

Summary and analysis of consultation responses and summary of representations from named consultees

Background

1. A statutory consultation on proposals for unitary local government in Oxfordshire was opened on 5 February and closed on 26 March 2026. We received a total of 4,676 responses.
2. The three proposals being consulted on were made by councils and submitted to the Government on 28 November 2025.
3. This document provides a summary of the 4,676 responses received to the Government's consultation on the proposals for future unitary local government in Oxfordshire.
4. The Government announced to Parliament in July 2026 that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the **3 unitary proposal submitted by Oxford City Council, with West Berkshire included in the southern unitary**.
 - **Greater Oxford Council** – Oxford City Council, together with 15 parishes from Cherwell District Council, 25 parishes from South Oxfordshire District Council and nine parishes from Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - **Northern Oxfordshire Council** – Cherwell District Council (less the 15 parishes included within 'Greater Oxford Council') and West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - **Ridgeway Council** – South Oxfordshire District Council (less the 25 parishes included within 'Greater Oxford Council'), Vale of White Horse District Council (less the nine parishes included within Greater Oxford Council), and West Berkshire Council.

From here, this is referred to as the '3 unitary proposal'.

5. **The consultation also invited views on the proposal submitted by Oxfordshire County Council proposing 1 unitary council:**
 - **Oxfordshire:** Cherwell, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire.

From here, this is referred to as the '1 unitary proposal.'

6. **The consultation also invited views on the proposal submitted by Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council proposing 2 unitary councils:**
 - **Oxford and Shires Council:** Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.

- **Ridgeway Council:** Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire, plus West Berkshire (outside of invitation area)

From here, this is referred to as the '2 unitary proposal.'

7. The consultation on these proposals has informed an assessment of the merits of each proposal. All the proposals have been considered carefully, alongside the responses received to this consultation, representations and any other relevant information, in assessing the proposals against the criteria before a judgement was taken on which proposal to implement.
8. The criteria by which proposals for local government reorganisation have been assessed are set out in the letter of invitation, sent to councils in area on 5 February 2025 [LINK](#). The consultation asked questions relating to the criteria for each of the above proposals.
9. This consultation relates to the structure of local government in Oxfordshire. These proposals relate to England only.

Methodology

10. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 states that the Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless they have consulted with every authority affected by the proposal and other such other persons as they consider appropriate. Those councils and persons considered appropriate are hereafter referred to as 'named consultees'.
11. The list of named consultees is available here [Proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire - GOV.UK](#)
12. In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (the Ministry) welcomed the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.
13. The Ministry used Citizen Space, a third-party consultation programme to collect responses. Citizen Space was open to both named consultees and all other interested parties. Further information on the statutory basis for, and methodology of, the consultation is provided on the [publication page](#).
14. Responses to the consultation were also received by email and letter.
15. The Ministry used a tool named Consult AI to assist in the analysis of responses. The AI tool identified themes present in the responses, which MHCLG officials have checked for accuracy. The tool did not have access to any personal data. All responses from named consultees were read by Ministry staff.

16. The department has conducted an evaluation of the Consult tool and concluded that Consult's theme mappings are consistent with human reviewers' assessments. For this consultation, human reviewers independently checked the theme assignments Consult had produced and likewise found that Consult's theme mappings were broadly consistent with the human reviewers.

Consultation Questions

17. Respondents answered the questions below using a five-point agree–disagree scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with an additional 'don't know' option

18. The questions were as follows:

- a) **Question 1:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?
- b) **Question 2:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?
- c) **Question 3:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?
- d) **Question 4:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

This proposal includes West Berkshire. As of 5 February 2026, West Berkshire Council had received in-principle Exceptional Financial Support to support their 2025/26 budget. This council will not necessarily be in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support in future financial years. Updates on Exceptional Financial Support can be found on GOV.UK.

- e) **Question 5:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?
- f) **Question 6:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?
- g) **Question 7:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?
- h) **Question 8:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?
- i) **Question 9:** If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

- j) **Question 10:** This proposal is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary changes. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?
- k) **Question 11:** If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

Summary of responses

19. There were 4,676 responses to this consultation, 38 from named consultees and 4,638 by other respondents.

Responses from named consultees

Named Consultee respondents	Number of Responses
Principal councils	7
Neighbouring councils	9
Health Bodies	2
Police and Fire	3
Education Bodies	0
Other Public Sector	4
Voluntary and Community Sector	5
Business Organisations	0
National Bodies	5
Other named consultees	3
Total named consultees	38

Responses from other respondents

Other respondents	Number of Responses
Individual living in Oxfordshire	4198
Individual not living in affected area or who did not specify their location	281
Organisation	159
Total other respondents	4638
Total responses (Including named consultees)	4676

Summary of findings

20. Tables in this report included numbers rounded to the nearest whole number, and as such, not all cumulative scores will equal 100%.
21. Respondents were invited to respond to 8 multiple choice questions per proposal and could provide a rationale for their answers in a free text box. Where a proposal included boundary change, respondents were invited to answer an

additional question and provide an additional free text response. The multiple-choice questions invited respondents to state whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed/agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed/disagreed, strongly disagreed, or did not know when responding to a statement.

