

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Bracknell Forest

Report to the Electoral Commission

*April 2002*

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Bracknell town, Crowthorne and Sandhurst is inserted inside the back cover of this report.



## WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bracknell Forest.



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Bracknell Forest's electoral arrangements on 17 April 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 27 November 2001, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Bracknell Forest:

- **in 16 of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 16 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 12 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 136-137) are that:

- **Bracknell Forest Borough Council should have 42 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 18 wards, instead of 19 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward (Hanworth) should retain its existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 16 of the proposed 18 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average;**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all 18 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Crowthorne, Warfield and Winkfield;**
- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the town councils of Bracknell and Sandhurst.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 4 June 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Ascot	2	part of Winkfield parish (the proposed Ascot parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
2	Binfield with Warfield	3	the parish of Binfield; part of Warfield parish (the proposed St Michael's parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
3	Bullbrook	2	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Bullbrook parish ward)	Large map
4	Central Sandhurst	2	part of Sandhurst parish (the proposed Central Sandhurst parish ward)	Large map
5	College Town	2	part of Sandhurst parish (the proposed College Town parish ward)	Large map
6	Crown Wood	3	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Crown Wood parish ward); part of Winkfield parish (the proposed Forest Park parish ward)	Large map
7	Crowthorne	2	part of Crowthorne parish (the proposed Crowthorne parish ward)	Large map
8	Great Hollands North	2	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Great Hollands North parish ward)	Large map
9	Great Hollands South	2	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Great Hollands South parish ward)	Large map
10	Hanworth	3	<i>Unchanged.</i> part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Birch Hill and Hanworth parish wards)	Large map
11	Harmans Water	3	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Harmans Water parish ward); part of Winkfield parish (the proposed Martins Heron & Warren parish ward)	Large map
12	Little Sandhurst & Wellington	2	part of Sandhurst parish (the proposed Little Sandhurst parish ward); part of Crowthorne parish (the proposed Crowthorne South parish ward)	Large map
13	Old Bracknell	2	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Old Bracknell parish ward)	Large map
14	Owlsmoor	2	part of Sandhurst parish (the proposed Owlsmoor parish ward)	Large map
15	Priestwood & Garth	3	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Priestwood and Garth parish wards)	Large map
16	Warfield Harvest Ride	3	part of Warfield parish (the proposed Quelm and Whitegrove parish wards)	Large map
17	Wildridings & Central	2	part of Bracknell parish (the proposed Town Centre and Wildridings parish wards)	Large map
18	Winkfield & Cranbourne	2	part of Winkfield parish (the proposed Winkfield & Cranbourne parish ward); part of Warfield parish (the proposed Warfield Park parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3

Notes: 1 The whole of the borough is parished.

2 Map 2, Appendix A and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Bracknell Forest

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 Ascot	2	3,941	1,971	5	3,801	1,901	0
2 Binfield with Warfield	3	5,879	1,960	4	5,891	1,964	3
3 Bullbrook	2	3,842	1,921	2	3,870	1,935	2
4 Central Sandhurst	2	4,035	2,018	7	3,644	1,822	-4
5 College Town	2	3,649	1,825	-3	3,655	1,828	-4
6 Crown Wood	3	5,871	1,957	4	5,976	1,992	5
7 Crowthorne	2	3,757	1,879	0	3,807	1,904	0
8 Great Hollands North	2	3,110	1,555	-17	3,660	1,830	-4
9 Great Hollands South	2	3,985	1,993	6	3,729	1,865	-2
10 Hanworth	3	6,549	2,183	16	6,073	2,024	6
11 Harmans Water	3	5,234	1,745	-7	5,421	1,807	-5
12 Little Sandhurst & Wellington	2	3,830	1,915	2	3,802	1,901	0
13 Old Bracknell	2	3,463	1,732	-8	3,954	1,977	4
14 Owlsmoor	2	3,962	1,981	5	3,860	1,930	1
15 Priestwood & Garth	3	5,589	1,863	-1	5,698	1,899	0
16 Warfield Harvest Ride	3	5,093	1,698	-10	5,689	1,896	0
17 Wildridings & Central	2	3,443	1,722	-8	3,496	1,748	-8
18 Winkfield & Cranbourne	2	3,680	1,840	-2	3,857	1,929	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>78,912</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>79,883</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,879</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,902</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bracknell Forest. We have now reviewed three of the six Berkshire unitary authorities as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004. Our final recommendations reports for Reading, Slough and Wokingham will be published shortly.

2 Bracknell Forest's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1977 (Report no. 196). Since undertaking that review, Bracknell Forest became a unitary authority in 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 17 April 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Bracknell Forest Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, Berkshire Local

Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 13 August 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 27 November 2001 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bracknell Forest*, and ended on 28 January 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The borough of Bracknell Forest comprises the south-east section of the county of Berkshire. It was granted unitary status in 1998. The borough covers an area of some 11,000 hectares and has a population of approximately 110,000. It adjoins the unitary authorities of Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham to the north and west, and the county of Surrey to the south. The borough contains various centres of population including Bracknell, Sandhurst, Crowthorne and North Ascot. The borough has a strong economic base, with many companies involved in high technology industries located in the area. The borough also contains several national institutions including Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, Broadmoor Hospital and the Meteorological Office.

11 The borough is entirely parished, containing six civil parishes. Bracknell town is the largest settlement in the borough, comprising approximately half of the borough's total electorate. Since 1975, there has been an increase in the size of the electorate of 41 per cent, with the Borough Council forecasting a further increase of 1 per cent over the next five years.

12 The electorate of the borough is 78,912 (February 2001). The Council presently has 40 members who are elected from 19 wards, five of which are relatively rural in the north and east of the borough with the remainder being predominantly urban. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, nine are each represented by two councillors and four are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,973 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,997 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 16 of the 19 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and eight wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Warfield ward where the councillor represents 232 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Bracknell Forest*

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ascot	3	8,179	2,726	38	7,886	2,629	32
2 Binfield	2	5,312	2,656	35	5,294	2,647	33
3 Bullbrook	3	5,074	1,691	-14	5,096	1,699	-15
4 Central Sandhurst	2	3,346	1,673	-15	3,079	1,540	-23
5 College Town	2	4,097	2,049	4	3,985	1,993	0
6 Cranbourne	1	1,110	1,110	-44	1,161	1,161	-42
7 Crowthorne	3	4,433	1,478	-25	4,453	1,484	-26
8 Garth	2	2,926	1,463	-26	2,840	1,420	-29
9 Great Hollands North	2	3,499	1,750	-11	4,118	2,059	3
10 Great Hollands South	2	3,596	1,798	-9	3,271	1,636	-18
11 Hanworth	3	6,549	2,183	11	6,073	2,024	1
12 Harmans Water	3	6,295	2,098	6	6,728	2,243	12
13 Little Sandhurst	2	3,154	1,577	-20	3,156	1,578	-21
14 Old Bracknell	3	4,037	1,346	-32	4,520	1,507	-25
15 Owlsmoor	1	4,203	4,203	113	4,095	4,095	105
16 Priestwood	2	2,670	1,335	-32	2,865	1,433	-28
17 St Mary's	1	1,675	1,675	-15	1,721	1,721	-14
18 Warfield	1	6,556	6,556	232	7,261	7,261	264
19 Wildridings	2	2,201	1,101	-44	2,281	1,141	-43
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>78,912</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>79,883</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,973</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,997</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in St Mary's ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Owlsmoor ward were significantly under-represented by 113 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received 11 representations, including borough-wide schemes from Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council Labour Group. It also received representations from Bracknell Constituency Liberal Democrats, four town and parish councils, a local Conservative party, a borough councillor and two local organisations. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bracknell Forest*.

16 The draft recommendations were based on the Labour Group's proposals for the north of the Borough and for Bracknell town, which achieved significant improvement in electoral equality. However, the LGCE moved away from the Labour Group's proposals for the centre of Bracknell town and based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. It also adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Crowthorne and Sandhurst, together with some of its own proposals. It proposed that:

- Bracknell Forest Borough Council should be served by 42 councillors, compared with the current 40, representing 19 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundary;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Bracknell and Sandhurst town councils, and for the parishes of Binfield, Crowthorne, Warfield and Winkfield.

**Draft Recommendation**

Bracknell Forest Borough Council should comprise 42 councillors, serving 19 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 17 of the 19 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2006.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 46 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

### **Bracknell Forest Borough Council**

19 The Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations. However, it reiterated its proposals in the Priestwood and Garth area of the borough, arguing that they would result in the establishment of a coherent ward that would best meet the requirements of local residents. It also put forward alternative proposals for the Whitegrove area of Warfield parish. The Borough Council also put forward a new three-member Binfield with Warfield ward comprising the LGCE's proposed Binfield Popeswood and Binfield with Warfield wards. It stated that its proposals "responded to the deep concerns expressed by local residents". The Borough Council also put forward a number of alternative names for the LGCE's proposed wards.

### **Bracknell Forest Borough Council Labour Group**

20 The Bracknell Forest Borough Council Labour Group ('the Labour Group') substantially endorsed the draft recommendations. In particular, it expressed support for the proposed Priestwood & Garth ward. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposals for the centre of Bracknell, including the establishment of a single-member Bracknell Central ward and a three-member Easthampstead ward. It argued that the central part of Bracknell town shares many local concerns with residents located to the south of Downshire Way in the existing Wildridings ward.

### **The Bracknell Constituency Liberal Democrats**

21 The Bracknell Constituency Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') were "broadly content" with the draft recommendations. In particular, they supported the proposals for the north of the borough. However, they objected to the draft recommendations for the Sandhurst and Crowthorne areas, arguing that the proposals had no regard for the statutory criteria and had been designed to "serve the interests of a number of leading councillors in Sandhurst". The Liberal Democrats favoured alternative arrangements largely based on existing ward boundaries. They also commented on the electoral cycle and parish and town council electoral arrangements in the borough.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

22 Bracknell Town Council broadly supported the draft recommendations for the town. While it expressed a preference for the establishment of a town centre ward, the Town Council accepted the draft recommendations for the central part of the town, subject to a number of minor amendments which it stated residents would find "more acceptable". Crowthorne Parish Council stressed the importance of the proposed Crowthorne South parish ward retaining Crowthorne in its name.

23 The 'northern parishes' (Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield parish councils) made a joint submission strongly objecting to the draft recommendations in their respective areas. They

argued that the proposals failed to recognise traditional and historic communities and were “contrary to both these criteria”. They stressed the importance of retaining coterminosity between borough ward and parish boundaries and supported a council size of 43 members. Each of the three northern parishes made individual submissions at Stage Three. Binfield Parish Council argued that the proposed division of the parish between two borough wards would not reflect community identities and interests, and stated that the proposed Binfield with Warfield ward would contain separate communities with no links “historic or otherwise”. The Parish Council also queried the Borough Council’s five-year electorate projections for the parish. It reiterated its preference to retain the existing ward, subject to increasing its representation to three borough councillors.

24 Warfield Parish Council strongly objected to the draft recommendations, particularly for the more rural part of the parish. It also queried the Borough Council’s electorate projections for the parish and reiterated its Stage One proposals for three borough wards that, taken together, would remain coterminous with the existing parish boundary. Winkfield Parish Council also strongly opposed the draft recommendations. It argued that they would lead to the “fragmentation of the Parish” and had insufficient regard for the statutory criteria. It reiterated its Stage One proposals for warding arrangements that would reflect the existing boundaries of the parish. The Parish Council also put forward amendments to the LGCE’s proposals for the east of Bracknell town in order to facilitate its borough warding proposals for the parish.

