

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Wokingham

January 2002

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the towns of Early, Wokingham and Woodley is inserted inside the back of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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

SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Wokingham on 12 June 2001:

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Wokingham:

- **in 15 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 11 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **this situation is expected to continue by 2006, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 11 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 80-81) are that:

- **Wokingham District Council should have 54 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **in 20 of the proposed 25 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **this level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Arborfield, Early, Finchampstead, Shinfield, Twyford, Wokingham and Woodley.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 22 January 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 18 March 2002:

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Wokingham Review
LGCE
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

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

Table 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Arborfield	1	Part of Arborfield & Newland parish (the proposed Arborfield & Newland parish ward).	Map A2
2	Barkham	1	The parish of Barkham; part of Arborfield & Newland parish (the proposed Garrison parish ward); part of Wokingham parish (the proposed Sandy Bottom parish ward).	Map A2 and Large Map
3	Bulmershe & Whitegates	3	Part of Woodley parish (the proposed Bulmershe parish ward); Whitegates parish.	Large map
4	Charvil	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Charvil).	Map 2
5	Coronation	2	Part of Woodley parish (the proposed Coronation Central and Coronation East parish wards).	Large map
6	Emmbrook	3	Part of Wokingham parish (the proposed Emmbrook North and Emmbrook South parish wards).	Large Map
7	Evendons	3	Part of Wokingham parish (the proposed Evendons East and Evendons West parish wards).	Large map
8	Finchampstead North	2	Part of Finchampstead parish (the proposed Finchampstead North parish ward).	Map A2
9	Finchampstead South	2	Part of Finchampstead parish (the proposed Finchampstead South parish ward).	Map A2
10	Hawkedon	3	Part of Early parish (the proposed Cutbush and Hawkedon parish wards).	Large Map
11	Hillside	3	Part of Hillside parish (the proposed Hillside and Radstock parish wards).	Large Map
12	Hurst	1	The parish of St Nicholas Hurst; part of Twyford parish (the proposed Town parish ward).	Map 2
13	Loddon	3	Part of Woodley parish (the proposed Loddon Airfield, Loddon South and Loddon West parish wards).	Large map
14	Norreys	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Part of Wokingham parish).	Large map
15	Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe	2	The parishes of Remenham, Ruscombe and Wargrave.	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16	Shinfield Rise	1	Part of Shinfield Parish (the proposed Shinfield Rise parish ward).	Map A3
17	Shinfield & Spencers Wood	3	Part of Shinfield Parish (the proposed Grazeley, School and Ryeish parish wards).	Map A4
18	Sonning & Coronation West	1	The parish of Sonning; part of Woodley parish (the proposed Coronation West parish ward).	Large map
19	South Lake	2	Part of Woodley parish (the proposed South Lake North and South Lake South parish wards).	Large Map
20	St Nicholas	3	Part of Early parish (the proposed Maiden Erlegh, St Nicholas and Redhatch parish wards).	Large Map
21	Swallowfield	1	Part of Shinfield parish (the proposed Spencers Wood parish ward); the parish of Swallowfield.	Map 2
22	Twyford	2	Part of Twyford parish (the proposed Twyford parish ward).	Map A5
23	Wescott	2	Part of Wokingham parish (the proposed Wescott East and Wescott West parish wards).	Large Map
24	Winnersh	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Winnersh)	Large Map
25	Wokingham Without	3	Part of Finchampstead parish (the proposed Lower Wokingham parish ward); the parish of Wokingham Without.	Map 2

Notes: *1 The whole district is parished.*

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1,A2,A3, A4 and A5 in Appendix A, and the large map at the back of the report.

Table 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Wokingham

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 Arborfield	1	1,328	1,328	-36	1,996	1,996	-4
2 Barkham	1	2,165	2,165	4	2,198	2,198	6
3 Bulmershe & Whitegates	3	6,300	2,100	1	5,829	1,943	-6
4 Charvil	1	2,200	2,200	6	2,037	2,037	-2
5 Coronation	2	4,457	2,229	7	4,283	2,142	3
6 Emmbrook	3	6,276	2,092	0	6,281	2,094	1
7 Evendons	3	6,485	2,162	4	6,088	2,029	-2
8 Finchampstead North	2	4,216	2,108	1	3,955	1,978	-5
9 Finchampstead South	2	4,303	2,152	3	4,128	2,064	-1
10 Hawkedon	3	6,766	2,255	8	6,299	2,100	1
11 Hillside	3	6,647	2,216	6	6,054	2,018	-3
12 Hurst	1	2,115	2,115	2	2,039	2,039	-2
13 Loddon	3	6,356	2,119	2	6,315	2,105	1
14 Norreys	3	6,294	2,098	1	6,262	2,087	1
15 Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe	2	4,187	2,094	1	4,179	2,090	1
16 Shinfield Rise	1	1,763	1,763	-15	2,212	2,212	7
17 Shinfield & Spencers Wood	3	3,773	1,258	-40	6,487	2,162	4
18 Sonning & Coronation West	1	2,225	2,225	7	2,186	2,186	5
19 South Lake	2	4,709	2,355	13	4,165	2,083	0