22. For the purposes of this document we have classified positive responses as strongly agree, somewhat agreed or agree and negative responses as somewhat disagree or disagree and strongly disagree.
23. Quantitative scoring against specific questions was applied to responses submitted by email and post only where respondents provided explicit answers based on the scale provided. No assumptions or inferred positions were applied to submissions that did not directly address those questions.
24. Responses received by email and post are not included in the respondent count for questions 9 and 11. A summary of the relevant views expressed in those responses against each criterion is included within the summary of free text responses for each respondent type.
25. In addition to this round of consultation, the Government undertook consultation on 6 other local government reorganisation areas between 19 November 2025 and 11 January 2026. One response received as part of that consultation is relevant to all local government reorganisation areas, including those in this round of consultation. A summary of the relevant views expressed in that response against each criterion is included within the summary of free text responses for that respondent type.
26. The table below takes the average response across the multiple-choice questions to provide an overall view of whether all respondents viewed a proposal positively or negatively.

All respondents

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
1 Unitary	29364	37%	51%	10%	3%
2 Unitary	37532	32%	53%	12%	3%
3 Unitary	37004	37%	50%	10%	3%

27. Overall, responses showed a broadly similar pattern across the three proposals. The 1 unitary and 3 unitary proposals each received positive responses from 37% of respondents, compared with 32% for the 2 unitary proposal. Negative responses ranged from 50% to 53% across the options, while between 10% and 12% of respondents selected neither agree nor disagree and 3% selected “don’t know” for each proposal. Overall, the findings indicate a largely consistent distribution of views across all three proposals, with the 1 unitary and 3 unitary

proposals receiving slightly higher levels of positive response than the 2 unitary proposal.

Named consultees

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
1 Unitary	161	26%	30%	43%	1%
2 Unitary	207	31%	29%	40%	0%
3 Unitary	207	19%	39%	42%	0%

28. Overall, the responses from the named consultees demonstrate a slight preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 31% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 29% of respondents provided negative responses. 40% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. Preference in order is for the 2 unitary proposal followed by the 1 unitary proposal then the 3 unitary proposal.

Individuals living in Oxfordshire

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
1 Unitary	26697	37%	51%	9%	3%
2 Unitary	34082	32%	53%	12%	3%
3 Unitary	33593	37%	50%	10%	3%

29. Overall, the responses from individuals living in Oxfordshire show a similar pattern across the 1 and 3 unitary proposals. 37% of respondents to both proposals provided positive responses to the questions, while 51% of respondents provided negative responses to the 1 unitary proposal and 50% provided negative responses to the 3 unitary proposal. Responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know accounted for 12% of responses to the 1 unitary proposal and 13% of responses to the 3 unitary proposal. The 2 unitary proposal produced a broadly comparable distribution of responses. Overall, the findings indicate a largely consistent spread of views across the three proposals.

Individuals living outside of the affected area

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
1 Unitary	1690	39%	48%	10%	3%
2 Unitary	2213	25%	61%	11%	2%
3 Unitary	2174	33%	55%	10%	2%

30. Overall, responses from individuals living outside Oxfordshire varied across the three proposals. Positive responses accounted for 39% for the 1 unitary proposal, 25% for the 2 unitary proposal and 33% for the 3 unitary proposal.

Negative responses accounted for 48%, 61% and 55% respectively. For each proposal, between 10% and 11% of responses were neither agree nor disagree, and between 2% and 3% were “don’t know”.

Organisations

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
1 Unitary	816	39%	41%	18%	2%
2 Unitary	1030	42%	34%	20%	4%
3 Unitary	1030	23%	58%	16%	2%

31. Overall, the responses from organisations demonstrate a marginal preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 42% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 34% of respondents provided negative responses. 24% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. Preference in order is for the 2 unitary proposal, closely followed by the 1 unitary proposal with the 3 unitary proposal being the least preferred option.

