

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire

February 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the unitary authority area.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for the new town of Milton Keynes and Bletchley is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes on 25 July 2000.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Milton Keynes:

- **in 13 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and two wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 12 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 142-143) are that:

- **Milton Keynes Council should have 51 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 23 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These draft recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In 15 of the proposed 23 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 23 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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 parish of West Bletchley and the town of Newport Pagnell;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Shenley Church End Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 27 February 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 30 April 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bradwell	3	Bradwell ward (Bradwell parish); Linford South ward (part – Conniburrow ward of Great Linford parish)	Large Map
2	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford	3	Danesborough ward (part – Manor North ward (part) of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish as proposed); Denbigh ward (part – Church Green, Poets and Saints wards of West Bletchley parish as proposed); Eaton Manor ward (part – Manor North ward (part) of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish as proposed); Fenny Stratford ward (Central Bletchley, Fenny Stratford and Granby wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish as proposed and Simpson parish as proposed)	Large Map
3	Campbell Park	3	Campbell Park ward (part – Fishermead, Oldbrook, Springfield and Woolstone wards of Campbell Park parish); Loughton Park ward (part – Central Milton Keynes parish as proposed)	Large Map
4	Danesborough	1	Danesborough ward (part – Woburn Sands parish, Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill parishes as proposed and Wavendon parish (part) as proposed); Walton Park ward (part – Wavendon parish (part) as proposed)	Large Map
5	Denbigh	2	Denbigh ward (part – Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West wards of West Bletchley parish as proposed)	Large Map
6	Eaton Manor	2	Denbigh ward (part – Eaton South ward (part) of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish as proposed); Eaton Manor ward (part – Eaton South ward (part), Eaton North and Manor South wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish as proposed)	Large Map
7	Emerson Valley	3	Emerson Valley ward (part – Emerson Valley ward of Shenley Brook End parish as proposed)	Large Map
8	Furzton	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Furzton ward of Shenley Brook End parish as proposed)	Large Map
9	Hanslope Park	1	Hanslope Park ward (part – Castlethorpe, Hanslope and Haversham-cum-Little Linford parishes as proposed)	Map 2
10	Linford North	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Giffard Park & Blakelands, Linford Village and Pennyland & Bolbeck Park wards of Great Linford parish)	Large Map

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
11 Linford South	2	Campbell Park ward (part – Campbell Park & Newlands and Willen wards of Campbell Park parish); Linford South ward (part – Downhead Park & Willen Park, Downs Head and Neath Hill wards of Great Linford parish)	Large Map
12 Loughton Park	3	Loughton Park ward (part – Loughton parish and Shenley Church End parish (part) as proposed); Emerson Valley ward (part – Shenley Church End parish (part) as proposed)	Large Map
13 Middleton	2	Walton Park ward (part – Broughton parish (part) as proposed, Milton Keynes parish as proposed and Monkston, Monkston Park & Kingston ward of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish as proposed); Sherington ward (part – Broughton parish (part) as proposed); Woughton ward (part – Peartree Bridge, Tinkers Bridge, Woughton Village & Woughton Park wards of Woughton on the Green parish)	Large Map
14 Newport Pagnell North	2	Newport Pagnell North ward (part – North ward of Newport Pagnell town (part) as proposed); Newport Pagnell South ward (part – North ward of Newport Pagnell town (part) as proposed)	Map A2
15 Newport Pagnell South	2	Newport Pagnell North ward (part – South ward of Newport Pagnell town (part) as proposed); Newport Pagnell South ward (part – South ward of Newport Pagnell town (part) as proposed)	Map A2
16 Olney	2	Olney ward (Olney, Ravenstone and Weston Underwood parishes); Ouse Valley ward (part – Clifton Reynes and Newton Blossomville parishes and Cold Brayfield, Lavendon and Warrington parishes as proposed)	Map 2
17 Sherington	1	Sherington ward (part – Chicheley, North Crawley, Sherington and Stoke Goldington parishes, Lathbury and Gayhurst parishes as proposed, Tyringham & Filgrave parish (part) and Moulsoe parish (part) as proposed); Ouse Valley ward (part – Astwood, Emberton and Hardmead parishes and Tyringham & Filgrave parish (part) as proposed); Walton Park ward (part – Moulsoe parish (part) as proposed)	Map 2
18 Stantonbury	2	Stantonbury ward (part – Stantonbury parish as proposed)	Large Map
19 Stony Stratford	3	Bradwell Abbey ward (part – Two Mile Ash ward of Bradwell Abbey parish); Stony Stratford ward (part – Calverton and Stony Stratford parishes as proposed)	Large Map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
20	Walton Park	3	Danesborough ward (part – Walton parish (part) as proposed); Fenny Stratford ward (part – Walton parish (part) as proposed); Walton Park ward (part – Walton parish (part) as proposed and Kents Hill, Kents Hill Park & Brinklow ward of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish as proposed)	Large Map
21	Whaddon	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Castles, Fairways, Racecourses and Rivers wards of West Bletchley parish as proposed)	Large Map
22	Wolverton	3	Bradwell Abbey ward (part – Hodge Lea & Stacey Bushes ward of Bradwell Abbey parish); Hanslope Park ward (part – New Bradwell parish (part) as proposed); Stony Stratford ward (part – Wolverton & Greenleys parish (part) as proposed); Wolverton ward (Wolverton & Greenleys parish (part) and New Bradwell parish (part) as proposed); Stantonbury ward (part – New Bradwell parish (part) as proposed)	Large Map
23	Woughton	2	Woughton ward (part – Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Leadenhall and Netherfield wards of Woughton on the Green parish)	Large Map

Notes: 1 The proposed warding arrangements for Milton Keynes reflect the provisions of The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 which made a number of boundary amendments to existing parishes and established new parishes for Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Calverton, Central Milton Keynes, Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow, New Bradwell, Simpson, Stony Stratford, Tyringham & Filgrave, West Bletchley and Wolverton & Greenleys areas.

2 Where “as proposed” is stated in the above table, it refers to modifications that form part of The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 or are currently being prepared by Milton Keynes Council further to that Order. In Newport Pagnell town and West Bletchley parish, however, arrangements currently being prepared by Milton Keynes Council would be superceded by our draft recommendations.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Milton Keynes

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bradwell	3	9,155	3,052	3	9,172	3,057	-5
2 Bletchley & Fenny Stratford	3	8,895	2,965	0	9,500	3,167	-2
3 Campbell Park	3	9,853	3,284	11	10,207	3,402	5
4 Danesborough	1	3,303	3,303	11	3,369	3,369	4
5 Denbigh	2	5,732	2,866	-3	6,102	3,051	-6
6 Eaton Manor	2	5,725	2,863	-3	6,390	3,195	-1
7 Emerson Valley	3	6,235	2,078	-30	9,581	3,194	-1
8 Furzton	2	5,663	2,832	-5	6,077	3,039	-6
9 Hanslope Park	1	3,217	3,217	8	3,391	3,391	5
10 Linford North	2	6,565	3,283	11	6,591	3,296	2
11 Linford South	2	5,960	2,980	0	6,477	3,239	0
12 Loughton Park	3	8,176	2,725	-8	10,003	3,334	3
13 Middleton	2	3,514	1,757	-41	7,042	3,521	9
14 Newport Pagnell North	2	5,677	2,839	-4	5,763	2,882	-11
15 Newport Pagnell South	2	5,692	2,846	-4	5,827	2,914	-10
16 Olney	2	6,236	3,118	5	6,723	3,362	4
17 Sherington	1	3,211	3,211	8	3,328	3,328	3
18 Stantonbury	2	6,828	3,414	15	6,873	3,437	6
19 Stony Stratford	3	9,276	3,092	4	9,383	3,128	-3
20 Walton Park	3	9,448	3,149	6	9,681	3,227	0
21 Whaddon	2	6,601	3,301	11	6,662	3,331	3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Wolverton	3	9,872	3,291	11	10,073	3,358	4
23 Woughton	2	6,416	3,208	8	6,476	3,238	0
Totals	51	151,250	–	–	164,691	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,966	–	–	3,229	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Milton Keynes Council's submission.*

Notes: 1 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.

2 The proposed warding arrangements for Milton Keynes reflect the provisions of The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 which made a number of boundary amendments to existing parishes and established new parishes for Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Calverton, Central Milton Keynes, Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow, New Bradwell, Simpson, Stony Stratford, Tyringham & Filgrave, West Bletchley and Wolverton & Greenleys areas.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the unitary authority area of Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the four two-tier districts in Buckinghamshire, together with Milton Keynes Council, as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first detailed review of the electoral arrangements of Milton Keynes unitary authority. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1975 (Report No. 124). Since undertaking that review, Milton Keynes has become a unitary authority on its existing boundaries (April 1997). Electoral arrangements were also considered as part of the Commission's review of local government structure in 1994, although given the constraints on the timetable for the review and the need to afford priority to structural concerns, a detailed review of electoral arrangements was not possible. The electoral arrangements of the new unitary authority were put in place as part of the Structural and Boundary Change Order which abolished the two-tier Milton Keynes Council and the County Council electoral divisions covering the area of the new authority.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (Fourth Edition published in December 2000). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a borough’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including Milton Keynes Council, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in our *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections, and our present *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Milton Keynes Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, the County of Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils, 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. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 27 February 2001 and will end on 30 April 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.***

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an Order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The unitary authority of Milton Keynes covers an area of approximately 31,000 hectares in north-east Buckinghamshire and has a population of over 200,000, some half of whom reside in Milton Keynes new town itself. Over the last thirty years, Milton Keynes has expanded rapidly, enjoying the fastest rate of growth in England. It became a unitary authority in April 1997. Outside the new town of Milton Keynes itself, the borough is predominantly rural in character although it also includes the smaller towns of Bletchley, Fenny Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Olney, Stony Stratford and Wolverton. The authority is bounded by the County of Northamptonshire to the north and west, Bedfordshire to the east and Aylesbury Vale District to the south. From May 2001, the borough will be entirely parished with a total of 46 parishes.

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

17 The electorate of the borough is 151,250 (February 2000). The Council currently has 51 members who are elected from 24 wards. Five wards cover the rural part of the borough, while 19 wards cover the urban areas. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 15 wards are each represented by two councillors and three wards are each represented by a single councillor. The Council is elected by thirds.

