

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane in Hampshire

Further electoral review

October 2007

Translations and other formats

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What is the Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Ann M. Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews 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 and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Basingstoke & Deane is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements 17 wards have electoral variances of more than 10%. Development forecast during the previous review was not realised, particularly in Popley West and Rooksdown wards, which has resulted in them having variances of 32% and 55% fewer electors than the borough average, respectively.

This review was conducted in four stages:

| Stage | Stage starts | Description |
|--------------|---------------------|---|
| One | 6 September 2005 | Submission of proposals to us |
| Two | 13 December 2005 | Our analysis and deliberation |
| Three | 27 February 2007 | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four | 22 May 2007 | Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations |

Draft recommendations

Our draft recommendations were based on a council size of 60 members. We generally adopted the Council's Option C proposals, but subject to a number of our own amendments and those put forward by other respondents. Under our draft recommendations it is predicted that by 2009 no ward would have a variance of over 9% from the borough average.

Responses to consultation

At Stage Three we received 83 submissions. The Council revised its Stage One position, expressing support for a 56-member council, but also putting forward comments on the draft recommendations. The remaining submissions expressed a mixture of support and objections to the Council's proposals and our draft recommendations.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

Since the last review the electorate in Basingstoke & Deane has decreased by 1%, despite the Council's prediction of 9% growth over the five-year forecast period of the last review. At Stage Three, after receiving a number of queries from respondents,

we sought clarification from the Council about its current five-year forecast of 7% growth. Following a meeting with Council officers we accepted that its subsequent revisions provided the most accurate figures available.

Council size

At Stage One, following further consultation on a 30-member proposal, the Committee decided to retain the existing council size of 60 members. At Stage Three the Council revised its position, supporting a 56-member council. However, the Committee did not consider that the Council had put forward sufficiently strong evidence for its revised proposal, particularly when the Committee had already consulted on council size and received support for a 60-member council. We are therefore confirming 60 members as final.

General analysis

In the urban area of Basingstoke we are broadly confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to a number of minor amendments necessary to address the Council's revised electorate figures. Our decision in the Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, Kempshott, South Ham and Winklebury area was a difficult balance between electoral equality and conflicting evidence of local communities. In the rural area, given the strong evidence received, we have decided to revert to the existing electoral arrangements in a number of places. In the remaining areas we are confirming the draft recommendations as final.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 19 November 2007. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for queries regarding the implementation of these recommendations.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Final recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Basing | 3 | 6,384 | 2,128 | 12 | 6,354 | 2,118 | 5 |
| 2 | Baughurst & Tadley North | 2 | 4,167 | 2,084 | 9 | 4,374 | 2,187 | 8 |
| 3 | Bramley & Sherfield | 2 | 3,694 | 1,847 | -3 | 3,778 | 1,889 | -7 |
| 4 | Brighton Hill North | 2 | 3,842 | 1,921 | 1 | 3,822 | 1,911 | -6 |
| 5 | Brighton Hill South | 2 | 3,849 | 1,925 | 1 | 3,770 | 1,885 | -7 |
| 6 | Brookvale & Kings Furlong | 2 | 3,790 | 1,895 | -1 | 4,247 | 2,124 | 5 |
| 7 | Buckskin | 2 | 3,768 | 1,884 | -1 | 4,383 | 2,192 | 8 |
| 8 | Burghclere, Highclere & St Mary Bourne | 2 | 4,282 | 2,141 | 12 | 4,303 | 2,152 | 6 |
| 9 | Chineham | 3 | 5,200 | 1,733 | -9 | 6,313 | 2,104 | 4 |
| 10 | East Woodhay | 1 | 2,173 | 2,173 | 14 | 2,254 | 2,254 | 11 |
| 11 | Eastrop | 2 | 3,138 | 1,569 | -18 | 4,085 | 2,043 | 1 |
| 12 | Grove | 2 | 4,417 | 2,209 | 16 | 4,454 | 2,227 | 10 |
| 13 | Hatch Warren & Beggarwood | 3 | 5,805 | 1,935 | 2 | 6,055 | 2,018 | 0 |

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 14 | Kempshott | 3 | 5,798 | 1,933 | 1 | 5,644 | 1,881 | -7 |
| 15 | Kingsclere | 2 | 3,767 | 1,884 | -1 | 3,827 | 1,914 | -6 |
| 16 | Norden | 3 | 5,603 | 1,868 | -2 | 5,810 | 1,937 | -4 |
| 17 | Oakley & North Waltham | 3 | 5,430 | 1,810 | -5 | 5,357 | 1,786 | -12 |
| 18 | Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon | 2 | 3,604 | 1,802 | -5 | 3,907 | 1,954 | -4 |
| 19 | Pamber & Silchester | 2 | 3,629 | 1,815 | -5 | 3,730 | 1,865 | -8 |
| 20 | Popley East | 2 | 3,687 | 1,844 | -3 | 3,948 | 1,974 | -3 |
| 21 | Popley West | 2 | 2,163 | 1,082 | -43 | 3,911 | 1,956 | -3 |
| 22 | Rooksdown | 1 | 851 | 851 | -55 | 1,983 | 1,983 | -2 |
| 23 | Sherborne St John | 1 | 1,744 | 1,744 | -8 | 1,923 | 1,923 | -5 |
| 24 | South Ham | 3 | 6,422 | 2,141 | 12 | 6,267 | 2,089 | 3 |
| 25 | Tadley Central | 1 | 2,153 | 2,153 | 13 | 2,167 | 2,167 | 7 |

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 | Tadley South | 2 | 4,331 | 2,116 | 14 | 4,369 | 2,185 | 8 |
| 27 | Upton Grey & The Candovers | 1 | 2,160 | 2,160 | 13 | 2,210 | 2,210 | 9 |
| 28 | Whitchurch | 2 | 3,842 | 1,921 | 1 | 4,090 | 2,045 | 1 |
| 29 | Winklebury | 2 | 4,617 | 2,309 | 21 | 4,245 | 2,123 | 5 |
| | Totals | 60 | 114,310 | - | - | 121,580 | - | - |
| | Averages | - | - | 1,905 | - | - | 2,026 | - |

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

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Basingstoke & Deane.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make on-going assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

- thirty per cent of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Basingstoke & Deane. Basingstoke & Deane's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State on 25 July 2000. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made in March 2001 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2002.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Basingstoke & Deane is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful both in understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments that interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to the Commission 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 any parish and town councils in the borough. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the borough or parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as nearly as is possible, the same across a district. In practice each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors, given geographic and other constraints, including the make-up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews, and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just arrived at by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from that of another. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

14 The review is in four stages (see Table 2).

Table 2: Stages of the review

| Stage | Stage starts | Description |
|-------|------------------|---|
| One | 6 September 2005 | Submission of proposals to us |
| Two | 13 December 2005 | Our analysis and deliberation |
| Three | 27 February 2007 | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four | 22 May 2007 | Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations |

15 Stage One began on 6 September 2005, when we wrote to Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, the Association of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Authorities, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 12 December 2005.

16 During Stage Two we considered that a local resident put forward compelling evidence for a revised council size. We therefore conducted further consultation. We then considered this evidence along with the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

17 Stage Three began on 27 February 2007 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane in Hampshire*, and ended on 21 May 2007.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and we now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It is now for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an electoral changes Order. The Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), which define the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by Section 97 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The borough of Basingstoke & Deane is situated in northern Hampshire, comprising 51 parishes and the unparished urban settlement of Basingstoke. Ninety per cent of the borough's area comprises agricultural land, woodland or other green-field uses. Basingstoke is the largest town in the area, containing approximately 60% of the borough's population. The second largest settlement is the Tadley, Baughurst and Pamber Heath area.

22 The electorate of the borough is 114,310 (December 2004). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 30 wards. There are currently eight single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and eight three-member wards. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present each councillor represents a borough average of 1,905 electors (114,310 divided by 60), which the Council forecasts will increase to 2,026 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (121,580 divided by 60).

23 During the last review of Basingstoke & Deane, the Council forecast that the electorate would increase from 115,000 to 125,330 by 2004, a projected growth of 8%. However, this level of growth has not been realised, resulting in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that, under these arrangements, electoral equality across the borough met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in 17 of the 30 wards (56%) varies by more than 10% from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Rooksdown ward where the councillor represents 55% fewer electors than the borough average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council on 12 May 2005.

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Basing | 3 | 6,384 | 2,128 | 12 | 6,354 | 2,118 | 5 |
| 2 | Baughurst | 1 | 1,917 | 1,917 | 1 | 2,056 | 2,056 | 1 |
| 3 | Brighton Hill North | 2 | 3,544 | 1,772 | -7 | 3,535 | 1,768 | -13 |
| 4 | Brighton Hill South | 2 | 3,971 | 1,986 | 4 | 3,882 | 1,941 | -4 |
| 5 | Brookvale & Kings Furlong | 2 | 3,790 | 1,895 | -1 | 4,247 | 2,124 | 5 |
| 6 | Buckskin | 2 | 3,246 | 1,623 | -15 | 3,818 | 1,909 | -6 |
| 7 | Burghclere | 1 | 1,957 | 1,957 | 3 | 1,974 | 1,974 | -3 |
| 8 | Calleva | 2 | 4,363 | 2,182 | 15 | 4,432 | 2,216 | 9 |
| 9 | Chineham | 3 | 5,200 | 1,733 | -9 | 6,313 | 2,104 | 4 |
| 10 | East Woodhay | 1 | 2,173 | 2,173 | 14 | 2,254 | 2,254 | 11 |
| 11 | Eastrop | 2 | 3,138 | 1,569 | -18 | 4,085 | 2,043 | 1 |
| 12 | Grove | 2 | 4,417 | 2,209 | 16 | 4,454 | 2,227 | 10 |
| 13 | Hatch Warren & Beggarwood | 3 | 6,590 | 2,197 | 15 | 6,839 | 2,280 | 13 |

Table 3 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 14 | Highclere & Bourne | 1 | 2,325 | 2,325 | 22 | 2,329 | 2,329 | 15 |
| 15 | Kempshott | 3 | 6,099 | 2,033 | 7 | 5,945 | 1,982 | -2 |
| 16 | Kingsclere | 2 | 3,767 | 1,884 | -1 | 3,827 | 1,914 | -6 |
| 17 | Norden | 3 | 5,603 | 1,868 | -2 | 5,810 | 1,937 | -4 |
| 18 | Oakley & North Waltham | 3 | 5,584 | 1,861 | -2 | 5,531 | 1,844 | -9 |
| 19 | Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon | 2 | 3,604 | 1,802 | -5 | 3,907 | 1,954 | -4 |
| 20 | Pamber | 1 | 2,161 | 2,161 | 13 | 2,269 | 2,269 | 12 |
| 21 | Popley East | 2 | 3,276 | 1,638 | -14 | 3,562 | 1,781 | -12 |
| 22 | Popley West | 2 | 2,574 | 1,287 | -32 | 4,297 | 2,149 | 6 |
| 23 | Rooksdown | 1 | 851 | 851 | -55 | 1,983 | 1,983 | -2 |
| 24 | Sherborne St John | 1 | 2,389 | 2,389 | 25 | 2,556 | 2,556 | 26 |
| 25 | South Ham | 3 | 5,607 | 1,869 | -2 | 5,452 | 1,817 | -10 |

Table 3 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane borough

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2009) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 | Tadley North | 2 | 4,466 | 2,233 | 17 | 4,548 | 2,274 | 12 |
| 27 | Tadley South | 2 | 4,268 | 2,134 | 12 | 4,306 | 2,153 | 6 |
| 28 | Upton Grey & The Candovers | 1 | 2,160 | 2,160 | 13 | 2,210 | 2,210 | 9 |
| 29 | Whitchurch | 2 | 3,842 | 1,921 | 1 | 4,090 | 2,045 | 1 |
| 30 | Winklebury | 3 | 5,044 | 1,681 | -12 | 4,715 | 1,572 | -22 |
| | Totals | 60 | 114,310 | - | - | 121,580 | - | - |
| | Averages | - | - | 1,905 | - | - | 2,026 | - |

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

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 43 submissions were received. The Council submitted four schemes, with Option C being its preferred and formally adopted option. Two respondents supported its Option A, eight supported its Option C and 18 supported or generally supported its Option D. A local resident, Mr Markham, put forward proposals for a 30-member council with wards based on Hampshire county divisions. Nine respondents requested the retention of their existing wards or put forward general comments. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane in Hampshire*.