Analysis of responses by question

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Principal Council 1 unitary	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
Principal Council 2 Unitary	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	7	29%	71%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council 1 unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Health Bodies 1 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 1 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector 1 unitary	3	67%	0%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Business Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 1 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies 2 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies 3 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees 1 Unitary	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
Other named consultees 2 Unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees 3 Unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%

Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	30%	35%	35%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	17%	43%	39%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 1 Unitary</i>	3818	45%	50%	5%	1%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	3799	38%	57%	5%	1%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3751	43%	51%	5%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 1 Unitary</i>	244	43%	50%	6%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	250	28%	68%	4%	0%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	246	35%	59%	6%	0%
<i>Organisations 1 Unitary</i>	117	52%	35%	13%	0%
<i>Organisations 2 Unitary</i>	115	50%	38%	11%	1%
<i>Organisation 3 Unitary</i>	115	25%	64%	10%	1%

Total Responses Question 1

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Total all responses 1 Unitary</i>	4202	45%	49%	5%	1%
<i>Total all responses 2 Unitary</i>	4187	37%	57%	6%	1%
<i>Total all responses 3 Unitary</i>	4135	42%	52%	6%	1%

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 1 unitary</i>	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	7	29%	71%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 1 Unitary</i>	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 1 Unitary</i>	3	67%	0%	33%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	50%	0%

<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary</i>	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary</i>	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 1 Unitary</i>	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	30%	35%	35%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	17%	43%	39%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 1 Unitary</i>	3819	39%	53%	7%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	3794	33%	55%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3742	40%	51%	8%	2%

Individual living outside affected area 1 Unitary	243	40%	51%	7%	2%
Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary	245	27%	62%	9%	2%
Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary	241	34%	56%	8%	2%
Organisations 1 unitary	117	40%	39%	17%	3%
Organisations 2 unitary	115	46%	34%	17%	3%
Organisation 3 unitary	115	25%	60%	13%	2%

Total Responses Question 2

Respondent type/Proposal	No. responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total all responses 1 unitary	4202	39%	52%	7%	2%
Total all responses 2 unitary	4177	33%	55%	10%	2%
Total all responses 3 unitary	4121	39%	51%	8%	2%

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type/Proposal	No. responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council 1 Unitary	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
Principal Council 2 Unitary	7	71%	14%	14%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council 1 Unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%

Health Bodies 1 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 1 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector 1 Unitary	3	67%	0%	53%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Business Bodies 1 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 1 Unitary	1	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees 1 Unitary	3	33%	0%	67%	0%

<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	30%	26%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	13%	48%	39%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 1 Unitary</i>	3815	41%	49%	8%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	3788	35%	53%	10%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3742	38%	53%	7%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 1 Unitary</i>	241	43%	45%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	242	27%	60%	13%	0%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	239	34%	59%	5%	1%
<i>Organisations 1 unitary</i>	116	42%	42%	15%	1%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	114	45%	36%	18%	2%
<i>Organisation 3 unitary</i>	114	25%	61%	13%	1%

Total Responses Question 3

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
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Total all responses 1 unitary	4195	41%	49%	8%	2%
Total all responses 2 unitary	4167	34%	53%	11%	2%
Total all responses 3 unitary	4118	37%	54%	8%	1%

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type/Proposal	No. responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council 2 Unitary	7	86%	14%	0%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	7	43%	43%	14%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%

<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	23	35%	30%	35%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	22%	35%	43%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	3793	28%	53%	14%	4%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3743	34%	51%	12%	4%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	248	24%	65%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	244	32%	55%	11%	2%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	114	40%	32%	21%	6%
<i>Organisation 3 unitary</i>	114	22%	58%	19%	1%

Total Responses Question 4

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Total responses 2 unitary</i>	4178	28%	53%	14%	4%

Total responses 3 unitary	4124	33%	51%	12%	4%
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Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type/Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council 1 unitary	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
Principal Council 2 Unitary	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	7	29%	71%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council 1 unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Health Bodies 1 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector 1 unitary	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%

Other Public Sector 3 unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	5	20%	60%	20%	0%
Business Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 1 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies 2 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
National Bodies 3 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees 1 unitary	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
Other named consultees 2 Unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other named consultees 3 Unitary	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	30%	26%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	17%	43%	39%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

Respondent type/Proposal	No. of responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Individual living in affected area 1 unitary	3813	35%	53%	10%	2%

<i>Individual living in affected area 2 unitary</i>	3783	30%	54%	13%	3%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3728	36%	50%	11%	3%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 1 unitary</i>	241	38%	49%	10%	3%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	249	24%	61%	12%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	243	33%	54%	12%	1%
<i>Organisations 1 unitary</i>	117	32%	44%	21%	3%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	115	39%	33%	24%	3%
<i>Organisation 3 unitary</i>	115	22%	57%	19%	2%