## **Other Representations**

25 A further 37 representations were received in response to the draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. Councillor Barnard (Warfield) supported the proposals of Warfield Parish Council. Councillor Glasson (Priestwood) supported the LGCE’s proposals in the Priestwood area, but considered that a central ward in Bracknell town would ensure the effective representation of residents of the town centre. Councillor Fawcett (Priestwood) argued that the division of Binfield between two borough wards would “work against the philosophy of one integrated village”, and put forward alternative warding arrangements for the parish council. A town councillor supported Bracknell Town Council’s proposals. Birch Hill & Hanworth Community Liaison Group supported the LGCE’s proposals in its area while the chairman of a tenants’ association and a local resident supported the establishment of a town centre ward. A further six local residents supported the LGCE’s proposals in the Bracknell town area. A town councillor and two local residents supported the proposals for the Great Hollands area but requested an alteration to the proposed allocation of parish councillors.

26 A petition signed by 18 local residents was received proposing that the Priory Lane area of Bullbrook ward be transferred to the proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward. Another local resident argued that the Ranelagh Drive area of Bracknell town should remain in Harmans Water ward and not be transferred to the proposed Wildridings ward. Two other local residents supported the LGCE’s proposals for the Winkfield area. A further 21 local residents opposed the draft recommendations in the Binfield area. All considered that the draft recommendations had insufficient regard to community identities and interests.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bracknell Forest is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

28 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 within the next five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

29 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.

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

31 Since 1975 there has been a 41 per cent increase in the electorate of Bracknell Forest borough. At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1 per cent from 78,912 to 79,883 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Great Hollands North ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Old Bracknell ward and the more rural Warfield ward. In order to prepare these forecasts the Council, using a county-wide methodology, had estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

32 The LGCE had sought further clarification from the Borough Council with regard to its electorate forecasts in the Winkfield and Great Hollands areas of the borough. The Labour Group had queried the Council’s electorate projections for the Great Hollands area. It considered that the proposed Great Hollands North ward would contain 3,729 electors by 2006, as compared to the Borough Council’s figure of 3,660 and that the proposed Great Hollands South ward would contain 3,660 electors, as compared to the Borough Council’s figure of 3,729. In its draft recommendations, LGCE noted that the Borough Council and the Labour

Group had proposed transferring the same number of electors from Great Hollands North ward to Great Hollands South ward. It noted that neither electorate projection would have a substantive effect on either the proposed warding arrangements or electoral equality in this area and therefore adopted the Borough Council's electorate projections for the Great Hollands area.

33 In respect of the Winkfield area, both Winkfield Parish Council and Councillor Flood (St Mary's) argued that a number of new development sites had not been taken into account by the Borough Council, and that the projected electorate increase in the more rural Cranbourne and St Mary's wards appeared unlikely. However, the Parish Council considered that these reservations would not materially affect the allocation of borough councillors for the Winkfield area and therefore used them as the basis of its warding proposals for the parish. The Borough Council confirmed that its electorate projection had been derived from a county-wide methodology and had, on the advice of the LGCE, been amended to take account of all proposed developments within the parish over the course of the next five years. The LGCE concluded that the Borough Council's electorate projections were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at that time. In particular, it noted that they have formed the basis of not only the Borough Council's proposals, but those of the Labour Group and Winkfield Parish Council.

34 The LGCE noted a minor inconsistency between the figures detailed in the Borough Council's Option A and Option B proposals that were put out to public consultation. For the purposes of consultation it based the electorate projection in this area on the Option B figures. It noted that this has no substantive effect on either the proposed warding arrangements or the total projected electorate for the borough as a whole.

35 At Stage Three the northern parishes of Binfield Warfield and Winkfield disputed the Borough Council's electorate projections in their respective areas. In a joint submission, the parishes argued that Berkshire, and in particular Bracknell, is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. They considered that the Borough Council's projections underestimated potential growth in the north of the borough and considered that electorate projections should take account of growth over a longer timescale than five years. Binfield Parish Council argued that a number of development sites had not been taken into account in the Borough Council's projections. It noted that a number of planning permissions had subsequently been agreed that would result in a net increase of 120 dwellings in the parish. It concluded that, with such an increase, the Borough Council's projection of a decline of 18 electors by 2006 seemed unlikely. Warfield Parish Council argued that the Borough Council's electorate forecasts did not reflect the anticipated growth in electorate over the course of the next five years in Warfield. It argued that establishing wards on "questionable electorate forecasts" while ignoring community identities and interests "does not meet the principles set out in the Commission's Guidelines".

36 In the light of the comments from the northern parishes, we sought further clarification from the Borough Council as to the electorate forecasts for the north of the borough. The Council reiterated its view that its electorate forecasts were based on a county-wide methodology, which had been adjusted to take account of all confirmed new developments. It stated that in a number of cases, developments had not yet been approved and that there was no indication as to the timing of these applications. The Borough Council remained satisfied that its electorate projections remained the most accurate estimate at the time they were produced.

37 Having considered the evidence received at Stage Three and the further comments of the Borough Council we have concluded that the Borough Council's electorate forecasts remain the best estimate that can reasonably be made at this time. We consider that under either projection,

the LGCE's draft recommendations would not be adversely affected in terms of electoral equality. Moreover, while we acknowledge that forecasting electorates is an inexact science, we consider that ten-year or fifteen-year electorate projections, as favoured by the northern parishes, are significantly more difficult to estimate and are therefore more prone to inaccuracy. We remain of the view that five-year electorate projections, which we are required to have regard to by statute, constitute the most effective method of ascertaining accurate electorate forecasts for a given area. We therefore accept that the Borough Council's electorate forecasts represent the best estimates currently available.

## **Council Size**

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

39 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted the Labour Group's proposal for a council of 42 members. While the Borough Council, Warfield and Winkfield parish councils favoured an alternative council size of 43 members, the LGCE recognised that there was a broad consensus in favour of a small increase in council size. However, it noted that a council size of 42 would facilitate the most equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the borough and would therefore secure the greater improvement in borough-wide levels of electoral equality.

40 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the proposed council size of 42. The northern parishes made a joint submission in which they argued that a council size of 43 was the minimum number of councillors necessary to offset the loss of county representation in 1998 and the consequential increase in workload for borough councillors. Furthermore, they argued that, with an increase in the size of electorate of over 40 per cent since 1975, the case for a 43-member council "becomes very strong". In individual submissions, Binfield and Winkfield parish councils reiterated their support for a 43-member council for the reasons outlined above. Binfield Parish Council also noted the range of average number of electors per councillor across the unitary authorities of Berkshire and argued that a council size of 43 would ensure a more "equitable situation" in Binfield.

41 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. As stated in the *Guidance*, we do not necessarily subscribe to the point of view that loss of county councillor representation automatically justifies an increase in the number of members representing the borough. However, we concur that a council size of 42 secures the most equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the borough. We note in particular the support of both the Borough Council and the Labour Group for the proposed council size and are satisfied that it will secure the best balance between the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for a council size of 42 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

42 A number of considerations emerged which assisted the LGCE in preparing its draft recommendations. It recognised Bracknell Forest to be a diverse borough that combines rural areas in the north and east with large urban developments to the west and south and has been subject to significant changes in the size and distribution of its electorate in recent years. The LGCE acknowledged that both the proposals of the Borough Council and the Labour Group would secure much improved levels of electoral equality both now and by 2006. For the

Sandhurst and Crowthorne areas of the borough, it noted a broad degree of consensus in favour of the Borough Council's proposals. The LGCE considered that the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements for this area would provide a satisfactory balance between the statutory criteria and therefore decided to adopt them as part of its draft recommendations.

43 The LGCE recognised that the review process has been somewhat contentious in Bracknell town and the surrounding 'northern parishes'. However, it noted that both the Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals made provision for the transfer of a number of more urban settlements in the existing Ascot ward into the borough wards of Bracknell town. The LGCE recognised the strong opposition to these proposals from the parishes affected and noted that the alternative warding arrangements they put forward had been the subject of a thorough consultation exercise. However, the LGCE concluded that change to the warding structure in this area was necessary in order to secure the effective and convenient representation of more urban communities that abut the parish boundary with Bracknell town, as well as ensuring clear and easily identifiable ward boundaries. The LGCE therefore decided to base its draft recommendations in the Bracknell and surrounding area on the Labour Group's proposals, which it considered would provide a best balance between the statutory criteria. However, to ensure more easily identifiable ward boundaries that better reflect community identities and interests, it moved away from the Labour Group's proposals in some areas, particularly in areas towards the centre of Bracknell town, and proposed utilising a number of alternative warding options put forward by the Borough Council, together with some of its own proposals.

44 At Stage Three the draft recommendations received a broad degree of support from the Borough Council and the Labour Group. However, both reiterated elements of their Stage One proposals. The Labour Group restated its support for a new single-member Bracknell Central ward and three-member Easthampstead ward. The Borough Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for the north of Bracknell town. It also proposed alternative warding arrangements in the Binfield and Warfield areas and put forward a number of alternative ward names. We have noted the broad support among local residents and others for the draft recommendations in Bracknell town and have therefore decided to confirm them as final, subject to a number of minor amendments to both borough and town council warding arrangements to ensure that the proposed electoral arrangements better reflect the statutory criteria.

45 We have noted the broad support at Stage Three for the draft recommendations in the Sandhurst and Crowthorne areas. While we note the opposition of the Liberal Democrats, we consider that the draft recommendations will secure a good balance between the statutory criteria and will command local support. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to adopting an alternative ward name put forward by the Borough Council at Stage Three.

46 We recognise that the draft recommendations for the Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield areas have generated local opposition and note that each of the three northern parishes reiterated their Stage One proposals to establish borough wards that would not straddle existing parish boundaries. We note that the draft recommendations for the Binfield area have aroused particular opposition from local residents and others and have carefully considered the Borough Council's alternative proposals for this area. We endorse the view set out in the draft recommendations that ward boundaries in this area need to be rationalised for the purposes of borough warding. Moreover, we also agree that urban areas that abut the eastern boundary with Bracknell town would be more effectively represented with adjoining urban areas and consider that the proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward will ensure the most effective representation of

urban communities in the south of Warfield parish. However, we have been persuaded that the Borough Council's alternative proposals in the Binfield and rural Warfield areas will secure a better balance between the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We also consider that the Council's proposals for this area would carry greater local support than the draft recommendations.

47 Accordingly, we have decided to depart from the draft recommendations for the Binfield and rural Warfield area and are basing our final recommendations on the Borough Council's Stage Three proposals. We consider that our revised proposals would achieve the best balance between the statutory criteria. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

#### **Northern Parishes**

- (a) Ascot, Cranbourne and St Mary's wards;
- (b) Binfield and Warfield wards;

#### **Bracknell town**

- (c) Bullbrook, Garth and Priestwood wards;
- (d) Old Bracknell and Wildridings wards;
- (e) Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South wards;
- (f) Hanworth and Harmans Water wards;

#### **Sandhurst and Crowthorne**

- (g) Central Sandhurst, College Town and Owlsmoor wards;
- (h) Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst wards.

