

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire

January 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Oadby & Wigston is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer, the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee for England which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements, there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Oadby & Wigston's electoral arrangements on 12 June 2001.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Oadby & Wigston:

- **in nine of the 10 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to continue with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main proposals for Oadby & Wigston's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 59 - 60) are that:

- **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should have 26 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 10 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In nine of the proposed 10 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in nine wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 15 January 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**

- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 11 March 2002:

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Oadby & Wigston Review
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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	All Saints	3	part of All Saints ward; part of Central ward
2	Brocks Hill	2	part of Brocks Hill ward; part of St Peter's ward
3	Grange	3	part of Brookside ward; Grange ward
4	Meadowcourt	3	part of All Saints ward; part of St Wolstan's ward
5	St Peter's	2	part of Brocks Hill ward; part of Brookside ward; part of St Peter's ward
6	St Wolstan's	3	part of Central ward; part of St Peter's ward; part of St Wolstan's ward
7	South Wigston	3	Basset ward; Fairfield ward
8	Uplands	2	part of Brookside ward
9	Wigston Fields	3	part of Central ward; Westfield ward
10	Woodlands	2	part of Brookside ward

Notes: 1 The whole district is unparished.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Oadby & Wigston

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	All Saints	3	4,991	1,664	0	5,010	1,670	-1
2	Brocks Hill	2	3,135	1,568	-6	3,135	1,568	-7
3	Grange	3	5,036	1,679	1	5,005	1,668	-1
4	Meadowcourt	3	4,820	1,607	-3	4,818	1,606	-5
5	St Peter's	2	3,185	1,593	-4	3,226	1,613	-4
6	St Wolstan's	3	5,012	1,671	0	5,049	1,683	0
7	South Wigston	3	5,732	1,911	15	5,824	1,941	15
8	Uplands	2	3,319	1,660	0	3,346	1,673	-1
9	Wigston Fields	3	5,037	1,679	1	5,028	1,676	0
10	Woodlands	2	2,997	1,499	-10	3,321	1,661	-1
	Totals	26	43,264	-	-	43,762	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,664	-	-	1,683	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Oadby & Wigston Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We are also conducting a review of Leicester City Council, which has unitary status, on the same timetable as this review. Our programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Oadby & Wigston. Oadby & Wigston's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1977 (Report no. 178). The electoral arrangements of Leicestershire County Council were last reviewed in March 1983 (Report no. 441). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the district.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configurations are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Electoral Commission

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half of the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when we wrote to Oadby & Wigston Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Leicestershire Local Councils Association, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region, the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Oadby & Wigston Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 3 September 2001.

12 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 15 January 2002 and will end on 11 March 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Oadby & Wigston lies to the south-east of Leicester city, in the centre of the county of Leicestershire. The borough has a population of approximately 53,400 and covers 2,372 hectares making it the smallest district in Leicestershire. The M1 is easily accessible from the borough, giving it good links to London, the Midlands and the North. There is a diverse profile of local industry, including hosiery, shoes, plastics, electrical general engineering, printing and food products.

16 The borough comprises the three distinct areas of Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston, which are covered by four, two and four wards respectively, under the existing arrangements. Although the majority of the existing St Peter's ward is situated in Oadby, the ward also covers a small part of Wigston.

17 The electorate of the borough is 43,264 (February 2001). The Council presently has 26 members who are elected from 10 wards, all of which are relatively urban in character. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors and four are each represented by two councillors. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

18 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated, in percentage terms, the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average. In the text which follows, this figure may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,664 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,683 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 10 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, three wards by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Brookside ward where the councillor represents 44 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Oadby & Wigston

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	All Saints	3	6,390	2,130	28	6,434	2,145	29
2	Bassett	2	2,919	1,460	-12	3,024	1,512	-9
3	Brocks Hill	3	3,980	1,327	-20	3,961	1,320	-21
4	Brookside	3	7,202	2,401	44	7,495	2,498	50
5	Central	3	3,792	1,264	-24	3,777	1,259	-24
6	Fairfield	2	2,813	1,407	-15	2,800	1,400	-16
7	Grange	3	4,369	1,456	-12	4,376	1,459	-12
8	St Peter's	2	2,830	1,415	-15	2,940	1,470	-12
9	St Wolstan's	3	5,921	1,974	19	5,907	1,969	18
10	Westfield	2	3,048	1,524	-8	3,048	1,524	-8
	Totals	26	43,264	-	-	43,762	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,664	-	-	1,683	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Oadby & Wigston Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Central ward were relatively over-represented by 24 per cent, while electors in Brookside ward were relatively under-represented by 44 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