Total Responses Question 5

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Total all responses 1 unitary</i>	4194	35%	52%	11%	2%
<i>Total all responses 2 unitary</i>	4170	30%	53%	14%	3%
<i>Total all responses 3 unitary</i>	4109	36%	50%	12%	3%

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 1 unitary</i>	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	7	29%	71%	0%	0%

Neighbouring Council 1 unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	0%	80%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	0%	80%	0%
Health Bodies 1 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Public Sector 1 unitary	3	67%	0%	33%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	5	40%	40%	20%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	5	40%	40%	20%	0%
Business Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 1 unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%

<i>National Bodies 2 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 1 unitary</i>	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	35%	22%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	22%	35%	43%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 1 unitary</i>	3814	31%	55%	10%	4%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 unitary</i>	3787	30%	55%	12%	3%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3727	36%	50%	11%	4%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 1 unitary</i>	242	33%	50%	13%	5%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	245	22%	60%	14%	5%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	238	32%	53%	12%	4%
<i>Organisations 1 unitary</i>	116	34%	46%	19%	1%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	114	39%	38%	21%	3%

Organisation 3 unitary	114	21%	61%	16%	2%
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Total Responses Question 6

Respondent type/Proposal	No. responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Total all responses 1 unitary	4195	31%	54%	11%	4%
Total all responses 2 unitary	4169	30%	54%	13%	3%
Total all responses 3 unitary	4102	35%	50%	11%	4%

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

Respondent type/Proposal	No. responses	Positive	Negative	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Don't know
Principal Council 1 unitary	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
Principal Council 2 Unitary	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	7	43%	57%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council 1 Unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
Health Bodies 1 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 1 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 1 unitary</i>	3	67%	0%	33%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	25%	25%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary</i>	5	0%	40%	40%	20%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary</i>	5	0%	40%	40%	20%
<i>Business Bodies 1 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 1 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 1 unitary</i>	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	39%	4%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	26%	30%	39%	4%

Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	17%	35%	43%	4%
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Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Individual living in affected area 1 unitary	3806	36%	41%	16%	7%
Individual living in affected area 2 unitary	3775	29%	46%	18%	7%
Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary	3720	34%	44%	16%	6%
Individual living outside affected area 1 unitary	239	43%	37%	14%	6%
Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary	243	26%	56%	14%	5%
Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary	240	30%	51%	14%	5%
Organisations 1 unitary	117	39%	34%	21%	6%
Organisations 2 unitary	115	41%	30%	22%	8%
Organisation 3 unitary	115	22%	51%	21%	6%

Total Responses Question 7

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses 1 unitary	4185	37%	41%	16%	7%
Total all responses 2 unitary	4156	29%	46%	18%	7%
Total all responses 3 unitary	4098	33%	44%	16%	6%

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 1 Unitary</i>	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	7	71%	29%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	7	57%	43%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 1 Unitary</i>	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	5	20%	0%	80%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 1 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 1 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 1 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 1 unitary</i>	3	67%	0%	33%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 1 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	50%	0%

<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary</i>	5	40%	40%	20%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary</i>	5	40%	40%	20%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 1 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 1 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 1 unitary</i>	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 1 unitary	23	26%	30%	43%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 unitary	23	35%	30%	35%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	30%	26%	43%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 1 unitary</i>	3812	30%	59%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 unitary</i>	3791	33%	53%	12%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	3730	42%	46%	10%	2%

<i>Individual living outside affected area 1 unitary</i>	240	34%	53%	10%	3%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	248	27%	62%	10%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	244	35%	55%	8%	2%
<i>Organisations 1 unitary</i>	116	32%	47%	19%	2%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	114	44%	33%	20%	3%
<i>Organisation 3 unitary</i>	114	26%	54%	17%	3%

Total Responses Question 8

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Total all responses 1 unitary</i>	4191	31%	58%	9%	2%
<i>Total all responses 2 unitary</i>	4176	33%	53%	12%	2%
<i>Total all responses 3 unitary</i>	4111	41%	47%	10%	2%

Question 9: If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>Total Named consultees</i>	<i>Total Individuals living in area</i>	<i>Total individuals not in area</i>	<i>Total Organisation</i>
<i>Total all responses 1 unitary</i>	23	2254	141	91
<i>Total all responses 2 unitary</i>	22	1991	149	78
<i>Total all responses 3 unitary</i>	21	1975	141	78

We also received 93 responses by email and post. 15 were from named consultees, 28 were from individuals living in area, 10 were from individuals not in area or who did not specify their location, 51 were from organisations. A summary of the views shared in these responses is included within the summaries below

Summary of named consultee responses

32. Principal Councils

Responses from the seven principal councils supported the proposals that they put forward with the four 'district' councils and West Berkshire (from outside the invitation area) supporting the 2 unitary proposal.

