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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Three Rivers District Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in July 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
24 July 2012	Consultation on council size
23 October 2012	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
15 January 2013	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
16 April 2013	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
9 July 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

The Commission received 62 submissions during its initial consultation on council size. These submissions proposed council sizes of between 30 and 42. During Stage One, we received 54 submissions including district-wide schemes from the Council, the Conservative Group, and Councillor Sansom (Rickmansworth ward). All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Three Rivers District Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 3.4% over this period. This represents a moderate level of growth, mostly spread across the district with one large-scale development in the Leavesden area. We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

Three Rivers District Council currently has a council size of 48. The Council originally proposed a council size of 39. They argued a reduction was necessary due to councillors having light workloads, and a reduction to 39 would still giving them

opportunity to undertake their community representational duties. It also demonstrated how this council size worked within the new committee structure, and ensured resilience on committees.

The Conservative Group proposed a council size of 30, arguing that councillor workloads could be adequately managed with such a reduction, and placed the onus on local organisations and parish councils to increase their representational role. The Labour Group proposed a council size of 42, arguing that this most adequately served the district's community representational needs.

During consultation, we received submissions primarily in support of council sizes of 39 and 30. Many of those supporting a council size of 39 were concerned about the potential loss of local representation, and the relationship between the Council and local organisations. Those supporting a council size of 30 felt that this would provide monetary and efficiency savings. We considered that the arguments supporting 39 provided evidence on community representational aspects, in addition to the Council's arguments on council governance. We have therefore adopted a council size of 39 as part of our draft recommendations.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during consultation on warding arrangements, we have developed proposals based on a combination of the submissions received. In general, we have based our draft recommendations on the Council's and Conservative Group's schemes. However, we have adapted these schemes to take account of evidence received in respect of community identity in several places across the district. Our proposals will provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and transport links in the district.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council contained in the report. **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.** We will take into account all submissions received by **8 July 2013**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

Review Officer
Three Rivers Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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

You can also view our draft recommendations for Three Rivers District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Three Rivers District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Three Rivers District Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council in autumn 2013.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Three Rivers?

6 We decided to conduct this review because a formal request was made by Three Rivers District Council for an electoral review of Three Rivers.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 8 July 2013. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in autumn 2013. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 21 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Three Rivers District Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

15 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

16 Under the 2009 Act, where a council elects by thirds or halves (as opposed to the whole council being elected every four years), there is a presumption that the authority should have a uniform pattern of three-member and two-member wards respectively. We will only move away from this presumption where we receive compelling evidence to do so and where it can be demonstrated that an alternative warding pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria. Consequently, our starting point for this review was that Three Rivers District Council should have a uniform pattern of three-member wards given its electoral cycle at this time.

Submissions received

17 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Three Rivers District Council and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 62 submissions during consultation on council size and 54 submissions during the consultation on warding patterns, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

18 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 3.4% over this period.

19 These projections forecast slow to moderate growth across the district, with the largest growth in the southern part of Abbots Langley parish. We are content that these forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

20 The Council currently has 48 councillors elected from one single-member ward, 10 two-member wards and nine three-member wards. At the beginning of the electoral review, we met Council officers and elected members to discuss council size.

21 Following initial discussions with group leaders, we received submissions on council size from the Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group.

22 The Council's submission argued that a reduction to a council size of 39 would not adversely affect the governance of the authority. The Council had recently agreed to implement a new committee structure and this could still be accommodated under a council size of 39. The Council also argued that a reduction was necessary as councillors were creating work for themselves. However, they argued that a reduction beyond 39 would place too onerous a burden on councillors in respect of their community representational role.

23 The Conservative Group argued that a council size of 30 could still be accommodated in the revised committee structure. In terms of the representative role

of councillors, they posited that parish councils and community organisations could expand to pick up the extra workload that would be generated by fewer councillors. However, no evidence regarding parish council capability to do this was provided.

24 The Labour Group echoed the Council's submission; however they argued that with a council size of 42, a single-member Sarratt ward could be accommodated without compromising electoral equality.

25 During the consultation on council size we received 62 submissions, of which four were from parish and town councils, five were from local organisations, one was from a political party, and the remaining 52 were from members of the public. Of the submissions, 36 supported a council size of 39, 16 supported a council size of 30, and the remainder either did not specify a council size or supported an alternative number.