20 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston Borough Council.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received one submission during Stage One, a borough-wide scheme from Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council

22 The Borough Council proposed a council of 28 members, two more than at present, serving 12 wards, compared to the existing 10. It proposed that eight of the existing wards should be modified and that a pattern of two and three-member wards should be retained. All wards proposed under the Council's scheme would have electoral variances below 10 per cent by 2006. The Council stated that the existing system of whole council elections every four years should be retained. The Council's scheme was supported by both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the Council; its submission also included six representations it had received during consultation it undertook on its proposals during Stage One.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

23 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

24 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

25 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and maintaining local ties.

26 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

27 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been a 16 per cent increase in the electorate of the borough of Oadby & Wigston. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a small increase in the electorate of approximately 1 per cent from 43,264 to 43,762 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Brookside ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

29 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the Borough Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

30 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

31 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council presently has 26 members. The Borough Council consulted on three different schemes; two based on a council size of 27 and one on a council size of 28. The Council recommended that its Proposal A, with a council size of 28, should be adopted. Following its consultation process, it adopted a council size of 28 as part of its Stage One submission. The Council made no further comments on council size.

32 When formulating our draft recommendations, deciding on the correct council size is our first objective. We request at the outset of the review that any proposal to change the council size of a local authority is supported with evidence and argumentation as to why the existing council size does not facilitate effective and convenient local government and why a proposed increase or decrease in council size would be beneficial to the local authority and the electorate. During Stage One of this review we received no such argumentation or evidence and we are consequently unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for an increase in council membership from 26 to 28. We also looked at the allocation of councillors under a council size of 28 and noted that it was not possible to provide the correct allocation between the three towns. As a council size of 28 does not work, we considered a number of alternative council sizes and noted that under the existing council size of 26 it was possible to provide a good allocation of councillors. Having noted that a council size of 26 enabled us to provide good electoral arrangements and, as we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, we propose retaining the existing council size of 26.

33 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the sole response received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 26 members.

Electoral Arrangements

34 Having decided to retain the existing council size of 26 we have been unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in their entirety. However, due to the fact that the councillor:elector ratio in 2006 under a council size of 26 (1:1,683) is close to that under a council size of 28 (1:1,563) we have been able to adopt the Council's proposed wards in some parts of the borough, especially in Oadby town. Where possible we have attempted to adopt the Borough Council's proposals. However, due to the fact that the Council's proposals included two extra councillors, we have had to develop our own proposals in some areas, particularly in South Wigston and Wigston.

35 In its submission the Borough Council stated that it wished to ensure "that ward boundaries did not overlap the separate towns" of Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston. We have developed our draft recommendations with this in mind and have therefore proposed a relatively high electoral variance in South Wigston in order to retain a strong boundary between the towns of South Wigston and Wigston, as outlined later in the chapter. Having

decided on a council size of 26 and given the desire to retain clear boundaries between the three towns, our next objective was to allocate the correct number of councillors to Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston. Under the Borough Council's proposals for a council size of 28, it allocated 11 councillors to Oadby, 13 councillors to Wigston and four councillors to South Wigston. However, having decided not to adopt this increase in council size, we calculated the correct allocation of councillors between the three towns under a council size of 26. Oadby is entitled to 11 councillors, South Wigston is entitled to three councillors and Wigston is entitled to 12 councillors by 2006. We have ensured that the correct allocation of councillors is retained across the borough.

36 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Brocks Hill, Brookside, Grange and St Peter's wards (Oadby)
- (b) All Saints, Central, St Wolstan's and Westfield wards (Wigston)
- (c) Bassett and Fairfield wards (South Wigston)

37 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Brocks Hill, Brookside, Grange and St Peter's wards (Oadby)

38 These four wards are situated to the north and east of the borough and cover the town of Oadby, although St Peter's ward does include a small part of Wigston town. Brocks Hill, Brookside and Grange wards are all three-member wards while St Peter's ward returns two councillors. Under the existing arrangements the wards of Brocks Hill, Grange and St Peter's have councillor:elector ratios 20 per cent, 12 per cent and 15 per cent below the borough average respectively (21 per cent, 12 per cent and 12 per cent by 2006). Brookside ward has a councillor:elector ratio 44 per cent above the borough average (50 per cent by 2006).