18 Due to significant levels of growth which had taken place in the borough since the last periodic electoral review was carried out in 1975, the Commission made modifications to electoral arrangements at the time of the review of the local government structure in Buckinghamshire in 1994. Since that review was carried out, there has been a further increase in the electorate in Milton Keynes borough, with around 16 per cent more electors than at the time of the review as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Emerson Valley and Walton Park wards.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,966 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 3,229 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes, the number of electors per councillor in 13 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and two wards vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Ouse Valley ward, where the councillor represents 27 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Milton Keynes

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bradwell	2	7,001	3,501	18	7,010	3,505	9
2 Bradwell Abbey	2	4,934	2,467	-17	4,936	2,468	-24
3 Campbell Park	3	10,108	3,369	14	10,607	3,536	9
4 Danesborough	2	5,021	2,511	-15	5,135	2,568	-20
5 Denbigh	3	9,541	3,180	7	10,672	3,557	10
6 Eaton Manor	2	6,404	3,202	8	6,515	3,258	1
7 Emerson Valley	2	6,235	3,118	5	9,657	4,829	50
8 Fenny Stratford	2	4,407	2,204	-26	4,805	2,403	-26
9 Furzton	2	5,663	2,832	-5	6,137	3,069	-5
10 Hanslope Park	1	3,217	3,217	8	3,391	3,391	5
11 Linford North	2	6,565	3,283	11	6,591	3,296	2
12 Linford South	2	6,888	3,444	16	6,949	3,475	8
13 Loughton Park	3	9,147	3,049	3	11,157	3,719	15
14 Newport Pagnell North	2	5,295	2,648	-11	5,383	2,692	-17
15 Newport Pagnell South	2	6,074	3,037	2	6,207	3,104	-4
16 Olney	2	4,919	2,460	-17	5,346	2,673	-17
17 Ouse Valley	1	2,152	2,152	-27	2,284	2,284	-29
18 Sherington	1	2,376	2,376	-20	2,421	2,421	-25
19 Stantonbury	2	6,828	3,414	15	6,977	3,489	8
20 Stony Stratford	2	6,152	3,076	4	6,257	3,129	-3
21 Walton Park	3	9,280	3,093	4	12,991	4,330	34
22 Whaddon	2	6,601	3,301	11	6,662	3,331	3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Wolverton	3	8,062	2,687	-9	8,159	2,720	-16
24 Woughton	3	8,380	2,793	-6	8,442	2,814	-13
Totals	51	151,250	–	–	164,691	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,966	–	–	3,229	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Milton Keynes 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 2000, electors in Ouse Valley ward were relatively over-represented by 27 per cent, while electors in Bradwell ward were relatively under-represented by 18 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from Milton Keynes Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 18 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Council, Milton Keynes Conservatives, Milton Keynes Labour Party, Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats and Councillor White, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Council and the Commission.

Milton Keynes Council

22 Milton Keynes Council proposed that the current council size of 51 be retained, and that the number of wards be reduced by two to 22. In the north of the borough, the Council proposed dividing the current Ouse Valley ward between a single-member Sherington ward and a two-member Olney ward, and transferring Moulsoe parish to a revised Newport Pagnell South ward. In the east, it proposed a single-member Danesborough ward, two-member Woughton and Middleton wards and a three-member Caldecotte ward. In the west, the Council proposed an enlarged Stony Stratford ward represented by three councillors, and allocating an additional councillor to Emerson Valley ward. In Bletchley, it proposed three-member Denbigh, Fenny Stratford and West Bletchley wards. The Council's proposals would result in eight of the 22 proposed wards having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent currently. By 2005, one ward would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average. The Council's proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Milton Keynes Conservatives

23 Milton Keynes Conservatives ('the Conservatives') put forward identical warding proposals to those proposed by the Council. They argued that the current council size of 51 is sufficient to represent the electors of Milton Keynes, and that a mixed pattern of wards reflects the different communities and terrains in the area. However, they considered that the authority should have whole-council elections rather than elections by thirds as at present and that, in order to improve electoral equality, further consideration should be given to warding arrangements in Newport Pagnell. The Conservatives' proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration

24 Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration ('the Labour Party') proposed a council size of 45, six fewer than present, and 15 three-member wards. It argued that, from May 2001, the authority will be entirely parished, providing neighbourhoods with a highly localised voice able to scrutinise Council decision-making, thereby enabling the

Council to become more strategic in approach. It considered that its proposals for a uniform structure of three-member wards would have the advantage of facilitating elections by thirds and would provide better electoral equality.

25 In the rural area, the Labour Party proposed two wards – Ouse Valley and Milton Keynes East – and a new ward containing the whole of Newport Pagnell town. The existing Woughton ward would be divided between new Four Bridges, Ouzel Valley and Mount Farm wards. The new Mount Farm ward would also include the current Fenny Stratford ward and part of Walton Park ward. In Bletchley, the northern parts of Denbigh and Whaddon wards would be combined to form a new West Bletchley ward, while the southern parts would be combined with the existing Eaton Manor ward to form a new South Bletchley ward. The Labour Party’s proposals would result in four of the 15 proposed wards having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent currently. By 2005, no wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average. The Labour Party’s proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats

26 Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats (‘the Liberal Democrats’) also proposed a council size of 51. They argued that Milton Keynes is a growing city, and that any reduction in council size would risk making representation more remote and would be “an extremely retrograde step”. They supported the retention of the current electoral cycle of election by thirds, and argued that the mixed pattern of wards should not be modified “without good reason”.

27 The Liberal Democrats’ proposals were identical to the Council’s proposals with the exception of the north of the borough and Bletchley. In the north, they proposed a three-member Olney & Rural ward, expanding Newport Pagnell North ward to include the parishes of Gayhurst, Lathbury and Stoke Goldington, and retaining the current Newport Pagnell South ward. In Bletchley, they proposed revised two-member Eaton Manor and Denbigh wards and a new three-member Bletchley Central ward comprising part of Denbigh and Eaton Manor wards and the Bletchley Town Centre and Fenny Stratford areas. They also proposed that the Council’s proposed Caldecotte ward be renamed Walton Park ward. The Liberal Democrats’ proposals would result in eight of the 22 proposed wards having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent currently. By 2005, no wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average. The Liberal Democrats’ proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Councillor White

28 Councillor White (Danesborough ward) also proposed retaining the current council size of 51, which he argued is “quite sufficient to represent the electors of Milton Keynes”. He also stated that he would oppose any increase in council size, and supported a mixed pattern of wards for the borough.

29 Councillor White’s proposals were identical to the Council’s in the rural areas of the borough, but differed for Bletchley and the new town of Milton Keynes itself. In the north of the borough, he proposed expanding Newport Pagnell North ward to include the Blakelands area of the current Linford North ward. In the west, he proposed retaining the existing two-member Stony

Stratford ward and creating three-member Loughton Park and Shenley wards. In Bletchley, he proposed three-member West Bletchley, Water Eaton and Watling wards. Under his proposals, Bletchley town centre would be combined with the Eaton Park area, and Fenny Stratford would be combined with the northern part of the current Denbigh ward. In the east, he proposed a three-member Woughton ward and a two-member Middleton ward. Councillor White's proposals would result in seven of the 22 proposed wards having electoral variances of more than 10 per cent currently. By 2005, no wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average. Councillor White's proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Members of Parliament

30 One submission was received from a Member of Parliament for the borough. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (Milton Keynes South West) supported the Labour Party's proposals. She argued that a 45-member council would allow the Council to function in a more strategic and efficient manner. She stated that creating 15 three-member wards would ensure a more satisfactory arrangement under a system of elections by thirds, and would "reflect real communities within the City while ensuring a relatively small variance from the average voter number".

Parish, Town and Neighbourhood Councils

31 We received representations from eight parish, town and neighbourhood councils. Stony Stratford Neighbourhood Council supported the creation of three-member wards throughout the borough, and retaining the present system of elections by thirds. It also stated that it was not opposed to Stony Stratford being combined with adjoining communities for borough warding purposes. Wolverton & Greenleys Neighbourhood Council argued that the borough ward boundaries for its area should not cross parish boundaries, and that the communities of Wolverton and Greenleys should remain combined in a borough ward. Bradwell Abbey Parish Council argued that "all wards should have an equal number of councillors and have exactly the same cycle of elections".

32 Woughton Parish Council supported the creation of three-member wards throughout the borough and retaining the present system of elections by thirds. It argued that the southern part of Woughton on the Green parish shares links with Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, while the northern part of the parish shares links with estates in Campbell Park ward. Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Council also supported the creation of three-member wards and the retention of the present system of elections by thirds, and argued that there is a commonality of interests between residents in the areas around central Bletchley, stretching from West Bletchley in the west to Woughton on the Green parish in the north.

33 Woburn Sands Town Council argued that it should form part of a entirely rural, single-member ward rather than be part of a ward containing both urban and rural areas. Lavendon Parish Council expressed concern that any increase in the size of wards in the rural area could reduce the effectiveness of local representation, and supported retaining the existing Ouse Valley ward. Shenley Church End Parish Council argued that, in order to ease the workload on councillors, it should have an additional two parish councillors.

Other Representations

34 We received four further representations at Stage One. Councillor Ellis (Ouse Valley ward) opposed the Council's proposals for the rural area, arguing that increasing the size of rural wards to achieve better electoral equality would have a significantly detrimental effect on the quality of representation.

35 Bletchley Parish Working Group argued that, while the current wards in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford were satisfactory, there was a need to modify ward boundaries in West Bletchley. Campbell Park parish councillor, Councillor Osbourne, raised a number of issues, including a request for more frequent parish council elections.

36 A local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals, which he argued would provide reasonable electoral equality, a uniform structure of three-member wards and would reflect community ties. However, he proposed one alteration, arguing that its proposed Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards should be replaced by a new Northern Towns ward, combining Stony Stratford and Wolverton, and a revised Bradwell Abbey ward based upon Bradwell Abbey parish and the Great Holm, Greenleys and Crownhill areas.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

39 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for 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.

40 Our *Guidance* states that 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 kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

41 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 9 per cent from 151,250 to 164,691 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the current Walton Park and Emerson Valley wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Loughton Park and Denbigh wards. The Council has 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 has been obtained from the Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries.

42 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

43 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

44 Milton Keynes Council currently has 51 members. The Labour Party and Dr Phyllis Starkey MP proposed reducing the number of councillors for the borough from 51 to 45, while the Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives and Councillor White proposed retaining the current council size of 51.