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 %
20 St Nicholas	3	7,204	2,401	15	6,739	2,246	8
21 Swallowfield	1	1,883	1,883	-10	1,936	1,936	-7
22 Twyford	2	4,386	2,193	5	4,400	2,200	6
23 Wescott	2	4,267	2,134	2	4,050	2,025	-2
24 Winnersh	3	5,950	1,983	-5	6,143	2,048	-1
25 Wokingham Without	3	6,208	2,069	-1	5,806	1,935	-7
Totals	54	112,463	-	-	112,067	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,083	-	-	2,075	

Source: Electorate figures are based on Wokingham District Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of Wokingham, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the six districts in Berkshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wokingham. Wokingham's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1978 (Report no. 282). Since undertaking that review, Wokingham has become a unitary authority (1998). The change in unitary status has led to the loss of 13 county councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Wokingham from 67 to 54.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

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

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

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate

should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

Table 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

11 Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when we wrote to Wokingham District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, Berkshire Association Local Councils, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the 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 Wokingham District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 September 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 22 January 2002 and will end on 18 March 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The district of Wokingham is situated thirty miles west of London in central Berkshire. Comprising 17,892 hectares, the district has a population of 146,252 and is entirely parished (17 in total). The town of Wokingham is the largest within the district and, along with the whole of the Thames Valley region, has seen significant economic growth over the last three decades. Wokingham District Council became a unitary authority in 1998.

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

17 The electorate of the district is 112,463 (February 2001). The Council presently has 54 members who are elected from 24 wards, eleven of which are relatively urban in character and the remainder being predominantly rural. Twelve of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and six are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,083 electors, which the District Council forecasts will decrease to 2,075 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 15 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 11 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Redhatch ward where the councillor represents 97 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Wokingham

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Arborfield	1	1,438	1,438	-31	2,106	2,106	1
2 Barkham	1	1,782	1,782	-14	1,828	1,828	-12
3 Bulmershe	2	3,065	1,533	-26	3,051	1,526	-26
4 Charvil	1	2,200	2,200	6	2,037	2,037	-2
5 Coronation	3	5,859	1,953	-6	5,552	1,851	-11
6 Emmbrook	3	4,749	1,583	-24	4,757	1,586	-24
7 Evendons	3	8,473	2,824	36	8,060	2,687	29
8 Finchampstead North	2	4,569	2,285	10	4,286	2,143	3
9 Finchampstead South	2	4,742	2,371	14	4,549	2,275	10
10 Hurst	1	1,489	1,489	-29	1,411	1,411	-32
11 Little Hungerford	3	8,239	2,746	32	7,862	2,621	26
12 Loddon	3	6,466	2,155	3	6,090	2,030	-2
13 Norreys	3	6,294	2,098	1	6,262	2,087	1
14 Redhatch	3	12,329	4,110	97	11,229	3,743	80
15 Remenham & Wargrave	2	3,394	1,697	-19	3,384	1,692	-18
16 Shinfield	3	5,988	1,996	-4	9,127	3,042	47
17 Sonning	1	1,123	1,123	-46	1,142	1,142	-45
18 South Lake	3	4,709	1,570	-25	4,165	1,388	-33
19 Swallowfield	1	1,431	1,431	-31	1,509	1,509	-27

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 %
20 Twyford & Ruscombe	3	5,805	1,935	-7	5,823	1,941	-6
21 Wescott	2	3,935	1,968	-6	3,862	1,931	-7
22 Whitegates	2	3,018	1,509	-28	2,778	1,389	-33
23 Winnersh	3	5,950	1,983	-5	6,143	2,048	-1
24 Wokingham Without	3	5,416	1,805	-13	5,054	1,685	-19
Totals	54	112,463	-	-	112,067	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,083	-	-	2,075	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wokingham District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Redhatch ward were relatively over-represented by 97 per cent, while electors in Sonning ward were relatively under-represented by 46 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Wokingham District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 19 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups on the council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

Wokingham District Council

21 The District Council undertook an extensive public consultation exercise during Stage One, inviting comments from all local groups. Following consultation, the Council put forward an options document consisting of two options, schemes A and B, for discussion by the council. Agreement was reached between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups on only six wards: the proposed wards of Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Winnersh and Wokingham Without. Consensus was not reached on any other area and therefore the Council did not formally submit a district-wide scheme for Wokingham.

22 However in formulating our draft recommendations we have taken into consideration both of the consultation schemes and these will be referred to throughout the report as either Scheme A or Scheme B. Both schemes were based on the existing council size and involved a mixture of single- and multi-member wards. The schemes would generally retain much of the existing warding pattern, but would involve parish warding in a number of areas. Scheme B varied from Scheme A in that it involved alternative warding arrangements for the northern part of the district. Specific warding proposals for the urban areas of Early, Wokingham and Woodley were not presented under either scheme.

The Conservative Group

23 The Conservative Group (here after referred to as the Conservatives) proposed a district-wide scheme based on a 54-member council. It agreed with the District Council's consultation schemes with regard to the six wards listed above, but put forward different proposals for the remainder of the district.

The Liberal Democrat Group

24 The Liberal Democrat Group (here after referred to as the Liberal Democrats) proposed a district-wide scheme based on a 55-member council to create "wards that achieve equality of representation but still maintain communities." It offered an alternative scheme for the northern part of the district. Its scheme also mirrored that of the District Council consultation schemes in the six areas referred to above, but was significantly different from the Conservative Group's proposals in the main urban areas of the district.