33. Neighbouring Principal Councils

Of the nine neighbouring authorities from outside of the Oxfordshire invitation area who responded, two supported the 1 unitary proposal, one supported the 2 unitary proposal, and one supported the 3 unitary proposal. Five neighbouring authorities were neutral, expressing no preference for a proposal.

34. Health Bodies

Both Health bodies that responded stated their neutrality for the three proposals but did state the importance of continued engagement and that existing services should not be weakened by transition.

35. Other Public Sector

One consultee showed a preference for the 1 unitary proposal viewing it as the quickest to implement with the least disruption and cost, it did not support the 2 or 3 unitary proposals, opposing cross county boundary changes that include West Berkshire. The two other respondents were neutral on all proposals.

36. Police and Fire

One consultee stated their preference for the 1 Unitary Proposal viewing it best to support prevention, protection, emergency response and financial stability. The two other respondents remained neutral and stated no single preference.

37. Voluntary and Community Sector

One consultee strongly supported the 1 Unitary proposal seeing it as the strongest proposal for strategic coherence and financial resilience.

Some respondents see the 2 Unitary proposal as offering stronger local responsiveness and community engagement, however, respondents highlight risks of fragmentation, limited financial or service benefits, and disruption to existing partnerships. These issues also apply when respondents talk about the 3 Unitary proposal which gains the least support.

All consultees in this area talk of a need to protect VCSE funding, partnerships and local networks during transition.

38. National

None of the five consultees that responded from this category stated any preference for any of the proposals. Most did note their support for devolution and a hope that the chosen process will strengthen local engagement and services rather than weaken them.

39. Other Named Consultees

One respondent in this category showed strong support for the 1 unitary option stating that a single county-wide authority aligns directly with how the visitor economy already operates. Two other respondents stated no preference, remaining neutral.

Comments against the criteria

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

Views expressed against this criterion were mixed. Respondents recognised that all three proposals would establish single-tier local government, but concerns were raised about whether the proposed geographies were sufficiently coherent and deliverable. For the 2 and 3 unitary proposals, concerns focused on the inclusion of West Berkshire, which sits outside the Oxfordshire invitation area, and the additional administrative boundary change and public service complexity this would create. For the 3 unitary proposal, comments also focused on the proposed Greater Oxford boundary change, with concerns about local identity, parish boundaries and whether the proposed geography would command local support.

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

Concerns were raised that the 3 unitary proposal would create smaller and more uneven councils, with greater disaggregation and boundary-change complexity. Respondents and partner bodies raised concerns about whether the proposed councils would have sufficient scale and resilience to manage financial shocks and high-risk statutory services. Concerns were also raised that the inclusion of West Berkshire in the 2 and 3 unitary proposals would increase transition complexity, including because it would cut across existing Oxfordshire and Berkshire fire service footprints. Some responses also highlighted that the 1 unitary proposal could provide greater financial resilience and avoid disaggregation risk, while others considered that smaller councils could be better placed to deliver locally responsive services.

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

Concerns were raised about the impact of disaggregation on service continuity, particularly for high-risk statutory services. The 1 unitary proposal was seen by some respondents and service partners as presenting the lowest transition risk because it would maintain existing countywide statutory service footprints. By contrast, the 2 and 3 unitary proposals were seen by some respondents as offering more place-based service delivery, but concerns were raised about fragmentation, transition risk, duplication and the potential impact on services where existing public service footprints would need to be split or reconfigured. For the 3 unitary proposal, concerns focused particularly on the scale of disaggregation and the need to manage risks to adult social care, children's services, SEND and fire governance.

43. For criterion 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:

Responses showed differing views on the extent to which each proposal reflected local views. The 2 unitary proposal was presented by some respondents as the strongest example of joint working between councils, having been submitted by several district councils and West Berkshire Council. The 1 unitary proposal was seen by some

respondents as providing a coherent countywide solution, but concerns were raised that it could feel remote from local communities and rely heavily on neighbourhood governance to address local identity concerns. The 3 unitary proposal placed local identity and the distinct needs of Oxford at the centre of its case, but concerns were raised about the proposed Greater Oxford boundary change, including opposition from some surrounding communities and parish interests.