39 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council proposed that the A6 trunk road should be used as a boundary for its entire length from north to south across the borough. It proposed a three-member Grange ward and two two-member Uplands and Woodlands wards to the north of the A6 and two two-member Brocks Hill and St Peter's wards to the south. It proposed transferring into St Peter's ward those electors situated to the south of the A6, currently in Brookside ward. The Council's proposed eastern boundary of Grange ward would run behind the properties of Tudor Drive, along the edge of Uplands Park, behind the properties of Covert Close and Launde Road before crossing farmland to the borough boundary. The Council proposed that all electors to the west of this boundary should be transferred from Brookside ward into a new Grange ward with all of the electors of the existing Grange ward. It proposed that the remainder of Brookside ward should be divided into two new wards using the Fludes Lane wildlife corridor, which follows the Oadby Wash Brook, as the boundary between a two-member Uplands ward to the north and a two-member Woodlands ward to the south. It stated that its proposed Woodlands ward "has a focal point of the Woodland Grange Primary School".

40 To the south of the A6 the Council proposed that "the boundary between the former urban districts of Oadby and Wigston" should be used as the western boundary of St Peter's ward. This boundary modification would result in those electors to the south of Leicester

Racecourse and Wigston Road being included in St Wolstan's ward. The Council stated in its submission that it had considered the possibility, raised by a resident of Oadby, of including the electors of The Oval in St Wolstan's ward, but that this had been rejected. The Council proposed that the boundary between Brocks Hill and St Peter's wards should run behind the properties on the southern side of Rosemead Drive. It stated that the electors situated to the north of this boundary should be transferred from the existing Brocks Hill ward into a revised two-member St Peter's ward with the remainder of the existing St Peter's ward and those electors transferred from Brookside ward. It stated that the remainder of the existing Brocks Hill ward should form a revised two-member Brocks Hill ward, which has "its own community facilities based around the schools complex situated towards the centre of the proposed area".

41 Under the Borough Council's proposals for a 28-member council, the wards of Brocks Hill, Grange, St Peter's and Uplands would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent, 7 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent above the borough average respectively (equal to the borough average, 5 per cent, 8 per cent and 9 per cent above by 2006). Woodlands ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the borough average (6 per cent above by 2006).

42 As stated earlier in the chapter, we have decided not to adopt the Borough Council's proposed council size of 28 and propose retaining the existing council size of 26. Under a council size of 26 the town of Oadby is entitled to 10.71 councillors and in its Stage One submission the Borough Council has allocated it 11 councillors. As this is the correct allocation of councillors, the electoral equality in the Borough Council's proposed Brocks Hill, Grange, St Peter's, Uplands and Woodlands wards actually improves under a council size of 26. We therefore propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals. However, we are proposing three minor boundary modifications. We propose including the electors of Covert Close and numbers 2 to 28 Launde Road in Grange ward rather than the Council's proposed Uplands ward to provide improved electoral equality.

43 We are endorsing the Council's proposal to transfer electors from St Peter's ward into St Wolstan's ward. However, we also propose transferring the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road in St Wolstan's ward rather than the proposed St Peter's ward. We have noted that the Borough Council has used the former borough boundary between Oadby and Wigston as its proposed boundary between St Peter's and St Wolstan's wards in order to address the anomaly of those electors living in Wigston but voting in an Oadby ward. We noted that the issue of including the electors of the Oval in St Wolstan's ward was raised during the Council's Stage One consultation. Having visited the area we consider that the land around Wash Brook, including the Oval Park Sports Ground and the Parklands Leisure Centre, provides a more identifiable break between the towns of Oadby and Wigston than the Borough Council's proposed boundary. We consider that transferring these electors into St Wolstan's ward will provide a clear, identifiable boundary and more effective and convenient local government for the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road. We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposed Brocks Hill ward with one minor modification. We propose moving the north-western boundary to run along the centre of Wigston Lane before running behind the properties of Rosemead Drive. We consider that this modification will provide a boundary, which is more easily identifiable than the existing boundary, which crosses playing fields. We propose adopting the Council's proposed and Woodlands ward without modification. We would welcome comments from local people on these proposed wards during Stage Three.