48 Details of our final 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

### **Ascot, Cranbourne and St Mary's wards**

49 The existing wards of Ascot, Cranbourne and St Mary's are situated in the north-east of the borough, and together form the parish of Winkfield. Ascot ward contains North Ascot town and is a three-member ward while the more rural Cranbourne and St Mary's wards are each served by a single councillor. Under existing arrangements, Ascot ward has 38 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average and is forecast to contain 32 per cent more than the average by 2006. Cranbourne and St Mary's wards have 44 per cent fewer and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (42 per cent fewer and 14 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

50 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE based its proposals for this area on those of the Labour Group. It proposed that the existing Cranbourne and St Mary's wards should be combined with that part of the existing Warfield ward broadly to the east of Ascot Road and Malt Hill (and including a number of properties on the west side of these roads) in a new two-member Winkfield & Cranbourne ward. It also proposed a revised two-member Ascot ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the east of New Forest Ride and Bog Lane. As detailed later, the LGCE proposed that more recent urban developments in the west of the existing Ascot ward be transferred to the borough wards of Bracknell town.

51 The LGCE concluded that to ensure effective and convenient local government, as well as secure the best balance between the statutory criteria, that the urban developments in the west of Winkfield parish should be incorporated into the borough wards of Bracknell town. It considered that the Labour Group's proposals would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria, as well as utilising clear and well-defined ward boundaries. It was persuaded that they reflect an appropriate balance between the Borough Council's proposals and the views expressed by Winkfield Parish Council and others at Stage One. In particular, the LGCE considered that the Labour Group's proposals would not excessively divide the parish of Winkfield between individual borough wards and would facilitate the most effective and convenient representation of both urban and rural communities in the Winkfield area.

52 The LGCE was not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals for this area would appropriately reflect local community identities and interests. In particular, it considered that the Borough Council's proposed single-member Ascot & the Warren ward comprising Chalvey Down, Warren and the north part of Forest Park would divide the Forest Park community and combine disparate areas that are separated from each other by a number of main roads. It also considered that the proposed ward would utilise an arbitrary boundary and would divide the communities of Martins Heron and the Warren. In respect of the Borough Council's proposed ward that would comprise the rural Warfield, Cranbourne and St Mary's areas of the borough, the LGCE considered that it would encompass a relatively large geographical area and have insufficient regard for the statutory criteria. The LGCE generally concurred with the views of Winkfield Parish Council that the Borough Council's proposals would result in the excessive division of Winkfield parish between borough wards.

53 The LGCE acknowledged that Winkfield Parish Council had conducted an extremely thorough consultation exercise with local residents of the parish and recognised that a substantial majority of respondents opposed the creation of borough wards that breached the parish boundary with Bracknell town. At Stage One, the Parish Council had put forward its own warding arrangements for the Winkfield area. It proposed a new single-member St Mary's & St Peter's ward that would comprise that area of the parish broadly to the north of Forest Road, and a new three-member Priors ward comprising that part of the parish to the north of the London to Reading railway line. It proposed that the remainder of the parish to the south of the railway line should form a new two-member Swinley Forest ward. Councillor Flood (St Mary's) proposed a further division of the Parish Council's proposed Priors ward into a new two-member Winkfield East ward, and a new single-member Winkfield West ward.

54 However, the LGCE was not persuaded that the proposals of Winkfield Parish Council and those of Councillor Flood would secure the best balance between the statutory criteria. It considered that the communities of Martins Heron, the Warren and Forest Park utilise joint amenities and facilities with adjoining communities in the east of Bracknell town and noted, in particular, that Forest Park shares a number of communication and transport links with the Crown Wood area of Bracknell town. While accepting that such links are less clearly defined in the Martins Heron area, the LGCE concluded that this community shares even weaker communication links with North Ascot and other communities in the Parish Council's proposed Priors ward.

55 At Stage Three the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for this area. The Liberal Democrats noted that the draft recommendations for this area had been based on the proposals of the Labour Group and considered them "much more acceptable" than the Stage One proposals of the Borough Council.

56 In a joint submission, the ‘northern parishes’ (Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield parish councils) strongly opposed the draft recommendations. They stated that borough ward boundaries should remain coterminous with existing parish boundaries and argued that the draft recommendations would cause difficulties in raising interest in local issues. The parishes concluded that the draft recommendations had insufficient regard for parish identities and would not secure effective and convenient local government. As detailed earlier, the parishes also reiterated their support for a council size of 43 members and queried the Borough Council’s electorate forecasts for the north of the borough.

57 In a further submission, Winkfield Parish Council considered that there had been insufficient local consultation on the Labour Group’s Stage One warding arrangements. It argued that the borough had a long history of active and independent parish and town councils, “which have worked to preserve and enhance local communities” and argued that the draft recommendations placed too great an emphasis on electoral equality at the expense of both the expressed wishes of the local community and the need to secure effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, it argued that such an approach had not always been adopted in the other unitary authorities of Berkshire and expressed concern that new parliamentary constituency boundaries, which would be based on the LGCE’s proposed wards, would further erode community identities and interests. Winkfield Parish Council therefore reiterated its Stage One warding proposals and also put forward alternative warding arrangements for the east of Bracknell town (which are detailed below) in order to facilitate its proposals for the parish. Winkfield Parish Council argued that its proposals respected the need to secure equality of representation while having regard to the wishes of local communities. It argued that its proposals, taken together with those of Binfield and Warfield parish councils, provided a “comprehensive and community backed scheme” for the borough.

58 A resident of Harmans Water broadly supported the draft recommendations. However, he considered that the links between Harmans Water and the Martins Heron area of Winkfield parish were less clearly defined than they initially appear and stated that it can take “five or ten minutes” to drive from one area to the other. A further two residents of Harmans Water supported the proposals to incorporate the Martins Heron and Warren area in its proposed Harmans Water ward. A resident of North Ascot supported the draft recommendations. He considered that the Martins Heron and Warren areas of the parish have little in common with the North Ascot area, and argued that urban developments that abut the eastern boundary with Bracknell town would benefit in being represented with adjoining urban communities. Another member of the public supported the draft recommendations for the Winkfield area. He stated that the grouping of the “greater Bracknell area” was necessary as adjoining urban areas constituted the “eastern extension” of Bracknell town and have mutual community interests. He also put forward the alternative name of Forest Hamlets for the proposed Winkfield & Cranbourne ward, noting that the proposed ward comprises parts of two parishes and therefore required a “neutral name”.

59 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations for this area have proved contentious. However, we note that the Borough Council has accepted the draft recommendations for an area in which it originally put forward alternative warding arrangements. We also note the broad support of both the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats. We have not been persuaded that the alternative ward name of Forest Hamlets for the proposed Winkfield & Cranbourne ward, put forward by a member of the public at Stage Three, would accurately reflect community identities and have therefore not been persuaded to adopt it as part of our final recommendations.

60 We have given careful consideration to the proposals put forward by Winkfield Parish Council at Stage Three. We recognise that its proposed wards would secure significant improvement in electoral equality and would have a significant degree of local support. However, we concur with the draft recommendations that the Martins Heron, Warren and Forest Park areas of the parish would be more effectively represented with adjoining urban communities in the east of Bracknell town. We consider that the Forest Park area in particular shares clear and convenient communication links with the Crown Wood area of Bracknell town. While we accept that such links are less clearly defined between Martins Heron and Harmans Water, we consider its links are weaker with the North Ascot area, which constitutes the only other significant urban area of Winkfield parish. We also consider that the proposals of Winkfield Parish Council will divide the Martins Heron and Warren area between borough wards. Whilst these areas are separated from each other by the London to Reading railway line, we consider that they share strong community identities and note that they share an active residents' association. On the balance of evidence received at Stage Three, we have not been persuaded to adopt the proposals of Winkfield Parish Council as part of our final recommendations.

61 We note that Winkfield Parish Council raised the issue of the parliamentary constituency boundary in this area. Although the creation of cross-parish borough wards would breach the existing constituency boundary, this is not an issue that we can have regard to as part of this review. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England is in the process of conducting its fifth review of parliamentary constituency boundaries and the borough ward boundaries that we recommend will form the basis of the Boundary Commission's recommended parliamentary boundaries.

62 We have therefore concluded that the draft recommendations for these wards would secure the best balance obtainable between the statutory criteria and will ensure the most effective representation of the constituent communities of Winkfield parish. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final. We consider that our final recommendations will reflect community identities and interests and note the support of both the Borough Council and the Labour Group for the draft recommendations. We would emphasise that our proposed borough warding arrangements in no way indicate a view as to any future amendments to existing parish boundaries. It is the responsibility of the Borough Council to conduct parish reviews, and no changes to parish boundaries can be made without local consultation. Under our final recommendations, Winkfield & Cranbourne and Ascot wards would have 2 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more and equal to the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2, and on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

## **Binfield and Warfield wards**

63 The existing wards of Binfield and Warfield are situated in the north of the borough, and abut the northern boundary of Bracknell town. Binfield ward is coterminous with Binfield parish and is a two-member ward. Warfield ward is coterminous with Warfield parish and is a single-member ward. Over the past two decades, there has been substantial residential development in Warfield ward, particularly in the area that adjoins the northern boundary of Bracknell town. Under existing arrangements, Binfield and Warfield wards have 35 per cent more and 232 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (33 per cent more and 264 per cent more than the average by 2006).

64 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE based its proposals on those of the Labour Group. It proposed a new two-member Binfield Popeswood ward that would comprise more recent developments in the south of Binfield parish and proposed that the more rural part of the existing Binfield ward to the north of Forest Road be combined with that part of the existing Warfield ward to the north of Harvest Ride and west of Ascot Road and Malt Hill in a new single-member Binfield with Warfield ward. The LGCE concluded that its proposals would secure the most effective and convenient representation of this area, while ensuring much improved electoral equality. It considered that the proposed Binfield Popeswood ward would ensure the effective and convenient representation of more recent developments in the south of the parish and that the proposed Binfield with Warfield ward would more effectively represent the interests of more established rural communities in the north of Binfield and Warfield.

65 The draft recommendations proposed a new three-member Warfield Harvest Ride ward comprising the remainder of the existing Warfield ward, broadly to the south of Harvest Ride and containing the more urban Whitegrove and Quelm Park areas. The LGCE considered that the proposed ward would reflect the identities and interests of local communities while ensuring that more recent developments which adjoin the northern boundary of Bracknell town are effectively represented at borough level. The LGCE concluded that its proposals in the Warfield area would secure an appropriate balance between the proposals of the Borough Council and the views expressed by local interested parties at Stage One, while providing excellent levels of electoral equality. It noted in particular that its proposed wards would not breach the parish boundary with Bracknell town in either the Binfield or Warfield areas.

66 The LGCE was not persuaded by the Borough Council's Stage One proposals for this area. In particular, it considered the Borough Council's proposed Whitegrove ward, which would comprise a majority of the Whitegrove development, would utilise an insufficiently clear ward boundary. Furthermore, it was not persuaded by the Borough Council's proposals to transfer that part of the Whitegrove area, broadly to the south and west of Harvest Ride and Jig's Lane South, to a revised three-member Bullbrook ward, or that the Quelm Park area be incorporated in a revised two-member Garth ward. The LGCE considered that the Borough Council's proposed wards would utilise insufficiently clear ward boundaries, particularly in the south Warfield and north Bracknell areas and would result in the excessive warding of Warfield parish. The LGCE considered that the parish boundary between Warfield and Bracknell would provide a sufficiently clear feature on which to base borough ward boundaries and that the more urban areas of Warfield were of sufficient size to sustain a separate borough ward.

