

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

Report to the Electoral Commission

June 2002

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

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. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Kru Desai
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Oadby & Wigston's electoral arrangements on 12 June 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 15 January 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

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

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

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 60 – 61) are that:

- **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should have 26 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 10 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**

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

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

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, to arrive no later than 18 July 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

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

Notes: 1 The whole district is unparished.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Oadby & Wigston

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

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire. The seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire (excluding Leicester) have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have also conducted a review of Leicester City Council, which has unitary status, on the same timetable as this review. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

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

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Oadby & Wigston was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

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

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Oadby & Wigston is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 12 June 2001 when the LGCE wrote to Oadby & Wigston Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Leicestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils, the Member of Parliament

with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 September 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 15 January 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire*, and ended on 11 March 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

Map 1: Existing Wards in Oadby & Wigston

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

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

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

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

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received one representation, a borough-wide scheme from Oadby & Wigston Borough Council. In the light of this representation and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston in Leicestershire*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations for Oadby town were based on the Borough Council's proposals, albeit with minor boundary modifications. In Wigston town the LGCE put forward a number of its own proposals while adopting one of the Borough Council's proposed wards. In South Wigston the LGCE put forward its own proposals. These draft recommendations achieved improvements in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two- and three-member wards across the borough. It proposed that:

- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should be served by 26 councillors, as at present;
- there should continue to be 10 wards and the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should comprise 26 councillors, serving 10 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 10 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only South Wigston ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received four representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council.

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council

19 The Borough Council stated that it preferred its Stage One proposals to the draft recommendations. It made comments on the proposed ward names of nine of the 10 proposed wards.

Leicestershire County Council

20 The County Council commented on the future County Council review and generally supported the Borough Council's proposals for new ward names.

Other Representations

21 A further two representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations, from a local councillor and a local resident. Councillor Hunt, who is a member of both Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council, put forward proposals for new ward names identical to those put forward by Oadby & Wigston Borough Council. A resident of Great Glen also put forward proposals for new ward names for six of the 10 proposed wards.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

22 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Oadby & Wigston is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). 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”.

23 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

26 Since 1975 there has been a 16 per cent increase in the electorate of the borough of Oadby & Wigston. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a small increase in the electorate of approximately 1 per cent from 43,264 to 43,762 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expected most of the growth to be in Brookside ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

27 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

28 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

29 Oadby & Wigston Borough Council presently has 26 members. During Stage One the Borough Council consulted locally on three different schemes: two based on a council size of 27 and one on a council size of 28. Following its consultation process, it adopted a council size of 28 as part of its Stage One submission. The Council provided no further evidence or argumentation in support of its proposed increase in council size. In the absence of any justification, the LGCE was not prepared to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for an increase in council membership from 26 to 28. Furthermore, the LGCE looked at the allocation of councillors under a council size of 28 and noted that it was not possible to provide the correct allocation between the three towns. The LGCE considered a number of alternative council sizes and noted that under the existing council size of 26 it was possible to provide a good allocation of councillors. Having noted that a council size of 26 provided good electoral arrangements and, as it was assumed that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, the LGCE proposed retaining the existing council size of 26.

30 During Stage Three we received no direct comments on council size, although the Borough Council stated that it preferred its Stage One proposals. However, it provided no further evidence to support an increase in council size. Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 26 members.

Electoral Arrangements

31 Having decided to retain the existing council size of 26, the LGCE was unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in their entirety. However, due to the fact that the councillor:elector ratio in 2006 under a council size of 26 (1:1,683) is close to that under a council size of 28 (1:1,563) it was able to adopt the Council's proposed wards in some parts of the borough, especially in Oadby town. However, given that the Council's Stage One proposals included two extra councillors, the LGCE had to develop its own draft recommendations in some areas, particularly in South Wigston and Wigston.

32 In its Stage One submission, the Borough Council stated that it wished to ensure "that ward boundaries did not overlap the separate towns" of Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston. The LGCE developed its draft recommendations with this in mind and proposed a relatively high electoral variance in South Wigston in order to retain a strong boundary between the towns of South Wigston and Wigston, as outlined later. Having decided on a council size of 26 and given the desire to retain clear boundaries between the three towns, the LGCE's next objective was to allocate the correct number of councillors to Oadby, South Wigston and Wigston. Under the Borough Council's proposals for a council size of 28, it allocated 11 councillors to Oadby, 13 councillors to Wigston and four councillors to South Wigston. However, having decided not to adopt this increase in council size, the LGCE calculated the correct allocation of councillors between the three towns under a council size of 26. Oadby is entitled to 11 councillors, South Wigston is entitled to three councillors and Wigston is entitled to 12 councillors by 2006. It ensured that the correct allocation of councillors was retained across the borough in its draft recommendations.

33 In response to the LGCE's draft recommendations report Oadby & Wigston Borough Council stated that it "is pleased that the draft recommendations retain the distinct identities of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. Nevertheless, the Council wishes to impress it still prefers its own proposals, as submitted during [Stage One]." It proposed modifications to the ward names in nine of the proposed 10 wards, which were supported by Councillor Hunt and broadly by Leicestershire County Council. No detailed comments were received on the proposed ward boundaries and, in light of this, we have decided to confirm as final all ward boundaries consulted on under the draft recommendations.

