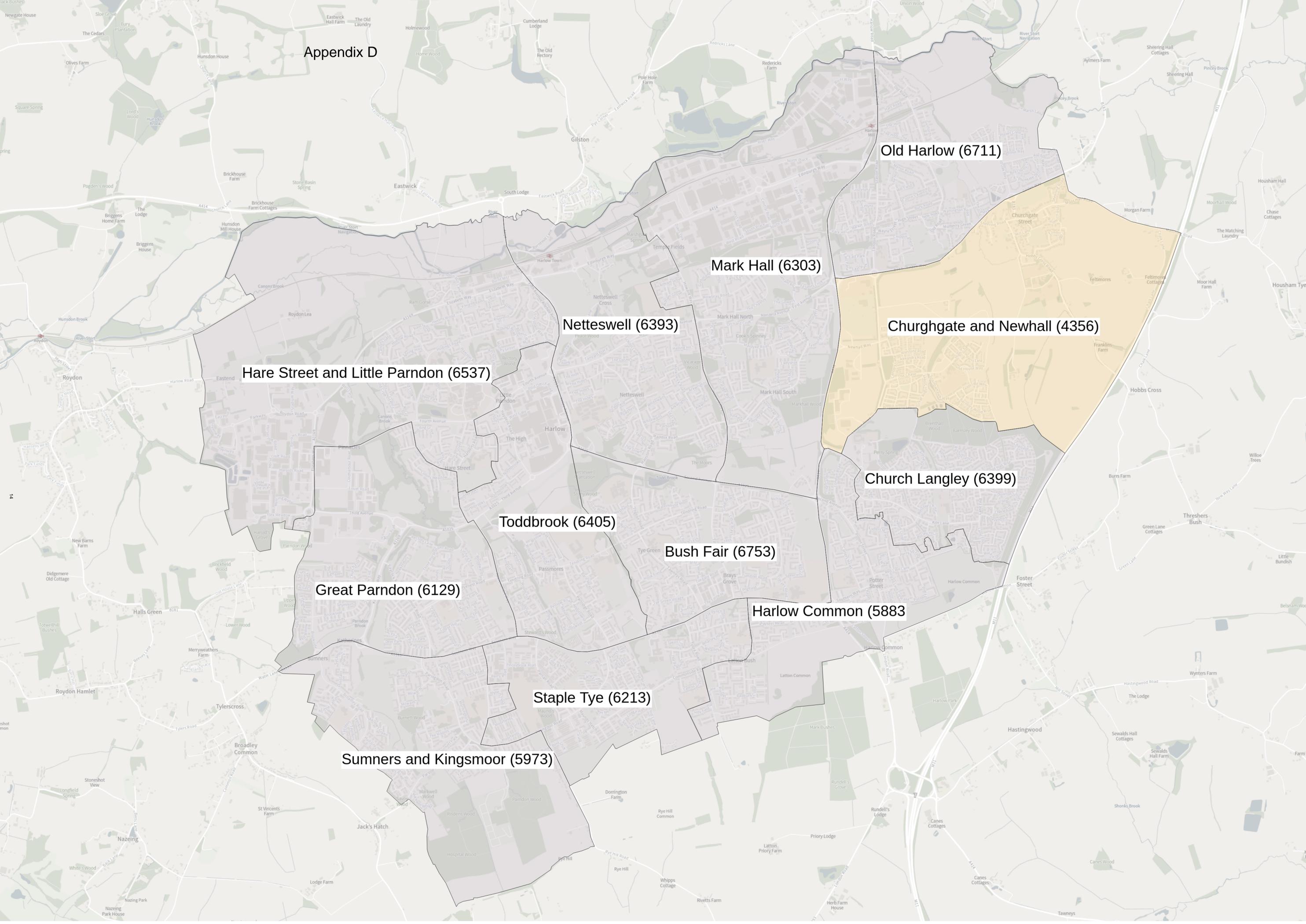
Appendix B3



Appendix C



Appendix D



Old Harlow (6711)

Mark Hall (6303)

Churghgate and Newhall (4356)

Netteswell (6393)

Hare Street and Little Parndon (6537)

Church Langley (6399)

Toddbrook (6405)