45 The Labour Party argued that, from May 2001, the whole of Milton Keynes would be parished and that 322 parish councillors will provide neighbourhoods with a highly localised voice. It stated that it supported strengthening the role of parish and town councils, and argued that this increase in local representation provides an opportunity to further devolve services and decisions to local neighbourhoods. It proposed creating a strategic authority working in partnership with, and devolving responsibility to, parish councils and parish councillors. The Labour Party stated that a smaller strategic authority with clear effective leadership would focus accountability upon the key strategic decisions affecting Milton Keynes. It also argued that its proposals would complement the move to new democratic structures, as required by the Local Government Act 2000. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP argued that reducing the council size to 45 would enable the Council to function in a more strategic and efficient manner.

46 The Liberal Democrats argued that "Milton Keynes is a growing city, probably at a rate without equal in England". In view of this, they considered that it may be possible to make a persuasive case for an increase in the size of the Council. They noted that, in a growing city, retaining the existing council size would lead to an increasing number of electors per councillor with the risk that representation may become more remote. They also considered that a larger council would provide sufficient backbench councillors to more effectively scrutinise the Executive, in line with the modernisation agenda. They concluded, on balance, that the current council size of 51 should be retained and argued that "any reduction in the size of the Council in a rapidly expanding city would be an extremely retrograde step".

47 The Conservatives argued that 51 councillors are quite sufficient to represent the electors of Milton Keynes. Councillor White supported this view, but also stated that he would oppose any increase in the number of councillors for Milton Keynes. Councillor Ellis argued that "it is simply not possible to collect together enough rural parishes in any part of the northern two-thirds of the unitary council to create a manageable electoral total of more than 2,500 per member". As the current average number of electors per councillor is 2,966, this implies support for an increase in the number of councillors in the rural area if nowhere else.

48 We have carefully considered the representations received, and have noted the lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate council size for Milton Keynes. The disagreement over council size appears to centre primarily on the representational role of councillors. The new town of Milton Keynes is growing at a rate that is almost without equal in the rest of England. Since the review of local government structure in 1994, at which time a number of modifications were

made to electoral arrangements, including the establishment of a council size of 51, the electorate of the borough has increased by more than 15 per cent. Councillor Ellis, with reference to the more rural northern part of the borough, considered that achieving electoral equality based on the current council size in this area would have a significant impact on the representation of the communities concerned. The Liberal Democrats also noted that merely retaining the current council size would increase the representational burden of councillors, while the Conservatives considered that the current council size is sufficient. The Labour Party, however, proposed to resolve this issue by increasing delegation to parish councils in the borough.

49 We have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to support a reduction in council size to 45. While we welcome the Labour Party's objective of delegating significant responsibilities to parish and town councils, we consider that to be effective such a proposal assumes a high level of involvement in such matters from parish councils which, in our experience, vary significantly in terms of their levels of activity. We therefore have some reservations over basing a reduction in council size on a premise, as yet untested, that all parish councils in the area will wish to participate in the exercise of delegated functions. We also note that some parish councils have yet to be created, while some essentially replace neighbourhood councils in their areas, suggesting little actual increase in the level of local representation. We note that Milton Keynes is a growing area, but consider that it has a very diverse nature – from very sparsely populated rural areas in its north, to the older, more established towns of Newport Pagnell, Bletchley and Wolverton and areas of new development in the new town itself. We consider that in the light of this, a reduction in council size prior to any significant changes in the internal management of the authority may lead to less convenient and effective local government for the area.

50 We note that there is some cross-party support for retaining the current council size, and that there is no evidence of public support for the significant reduction proposed by the Labour Party. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral Arrangements

51 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Council, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives and Councillor White, a number of considerations have emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations.

52 Firstly, we received differing views as to the most appropriate council size for the borough. While the Labour Party proposed a reduction in council size to 45, the other borough-wide submissions proposed retaining a council size of 51. As detailed above, we are basing our draft recommendations on the current council size of 51. Given this preliminary conclusion on the most appropriate council size, we have been unable to adopt the Labour Party's scheme.

53 Secondly, we note that the Labour Party have put forward a uniform pattern of three-member wards, while the other borough-wide schemes would provide a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards. The Labour Party argued that a uniform pattern of three-member wards, combined with elections by thirds, would “enhance accountability and help create a more responsive and effective strategic authority”. It argued that the current mixed pattern of wards “causes confusion, reduces accountability and gives a distinct political advantage to parties representing smaller areas without annual elections”. It also cited other cities, such as Southampton, Stoke-on-Trent and Portsmouth, where the Commission has recommended the creation of uniform patterns of three-member wards. The Liberal Democrats argued that the current “hybrid” pattern of wards should not be disturbed without good reason. They argued that their proposals would have the advantage of largely maintaining the link between parishes and borough wards which “has brought tremendous benefits in terms of ease of working between the parishes, parish councillors and borough councillors who represent the same communities”. They argued that, in Milton Keynes, a three-member ward structure would result in “a considerable loss of community identity”. The Conservatives and Councillor White also proposed a mixed pattern of wards which the Conservatives argued would respond “to the different terrains of Milton Keynes”. They stated that their proposals would provide two- and three-member wards for the new town and that only certain village wards, covering a substantial area, would be represented by a single councillor.

54 As outlined in our *Guidance*, we are not prescriptive about whether wards should be represented by one, two or three councillors. Instead, our proposals are based upon the arrangements which we consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We consider that Milton Keynes is a diverse authority. It combines a significant rural area in the north and east with more established settlements such as Bletchley, Fenny Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Stony Stratford and Wolverton, and newer developments in the new town itself. Unlike many other large urban areas, the communities in the new town are self-contained and discrete entities within a grid road system which provides physical barriers between areas. In our view, this diverse settlement plan does not lend itself to a uniform warding pattern, and we consider that a mixed pattern of wards would best reflect community identities and interests and would provide convenient and effective local government in Milton Keynes. We also consider that any new warding arrangements should, as far as practicable, reflect the grid road system in the new town, the M1 motorway and the A5 trunk road and maintain separate representation for urban and rural areas.

55 Thirdly, we have had regard to the provisions of The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 which comes into effect in May 2001. This Order provides for the creation of 10 new parishes (Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Calverton, Central Milton Keynes, Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow, New Bradwell, Simpson, Stony Stratford, Tyringham & Filgrave, West Bletchley and Wolverton & Greenleys) and makes numerous parish boundary changes. As a result of the Order, the borough would be entirely parished. Where parish boundaries have not been subject to change, our proposals reflect the existing boundaries and warding arrangements. Where they have been subject to change, our proposals reflect the new parish boundaries and the revised parish warding arrangements currently being prepared by Milton Keynes Council. There are, however, two exceptions to this approach. In Newport Pagnell and West Bletchley, our draft

recommendations for borough wards would supercede parish warding arrangements currently being prepared by Milton Keynes Council.

56 We propose basing our draft recommendations for the new town area on the Council's proposals, which were identical to the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' proposals. We propose putting forward our own proposals for Newport Pagnell and the rural area, reflecting elements of the Council's and Conservatives' scheme, and basing our proposals for Bletchley on the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We consider that our draft recommendations would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards;
- (b) Hanslope Park, Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards;
- (c) Bradwell Abbey, Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards;
- (d) Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards;
- (e) Denbigh, Eaton Manor, Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards;
- (f) Danesborough ward;
- (g) Campbell Park, Walton Park and Woughton wards;
- (h) Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards.

57 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards

58 The town of Newport Pagnell is located to the north-east of Milton Keynes town and currently comprises two wards, each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Newport Pagnell North ward has 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, which is forecast to deteriorate to 17 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Newport Pagnell South ward currently has 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, and is projected to contain 4 per cent fewer than average by 2005.

59 The Council proposed that the existing Newport Pagnell South ward be expanded to include Moulsoe parish (from Sherington ward), and that the existing Newport Pagnell North ward remain unchanged. Under the Council's proposals, Newport Pagnell North ward would have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, deteriorating to 17 per cent fewer by 2005. Newport Pagnell South would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to equal to the average by 2005.

60 The Conservatives proposed identical arrangements for Newport Pagnell to the Council. They considered that the parish wards of Newport Pagnell should be modified "in order to bring about a more tolerable variance" for the current Newport Pagnell North ward. However, they put forward no detailed proposals for the town.

61 The Liberal Democrats proposed alternative arrangements for Newport Pagnell. They proposed no change to the existing Newport Pagnell South ward, noting that the ward is

coterminous with the new Town Council ward and has reasonable electoral equality. In order to improve electoral equality, they proposed expanding Newport Pagnell North ward to include Lathbury, Gayhurst and Stoke Goldington parishes from the existing Sherington ward. They noted that all three parishes are located on the B526 Newport Pagnell to Northampton road and lie between the River Ouse and the M1 motorway. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards would have 1 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, deteriorating to 6 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2005.

62 The Labour Party argued that, based on a council size of 45, the current Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards should be combined to form a three-member Newport Pagnell ward. It argued that the town has an historic identity and record of independence, and that the area should maintain its own separate representation rather than be broken up and combined with parts of the rural area. Under a council size of 45, the Labour Party's proposed Newport Pagnell ward would have 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 6 per cent more than average by 2005. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

63 Councillor White concurred with the Council's and Conservatives' proposals for Newport Pagnell South ward. However, in relation to Newport Pagnell North ward, he proposed combining the current ward with the Blakelands area of Great Linford parish. Alternatively, in order to facilitate a three-member ward pattern, he proposed combining the revised Newport Pagnell North ward with Hanslope Park ward. Under Councillor White's preferred option, Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards would have 1 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent fewer and equal to the average by 2005). His alternative proposal for a three-member Newport Pagnell North ward would contain 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, and 2 per cent fewer by 2005.

64 We note that we received a number of differing proposals for the Newport Pagnell area. In order to improve electoral equality, the Council proposed combining Moulsoe parish with part of Newport Pagnell. The Conservatives concurred, but also proposed that changes be made to the boundary between the two wards in the town to improve electoral equality further. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, proposed combining Gayhurst, Lathbury and Stoke Goldington parishes with the northern part of Newport Pagnell. While we recognise that this approach would provide improved electoral equality in Newport Pagnell, we have not been persuaded that it is appropriate in this area. We consider that while the villages surrounding Newport Pagnell have good communication links with the town, they are quite different in nature from it. In particular, we note that Newport Pagnell is a town with an electorate of over 11,000, while the largest of the surrounding villages, Stoke Goldington, has fewer than 500 electors.