34 Leicestershire County Council stated that it “envisages that there will be considerable difficulties in a number of districts in using the wards contained in the draft recommendations as building blocks for future county electoral divisions”. However, our approach in two-tier county areas is, first, to review the electoral arrangements of the district councils and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. Our future recommendations for electoral division boundaries in all counties, including Leicestershire, will be based on the new district wards.

35 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

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

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

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

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

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

39 To the south of the A6 the Council proposed that “the boundary between the former urban districts of Oadby and Wigston” should be used as the western boundary of St Peter’s ward. This boundary modification would result in those electors to the south of Leicester Racecourse and Wigston Road being included in St Wolstan’s ward. The Council proposed that the boundary between Brocks Hill and St Peter’s wards should run behind the properties on the southern side of Rosemead Drive. It stated that the electors situated to the north of this boundary should be transferred from the existing Brocks Hill ward into a revised two-member St Peter’s ward with the remainder of the existing St Peter’s ward and those electors transferred from Brookside ward. It stated that the remainder of the existing Brocks Hill ward should form a revised two-member Brocks Hill ward.

40 When formulating the draft recommendations the LGCE noted that the electoral equality in the Borough Council’s proposed Brocks Hill, Grange, St Peter’s, Uplands and Woodlands wards

actually improved under a council size of 26. The draft recommendations for this area were therefore based on the Borough Council's proposals. However, the LGCE proposed three minor boundary modifications. To provide improved electoral equality, it included the electors of Covert Close and numbers 2 to 34 Launde Road in Grange ward rather than the Council's proposed Uplands ward.

41 The LGCE adopted the Council's proposal to transfer electors from St Peter's ward into St Wolstan's ward. However, it also proposed transferring the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road in St Wolstan's ward rather than the proposed St Peter's ward. Having visited the area, the LGCE considered that the land around Wash Brook, including the Oval Park Sports Ground and the Parklands Leisure Centre, provides a more identifiable break between the towns of Oadby and Wigston than the Borough Council's proposed boundary. It transferred these electors into St Wolstan's ward in order to provide a clear, identifiable boundary and more effective and convenient local government for the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road. It adopted the Borough Council's proposed Brocks Hill ward with one minor modification, moving the north-western boundary to run along the centre of Wigston Lane before running behind the properties of Rosemead Drive. It proposed adopting the Council's proposed Woodlands ward without modification.

42 Under the draft recommendations for a 26-member council, Uplands ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average (1 per cent below by 2006). Brocks Hill, St Peter's and Woodlands wards would have councillor:elector ratios 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 10 per cent below the borough average respectively (7 per cent, 4 per cent and equal to the borough average by 2006). Grange ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent below by 2006).

43 At Stage Three Oadby & Wigston Borough Council proposed to assign the town name of Oadby to each of the ward names in this area. This proposal was supported by Leicestershire County Council and Councillor Hunt. A resident of Great Glen proposed renaming the proposed Grange and Uplands wards Southmeads and Eden respectively. No further comments were received at Stage Three.

44 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area as final. However, we propose renaming the wards in this area Oadby Brocks Hill, Oadby Grange, Oadby St Peter's, Oadby Uplands and Oadby Woodlands as put forward by the Borough Council, County Council and Councillor Hunt. We do not propose adopting Eden or Southmeads as ward names as those put forward under the draft recommendations were proposed locally at Stage One and have received local support at Stage Three. Our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

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

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

46 At Stage One Oadby & Wigston Borough Council proposed that the boundaries of all four wards should be modified to create five new wards. It proposed that the A5199 should be used as a boundary for the majority of its length from north to south across the borough, the only exception being around the hamlet of Kilby Bridge, which should be included in All Saints ward

in its entirety. To the east of the A5199, in Wigston, it proposed a two-member St Wolstan's ward and a three-member Meadowcourt ward. To the west of the A5199, it proposed a two-member Central Wigston ward and two three-member All Saints and Westfield wards. The Borough Council proposed transferring into St Wolstan's ward those electors to the south of Leicester Racecourse and Wigston Road, currently in St Peter's ward. The Council stated that these electors should form a new two-member St Wolstan's ward with those electors of the existing St Wolstan's ward situated to the east of the A5199, Leicester Road and north of Mere Road. It proposed that the electors to the south of the properties on Mere Road and east of the A5199, Bull Head Street, currently situated in St Wolstan's ward, should form a new three-member Meadowcourt ward with electors of the existing All Saints ward situated to the east of the A5199, Welford Road.