67 The LGCE acknowledged that the Borough Council's proposal to retain the existing Binfield ward and increase its representation to three councillors had a broad degree of local support, including that of Binfield Parish Council. However, it argued that, in formulating its draft recommendations, a borough-wide approach was necessary and that it must consider the impact on adjacent areas of retaining the existing ward. The LGCE was not persuaded that division of the parish between more than one borough ward would necessarily hinder the effective and convenient representation of its constituent communities. Furthermore, it argued that Binfield comprises a number of discrete communities that warrant separate representation on the Borough Council.

68 The LGCE recognised that Warfield Parish Council had conducted a thorough consultation exercise among local residents and that a substantial majority of respondents were opposed to the creation of borough wards that would straddle existing parish boundaries. At Stage One, the Parish Council had proposed a new single-member Warfield St Michael's ward that would reflect the rural area of the parish, but would also include the Bedfordshire Down area of the

more urban Whitegrove development. It also proposed a new single-member Lark's Hill ward reflecting that part of existing ward to the south of Harvest Ride, and up to and including the rear of properties on the east side of Top Common. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Warfield ward containing the majority of the Whitegrove area form a new two-member Warfield Whitegrove ward. The LGCE accepted that the Parish Council's proposals had some merit, in that they would secure significant improvement in the current high levels of electoral inequality in the existing Warfield ward. However, it considered that, in attempting to retain borough wards that are coterminous with the existing parish boundary, the Parish Council's proposals would not sufficiently address the need to ensure clear and distinct ward boundaries. In particular, it considered that the proposed two-member Whitegrove ward would separate the Bedfordshire Down and Top Common areas from the remainder of the Whitegrove area. It concluded that the Parish Council's proposals would not secure the best balance between the statutory criteria.

69 At Stage Three, the Borough Council put forward alternative warding arrangements for this area. It proposed a new three-member Binfield with Warfield ward that would comprise the LGCE's proposed two-member Binfield Popeswood ward and single-member Binfield with Warfield ward. The Borough Council argued that the draft recommendations did not pay sufficient regard to community identities in the Binfield area and stated that its proposals responded to both the "deep concerns expressed by local residents" and the views of Binfield Parish Council. The Borough Council reiterated its views on the Quelm Park area, and proposed combining it in a borough ward with the Garth area of Bracknell town. It proposed that the remainder of the Whitegrove development, up to and including Top Common in the west, form a new two-member Whitegrove ward. The Borough Council argued that its proposals would "best meet the requirements of residents" and stated that there are "clear and strong affinities" between the Garth and Quelm areas. The Council argued that the proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward would combine areas that share few identities and interests.

70 The Labour Group fully supported the draft recommendations for this area. The Liberal Democrats noted that the draft recommendations for this area had been based on the proposals of the Labour Group and considered them "much more acceptable" than the Stage One proposals of the Borough Council.

71 In a joint submission, the 'northern parishes' (Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield parish councils) strongly opposed the draft recommendations. They stated that borough ward boundaries should remain coterminous with existing parish boundaries and argued that the draft recommendations would cause difficulties in raising interest in local issues. The parishes concluded that the draft recommendations had insufficient regard for parish identities and would not secure effective and convenient local government. As discussed earlier, the parishes also reiterated their support for a council size of 43 members and queried the Borough Council's electorate forecasts for the north of the borough.

72 Warfield Parish Council also made an individual submission at Stage Three. The Parish Council argued that the draft recommendations would not ensure effective and convenient local government. It argued that the review process placed too great an emphasis on electoral equality at the expense of community identities and interests. It considered that the draft recommendations would result in a conflict of interests and make it "extremely difficult" for a borough councillor representing a number of parished areas to act impartially and comply with the Borough Council's *Code of Conduct*. The Parish Council argued that the proposed Binfield with Warfield ward and Winkfield & Cranbourne ward would combine disparate rural areas with "little or nothing in common" and reiterated its Stage One proposals, noting that they

would ensure good electoral equality while not breaching the boundary with adjoining parished areas.

73 Binfield Parish Council reiterated its support for retaining the existing Binfield ward and increasing its representation to three borough councillors. It argued that the boundary between the proposed Binfield Popeswood and Binfield with Warfield wards would divide the village of Binfield and have a detrimental effect on community identities and interests. It argued that the proposed Binfield with Warfield ward would combine diverse areas with few shared identities and that it would prove difficult to raise interest in issues of local concern with residents in Warfield. It considered that the proposed warding of the parish would result in increased competition for resources and would therefore have a particularly detrimental effect on the more rural part of the parish. As stated earlier, the Parish Council raised the issue of the Borough Council's electorate forecasts for the parish and considered that it had under-estimated the likely growth in electorate over the course of the next five years.

74 Councillor Barnard (Warfield) fully supported the proposals of Warfield Parish Council and stated that they have regard for community identities and interests. He considered that a warding solution based on existing parish boundaries would ensure that councillors are able to accurately and effectively represent local residents. Councillor Fawcett (Priestwood) argued that the draft recommendations would "work against the philosophy of one integrated village" in the Binfield area. He argued that if the parish is to have wards, then it should be to avoid "the preponderance of representatives for one area" at the expense of another and put forward alternative parish warding arrangements that are discussed below.

75 A local resident supported the draft recommendations. She stated that Binfield had been "traditionally" divided into north and south and that the proposed wards recognised existing communities and their problems. A further 21 local residents of Binfield strongly opposed the draft recommendations in the area. All considered that the LGCE's proposed wards had insufficient regard for community identities and interests and would not secure the effective representation of local communities on the Borough Council.

76 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise the strong opposition to the draft recommendations for this area. We have consequently given particular consideration to the alternative warding arrangements put forward at Stage Three by the Borough Council, and Binfield and Warfield parish councils. We have noted the particularly widespread opposition to the proposals to divide Binfield between more than one borough ward. We acknowledge that the proposals of Binfield and Warfield parish councils will secure good electoral equality while establishing borough wards that do not breach existing parish boundaries. However, we consider that the entirety of the more urban south of the existing Warfield ward warrants separate representation on the Borough Council and concur with the draft recommendations that the proposals of Warfield Parish Council will divide some areas on the edge of the Whitegrove area from the majority of its proposed Whitegrove ward. In formulating our final recommendations, we must adopt a borough-wide approach and cannot necessarily consider a single ward or parished area in isolation.

77 While we accept that retaining the existing Binfield ward with three councillors would secure good electoral equality, we have not been persuaded that combining part or all of Binfield parish with adjoining parished areas would necessarily hinder the achievement of effective and convenient local government. However, we recognise that the Borough Council's proposed Binfield with Warfield ward would provide a good balance between the statutory criteria and consider that this proposal would command greater local support than the draft

recommendations. While acknowledging that the arguments are finely balanced, we have decided to move away from the draft recommendations in the Binfield and north Warfield areas and propose adopting the Borough Council's proposed three-member Binfield with Warfield ward as part of our final recommendations. Subject to this, we have decided to confirm the remainder of the draft recommendations for this area as final.

78 We would emphasise that our proposed borough warding arrangements in no way indicate a view as to any future amendments to existing parish boundaries. It is the responsibility of the Borough Council to conduct parish reviews, and no changes to parish boundaries can be made without local consultation. Under our final recommendations Binfield with Warfield and Warfield Harvest Ride wards would have 4 per cent more and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2, Map A2 in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bullbrook, Garth and Priestwood wards**

79 The existing wards of Bullbrook, Garth and Priestwood are situated in the north of Bracknell, a town of some 37,000 electors that constitutes the largest settlement in the borough. Garth and Priestwood wards are two of the original new-town neighbourhoods and are each represented by two councillors. Bullbrook ward is situated in the north-east of the town and is a three-member ward. Under existing arrangements, Bullbrook, Garth and Priestwood wards have 14 per cent, 26 per cent and 32 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (15 per cent, 29 per cent and 28 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

80 The LGCE based its draft recommendations on the proposals of the Labour Group. It proposed a revised three-member Priestwood & Garth ward, comprising the existing Priestwood and Garth wards to the north of Skimped Hill Lane. It proposed a revised two-member Bullbrook ward with the transfer of the Calfridus Way area to a revised three-member Harmans Water ward. As detailed below, it proposed that the area broadly to the west of Larges Lane be transferred to a new two-member Wildridings ward.

81 The LGCE considered that its proposals would secure the most effective and convenient representation of this area, while providing much improved electoral equality. It noted that its proposals would unite the established new-town neighbourhoods of Priestwood and Garth in the same borough ward and considered that these areas, which are the earliest neighbourhoods of Bracknell new town, have shared identities and interests and would make an appropriate alliance for the purposes of borough warding. It also noted that the proposed ward had the support of Bracknell Town Council. The LGCE considered that its proposed wards would reflect the identities and interests of the Bullbrook, Priestwood and Garth areas, while utilising distinct and clearly defined ward boundaries. Furthermore, the LGCE noted that such a warding pattern would avoid the excessive warding of communities in the Warfield and Binfield areas and would not involve the establishment of borough wards that straddle the boundary with Bracknell town, which was a particular concern of Binfield and Warfield parish councils. The LGCE concluded that its proposed warding arrangements for this area would secure an appropriate balance between the proposals of the Borough Council and the parishes affected, while also providing excellent levels of electoral equality.

82 The LGCE was not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals would either utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries or secure effective and convenient local government in this area. It noted, in particular, that the Borough Council's proposed Priestwood

ward would unite entire roads within its boundaries. While not opposed to this approach, the LGCE emphasised that main roads often provide a clear demarcation, as well as a focus of established communities, and concluded that the Borough Council's proposals would result in arbitrary ward boundaries in this area. As stated earlier, the LGCE concluded that the parish boundary between Bracknell town and the parishes of Binfield and Warfield provides a clear and distinct feature on which to base borough ward boundaries. It considered that the Borough Council's proposals to combine the Quelm Park area in its proposed two-member Garth ward and the south-west section of the Whitegrove area in its proposed three-member Bullbrook ward would result in the excessive fragmentation of communities in the Warfield area. The LGCE concluded that the Whitegrove and Quelm Park areas of the parish are of sufficient size to warrant separate representation at borough level.

83 At Stage Three the Borough Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for the Priestwood and Garth areas of the town. It proposed a revised two-member Priestwood ward that would comprise the existing ward and that part of Garth ward up to the rear of properties on the south of Shepherds Lane, and a number of properties on the east side of the B3018 Binfield Road. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Garth ward be combined with that part of the existing Warfield ward to the west of Gough's Lane and south of Harvest Ride, and that part of Bullbrook ward to the north of the junction between Priory Lane and Warfield Road in a new two-member ward. The Borough Council argued that its proposals would "best meet the requirements of local residents". It argued that its proposed Priestwood ward would combine areas with shared urban characteristics and would result in a "coherent ward". The Borough Council stated that the constituent communities of its proposed Garth with Quelm ward shared "strong affinities" and were all served by Warfield Road. As stated above, it argued that the LGCE's proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward combined areas that do not share community identities or interests and put forward alternative proposals for this part of Warfield parish. The Borough Council broadly supported the LGCE's proposed two-member Bullbrook ward.

84 The Labour Group fully supported the draft recommendations for this area. In particular, it argued that combining part of the existing Garth ward with the Quelm area of the existing Warfield ward would have insufficient regard for community identities and would divide the Garth area between borough wards. It also considered that such a ward pattern would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality by 2006, when compared to the draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrats noted that the draft recommendations for this area had been based on the proposals of the Labour Group and considered them "much more acceptable" than the Stage One proposals of the Borough Council. Bracknell Town Council also supported the draft recommendations for this area.