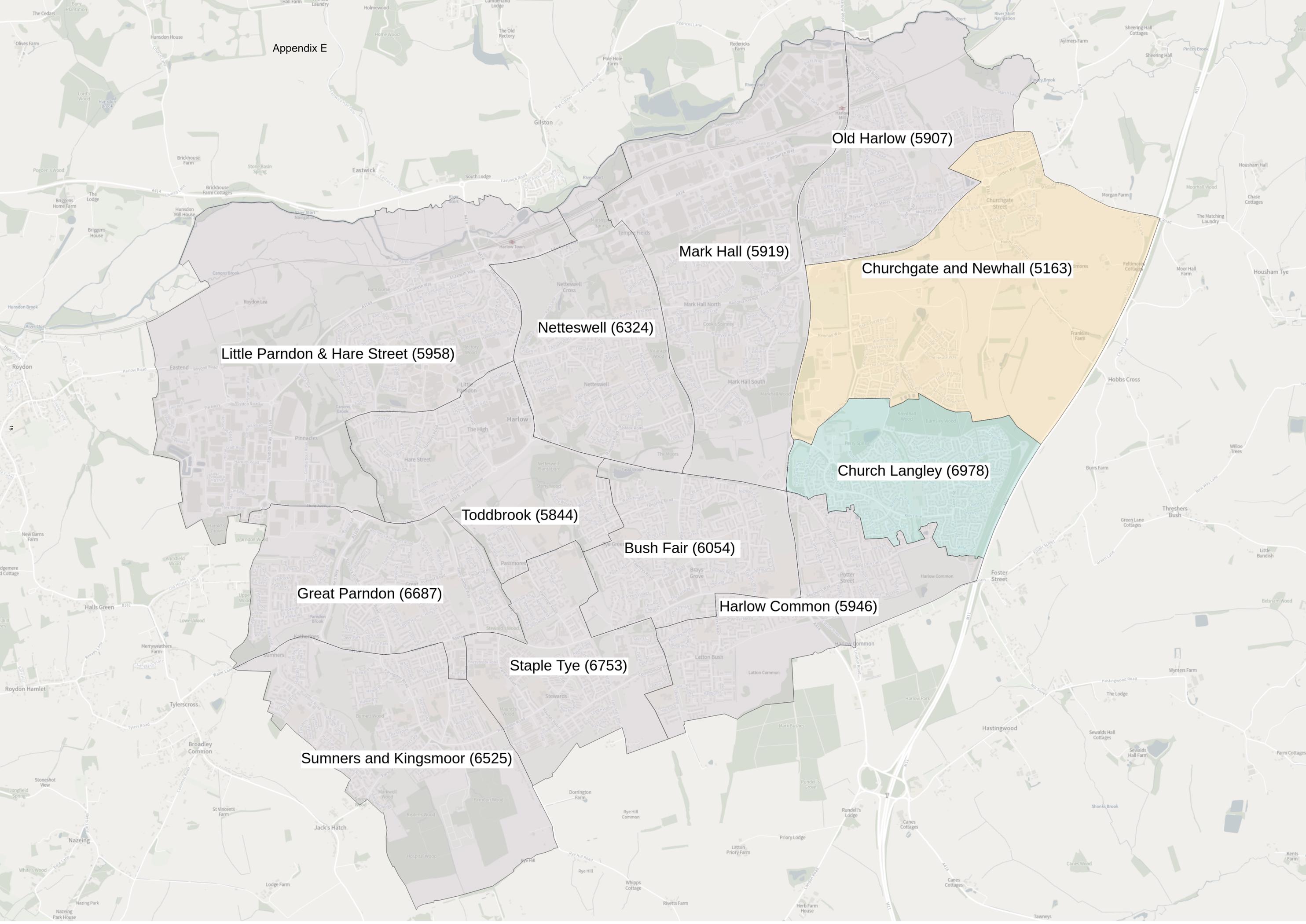
Bush Fair (6753)

Harlow Common (5883)

Great Parndon (6129)

Staple Tye (6213)

Sumners and Kingsmoor (5973)



Old Harlow (5907)

Mark Hall (5919)

Churchgate and Newhall (5163)

Netteswell (6324)

Little Parndon & Hare Street (5958)

Church Langley (6978)

Toddbrook (5844)

Bush Fair (6054)

Great Parndon (6687)

Harlow Common (5946)

Staple Tye (6753)

Summers and Kingsmoor (6525)

Appendix F

Old Harlow and Gilden Way (6877/2293)

Mark Hall and The Stow (6303/2101)

Netteswell (7269/2423)

Little Parndon (6282/2094)

Church Langley East and Newhall (7275)

Church Langley West and Potter Street (7020)

Great Parndon (6129/2043), Passmores (6885/2295)

Latton Bush and Commonsides (6576/2192)

Sumners and Kingsmoor (6687/2229)

Old Harlow and Burnt Mill (6078/2026)

Mark Hall and The Stow (6717/2239)

Newhall and Churchgate (6366/2122)

Little Parndon and Hare Street (6762/2254)

Netteswell and The High (7347/2449)

Church Langley (6978/2326)

Tye Green (6957/2319)

Great Parndon (6459/2153)

Brays Grove and Potter Street (7095/2365)

Stewards and Latton Bush (6627/2209)

Sumners and Kingsmoor (6687/2229)