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

48 When formulating the draft recommendations, the LGCE attempted to base its proposed wards on those put forward in the Borough Council's submission. It adopted the Borough Council's proposed Meadowcourt ward as it provides acceptable levels of electoral equality under a council size of 26. It also adopted the Borough Council's proposal to transfer electors from St Peter's ward into St Wolstan's ward, although it also included the electors of The Oval and numbers 200 to 258 Wigston Road in St Wolstan's ward rather than the proposed St Peter's ward. The LGCE attempted to retain the A5199 as the western boundary of its proposed St Wolstan's ward. However, this created difficulties when formulating proposals for the wards to the west of Wigston. Consequently, the LGCE proposed a new three-member St Wolstan's ward, which included the remainder of the existing ward, those electors transferred from St Peter's ward and those electors north of Aylestone Lane and east of Carlton Drive, currently situated in Central ward.

49 The LGCE also proposed a new three-member Wigston Fields ward comprising the whole of the existing Westfield ward and those electors to the west of South Avenue and Wigston All Saints CE Primary School currently in Central ward. Finally the LGCE proposed a three-member All Saints ward based on the Borough Council's proposed All Saints ward. However, it included in All Saints ward those electors to the east of the rear of the properties on South Avenue and south of Aylestone Lane and Paddock Street, included in Central Wigston ward by the Borough Council.

50 Under the draft recommendations for a 26-member council, the wards of All Saints and St Wolstan's would both have councillor:elector ratios equal to the borough average (1 per cent below and equal to the borough average by 2006 respectively). Wigston Fields ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent above the borough average (equal to the borough average by 2006), Meadowcourt ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2006).

51 At Stage Three Oadby & Wigston Borough Council proposed renaming Wigston Fields ward as Wigston Waterleys, "as Waterleys is the name of the local primary school and community facility, which is fairly central to the proposed ward". It also proposed including the town name of Wigston in all ward names in this area. Councillor Hunt supported the Borough Council's proposed ward names in this area. Leicestershire County Council also supported the proposal to include the Wigston town name in ward names in this area. A resident of Great Glen

proposed renaming the proposed Meadowcourt, St Wolstans and Wigston Fields wards Thornby, Ruskington and Northfield respectively. No further comments were received at Stage Three.

52 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area. However, we propose renaming the wards Wigston All Saints, Wigston Meadowcourt, Wigston St Wolstan's and Wigston Waterleys, as put forward by the Borough Council and Councillor Hunt and generally supported by the County Council. We do not propose adopting Northfield, Ruskington or Thornby as ward names as those put forward under the draft recommendations were proposed locally at Stage One and have received local support at Stage Three. Our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. They are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Bassett and Fairfield wards (South Wigston)

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

54 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements of both these wards as it was "keen to see South Wigston retain its local identity and to retain two wards (Bassett and Fairfield), with two councillors in each, without the need to include any parts of Wigston" in either ward.

55 When formulating the draft recommendations, the LGCE noted that, under a 26-member council, the 2006 electorate of South Wigston is entitled to 3.46 councillors. In an attempt to move this allocation closer to a whole figure of three or four councillors the LGCE considered transferring electors from either of the South Wigston wards into a ward with electors from Wigston, as well as including electors from Wigston in a South Wigston ward. However, it concluded that such a warding arrangement would not provide a good reflection of local communities in either area and therefore proposed retaining the London to Leicester railway as a boundary between the wards covering South Wigston and those covering Wigston. It was noted that the Borough Council had stated that electors from South Wigston should not be included in a district ward with electors from Wigston. Having decided not to breach this boundary, the LGCE proposed allocating the area of South Wigston three councillors, to which it is entitled, and therefore proposed a three-member ward covering South Wigston in its entirety and naming this ward South Wigston. Under the draft recommendations South Wigston ward provided a high electoral variance both initially and in 2006. However, the LGCE considered that such an electoral variance was justifiable as it allowed the retention of the boundary between South Wigston and Wigston. It considered that the draft recommendations for this area reflected community identities and interests and provided effective and convenient local government for the electors of South Wigston and those in the neighbouring wards of Wigston.

56 Under the draft recommendations, South Wigston ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 15 per cent above the borough average both initially and in 2006.

57 The proposed ward name of South Wigston was supported by Oadby & Wigston Borough Council and Councillor Hunt of Charnwood Borough Council. A resident of Great Glen proposed renaming South Wigston ward as Kirkdale to avoid confusion with the names of Wigston wards.

58 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations in this area as they would achieve good electoral equality and reflect community identities in the area. We do not propose renaming South Wigston ward Kirkdale as the ward covers South Wigston town in its entirety and was supported locally at Stage Three. Our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. They are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

59 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

60 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose renaming the proposed Wigston Fields ward Wigston Waterleys;
- we propose inserting the town name of Oadby in front of Brocks Hill, Grange, St Peter's, Uplands and Woodlands ward names; and of Wigston in front of All Saints, Meadowcourt and St Wolstan's;
- we propose no modification to the proposed South Wigston ward

61 We conclude that, in Oadby & Wigston:

- a council of 26 members should be retained;
- there should be 10 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

62 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

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

63 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to one, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. By 2006 only one ward, South Wigston, would vary by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 15 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should comprise 26 councillors serving 10 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Oadby & Wigston

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

64 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Oadby & Wigston and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

65 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether 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 18 July 2002.

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

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