26 Our draft recommendations were based primarily on the Council's Option C proposals, but amended to take account of our own proposals, and of proposals put forward by other respondents.

27 In the Basingstoke town area, the Council's Option C and Option D put forward a number of identical wards and we generally adopted these. In the remaining area our proposals are generally based on Option C, but subject to a number of amendments designed to produce the best balance between good electoral equality and community identity.

28 In the rural area the Council's Option C and Option D proposed identical Basing, Overton and Whitchurch wards. However, in the remainder of the rural area the Council's Option D proposed multi-member wards as a matter of principle. Although in a few areas these multi-member rural wards secured better electoral equality, in others they did not. We therefore adopted the Option C proposals in this area.

29 We proposed:

- Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors, the same as at present, representing 30 wards, the same as at present;
- The boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries²; and
- There should be new warding arrangements for Tadley, Rooksdown and Sherborne St John parishes.

30 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the borough average in no more than 11 of the 30 wards. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 9% from the average by 2009.

² We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors. Where additional changes have not been made to these boundaries as part of our final recommendations, these minor boundary amendments are not considered as modifications.

4 Responses to consultation

31 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 83 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Borough Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council

32 The Council moved away from its Stage One support for a 60-member council, expressing support for the Stage One Option A 56-member proposals. It also put forward comments on the draft recommendations, in the event that we did not adopt its 56-member council proposals.

Political groups

33 We received seven submissions from political groups. The Conservative Group on the Council put forward an almost identical submission to the Council's revised proposal. The Labour Group expressed concern about the electorate figures, with particular reference to the impact in the Buckskin and South Ham areas. The Liberal Democrat Group expressed general support for the draft recommendations, but also put forward a number of objections, particularly in relation to the Kempshott Rise area.

34 The Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party expressed general support for the draft recommendations, but objected to the proposals in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood and Kempshott, particularly around Kempshott Rise. The North West Liberal Democrat Local Party submitted an identical submission to that from the Basingstoke Liberal Democrat local party. North West Hampshire Conservative Association expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposals, commenting specifically on the rural areas. Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party expressed concerns about the electorate forecasts and put forward general comments, including comments on the Kempshott area.

Hampshire County Council

35 Hampshire County Council expressed concerns that the draft recommendations did not take sufficient consideration of the county division boundaries and that coterminosity between ward and division boundaries had worsened as a result.

Councillors

36 We received 18 submissions from councillors. Councillor Tilbury (Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon ward) expressed opposition to the Council's proposals for a 56-member council and also expressed concerns about the electorate forecasts. Councillor Finney (Winklebury ward) expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals. Councillor Allen (Baughurst ward) requested the retention of the existing Baughurst and Tadley wards. Councillor Tucker (Calleva ward) expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals for this area, while also supporting its proposed amendments to the draft recommendations.

37 Councillor Watts (South Ham ward) expressed general support for the draft recommendations, but rejected our proposals for the Buckskin and South Ham area. Councillor Heath (Kempshott ward) expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposal and argued that the Berg Estate should be in Kempshott ward. Councillor Putty (Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward) objected to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward. Councillors Golding and Donnell (Winklebury ward) both expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposals. Councillor Donnell also put forward strong objections to the transfer of part of Winklebury ward to Buckskin ward.

38 Councillor Ruffell (Upton Grey & The Candovers ward) objected to the draft recommendations for Upton Grey & The Candovers. Councillors Richardson (Oakley & North Waltham ward), Leek (Sherborne St John ward) and Osselton (Kingsclere ward) all expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals. Councillor Lewin (Burghclere ward) objected to the draft recommendations for his ward. Councillor Saunders (East Woodhay ward) queried the electorate forecasts, arguing that East Woodhay should not be combined with any of the surrounding parishes. Councillor Biermann (Chineham ward) proposed a number of minor amendments to the Chineham parish boundary.

39 Councillor Gardiner (Calleva ward) and Councillor Chapman (Pamber ward) expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals for their areas.

Parish and town councils

40 Representations were received from 14 parish and town councils. Tadley Town Council objected to the draft recommendation to transfer part of Tadley to a ward with Baughurst parish. Baughurst Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations, arguing that it should remain a single-member ward. Farleigh Wallop Parish Meeting expressed support for Councillor Ruffell's submission. Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council objected to the transfer of Mapledurwell & Up Nately out of Basing ward. Mapledurwell & Up Nately Parish Council requested the retention of the existing electoral arrangements. Oakley & Deane Parish Council objected to the draft recommendation to separate Oakley from Deane.

41 Overton Parish Council supported the draft recommendation to separate it from Steventon parish. East Woodhay Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations, arguing that it is self-contained and that the electorate forecasts for the area were incorrect. Burghclere, Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green and Newton parish councils all expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals and cited links between them which they argued the draft recommendations ignore. Chineham Parish Council proposed a number of amendments to the parish boundaries. Sherborne St John Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations in its area. Monk Sherborne Parish Council expressed support for the Council's Stage One proposals.

Other representations

42 Three local residents put forward borough-wide comments about the draft recommendations, including a mixture of support and objections. One of these, Mr Berwick-Gooding, put forward detailed comments. Seven local residents objected to the draft recommendation to transfer part of Tadley parish to a ward with Baughurst parish. Six local residents objected to proposed boundary amendments between Kempshott, Buckskin, South Ham and Hatch Warren & Beggarwood wards. Another local resident objected to the proposals to transfer part of the existing Winklebury ward to Buckskin ward.

43 Three local residents objected to our draft recommendations for Upton Grey & The Candovers ward, putting forward a similar argument to that made by Councillor Ruffell. Eight other local residents also objected to the draft recommendations for the Upton Grey & The Candovers area. Eight local residents objected to the draft recommendation to take Steventon parish out of a ward with Laverstoke and Overton parishes. A local resident expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals for the Burghclere area, also objecting to the transfer of Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish to Kingsclere ward. Finally, a local resident expressed support for the draft recommendations for Bramley & Sherfield, Pamber & Silchester and Sherborne St John wards.

44 Bishop's Green Youth Project objected to the proposals for Burghclere and Bourne ward. The Baughurst Society objected to the proposals to transfer part of Tadley parish to a ward with Baughurst parish.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

45 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane.

46 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), which stipulates the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972

47 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. 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 clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

48 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

49 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 should also be taken into account and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

50 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries. We are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Electorate figures

51 As part of the previous review of Basingstoke & Deane, the Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 9% between 1999 and 2004. However, between 1999 and the start of this review the electorate has actually decreased slightly, by 0.7%. The growth predicted in the Popley and Rooksdown areas has largely not been realised, which has had a knock-on effect on electoral equality across the borough. At the start of this review, the Council submitted electorate forecasts projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% from 114,310 to 122,250 over the five-

year period from 2004 to 2009. It argued that much of this growth would be in the areas that had not grown as much as predicted during the last review.

52 During the preliminary period of the review, Councillor Shaw and the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party queried the Council's projected figures, raising questions about the impact of under-registration on the electorate forecasts and suggesting that the Council had not included certain developments.

53 We raised these concerns with the Council, which commented that it had included all appropriate developments and that, while voter under-registration was an issue, it considered its forecasting methodology had accurately reflected this.

54 At Stage Three a number of respondents questioned the Council's electorate forecasts, with particular reference to the Old Kempshott Lane area in Buckskin and the Harwood Paddock area in East Woodhay, but also the general process that the Council went through.

55 Councillor Heath argued that the Council had not included development figures for the development on Old Kempshott Lane.

56 The Labour Group expressed concerns about the Council's electorate figures. It expressed concern at the number of void properties, arguing that even though residents were not on the electoral register, councillors would still have to represent these people. It also cited concerns that 'a new development in Old Kempshott Lane, Buckskin, which may provide a further 300 properties has not been considered in the Council's electorate figures'.

57 The Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party also expressed concerns about the Council's electorate projections. As at Stage One, it questioned the accuracy of the electoral register and also the accuracy of the developments included in the Council's figures. It argued that there had been changes to the electorate projections in the Old Kempshott Lane area and that this highlighted the inaccuracies in the Council's original figures. It also argued that there was 'no method of challenging the electorate projections produced by the Council'.

58 Councillor Watts (South Ham ward) and a local resident also argued that the Council's electoral forecasts had not taken account of the development on Old Kempshott Lane.

59 East Woodhay Parish Council argued that the Harwood Paddock development that was scheduled to be completed within the parish was 'taken out of the Local Plan [...] and now lies outside the settlement boundary', adding that 'no such development will therefore take place and the forecast figures should be adjusted accordingly'. A local resident also questioned the electorate forecast for East Woodhay, citing an amendment to the Local Plan.

60 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received. We note the Labour Group's concerns about being unable to challenge the Council's electorate forecasts. However, we would point out that it raised concerns with the Committee at the start of the review and that these concerns were raised with the Council. While the Committee is able to bring some expertise to these deliberations, it is also reliant

on council officers, with knowledge of local issues and policies, to inform its decisions.

61 We also note the comments regarding the Council’s methodology, including the counting of void properties and the general accuracy of the electoral register. We consider that these issues were dealt with in the draft recommendations, when we wrote to the Council regarding the issue of voter under-registration following submissions received at Stage One. We remain of the view that the Council has carried out the most accurate count possible.

62 However, we did have a concern regarding the comments about revisions to the areas of housing development. We note that the issue of Old Kempshott Lane was raised in response to the draft recommendations.