Members of Parliament

25 Two submissions were received from Members of Parliament. Theresa May MP, member for Maidenhead, proposed that the existing wards of Charvil, Hurst and Sonning remain as single-member wards, but that part of the existing Twyford & Ruscombe ward join a modified Hurst ward to achieve electoral equality. Jane Griffiths MP, member for Reading East, stated that she would comment on our draft recommendations.

Parish and Town Councils

26 We received representations from nine parish and town councils. Barkham Parish Council supported the District Council proposals for an enlarged Barkham ward, while Charvil Parish Council opposed any proposal that would divide Charvil parish for community identity reasons. Early Town Council supported the District Council's Option A scheme but disputed the Council's electorate forecast for Early town. Shinfield Parish Council proposed a 55-member council and opposed the District Council's proposal to combine part of Shinfield parish with the existing Swallowfield ward. Swallowfield Parish Council opposed any parish warding to its parish but supported the District Council's proposal to enlarge the existing Swallowfield ward to include part of Shinfield parish. St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to not divide Hurst parish, while Twyford Parish Council opposed any division of Twyford parish for district ward purposes. Wokingham Town Council proposed boundary modifications to the existing Emmbrook, Evendons and Wescott wards within Wokingham town to improve electoral equality. Woodley Town Council proposed that Whitegates ward be included with Woodley town and that no part of Woodley parish boundary be breached.

Other Representations

27 We received a further five representations from local political parties and organisations, councillors and local residents. Early and Shinfield Branch Labour Party opposed the transfer of Whitegates ward to Woodley and questioned the District Council's electorate projections for Early. Maidenhead Conservative Association withdrew its original submission and supported instead the Conservative's proposals, while Councillor Graddon, representing Charvil, opposed any division of Charvil parish. Councillor Rose, representing Sonning, proposed combining Charvil parish and Sonning parish in a modified district ward. One local resident opposed the division of Charvil parish for community identity reasons.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

31 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

33 Since 1975 there has been an 40 per cent increase in the electorate of Wokingham district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a decrease in the electorate of less than 1 per cent from 112,463 to 112,067 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the Shinfield area. 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 District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

34 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

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

36 Wokingham District Council presently has 54 members. The District Council based both the schemes produced following local consultation on a council size of 54 and stated that this was “viewed as the appropriate size to handle the work of the unitary authority and to meet [the] member’s constituency role.” It further stated that maintaining the current council size “accorded with the views expressed by town and parish councils.” Both the Liberal Democrats and Shinfield Parish Council proposed a 55-member council, but did not undertake consultation on this proposal.

37 Having considered the electoral arrangements carefully, we note that 54-member council would facilitate the correct allocation of councillors for the towns of Early and Woodley. Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the consultation undertaken and responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality, and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 54 members.

Electoral Arrangements

38 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One. The District Council’s consultation schemes, although district-wide, did not propose specific warding arrangements for the towns of Early, Wokingham and Woodley. Its two options differed in that they provided alternative warding arrangements for the north of the district and, in general, would provide for improvements to electoral equality. The Conservative proposal would also provide for improvements to electoral equality but in light of other responses received during Stage One, we have not been persuaded that its scheme respects community identity in all parts of the district. The Liberal Democrat proposal, based on a 55-member council, would not provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality in a number of areas.

39 Having considered all the representations received during Stage One, we have concluded that no individual submission would provide the most suitable warding arrangement for the entire district and that each proposal had its own merit. We propose, therefore, basing our draft recommendations on certain aspects of each district-wide submission. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to propose our own warding pattern in a number of areas of the district. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (1) Northern Grouping - the wards of Charvil, Hurst, Remenham & Wargrave, Sonning, Twyford & Ruscombe.
- (2) Woodley - the wards of Bulmershe, Coronation, Loddon and South Lake.
- (3) Early - the wards of Little Hungerford and Redhatch.
- (4) Wokingham - the wards of Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott.

- (5) Southern Grouping - the wards of Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Shinfield, Swallowfield, Winnersh and Wokingham Without.

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

Northern Grouping

Charvil, Hurst, Remenham & Wargrave, Sonning, Twyford and Ruscombe wards

41 These wards lie to the north of the district, are mainly rural in character and all, except the parishes of Remenham & Wargrave which together form a district ward, are coterminous with the parishes of the same name. The single-member Charvil ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 6 per cent (2 per cent under-represented by 2006), while the single-member Hurst ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 29 per cent (32 per cent by 2006). The two-member Remenham & Wargrave ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 19 per cent (18 per cent by 2006). The single-member Sonning ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 46 per cent (45 per cent by 2006), while the three-member Twyford & Ruscombe ward is under-represented with an electoral variance of 7 per cent (6 per cent by 2006).

42 Scheme A proposed that the existing ward of Charvil be divided between a modified Sonning and a modified Twyford ward. It also proposed a new Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward and that part of the existing Coronation ward be combined with the existing Hurst ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the district average in Sonning & Charvil ward (6 per cent above the average by 2006), 3 per cent below the district average in Twyford & Charvil ward (4 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent above the district average in Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward (no change by 2006) and equal to the district average in Hurst & Coronation ward (5 per cent below the average by 2006).