85 As stated earlier, Warfield Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations in its area, although it stated that "we clearly support the retention of the existing boundary between Warfield parish and Bracknell town". Councillor Glasson (Priestwood) stated that the LGCE's proposed Priestwood & Garth ward would be "universally well received". He argued that residents of the Priestwood and Garth areas of the town consider themselves a single community and that this is recognised in the draft recommendations. A petition signed by 18 local residents opposed the draft recommendation in the north of the proposed Bullbrook ward. They argued that residents in the "triangle" of Priory Lane and Warfield Road share few historical or geographical ties with either the Bullbrook or Garth areas and shared community identities and interests with the Shortland Oaks area of Warfield parish. They proposed that their area be incorporated in the proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward and stated that this would have little impact on electoral equality. A local resident supported the LGCE's proposed two-member Bullbrook ward, stating that the proposed ward would be "more compact and

preserve the essential Bullbrook community”. Another local resident supported the LGCE’s proposed Priestwood & Garth ward, arguing that its constituent communities have shared identities and utilise joint amenities and facilities.

86 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations have met with some local opposition. We have considered the Borough Council’s alternative warding arrangements in the Priestwood and Garth areas and recognise they would secure good levels of electoral equality. However, we are not persuaded that combining the Quelm area of Warfield parish with the Garth area of Bracknell town would secure the best balance between the statutory criteria. We consider that the Quelm area identifies with the Whitegrove area to its east and that these two areas make an appropriate alliance for the purposes of borough warding. We also consider that the Borough Council’s proposed two-member Priestwood ward would utilise an arbitrary boundary and divide the community of Garth between two borough wards. We concur with the draft recommendations that the parish boundary between Warfield and Bracknell town forms a strong feature on which to base borough ward boundaries and have therefore not been persuaded to adopt the Borough Council’s alternative proposals for this area as part of our final recommendations.

87 We note the views of local residents in the Priory Lane and Warfield Road area of the proposed Bullbrook ward. However, by transferring this area to the proposed Warfield Harvest Ride ward, we would be required to create a separate town council ward for this area. While we acknowledge that the far northern boundary of the proposed Bullbrook ward has an irregular appearance, we are not persuaded that there are sufficient electors in this area to ensure a viable town council ward. We consider that it would be more appropriate for this issue to be addressed as part of a future parish review.

88 We have noted the support of the Labour Group, as well as borough councillors and a number of local residents for the draft recommendations in this area. On the balance of evidence received, we consider that the proposed Bullbrook and Priestwood & Garth wards would secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria and have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final. Under our final recommendations, Priestwood & Garth and Bullbrook wards would have 1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to and 2 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Old Bracknell and Wildridings wards**

89 The existing wards of Old Bracknell and Wildridings are situated towards the centre of Bracknell town. Old Bracknell ward is based on the pre-new town settlement of Bracknell and is currently represented by three councillors. Wildridings ward is based on the new-town neighbourhood of the same name and is a two-member ward. Under existing arrangements, Old Bracknell and Wildridings wards have 32 per cent fewer and 44 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (25 per cent fewer and 43 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

90 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE based its proposals for these wards on those of the Borough Council. It proposed that part of the existing Old Bracknell ward to the south and east of Crowthorne Road and up to the rear of properties on the north side of Rectory Lane and to the rear of properties on the west side of South Lynn Crescent be transferred to a revised two-member Wildridings ward. It proposed that the revised Wildridings ward also include the commercial centre of Bracknell town that currently lies in the existing Bullbrook, Priestwood

and Garth wards. It also proposed that Wildridings ward contain that part of Harmans Water ward broadly to the west of Ranelagh Drive and north of Broad Lane. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Old Bracknell ward form a revised two-member Old Bracknell ward. The LGCE considered that its proposed wards would utilise clearly defined boundaries while having regard for community identities and concluded that they would secure a good balance between the statutory criteria. In particular, the LGCE noted that its proposed Wildridings ward would not divide communities and would unite the central part of Bracknell town within the same borough ward.

91 The LGCE was not persuaded to adopt the Labour Group's proposals for this area. At Stage One, the Labour Group proposed combining that part of the existing Old Bracknell ward broadly to the south of Bill Hill and to the rear of properties on the south side of Beech Glen (and less those roads to the north of the sports centre that exit onto Bagshot Road) with that part of Wildridings ward broadly to the south of Wildridings Road and Kyle Close in a new three-member Easthampstead & Wildridings ward. It proposed a new single-member Bracknell Central ward, comprising the remainder of the existing Old Bracknell and Wildridings wards, that part of Harmans Water ward broadly to the north of Broad Lane and including a number of roads that access onto the east side of the A322 Bagshot Road, that part of Bullbrook ward to the west of Larges Lane and that part of Garth ward to the south and west of Sandy Lane and Warfield Road. The LGCE noted the Labour Group's assertion that its proposed Bracknell Central ward would unite central communities that are subject to local issues different from those faced by the established neighbourhoods of the town. It also recognised the support of Bracknell Town Council for the establishment of a town centre ward. However, it concluded that the proposed ward would divide communities in the north of Wildridings and would not utilise a sufficiently strong and well-defined ward boundary.

92 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. The Labour Group reiterated its Stage One preference for the establishment of a single-member Bracknell Central ward and a new three-member Easthampstead ward that would comprise a majority of the existing Wildridings and Old Bracknell wards. While acknowledging that the southern boundary of its proposed Central ward is "less distinct than those in the north", it argued that the proposed ward would be clearly understood by local residents. The Labour Group stated that the constituent communities of its proposed Bracknell Central ward face similar local issues including traffic, noise pollution and commercial development. It argued that these issues are a unifying factor and that its proposed ward would best reflect the statutory criteria.

93 Bracknell Town Council accepted the draft recommendations for this area. However, it expressed disappointment that the draft recommendations had not proposed a separate single-member 'town centre' borough ward and put forward two minor amendments to the proposed warding arrangements. It proposed that the whole of Larges Lane be utilised as the ward boundary between the proposed Wildridings and Bullbrook wards, and that the boundary between the proposed Old Bracknell and Wildridings ward be amended to follow the middle of Crowthorne Road, south of the junction with Rectory Lane. The Town Council argued that its proposed amendments would have little effect on electoral equality and would be "more acceptable" to local residents.

94 Councillor Glasson (Priestwood) expressed a preference for the establishment of a single-member Bracknell Central ward and a three-member Easthampstead ward, as proposed by the Labour Group. He stated that many residents in the Old Bracknell and Wildridings areas regarded themselves as being residents of Easthampstead, and that they would be familiar with

the proposed ward as the two areas had been combined in a single county division prior to the abolition of Berkshire County Council. A Bracknell town councillor concurred with the views of Bracknell Town Council and supported its proposed amendments. The Chairman of Ferriby Court Residents' Association argued that residents of the commercial centre of Bracknell town had "no affinity" with the Wildridings area and that the London to Reading railway line acted as a "natural barrier" between the two areas. However, he supported the Labour Group's proposals for the centre of Bracknell town, stating that residents of this area are not effectively represented under the existing ward configuration.

95 We received three further submissions in respect of this area. Two local residents supported the establishment of a town centre ward. One argued that there were sufficient anticipated brown-field sites in the town centre to justify a town centre ward. Another considered that the area to the north of Broad Lane that currently lies in the existing Harmans Water ward identifies with the centre of Bracknell rather than the Harmans Water neighbourhood. A further local resident argued that the Ranelagh Drive area to the north of Broad Lane had few links with the centre of Bracknell town. He stated that the areas have different concerns and argued that this area should remain warded with the Harmans Water area.

96 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations for this area have proved somewhat contentious. We acknowledge that there is strong local support for the establishment of a new Bracknell Central ward to represent new and growing communities located towards the centre of Bracknell town. However, we have not been persuaded that there are sufficient electors, both now and in 2006, to justify the establishment of a Bracknell Central ward without encroaching on the established neighbourhood communities that surround the centre of Bracknell town. We concur with the views of a local resident that Ranelagh Drive and areas to its east should remain warded with the Harmans water area of the town in order to reflect community identities and interests. We concur with the draft recommendations that the Labour Group's proposed Bracknell Central ward would utilise arbitrary ward boundaries and divide communities in the Wildridings area, to the south of Downshire Way. We note that under the existing arrangements, the town centre is divided between several of the existing wards. Under the draft recommendations, the town centre would be grouped together in the same borough ward, which we consider provides a better balance between the statutory criteria than the current arrangements.

97 We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Wildridings and Old Bracknell wards as final, subject to several minor modifications. We consider that the minor amendments put forward by Bracknell Town Council at Stage Three have merit, in that they would ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries that reflect community identities and would not have a detrimental effect on electoral equality. We have therefore decided to adopt Bracknell Town Council's proposals as part of our final recommendations. We also recognise that the town-centre area of the proposed Wildridings ward constitutes a significant and distinct community within the proposed ward. We therefore propose that the ward be renamed Wildridings & Central to more accurately reflect community identities in this area. As discussed in detail later, we have been persuaded that the town centre does constitute a distinct community of the borough and have therefore proposed an amendment to our proposed electoral arrangements for Bracknell Town Council to reflect this.

98 Under our final recommendations, Old Bracknell and Wildridings & Central wards would have 8 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent more and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report

## **Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South wards**

99 The existing wards of Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South are situated in the south-west of Bracknell and are each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South wards have 11 per cent fewer and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent more and 18 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

100 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed a revised two-member Great Hollands North ward and a revised two-member Great Hollands South ward. It proposed that the whole of Beedon Drive and Eddington Road be transferred from Great Hollands North ward to Great Hollands South ward, as proposed by the Borough Council and the Labour Group. It also proposed that the Easthampstead Park Educational Centre be transferred to Great Hollands South ward. The LGCE noted a substantial degree of consensus between the Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals for the Great Hollands area. It recognised that both borough-wide schemes proposed the transfer of more recent residential development on Beedon Drive and Eddington Road from Great Hollands North ward to Great Hollands South ward. While it acknowledged that the proposed Great Hollands North ward would initially contain a relatively high electoral variance, the LGCE recognised that the Peacock Farm development site will result in a substantial improvement in electoral equality for the proposed ward by 2006.

101 The LGCE noted that the only discernable difference between the two proposals was with regard to the location of the Easthampstead Park Educational Centre. It considered that the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the centre to its proposed Great Hollands South ward would ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area and adopted it as part of its draft recommendations. However, it proposed a minor amendment to both proposals, affecting no electors, to ensure more clearly defined boundaries in the west of the Great Hollands area. The LGCE concluded that its draft recommendations would reflect the identities and interests of local communities while securing improved levels of electoral equality.

102 At Stage Three the Borough Council, the Labour Group and Bracknell Town Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for this area. A local resident supported the LGCE's proposed warding arrangements in the Great Hollands area. A Bracknell town councillor and two further local residents also supported the draft recommendations. However, as discussed later, they queried the proposed allocation of town councillors between the proposed north and south town council wards.

103 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We note that the draft recommendations have a broad degree of local support and consider they will secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria in the Great Hollands area. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South wards as final. The allocation of town councillors between the proposed town council wards is discussed in detail later. Under our final recommendations, Great Hollands North and Great Hollands South ward would have 17 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Hanworth and Harmans Water wards**

104 The existing wards of Hanworth and Harmans Water are situated in the south and east of Bracknell town and are both three-member wards. Under existing arrangements, Hanworth and Harmans Water wards have 11 per cent more and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more and 12 per cent more than the average by 2006).