63 We therefore wrote to the Council requesting clarification about the comments that we received. In a meeting with council officers the Council commented that given the time from the start of the review a number of their original projections could now be reassessed to provide more accurate projections through to 2009. The officers provided revised figures across the borough. The Committee acknowledges that forecasting electorates is difficult and considers that these revisions are unavoidable given the availability of more up-to-date data. We are satisfied that these are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. Table 4 outlines the revisions to the electorate forecast figures.

Table 4: Revised electorate forecasts

| | Ward name | Original 2009 electorate forecast | Change in forecast | Revised 2009 electorate forecast |
|----|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | Basing | 6,354 | 0 | 6,354 |
| 2 | Baughurst | 2,006 | 50 | 2,056 |
| 3 | Brighton Hill North | 3,505 | 30 | 3,535 |
| 4 | Brighton Hill South | 3,882 | 0 | 3,882 |
| 5 | Brookvale & Kings Furlong | 4,477 | -230 | 4,247 |
| 6 | Buckskin | 3,308 | 510 | 3,818 |
| 7 | Burghclere | 1,974 | 0 | 1,974 |
| 8 | Calleva | 4,722 | -290 | 4,432 |
| 9 | Chineham | 6,543 | -230 | 6,313 |
| 10 | East Woodhay | 2,374 | -120 | 2,254 |
| 11 | Eastrop | 3,535 | 550 | 4,085 |

Table 4 (continued): Revised electorate forecasts

| | Ward Name | Original 2009 electorate forecast | Change in forecast | Revised 2009 electorate forecast |
|----|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| 12 | Grove | 4,294 | 160 | 4,454 |
| 13 | Hatch Warren & Beggarwood | 6,839 | 0 | 6,839 |
| 14 | Highclere & Bourne | 2,329 | 0 | 2,329 |
| 15 | Kempshott | 5,925 | 20 | 5,945 |
| 16 | Kingsclere | 3,827 | 0 | 3,827 |
| 17 | Norden | 5,930 | -120 | 5,810 |
| 18 | Oakley & North Waltham | 5,511 | 20 | 5,531 |
| 19 | Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon | 3,907 | 0 | 3,907 |
| 20 | Pamber | 2,249 | 20 | 2,269 |
| 21 | Popley East | 3,722 | -160 | 3,562 |
| 22 | Popley West | 4,597 | -300 | 4,297 |
| 23 | Rooksdown | 2,333 | -350 | 1,983 |
| 24 | Sherborne St John | 2,556 | 0 | 2,556 |
| 25 | South Ham | 5,452 | 0 | 5,452 |
| 26 | Tadley North | 4,648 | -100 | 4,548 |
| 27 | Tadley South | 4,406 | -100 | 4,306 |
| 28 | Upton Grey and The Candovers | 2,210 | 0 | 2,210 |
| 29 | Whitchurch | 4,090 | 0 | 4,090 |
| 30 | Winklebury | 4,745 | -30 | 4,715 |
| | Total | 122,250 | -670 | 121,580 |

Council size

64 Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council presently has 60 members.

65 At Stage One we received a number of proposals for different council sizes, including proposals from the Council to retain the existing council size of 60 members. It also put forward another option based on 56 members, but did not provide any evidence in support. A local resident, Mr Markham, put forward proposals for a 30-member council, a reduction of 30 councillors.

66 We considered that Mr Markham had put forward persuasive evidence for his reduction. When balanced against the evidence received supporting the retention of the existing council size we considered that his proposals had strong merit. We therefore decided to consult on his proposals.

67 However, following this consultation, although there was some continued support, there were also a large number of well-evidenced objections. We shared a number of these concerns, particularly over the impact of councillor workload and the ability to represent local people while also ensuring that the Council's decision-making process could function. We therefore decided to retain the existing arrangements. Full detail of our decision can be found in the *Draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements in Basingstoke & Deane in Hampshire*.

68 At Stage Three the Council decided to support its Stage One Option A proposal for a 56-member council. It argued that adopting the 56-member council would 'result in no changes to the ward boundaries of Basing, Chineham, East Woodhay, Grove, Highclere & Bourne, Norden, Rooksdown, Tadley North, Tadley South and Whitchurch wards'. The Council commented that a 'higher councillor/elector ratio can be justified due to the familiarity of all Councillors and the majority of the population with electronic communication' and that the 56-member proposal would resolve the 'difficult judgement' that the Boundary Committee encountered in trying to squeeze 10 seats into Bucksdown, Kempshott, South Ham and Winklebury, which has an unfortunate knock-on effect in their proposals for Hatch Warren & Beggarwood'. It went on to argue that a number of the issues that the Committee had considered would be improved by adopting a 56-member council.

69 The Council's proposals were supported by an identical proposal from the Council's Conservative Group. A large number of the remaining submissions also supported proposals based on the 56-member Option A proposals, although they did not put forward specific evidence on how such a council size would work in terms of political management and local governance. However, other respondents supported proposals based on our draft recommendations for a 60-member council.

70 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note that the Council has moved away from its position at Stage One. In our draft recommendations we argued that the Council had provided good evidence for retaining the existing council size. We note its revised arguments at Stage Three. However, although it is only proposing a reduction of four members, we do not consider that it has provided any compelling evidence on how the Council itself would function with a reduced membership. It briefly alluded to the increased use of technology, but did not assess the impact on the Council's decision-making structures or on the workload of individual councillors. We note that it argued that its

proposals would enable 'no change' in a large number of wards, but we would point out that this cannot be the starting point for a review and that we had hoped it would argue in terms of the Council's management structure, as described in our *Guidance*.

71 In addition, while the Council's revised proposal drew general support from a large number of respondents, it also drew objections from those who supported a 60-member council. The supporters of a 56-member council did not provide us with any compelling evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft proposal for a 60-member council. We are therefore confirming a 60-member council as final.

Electoral equality

72 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

73 The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough, 114,310, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 60 under our draft proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our recommendations is 1,905.

74 Our draft recommendations in Basingstoke & Deane generally secured good electoral equality and no ward was forecast to have a variance of over 9% from the borough average by 2009.

75 Under our final recommendations, electoral equality is due to deteriorate slightly. However, we consider that this is justified given that our proposals reflected the evidence received during consultation at Stage Three. East Woodhay ward will have 11% more electors than the borough average by 2009. However, given the evidence that East Woodhay parish looks outside the borough we consider that our final recommendations reflect the local community. We also propose an Oakley & North Waltham ward with 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009. We consider that respondents have put forward good evidence for community links between Steventon and Overton and between Laverstoke, Mapledurwell & Up Nately and Basing. While the variance in Oakley & North Waltham is relatively high, we consider that this is justified by reflecting community identities in these other areas in these rural wards.

General analysis

76 At Stage One the Council submitted four different borough-wide proposals, Option A, Option B, Option C and Option D. However, Option C was submitted as the Council's official scheme following a vote by its members. Three of the four schemes (except Option B) were supported by a number of the respondents, although a number of respondents also proposed amendments to those options. Option A was supported by the Basingstoke Conservative Association, Option C was supported by the Basingstoke Liberal Democrats and other Liberal Democrat groups and councillors, while Option D was supported by the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Group and other Labour groups and councillors. We also received Mr Markham's proposals for a 30-member council.

77 As stated in the council size section, we did not adopt either Mr Markham's or the Council's Option A proposals (as supported by the Conservative Association) for a reduction in council size. Since we adopted a 60-member council, and given that these proposals are based on a different council size, we were unable to consider them further.

78 Of the remaining borough-wide schemes, the Council's Option B did not receive any support, and it also secured worse electoral equality than the Council's Option C or Option D. Therefore, given the lack of support, lack of community identity evidence and poor levels of electoral equality achieved, we did not pursue Option B further.

79 We gave careful consideration to Options C and D and the submissions in support or opposition. We noted that the Basingstoke town area of the borough is unparished and that none of the options or other responses received proposed wards that cross into the surrounding rural area. We therefore based our draft recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane on the discrete areas of Basingstoke town and the rural area.

80 In the Basingstoke town area, the Council's Option C and Option D put forward a number of identical wards and we generally adopted these. In the remaining areas we generally based our proposals on Option C, but subject to a number of amendments.

81 In the rural area, Option D proposed multi-member wards as a matter of principle. However, we did not consider that it provided sufficient evidence to warrant us avoiding single-member wards as a matter of principle, particularly when a number of these received local support. We therefore based our draft recommendations on Option C.

82 At Stage Three the Council moved away from its Stage One support for proposals based on a 60-member council and expressed support for its Stage One Option A proposals based on a 56-member council. As stated in the council size section, the Committee does not consider that the Council or the supporters of its 56-member proposals put forward sufficient evidence to justify its proposed reduction in council size. We are therefore retaining a 60-member council.

83 Given that its proposals for a 56-member council are based on a different council size from the 60-member council adopted as part of our final recommendations, we are unable to fully consider the Council's proposals. Indeed,

we note that the Council and the majority of respondents who supported its Stage Three proposals also put forward comments on the draft recommendations in the event that its proposals for a 56-member council were rejected. We have therefore considered these further comments.

84 The revisions to the electorate forecasts, described above, have not generally had a significant impact on the level of electoral equality achieved by the draft recommendations. However, we have revisited our draft recommendations in the light of these revisions.

85 In the Basingstoke town area we are generally confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to a number of amendments designed to reflect evidence received and the revised electorate figures.

86 In the rural area, on the basis of strong evidence and revisions to the electorate forecasts, we are reverting to the existing electoral arrangements in a number of areas. In the remaining areas we are confirming the draft recommendations as final.

Warding arrangements

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

- Brookvale & Kings Furlong, Eastrop, Grove and Norden wards
- Brighton Hill North and Brighton Hill South wards
- Buckskin, Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, Kempshott, South Ham and Winklebury wards
- Chineham, Popley East, Popley West and Rooksdown wards
- Basing, Oakley & North Waltham and Upton Grey & The Candovers wards
- Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon and Whitchurch wards
- Burghclere, East Woodhay, Highclere & Bourne and Kingsclere wards
- Baughurst, Tadley North and Tadley South wards
- Calleva, Pamber and Sherborne St John wards

88 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Table 1 (pages 7–9), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Brookvale & Kings Furlong, Eastrop, Grove and Norden wards

89 These wards are in the town of Basingstoke and are not parished. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

90 In the draft recommendations report we noted that there was agreement on the Council's Option C proposals in this area and that they secured good electoral equality, while maintaining strong boundaries and reflecting local communities. We therefore adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

91 At Stage Three the Council did not comment on these wards. The Conservative Group on the Council put forward comments identical to the Council's. The Council's Liberal Democrat Group expressed general support for these wards, but did not

make any specific comments. North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party also expressed general support for these wards.

92 Two local residents also expressed general support for our draft recommendations, but did not make any specific comments.

93 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note the general support that our draft recommendations for this area have received. However, we also note that as a result of the amendments to the Council's electorate forecasts, electoral equality in a number of the proposed wards would in fact be worse by 2009 than had originally been recommended. Brookvale ward would worsen from 1% fewer electors than the borough average in 2009 to 5% fewer, Eastrop ward would worsen from 3% fewer to 11% more, Norden ward would marginally worsen from 3% fewer to 4% fewer. Grove ward would improve from 5% more electors than the borough average to 2% more.