65 We have also considered Councillor White's proposal to combine the Blakelands area of Linford North ward with the northern part of Newport Pagnell. We note that such a proposal would significantly improve electoral equality, and would combine Newport Pagnell with another urban area rather than surrounding rural areas. However, we have not been persuaded that there are significant community links between the Blakelands area and Newport Pagnell. Upon

inspection, we noted that the area is separated from Newport Pagnell by the M1 motorway and that the majority of the electors reside in the area to the south of Tanners Drive Industrial Estate. We consider that the Blakelands area has a greater affinity with other parts of the new town than with Newport Pagnell, and in particular shares community ties with Giffard Park, with which it is also linked at parish ward level.

66 We concur with the Labour Party's view that Newport Pagnell is distinct from the surrounding areas, and that it should maintain separate representation on the Council. Based on our proposed council size of 51, we propose that the town should remain represented by four councillors, rather than three councillors as proposed by the Labour Party. We recognise that, under our proposed council size of 51, the town would be entitled to 3.8 councillors now and 3.6 councillors by 2005, and that some of the alternative options would provide better levels of electoral equality than our proposals. However, we consider that this approach would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area.

67 We are not content, however, to retain the existing wards in Newport Pagnell as the existing Newport Pagnell North ward in particular provides a poor level of electoral equality. We consider that there is merit in the Conservatives' proposal to modify the boundaries between the two wards in the town to improve electoral equality. However, in the light of no detailed proposals for revised warding arrangements being proposed, we have prepared our own proposal for this area. We propose that the area to the north of the High Street be transferred from Newport Pagnell North ward to Newport Pagnell South ward, and that the area to the north of Annesley Road, The Grove and to the rear of properties on Broad Street should be transferred from Newport Pagnell South ward to the revised Newport Pagnell North ward.

68 Under our proposals, the revised Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards would both have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average currently, and 11 per cent and 10 per cent fewer respectively by 2005. We recognise that these proposals differ somewhat from those proposed locally at Stage One, and would particularly welcome local views at Stage Three. Our proposed ward boundaries in Newport Pagnell are illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A.

Hanslope Park, Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards

69 The four wards of Hanslope Park, Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington cover the rural part of the district to the north and north-east of Milton Keynes new town. Olney ward is represented by two councillors while Hanslope Park, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards are each represented by a single councillor. Hanslope Park comprises the three parishes of Castlethorpe, Hanslope and Haversham-cum-Little Linford, while Olney ward comprises the three parishes of Olney, Ravenstone and Weston Underwood. Ouse Valley ward contains the nine parishes of Astwood, Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Emberton, Hardmead, Lavendon, Newton Blossomville, Tyringham & Filgrave and Warrington; while Sherington ward contains the seven parishes of Chicheley, Gayhurst, Lathbury, Moulsoe, North Crawley, Sherington and Stoke Goldington. Currently, Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards are significantly over-represented with 17 per cent, 27 per cent and 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than average respectively (and 25 per cent, 17 per cent and 29 per cent fewer by 2005). Hanslope Park ward currently has 8 per

cent more electors per councillor than average, improving to 5 per cent more than average by 2005.

70 The Council proposed that the number of councillors for this area be reduced from five to four in order to improve electoral equality. In particular, it proposed dividing the existing Ouse Valley ward between revised Olney and Sherington wards. The revised Olney ward would comprise Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Lavendon, Newton Blossomville, Olney, Warrington and Weston Underwood parishes and would continue to be represented by two councillors. The revised Sherington ward would comprise Astwood, Chicheley, Emberton, Gayhurst, Hardmead, Lathbury, North Crawley, Ravenstone, Sherington, Stoke Goldington and Tyringham & Filgrave parishes and would continue to be represented by one councillor. It proposed retaining the existing single-member Hanslope Park ward, subject to minor boundary modifications with the existing Wolverton ward to take account of changes to parish boundaries. As outlined above, under the Council's proposals, Moulsoe parish would be combined with the existing Newport Pagnell South ward. Under the Council's proposals, Hanslope Park, Olney and Sherington wards would have 8 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (improving to 5 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent more by 2005).

71 The Conservatives and Councillor White put forward identical proposals to the Council for this area. However, Councillor White also put forward some alternative proposals. In order to facilitate a three-member ward pattern, he considered that Newport Pagnell North ward could be combined with Hanslope Park ward. He reiterated, however, that his preference would be for two separate wards. In relation to the proposed Olney ward, he argued that there may be some benefit in dividing the proposed Olney ward to form two single-member wards. A new Olney West ward would comprise Weston Underwood parish and the part of Olney Town to the west of the High Street and Yardley Road and would contain 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 1 per cent more by 2005. A new Olney East ward would comprise the remaining part of Olney Town together with Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Lavendon, Newton Blossomville and Warrington parishes from the current Ouse Valley ward. It would contain 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor currently, improving to 1 per cent more by 2005.

72 The Liberal Democrats also proposed retaining the existing Hanslope Park ward, subject to minor boundary changes resulting from the recent parish review. However, for the remainder of the area, they proposed alternative warding arrangements to those proposed by the Council. As outlined above, in order to improve electoral equality, the Liberal Democrats proposed that Lathbury, Gayhurst and Stoke Goldington parishes be transferred from Sherington ward to a revised Newport Pagnell North ward. They proposed combining the remaining part of the existing Sherington ward with the current Olney and Ouse Valley wards to form a new three-member Olney & Rural ward. The Liberal Democrats argued that the electorate of Olney Town is too large to entitle it to one member but too small for two members, and therefore needs surrounding villages added to it to achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality. They also noted that "Emberton, Sherington, Lavendon and the surrounding villages look to Olney for facilities... and therefore have a community of interest with Olney". The Liberal Democrats' proposed Olney & Rural ward would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, and 4 per cent fewer by 2005.

73 The Labour Party proposed two three-member wards for this area based on a council size of 45. It proposed a new Milton Keynes East ward comprising the majority of the existing Ouse Valley ward, part of the existing Sherington ward (Chicheley, Lathbury, Moulsoe, North Crawley and Sherington parishes), the majority of the existing Danesborough ward and part of Walton Park ward (the Atterbury, Broughton, Old Farm Park and Wavendon Gate areas). The proposed Ouse Valley ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Ouse Valley and Sherington wards (Gayhurst, Lavendon, Stoke Goldington and Warrington parishes), together with the existing Olney and Hanslope Park wards. The Labour Party argued that these wards would combine communities with traditional links. The proposals would utilise the River Great Ouse as a ward boundary throughout, with the exception of Lathbury and Cold Brayfield parishes. Under the Labour Party's proposed council size of 45, Milton Keynes East and Ouse Valley wards would have 14 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively (both having 6 per cent fewer by 2005). Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

74 Councillor Ellis (Ouse Valley ward) argued that there is a need for a lower number of electors per councillor in the rural area, stating that "the physical problem of representing my present scattered rural ward is infinitely more difficult than representing a Town electorate of more than four times the headcount". He stated that the existing Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards are reasonably coherent, and argued that the Council's proposals would lead to communities with no social, religious or economic ties being combined and would create wards too large to maintain effective oversight. Lavendon Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Ouse Valley ward, arguing that an enlarged ward would reduce the effectiveness of the area's representation.

75 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One and a number of considerations have emerged. Firstly, we note that our proposed council size of 51 limits the extent to which we are able to consider the proposals submitted by the Labour Party. We also note that, unlike the four other borough-wide schemes, we have not proposed combining any of the rural parishes with Newport Pagnell, and we are therefore unable to put forward these in their entirety either. We note also that, with the exception of Hanslope Park ward, the current wards provide a poor level of electoral equality and consider that this should be addressed as part of this review. We note that to achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality under our proposed council size, will inevitably result in the formation of larger wards in the rural area. We recognise Councillor Ellis' argument that larger geographical areas are more difficult to represent than predominantly urban ones and that therefore there should be some form of rural weighting. However, as outlined in our *Guidance*, there is no provision in legislation to apply such a weighting in reaching our recommendations.

76 We note that all of the borough-wide schemes would significantly improve electoral equality in the area, but differed with regard to the most appropriate ward boundaries. The Labour Party utilised the Great River Ouse as a ward boundary in this area and proposed two large wards each represented by three councillors. Its proposed Milton Keynes East ward would stretch from Little Brickhill in the south to Cold Brayfield in the north, and Ouse Valley ward from Castlethorpe in the west to Lavendon in the east. The Council, the Conservatives and Councillor White would largely maintain the existing Hanslope Park ward, but proposed dividing the existing Ouse Valley

ward between revised Olney and Sherington wards. Councillor White also put forward an alternative dividing Olney ward between two wards. The Liberal Democrats also proposed retaining Hanslope Park ward, but their proposed Olney & Rural ward would contain the whole of the rural area to the east of the M1 motorway less Gayhurst, Lathbury and Stoke Goldington parishes. They argued that a number of the communities in the Council's proposed Sherington ward look to Olney.

77 Our proposals for this area are based on the various locally-generated schemes, but with some modifications. We propose retaining the existing single-member Hanslope Park ward, subject to minor boundary changes to reflect the revised parish boundaries, as proposed by the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White. We consider that the three parishes which make up this ward share an affinity, and note that there are only three crossing points across the M1 motorway linking this area with the neighbouring parishes to their east. We consider that this proposal would provide a relatively compact single-member ward and a reasonable level of electoral equality, and are therefore content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposed Hanslope Park ward would have 8 per cent more electors per councillor currently, improving to 5 per cent more than average by 2005.

78 We propose two wards for the rural area to the east of the M1 motorway – a revised single-member Sherington ward and a revised two-member Olney ward – as proposed by the Council and the Conservatives, subject to Moulsoe parish forming part of a revised Sherington ward and Ravenstone parish forming part of a revised Olney ward. We consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposed Olney & Rural ward and the Labour Party's proposed Milton Keynes East ward would be large and unwieldy and that we should maintain smaller wards in what is a relatively sparsely populated area if possible. While we acknowledge there is some merit in providing three single-member wards in this area, as proposed under Councillor Whites' alternative proposal, we note that such a proposal is only possible by dividing the town of Olney between wards, which we do not consider would best reflect community ties.

79 Our proposed single-member Sherington ward would comprise the parishes of Astwood, Chicheley, Emberton, Gayhurst, Hardmead, Lathbury, Moulsoe, North Crawley, Sherington, Stoke Goldington and Tyringham & Filgrave. It would contain 8 per cent more electors per councillor currently, improving to 3 per cent more by 2005. Our proposed Olney ward would comprise Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Newton Blossomville, Lavendon, Olney, Ravenstone, Warrington and Weston Underwood parishes and would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor currently, improving to 4 per cent more by 2005. Our proposals for this area are illustrated in Map 2.