26 Submissions supporting a council size of 39 expressed concern that a smaller number would damage the relationship between councillors and electors, leading to less effective local representation. Some respondents also argued that a lower council size would lead to a less diverse selection of representatives. Submissions supporting a council size of 30 argued that this smaller council size could allow the extra workload to be picked up by parish councils and officers. However, no parish councils supported a council size of 30.

27 We noted that the majority of representations supported a council size of 39, and echoed the Council's argument. We had concerns that the submissions supporting a council size of 30 were based on an assumption that parish councils would provide the local representation that councillors would no longer have time to undertake. As parish councils did not support a council size of 30, we were not persuaded that this assumption was borne out in the evidence received.

28 We consider that the Council set out a robust proposal for 39 councillors, and that this number would provide the best balance between the community representation and local governance roles of elected members. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a council size of 39.

Electoral fairness

29 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

30 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (68,222 in 2012 and 70,574 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 39 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,749 in 2012 and 1,810 by 2018.

31 Under our draft recommendations, 12 of our proposed 13 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. We are

therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Three Rivers.

General analysis

32 During our consultation on warding patterns we received 54 submissions, including district-wide warding patterns from the Council, the Conservative Group, and Councillor Sansom (Rickmansworth ward).

33 Both the Council's and the Conservative Group's schemes were based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards. The ward pattern proposed by Councillor Sansom was based on three-member wards with the exception of a single-member Sarratt ward, and a two-member Ashridge ward.

34 Both the Council and Conservative Group provided some evidence of community identities across the district to support their warding patterns. We did not consider that the representation from Councillor Sansom contained sufficient evidence of community identities to support his proposed warding pattern.

35 In formulating a warding pattern for the district the Council allocated a certain number of councillors to geographic parts of the district. The proposals from the Conservative Group and Councillor Sansom were broadly based on these same geographical areas, but differed in some areas to create an alternate pattern of wards.

36 Our draft recommendations are for a pattern of 13 three-member wards. Our recommendations are predominantly based on the Council and Conservative group schemes, with some amendments made to better reflect our statutory criteria. We consider our recommendations provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

37 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 23–24) and the large map accompanying this report.

38 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations. We also particularly welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

39 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Three Rivers. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Watford Rural (pages 10–11)
- Croxley Green (pages 12–13)
- Abbots Langley (pages 13–15)
- Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt (pages 15–19)

40 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 23–24 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Watford Rural

41 The parish of Watford Rural is situated in the south-eastern corner of the district, and comprises the settlements of South Oxhey, Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park.

42 The existing wards for this area are the two-member Ashridge, Hayling and Oxhey Hall wards, and the three-member Carpenders Park and Northwick wards. These wards are projected to have 8% fewer, 8% fewer, 9% fewer, 5% fewer and 15% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

43 The Council proposed three three-member wards for this area: the first included Oxhey Hall with the northern part of Carpenders Park; the second included the southern part of South Oxhey with the southern part of Carpenders Park; and the third covered the north and centre of South Oxhey. The Council stated that this warding pattern ensured that the central community of South Oxhey remained in one ward. The Council acknowledged that this was at the cost of Carpenders Park being divided between two wards, one of which would not have internal road access. The Council also noted that their proposed boundary would follow an existing county division boundary with reference to placing Oxhey Hall with Carpenders Park. Overall, the Council argued that South Oxhey had a stronger sense of community identity than Carpenders Park, and thus warranted a single ward to cover the majority of the area.

44 The Conservative Group also proposed three, three-member wards for this area: the first included the entirety of Carpenders Park in a ward with the south-eastern part of South Oxhey; the second, the remainder of the southern part of South Oxhey; and the third included Oxhey Hall with the northern part of South Oxhey. In support of this proposal, the Conservative Group argued that Carpenders Park had a strong sense of community identity, and that the proposed wards did not overly divide South Oxhey, or place Oxhey Hall with areas with which it did not associate.