44. For criterion 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:

Views on devolution were mixed. Some respondents considered that a single Oxfordshire council would provide a clear and coherent voice in future Thames Valley devolution arrangements and a straightforward partner for strategic planning and investment. Others considered that the 2 or 3 unitary proposals could provide a more balanced set of voices within a future strategic authority, including a more distinct voice for Oxford and its growth area. Concerns were raised, however, that the inclusion of West Berkshire in the 2 and 3 unitary proposals, and the Greater Oxford boundary change in the 3 unitary proposal, would add complexity to implementation and public service alignment alongside devolution.

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

Respondents emphasised the importance of local identity, proximity to communities and accessible decision-making. Concerns were raised that a single countywide council could feel remote from residents and would need strong neighbourhood governance arrangements to maintain local voice. The 2 and 3 unitary proposals were seen by some respondents as offering councils closer to residents and better aligned to local communities. However, concerns were also raised that the 3 unitary proposal, particularly the Greater Oxford boundary change, could weaken the identity and voice of some surrounding rural and parish communities. Respondents generally highlighted that whichever proposal is implemented, strong local engagement, parish and town council relationships, and clear neighbourhood arrangements would be needed during implementation.

The themes identified by the AI tool were as follows:

1. Concerns About Council Boundaries and Community Identity

Some respondents have worries that proposed council boundaries undermine local identity, do not reflect natural communities or historic ties, and risk inadequate representation, especially for rural areas and specific places like West Berkshire and Oxford City.

2. Loss of Local Representation and Accountability

Some respondents fear that a single larger authority could erode local identities, reduce democratic accountability, diminish local representation, and make it harder for communities, especially rural areas, to influence decisions and maintain tailored services.

3. Risks to Service Delivery and Financial Efficiency

Some respondents feared that reorganising councils could disrupt service delivery, create inefficiencies, increase costs, duplicate services, and pose financial risks, with doubts about promised savings and negative impacts on vulnerable groups.

4. Distinct Urban and Rural Needs Require Tailored Representation

Some respondents see Oxford City and rural areas as having fundamentally different needs, supporting the case for separate councils or tailored governance to improve representation and address these differences.

5. Urban-Rural Divide and Oxford-Centric Risks

Some respondents are concerned that a single authority would prioritize Oxford over rural areas, risking neglect, unfair resource allocation, and failure to address the distinct needs of both urban and rural communities.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

Across the responses reviewed, many respondents expressed a clear preference between the proposals, while a notable proportion do not state an overall preferred option, instead commenting on principles or risks. Where a preference is stated, most respondents favour the proposal for two unitary councils, especially the more rural parish councils. Some respondents support the proposal for one unitary council, often citing strategic coherence, while a smaller number favour or explore the 3 unitary proposal, sometimes with reservations about boundary change and delivery.

Common themes across responses include the importance of financial sustainability, service resilience (particularly for adult and children's social care and SEND), and maintaining local identity and democratic accountability. Many respondents emphasise the need for sensible geographies aligned with travel to work areas, housing markets and infrastructure, with concerns raised about remoteness in a single county-wide authority and fragmentation or subscale capacity in split models. Positive points noted include clearer accountability, opportunities for integrated planning, and alignment with devolution, while concerns focus on transition risk, loss of local connection, and the robustness of evidence supporting efficiencies. Overall, views are mixed, with strong support for outcomes-

based principles and differing perspectives on the structures best placed to deliver them.

Question 10: This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change, and/or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for these changes?

Summary of Named Consultee Responses

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 2 unitary</i>	7	71%	14%	14%	0%

<i>Principal Council 3 unitary</i>	7	14%	86%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community sector 2 unitary</i>	5	20%	20%	60%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community sector 3 unitary</i>	5	20%	40%	40%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%

<i>Other named consultees 2 unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	23	30%	22%	48%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	23	13%	43%	43%	0%

Individuals and Organisation (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	3772	29%	54%	14%	3%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 unitary</i>	3710	33%	52%	11%	4%
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	243	24%	60%	14%	2%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	239	33%	53%	13%	2%
<i>Organisations 2 unitary</i>	114	39%	35%	22%	4%
<i>Organisations 3 unitary</i>	114	20%	58%	19%	3%

Total Responses Question 10

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
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<i>Total all responses 2 unitary</i>	4152	29%	54%	14%	3%
<i>Total all responses 3 unitary</i>	4086	33%	52%	12%	4%

Question 11: If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>Total Named consultees</i>	<i>Total Individuals living in area</i>	<i>Total individuals not in area</i>	<i>Total Organisation</i>
<i>Total all responses 2 Unitary</i>	20	1136	75	53
<i>Total all responses 3 Unitary</i>	20	1125	79	55

We also received 93 responses by email and post. 15 were from named consultees, 28 were from individuals living in area, 10 were from individuals not in area or did not specify their location, 51 were from organisations. A summary of the views relevant to this question shared in these responses is included within the summaries below'

Summary of Local Government Boundary Commission (The Commission) Response

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England provided observations on the evidence provided to support the boundary change request within the 3 unitary proposal, drawing on its Principal Area Boundary Review expertise. It considered the evidence in the bid documentation as it related to the identity and interests of local communities, and the promotion of effective and convenient local government. The Commission observed that the evidence to support Greater Oxford was more detailed than for the other two proposed authorities.