94 We had greater concerns over the worsening of electoral equality in our proposed Eastrop ward. The Council have forecast an extra 550 electors in this area by 2009, which would result in it having 11% more electors than the average if we retained our draft recommendations. Electoral variance in the neighbouring Brookvale ward would also worsen, albeit to an acceptable level. We note that the area as a whole has strong boundaries, being bounded by the railway to the north and by the ring road to the south-east and west. However, we examined ways of addressing the deterioration in electoral variance in Eastrop ward by examining the boundary between it and Brookvale ward.

95 We note that with the revised electorate forecasts the existing wards actually secure better electoral equality, with Brookvale ward having 5% more electors by 2009 and Eastrop having 1% more. We also note that at Stage One and Stage Three, although there was some support for the boundary put forward in the draft recommendations, this was not strong. We consider the existing boundary between these wards to be good. We therefore propose reverting back to the existing arrangements for these two wards. Since we are reverting to the existing electoral arrangements, we have also decided to retain the existing name of Brookvale & Kings Furlong ward.

96 We consider the changes to electoral equality in Norden and Grove wards to be acceptable. In addition, these wards have strong boundaries and have drawn some support. We are therefore confirming them as final.

97 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances off our final recommendations for Brookvale & Kings Furlong, Eastrop, Grove and Norden wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Brighton Hill North and Brighton Hill South wards

98 These wards are in the town of Basingstoke and are not parished. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

99 In the draft recommendations report we noted that most respondents generally agreed on the external boundary of the Brighton Hill area, including the amendment to transfer a small area of Hatch Warren & Beggarwood to Brighton Hill. We also noted that there was disagreement over how to define different communities within it and therefore disagreement over how to divide the wards. We did not consider that any party had put forward strong evidence to justify its proposed division of the area. However, we noted that the Basingstoke & Deane Constituency Labour Party's proposals substantially redrew the existing boundaries, while also securing worse levels of electoral equality than Option C. We also considered Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposals, but noted that they secured significantly worse levels of electoral equality. We therefore adopted the Option C proposals without amendment.

100 At Stage Three the Council did not put forward any comments on these wards. The Council's Liberal Democrat Group expressed general support for these wards, but did not make any specific comments. North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party also expressed general support for these wards.

101 A local resident also expressed general support for these wards, but did not put forward any specific comments. Another local resident reiterated support for his Stage One proposals, which we had rejected, but stated, 'however I am happy that you have rejected splitting Brighton Hill in to East and West wards'.

102 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note the general support that our draft recommendations for this area have received. We note the comments of the local resident, but do not consider that he put forward any strong additional evidence to support his original proposals. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

103 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Brighton Hill East and Brighton Hill West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Buckskin, Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, Kempshott, South Ham and Winklebury wards

104 These wards are in the town of Basingstoke and are not parished. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

105 In the draft recommendations report we noted that this area attracted a number of different and often conflicting proposals. The Council favoured Option C, while the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party put forward a proposal identical to the Council's Option D. Mr Berwick-Gooding also put forward a number of amendments to the Council's Option C proposals.

106 We noted that the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals secured better electoral equality than the Council's Option C proposals. Its proposals also avoided the high opposing variances between Hatch Warren & Beggarwood and Kempshott wards. However, we had concerns over its the proposal to transfer part of the Berg Estate to its Buckskin ward, noting that this area of the Berg Estate does not

actually have any direct road links to the Buckskin ward. We did not consider that this would reflect local communities and therefore decided against adopting the proposal. Unfortunately, this had a significant knock-on effect on the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals for the remainder of the area, either worsening electoral equality or requiring substantial redrawing of its proposals. We were therefore unable to adopt any of its proposals for this area.

107 We also noted that Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposal for this area, which included retaining the majority of the existing Hatch Warren & Beggarwood and Kempshott wards, secured significantly worse electoral equality than either Option C or the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals. Mr Berwick-Gooding did provide some reasonable evidence of local community links, but given the significantly worse levels of electoral equality we did not adopt his proposals.

108 We therefore based our proposals for this area on the Council's Option C, but with a number of amendments to improve electoral equality, reflect communities and take into account arguments put by the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party and Mr Berwick-Gooding.

109 As stated above, we noted that the Council's Option C secured high opposing variances between Hatch Warren & Beggarwood and Kempshott wards and examined ways to address this. We also noted the strong argument received for both Option C and in support of the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals that the Berg Estate should no longer be divided between three wards, and that a better option would be to divide it between two wards. Indeed, we noted that much of the evidence argued that the Berg Estate should be wholly in the South Ham ward, to which it is said to have strong community links. We therefore examined ways to address this.

110 Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party Buckskin & Kempshott Branch also proposed transferring the Kempshott Rise area (609 electors) out of Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward to Kempshott ward, acknowledging that the proposal would breach the A30 boundary. However, it argued that the area does not have strong links to Hatch Warren and could access Kempshott ward via the A30 roundabout.

111 While we acknowledged the concerns about access from Kempshott Rise to the rest of Kempshott, we considered that the links via the roundabout were reasonable. We also noted that adopting this amendment would improve electoral equality in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward, while also significantly improving it in Kempshott ward. The improvement in electoral equality in Kempshott ward enabled us to improve electoral equality elsewhere in the area and reflect the strong community links of the Berg Estate, albeit by worsening electoral equality in Kempshott ward again. We therefore adopted the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise from Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward to Kempshott ward.

112 We noted the strong argument about community links in the Berg Estate and its links to South Ham, and that it is divided from Kempshott by Pack Lane. We also noted that it is possible to transfer 492 electors from the Berg Estate under Option C's Kempshott ward to South Ham ward. While this proposal would worsen electoral equality in our modified Kempshott ward, it would improve it in South Ham ward. We considered that this proposal reflected local communities without significantly

worsening electoral equality. We therefore adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

113 We noted Mr Berwick-Gooding's argument that the proposals to place Melford Gardens, Old Kempshott Lane and Buckskin Lane in Kempshott ward did not reflect communities, as the areas do not have access into the ward. We also noted that he proposed transferring the 175 electors in these roads to Buckskin ward. However, transferring all 175 electors would further worsen electoral equality in our modified Kempshott ward, to -9% by 2009, but improve it in Buckskin to -2%.

114 We adopted part of Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposals, transferring Melford Gardens and Old Kempshott Lane to Buckskin ward, concurring that they do not have good access into Kempshott ward.

115 Finally, we noted that Option C, Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party and Mr Berwick-Gooding all agreed that the West Ham Lane and Worting area of the existing Winklebury ward has strong community links with Buckskin ward. However, Mr Berwick-Gooding also argued for the transfer of the Wykeham Drive area. While he put forward some reasonable evidence, we noted that the area has good road links to the Worting Road and into West Ham Lane and Worting and that his proposal would significantly worsen electoral equality. We therefore did not adopt Mr Berwick-Gooding's amendment.

116 As stated above, at Stage One this area attracted a number of significantly different and often conflicting proposals. However, we considered that our draft recommendations provided the best balance between the community identity evidence received, while also securing improved electoral equality.

117 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council, the Council objected to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward. It also argued that the residents of the Berg Estate wished to remain part of Kempshott ward. It supported the draft recommendation to transfer the area south of Old Kempshott Lane to Buckskin ward, citing the road links for these areas into Buckskin ward. However, it also argued that the additional development under the Council's revised electorate figures would give Buckskin ward too many electors and therefore proposed transferring part of the 'South Ham extension', arguing the area has 'no connection by road to Buckskin and is entirely dependent on its links to South Ham'. The Council's submission was supported by an identical submission from the Council's Conservative Group.

118 The Council's Liberal Group expressed general support for the proposals in this area, but put forward objections to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward. It stated that there is a 'strong physical separation of the communities by the A30'.

119 North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party also objected to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward, stating that the A30 'is an extremely busy road and the pedestrian crossing and a shared roundabout do not make it a focal point for the communities either side of it'. They argued that the areas share 'facilities and interests' with the rest of Hatch Warren. They also supported the transfer of the Berg Estate to South Ham ward.

120 The Council's Labour Group expressed concerns about the electorate figures in this area and requested the retention of the existing wards, subject to a small amendment to the proposed Winklebury ward.

121 Councillor Watts (South Ham ward) expressed a preference for retaining the existing electoral arrangements in South Ham ward but stated that if this were not possible he would favour the transfer of part of the South Ham extension, as proposed by the Council, to South Ham ward. He argued that the loss of councillors would be made up for by the Council's revised electorate forecasts for Buckskin ward. He also requested no change to the other wards in this area.

122 Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party expressed support for transferring Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward but said that this was dependent on the boundaries elsewhere in Kempshott and Hatch Warren & Beggarwood wards. It objected to our proposal to transfer the Berg Estate to South Ham ward, arguing that our rejection of its Stage One proposal to transfer part of the Berg Estate to Buckskin ward on the grounds of a lack of road links was not consistent with the lack of road links between the South Ham extension and Buckskin ward. It therefore put forward a revised version of its Stage One proposals. It proposed broadly transferring the same area of the Berg Estate to Buckskin ward, but extending the boundary in the north so that there is road access via Pinkerton Road. It argued that the existing Buckskin ward already contains part of South Ham in the South Ham extension and 'for this reason moving other parts of South Ham ward into Buckskin ward presents no problems at all from the perspective of community identity'. It also proposed transferring the Worting Road area of Winklebury ward south of the railway line to South Ham ward.

123 Councillor Heath (Kempshott ward) expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposal, but also expressed support for its proposed modifications to the draft recommendations to retain the Berg Estate in Kempshott ward. She stated that, 'Residents of the Berg estate are fully integrated into Kempshott [and] receive the local *Kempshott Courier* magazine,' adding that 'there is a local neighbourhood watch group, which considers itself part of Kempshott.' Councillor Court (Kempshott ward) also objected to the proposal to transfer the Berg Estate to South Ham ward and the south end of Old Kempshott Lane to Buckskin, arguing that this would impact on the neighbourhood watch schemes in both areas. She also objected to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward, citing the A30 as a significant barrier.

124 Councillor Putty (Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward) argued that the A30 forms a strong barrier between Kempshott Rise and Kempshott ward and that the area should remain in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward.

125 Councillors Donnell and Golding (Winklebury ward) both objected to the draft recommendations for Winklebury and expressed support for the Council's Stage Three 56-member proposal. Councillor Donnell put forward strong evidence for the links between the area to the north of the railway line and the remainder of Winklebury ward. He stated that 'they share common schools (Forthill, Castle Hill, Winklebury Juniors) with the rest of Winklebury. These are not schools that are used by residents of Buckskin. They utilise the same shops – Elmwood Way [...] the same religious groupings [...] the same community facilities at the Sycamore Centre and Forthill community Centre'. He also said that there are poor road links to Buckskin,

stating, 'the only current access between the Wykeham Drive area and Buckskin is via a narrow tunnel under the railway on the Old Worting Road [...] This is a major reason why the residents of the Wykeham Drive do not use Buckskin'. Councillor Golding also objected to these proposals, but acknowledged that if any roads were to be transferred they should be those put forward in our draft recommendations. However, he added that residents 'have no community connection with Buckskin and their schools, shops etc are predominantly in Winklebury', adding that 'the railway line running between Winklebury and Buckskin [...] is a massive physical barrier and the only road between the two areas is through a narrow tunnel which is something of a bottleneck'.