45 Councillor Sansom proposed one two-member ward and two three-member wards for this area: the two-member ward comprising the southern part of South Oxhey; the first three-member ward comprising the entirety of Carpenders Park with the eastern part of Oxhey Hall and the second three-member ward comprising the north and central parts of South Oxhey. Under his warding pattern, the western part of Oxhey Hall would be included in a ward with Moor Park and Eastbury which are outside the parish of Watford Rural to the west. Councillor Sansom argued this warding configuration ensured the entirety of South Oxhey could be kept within two wards.

46 We received 37 submissions relating specifically to this area. One submission was from Watford Rural Parish Council, three were from local organisations and the remainder from members of the public.

47 Watford Rural Parish Council stated that they supported the Council's scheme, noting that they agreed the Council's proposed boundaries recognised South Oxhey as 'highly distinct with strong community ties across the estate.'

48 The remaining 36 submissions relating to Watford Rural opposed the Council's proposals. Most of the respondents suggested an alternative warding pattern which

was broadly similar to that proposed by the Conservative Group. These representations included community identity evidence to support the retention of Carpenders Park entirely in one ward. Respondents argued that the community is very self-contained, citing local facilities such as a primary school, a doctor's surgery, a dentist and community organisations such as the residents' association and community hall. Respondents also indicated a lack of common identity with the Oxhey Hall community to the north-west. This concern was also raised by the Oxhey Hall Residents' Association, who noted the lack of transport links and community ties between Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park.

49 We recognise that it not possible to draw up warding arrangements for Watford Rural that avoid dividing all communities in the parish while ensuring good electoral equality. Oxhey Hall is separated from South Oxhey by the playing fields south of Hillcroft Crescent. Carpenders Park is separated from South Oxhey by the Metropolitan Line, of which there is only one crossing, along Little Oxhey Lane in the extreme south of the parish.

50 We consider that the representations received during our consultation provide strong community identity evidence to support retaining Carpenders Park in one single ward. Having visited the area and observed the boundaries on the ground we consider that the area east of Prestwick Road and south of Carpenders Park station provides for an easily identifiable boundary between wards.

51 In relation to community identities and interests, we consider that Oxhey Hall looks predominantly outside of the district, towards Watford. The main links within the district run south towards South Oxhey. As such, we consider that the Conservative Group's proposal to include Oxhey Hall with the section of South Oxhey to the north of Gosforth Lane and Fairfield Avenue represents the best available arrangement in this area. This would result in combining the existing Oxhey Hall and Hayling wards to form a three-member ward.

52 Consequently, this would result in the existing Northwick ward, and the west and central sections of the existing Ashridge ward forming a further three-member ward in this area.

53 We do not consider the Council has provided sufficient evidence to support including Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park in the same ward. We consider that the two areas are geographically distant from each other. We are also concerned that the two areas do not have clear internal communication and transport links and that the Metropolitan Line is a barrier between the two areas.

54 Although there is a road link between Oxhey Hall and Moor Park, we have not received strong evidence suggesting sufficient links exist between them to justify adopting Councillor Sansom's proposals in this area.

55 Having considered the evidence received we have decided to adopt the Conservative Group's proposed warding pattern for Watford Rural as part of our draft recommendations. We consider this warding pattern provides the best balance between the statutory criteria and avoids creating arbitrary warding arrangements in this area. Our draft recommendations for Watford Rural are for the three, three-member wards of Carpenders Park, Oxhey Hall & Hayling and South Oxhey wards. These wards are projected to have a number equal to, 1% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Croxley Green

56 Croxley Green parish is located on the eastern side of Three Rivers, separated from Watford by the Grand Union Canal, and with areas of parkland separating it from other areas in Three Rivers.

57 The existing wards for this area are the two-member Croxley Green North and Croxley Green South wards, and the three-member Croxley Green ward. These wards are projected to have 2% more, 4% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

58 The Council proposed two three-member wards for this area – Croxley Green Dickinsons and Croxley Green Durrants. The Council proposed the boundary between the wards broadly follow the Metropolitan Line before diverting north to run to the east of The Green and Grove Crescent. The Council did not provide specific evidence as to why this boundary reflected community identities. Their main argument concerning Croxley Green was that it was important for the wards to be contained entirely within the parish. In support of this, they cited the well-defined geography, and a number of local clubs and community groups that serve Croxley Green.