105 The LGCE based its draft recommendations for this part of the borough on the proposals put forward by the Labour Group and proposed retaining the existing three-member Hanworth ward. It proposed a revised three-member Harmans Water ward combining that part of the existing ward up to and including Ranelagh Drive to the north, and including roads that exit onto the south side of Harmans Water Road. It proposed that the Calfridus Way area of the existing Bullbrook ward and the Martins Heron and Warren areas of the existing Ascot ward should be contained within the proposed ward. As stated earlier, the LGCE proposed that the north-west section of the existing Harmans Water ward, to the west of Ranelagh Drive be combined in a revised two-member Wildridings ward. The LGCE proposed that the remainder of the existing Harmans Water ward, comprising the Crown Wood area, be combined with the Forest Park area of the existing Ascot ward in a new three-member Crown Wood ward.

106 The LGCE considered that its proposals would accurately reflect local community ties and identities in this area, and would facilitate the most effective and convenient representation of the constituent communities. The LGCE noted in particular that its proposals utilise the whole of New Forest Ride and Bog Lane as ward boundaries in the east of this area and concurred with the Labour Group that they provide a strong feature on which to base borough ward boundaries. However, as stated earlier, the LGCE was not persuaded to adopt the Labour Group's proposed Bracknell Central ward as part of its draft recommendations. It considered that the proposed ward utilised insufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries and had therefore based its proposals for the central part of Bracknell town on those of the Borough Council.

107 The LGCE was not persuaded by the Borough Council's proposals for the Hanworth and Harmans Water areas. It considered that the existing Hanworth ward forms a coherent community and utilises strong and clearly defined ward boundaries and noted that the Borough Council's proposed Birch Hill ward would combine areas that are separated by the A322 Bagshot Road. It considered that electors in the south of Forest Park share greater community ties and identities with the Crown Wood area of Bracknell, and noted that both areas are connected by a number of convenient communication links, including Farningham and Nuneaton roads. The LGCE concluded that Forest Park forms a clear and cohesive community and should not be divided for the purposes of borough warding. Furthermore, the LGCE considered that the Borough Council's proposed single-member Ascot & the Warren ward would divide the more urban Martins Heron and Warren communities and considered that its proposals would ensure that both areas remain in a single borough ward.

108 The LGCE recognised that the review has been somewhat contentious in the Winkfield area. It stated that its initial consideration in formulating appropriate warding arrangements for this area had been to decide whether the more recent residential developments in the west of the existing Ascot ward should be transferred to the borough wards of Bracknell town. The LGCE recognised that Winkfield Parish Council had conducted an extremely thorough consultation process in the areas affected and that a substantial majority of respondents opposed the creation of borough wards that would breach existing parish boundaries. However, the LGCE stressed

the importance of adopting a borough-wide approach in formulating its draft recommendations and the need to secure the effective and convenient representation of electors across Bracknell Forest borough. It recognised that the arguments are finely balanced but concluded that boundaries in this area should be rationalised for the purposes of borough warding and that the Martins Heron, Warren and Forest Park areas of Winkfield parish should be transferred to the borough wards of Bracknell town.

109 It considered that the Martins Heron, Warren and Forest Park areas share joint amenities and facilities with neighbouring communities in Bracknell town, including retail, medical and educational facilities. In respect of the Forest Park area, the LGCE concluded that it shares a number of clear and convenient communication links with areas immediately to its west. It noted that the Crown Wood area can be accessed via both Farningham and Nuneaton roads, and by a number of interconnecting footpaths. While accepting that such links are not as clearly defined between the Martins Heron and Warren areas and Bracknell town, the LGCE concluded that communication and transportation links are even weaker with the remainder of Winkfield Parish, and particularly with North Ascot which constitutes the only other substantial urban area in Winkfield parish. It noted in particular that Bracknell town can be accessed via Bog Lane and London Road, and that the area shares a convenient and direct rail link with Bracknell town centre. Furthermore, as stated earlier, it noted that Winkfield Parish Council's proposals would divide communities in the Martins Heron and Warren areas. The LGCE considered that they form a clear community, utilise joint amenities and facilities and share an active local residents' association. It concluded that all these factors, taken together, demonstrate a clear sense of community identity and interest and was therefore not persuaded that the Martins Heron and Warren areas should be separated for the purposes of borough warding.

110 At Stage Three the Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations for these wards. However, it proposed a minor realignment to the boundary between the proposed Harmans Water and Old Bracknell wards so that it follows the whole of the A322 Bagshot Road (this amendment would not affect any electors). The Council argued that the proposed amendment would ensure a "strong continuous boundary line" between the proposed wards. The Borough Council also put forward alternative names for the proposed Crown Wood and Harmans Water wards. It proposed that Crown Wood ward be renamed Crown Park ward in order to recognise both the Crown Wood and Forest Park areas of the proposed ward. It proposed that Harmans Water ward be renamed Herons Water & the Warren so as to recognise the Martins Heron and Warren areas of Winkfield parish that comprise the eastern section of the proposed ward.

111 The Labour Group broadly supported the draft recommendations for this area. However, it concurred with the Borough Council that the A322 be utilised as the eastern ward boundary of the proposed Old Bracknell ward and reiterated its proposed name of Crown Forest for the proposed Crown Wood ward. As detailed earlier, the Labour Group also reiterated its preference that the part of the existing Harmans Water ward broadly to the north of Broad Lane, and Elizabeth Court and Dolphin Close be transferred to a new Bracknell Central ward. It argued that these areas share community identities and interests with adjoining areas towards the centre of Bracknell town and that they share clear road and pedestrian links.

112 The Liberal Democrats noted that the draft recommendations for this area had been based on the proposals of the Labour Group and considered them "much more acceptable" than the Stage One proposals of the Borough Council. Bracknell Town Council broadly supported the draft recommendations for this area, but stated that it was "disappointed" that they had not proposed a 'town centre' borough ward. As stated earlier, Binfield Warfield and Winkfield

parish councils put forward a joint submission at Stage Three strongly opposing the draft recommendations. They reiterated their view that borough ward and parish boundaries should remain coterminous and argued that the draft recommendations did not reflect community identities and would not secure effective and convenient local government.

113 Winkfield Parish Council also made an individual submission at Stage Three. It argued that the draft recommendations to transfer more urban areas situated in the west of the parish into the borough wards of Bracknell town would lead to the fragmentation of the parish. It noted that ten borough councillors would represent all or part of Winkfield parish on the Borough Council, compared to the current five, and argued that this would not secure the effective and convenient representation of Winkfield residents. Winkfield Parish Council also noted the LGCE's comments that the proposed borough wards would form the basis of new parliamentary constituency boundaries. It expressed concern that the identities and interests of the parish would be further eroded should parliamentary constituency boundaries no longer adhere to existing parish boundaries. As detailed earlier, the parish council reiterated its Stage One warding proposals for the parish. It also put forward alternative warding arrangements for the east of Bracknell town in order to facilitate its proposals for the parish. It proposed that either the boundary between the proposed Harmans Water and Crown Wood wards be realigned to follow Harmans Water Road, or that these two wards be combined to form a new four-member Harmans Water & Crown Wood ward. In both instances, it proposed that the parish boundary between Winkfield parish and Bracknell town be retained as a borough ward boundary. Winkfield Parish Council argued that its proposals respected the need to secure equality of representation while having regard to the wishes of local communities. It argued that its proposals, taken together with those of Binfield and Warfield parish councils, provided a "comprehensive and community backed scheme" for the borough.

114 Birch Hill & Hanworth Community Liaison Group supported the LGCE's draft recommendations to retain the existing Hanworth ward and stressed the importance of wards retaining "the sense of identity that they currently have". A resident of Harmans Water broadly supported the draft recommendations. However, he considered that the links between Harmans Water and the Martins Heron area of Winkfield parish were less clearly defined than they appear and stated that it can take "five or ten minutes" to drive from one area to the other. A further two residents of Harmans Water supported the draft recommendations to incorporate the Martins Heron and Warren area in the proposed Harmans Water ward. A resident of Crown Wood stressed the importance of utilising the A322 Bagshot Road to the south of Downshire Way, as the boundary between the proposed Crown Wood and Old Bracknell wards. He also concurred with the Labour Group's proposed ward name of Crown Forest. A resident of North Ascot supported the draft recommendations. He considered that the Martins Heron and Warren areas of the parish have little in common with the North Ascot area, and argued that urban developments that abut the eastern boundary with Bracknell town would benefit in being represented with the adjoining urban communities of Harmans Water and Crown Wood. A further local resident supported the proposed Hanworth ward. A member of the public supported the LGCE's proposed wards but put forward alternative ward names at Stage Three. He proposed that Harmans Water ward be renamed Forest East and Crown Wood ward be renamed Forest South. He noted that the proposed wards combine adjoining parished areas and stated that "a neutral name" would more accurately respect community identities.

115 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations for this area have been particularly contentious. We note the view of Winkfield Parish Council that borough warding arrangements should remain coterminous with the existing parish boundary and recognise that it had put forward alternative

warding arrangements for the east of Bracknell town to facilitate its proposals. However, as stated earlier, we have not been persuaded that the Martins Heron, Warren and Forest Park areas would be as effectively represented under the Parish Council's proposals. We concur with the LGCE that these areas share community identities and interests and utilise joint amenities and facilities and should be combined with the Harmans Water and Crown Wood areas of Bracknell town for the purposes of borough warding. While we acknowledge that the Parish Council's proposed two-member Harmans Water and Crown Wood wards would secure good electoral equality, we consider that the boundary between the two proposed wards would divide those roads that access onto the south of Harmans Water Road from the rest of the Harmans Water community. Furthermore, we consider that, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, a four-member ward, based on the existing Harmans Water ward, is not justified in this area and could unacceptably dilute the accountability of councillors to their electorate. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt the proposals of Winkfield Parish Council as part of our final recommendations.

116 We have considered the alternative ward names put forward at Stage Three by the Borough Council and a member of the public. While we are not prescriptive in respect of ward names, we consider that the proposed ward names of the Borough Council would not reflect community identities in the proposed Harmans Water and Crown Wood wards. We consider that the LGCE's proposed ward names are familiar to local electors and reflect the majority community in each of the proposed wards. We are not persuaded to put forward the alternative ward names put forward by a member of the public at Stage Three. We consider that the proposed names of Forest East and Forest South would not accurately reflect the constituent communities of the proposed wards.

117 As detailed earlier, we have not been persuaded that areas in the north and west of the LGCE's proposed Harmans Water ward should be combined in a new Bracknell Central ward. We consider that Ranelagh Drive and areas to its east share community identities and interests with the Harmans Water area and concur with the views of a local resident at Stage Three that this area should remain warded with Harmans Water.

118 We note the broad support of the Borough Council, the Labour Group, a local resident of North Ascot and a member of the public for the draft recommendations. We consider that the Martins Heron, Warren and Forest Park areas of the borough are distinct communities that are separate from the North Ascot settlement. We consider that these areas share a number of clear and direct communication links with adjoining communities in Bracknell town and that the proposed wards would ensure the best balance between the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Crown Wood and Harmans Water wards as final, subject to a minor realignment of the boundary with Old Bracknell ward to ensure a more clearly defined ward boundary that follows the A322 Bagshot Road. We have noted the broad support for the LGCE's proposed Hanworth ward, which we consider will secure a good balance between the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm the proposed wards as part of our final recommendations.

119 We would emphasise that our proposed borough warding arrangements in no way indicate a view as to any future amendments to existing parish boundaries. It is the responsibility of the Borough Council to conduct parish reviews, and no changes to parish boundaries can be made without local consultation.