Summary of named consultee responses (relating to Boundary Change and Public Service Impacts)

46. Principal Councils

Principal council responses reflected differing views on the proposals, largely aligned to the proposals that councils had submitted or supported. Councils not supportive of boundary change raised concerns that the 3 unitary proposal would create artificial and poorly justified boundaries, disrupt coherent geographies, fragment services and weaken economic alignment.

Concerns were also raised that the proposed changes could create imbalanced or less viable authorities, particularly where existing service and community identities would be split.

The 2 unitary proposal was generally viewed by its supporting councils as providing more coherent and functional service geographies, better reflecting economic areas, transport corridors and established community identities.

The 1 unitary proposal was supported on the basis that it would avoid boundary change and maintain a single countywide service footprint, although some respondents considered that its scale could weaken local responsiveness.

The 3 unitary proposal was supported by Oxford City Council as a way of addressing Oxford's under-bounding and creating a Greater Oxford authority aligned to housing and economic growth, but this was contested by other principal councils, particularly in relation to the proposed Greater Oxford boundary change and its impact on surrounding rural communities.

47. Neighbouring principal councils

One neighbouring council challenges the proposed boundary alignment in the 2 unitary model, arguing it splits a single urban area and proposes the movement of wards to reflect functional geography and align services with community use and identity.

Concerns are raised by some that current boundaries would create fragmented services, democratic deficits and weaken community representation, with residents relying on services outside their authority.

The 3 unitary proposal is viewed by some as enabling boundary changes to support Oxford's growth, but without detailed critique.

Other respondents raise concerns that the inclusion of West Berkshire could disrupt existing economic geographies, partnerships and wider regional coherence. A broader theme is the need for a strategic, regionwide boundary review to better reflect the Thames Valley's economic geography.

48. Health Bodies

No specific responses regarding boundary changes or service impacts.

49. Other public sector

Respondents in this area stressed the importance of alignment with NHS geographies, sufficient scale, and minimising complexity, emphasising that any changes must strengthen local representation and avoid disconnect from communities, reinforcing concerns about fragmentation.

One respondent explicitly supports avoiding disaggregation, arguing that the 1 unitary proposal best maintains clear governance, continuity of services and strong safeguarding performance, and reduces transition risk.

50. Police and Fire

All three respondents warn that boundary changes risk misalignment, duplication and disruption to safeguarding and partnerships. Disaggregation under 2 and 3 unitary models could weaken governance, resilience and coordination. Single or aligned geographies are preferred for clear boundaries, stability and integrated service delivery, with change seen as costly and complex.

51. Voluntary and Community Sector

Across responses in this area, there is a clear preference for models that minimise both boundary disruption and system disaggregation, or that put strong mitigations in place where change is unavoidable.

52. National

One respondent emphasised the importance of preserving clear, historic county boundaries and sought assurance that ceremonial boundaries and arrangements remain unchanged and simple.

Others were cautious about boundary change and risks of disaggregation.

53. Other Named Consultees

One respondent asked that the process respected local identity and supported effective partnerships, without favouring a specific model.

Comments against the criteria

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

Respondents raised mixed views about the proposed boundary changes and service impacts. Some comments recognised the potential benefits of aligning council boundaries with functional economic areas, housing markets and growth corridors, particularly in relation to the case for a Greater Oxford authority and the wider Ridgeway geography. However, concerns were also raised that the inclusion of West Berkshire in the 2 and 3 unitary proposals would extend the geography beyond the Oxfordshire invitation area and introduce additional administrative and delivery complexity. For the 3 unitary proposal, respondents raised specific concerns about the proposed Greater Oxford boundary change, including whether the evidence sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed boundaries reflected local identity, service delivery needs and existing community links. Some responses also noted that, while the Oxford City Council proposal referred to substantial engagement, little of the feedback presented related directly to the proposed boundaries.