126 One local resident also objected to our proposed Buckskin ward, arguing that the area to the north of the railway line has links with Winklebury, citing local shops and services and also referring to the physical boundaries.

127 Another local resident also expressed concerns about the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward but added, 'however I understand that this enables you to move most of the Berg Estate to South Ham to unite it in one ward, which I support'. That local resident expressed support for the proposal to transfer Old Kempshott Road and Melford Gardens to Buckskin ward. Another local resident stated that 'I oppose your Hatch Warren & Beggarwood and Kempshott wards and support your South Ham wards'.

128 One local resident proposed a number of amendments in this area. He proposed retaining Kempshott Rise in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, stating that 'despite its somewhat misleading name, this area is very much part of Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, sharing all its community facilities', and highlighting the barrier that the A30 forms. He also proposed retaining the Berg Estate in Kempshott ward, arguing that 'residents share Kempshott facilities, such as the local newsletter and community hall, and few in South Ham'. He proposed transferring an area of the South Ham extension from Buckskin ward to South Ham ward. Finally, he proposed retaining part of Winklebury ward transferred to Buckskin ward in Winklebury.

129 Two local residents objected to the proposal to transfer Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward, arguing that the A30 is a strong barrier between the areas. Another local resident also objected to the proposal and also the one to transfer Melford Gardens to Buckskin ward. Another made general comments about boundary changes and objected to the proposal to transfer the Berg Estate to South Ham ward.

130 We have given careful consideration to all the evidence received. We note that there are a number of conflicting proposals for this area, supported by sometimes conflicting evidence, particularly in relation to the Berg Estate. As stated in the draft recommendations, we found it a difficult balance to secure good electoral arrangements given the evidence received at Stage One and it is obviously important that we still consider the comments put forward at that stage as in some instances they conflict with the comments received at Stage Three.

131 First, we note the strong evidence concerning the Winklebury area put forward by Councillors Donnell and Golding. We also note that they have provided very good evidence of the links between the Worting area and the remainder of Winklebury ward. We would also concur with their view that our proposed ward boundary is not ideal and that the railway line does form a strong barrier.

132 However, we also note that both councillors expressed support for the council's Stage Three 56-member proposal. Unfortunately, for the reasons outlined in the Council size section, we have rejected this. While their proposals secured reasonable levels of electoral equality under a 56-member council, we note that under the 60member council that we are adopting transferring the Worting area to Winklebury ward would worsen electoral equality in Winklebury ward to 20% more electors than the borough average by 2009. Although the councillors provided strong evidence, we do not consider it sufficiently compelling to warrant such a high variance, particularly in an urban area. We are therefore confirming the draft recommendation for Winklebury ward as final.

133 We also note the strong objections to our proposal to transfer the Kempshott Rise area to Kempshott ward. Retaining this area in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood would worsen electoral equality in that ward from 1% fewer electors than the borough average in 2009 to 9% more, but worsen it in Kempshott from 8% fewer electors to 17% fewer. Although we do not consider that respondents have put forward particularly strong evidence of Kempshott Rise's community links to Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, we do recognise that the A30 could form a significant barrier between it and Kempshott. However, we also note that while it forms a barrier there is reasonable access across the A30 via a large roundabout.

134 We would be prepared to accept an electoral variance of 9% more electors than the borough average in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood which would result from retaining the Kempshott Rise area in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward. However, this would be entirely dependent on finding a solution to improving the electoral variance of 17% fewer electors than the borough average that would result in the proposed Kempshott ward as a result of removing the Kempshott Rise area.

135 As stated above, we consider that we received conflicting evidence about the treatment of the Berg Estate. Some of this evidence also conflicts with that received at Stage One. Transferring the Berg Estate back to Kempshott ward would address the electoral variance of 17% fewer electors that would result in Kempshott ward were Kempshott Rise transferred back to Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward. However, we would need to be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to warrant us breaking the ties between the Berg Estate and South Ham ward that are reflected in its draft recommendations. Indeed, we must be convinced that the links between Kempshott Rise and Hatch Warren & Beggarwood are stronger than those between the Berg Estate and South Ham.

136 We note that the Council and Councillor Heath's comments were in direct contradiction to those received during Stage One which argued that the Berg Estate had links with the remainder of South Ham, including the shops at Buckland Avenue and a number of junior and infant schools, churches and sports facilities. In addition, we note that a number of respondents continue to support the transfer of the Berg Estate to South Ham and that a number of respondents, while expressing doubts about the transfer of Kempshott Rise to Kempshott ward, acknowledge that this effectively facilitates the transfer of the Berg Estate to South Ham. When balanced against the evidence received at Stage Three and Stage One, we do not consider that the Council or Councillor Heath have put forward sufficiently strong evidence to persuade us that the Berg Estate has stronger links with Kempshott than it does with South Ham.

137 Accordingly, we do not feel we can now transfer the Berg Estate to Kempshott simply to facilitate retaining Kempshott Rise in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, and thus maintain the integrity of the A30 as a strong boundary feature. We acknowledge that the boundary between Kempshott Rise and Hatch Warren & Beggarwood is not ideal, but for the reasons outlined above we consider that there is stronger evidence for retaining the Berg Estate in South Ham ward than transferring Kempshott Rise to Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward.

138 We also note the comments about the South Ham extension and acknowledge that there are some issues of access in this area. However, while there is some merit in the Labour Group's proposal to address this issue by transferring an area of the South Ham extension to South Ham ward, we note that this only transfers part of the area. As a result, a number of roads would still have the same access issues. We do not consider that the Labour Group has provided sufficient evidence to transfer just part of this area.

139 We have examined the possibility of transferring the whole South Ham extension to South Ham. Unfortunately the area contains over 1,000 electors and transferring it would worsen electoral equality, giving Buckskin ward 16% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009 and South Ham ward 20% more electors than the borough average. Even if we considered there to be sufficient evidence to transfer the Berg Estate back to Kempshott, giving the modified South Ham ward 12% more electors than the borough average, we do not consider that the Labour Group has provided sufficient evidence to warrant a 16% electoral variance in Buckskin ward.

140 In summary, although the Committee considers there to be reasonable arguments for retaining Kempshott Rise in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood ward, we do not consider there is sufficient evidence to persuade us to move away from the draft proposal to transfer the Berg Estate to South Ham to improve electoral equality in Kempshott, if Kempshott Rise were retained in Hatch Warren & Beggarwood.

141 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Buckskin, Hatch Warren & Beggarwood, Kempshott, South Ham and Winklebury wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Chineham, Popley East, Popley West and Rooksdown wards

142 Popley East ward is not parished. Chineham ward comprises Chineham parish and Taylors Farm parish ward of Sherfield on Loddon parish. Popley West ward comprises an unparished area of Basingstoke town and Popley Fields parish ward of Sherborne parish. Rooksdown ward comprises an unparished area of Basingstoke town and Rooksdown parish. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

143 In our draft recommendations we noted that, excepting Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposals, there was broad agreement for Popley East and Popley West wards. While Mr Berwick-Gooding proposed wards that utilised strong boundaries, they also gave high opposing variances. In addition, he did not provide strong evidence

explaining how his proposals would better reflect local communities. Therefore, given the strong support for broadly retaining the existing electoral arrangements, subject to a minor amendment, we did not adopt his proposal.

144 We also noted a minor difference between the Option C proposals (as supported by Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party) and those of the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party for the Popley area. The Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals secured better electoral equality than the Council's Option C proposals by transferring a small area of future development (177 electors) into the Rooksdown area. There was also some disagreement over which way this area will be accessed when it is complete. However, despite the uncertainty over access and the improved electoral equality in Popley East ward under the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals, we were unable to adopt them given our proposals for the Rooksdown area (discussed below). We therefore adopted the Council's Option C proposals for Popley East and Popley West wards without amendment.

145 There was general support for retaining the existing Chineham ward. Mr Berwick-Gooding did however propose a minor amendment to transfer the Chineham Business Park area from Popley East ward to Chineham ward. We noted that the business park does not contain any electors and has reasonable links to Chineham across the railway line, while only linking to Popley East via Crockford Lane. We noted that Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposal would create a more compact Popley East ward. We therefore adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

146 We did not consider that the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposal to transfer the Rooksdown area to its Priory ward reflected local communities. We concurred with the alternative arguments that the area is predominantly urban and looks towards Basingstoke, rather than the surrounding rural area. Therefore we did not adopt the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals.

147 We also noted the minor differences between the proposals put forward by the Council's Option C and Mr Berwick-Gooding. While Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposals had some merit in terms of strong boundaries, we did not consider that they were justified given the resulting variance of 21%. We therefore adopted the Council's Option C proposal for Rooksdown ward.

148 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council, the Council did not put forward any comments on our proposed Chineham, Popley East and Popley West wards. It expressed support for our proposed Rooksdown ward, as did the Conservative Group on the Council, which put forward identical comments to the Council's.

149 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party all expressed general support for our proposals in this area.

150 Mr Berwick-Gooding put forward objections to our draft recommendations for Popley East and Popley West and expressed regret that we rejected his Stage One proposals. However, he proposed amendments to our draft recommendations. He proposed transferring the east part of the Popley Fields development from Popley West to Popley east ward and the John Hunt School development from Popley East

to Popley West ward. He argued that the east part of the Popley Fields developments would have access to Carpenters Down and that residents would 'send their children to Marnel School which is north of Popley Way and use the local shops in Carpenters Down.' He argued that the issue of access was similar to that in Melford Gardens and Old Kempshott Road. He added that this area 'will not be able to access on to Chineham Lane until after 2008.'

151 He also argued that the John Hunt School site development would have two access points into Popley Way and one into Shakespeare Road, adding that 'it is therefore likely to share facilities with electors in the roads off Shakespeare Road and those in Tewkesbury Close, Evesham Walk and Pershore Road'. He also reiterated his support for his Stage One amendment to the proposed Rooksdown ward. Finally he objected to the proposals for the Trumpet Road area.

152 Two local residents also expressed support for similar amendments to the electoral arrangements for Popley East and Popley West wards.

153 Chineham Parish Council proposed a number of minor boundary amendments designed to strengthen the external boundaries of the parish. Councillor Biermann (Chineham ward) put forward identical proposals to Chineham Parish Council for this area.

154 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note Chineham Parish Council's proposals. However, we also note that its proposals would actually involve the alteration of the external boundaries of the parish in order to make them coterminous with the ward boundaries. Unfortunately we are unable to consider alterations to the external boundaries of parishes as part of this review. We are therefore unable to consider its proposals further. In light of the general support that our Chineham ward received we are confirming it as final.