Bradwell Abbey, Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards

80 Stony Stratford and Wolverton are two historic towns to the north-west of Milton Keynes new town. Currently, the town of Stony Stratford is combined with the small village of Calverton to its south in the existing Stony Stratford ward, while Wolverton ward is based upon the former railway communities and contains the newly parished areas of Wolverton & Greenleys and New Bradwell. Bradwell Abbey ward is coterminous with Bradwell Abbey parish which forms part of Milton Keynes itself, and comprises the estates of Two Mile Ash, Hodge Lea and Stacey

Bushes. Bradwell Abbey and Stony Stratford wards are currently represented by two councillors each, while Wolverton ward is represented by three councillors. Bradwell Abbey and Wolverton wards currently have 17 per cent and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively (24 per cent and 16 per cent fewer by 2005). Stony Stratford ward currently has 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average, and is forecast to have 3 per cent fewer than average in five years' time.

81 The Council proposed that the number of councillors for this area be reduced from seven to six in order to improve electoral equality. Under the Council's proposals, the existing Bradwell Abbey ward would be divided between revised Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards, which would each be represented by three councillors. The revised Wolverton ward would comprise the new parishes of Wolverton & Greenleys and New Bradwell (on their revised boundaries) together with the part of Bradwell Abbey parish to the east of the A5 trunk road (Hodge Lea & Stacey Bushes parish ward). The revised Stony Stratford ward would comprise the two new parishes of Stony Stratford and Calverton together with the part of Bradwell Abbey parish and ward to the west of the A5 trunk road (Two Mile Ash parish ward). Under the Council's proposals, Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards would have 4 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (improving to 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more than average by 2005).

82 The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats put forward identical proposals to the Council in this area. The Liberal Democrats noted that while the existing Stony Stratford ward provides reasonable electoral equality, the current Bradwell Abbey ward is significantly over-represented. It also argued that residents of Two Mile Ash use Stony Stratford for shopping, and noted that the area is only linked to the remainder of the ward by one road across the A5 trunk road. In relation to the proposed Wolverton ward, it argued that "Wolverton and New Bradwell, although physically divided by the railway, have a strong community of interest as they are both former railway communities".

83 Councillor White put forward identical proposals to those of the Council for Wolverton ward. He argued that the Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes area of Bradwell Abbey parish relates well to the town, and noted that the proposal would improve electoral equality. However, he proposed that the current Stony Stratford ward should remain unaltered. He argued that the current two-member ward provides reasonable electoral equality and that the Kiln Farm Industrial Estate and A5 trunk road form natural boundaries for the ward. He further proposed that the remaining part of the existing Bradwell Abbey ward, the Two Mile Ash area, be combined with the Crownhill area of Shenley Church End parish and Loughton parish to form a revised three-member Loughton Park ward. Councillor White's proposed Loughton Park and Stony Stratford wards would have 2 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than average by 2005).

84 The Labour Party proposed revised three-member Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards, based on a council size of 45. It proposed combining the current Stony Stratford ward with the Crownhill area of Shenley Church End parish and Great Holm ward of Loughton parish from Loughton Park ward. It argued that many residents of the adjoining area work, shop and use leisure facilities in Stony Stratford. The Labour Party's revised Wolverton ward would comprise

the new parish of Wolverton & Greenleys and the parish of Bradwell Abbey, which it argued is closely linked to the town. The remaining part of the existing Wolverton ward, New Bradwell parish, would be combined with parts of the Bradwell and Stantonbury wards to form a revised Bradwell ward, as detailed below. Based on a council size of 45, the Labour Party's proposed Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards would have 2 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively (1 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2005). Dr Phyllis Starkey MP supported the Labour Party's proposals in their entirety.

85 A local resident supported the Labour Party's proposal for a reduced council size of 45, but argued for alternative warding arrangements in this area. He proposed a three-member Northern Towns ward, comprising the existing Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards less the Greenleys estate area of Wolverton & Greenleys parish. He argued that this proposal would combine two established communities formerly linked by a common Urban District Council prior to 1974. He also proposed a revised three-member Bradwell Abbey ward comprising Bradwell Abbey parish, the Greenleys estate from Wolverton & Greenleys parish, Great Holm ward of Loughton parish and the Crownhill area of Shenley Church End parish. Under these proposals, and a council size of 45, Northern Towns and Bradwell Abbey wards would have 3 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005).

86 We received three further representations in relation to this area. Bradwell Abbey Parish Council supported the creation of a uniform pattern of wards and elections. Stony Stratford Neighbourhood Council supported the creation of three-member wards, and were not opposed to being combined with neighbouring areas with which they share a community of interest. Wolverton & Greenleys Neighbourhood Council argued that the new parish of Wolverton & Greenleys should not be divided between borough wards or be combined with neighbouring parishes. It argued that the communities of Wolverton and Greenleys share many facilities and have been closely linked for 25 years.

87 We have carefully considered the representations received and note that all the proposals submitted at Stage One would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality in this area. We note, however, that our proposed council size of 51 limits the extent to which we are able to consider the Labour Party's proposals or any other proposals based on a council size of 45.

88 We note that the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White all put forward identical arrangements for a revised Wolverton ward. We concur with the view expressed at Stage One that, despite their physical division by the London to Glasgow railway line, New Bradwell and Wolverton are similar in nature and should continue to form part of the same ward. We are also content to combine the Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes area of Bradwell Abbey ward with Wolverton to form a revised ward, as the area is in close proximity to Wolverton and shares good communication links with it. We note that the proposed ward would have clear, identifiable boundaries of the A5 trunk road, the London to Glasgow railway line and the Grand Union Canal and that the level of electoral equality in the resulting ward would improve significantly over the next five years. We are therefore content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations.

89 We have carefully considered the proposal for a three-member Stony Stratford ward put forward by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, and Councillor White's proposal to retain the existing two-member ward. We note that the two proposals would achieve similar levels of electoral equality. We recognise that Stony Stratford is a more established area of the borough and that, to some extent, it is physically separate from the new town to its south and east, but note also the Liberal Democrats' view that residents of the Two Mile Ash area tend to use Stony Stratford for shopping and other services. For the purpose of our draft recommendations, however, we propose putting forward a three-member Stony Stratford ward, comprising Calverton and Stony Stratford parishes and the Two Mile Ash area of Bradwell Abbey parish. We consider that the proposal has cross-party support and would provide for minimal change to neighbouring wards. We would, however, particularly welcome the views of local residents and interested parties on the most appropriate warding arrangements for this area at Stage Three.

90 Our proposed Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards would contain 4 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor currently respectively, improving to 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005. Our proposed ward boundaries are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards

91 Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards cover the south-western and central parts of Milton Keynes new town. This part of the town has seen significant growth in recent years, and it is forecast that this will continue over the next five years. Furzton and Emerson Valley wards together cover the parish of Shenley Brook End, while Loughton Park ward contains the parishes of Loughton, Central Milton Keynes and Shenley Church End. Furzton ward is currently represented by two councillors and has 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2005. Emerson Valley and Loughton Park wards are currently represented by two and three councillors respectively, and have 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average currently. However, due to development over the next five years, it is forecast that Emerson Valley and Loughton Park wards will have 50 per cent and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

92 The Council proposed minimal change to warding arrangements in this area. Under the Council's proposals, Furzton ward would remain unchanged while Emerson Valley ward would be represented by three councillors (instead of the current two), and its ward boundaries would remain largely unchanged. The Council proposed modifying the boundary between Emerson Valley and Loughton Park wards in order to reflect the revised boundary between Shenley Brook End and Shenley Church End parishes. Loughton Park ward would continue to be represented by three councillors, but would in future comprise only Loughton and Shenley Church End parishes. It proposed combining the new Central Milton Keynes parish with part of Campbell Park parish to form a revised Campbell Park ward. Under the Council's proposals, Furzton and Loughton Park wards would have 5 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005). The proposed Emerson Valley ward would have 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average

currently. However, due to the significant level of development expected in this area, it is forecast to have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2005.

93 The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats put forward identical proposals to the Council for this area. The Liberal Democrats argued, in relation to its revised Loughton Park ward, that Central Milton Keynes parish is separated from the rest of the existing Loughton Park ward by the West Coast main railway line and the A5 trunk road, and that these form substantial barriers to community identities in this area.

94 Councillor White also proposed increasing the number of councillors for Emerson Valley ward from two councillors to three. However, in the remainder of the area, he put forward his own proposals. He proposed combining the Two Mile Ash area of Bradwell Abbey ward with the Crownhill area of Shenley Church End parish and Loughton parish to form a revised three-member Loughton Park ward. He proposed combining the current Furzton ward with the Shenley Church End area (in Shenley Church End parish) to form a new Shenley ward, represented by three councillors. He also proposed combining Central Milton Keynes parish with the majority of the existing Campbell Park parish to form a new Central Milton Keynes ward as detailed below. Councillor White's proposed Emerson Valley and Shenley wards would have 30 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 1 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2005. Loughton Park ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average both now and in 2005.

95 The Labour Party proposed alternative arrangements for this area based on a council size of 45. As outlined above, it proposed a revised Stony Stratford ward containing the current ward together with the Crownhill area of Shenley Church End parish and Great Holm ward of Loughton parish from Loughton Park ward. It proposed that the remaining parts of Loughton and Shenley Church End parishes (Loughton parish ward and the Shenley Church End area), be combined with the current Furzton ward to form a new three-member Teardrops ward. It proposed that the remaining part of the existing Loughton Park ward, Central Milton Keynes parish, be divided between new Four Bridges and Linford Wood wards, as detailed below. It proposed combining the existing Emerson Valley ward with Fairways ward of West Bletchley parish to form a new three-member Howe Park Wood ward. It noted that the Fairways area runs parallel to the Tattenhoe estate in Emerson Valley ward, and argued that the two share communication, family and schooling links. The Labour Party's proposed Teardrops and Howe Park Wood wards would have 3 per cent and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively (4 per cent and 2 per cent more by 2005). Dr Phyllis Starkey MP supported the Labour Party's proposals in their entirety. We also received a submission from a local resident supporting these proposals, with the exception of the Crownhill and Great Holm areas, which he proposed should form part of a revised Bradwell Abbey ward, as outlined above.