59 The Conservative Group proposed to split Croxley Green between three wards, two of which include areas outside Croxley Green parish. The Group's north-eastern ward was mostly identical to the Council's proposed ward, albeit with the boundary running to the west of Grove Crescent. In the south, the Group proposed to combine the existing Croxley Green South ward with the centre of Rickmansworth town, noting that these areas were on the same main road, and also had the Grand Union Canal to link them. The remainder of Croxley Green was placed in a ward with Sarratt and the northern half of Chorleywood. They argued that this placed communities with historical associations together in the same ward.

60 Councillor Sansom proposed a warding arrangement for Croxley Green nearly identical to the Council, save for including Grove Crescent with the north-eastern ward.

61 We also received a submission relating to this area from Croxley Green Parish Council. They stressed the strong sense of community within the village and the geographical separation of the parish from adjoining communities. While they did not propose any specific ward boundaries, they stressed the importance of two three-member wards entirely contained within the parish in order to avoid dividing communities.

62 We consider the arguments supporting two three-member wards for Croxley Green to be highly persuasive. As stated previously, the parish is geographically separate from the remainder of the district and the evidence received indicates a community with strong ties through a number of local groups and organisations. The Conservative Group's proposal would involve splitting the community of Croxley Green to include parts of it with areas with which it shares no community identity. Although the A412 links Rickmansworth with Croxley Green, we consider it does not reflect significant community ties between these two areas.

63 Having decided to divide Croxley Green between wards we visited the area to ensure that the boundaries proposed were strong and easily identifiable. In the south, we noted that the Metropolitan Line presents a stronger boundary than the A412 and the houses on the south side of the Metropolitan Line look across the A412 rather than across the railway line.

64 In the north, upon visiting the area we noted that Grove Crescent looks east towards Durrants ward rather than west. However, including the Grove Crescent area in Durrants ward would lead to poor levels of electoral equality. We explored whether other areas could be moved out of the Durrants ward. However, we considered that no other part of Durrants ward looks towards areas outside the proposed ward. We have therefore decided to adopt the Council's proposals for Croxley Green.

65 The representations received for this area also commented on proposed ward names. The Council proposed that ward names should be prefaced with 'Croxley Green'. However, we consider that this will create unnecessarily long ward names particularly as all electors in this area of the district are residents of Croxley Green. We consider that evidence has been provided to support the name 'Durrants' in the north-east, based on the former Durrants House and Durrants School sites. However, we do not consider that sufficient evidence has been received to support the Council's proposed 'Dickinsons' ward. We therefore propose to name the south and western Croxley Green ward 'Croxleyhall Wood'. This ward name reflects the Croxleyhall Wood, which is situated in this ward. We welcome alternative suggestions for ward names in this area.

66 Having considered the evidence received we have decided to adopt the Council's proposed warding pattern for the Croxley Green area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to modifications to ward names. Our draft recommendations in Croxley Green are for the two three-member wards of Croxleyhall Wood and Durrants. These wards are projected to have 3% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Abbots Langley

67 Abbots Langley parish is located in the north-eastern corner of the district and is geographically distant from the other major settlements in Three Rivers. The parish includes overspill from the communities of Kings Langley to the west, and Woodside and Kingswood to the south-east.

68 The existing wards for this area are the two-member Bedmond & Primrose Hill ward and the three-member Abbots Langley, Langleybury and Leavesden wards. These wards are forecast to have 9% more, 13% fewer, 9% fewer and 12% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

69 The Council proposed three, three-member wards for this area. In the north-east they proposed to include the village of Bedmond in a ward with the centre of Abbots Langley village. To the west the Council proposed to include the settlement of Primrose Hill and the Langleybury area in a ward with the south-west of Abbots Langley village. To the south they proposed to slightly expand the existing Leavesden ward to include the area around Furtherfield and Queens Drive.

70 The Council argued that their proposals for the north-eastern and western wards avoided dividing the existing Abbots Langley ward. The Council also argued that Primrose Hill did not need to be included in the same ward as the Bedmond area as they were already in different parish wards, and they had different postcodes. The Council considered that the ward they proposed for the south of this area was an established ward and only wanted to modify the boundaries in order to improve electoral equality.