43 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Charvil parish be divided between a modified Hurst ward, a modified Sonning ward and a modified Remenham & Wargrave ward. They proposed no change to the existing Twyford & Ruscombe ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Sonning & Charvil ward would be 12 per cent above the district average (9 per cent by 2006), 10 per cent above the district average in Hurst & Charvil ward (4 per cent by 2006), 10 per cent below the district average in Remenham & Wargrave ward (11 per cent by 2006) and 5 per cent below the district average in Twyford & Ruscombe ward (no change by 2006). The Liberal Democrats also proposed an alternative scheme for this area which differed from its other proposal in that the existing Remenham & Wargrave ward, the existing Sonning ward and part of the existing Charvil ward would be combined in a proposed Riverside ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Hurst & Charvil ward would be 10 per cent above the district average (3 per cent by 2006), 5 per cent below the district average in Twyford & Ruscombe ward (no change by 2006) and 3 per cent below the district average in Riverside ward (4 per cent by 2006).

44 The Conservatives proposed that the existing Charvil ward remain unchanged and that part of the existing Coronation ward be combined with the existing Sonning ward. It also proposed that the existing Ruscombe ward and Remenham & Wargrave ward be joined together in a new Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward. It further proposed that part of the existing Twyford ward be combined with the existing Hurst ward, with the remaining part of Twyford becoming a two-member

ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Charvil ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (2 per cent below the average by 2006), 7 per cent above the district average in Sonning & Coronation ward (5 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent above the district average in Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward (no change by 2006), 2 per cent above the district average in Hurst ward (2 per cent below the average by 2006) and 5 per cent below the district average in Twyford ward (6 per cent by 2006).

45 Charvil Parish Council, St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council and Twyford Parish Council all opposed any division of their respective parishes between district wards. No other representations were received.

46 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area and acknowledge the difficulties presented in formulating a scheme for this part of the district. Both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats recognised that a modification to the existing arrangements had to be undertaken to improve electoral equality. We have had also to consider various options in order to improve electoral equality while also minimising any adverse impact on community identity. The existing Hurst ward lies in the rural heart of the district and is seriously under-represented. Hurst offers no obvious links with its surrounding wards and all options considered required linking Hurst with another parish in a new parish ward. All of the parish councils involved were opposed to their potential division but in undertaking a Periodic Electoral Review we have to look at the district as a whole when drafting our recommendations.

47 Scheme A and the Liberal Democrats proposed that part of Charvil parish be included in a ward with Hurst, while the Conservatives proposed linking part of Twyford with Hurst. We would propose adopting the Conservative proposal that part of Twyford parish, that part approximately south of the railway line, should form part of an enlarged Hurst ward and that the remaining part of Twyford parish form a new Twyford district ward. Of all the options we consider that this provides the most practical pairing in terms of electoral equality and minimising any adverse impact on community identity. Having visited the area, the Conservative proposal also provided the best option in terms of access between Hurst and Twyford via the A321. Scheme A and the Liberal Democrat proposals, although providing similar levels of electoral equality, did not provide the same level of respect for community identity. Furthermore, access between Charvil and Hurst is not of a comparable quality to access between Twyford and Hurst, and this proposal would also necessitate the dividing of Charvil parish which could not be achieved in a manner that meets our statutory criteria. The proposal would have concurrent effects on other parishes in the north of the district and will not form part of our draft recommendations.

48 We were presented with similar difficulties in achieving electoral equality while also minimising the impact on community identity in Sonning. Given our draft recommendation that Whitegates join Woodley and that the existing Charvil ward remain unchanged, then part of Woodley parish would need to join a modified Sonning ward for electoral equality to be achieved. We would propose adopting the Conservative proposal to combine part of the existing Coronation ward, approximately the existing Coronation West parish ward of Woodley parish, in a new Sonning & Coronation West ward. This would achieve excellent electoral equality for both the northern area and Woodley town, (as detailed later in the chapter), and of all the options considered would have least impact on community identity given the historical links and good access between Sonning and Woodley. As part of our overall scheme for the northern area, we would propose adopting the Conservative proposal for Charvil as it provides excellent electoral equality. We would also propose adopting the proposed Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward given the excellent electoral equality it achieves and the community identity it reflects.

The Liberal Democrats proposals, under both of its schemes for the northern area, would involve a large reconfiguration of the northern area and would involve the division of Charvil parish, which we have not endorsed as part of our draft recommendations. We have also not endorsed its proposal to include Sonning parish in part of an enlarged Riverside ward with the existing Remenham & Wargrave ward given our draft proposal to join Sonning with part of the existing Coronation ward (please see later in the chapter).

49 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the single-member Charvil ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (2 per cent below the average by 2006), in the single-member Hurst ward 2 per cent above the average (2 per cent below the average by 2006), in the two-member Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward 1 per cent above the district average (no change by 2006), in the single-member Sonning & Coronation West ward 7 per cent above the district average (5 per cent by 2006) and in the two-member Twyford ward 5 per cent above the district average (6 per cent by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map2, Map A5 in Appendix A and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Woodley

Bulmershe, Coronation, Lodden and South Lake wards

50 The town of Woodley lies to the north of the main west country railway line. Woodley comprises the two-member Bulmershe ward which is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 26 per cent (no change by 2006), the three-member Coronation ward, which is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 6 per cent (11 per cent by 2006), the three-member Lodden ward which is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 3 per cent (2 per cent under-represented by 2006) and the three-member South Lake ward, which is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 25 per cent (33 per cent by 2006).

51 Scheme A proposed that Woodley town be represented by ten members and that the existing Whitegates parish be included in a ward with parts of Woodley for district warding purposes. It provided no further proposals regarding arrangements for the warding of Woodley.