120 Under our final recommendations, Crown Wood, Hanworth and Harmans Water wards would have 4 per cent more, 16 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than

the borough average respectively (5 per cent more, 6 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Central Sandhurst, College Town and Owlsmoor wards**

121 The existing wards of Central Sandhurst, College Town and Owlsmoor form the central and eastern part of Sandhurst, a settlement of some 15,000 electors that is situated in the south of the borough and constitutes its second largest town. Central Sandhurst and College Town wards are currently served by two councillors each while Owlsmoor is a single-member ward. Under existing arrangements, Central Sandhurst and College Town wards have 15 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (23 per cent fewer and equal to the borough average by 2006). Owlsmoor ward has 113 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, and is forecast to have 105 per cent more electors than the average by 2006.

122 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed minor amendments to these wards in order to secure improved electoral equality and noted that its proposals had been endorsed by Sandhurst Town Council during its consultation exercise with local interested parties. The Labour Group accepted the Borough Council's proposals for Sandhurst and did not put forward alternative warding arrangements for this area.

123 The LGCE based its draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals. It proposed that the Avocet Crescent area of College Town ward, to the north of Inverness Way and Moray Avenue, and that part of the existing Owlsmoor ward up to and including properties on the north side of Wargrove Drive be transferred to a revised two-member Central Sandhurst ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Owlsmoor ward and the remainder of College Town ward each form revised two-member wards.

124 The LGCE put forward two minor amendments to the Borough Council's proposals. In order to secure borough ward boundaries that adhere to clearly identifiable ground detail, it proposed that the southern boundary between the proposed Central Sandhurst and College Town wards be amended to follow Marshall Road up to the roundabout at which Raeburn Way exits and then follow the western edge of Shepherds Meadow up to the borough boundary. It also proposed that the southern boundary between Central Sandhurst and Little Sandhurst wards be amended to follow the railway line up to the sewage works, and then follow Swan Lane up to the borough boundary. The LGCE noted that these amendments to the Borough Council's proposals would not affect any electors. It also noted the consensus in support of the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements, with both the Labour Group and Sandhurst Town Council in support of the proposed wards. It concluded that its draft recommendations would secure a reasonable balance between the statutory criteria and secure good long-term levels of electoral equality.

125 At Stage Three the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for this area. The Liberal Democrats strongly objected to the proposed warding arrangements for the Sandhurst area. It argued that they did not reflect community identities and stated that their main purpose "would appear to be to serve the interests of a number of leading councillors in Sandhurst who presently hold very senior positions on the Borough Council". The Liberal Democrats favoured alternative proposals which would combine the existing Central Sandhurst and Little Sandhurst wards in a new three-member ward, and retain the existing two-member College Town ward. It also favoured the retention of the existing Owlsmoor ward, with an increase in its representation to two borough councillors.

Under these proposals, a new three member ward comprising the existing Little Sandhurst and Central Sandhurst wards and the existing two-member College Town ward would have 13 per cent more and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7 per cent more and 2 per cent more than the average by 2006). The proposed two-member Owlsmoor ward would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now and 5 per cent more than the average by 2006.

126 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the broad degree of consensus in support of the draft recommendations for these wards. We note the comments of the Liberal Democrats and acknowledge that its alternative proposals would utilise clearly defined boundaries and not involve a radical change to the existing ward configuration. However, we consider that their proposals would not secure sufficient improvement in electoral equality. Moreover, we note that under our proposed council size of 42, the Crowthorne and Sandhurst area is entitled to ten borough councillors. However, under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, this area would be allocated nine borough councillors, and would therefore not ensure an equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the borough.

127 We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final. Under our final recommendations, Central Sandhurst, College Town and Owlsmoor wards would have 7 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst wards**

128 The existing three-member ward of Crowthorne is situated to the north of Sandhurst town and is coterminous with the parish of the same name. The existing ward of Little Sandhurst is situated in the west of Sandhurst town and is currently represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst wards have 25 per cent fewer and 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (26 per cent fewer and 21 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

129 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE based its proposals on those of the Borough Council. It proposed a revised two-member Crowthorne ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the east of Sandhurst Road and up to and including properties on the south side of Dukes Ride, Waterloo Road, Lake End Way and Alcot Close. The LGCE proposed that the remainder of the existing Crowthorne ward, broadly to the west of Sandhurst Road and comprising the Wellington College site, be combined with the existing Little Sandhurst ward in a new two-member ward. The LGCE noted that the Borough Council did not express a preferred name for the proposed ward and concluded that the proposed ward should retain the name of Little Sandhurst which it considered would most accurately reflect the constituent communities of the proposed ward.

130 The LGCE noted the broad support for the Borough Council's proposals. While it acknowledged that the boundary between the Borough Council's proposed Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst wards adheres to the rear of properties to the north of Wellington College and therefore has a somewhat irregular appearance, it accepted that these proposals are supported by the parishes affected and by the Labour Group. The LGCE noted that the proposals would result in the establishment of a borough ward that straddles two relatively urban parished areas. However, it acknowledged that its options for change in this area were somewhat limited due to

the current electoral imbalance in the existing Crowthorne ward and its proximity to the borough boundary. It concluded that, due to these limitations, the Borough Council's proposals would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria and therefore adopted them as part of its draft recommendations. As stated earlier, the LGCE proposed a minor amendment to the southern boundary between Little Sandhurst and Central Sandhurst wards to ensure the ward boundaries in this area are tied to clear ground detail. This amendment would not affect any electors.

131 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards, subject to proposing an alternative name for the proposed Little Sandhurst ward. It proposed that the ward be renamed Little Sandhurst & Wellington to reflect the constituent communities of the proposed ward and to acknowledge the "significant contribution" that Wellington College and its associated housing had made to the area. The Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for this area.

132 The Liberal Democrats strongly objected to the draft recommendations for the Sandhurst and Crowthorne area. They argued that the draft recommendations did not reflect community identities and stated that their main purpose "would appear to be to serve the interests of a number of leading councillors in Sandhurst who presently hold very senior positions on the Borough Council". The Liberal Democrats favoured alternative proposals to combine the existing Central Sandhurst and Little Sandhurst wards in a new three-member ward and the retention of the existing Crowthorne ward, with a reduction in its representation to two borough councillors. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, a new three-member ward comprising the existing Little Sandhurst and Central Sandhurst wards and a two-member Crowthorne ward would have 13 per cent more and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7 per cent more and 14 per cent more than the average by 2006). Crowthorne Parish Council commented on the proposed parish council electoral arrangements, which are discussed in detail below.

133 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note that there is a broad degree of consensus in support of the draft recommendations for these wards. We have noted the comments of the Liberal Democrats and acknowledge that its alternative proposals would utilise clearly defined boundaries and not involve a radical change to the existing ward configuration. However, as stated earlier, we consider that their proposals would not secure sufficient improvement in electoral equality. Moreover, we note that under our proposed council size of 42, the Crowthorne and Sandhurst area is entitled to ten borough councillors. However, under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, this area would be allocated nine borough councillors and consequently would not ensure an equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the borough. We are not prescriptive in respect of ward names and accept that the Borough Council's proposed ward name of Little Sandhurst & Wellington would more accurately reflect the geographical extent of the proposed ward. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final, subject to adopting the Borough Council's proposed ward name of Little Sandhurst & Wellington.

134 Under our final recommendations, Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst & Wellington wards would have equal to, and two per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. Both wards would have an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the average by 2006. Our draft proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## Electoral Cycle

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

## Conclusions

136 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the draft recommendations report, we have decided substantially to endorse those draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in Bracknell town, we have decided to adopt the minor ward boundary amendments proposed by Bracknell Town Council;
- in the north of the borough, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed three-member Binfield with Warfield ward;
- we propose that Little Sandhurst ward be renamed Little Sandhurst & Wellington and that Wildridings ward be renamed Wildridings & Central.

137 We conclude that, in Bracknell Forest:

- there should be an increase in council size from 40 to 42;
- there should be 18 wards instead of 19 as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward (Hanworth) should retain its existing boundaries;

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

*Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	40	42	40	42
Number of wards	19	18	19	18
Average number of electors per councillor	1,973	1,879	1,997	1,902
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	16	2	16	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	0	12	0

139 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 16 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

## **Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

140 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that, if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the town councils of Bracknell and Sandhurst and the parishes of Binfield, Crowthorne, Warfield and Winkfield.

141 Bracknell Town Council is currently served by 25 councillors representing 11 wards: Bullbrook ward returning four town councillors, Old Bracknell ward returning three town councillors, and Birch Hill, Crown Wood, Garth, Great Hollands North, Great Hollands South, Harmans Water, Hanworth, Priestwood and Wildridings wards returning two councillors each.

142 In its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed new three-member Crown Wood, Hanworth, Harmans Water and Priestwood & Garth borough wards and new two-member Bullbrook, Great Hollands North, Great Hollands South, Old Bracknell and Wildridings borough wards. In formulating its proposed electoral arrangements for Bracknell Town Council, the LGCE sought as far as possible to reflect the preferences of respondents while retaining a coterminous parish and borough warding structure. As stated earlier, while acknowledging the broad support for a new Town Centre ward, the LGCE was not persuaded that the proposed ward would adhere to clear and distinct ground detail.

143 The LGCE noted the views of the Liberal Democrats who stated that there were numerous disparities between the ratio of electors to parish councillors across the different parishes of the borough and argued that the review provided the opportunity to rationalise this situation. The LGCE considered that the current diversity in the representation of parish councils in Bracknell Forest reflects the diverse nature of these authorities and was not persuaded that equal ratios of electors per councillor between parishes are a necessary prerequisite of effective and convenient local government.

144 The LGCE noted that Bracknell Town Council favoured increasing the size of the Town Council by one to 26 and considered this to be compatible with a town council warding structure based on its proposed borough wards. The LGCE therefore proposed revised Bullbrook, Great Hollands South and Old Bracknell wards (returning three councillors each) and revised Great Hollands North and Wildridings wards (returning two councillors each), whose boundaries would be coterminous with the proposed borough wards of the same name. It proposed revised Garth and Priestwood wards (returning two councillors each). Taken together, these wards would be coterminous with its proposed Priestwood & Garth borough ward. The LGCE proposed revised Hanworth and Birch Hill wards (returning two councillors each). Taken together, these wards would be coterminous with its proposed Hanworth borough ward. The LGCE proposed a revised Harmans Water ward (returning three members) and a revised Crown Wood ward (returning two members). The boundary of these proposed wards should reflect that part of Bracknell town contained within the borough wards of the same name.

145 At Stage Three the draft recommendations were broadly supported. However, as detailed earlier, there was some support for the creation of a Bracknell Central borough ward. Bracknell Town Council broadly supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for town council electoral arrangements, but put forward a number of minor amendments to the proposed borough wards to more accurately reflect community identities. A town councillor and two local residents supported the draft recommendations in the Great Holland's area but requested that the allocation of town councillors between the proposed North and South town council wards be reversed.