96 We have carefully considered the representations received in relation to this area at Stage One. We note that all of the borough-wide schemes, with the exception of that from the Labour Party, would retain the existing Emerson Valley ward subject to minor changes to its northern boundary to reflect revised parish boundaries, and increasing its representation to three councillors. We consider that this proposal would, under our proposed council size of 51, provide

for a reasonable level of electoral equality by 2005 and would reflect community ties well. We have not been persuaded to combine part of Bletchley with areas to its north, as we consider that such a proposal would divide the West Bletchley community unnecessarily and would fail to improve electoral equality under our proposed council size.

97 We also note that all of the borough-wide schemes proposed combining Central Milton Keynes parish with areas of the new town to the east of the A5 trunk road rather than with Loughton and Shenley Church End parishes with which it is currently linked at ward level. We concur with this view as, while we note that the shopping area acts as a centre for all the surrounding areas, we consider that the residential areas of the parish have greater links with areas to their north and south than with those to their west.

98 In relation to the remainder of the area, we propose adopting the proposals put forward by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. These proposals would retain the existing Furzton ward, and the current links between Loughton and Shenley Church End parishes that have cross-party support. While we consider that Councillor White's proposals would provide a comparable level of electoral equality, we note that they would require the warding of Shenley Church End parish. As outlined above, however, we recognise that there may be merit in the Two Mile Ash area being combined with areas to its south, and would therefore welcome further views in relation to this area at Stage Three.

99 Under our draft recommendations, Furzton and Loughton Park wards would be represented by two and three councillors respectively, and would contain 5 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005). The proposed three-member Emerson Valley ward would have 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, but due to significant development over the next five years is forecast to contain 1 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Our proposals are illustrated in the large map at the back of this report.

Denbigh, Eaton Manor, Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards

100 Denbigh, Eaton Manor, Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards cover the more established settlements of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford together with the smaller settlement of Simpson. Fenny Stratford ward covers Simpson parish and the Fenny Stratford and Bletchley Town Centre areas of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish, while Eaton Manor ward broadly covers the Water Eaton area of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish. Denbigh and Whaddon wards cover West Bletchley parish, and the Brickfields area of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish. Eaton Manor, Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards are each represented by two councillors, while Denbigh ward is represented by three councillors. Currently, Denbigh, Eaton Manor and Whaddon wards have 7 per cent, 8 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (10 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent more than average by 2005). Fenny Stratford ward, on the other hand, is significantly over-represented, with 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average both now and in 2005.

101 The Council proposed three three-member wards for this area. It proposed a new West Bletchley ward comprising the existing Whaddon ward together with the proposed Poets and

Saints wards of West Bletchley parish, which are currently part of Denbigh ward. It proposed combining the remaining part of Denbigh ward (the proposed Church Green, Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West wards of West Bletchley parish) with the Central Bletchley ward of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish, from Fenny Stratford ward to form a revised Denbigh ward. It proposed combining the remainder of Fenny Stratford ward (Fenny Stratford and Granby wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish and Simpson parish) with the current Eaton Manor ward and the Brickfields development to form a revised Fenny Stratford ward. Under the Council's proposals, the proposed Denbigh, West Bletchley and Fenny Stratford wards would have 2 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and equal to the borough average by 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals to the Council in this area.

102 The Liberal Democrats put forward alternative warding arrangements for the Bletchley area. They argued that Bletchley is a clearly defined area of the borough with its own unique features and identity. They proposed retaining the existing two-member Whaddon ward, arguing that the current boundaries are recognisable community boundaries. They stated that the A421 divides Bletchley from the new town of Milton Keynes, and Shenley Road, Buckingham Road and St Clement's Drive are all major roads which separate areas that were developed at different times. They proposed a revised two-member Denbigh ward, containing the proposed Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West wards of West Bletchley parish, together with Granby ward of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish. They also proposed a new three-member Bletchley Central ward, encompassing the remaining part of the existing Denbigh ward (Church Green, Poets and Saints wards of West Bletchley parish) together with the majority of the existing Fenny Stratford ward (Central Bletchley and Fenny Stratford wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish and Simpson parish) and part of Eaton Manor ward (Manor North ward of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish). They argued that the proposed ward would combine the older parts of Bletchley with the established communities of Fenny Stratford and Simpson, and that Manor North ward shares strong community ties with Fenny Stratford. The revised two-member Eaton Manor ward would contain the Water Eaton area together with the new development in the Brickfields area to the west of the London to Glasgow railway line.

103 The Liberal Democrats' proposed Bletchley Central, Denbigh and Eaton Manor wards would have 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent fewer by 2005). Whaddon ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, and 3 per cent more by 2005.

104 Councillor White proposed three three-member wards for the Bletchley area. He proposed a new Water Eaton ward comprising the existing Eaton Manor ward together with the Bletchley Town Centre area, the proposed Poets ward of West Bletchley parish and the Brickfields development to its south. A new Watling ward would contain Fenny Stratford, Granby and Manor North wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish, Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West wards of West Bletchley parish and Simpson parish. The remaining part of the existing Denbigh ward (Church Green and Saints wards of West Bletchley parish) would be combined with the existing Whaddon ward to form a new West Bletchley ward. Councillor White's proposed Watling and West Bletchley wards would have 2 per cent and 3 per cent more

electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer by 2005. Water Eaton ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, and 3 per cent fewer in 2005.

105 The Labour Party also proposed three three-member wards for Bletchley, but proposed that part of Milton Keynes new town should be combined with the area. In particular, its proposed Mount Farm ward would comprise the existing Fenny Stratford ward together with part of Woughton ward, and the proposed Caldecotte & Tilbrook and Walton Park, Walton and Walton Hall wards of Walton parish, currently in Danesborough and Walton Park wards. The Labour Party stated that the proposed ward would re-establish and expand the former (pre-1996) Fenny Stratford ward. It also argued that residents of the southern part of Woughton ward, the Beanhill, Netherfield and Tinkers Bridge areas, work and shop in Bletchley and share an affinity with the town. Its proposed South Bletchley ward would comprise the existing Eaton Manor ward together with the Brickfields development site and the part of Denbigh and Whaddon wards to the south of Buckingham Road (Poets, Racecourses and Saints wards of West Bletchley parish). The remaining part of the existing Denbigh ward (Church Green, Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West wards of West Bletchley parish) would be combined with part of Whaddon ward (Castles and Rivers wards of West Bletchley parish) to form a new West Bletchley ward. As outlined above, it proposed that the remainder of Whaddon ward (Fairways parish ward) be combined with Emerson Valley ward in a new Howe Park Wood ward. The Labour Party's proposed Mount Farm, South Bletchley and West Bletchley wards would, on the basis of a council size of 45, have 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent fewer, equal to the average and 3 per cent more by 2005). Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

106 We received three further submissions in relation to this area. Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Council supported elections by thirds and three-member wards. It supported ward boundaries centred on Queensway and central Bletchley, and argued that areas stretching from West Bletchley in the west to the southern part of Woughton ward in the north look towards Bletchley for shops, services and employment and share a commonality of interest with the town. Bletchley Parish Working Group argued that the ward boundaries in West Bletchley should be redefined in order to equalise electorates. Woughton Parish Council argued that the Beanhill, Tinkers Bridge and Netherfield estates look southwards to Bletchley for work, shopping and leisure purposes.

107 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, and a number of considerations have emerged. We note that our proposed council size of 51 limits the extent to which we are able to consider the Labour Party's proposals for this area but we have given consideration to their approach to new warding arrangements in Bletchley. We note that the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White all proposed new warding arrangements based on the settlements of Bletchley, Fenny Stratford and Simpson. The Labour Party, on the other hand, proposed combining parts of Woughton and Walton parishes with the town, and combining part of West Bletchley with the Emerson Valley area. We consider that Bletchley and Fenny Stratford are distinctive settlements which should be separately represented on the Council. While we recognise that residents of parts of Woughton may use

Bletchley for shopping or work, we consider that they have greater affinity with other parts of the new town of Milton Keynes than with Bletchley to the south, and note that they are divided by the A5 trunk road. Similarly, we consider that the western parts of Walton parish have a greater affinity with neighbouring parts of the new town, with which they are linked at parish level, than with Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, from which they are divided by Caldecotte Lake. We have therefore not been persuaded that this approach would best reflect community ties in this area.

108 We note that there was a lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate warding arrangements for the Bletchley area, with all of the borough-wide schemes putting forward differing proposals for this area. There were some areas of agreement, however. All of the borough-wide schemes would combine the new development in the Brickfields area with the Water Eaton area, and would combine parts of West Bletchley and Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parishes within a single ward, thereby breaching the London to Glasgow railway line. We note that access to the Brickfields development will be from Water Eaton rather than West Bletchley, and therefore consider there is some merit in this approach. We also consider that, while the railway line separates the centre of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford from West Bletchley, there are significant community ties between the areas and we are content therefore to combine them.

109 We propose basing our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposals in this area. We consider that their proposed warding arrangements would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the other borough-wide schemes. In particular, we note that their proposals would provide separate representation for the Water Eaton area, which we consider to be a distinctive part of the town, and would combine the Pinewood Drive and Oakwood Drive areas with Fenny Stratford rather than Water Eaton, which we consider would better reflect community ties. We also note that their proposal would provide a revised Denbigh ward comprising the newer part of the existing ward, and would combine the more established parts of the ward with Bletchley town centre.

110 However, in order to provide stronger ward boundaries in this area, we propose a number of amendments to the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We have not been persuaded that the Granby area should form part of a new Denbigh ward. We recognise that this area is physically isolated, separated from areas to its north by the A5 trunk road, from areas to its east by industrial estates and from areas to its west by the London to Glasgow railway line. However, we note that it does form part of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish and consider that, on balance, it would benefit from being linked with other parts of that parish at borough ward level. We also note that, under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the northern end of Whalley Drive and the eastern side of Shenley Drive to the south of Whaddon Way would be divided between its proposed Denbigh and Bletchley Central wards. We consider that both sides of northern end of Whalley Drive should form part of a revised Denbigh ward, and that the whole of the eastern side of Shenley Road to the south of Whaddon Way should form part of the same ward. We note that these changes would have a consequential effect on parish wards in this area, but note that their impact on parish ward electorates would be minimal. We also consider that, in order to reflect its constituent areas better, the proposed Bletchley Central ward should be renamed Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward.