52 The Liberal Democrats agreed that Woodley be represented by ten-members and that the existing Whitegates ward be included in a new Bulmershe & Whitegates ward, except for approximately 50 electors that would remain within Early. It also proposed retaining, with slight modifications, the existing wards of Coronation, Lodden and South Lake. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bulmershe & Whitegates ward would be 2 per cent below the district average (5 per cent by 2006), 2 per cent below the district average in Coronation ward (7 per cent by 2006), 3 per cent below the district average in Lodden ward (3 per cent above the average by 2006) and 15 per cent below the district average in South Lake ward (2 per cent above the average by 2006).

53 The Conservatives proposed that the current boundaries of Woodley remain generally unchanged, except that part of the existing Coronation ward be combined with part of the existing Sonning ward to its north. Their scheme for this area involved further modification to the existing arrangements but argued against including Whitegates parish in a ward with part of Woodley for reasons of community identity. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Coronation ward would be 4 per cent below the district average (7 per cent by 2006), 7 per cent above

the district average in Lodden ward (3 per cent by 2006) and equal to the district average in South Lake ward (10 per cent under the average by 2006).

54 Both Early Parish Council and Woodley Parish Council supported the inclusion of Whitegates parish in a ward with part of Woodley. Woodley Parish Council, however, opposed any further change to its boundaries. No other representations were received.

55 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area. We would propose generally adopting the Liberal Democrat proposals with modifications to improve electoral equality. Given the general consensus, we concur that all of Whitegates parish should form part of a new Bulmershe & Whitegates ward as it would facilitate the correct level of representation for the area as a whole. We would also propose adopting the Conservative proposal that part of the existing Coronation ward be combined with the existing Sonning ward in a new single-member Sonning & Coronation West ward (as detailed previously in this chapter). To improve electoral equality we would propose slightly modifying the Liberal Democrats proposed boundary between the proposed wards of Coronation and Lodden in the north-east of the town so that it would follow approximately along Hurricane Way, with those electors to its east forming part of a modified Lodden ward. We would also propose modifying the proposed boundary between the proposed Bulmershe & Whitegates ward and the proposed Lodden ward to improve electoral equality and provide for a more identifiable boundary. We would propose approximately running the boundary behind Rivermead County Primary School and along the northern part of Austin Road across to Viscount Way.

56 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Bulmershe & Whitegates would be 1 per cent above the district average (6 per cent by 2006), 7 per cent above the district average in the two-member Coronation ward (3 per cent by 2006), 2 per cent above the district average in the three-member Lodden ward (1 per cent by 2006) and 13 per cent above the district average in the two-member South Lake ward (equal to the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Early

Little Hungerford, Redhatch and Whitegates wards

57 The town of Early lies to the south of the west country railway line. Early comprises the three-member wards of Little Hungerford ward which is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 32 per cent (26 per cent by 2006) and Redhatch which is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 97 per cent (80 per cent by 2006). It also comprises the two-member Whitegates ward which is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 28 per cent (33 per cent by 2006).

58 Scheme A proposed that Early town be represented by nine members and that Whitegates parish be included in a ward with part of Woodley for reasons outlined previously in this chapter. It provided no further proposals regarding arrangements for the warding of Early.

59 The Liberal Democrats proposed a reconfiguration of the warding arrangements within Early. They proposed that the wards of Little Hungerford and Redhatch be replaced by three new three-member wards. A new Hawkedon ward would comprise part of both Little Hungerford and Redhatch wards, while the remainder of Redhatch ward would form a new Hillside ward. Under these proposals

the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the district average in Hawkedon ward (3 per cent by 2006), 8 per cent above the district average in Hillside ward (1 per cent below the average by 2006) and 17 per cent above the district average in St Nicholas ward (11 per cent by 2006).

60 The Conservatives proposed that the existing Whitegates ward remain in a ward with Early. It further proposed that the existing Little Hungerford and Redhatch wards be replaced by an enlarged Whitegates ward, and new wards of Hawkedon, Hillside and Maiden Erlegh. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Hawkedon ward would be 13 per cent above the district average (8 per cent by 2006), 11 per cent above the district average in Hillside ward (2 per cent by 2006), 15 per cent above the district average in Maiden Erlegh (7 per cent by 2006) and 15 per cent above the district average in Whitegates ward (6 per cent by 2006).

61 Early Parish Council disputed the District Council's electorate projections for Early, but endorsed proposals to include Whitegates parish in a ward with Woodley. Early & Shinfield Branch Labour Party opposed the division of Early and also questioned the Council's electorate projections. No other representations were received.

62 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area. Given our adoption of the proposal to transfer Whitegates ward from Early to Woodley with one minor modification, we are adopting the remainder of the Liberal Democrat proposals for Early. The Liberal Democrat proposal would achieve good electoral equality and maintain community identity.

63 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Hawkedon ward would be 8 per cent above the district average (1 per cent by 2006), 6 per cent above the district average in the three-member Hillside ward (3 per cent below the average by 2006) and 15 per cent above the district average in the three-member St Nicholas ward (8 per cent by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Wokingham

Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott wards

64 Wokingham Town comprises the three-member wards of Emmbrook, Evendons and Norreys, plus the two-member Wescott ward. Emmbrook ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 24 per cent (no change by 2006). Evendons ward and Norreys ward are both over-represented and have an electoral variance of 36 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (29 per cent and 1 per cent respectively by 2006). Wescott ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 6 per cent (7 per cent by 2006).