155 We note the proposals for revisions to our proposed Popley East and Popley West wards. While we acknowledge the concerns about the access for some of the electors in part of the Popley Fields development, we note that this is only a temporary issue and that by 2008 this area is scheduled to have access to the west via Chineham Lane. We also note the question of access for Trinidad Close, but note that it has access to Popley East ward along the edge of the ward, via Chineham Road. Finally, as far as the Popley wards were concerned, we note the proposal to transfer the John Hunt School development from Popley East to Popley West, but we are not persuaded by the argument about access to the west. In addition to this, given our proposal to reject the transfer of part of Popley Fields to Popley East ward, this amendment would significantly worsen electoral equality.

156 Therefore, in light of the general support for our draft recommendations and a number of concerns about the necessity of the residents' amendments, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the Popley wards as final.

157 Finally, we note the general support that our proposed Rooksdown ward secured. We note the objection to our proposal for the Trumpet Road area, but do not consider that he put the evidence received warrants moving us away from our draft recommendations. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Rooksdown ward as final.

158 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Chineham, Popley East, Popley West and Rooksdown wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Basing, Oakley & North Waltham and Upton Grey & The Candovers wards

159 These wards are in the south of the borough. Under the existing arrangements Basing ward comprises Mapledurwell & Up Nately, Newnham and Old Basing parishes. Oakley & North Waltham ward comprises Deane, Dummer, North Waltham, Oakley, Popham parishes and Wootton parish ward of Wootton St Lawrence parish. Upton Grey & The Candovers ward comprises Bradley, Candovers, Cliddesden, Ellisfield, Farleigh Wallop, Herriard, Nutley, Preston Candover, Tunworth, Upton Grey, Weston Corbett, Weston Patrick and Winslade parishes. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

160 In the draft recommendations we noted that there was general support for a modified Basing ward. We noted that Newnham Parish Council requested the retention of the existing electoral arrangements but that there was also good support for moving away from these. We also noted the Council's Liberal Democrat Group's modification to the Council's Option C proposal and while this improved electoral equality in North Waltham & The Candovers and Upton Grey wards it significantly worsened it in Basing ward. We did not consider that the Liberal Democrat Group provided sufficient evidence of community identity to justify this level of electoral inequality. We therefore adopted the Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party's single-member Basing ward.

161 In the remainder of the area, we noted the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals for a two-member Candovers ward. However, it did not provide any evidence for creating a large rural ward comprising a large number of rural parishes. Therefore, given the alternative options, we did not adopt it.

162 We noted the general support for the Council's Option C Upton Grey ward and that it secured reasonable electoral equality. We also noted that it has good road links and combines a number of rural parishes. We therefore adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

163 Finally, we noted Mr Berwick-Gooding's modification to North Waltham & The Candovers ward to transfer Deane parish to Oakley ward but also noted that it worsens electoral equality. We did not consider that Mr Berwick-Gooding provided sufficient evidence to justify this worsening of electoral equality and noted that including Deane parish would create a less 'compact' Oakley ward than under Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party's proposals.

164 We therefore adopted the Council's Option C proposals for this area without amendment.

165 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council the Council proposed retaining the existing Basing ward, arguing that

Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish has links with churches and shops to the north of the parish. It also stated that the north part of Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish 'has been subject to the sort of development in keeping with Basing'.

166 The Council also requested the retention of the existing Upton Grey & The Candovers ward. It opposed our proposed ward, rejecting the Liberal Democrats' Stage One argument that Dummer has links with the Candovers. It stated that 'Candovers have different schools, different towns to shop in, different vicars, different centres of employment, different railway stations, different development pressures [...] and no direct road links'. The Conservative Group on the Council put forward identical comments.

167 The Council's Liberal Democrat Group expressed support for its Stage One proposals for Basing and Upton Grey wards. It also acknowledged that there is support for transferring Steventon parish to Overton ward and Deane parish to Oakley ward. It rejected the Council's argument that Mapledurwell & Up Nately may be subject to the same development pressures as the rest of Basing ward. It stated that 'we believe that Mapledurwell and Up Nately share a community of interest with the rest of the proposed Upton Grey ward, being small villages with relatively few of their own facilities. The houses are more sparsely spread and are distinctly rural in character.'

168 North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party objected to our proposals. They argued that Oakley and Deane should be in the same ward 'as they were amalgamated into one parish council in 1976'. They also proposed transferring Ellisfield parish from the proposed Upton Grey ward to North Waltham & The Candovers ward and transferring Farleigh Wallop and Nutley parishes from North Waltham & The Candovers ward to Upton Grey ward. They argued that the parishes in its North Waltham & The Candovers ward 'share interests such as keeping the rural nature of their villages and facilities such as primary schools'. They added that 'there are road links between Ellisfield and Bradley and Preston Candover'. They argued that their proposed Upton Grey ward combined parishes that 'have shared interests such as keeping the rural nature of their villages and facilities such as primary schools'. Their proposals were supported by a local resident. The local resident also argued that Deane should be transferred to Oakley Parish Council as it 'meet[s] as one parish council', adding that 'the people of Oakley and Deane consider themselves one community that shares a community identity and interests as well as having shared facilities'.

169 Councillor Ruffell (Upton Grey & The Candovers ward) requested the retention of the existing Upton Grey & The Candovers ward. He cited links between the constituent parishes such as schools, vicars and local farming estates. He also argued that our draft recommendations would 'force the parishes in the Candovers to join with parishes north of the M3, parishes with which they have no historical, religious, cultural education or geographical connection'. He objected to the proposal to transfer Mapledurwell & Up Nately to the proposed Upton Grey ward, arguing that this would 'ignore its links with Newnham parish', adding that they 'have no links to Upton Grey or Tunworth'.

170 Ten local residents also expressed general support for the existing Upton Grey & The Candovers ward, putting forward similar arguments or actually endorsing Councillor Ruffell's argument.

171 Councillor Richardson (Oakley & North Waltham ward) expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals.

172 Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council objected to the draft recommendation to transfer Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish to the proposed Upton Grey ward, arguing that the existing electoral arrangements 'helps maintain a balance between the rural and urban parts of [Basing] ward'. Mapledurwell & Up Nately Parish Council also requested that it remain in Basing ward. Fairleigh Wallop parish meeting expressed support for Councillor Ruffell's comments.

173 Oakley & Deane Parish Council objected to the proposal to separate Oakley and Deane between wards, stating that 'the two parishes were joined in 1978 and the residents of Deane look towards Oakley for the provision of services'.

174 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received at Stage Three. We note that there are significant objections to our draft recommendations and that a number of alternative electoral arrangements have been put forward. We note the particular objections to our proposals for Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish and the creation of an Upton Grey ward, but also the objections to those for Deane parish.

175 On balance, although we concur with the Liberal Democrat Group that a large part of Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish lies to the south of the M3 and is rural in nature, we consider that the alternative arguments about the development issues that this part of the borough faces are persuasive. We also consider that it has good road links into Basing and note the support from the constituent parishes of Basing ward for retaining the existing ward. We also consider that while respondents have put forward some evidence about the links between the constituent parishes of the existing Upton Grey & The Candovers ward, they have put forward stronger arguments about the lack of links between the Candovers parishes and Deane and North Waltham parishes to the north. While we note the concern about separating Oakley and Deane between wards we note that uniting them worsens electoral equality.

176 We note the proposals from the Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke North West Liberal Democrat Local Party and while they secure good levels of equality, we note that they were not supported by strong evidence of community identity and do not reflect the local links put forward by other respondents. Therefore we do not propose adopting them.

177 Reverting to the existing Basing ward and Upton Grey & The Candovers ward would worsen electoral equality from 4% fewer electors to 5% more and 8% more to 9% more, respectively. However, transferring Steventon parish to Overton & Laverstoke ward would improve electoral equality from 8% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009 to 4% fewer. We note that as a result of these amendments it would also be necessary to revert to the existing Oakley & North Waltham ward, less the Wooton parish ward of Wooton St Lawrence parish. The revised Oakley & North Waltham ward would have 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009.

178 As stated above, the evidence for reverting to the existing Oakley & North Waltham ward despite worsening electoral equality is less strong than for retaining the existing Basing, Overton & Laverstoke and Upton Grey & The Candovers wards.

However, given the strong evidence of community links for these other wards, we consider that reverting to the Oakley & North Waltham ward reflects local communities in this area, while also reflecting the strong evidence for the links between Mapledurwell & Up Nately parish and Basing ward and Steventon parish and Overton and Laverstoke parishes. We are therefore reverting to the existing electoral arrangements for this area, subject to the minor amendment of transferring Wooton parish ward of Wooton St Lawrence parish to Sherborne St John ward.

179 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Basing, North Waltham & Oakley and Upton Grey & The Candovers wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon and Whitchurch wards

180 These wards are located in the south west of the borough. Under the existing arrangements Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon ward comprises Laverstoke, Overton and Steventon parishes. Whitchurch ward comprises Hurstbourne Priors and Whitchurch parishes. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

181 In our draft recommendations we noted the general support for the Council's Option C. We noted the Council's Liberal Democrat Group's and Overton Parish Council's proposals to retain Steventon parish in Overton ward. We also noted that the Council's Option C Overton ward actually secures worse electoral equality than the existing ward. However, given our decision to adopt the Council's Option C proposals for Basing, North Waltham & The Candovers and Upton Grey wards, we were unable to retain the existing Overton ward given the knock-on effect this would have. In addition, we noted Overton Parish Council's comments about links along the B4300 in the existing ward, but also noted that while the B4300 links Laverstoke and Overton parishes, it does not run through Steventon parish, running along its north boundary. Therefore, we adopted the Council's Option C Overton ward.

182 We also noted the broad support for retaining the existing Whitchurch ward. This ward secures good electoral equality and we therefore retained it as part of our draft recommendations.

183 At Stage Three the Council did not offer any comments on these wards in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council the Council.

184 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council expressed support for the draft recommendations for these wards, as did North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party. Two local residents also expressed general support for our draft recommendations for these wards.

185 Overton Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations for Overton ward, but requested that it be renamed Overton & Laverstoke ward to reflect the constituent parishes.

186 Seven local residents put forward strong objections to the draft recommendation to remove Steventon parish from Overton ward. One argued that Steventon residents

look to Overton as it is 'a lively shopping centre including a post office and co-operative society store which many villagers use in preference to the large and impersonal supermarkets which are further away'. She added that 'the doctors' surgery is also in Overton and the chemist's shop to which prescriptions are sent. It also has the most convenient station'. She also argued that Steventon is separated from the Candovers parishes by the motorway. The remaining respondents put forward similar arguments, particularly stressing the links to Overton for local shops and facilities.

187 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the general support and lack of opposition to our Whitchurch ward. Therefore, in light of this and the good electoral equality that it secures, we are confirming it as final.

188 We also note the comments regarding Steventon parish. Although Overton Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations, it did not put forward any evidence to support its comments. We do, however, note the strong objections to removing Steventon from the ward. We consider that respondents have put forward strong evidence and we are persuaded by their argument that Steventon residents look to Overton for a wide range of services.