71 The Conservative Group proposed a different warding pattern for the area. The Group proposed including the Bedmond and Primrose Hill areas in the same ward as Abbots Road and the area between High Street, Tibbs Hill Road and Popes Road from the Abbots Langley area. The Group also proposed to place the northern and eastern parts of Leavesden with the remainder of the eastern part of Abbots Langley. Their third ward in Abbots Langley included Langleybury with the western part of Abbots Langley village. The Conservative Group did not provide evidence relating to community identity to support these proposals.

72 In this part of the district Councillor Sansom proposed a northern ward for the Abbots Langley area which was similar to the Conservative Group's proposal. However, he proposed to include the area east of Tibbs Hill Road instead of the area around Trowley Rise and Langley Road. In the south-west, he proposed a ward incorporating the existing Langleybury ward less 28 electors which would be moved to Sarratt ward, and the south-western part of Leavesden. His eastern ward included a section of the centre of Abbots Langley and the northern section of Leavesden. Again, no specific community evidence relating to the Abbots Langley area was provided in his submission.

73 We also received a submission relating to this area from Abbots Langley Parish Council. They provided detailed evidence relating to community identities within Abbots Langley, including community groups, sports clubs and churches. They also stressed the importance of ensuring all wards were contained within the parish, and no wards should include any part of Sarratt.

74 We had concerns with all the schemes proposed for the Abbots Langley area. We did not see the merit in including the areas of Bedmond and Primrose Hill in different wards as suggested by the Council. Upon visiting the area we noted that these two areas share a common character and that there was no obvious place to divide the two areas without splitting a community. Similarly, we do not consider that Primrose Hill and Langleybury look sufficiently towards each other – the two settlements are to all intents and purposes on different sides of the village of Abbots Langley.

75 Regarding the Conservative Group's submission, we were concerned that including different parts of Leavesden in different wards would split a community with a common identity. This is especially notable as both areas appear to share community identities and interests with areas outside the district such as Woodside rather than the village of Abbots Langley. We also considered that using the full length of Tibbs Hill Road as a boundary was not appropriate, as when touring the area we observed that it appeared to be a focal point for a community, rather than acting as a barrier.

76 We considered that Councillor Sansom's proposals to include properties on Kindersley Way in a ward with the west of Abbots Langley and with properties east of

St Albans Way in the far east of the parish did not represent existing communities and would not create a coherent ward. Also, Councillor Sansom's proposal to include 28 electors from Abbots Langley parish in a Sarratt ward would create an unviable parish ward in Abbots Langley.

77 Our draft recommendations in Abbots Langley are therefore a combination of the three schemes received, with some amendments to better reflect the statutory criteria. We propose to adopt Councillor Sansom's proposed northern ward as part of our draft recommendations with one small modification – to include Tylersfield in order to further improve electoral equality. This modification ensures that the communities of Bedmond and Primrose Hill remain in the same ward.

78 In the south-east of Abbots Langley, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposed Leavesden ward. We consider that this ward appears to reflect communities in the south-east area and keeps the communities that appear to look outside of the district to the south-east in one ward. We considered whether the area around Furtherfield and Queens Drive should be included in this ward as it is currently in a ward with areas to the north-west. However, on visiting the area we observed that these streets have access to the south and east, towards South Way and Langley Lane, very much towards Langleybury.

79 Our proposed western ward for the Abbots Langley area includes a large central section of Abbots Langley as well as the settlement of Langleybury. In this ward, the north-eastern section has communication links west along Gallows Hill Lane and Hazelwood Lane. This represents the part of Abbots Langley with which the settlement of Langleybury has the most coherent links.

80 The representations received covering this area also commented on proposed ward names. The Council again proposed to preface all ward names in this area with 'Abbots Langley'. We consider that this would create overly long and potentially confusing ward names for electors. We are proposing to adopt the name Bedmond for the northern ward, as suggested by Councillor Sansom, Langleybury for the western ward as this ward shares much of the same area as the existing Langleybury ward, and Leavesden for the south-eastern ward, as suggested by the Council.

81 Our draft recommendations for Abbots Langley are for the three, three-member wards of Bedmond, Langleybury and Leavesden. These wards are forecast to have 1% fewer, 8% fewer and 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018 respectively.

Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt

82 This area comprises the centre of the district – the towns of Rickmansworth and Chorleywood, and the rural village of Sarratt. Chorleywood and Sarratt are parished, however, Rickmansworth is unparished.