65 Scheme A proposed that the Wokingham town area be represented by 11 members but it provided no further proposals regarding specific arrangements for the warding of Wokingham, except that part of the existing Evendons ward, (the Bearwood Road area), be included in a modified Barkham ward to improve electoral equality and reflect community identity. This proposal was agreed by both the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives.

66 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Wokingham town be divided into five wards, reconfiguring the existing warding arrangements to allow the creation of a new Woosehill ward from the existing wards of Emmbrook and Evendons. The existing Norreys ward would remain unchanged. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Emmbrook ward (3 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent below the district average in Evendons ward (9 per cent by 2006), 3 per cent above the district average in Norreys ward (2 per cent by 2006), 4 per cent above the district average in Wescott ward (4 per cent by 2006) and 3 per cent above the district average in Woosehill ward (2 per cent below the average in 2006).

67 The Conservative proposals maintained the current number of wards within Wokingham town in order to avoid “fragmentation of council representation for the town”. They proposed that the existing Norreys ward remain unchanged but proposed minor changes to the remaining three existing wards of Evendons, Emmbrook and Wescott to improve electoral equality. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average in Emmbrook ward (1 per cent above the average by 2006), 4 per cent above the district average in Evendons ward (2 per cent below the average by 2006), 1 per cent above the district average in Norreys ward (1 per cent by 2006) and 1 per cent under the average in Wescott ward (2 per cent by 2006).

68 Wokingham Town Council’s proposals for Wokingham mirrored those of the Conservatives. No other representations were received.

69 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area. We are adopting the Conservative proposal as part of our draft recommendations as it achieves excellent electoral equality, has the support of the Town Council and minimizes change to the existing warding arrangements. We have been persuaded that the Conservative proposals would better reflect community identity than those of the Liberal Democrats. We are also endorsing the agreed transfer of part of the existing Evendons ward, the proposed Sandy Bottom parish ward, to an enlarged Barkham ward.

70 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Emmbrook ward would be equal to the district average (1 per cent above the district average by 2006), 4 per cent above the district average in the three-member Evendons ward (2 per cent below the average by 2006), 1 per cent above the average in the three-member Norreys ward (no change by 2006) and 2 per cent above the district average in the two-member Wescott ward (2 per cent below the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Southern Grouping

Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Shinfield, Swallowfield, Winnersh and Wokingham Without wards

71 These wards lie to the south of the district. Arborfield ward is coterminous with Arborfield & Newland parish, Barkham ward is coterminous with Barkham parish, Finchampstead North ward and Finchampstead South ward cover Finchampstead parish, Shinfield ward is coterminous with Shinfield parish, Swallowfield ward is coterminous with Swallowfield parish, Winnersh ward is coterminous with Winnersh parish and Wokingham Without ward is coterminous with Wokingham Without parish. The single-member Arborfield ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 31 per cent (1 per cent by 2006), while the single-member Barkham ward is currently under-represented with an

electoral variance of 14 per cent (12 per cent by 2006). Both the two-member Finchampstead North and Finchampstead South wards are currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 10 and 14 per cent respectively (3 per cent and 10 per cent respectively by 2006). The three-member Shinfield ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 4 per cent (47 per cent over-represented by 2006), while the single-member Swallowfield ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 31 per cent (27 per cent by 2006). The three-member Wokingham Without ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 13 per cent (19 per cent by 2006).

72 The Scheme A proposals for the wards of Arborfield, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Winnersh and Wokingham Without were agreed upon by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. The Council proposed that the existing Arborfield and Winnersh wards remain unchanged and, as mentioned previously, that the existing Barkham ward be enlarged to cover part of the existing Evendons ward. It further proposed that the southern end of the boundary between the existing wards of Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South and Wokingham Without be modified slightly to improve electoral equality and enhance community identity. This would involve the creation of a new Lower Wokingham parish ward. The District Council's proposed boundary would follow Lower Wokingham Road instead of the railway line south of the B3430 Nine Mile Road and would be re-drawn at its southernmost tip to coincide with Roman Ride.

73 Both political groups generally agreed that part of the existing Shinfield ward, around the Spencers Wood area, should transfer to the existing Swallowfield ward to further achieve electoral equality for the southern area as a whole.

74 Agreement could not be reached between the political groups on new warding arrangements for Shinfield parish. The Liberal Democrats proposed the creation of a new Shinfield Rise ward to cover that part of Shinfield parish to the north of the M4. It also proposed a new Shinfield & Spencers Wood ward to cover the remaining part of Shinfield parish, except for the southern part of Spencers Wood Village, approximately the area south of Hunters Way, which would be included in a modified Swallowfield ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent below the district average in Shinfield Rise ward (9 per cent by 2006) and 38 per cent below the district average in Shinfield & Spencers Wood ward (6 per cent by 2006).

75 The Conservatives proposed a new Shinfield & Shinfield Rise ward that would comprise the northern part of Shinfield parish either side of the M4 and a new Spencers Wood & Grazeley ward that would cover the remaining southern part of Shinfield parish except for part of Spencers Wood village that would transfer to a modified Swallowfield ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in Shinfield & Shinfield Rise ward would be 27 per cent below the district average (12 per cent by 2006) and 37 per cent below the district average in Spencers Wood & Grazeley ward (4 per cent by 2006).