189 Transferring Steventon parish to Overton ward would improve electoral equality in Overton ward from 8% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009 to 4% fewer.

190 Therefore on balance, given the improvement to electoral equality, the objections to transferring it to a ward with parishes including North Waltham and Candovers and the strong evidence of links to Overton parish, we propose retaining Steventon parish in Overton ward.

191 Finally, we note Overton Parish Council's request to reflect the constituent parts of the ward in its name. We therefore propose naming the ward Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon ward.

192 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon and Whitchurch wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Burghclere, East Woodhay, Highclere & Bourne and Kingsclere wards

193 These wards are located in the north west of the borough. Under the existing arrangements Burghclere comprises Burghclere, Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green, Litchfield & Woodcott and Newnton parishes. East Woodhay ward comprises East Woodhay parish. Highclere & Bourne ward comprises Ashmansworth, Highclere and St Mary Bourne parishes. Finally, Kingsclere ward comprises Ashford Hill with Headley, Hannington and Kingsclere parishes. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

194 In the draft recommendations we noted Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposal to retain the existing electoral arrangements. However, we did not consider that he provided sufficient evidence to justify the retention of East Woodhay ward with 17% more electors than the borough average. We also noted his comments about future

development within the area, but legislation does not enable the Committee to consider development beyond the five-year forecast period. We therefore did not adopt his proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

195 We noted that the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals secured some improvement in electoral equality. However, we considered there to be insufficient evidence for its proposals simply because it did not 'favour' single-member wards. In addition, there was no evidence of local support for these proposals. Therefore, given the argument and the alternative arrangements put forward by the Council's Option C, we did not adopt them as part of our final recommendations.

196 Finally, we noted that the Council's Option C proposals secured an improvement in electoral equality. They were also supported by the other Liberal Democrat respondents. They put forward reasonable evidence for the links between the constituent parishes of the proposed wards, including shared facilities and road links. We acknowledged that the variance in Option C's proposed East Woodhay & Highclere ward is somewhat high, but noted that it is at the edge of the district. Unfortunately, this factor combined with the size of the parishes and the links between them meant we were unable to find alternative arrangements to improve electoral equality further. We therefore adopted the Council's Option C proposals without amendment.

197 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council the Council requested the retention of the existing East Woodhay ward. It stated that a revision to the electoral projections and the removal of a housing development would see 175 fewer houses. It argued that as a result 'there is no good reason for a ward whose boundaries are accepted to be interfered with'. It proposed combining the existing Burghclere and Highclere & Bourne wards to address the high variance in the existing Highclere & Bourne ward and to reflect the community links between Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green and Burghclere parishes. Finally it proposed retaining the existing Kingsclere ward. The Conservative Group on the Council submitted identical comments.

198 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council expressed support for our draft recommendations, but stated that 'we remain concerned that the predictions for East Woodhay are based on development which may not take place'. North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party both expressed support for our draft recommendations for these wards.

199 A local resident also questioned the electorate forecasts for East Woodhay parish, arguing that the properties in the Harwood Paddock development would give the existing ward a variance of less than 10%. The local resident also argued for the retention of the existing Burghclere and Highclere & Bourne wards, but acknowledged that the 14% variance of Highclere & Bourne ward may not be acceptable. He therefore proposed a Burghclere & Highclere ward combining Newton, Burghclere and Highclere parishes. He stated that 'these parishes all look northward to Newbury and have shared interests and facilities such as shops and schools.' He also proposed an Ecchinswell & Bourne ward comprising Ashmansworth, Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green, Litchfield & Woodcott and St Mary Bourne parishes. He argued this ward combines 'small rural parishes [...] with shared interests and views,' adding that 'St Mary Bourne and Stoke villages have good road links to the villages of Woodcott and Litchfield that link them to

Ashmansworth.’ He stated that these wards would have under 1% fewer and 6% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009.

200 As stated in the electorate figures section, East Woodhay Parish Council questioned the electorate forecasts arguing that the ‘Harwood Paddock [development] was taken out of the Local Plan [...] and now lies outside the settlement boundary [...] and the forecast figures should be adjusted accordingly’. It therefore also argued for the retention of the existing East Woodhay ward. It stated that ‘We have become self contained [...] we have our own schools, our own churches [...] our own shops, Post Office, surgery, garage pubs and light industrial areas, we have our own football, cricket and tennis clubs as well as a host of other village societies’. It therefore objected to being combined with neighbouring parishes.

201 Councillor Saunders (East Woodhay) also questioned the electorate projections for East Woodhay with reference to the Harwood Paddock development. He also argued that East Woodhay ‘is big enough to have within its boundaries all the necessary elements of shops, schools, churches, doctors, garages, pubs and light industry to make it self sustaining as a community.’

202 Councillor Osselton (Kingsclere ward) expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposal for a 56-member council and also its fallback comments on our draft recommendations.

203 Burghclere Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations, arguing that the parishes of Burghclere, Newton and Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green ‘are closely linked with shared interests built on their close geographical proximity with numerous connecting roads.’ It argued that the draft recommendations would not reflect this. It also stated that ‘the Clere School sports hall and other facilities are shared for extra curricular and community events. There is also a shared membership for local entities of the Sports Club, Women’s Institute, the Local Community Club and Horticultural Society. The Village Hall is shared by organisations for the youth, elderly and for exercise [...] all three parish churches share the same benefice and vicar’. It objected to the proposal to transfer Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish to Kingsclere ward and the inclusion of St Mary Bourne in its own ward, arguing that the ‘distance between the proposed northern and southern ends of the ward is far too great for any significant social or activity based links to exist’. It therefore expressed support for the Council's Stage Three proposals based on a 56-member council.

204 Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green Parish Council also expressed support for the Council’s 56-member proposals, putting forward similar evidence to Burghclere Parish Council for the links between itself, Burghclere and Newton parishes. It also objected to being in a ward with Kingsclere parish. Newton Parish Council also objected to the draft recommendations and expressed support for the Council’s 56-member proposals for this area. It cited the links between it and the neighbouring Burghclere and Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parishes and also the size of the ward, with reference to the distance from St Mary Bourne parish.

205 Councillor Lewin (Burghclere ward) also objected to our draft recommendations for this area, particularly the decision to ‘split’ Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish from Burghclere and Newton parishes. As with Burghclere Parish Council, he cited the links between these parishes and expressed concern about the

geographical distance covered by our draft proposal. He therefore expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposals. Bishops Green Youth Project also objected to our draft recommendations, putting forward similar arguments to Councillor Lewin's and Burghclere Parish Council's. A local resident also objected to our draft recommendation and expressed support for the Council's 56-member proposals for this area.

206 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received at Stage Three. We note that a number of respondents questioned the electorate forecasts for East Woodhay parish and that they provided slightly different estimates for the impact of these revisions. As explained in the electorate figures sections above, we sought clarification on this issue from the Council. It acknowledged that the Harwood Paddock development had been amended and that as a result East Woodhay would have 120 fewer electors by 2009 than originally predicted.

207 We note that the Council and a number of other respondents argued that it would therefore be possible to retain the existing East Woodhay ward with an electoral variance of 7% more electors than the borough average by 2009. This figure is in fact incorrect and given the actual size of the Harwood Paddock development and amendments to the electorate projections elsewhere we note that the existing ward would have 11% more electors than the borough average by 2009. We also note the strong evidence for the 'self contained' nature of East Woodhay. Therefore on balance, although retaining the existing East Woodhay ward would create a ward with a variance of 11% more electors than the borough average, given its location at the edge of the borough and the evidence received we propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations.

208 In the remainder of this area, we note the strong objections to our proposals to separate Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish from Burghclere and Newton parishes. The parish councils expressed support for the Council's proposals based on a 56-member council, but having concluded that the Council should continue to have 60 members we are unable to consider their views. However, we have given consideration to the very strong evidence of the links between these three parishes. We acknowledge that Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green has strong links with Burghclere and Newton parishes. We also note the objections to the proposal to combine St Mary Bourne with these parishes, given the distance between them.

209 However, although there is good evidence for the links between Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green, Burghclere and Newton parishes, we do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to retain the existing wards and the 15% variance that remains in Highclere & Bourne ward. We have therefore considered the alternative arrangements put forward.

210 We note the local residents' proposals to create a Burghclere & Highclere ward and Ecchinswell & Bourne ward. However, we note that these wards would not reflect the strong evidence received and would continue to separate Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish from Burghclere and Newton parishes. We have therefore not considered this further.

211 In order to improve electoral equality but reflect the links between these parishes, we propose adopting the Council's amendment, combining the existing

Burghclere and Highclere & Bourne wards. The resulting two-member ward would have 6% more electors than the borough average. We acknowledge that there may be some concerns that this creates a large ward and links St Mary Bourne parish to the northern parishes. However, this would enable us to retain the links between Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green, Burghclere and Newton parishes, while also improving electoral equality. In addition to this, although the ward will be relatively large, it will be served by two councillors, compared to the similarly sized (geographically) Upton Grey & The Candovers ward which is only served by a single member.

212 As a result of this amendment, it is also necessary to address Kingsclere ward. Removing Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green parish leaves this ward with too few electors. However, we note that there is some support for reverting to the existing Kingsclere ward and transferring Hannington parish back. We acknowledge that this secures good electoral equality, without having a negative impact on electoral equality in the neighbouring Sherborne St John ward. We are therefore adopting this as a part of our final recommendations.

213 We consider that the Council's proposals to retain the existing East Woodhay and Kingsclere wards and to combine Burghclere and Highclere & Bourne wards provides the best electoral arrangements, reflecting communities and securing good electoral equality.

214 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for East Woodhay, Burghclere, Highclere & St Mary Bourne and Kingsclere wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Baughurst, Tadley North and Tadley South wards

215 These wards are located in the north of the borough. Under the existing arrangements Baughurst ward comprises Baughurst parish, Tadley North ward comprises Tadley Central and Tadley North parish wards of Tadley parish, and Tadley South ward comprise Tadley East and Tadley South parish wards of Tadley parish. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

216 In our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the evidence received. We noted Mr Berwick-Gooding's proposals to retain the existing electoral arrangements, but rejected these given that his proposals retained a Tadley North ward with 14% more electors than the borough average by 2009.

217 We noted that Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals secured better levels of electoral equality than either Mr Berwick-Gooding's or the Council's proposals. However, although its proposals did not combine the whole of Baughurst with Kingsclere, we noted that Councillor Lovegrove objected to any proposals to combine Baughurst parish with Kingsclere. We also considered that the Liberal Democrat groups and Councillor Lovegrove provided strong evidence for joining Baughurst with the north part of Tadley. Finally, we noted the objections to combining Tadley Central and Tadley South into a three-member ward and did not consider that Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party provided sufficient evidence of community

links to justify this. We therefore opted not to adopt the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party's proposals in this area.

218 We considered that there was strong evidence for the links between the urban area of Baughurst and the neighbouring north area of Tadley. The Liberal Democrat groups and Councillor Lovegrove gave examples of schools and shops, arguing that Heath End Road forms the focus of the community, rather than a barrier. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals for this ward.