83 The existing wards for this area are the single-member Sarratt ward, the two-member wards of Chorleywood East, Penn, Rickmansworth and Rickmansworth West, and the three-member wards of Chorleywood West, Maple Cross & Mill End, and Moor Park & Eastbury. These wards are forecast to have 9% more, 20% more, 12% fewer, 30% more, equal to, 3% more, 4% fewer and 7% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

84 The Council proposed five three-member wards for this area. It proposed to include the sections of Chorleywood parish north of the Metropolitan Line with Sarratt in a three-member Chorleywood East & Sarratt ward. As an alternative to this, it suggested that the sections around Loudwater in the unparished area could also be included in this ward to improve community identity but which in turn would worsen electoral equality. The Council argued that, although Sarratt is a distinct community, it was not sufficiently distinct from the rest of the district to justify deviating from a pattern of three-member wards in Three Rivers. The Council also suggested that the major focus for amenities and services in Sarratt was Rickmansworth. They also argued that children in Sarratt tended to go to schools in Chorleywood.

85 The Council proposed a three-member Chorleywood West & Maple Cross ward, with the settlements of Maple Cross and Heronsgate in a ward with sections of Chorleywood south of the Metropolitan Line and west of the M25. It also proposed a Rickmansworth Penn & Mill End ward incorporating the existing Penn ward, the settlement of Mill End, and a section of Rickmansworth around Arnett Way and Beacon Way. It proposed a Rickmansworth Town ward incorporating the remainder of the existing Rickmansworth West and Rickmansworth wards, excluding the properties south of the Grand Union Canal going east along Moor Lane and south along Harefield Road. It proposed to include these properties in a ward with the settlements of Moor Park and Eastbury.

86 The Conservative Group also proposed five three-member wards covering this area. To the north the Group proposed a three-member ward for Chorleywood and Sarratt that used the A404 as a southern boundary. To ensure reasonable electoral equality, this ward also contained the western part of Croxley Green parish. The Group proposed a ward for Chorleywood using the A404 as a northern boundary, and the M25 as a western boundary. It proposed to include the settlements of Maple Cross and Mill End in a ward with the sections of the existing Penn ward south of Chiltern Drive and Coombe Hill Road. It also proposed a ward incorporating the remainder of the existing Penn and Chorleywood East wards with Rickmansworth West and a small part of the existing Rickmansworth ward around The Drive. As mentioned in paragraph 59, it proposed one ward placing the southern section of Croxley Green with the centre of Rickmansworth. It also proposed a ward covering a nearly identical area to the Council's Moor Park & Eastbury ward.

87 Councillor Sansom's proposal for this area was for five three-member wards and one single-member ward. His single-member Sarratt ward included 28 electors from Abbots Langley parish with Sarratt parish, as detailed in paragraph 72. He proposed a Chorleywood ward almost identical to the existing Chorleywood West ward, albeit incorporating the area south of the A404 and west of the M25. His proposed Rickmansworth North ward incorporated the remainder of Chorleywood parish, the part of the settlement of Loudwater outside Chorleywood parish, and the properties north of Tudor Way, Orchard Way and The Greenway in the existing Penn ward. His proposed Rickmansworth ward incorporated the remainder of the existing Rickmansworth ward. He proposed a Maple Cross & Mill End ward, including the settlements of Maple Cross and Mill End with the remainder of the existing Penn ward. His final ward was a Moor Park & Eastbury ward, which placed Moor Park and Eastbury in a ward with the areas of Watford Rural, described in paragraph 45.

88 We received eight further submissions relating to this area: one from Councillor Barton (Sarratt ward), two from local organisations, and five from members of the public.

89 We received submissions specifically commenting on Sarratt from Sarratt Parish Council, Councillor Barton and one local resident. Sarratt Parish Council argued that a single dedicated councillor was necessary to represent Sarratt's unique interests and priorities within Three Rivers. This argument was also made by Councillor Barton. The local resident argued that the current district councillor was a regular figure at parish council meetings, whereas the county councillor, who also served Chorleywood, was not. As such, the local resident considered this illustrated that a district councillor serving Sarratt and part of Chorleywood would not adequately represent Sarratt.