76 Barkham Parish Council supported the proposal to enlarge the existing Barkham ward, while Shinfield Parish Council stated that the Shinfield area should be represented by five councillors as part of a 55-member council. Swallowfield Parish Council opposed any division of Swallowfield parish but supported proposals to transfer part of the existing Shinfield ward to a modified Swallowfield ward.

77 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area. We are pleased to note the consensus between the political groups for the proposed wards of Arborfield, Barkhams, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South,

Winnersh and Wokingham Without. We would propose adopting these proposals as part of our draft recommendations, although we would propose a slight modification to the southern part of the proposed boundary between Arborfield ward and Barkham ward. To provide a more identifiable boundary between these wards we would propose that the boundary runs along Bramshill Close and that those electors to its east form a new Garrison parish ward of Arborfield parish, which would be included in Barkham ward. We consider that neither electoral equality nor community identity would be adversely affected by this proposal. We would also propose adopting the Liberal Democrat proposals for Shinfield parish and Swallowfield parish. We concur that their proposals for a new Shinfield Rise ward and a new Shinfield & Spencers Wood would provide for reasonable electoral equality, maintain community identity and provide a clear and identifiable boundary. We are also adopting their proposal that the southern end of Spencers Wood Village should be included in an enlarged Swallowfield ward.

78 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the single-member Arborfield ward would be 36 per cent below the district average (4 per cent by 2006), 4 per cent above the district average in the single-member Barkham ward (6 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent above the district average in the two-member Finchampstead North ward (5 per cent below the average by 2006), 3 per cent above the district average in the two-member Finchampstead South ward (1 per cent below the average by 2006), 15 per cent below the district average in the single-member Shinfield Rise ward (7 per cent by 2006), 40 per cent below the district average in the three-member Shinfield & Spencers Wood ward (4 per cent above the average by 2006), 10 per cent below the district average in the single-member Swallowfield ward (7 per cent by 2006), 5 per cent below under the district average in the three-member Winnersh ward (1 per cent by 2006) and 1 per cent below the district average in the three-member Wokingham Without ward (7 per cent by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2, Maps A2, A3, A4 in Appendix A and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

79 At Stage One we received no proposals for change to the electoral cycle of the district. Consequently, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

80 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be no change in the council size of 54 members;
- there should be 25 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

81 Our draft recommendations would involve modifying all but two of the existing wards in Wokingham district, as summarised below:

- the boundaries of Charvil, Norreys ward and Winnersh ward would remain unchanged.

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

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	54	54	54	54
Number of wards	24	25	24	25
Average number of electors per councillor	2,083	2,083	2,075	2,075
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	15	5	15	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	11	2	11	0

83 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Wokingham District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 11 to five. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Wokingham District Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

84 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Arborfield, Early, Finchampstead, Shinfield, Twyford, Wokingham and Woodley to reflect the proposed district wards.

85 The parish of Arborfield & Newland is currently served by ten councillors and is currently unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the parish should continue to be represented by ten councillors, but representing two wards, reflecting the proposed district ward boundaries for Arborfield. The proposed Arborfield ward, returning nine councillors, would form part

of the proposed Arborfield district ward and the proposed Garrison ward, returning one councillor, would form part of the proposed Barkham district ward.

Draft Recommendation

Arborfield & Newland Parish Council should comprise ten councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Arborfield parish ward (returning nine councillors) and Garrison parish ward (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

86 The town of Early is currently represented by 25 councillors and divided into eight wards: Cutbush ward (returning three councillors); Hawkedon ward (returning three councillors); Hillside ward (returning three councillors); Maiden Erlegh ward (returning three councillors); St Nicholas ward (returning three councillors); Radstock ward (returning three councillors); Redhatch ward (returning four councillors) and Whitegates ward (returning three councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the parish continue to be represented by 25 councillors, representing eight wards, reflecting the proposed district ward boundaries for Early. The proposed Cutbush ward, represented by three councillors and the proposed Hawkedon ward, represented by three councillors, would form part of the proposed Hawkedon district ward; the proposed Hillside ward, represented by three councillors, and the proposed Radstock ward, represented by three councillors, would form part of the proposed Hillside district ward; the proposed Maiden Erlegh ward, represented by three councillors, the proposed St Nicholas ward, represented by three councillors and the proposed Redhatch ward, represented by three councillors, would form part of the proposed St Nicholas district ward. Whitegates parish ward would form part of Bulmershe & Whitegates ward and would return three councilors.

Draft Recommendation

Early Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards: Cutbush ward (returning three councillors);Hawkedon ward (returning three councillors); Hillside ward (returning three councillors); Maiden Erlegh ward (returning three councillors); St Nicholas ward (returning three councillors); Radstock ward (returning three councillors); Redhatch ward (returning three councillors) Whitegates ward (returning councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named the large map inserted in the back of this report.

87 The parish of Finchampstead is currently represented by 17 councillors and divided into two wards: Finchampstead North ward (returning eight councillors) and Finchampstead South ward (returning nine councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the parish continue to be represented by 17 councillors, but representing three wards, an increase of one, to reflect our proposals at district level. The proposed Finchampstead North ward, returning seven councillors, would form part of the proposed Northampstead South district ward, the proposed Finchampstead North ward, returning seven councillors, would form part of the proposed Finchampstead South ward, returning eight councillors, would form part of the proposed

Finchampstead South district ward and the proposed Lower Wokingham ward, returning two councillors, would form part of the proposed Wokingham Without district ward.