44 Under our draft recommendations for a 26-member council, Uplands ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average (1 per cent below by 2006). Brocks Hill, St Peter's and Woodlands wards would have councillor:elector ratios 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 10 per cent below the borough average respectively (7 per cent, 4 per cent and equal to the borough average by 2006). Grange ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent below by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

All Saints, Central, St Wolstan's and Westfield wards (Wigston)

45 These four wards cover the majority of Wigston town and are situated to the south and centre of the borough. All Saints, Central and St Wolstan's are all three-member wards while Westfield ward returns two councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the wards of All Saints and St Wolstan's have councillor:elector ratios 28 per cent and 19 per cent above the borough average respectively (29 per cent and 18 per cent by 2006). Central and Westfield wards have councillor:elector ratios 24 per cent and 8 per cent below the borough average respectively (24 per cent and 8 per cent by 2006).

46 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council proposed that the boundaries of all four wards should be modified to create five new wards. It proposed that the A5199 should be used as a boundary for the majority of its length from north to south across the borough, the only exception being around the hamlet of Kilby Bridge, which should be included in All Saints ward in its entirety. To the east of the A5199, in Wigston it proposed a two-member St Wolstan's ward and a three-member Meadowcourt ward. To the west of the A5199, it proposed a two-member Central Wigston ward and two three-member All Saints and Westfield wards. As outlined earlier, the Borough Council proposed transferring into St Wolstan's ward those electors to the south of Leicester Racecourse and Wigston Road, currently in St Peter's ward. This modification would see "the boundary between the former urban districts of Oadby and Wigston" utilised as the new ward boundary. The Council stated that these electors should form a new two-member St Wolstan's ward with those electors of the existing St Wolstan's ward situated to the east of the A5199, Leicester Road and north of Mere Road. It proposed that the electors to the south of the properties on Mere Road and east of the A5199, Bull Head Street, currently situated in St Wolstan's ward, should form a new three-member Meadowcourt ward with electors of the existing All Saints ward situated to the east of the A5199, Welford Road. It stated that all the electors of this new ward "use common community facilities situated at the Meadow Primary School".

47 To the west of the A5199, the Borough Council proposed a revised three-member All Saints ward comprising the remaining electors of the existing All Saints ward south of Station Road and the rear of the properties on Cedar Avenue and Moat Street. It stated that this ward would have "its own clear community identity". The Council stated that the remainder of All Saints ward should be transferred into a new two-member Central Wigston ward with those electors to the south of Aylestone Lane situated in the existing Central ward. The Council also proposed incorporating Wigston town centre, to the south of Wakes Road, in Central ward. The remainder of Central ward would form a new three-member Westfield ward with the electors of the existing Westfield ward; it stated that "there already exists a strong community identity for the area, which is known locally as Wigston Fields".

48 Under the Borough Council's proposals for a 28-member council All Saints, Central Wigston and Westfield wards would have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent below the borough average respectively (10 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent by 2006). Meadowcourt and St Wolstan's wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent and 8 per cent above the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 8 per cent by 2006).

49 As stated earlier in the chapter, we have decided not to adopt the Borough Council's proposed council size of 28 and propose retaining the existing council size of 26. Under a 26-member council, the 2006 electorate of Wigston is entitled to 11.83 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council allocated Wigston 13 councillors, but in order to provide the correct allocation under a council size of 26, we are proposing 12 councillors to represent Wigston. Consequently we have been unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals. However, we have attempted to base our proposed wards on those put forward in its submission. We have adopted the Borough Council's proposed Meadowcourt ward as it provides acceptable levels of electoral equality under a council size of 26. As stated earlier, we are adopting the Borough Council's proposal to transfer electors from St Peter's ward into St Wolstan's ward. We also propose including the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road in St Wolstan's ward rather than the proposed St Peter's ward.

50 We attempted to retain the A5199 as the western boundary of our proposed St Wolstan's ward. However, this would have created difficulties in the wards to the west of Wigston. To create a two-member St Wolstan's ward and retain the A5199 as a boundary we would have to create two two-member wards from the existing Central and Westfield wards and part of All Saints ward. The boundary between these two alternative wards would divide the electors of the existing Westfield ward between two different wards, by running between the properties of Guildford Drive, Kew Drive, Roehampton Drive and those of Granville Road and Westfield Road. We considered that such a boundary is not strong and easily identifiable, and we also did not want to divide the electors of the existing Westfield ward as we consider such a warding arrangement would not provide an accurate reflection of community identity. Consequently, we are proposing a new three-member St Wolstan's ward, which includes the remainder of the existing ward, those electors transferred from St Peter's ward and those electors north of Aylestone Lane and east of Carlton Drive, currently situated in Central ward.