219 We also noted the Council's proposals for Tadley Central and Tadley South wards and considered there to be reasonable evidence and good support for these wards. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals for this area in their entirety.

220 Finally, we noted that there is some disagreement and discrepancy over the name of the proposed Baughurst & Heath End ward. While we do not have strong opinions on names, on the basis of the evidence received we proposed calling this ward Baughurst & Tadley North.

221 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council, the Council objected to the draft recommendations for Baughurst and Tadley. It rejected the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One argument that Baughurst residents use shops in Tadley. It also argued that the secondary school draws pupils from further afield than Tadley, therefore questioning the significance of the school in terms of community identity. It proposed retaining the existing wards by transferring a number of properties to the east of Heath End Road (Heath End Road, Heath End Farm, Landseer Court, O'Bee Gardens and Pinks Lane) from the existing Tadley North ward to Baughurst ward. It stated that 'all of these houses face towards Baughurst and will be dependent on the shops that are in Baughurst ward'. The Conservative Group on the Council submitted identical comments.

222 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. While it recognised the requests to retain the existing electoral arrangements, it stated that 'there is undoubtedly very strong community and geographic links between the northern part of Tadley and the northern part of Baughurst'. It also stated that 'the existence of parish wards [...] make it impossible to combine a small number of dwellings from Tadley North with the existing Baughurst ward to improve electoral equality'. North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party both expressed general support for our draft recommendations for these wards.

223 Councillor Allen (Baughurst ward) requested the retention of the existing wards for this area subject to the same minor amendment between the existing Baughurst and Tadley North wards proposed by the Council. She stated that 'it is not that people do not get on or do not mix from time to time, but it is the fact that the two different communities do want to keep them as two separate communities'. However, she also stated, 'Your report suggests that Baughurst residents use all the facilities that are sited within Tadley. This is partially true, as Tadley is a larger place and has more facilities. However, the secondary school is in Baughurst, as are a local Tesco store, three public houses, a pet shop and animal needs supplier, three take-away food shops, a post office and over forty public rights of way [...] which are all very well used by Tadley residents'.

224 Councillor Tucker (Calleva ward) expressed support for the Council's proposals for these wards.

225 Tadley Town Council objected to the draft recommendations and requested the retention of the existing wards. It stated that 'Baughurst and Tadley North had been a ward in the past and that this had not worked well'.

226 Baughurst Parish Council also objected to the draft recommendations and requested the retention of a single-member ward. It also argued that it had previously been in a ward with Tadley and that this had not worked.

227 The Baughurst Society requested the retention of the existing electoral arrangements and proposed an identical amendment to that put forward by the Council. It argued that Baughurst parish is rural, while Tadley North has a strong 'affinity' with the rest of the Tadley wards.

228 A local resident objected to our draft recommendations, arguing that previous efforts to combine part of Tadley with Baughurst did not work. He acknowledged that Baughurst contained a semi-urban area, but argued that to add more would make the area harder to manage. A further five residents objected to our draft recommendations and put forward broadly similar arguments to the other local resident's. A number of residents also proposed the minor amendment put forward by the Council. Another local resident expressed general support for our draft recommendations.

229 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the objections to our draft recommendation to combine part of Tadley parish with Baughurst parish. These arguments centre on objections to combining part of the 'urban' parish of Tadley with the 'predominantly rural' Baughurst parish. We note that this view was supported by the Council, and a number of other respondents, who expressed concerns that the urban Tadley part of Baughurst would dominate the rural issues of the rest of Baughurst. We note that Councillor Allen also supported this argument, but acknowledged that residents in the two areas 'mix from time to time' and that it is 'partially' true that Baughurst residents use Tadley facilities, but that Baughurst has its own facilities, that 'are all very well used by Tadley residents'.

230 However, we also note that there is some support for our draft recommendations and that a number of respondents consider that there are links between Baughurst and Tadley parishes.

231 While we acknowledge some concerns about combining rural and urban areas, we do not consider that residents have provided strong evidence in relation to the lack of links between the urban part of Baughurst and Tadley. Indeed, we note the comments of Councillor Allen who, while objecting to the proposals, provides clear evidence that the two areas do indeed share facilities.

232 We also note the proposal to transfer a small area of Tadley parish to Baughurst in order to retain the existing Baughurst and Tadley North wards. However, while this would improve electoral equality in the Tadley area, given the parish boundaries we are unable to adopt this amendment as it would require the creation of a small parish ward of a few hundred electors in the parish of Tadley which has 8,854 electors. We do not consider it viable to create such a small parish ward in a parish. Therefore we do not propose adopting this amendment.

233 On balance we do not propose moving away from our draft recommendations and are confirming them subject to a minor amendment to the boundary between Tadley Central and Tadley South. We note that the electors in Elmhurst have no access into Tadley South ward. By adopting this amendment we improve their access. This also marginally improves electoral equality, with Tadley Central and Tadley South having 7% and 8% more electors than the borough average by 2009, respectively.

234 Table 1 (pages 7–9) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for Baughurst, Tadley Central, Tadley North and Tadley South wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Calleva, Pamber and Sherborne St John wards

235 These wards are located in the north east of the borough. Under the existing arrangements Calleva ward comprises Hartley Wespall, Mortimer West End, Sherfield on Loddon, Silchester, Stratfield Turgis and Stratfield Saye parishes and Bramley East parish ward of Bramley parish. Sherborne St John ward comprises Monk Sherborne parish and Bramley West parish ward of Bramley parish, Sherborne St John parish ward of Sherborne St John parish and Ramsdell parish ward of Wootton parish. Table 3 (pages 16–18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

236 In our draft recommendations we noted that the Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party proposed a three-member Priory ward, including Rooksdown parish. As stated earlier, we concurred with the arguments that this area is predominantly urban and looks towards Basingstoke, rather than the surrounding rural area.

237 We acknowledged that the Council's Option C proposals had a number of fairly high variances. However, we were unable to improve these further given the size and links between the parishes in the area. We noted Monk Sherborne Parish Council's request to retain the existing electoral arrangements. However, given the adoption of different electoral arrangements elsewhere, we were unable to retain the existing ward. Therefore, in light of the general support that they received we adopted the Council's Option C proposals without amendment.

238 At Stage Three, in its comments on the draft recommendations for a 60-member council the Council expressed support for the draft recommendations for Bramley & Sherfield and Pamber & Silchester wards. It also expressed support for Sherborne St John ward. The Conservative Group on the Council submitted identical comments.

239 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations for Bramley & Sherfield, Kingsclere and Pamber & Silchester wards. North West Hampshire Liberal Democrat Local Party and Basingstoke Liberal Democrat Local Party also expressed general support for our draft recommendations for these wards.

240 Councillor Gardiner (Calleva ward) expressed support for the Council's 56-member council proposals for this area. He also expressed general support for its comments on our draft recommendations. Councillor Tucker (Calleva ward) put

forward identical comments to Councillor Gardiner’s. Councillor Chapman (Pamber ward) put forward similar comments to Councillor Gardiner’s.

241 Sherborne St John Parish Council requested that it remain in a single-member ward. Two local residents expressed support for our draft recommendations for this area.

242 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received at Stage Three. We note that there is general support for retaining the draft recommendations in this area. However, as stated in the Burghclere, East Woodhay, Highclere & Bourne and Kingsclere section above, there is also some support for returning Hannington parish to Kingsclere ward. We consider that the evidence provided was limited. However, as stated above we support the proposal to retain the existing Kingsclere ward. This helps enable the proposals in the north west of the borough. In addition, we note that transferring Hannington parish out of the draft Sherborne St John ward improves electoral equality there from 9% more electors than the borough average by 2009 to 5% fewer. Therefore, subject to the amendment to Sherborne St John, we propose confirming the draft recommendations for these wards as final.

243 Tables 1 and 3 (pages 7–9) provide details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations and the existing electoral arrangements for Bramley & Sherfield, Pamber & Silchester and Sherborne St John wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 2 and 4 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

244 Table 5 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

| | Current arrangements | | Final recommendations | |
|---|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | 2004 | 2009 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Number of councillors | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Number of wards | 30 | 30 | 29 | 29 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 1,905 | 2,026 | 1,905 | 2,026 |
| Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average | 17 | 9 | 12 | 2 |
| Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |

245 As shown in Table 5, our final recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 17 to 12. By 2009 only two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain a council size of 60 members.

Final recommendation

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 29 wards, as illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

246 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the borough council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

247 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with borough councils.³ If a borough council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

248 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Tadley, Rooksdown and Sherborne St John to reflect the proposed borough wards.

249 The parish of Tadley is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: Tadley Central, Tadley East, Tadley North and Tadley South. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated town councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

250 At Stage Three Tadley Town Council expressed support for the draft recommendations for parish electoral arrangements for Tadley parish. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

³ Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

Final recommendation

Tadley Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Tadley Central (returning four councillors), Tadley East (four councillors), Tadley North (four councillors) and Tadley South (four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 1 and 2.

251 Rooksdown parish is currently served by five councillors and is not warded. In our draft recommendations we recommended retaining the existing arrangements for this parish. At Stage Three we did not receive any comments regarding this parish and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Rooksdown Parish Council should comprise five councillors, as at present.

252 Sherborne Parish Council is currently served by seven councillors representing two wards: Popley Fields and Sherborne St John. In our draft recommendations we recommended retaining the existing arrangements for this parish. At Stage Three we did not receive any comments regarding this parish and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Sherborne Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, representing two wards: Popley Fields (returning three councillors) and Sherborne St John (four councillors) as at present. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 1, 2, 3 and 4.

6 What happens next?

253 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Basingstoke & Deane and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.⁴

254 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 19 November 2007, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

255 All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for queries regarding the implementation of these recommendations.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

⁴ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for Basingstoke & Deane

256 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Basingstoke & Deane borough.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Basingstoke & Deane borough, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Tadley parish.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Basingstoke town.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Basingstoke town and Old Basing.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

| | |
|---|--|
| AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) | A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it |
| Boundary Committee | The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews |
| Constituent areas | The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either |
| Consultation | An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review |
| Council size | The number of councillors elected to serve on a council |
| Order (or electoral change Order) | A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority |
| Electoral Commission | An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process |
| Electoral equality | A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Electoral imbalance | Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the borough |
| Electorate | People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections |
| FER (or further electoral review) | A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004 |
| Multi-member ward | A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors |
| National Park | <p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’ |
| Number of electors per councillor | The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Over-represented | Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented |
| Parish | A specific and defined area of land within a single borough enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents |
| Parish council | A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries |
| Parish electoral arrangements | The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward |
| Parish ward | A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council |
| PER (or periodic electoral review) | A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Political management arrangements | The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories: a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council |
| Under-represented | Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented |
| Variance (or electoral variance) | How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the borough average |
| Ward | A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the borough council |

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of practice on written consultation* (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/code.htm), requires all Government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Boundary Committee 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 B1: The Boundary Committee for England's 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 comply with this requirement. |
| 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. |