111 Under our draft recommendations, our proposed two-member Denbigh and Eaton Manor wards would both contain 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (and

6 per cent and 1 per cent fewer respectively by 2005). Our proposed three-member Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward would contain equal to the borough average number of electors per councillor currently, and 2 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Our proposed Whaddon ward would contain 11 per cent more electors per councillor currently, and 3 per cent more than average by 2005. We recognise that our proposals depart, to some extent, from all of the proposals that we received at Stage One. We would, therefore, particularly welcome the views of local people at Stage Three. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report, and our proposed parish warding arrangements are illustrated in Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

Danesborough ward

112 Danesborough ward comprises the parishes of Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands, and lies to the south-east of Milton Keynes new town. Due to the expansion of Milton Keynes in recent years, the current ward currently contains a mixture of small settlements and urban development. As a result, the recent parish review modified the boundaries of Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill and Wavendon parishes. However, no modifications were made to borough ward boundaries as part of that review. The ward is currently represented by two councillors and contains 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, which is forecast to deteriorate further to 20 per cent fewer than average by 2005.

113 The Council proposed amending the boundaries of Danesborough ward to coincide with the revised parish boundaries in this area. Under its proposals, the revised ward would comprise the revised Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands parishes, and would be represented by one councillor. The Council also proposed that the part of Bow Brickhill parish being transferred to Walton parish, the area to the north of Bletchley to Bedford railway line, should form part of a new Caldecotte ward, as detailed below. Under the Council's proposals, Danesborough ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 4 per cent more than average by 2005.

114 The Conservatives and Councillor White put forward identical proposals to the Council for this area. Councillor White noted that the proposed Danesborough ward would remove areas of the new town from the ward. He argued that no part of the new town could easily be added to the ward, and that a single-member ward would be more appropriate in this area. The Liberal Democrats also put forward identical arrangements for Danesborough ward, but proposed that the part of Bow Brickhill parish being transferred to Walton parish should form part of a revised Walton Park ward, rather than a new Caldecotte ward. They argued that there is no community of interest between the new town areas and the older, more rural parts of the current Danesborough ward. The Liberal Democrats also noted that the recent parish review has divided the two areas, placing the new town areas in Walton parish, and argued that these areas of development should be placed in a new Walton Park ward where they "rightfully belong".

115 The Labour Party proposed combining the majority of the existing Danesborough ward with part of the existing Ouse Valley ward (Astwood, Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Emberton, Hardmead, Newton Blossomville and Tyringham & Filgrave parishes), the majority of the existing Sherington ward (Chicheley, Lathbury, Moulsoe, North Crawley and Sherington

parishes), and the eastern part of Walton Park ward (the Atterbury, Broughton, Old Farm Park and Wavendon Gate areas) in a new Milton Keynes East ward. As outlined above, it also proposed combining the Caldecotte area with the Walton area of Walton Park ward, part of Woughton ward and the existing Fenny Stratford ward to form a new Mount Farm ward. Under the Labour Party's proposed council size of 45, Milton Keynes East ward would have 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 6 per cent fewer by 2005. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

116 Woburn Sands Town Council argued that it favoured its area forming part of an entirely rural ward, rather than one which would contain both rural and urban areas. It also stated that it would prefer any revised ward to be represented by a single councillor.

117 We have carefully considered the representations received and note there is a degree of consensus regarding the formation of a single-member Danesborough ward based upon the revised Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands parishes. We concur with this view, noting that the revised ward would comprise only the small rural settlements, while the parts of the new town which currently form part of the ward, would be combined with similar areas to their north. We have not been persuaded that, as proposed by the Labour Party, these areas should be combined with rural parishes to their north, from which they are physically separated by the M1 motorway. Under our draft recommendations, Danesborough ward would contain 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 4 per cent more than average by 2005. Our proposed Danesborough ward is illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Campbell Park, Walton Park and Woughton wards

118 Campbell Park, Walton Park and Woughton wards cover the southern and eastern parts of Milton Keynes new town. All three wards are currently represented by three councillors. Campbell Park and Woughton wards are coterminous with Campbell Park and Woughton on the Green parishes respectively, while Walton Park ward is based on the existing Walton, Milton Keynes and Broughton parishes. From May 2001, a new Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish will be formed, consisting primarily of part of the existing Milton Keynes parish. In addition, the eastern boundary of Broughton parish will be modified to follow the M1 motorway and Walton parish will be expanded southwards to the Bletchley to Bedford railway line. Campbell Park and Walton Park wards currently have 14 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, and are forecast to contain 9 per cent and 34 more than average by 2005. Woughton ward currently has 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, and is forecast to have 13 per cent fewer by 2005.

119 The Council proposed a revised two-member Woughton ward comprising Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Leadenhall and Netherfield wards of Woughton on the Green parish. It also proposed a new two-member Middleton ward, combining the remaining part of the current Woughton ward (Peartree Bridge, Tinkers Bridge, Woughton Village & Woughton Park wards of Woughton on the Green parish) and the revised Broughton and Milton Keynes parishes and the proposed Monkston, Monkston Park & Kingston ward of

Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish from Walton Park ward. It proposed that the revised Walton parish, currently in Danesborough and Walton Park wards, be combined with the proposed Kents Hill, Kents Hill Park & Brinklow ward of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish to form a new three-member Caldecotte ward. The Council also proposed a revised three-member Campbell Park ward comprising part of the existing ward – Fishermead, Oldbrook, Springfield and Woolstone wards of Campbell Park parish – together with the new Central Milton Keynes parish from the existing Loughton Park ward. It proposed combining the remainder of the existing Campbell Park ward – Willen and Campbell Park & Newlands wards of Campbell Park parish – with part of the existing Linford South ward as detailed below.

120 The Council's proposed Caldecotte and Woughton wards would contain 6 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. By 2005, both wards are forecast to contain equal to the borough average number of electors per councillor. Campbell Park ward would contain 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 5 per cent more by 2005. Middleton ward, on the other hand, would contain 41 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, but due to significant development expected to take place in the area, is forecast to contain 9 per cent more than average by 2005.

121 The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats put forward identical warding arrangements for this area, but the Liberal Democrats proposed that Caldecotte ward should retain the existing ward name of Walton Park. The Liberal Democrats argued, in relation to their proposed Campbell Park ward, that Central Milton Keynes is a fragmented community, and that much of its residential area was in the same ward as the Fishermead and Springfield area prior to 1996 and that many children attend Fishermead schools. They also argued that the Willen area is physically separated from the rest of Campbell Park parish by Willen Lake and a large expanse of parkland, and has strong links with neighbouring estates such as Willen Park. They therefore considered that the Willen area should be combined with the northern part of the new town.

122 Councillor White proposed alternative arrangements for this area. He put forward an identical Caldecotte ward to the Council, arguing that all areas of the ward look towards Walnut Tree as their local centre. He also proposed a new Central Milton Keynes ward, similar to the Council's proposed Campbell Park ward. His proposed ward would be represented by three councillors and would comprise Central Milton Keynes parish together with Fishermead, Oldbrook and Springfield wards of Campbell Park parish. He proposed a revised three-member Woughton ward comprising the whole of the existing ward (coterminous with Woughton on the Green parish) and Woolstone ward of Campbell Park parish. He also proposed a new two-member Middleton ward, comprising part of the existing Walton Park ward (the revised Broughton and Milton Keynes parishes and the proposed Monkston, Monkston Park & Kingston ward of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish) and part of Campbell Park ward (Willen and Campbell Park & Newlands wards of Campbell Park parish). He argued, in relation to his proposed Middleton ward, that these areas were in the same ward prior to 1996.

123 Councillor White's proposed Central Milton Keynes and Woughton wards would have 3 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively (2 per cent and 5 per cent fewer by 2005). Caldecotte ward would have 6 per cent

more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to equal to the borough average by 2005. Middleton ward would have 53 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, but due to significant development expected in the area, is forecast to contain 5 per cent fewer than average in 2005.

124 The Labour Party proposed a new Ouzel Valley ward comprising the majority of the existing Walton Park ward with parts of Woughton and Campbell Park wards (Woughton ward of Woughton on the Green parish and Willen and Woolstone wards of Campbell Park parish). It proposed a new Four Bridges ward containing the western part of Campbell Park ward (Fishermead and Oldbrook wards of Campbell Park parish), the northern part of Woughton ward (Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Leadenhall and Peartree Bridge wards of Woughton on the Green parish), and part of Loughton Park ward (Central Milton Keynes West ward of Central Milton Keynes parish). It argued that its proposed Four Bridges ward would bring together the estates to the south of the city centre. In relation to the proposed Ouzel Valley ward, it argued that the Ouzel Valley Park links the various estates and that Newport Road links Woughton Park, Woughton and Woolstone on the western fringe of the ward. Under the Labour Party's proposed council size of 45, Four Bridges ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 1 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Ouzel Valley ward would have 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to equal to the borough average by 2005.

125 As outlined above, the Labour Party proposed combining the eastern part of the existing Walton Park ward with parts of the existing Danesborough, Sherington and Ouse Valley wards in a new three-member Milton Keynes East ward. Also, as outlined above, it proposed that Caldecotte & Tilbrook and Walton Park, Walton and Walton Hall wards of Walton parish (currently in Danesborough and Walton Park wards) be combined with part of Woughton ward and the existing Fenny Stratford ward to form a new Mount Farm ward. The remaining part of Campbell Park ward (Springfield and Campbell Park & Newlands wards of Campbell Park parish) would be combined with Linford North ward and part of Linford South ward to form a new Canalside ward as detailed below. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

126 Woughton Parish Council supported the creation of three-member wards for the area. It argued that the separation of the Oldbrook estate in Campbell Park parish from the Coffee Hall estate in Woughton on the Green parish was a mistake of the last review, as they have a long record of shared interest. It noted that the Eaglestone area (in Woughton on the Green parish) and Fishermead area (in Campbell Park parish) have common school catchment links, but argued that the Springfield area of Campbell Park parish has traditionally looked eastwards to the Woolstone area. As outlined above, the Parish Council also considered that the southern part of the parish has many links with Bletchley.

127 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, and a number of considerations have emerged. We note that our proposed council size of 51 limits the extent to which we are able to consider the Labour Party's proposals for this area.

128 We note that while there was some agreement regarding the most appropriate warding arrangements for the Woughton area between the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, differing views were expressed by Councillor White, the Labour Party and Woughton Parish Council. Councillor White proposed a three-member ward containing the whole of the parish together with the Woolstone area; the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed dividing Woughton between two wards; while the Labour Party, to an extent supported by Woughton Parish Council, proposed its division between three wards. We consider that the existing Woughton ward, which is coterminous with the parish of Woughton on the Green, is quite diverse in nature. It combines some of the more established new town estates, with traditional areas such as the old village of Woughton on the Green. We have not been persuaded, however, that we should combine part of Woughton with Bletchley to its south. We consider that, while the areas may share shopping or employment links, the Bletchley community is more established, and that the Beanhill and Netherfield estates have greater affinity with the Coffee Hall and Eaglestone estates to their north. We propose a two-member Woughton ward containing the proposed Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Leadenhall and Netherfield wards of Woughton on the Green parish, as proposed by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. We note that this proposal would reflect the links between the more established new town estates and would combine the part of the existing Woughton ward to the east of the Grand Union Canal with the similar communities to their east.