51 We are proposing a new three-member Wigston Fields ward comprising the whole of the existing Westfield ward and those electors to the west of South Avenue and Wigston All Saints CE Primary School currently in Central ward. Our proposal would involve electors of Central Avenue being in two different wards. However, having visited the area, we consider this is an appropriate boundary, as there is a clear difference between the properties to the east and west of Central Avenue. We consider that those electors of Central Avenue who we propose transferring into Wigston Fields ward should be included in a ward with the electors of Holmden Avenue. We propose naming this ward Wigston Fields. However, we would welcome comments from local people on this proposed ward name. Finally we are proposing a three-member All Saints ward based on the Borough Council's proposed All Saints ward. However, we propose including in All Saints ward those electors to the east of the rear of the properties on South Avenue and south of Aylestone Lane and Paddock Street, included in Central Wigston ward by the Borough Council. We would welcome comments on our proposals for Wigston from local people, especially on our proposed St Wolstan's and Wigston Fields wards.

52 Under our draft recommendations for a 26-member council, the wards of All Saints and St Wolstan's would both have councillor:elector ratios equal to the borough average (1 per cent below and equal to the borough average by 2006 respectively). Wigston Fields ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent above the borough average (equal to the borough average by 2006), Meadowcourt ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Bassett and Fairfield wards (South Wigston)

53 The wards of Bassett and Fairfield cover South Wigston, which is situated to the west of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Bassett and Fairfield wards both return two councillors and have councillor:elector ratios 12 per cent and 15 per cent below the borough average respectively (9 per cent and 16 per cent by 2006).

54 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements of both these wards as it is "keen to see South Wigston retain its local identity and to retain two wards (Bassett and Fairfield), with two councillors in each, without the need to include any parts of Wigston" in either ward. The Council stated that it had considered a proposal put forward by a resident of Oadby but it had not adopted this proposal as part of its Stage One submission.

55 Under the Borough Council's proposals for a 28-member council, Bassett and Fairfield wards would have councillor:elector ratios 6 per cent and 9 per cent below the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 10 per cent by 2006).

56 As stated earlier in the chapter, we have decided not to adopt the Borough Council's proposed council size of 28 and propose retaining the existing council size of 26. Under a 26-member council, the 2006 electorate of South Wigston is entitled to 3.46 councillors. In an attempt to move this allocation closer to a whole figure of three or four councillors we considered transferring electors from either of the South Wigston wards into a ward with electors from Wigston, as well as including electors from Wigston in a South Wigston ward. However, we have concluded that such a warding arrangement would not provide a good reflection of local communities in either area and we therefore propose retaining the London to Leicester railway as a boundary between the wards covering South Wigston and those covering Wigston. We have noted that the Borough Council stated that electors from South Wigston should not be included in a district ward with electors from Wigston. Having decided not to breach this boundary we propose allocating the area of South Wigston three councillors, to which it is entitled, and therefore propose a three-member ward covering South Wigston in its entirety and naming this ward South Wigston. Our proposed South Wigston ward will provide a high electoral variance both initially and in 2006. However, we consider that such an electoral variance is justifiable as it allows us to retain the boundary between South Wigston and Wigston. We consider that our proposals in this area will reflect community identities and interests and provide effective and convenient local government for the electors of South Wigston and those in the neighbouring wards of Wigston.

57 Under our draft recommendations, South Wigston ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 15 per cent above the borough average both initially and in 2006. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

58 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council stated that there should be “no change to the current electoral cycle of whole council elections”. We did not receive any further comments relating to the electoral cycle of the borough. We therefore make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

59 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 26 members should be retained;
- there should be 10 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

60 Our draft recommendations would involve modifying all of the existing wards in the borough of Oadby & Wigston, as summarised below:

- in Oadby we propose adopting the Borough Council’s proposal for Brocks Hill and Woodlands wards, while making only minor modifications to its proposed Grange, St Peter’s and Uplands wards;
- in Wigston we propose adopting the Borough Council’s proposed Meadowcourt ward, while putting forward our own proposed wards of All Saints, St Wolstan’s and Wigston Fields;
- in South Wigston we propose that the whole area be represented by a single three-member South Wigston ward.

61 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	26	26	26	26
Number of wards	10	10	10	10
Average number of electors per councillor	1,664	1,664	1,683	1,683
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	1	8	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	4	0

62 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Oadby & Wigston Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to one. By 2006 only one ward, South Wigston, is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should comprise 26 councillors serving 10 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Oadby & Wigston

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

63 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 11 March 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

64 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Oadby & Wigston Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

65 In the light of responses received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table A1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.