90 In the Rickmansworth area, we received submissions from two local organisations – the Rickmansworth Chamber of Commerce and Rickmansworth & District Residents' Association – that both proposed alternative warding arrangements for the town. We also received three submissions from members of the public in this area.

91 The warding patterns in each part of Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt have intrinsic knock-on effects to wards in the remainder of the area. Therefore, it is necessary to consider with each proposal, any effects that changes might have on the wider area. Initially, we considered the Council's proposed warding arrangement provided the best balance of the statutory criteria, and so used that as the basis of our warding arrangements in this area.

92 In the Moor Park & Eastbury areas, the Council and Conservative Group proposed very similar warding patterns, with both proposing that Watford Rural parish be used as an eastern boundary. The major difference was that the Council proposed to include the properties around Moor Lane roundabout in this ward, while the Conservative Group proposed to draw the boundary down Moor Lane, thus including those houses in the ward to the north. Having toured the area, we observed that the houses on Moor Lane roundabout face west, towards Harefield Road. As such, we propose to adopt the Conservative proposal for the northern boundary of Moor Park & Eastbury. We are also proposing an amendment to move the western boundary to the east of Harefield Road and Woodcock Hill. These roads only have access within the district north towards Rickmansworth, and to include them with Moor Park & Eastbury would be to create a ward with no clear internal access routes.

93 As discussed in paragraph 62, we did not find the Conservative Group's argument to include part of Croxley Green in a ward with Rickmansworth convincing. We consider the Council's proposal for a Rickmansworth Town ward with the western boundary running west of Pheasants Way and down Field Way to be a better reflection of the statutory criteria. We propose one small amendment to this ward to run the northern boundary to the south of the settlement of Loudwater. Loudwater is currently partly in Chorleywood parish and partly in the unparished Rickmansworth area, but to split this between two wards would divide the community.

94 In the south-west corner of the district we received different warding patterns for the Maple Cross area. The Council proposed that Maple Cross be included in a ward with Chorleywood West. The Conservative Group and Councillor Sansom both proposed that Maple Cross be included in a ward with the Mill End area. Upon touring the area, we observed on the ground that it appears the Maple Cross area does not share any clear community identities and interests with any other part of Three Rivers district. We observed that the Maple Cross area was different in

character to Chorleywood and Rickmansworth. We considered that Maple Cross looks towards Harefield, Denham and The Chalfonts, all outside the district. We consider that including Maple Cross in a ward with Chorleywood West facilitates a stronger pattern of wards across the remainder of this area, and have therefore decided to adopt the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. Consequently, we have also decided to adopt the Council's proposed Penn & Mill End ward as part of our draft recommendations. We consider this ward reflects a coherent urban community that looks towards Rickmansworth.

95 In this part of the district we also received a number of representations concerning the parish of Sarratt. The parish is rural in nature, geographically distinct and has a different identity to the large villages and towns that make up the remainder of Three Rivers.

96 Some of the representations received, including that from Councillor Sansom, proposed a single-member Sarratt ward based solely on the parish. We investigated Councillor Sansom's proposal and were concerned that creating a single-member Sarratt ward would split the community of Langleybury in Abbots Langley (see paragraph 76). We also note that this proposed ward would have 11% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

97 We note the community identity evidence received in support of a single-member Sarratt ward. However, this proposal has a number of significant knock-on effects to neighbouring wards. In the Council's proposed Chorleywood East & Sarratt ward, not including Sarratt parish would result in a two-member ward with 19% more electors per councillor than the district average. To improve electoral equality in this area, properties to the west of Common Road and south of Badgers Walk and Parkfield would need to be included in a Chorleywood West ward. However, this modification would then require the Maple Cross area to be included in the Penn & Mill End ward. In turn this would require some properties in the north-east of the proposed ward be included in the Rickmansworth Town ward. Consequently, this would then require the Batchworth area to be included in a Moor Park & Eastbury ward, along with a section of the centre of Rickmansworth which would need to be transferred to a Chorleywood East ward. These modifications would result in a warding pattern for the entire area that would result with reasonable electoral equality. However, both the resultant Sarratt and Rickmansworth Town wards would have electoral variances over 10% by 2018.