146 As part of our final recommendations, we have substantially endorsed the draft recommendations, subject to two minor boundary amendments as proposed by the Town Council at Stage Three. As stated earlier, we were not persuaded that there were sufficient electors in centre of the town to justify the creation of a new Bracknell Central borough ward. However, as there is no statutory requirement for electoral equality at parish or town council level, we propose an amendment to the LGCE's proposed Wildridings town council ward. We propose that the area of the proposed ward broadly to the north of Downshire Way and Broad Lane form a separate Town Centre ward and that it be represented by a single town councillor. We propose that the remainder of Wildridings ward be represented by two town councillors. This proposed amendment requires an increase in council size to 27 to ensure an equitable allocation of councillors between wards that reflects the relative rates of growth in the town over the next five years. While we have noted the views of several respondents in respect of the proposed allocation of town councillors in the Great Hollands area, we note that Bracknell Town Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area and are therefore satisfied that they reflect the anticipated growth in electorate over the next five years. We consider that our proposed town council electoral arrangements will more readily reflect the preferences of local electors and ensure the effective representation of the central area of Bracknell on the town council.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Bracknell Town Council should comprise 27 councillors, two more than at present, representing 12 wards: Bullbrook, Great Hollands South, Harmans Water and Old Bracknell wards (returning three councillors each); Birch Hill, Crown Wood, Garth, Great Hollands North, Hanworth, Priestwood and Wildridings wards (returning two councillors each); and Town Centre ward (returning a single councillor). Our proposed town council ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

147 Sandhurst Town Council is currently served by 24 councillors representing four wards: Central Sandhurst, College Town, Little Sandhurst and Owlsmoor wards, returning six councillors each. As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed amendments to the borough wards of the town. It proposed revised two-member Central Sandhurst, College Town and Owlsmoor wards. It also proposed amendments to the existing Little Sandhurst ward, and that it should also comprise the south-west part of the existing Crowthorne ward. The LGCE noted the views of the Liberal Democrats who stated that there were numerous disparities between the ratio of electors to parish councillors across the different parishes of the borough and argued that the review provided the opportunity to rationalise this situation. The LGCE considered that the current diversity in the representation of parish councils in Bracknell Forest reflects the diverse nature of these authorities and was not persuaded that equal ratios of electors per councillor between parishes are a necessary prerequisite of effective and convenient local government. The LGCE proposed revised Central Sandhurst, College Town and

Owlsmoor parish wards, returning six councillors each. It also proposed a revised Little Sandhurst parish ward (returning six councillors) with boundaries reflecting that part of the proposed Little Sandhurst ward that is situated in Sandhurst parish.

148 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations for Sandhurst, arguing that they were intended to benefit incumbent councillors in this area. They reiterated their view that the structure of parish and town councils in the borough needed to be rationalised and argued that a smaller parish council size would be appropriate due to the frequency of unopposed elections to the parish council. They stated that a continuation of unopposed elections in the Sandhurst area “would be disastrous for local democracy and extremely damaging to public confidence in our already weakened electoral system”.

149 In our final recommendations, we confirmed the draft recommendations as final. While we note the views of the Liberal Democrats, we have not received any further evidence from the Parish Council itself in support of a reduced town council size. We remain of the view that the LGCE’s proposed town council size of 24 will ensure the effective representation of local residents on the town council. Having confirmed the draft recommendations for borough warding as final, we also confirm the proposed electoral arrangements for Sandhurst Town Council as final.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Sandhurst Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Central Sandhurst, College Town, Little Sandhurst and Owlsmoor wards, each returning six councillors. The boundary between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

150 Binfield Parish Council is currently served by 11 parish councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Binfield Parish Council. The Labour Group acknowledged that the Parish Council was opposed to warding of the parish. However, it recognised the need to ward the parish in order to reflect its proposed borough warding arrangements. It therefore proposed a new Binfield North ward returning three parish councillors and a new Binfield South ward returning eight parish councillors. It also put forward an alternative proposal that would further divide the parish into four parish wards.

151 Binfield Parish Council stated that it was not in favour of establishing parish wards. It argued that the introduction of parish warding would “prejudice the sense of a whole community” and result in the competition for resources between parish wards. It further argued that a concentration on ward issues would be at the expense of the parish as a whole. Binfield Village Protection Society reiterated these points and argued that warding of the parish would contribute little to the “continuing cohesion of the village as a community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.

152 As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed a new two-member Binfield Popeswood borough ward and a new single-member Binfield with Warfield borough ward. While it noted the opposition of Binfield Parish Council to the warding of the parish, the LGCE was not persuaded that this would necessarily have an adverse affect on the cohesion of the parish. It considered that the parish contains a number of discrete communities that warrant

separate representation on the Parish Council. The LGCE therefore proposed a new Binfield Popeswood parish ward (returning eight parish councillors) whose boundaries would reflect the borough ward of the same name. It also proposed a new Binfield North parish ward (returning three councillors) whose boundaries would reflect that part of the proposed Binfield with Warfield borough ward that lies in Binfield parish.

153 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed a new three-member Binfield with Warfield ward that would comprise all of Binfield parish and the north part of Warfield parish. Binfield Parish Council was strongly opposed to the warding of the parish for either borough or parish council electoral arrangements. It argued that this would result in competition for resources between the two proposed parished wards and considered that this would have a detrimental affect on the more rural part of the parish. It concluded that the proposed parish warding arrangements as a whole would be divisive and not reflect community identities. Councillor Fawcett (Priestwood) argued that the warding of the parish would “work against the philosophy of one integrated village”. However, he stated that if warding was considered necessary, then further warding should be considered to avoid the “preponderance of representatives from one area”. He proposed dividing the proposed Binfield Popeswood parish ward into a Binfield Central parish ward (returning three councillors); a Temple Park parish ward (returning two councillors); and Farley Wood parish ward (returning three councillors). As stated earlier, 21 local residents made submissions in opposition to the warding of the parish on the grounds of community identities.

154 As part of our final recommendations, we moved away from the LGCE’s proposals and adopted the Borough Council’s proposed three-member Binfield with Warfield ward. As a consequence of this, and in recognition of the strong local opposition to the warding of the parish, we propose that the Parish Council retain its existing electoral arrangements. While we note the proposals of Councillor Fawcett, we consider that his proposal to further sub divide the parish into parish wards would not command local support and would not reflect community identities in the Binfield area.

**Final Recommendation**

Binfield Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, elected from the whole parish.

155 Crowthorne Parish Council is currently served by 10 parish councillors and is not warded. In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed a new two-member Crowthorne borough ward and a new two-member Little Sandhurst borough ward that would contain the Wellington College area of Crowthorne. The LGCE considered that parish wards should reflect the proposed borough warding arrangements and therefore proposed a new Crowthorne ward (returning eight councillors) whose boundaries should reflect the borough ward of the same name. It also proposed a new Crowthorne South ward (returning two councillors) whose boundaries should reflect that part of the proposed Little Sandhurst borough ward contained within Crowthorne parish.

156 At Stage Three, Crowthorne Parish Council noted the draft recommendations and stressed the importance that the proposed Crowthorne South parish ward should retain the name of Crowthorne. We have confirmed the draft recommendations for borough warding arrangements in this area as final. Consequently, we therefore confirm the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Crowthorne Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Crowthorne ward (returning eight councillors) and Crowthorne South ward (returning two councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

157 Warfield Parish Council is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed a new single-member Binfield with Warfield ward, a new single-member Winkfield & Cranbourne ward and a new three-member Warfield Harvest Ride ward. The LGCE concluded that parish electoral arrangements should substantially reflect its proposed borough wards. It therefore proposed a new Warfield Whitegrove ward (returning seven councillors) containing that part of its proposed Warfield Harvest Ride borough ward to the east of Gough's Lane and a new Quelm ward (returning three councillors) reflecting that part of its proposed Warfield Harvest Ride borough ward to the west of Gough's Lane. The LGCE also proposed a new Warfield Park ward (returning two councillors) reflecting that part of Warfield parish contained within its proposed Winkfield & Cranbourne ward and a new St Michael's ward (returning a single councillor) reflecting that part of Warfield parish contained within its proposed Binfield with Warfield ward. As a consequence of these arrangements, the LGCE proposed that the Parish Council should be increased to 13 members.

158 At Stage Three, the Borough Council put forward revised borough warding arrangements for this area and proposed that parish council electoral arrangements should reflect its proposed borough wards. As detailed earlier, Warfield Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for a warding configuration that would reflect existing parish boundaries. While it stated that it "had views about ward names at both borough and parish levels", it considered this a less contentious issue than the boundaries of the proposed wards.

159 As part of our final recommendations, we confirmed the draft recommendations subject to the establishment of a three-member Binfield with Warfield ward. This would not materially affect the proposed parish electoral arrangements which we consider will ensure the effective representation of the constituent communities of Warfield parish. Moreover, we note that they are similar to the proposed parish warding arrangements put forward by Warfield Parish Council at both consultation stages. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for parish electoral arrangements in this area as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Warfield Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, two more than at present, representing four wards: Whitegrove ward (returning seven councillors), Quelm ward (returning three councillors), Warfield Park ward (returning two councillors) and St Michael's ward (returning a single councillor). Our proposals are illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

160 Winkfield Parish Council is currently served by 21 parish councillors representing five wards: Firlands ward returning six councillors, Manor ward returning five councillors, Cranbourne ward returning four councillors and Priory and St Mary's wards returning three councillors each. In its draft recommendation, the LGCE proposed a new two-member

Winkfield & Cranbourne borough ward and a new two-member Ascot Priory borough ward. It proposed that the Martins Heron and Warren areas be transferred to a new three-member Harmans Water borough ward and that the Forest Park area of the parish be transferred to a new three-member Crown Wood borough ward.

161 The LGCE considered that parish wards should reflect its proposed borough warding arrangements in this area and noted that Winkfield Parish Council opposed the division of the parish into too many parish wards. It therefore proposed a new Winkfield & Cranbourne parish ward (returning five councillors) reflecting that part of Winkfield parish contained within its proposed Winkfield & Cranbourne borough ward, and a new Ascot Priory ward (returning six councillors) with boundaries coterminous with the proposed borough ward of the same name. The LGCE also proposed a new Forest Park ward (returning five councillors) and a new Martins Heron & Warren ward (returning two councillors) with boundaries that reflect those parts of Winkfield parish contained within its proposed Crown Wood and Harmans Water borough wards respectively.

162 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations. As stated earlier, Winkfield Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for borough warding arrangements that would reflect the existing parish boundary. In respect of parish council electoral arrangements it argued that the LGCE's proposals would result in poor electoral equality in its proposed parish wards. Winkfield Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for parish council electoral arrangements. It proposed a revised Priory parish ward (returning nine councillors), a new Swinley Forest parish ward (returning six councillors) and a new St Mary's & St Peters parish ward (returning three councillors). Its proposed parish wards would reflect its proposed borough warding arrangements for the parish.

163 As part of our final recommendations, we are confirming the proposed borough warding arrangements for Winkfield as final. Having considered the proposed parish warding arrangements, we consider that the parish contains a number of discrete communities that warrant separate representation on the parish council. While we note the comments of Winkfield Parish Council, we would emphasise that there is no statutory requirement for electoral equality at parish or town council level. We consider that the draft recommendations for parish warding arrangements reflect community identities and interests, and secure the effective representation of the constituent communities of Winkfield on the Parish Council. We therefore have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for parish electoral arrangements in this area as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Winkfield Parish Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, instead of the current 21, representing four wards: Ascot Priory ward (returning six councillors), Forest Park ward (returning five councillors), Winkfield & Cranbourne ward (returning five councillors) and Martins Heron & Warren ward (returning two councillors). The boundary between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Bracknell Forest*

## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT ?

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

165 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 4 June 2002.

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Bracknell Forest: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Warfield parish.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Winkfield parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Bracknell, Crowthorne and Sandhurst.

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for Bracknell Forest: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed Warding of Warfield Parish*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Winkfield Parish*