Draft Recommendation

Finchampstead Parish Council should comprise 25 councillors, representing three wards: Finchampstead North ward (returning seven councillors); Finchampstead South ward (returning eight councillors) and Lower Wokingham ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

88 The parish of Shinfield is currently represented by 15 councillors and is currently divided into four wards: Grazeley ward (returning three councillors); School ward (returning five councillors); Shinfield Rise ward (returning three councillors) and Ryeish ward (returning four councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the parish continue to be represented by 15 councillors, but representing five wards, an increase of one, reflecting our proposals at district level. The proposed Grazeley parish ward, to be represented by two councillors, would form part of the proposed Shinfield & Spencers Wood district ward; the proposed School ward, returning five councillors, would form part of the proposed Shinfield & Spencers Wood district ward; the proposed Shinfield Rise ward returning three councillors, would be coterminous with the proposed Shinfield Rise district ward; the proposed Spencers Wood ward, returning two councillor, would form part of the proposed Swallowfield district ward and the proposed Ryeish ward, returning three councillors, would form part of the proposed Shinfield & Spencers Wood ward.

Draft Recommendation

Shinfield Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Grazeley ward (returning two councillors); School ward (returning five councillors); Shinfield Rise ward (returning three councillors); Spencers Wood ward (returning two councillor) and Ryeish ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

89 Twyford Parish Council is currently represented by 15 councillors and is unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the parish continue to be represented by 15 councillors, but representing two wards, an increase of one, to reflect our proposals at district level. The proposed Twyford ward, returning ten councillors, would be coterminous with the proposed Twyford district ward and the proposed Town ward, returning five councillors, would form part of the proposed Hurst district ward.

Draft Recommendation

Twyford Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Twyford ward (returning ten councillors) and Town ward (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map A5 in Appendix A.

90 The town of Woodley is represented by 24 councillors and is currently divided into eight wards: Bulmershe ward (returning four councillors); Coronation East ward (returning three councillors); Coronation West ward (returning three councillors); Loddon Airfield ward (returning three councillors); Loddon South ward (returning three councillors); Loddon West ward (returning two councillors); South Lake North ward (returning three councillors) and South Lake South ward (returning three councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we propose that the town be represented by 25 councillors representing nine wards, an increase of one: The proposed Bulmershe ward, to be represented by four councillors, would form part of the proposed Bulmershe & Whitegates district ward; the proposed Coronation Central ward, to be represented by two councillors and the proposed Coronation East ward, represented by three councillors, would form the proposed Coronation district ward; the proposed Coronation West ward, represented by two councillors, would form part of the proposed Sonning & Coronation West district ward; the proposed Loddon Airfield ward, represented by three councillors, the proposed Loddon South ward, represented by three councillors, and the proposed Loddon West ward, represented by two councillors, would form the proposed Loddon district ward; the proposed South Lake North ward and the proposed South Lake South ward, each represented by three councillors, would form part of the proposed South Lake district ward.

Draft Recommendation

Woodley Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, an increase of one, representing nine wards: Bulmershe ward (returning four councillors); Coronation Central ward (returning two councillors); Coronation West ward (returning two councillors); Coronation East ward (returning three councillors); Loddon Airfield ward (returning three councillors); Loddon South ward (returning three councillors); Loddon West ward (returning two councillors); South Lake North ward (returning three councillors) and South Lake South ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

91 The town of Wokingham is currently represented by 25 councillors and is divided into eight parish wards: Emmbrook North ward (returning three councillors); Emmbrook South ward (returning three councillors); Evendons East ward (returning three councillors); Evendons West ward (returning six councillors); Norreys East ward (returning three councillors); Norreys West ward (returning three Councillors); Wescott East ward (returning two councillors) and Wescott West ward (returning two councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we propose that Wokingham Town should continue to be represented by 25 councillors, representing nine wards, an increase of one, reflecting the proposed district ward boundaries for the area. The proposed wards of

Emmbrook North and Emmbrook South, each represented by three councillors, should form the proposed Emmbrook district ward; the proposed ward of Evendons East, represented by three councillors, the proposed ward of Evendons West, represented by five councillors and the proposed ward of Sandy Bottom, represented by one councillor, should form the proposed Evendons district ward; the proposed wards of Norreys East and Norreys West, each represented by three councillors, should form the proposed Norreys district ward and the proposed wards of Wescott East and Westcott West, each represented by two councillors, should form the proposed Wescott district ward.

Draft Recommendation

Wokingham Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards: Emmbrook North ward (returning three councillors); Emmbrook South ward (returning three councillors); Evendons East ward (returning three councillors); Evendons West ward (returning five councillors); Norreys East ward (returning three councillors); Norreys West ward (returning three councillors); Sandy Bottom ward (returning one councillor); Wescott East ward (returning two councillors) and Wescott West ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

92 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place by thirds, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Wokingham

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

94 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

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

Draft Recommendations for Wokingham: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wokingham area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3, A4 and A5, and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Arborfield parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Finchampstead parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Shinfield parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Twyford parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the towns of Early, Wokingham and Woodley.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Wokingham: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Arborfield Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Finchampstead Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Shinfield Parish

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Twyford Parish

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

Criteria	Compliance/departure
<i>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.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>
<i>It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>
<i>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.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>
<i>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.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>
<i>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.</i>	<i>We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.</i>
<i>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.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>
<i>Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.</i>	<i>We comply with this requirement.</i>