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

Concerns were raised that the boundary changes proposed under the 2 and 3 unitary options could add financial and implementation risk. The inclusion of West Berkshire was presented by proponents as supporting the viability of the proposed Ridgeway authority and helping to create a broader financial and service footprint, but respondents and analysis also identified uncertainty about the economic rationale for including an area outside the Oxfordshire invitation area. For the 3 unitary proposal, concerns were raised that the proposed configuration would create smaller and more uneven councils, with additional reliance on boundary modification, longer-term growth assumptions and place-based design to support viability. Respondents also highlighted that disaggregation, cross-boundary transition and changes to public service footprints could increase costs and complexity, potentially weakening the case that boundary change would improve resilience and financial sustainability.

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

Respondents raised concerns that boundary change could disrupt service delivery and partnership arrangements, particularly where proposed boundaries cut across existing

public service footprints. The inclusion of West Berkshire in the 2 and 3 unitary proposals would affect the current Oxfordshire and Berkshire fire and rescue governance footprints, creating additional complexity and requiring further assessment to ensure services remained safe and legal from vesting day. Concerns were also raised that the 3 unitary proposal would involve the greatest level of disaggregation, increasing transition risk for statutory services and wider public services. Some comments recognised that boundary changes could potentially enable more place-based service delivery, particularly through a Greater Oxford authority, but the overall theme was that these benefits would need to be weighed against the risks of disruption, fragmentation and additional implementation complexity.

57. For criterion 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:

Respondents noted that the 2 unitary proposal was developed jointly by Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire, with West Berkshire included in the proposed Ridgeway authority. However, concerns were raised about whether the boundary changes or service disaggregation proposed in the 2 and 3 unitary options had sufficiently broad local support, particularly where they affected communities outside the existing Oxfordshire footprint or around the proposed Greater Oxford boundary. For the 3 unitary proposal, concerns focused on whether the engagement evidence directly supported the specific boundary changes proposed, including the expansion of Oxford into surrounding parishes. Some parish and town councils and other respondents opposed the proposed Greater Oxford boundary, citing local identity, rural voice and concerns about being brought within a city-focused authority.

58. For criterion 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:

Comments on boundary change and service impacts were limited in relation to devolution. Some respondents and proposal material suggested that boundary changes could support clearer place-based representation within a future Thames Valley strategic authority, particularly by creating a distinct Greater Oxford voice and by aligning parts of the Ridgeway geography with wider Thames Valley economic corridors. However, concerns were also raised that including West Berkshire in the 2 and 3 unitary proposals would add complexity. The evidence therefore points to potential devolution benefits from a more place-based structure, but also to risks that boundary change could complicate the transition to new devolution arrangements and create additional questions about alignment with wider public service and strategic authority boundaries.

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

Respondents raised concerns that boundary changes and service impacts could weaken local identity and community voice where communities were moved into new authorities that they did not identify with. This was particularly evident in responses concerning the proposed Greater Oxford boundary, where some rural and parish respondents objected to being included in a city-focused authority and raised concerns about representation, local identity and neighbourhood influence. Some comments recognised that smaller place-based authorities could improve local focus and make

engagement feel closer to residents, but others argued that the proposed boundaries risked dividing established communities or creating geographies that did not reflect local ties. Overall, the boundary-change comments under this criterion were primarily about ensuring that any new boundaries support genuine local engagement, retain recognisable community identities and provide clear mechanisms for neighbourhood voice during and after reorganisation.

The themes identified by the AI tool were as follows:

1. Doubts about public service benefits and democratic representation

Some respondents expressed concerns about a perceived lack of public service benefits and democratic representation.

2. Fears of increased costs, bureaucracy, and service fragmentation

Some respondents believed that boundary change could risk higher administrative costs, unnecessary bureaucracy, fragmented service delivery, and negative impacts on rural and vulnerable communities.

3. Concerns about loss of local identity and rural representation

Some respondents fear that boundary change could erode local identity, diminish rural representation, disrupt community ties, and prioritize urban over rural needs.

4. Preference for alternative governance structures or maintaining status quo

Some respondents expressed that alternative arrangements, such as a single countywide authority or devolving powers to districts, are preferred for their perceived efficiency and lower disruption compared to the proposal.

5. Concerns about local and area-specific impacts

Some respondents raised specific worries about negative effects on particular areas, including green belt land, transport, and the inclusion or exclusion of certain communities.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

There was a general emphasis on the need for “sensible geographies” aligned to areas such as travel-to-work, housing markets and infrastructure, with concerns about extreme change. Some parish and town councils in more rural areas were opposed to the 3 unitary proposal and their plans to expand a Greater Oxford Council.

Other comments ranged from a single unitary risking overly large/geographically distant boundaries and a loss of local connection to multiple smaller unitaries risking fragmentation or boundaries that lack scale and coherence. With some respondents (particularly those considering 3 unitaries) raising reservations about boundary choices and their deliverability.