98 We recognise that a three-member Chorleywood East & Sarratt ward would not address the concerns of Sarratt Parish Council. However, in order for a single-member Sarratt ward to be accommodated, the resultant warding pattern would create wards in Chorleywood, Rickmansworth and Moor Park which would not reflect community identity evidence received for these areas and not provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. We consider that including the Sarratt area with Chorleywood East is preferable in terms of reflecting community identities in Three Rivers as a whole than dividing the towns of Chorleywood and Rickmansworth between district wards. We would welcome any submissions for alternative warding arrangements across this area, particularly those supported by community evidence and which have regard to consequential effects in the wider area.

99 The representations regarding this area also commented on ward names. We have decided to adopt the Council's proposed ward names for this area, subject to three amendments. We consider the name 'Rickmansworth Penn & Mill End' to be

somewhat long and confusing. We consider that residents in the area already identify with the names ‘Penn’ and ‘Mill End’, both of which feature in current ward names. As such, we are proposing to rename that ward ‘Penn & Mill End’. We are also proposing to rename the Chorleywood wards ‘Chorleywood North & Sarratt’, and ‘Chorleywood South & Maple Cross’. We consider that the areas covered by the respective wards are more aligned to north and south than east and west, as suggested by the Council.

100 Our draft recommendations for Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt are for the five three-member wards of Chorleywood North & Sarratt, Chorleywood South & Maple Cross, Moor Park & Eastbury, Penn & Mill End and Rickmansworth Town. These wards are projected to have 9% more, 11% more, 4% fewer, 4% fewer and 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Conclusions

101 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2012 and 2018 electorate figures

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2012	2018
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of wards	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,749	1,810
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation
 Three Rivers District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 13 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

102 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

103 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority ward arrangements. However, Three Rivers District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

104 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Abbots Langley parish.

Draft recommendations

Abbots Langley Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Abbots Langley (returning four members), Bedmond (returning five members), Hunton Bridge & Langleybury (returning one member) and Leavesden (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

105 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Chorleywood parish.

Draft recommendations

Chorleywood Parish Council should return 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Chorleywood Cedars (returning two members), Chorleywood North (returning seven members), Chorleywood Quickwood (returning one member) and Chorleywood South (returning seven members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

106 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Croxley Green parish.

Draft recommendations

Croxley Green Parish Council should return 17 parish councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Croxleyhall Wood (returning eight members), Durrants (returning eight members) and Railway (returning one member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

107 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Watford Rural parish.

Draft recommendations

Watford Rural Parish Council should return 14 parish councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Ashridge (returning one member), Carpenders Park (returning four members), Hayling (returning two members), Oxhey Hall (returning two members) and South Oxhey (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

108 There will now be a consultation period of twelve weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 8 July 2013. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

109 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Three Rivers and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

110 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Three Rivers Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk> or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk

111 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Three Rivers District Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

112 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

113 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

114 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Three Rivers District Council in 2014.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Three Rivers

115 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Three Rivers District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Three Rivers District Council.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Three Rivers District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Three Rivers District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bedmond	3	5,286	1,762	1%	5,359	1,786	-1%
2	Carpenders Park	3	5,397	1,799	3%	5,455	1,818	0%
3	Chorleywood North & Sarratt	3	5,834	1,945	11%	5,929	1,976	9%
4	Chorleywood South & Maple Cross	3	5,942	1,981	13%	6,032	2,011	11%
5	Croxleyhall Wood	3	5,138	1,713	-2%	5,267	1,756	-3%
6	Durrants	3	4,948	1,649	-6%	5,218	1,739	-4%
7	Langleybury	3	4,924	1,641	-6%	5,021	1,674	-8%
8	Leavesden	3	4,851	1,617	-8%	5,626	1,875	4%
9	Moor Park & Eastbury	3	5,140	1,713	-2%	5,196	1,732	-4%
10	Oxhey Hall & Hayling	3	5,308	1,769	1%	5,385	1,795	-1%
11	Penn & Mill End	3	5,166	1,722	-2%	5,195	1,732	-4%

Table A1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Three Rivers District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Rickmansworth Town	3	5,296	1,765	1%	5,670	1,890	4%
13	South Oxhey	3	4,992	1,664	-5%	5,222	1,741	-4%
	Totals	39	68,222	–	–	70,574	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,749	–	–	1,810	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward 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.

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