129 We also note that there was some agreement between the Council, the Conservatives and Councillor White that the revised Walton parish should be combined with the southern part of the new Kents Hill, Monkston and Brinklow parish in a new Caldecotte ward. The Liberal Democrats also supported this warding arrangement, but proposed that the ward retain its existing name of Walton Park. We consider that these proposals have considerable merit. They would combine the newer estates in the south-east of Milton Keynes centred around the Walnut Tree local centre, and we note that the ward would have strong boundaries including the Bletchley to Bedford railway line in the south, Caldecotte Lake in the west and the A421 Standing Way in the north. We consider that, on balance, there is some merit in retaining the existing ward name of Walton Park for the area, but would welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

130 We also note that the existing Campbell Park ward is quite diverse, and that all of the borough-wide proposals have proposed dividing it between new borough wards. All of the proposals would combine all or part of the existing ward with Central Milton Keynes. However, while the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed combining the Oldbrook, Fishermead and Springfield estates and the Woolstone area with the whole of Central Milton Keynes, Councillor White proposed that the Woolstone area should be combined with areas to its south. The Labour Party, on the other hand, proposed dividing the Central Milton Keynes area between wards, combining the Woolstone area with areas to its south and east, and the Springfield area with areas to its north. We consider that the whole of the Central Milton Keynes parish should be contained in a single ward, and that the Springfield estate shares greater affinity with areas to its west than its north. We consider that there is some merit in combining the Woolstone area with areas to its east, but that the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria for the area as a whole would be achieved by retaining its links with areas to its west. We therefore propose putting forward a revised Campbell Park ward as proposed by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in this area. We note, however, that

while the revised ward will continue to contain part of the existing Campbell Park parish, the Campbell Park area itself would no longer form part of the revised ward. We would therefore particularly welcome comments on the most appropriate ward name for this new ward at Stage Three.

131 We are also content to put forward the Council's proposed Middleton ward as part of our draft recommendations. We note that this proposal has the support of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, and is forecast to provide a reasonable level of electoral equality by 2005 in an area that is subject to significant growth over the next five years. We also consider that the proposed ward would reflect community ties well. In particular, it would combine areas to the east of the River Ouzel and the Grand Union Canal which would appear to have a great deal of affinity. It would also utilise the strong boundary of Willen Lake in the north, enabling the two neighbouring estates of Willen and Willen Park to be combined in a ward.

132 Our proposed Walton Park and Woughton wards would contain 6 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, and both are forecast to contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough by 2005. Campbell Park ward would contain 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 5 per cent more by 2005. Middleton ward, on the other hand, would contain 41 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently, but due to significant development expected in the area, is forecast to contain 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2005. Our proposed ward boundaries for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards

133 Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards cover the northern part of Milton Keynes new town. All four wards are currently represented by two councillors. Bradwell and Stantonbury wards are both coterminous with parishes of the same name, while Linford North and Linford South wards together cover Great Linford parish. While all four wards are significantly under-represented at present, due to their relatively stable electorates the level of electoral equality is forecast to improve over the next five years. Bradwell, Stantonbury, Linford North and Linford South wards currently have 18 per cent, 15 per cent, 11 per cent and 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, improving to 9 per cent, 8 per cent, 2 per cent and 8 per cent more than average by 2005.

134 The Council proposed retaining the existing two-member Linford North and Stantonbury wards, subject to a minor alteration to the northern boundary of Stantonbury ward to reflect the revised northern boundary of the parish. It proposed that expanding the existing Bradwell ward to include Conniburrow ward of Great Linford parish (currently in Linford South ward) and that the ward be represented by three councillors instead of two. It proposed a revised two-member Linford South ward containing the part of the existing ward to the east of the B4034 Marlborough Street (Downhead Park & Willen Park, Downs Barn and Neath Hill wards of Great Linford parish) together with Campbell Park & Newlands and Willen wards of Campbell Park parish. The Council's proposed Linford North and Stantonbury wards would contain 11 per cent and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, improving to 2 per cent

and 6 per cent more by 2005. Linford South ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in five years' time, while Bradwell ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now, and 5 per cent fewer by 2005.

135 The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats put forward identical warding arrangements to the Council for this area. The Liberal Democrats noted that the Bradwell Common estate and the Conniburrow area are directly linked by road, rather than separated by grid roads as most other areas in the new town area are. They argued that, as a result, there is a greater community of interest between the two areas than between most estates. In relation to Linford South ward, they argued that there are strong links between Willen and Willen Park, and that Campbell Park & Newlands ward of Campbell Park parish would sit comfortably with either Linford South or Campbell Park wards, as its housing is located on the northern and southern fringes of the ward.

136 Councillor White proposed four two-member wards for this area. He proposed retaining the existing Stantonbury ward, subject to a minor parish boundary change. However, for the remainder of the area, he proposed alternative warding arrangements. He proposed that the existing Bradwell ward should remain unchanged. His proposed Linford South ward would comprise Conniburrow, Downs Barn and Downhead Park & Willen Park wards of Great Linford parish from the existing ward, together with the Pennyland area (part of the existing Pennyland & Bolbeck parish ward) from Linford North ward. He also proposed a revised Linford North ward comprising Linford Village ward and the Bolbeck Park and Giffard Park areas (of Pennyland & Bolbeck Park and Giffard Park & Blakelands wards) of Great Linford parish from the existing ward and the Neath Hill ward of Great Linford parish from Linford South ward. As outlined above, he also proposed a revised Newport Pagnell North ward comprising the current ward and the Blakelands area of Great Linford parish. Councillor White's proposed Bradwell, Stantonbury, Linford North and Linford South wards would have 18 per cent, 15 per cent, 10 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively (9 per cent, 6 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent more by 2005).

137 The Labour Party proposed three wards for this area, each represented by three councillors. It proposed combining the whole of existing Linford North ward with Downhead Park & Willen Park ward of Great Linford parish from Linford South ward, and Springfield and Campbell Park & Newlands wards of Campbell Park parish from Campbell Park ward to form a new Canalside ward. It proposed that the remainder of Linford South ward be combined with part of Bradwell ward (Bradwell Common ward of Bradwell parish), part of Stantonbury ward (Stantonbury & Linford Wood ward of Stantonbury parish) and part of Loughton Park ward (Central Milton Keynes East ward of Central Milton Keynes parish) to form a new Linford Wood ward. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Bradwell and Stantonbury wards be combined with New Bradwell parish, from the existing Wolverton ward, to form a revised Bradwell ward. The Labour Party argued that, in relation to its proposed Bradwell ward, there are historic links between Old Bradwell and New Bradwell. Under the Labour Party's proposed council size of 45, Bradwell and Linford Wood wards would have 10 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently, improving to 2 per cent and 1 per cent more than average by 2005. Canalside ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor currently, and 2 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Dr Phyllis Starkey MP and a local resident supported the Labour Party's proposals for this area in their entirety.

138 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, and a number of considerations have emerged. We note that our proposed council size of 51 limits the extent to which we are able to consider the Labour Party's proposals for this area. Our proposals for the neighbouring Middleton ward and the town of Newport Pagnell also limit the extent to which we are able to put forward Councillor White's proposals. We are content to put forward the Council's proposals for this area, which were identical to those put forward by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. We note that these proposals would broadly retain the existing Linford North and Stantonbury wards and consider that, by combining the neighbouring areas of Bradwell Common and Conniburrow and Willen and Willen Park, they would reflect community ties in this area well.

139 Our draft recommendations would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality in this area, with no ward forecast to vary by more than 6 per cent from the borough average by 2005. Stantonbury and Linford North wards would contain 15 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average currently respectively, improving to 6 per cent and 2 per cent more than average by 2005. Linford South ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in 2005, while Bradwell ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor now and 5 per cent fewer by 2005. Our proposals are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

140 We received nine representations regarding the Council's electoral cycle. The Council, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, Woughton Parish Council, Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Council, Stony Stratford Neighbourhood Council and a local resident all supported the retention of election by thirds. The Labour Party argued that annual elections make councils more responsive, while the Liberal Democrats argued that the current system works well. The Conservatives, on the other hand, argued that elections should be held for the whole Council every four years.

141 We have considered carefully all representations on this issue. At present, there appears to be a majority view that the present electoral cycle should be retained and we therefore propose no change to the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds for the Council.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 51 members should be retained;
- there should be 23 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

143 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations predominantly on the Council’s proposals, which were identical to the Conservatives’ proposals and to the Liberal Democrats’ and Councillor White’s proposals in a number of areas. We propose departing from the Council’s proposals in the following areas:

- in Newport Pagnell we propose putting forward our own proposals;
- we propose modifying the Council’s proposals to include Moulsoe parish in a revised Sherington ward and Ravenstone parish in a revised Olney ward;
- we propose that the Council’s proposed Caldecotte ward should remain named Walton Park ward, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats; and
- we propose putting forward the Liberal Democrats’ proposals for the Bletchley area subject to some minor boundary modifications and a ward name change.

144 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	51	51	51	51
Number of wards	24	23	24	23
Average number of electors per councillor	2,966	2,966	3,229	3,229
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	8	12	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	2	7	0

145 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Milton Keynes Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 13 to eight. By 2005 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Milton Keynes Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 23 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

146 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough.

147 The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 comes into effect in May 2001, and provides for the creation of 10 new parishes in Milton Keynes: Bletchley & Fenny Stratford; Calverton; Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow; Central Milton Keynes; New Bradwell; Simpson; Stony Stratford; Tyringham & Filgrave; West Bletchley and Wolverton & Greenleys. It also provides for numerous parish boundary changes, and would result in the borough being entirely parished. The Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions did not make provision for new parish wards as part of that Order, and consequently a number of changes to parish wards are currently being prepared by Milton Keynes Council. It is envisaged that these changes will also come into effect in May 2001 and, as a result, our proposed wards reflect both existing parish warding arrangements and parish warding arrangements currently being prepared by the Council. However, as a result of modifications to borough ward boundaries in Newport Pagnell and West Bletchley, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Newport Pagnell and West Bletchley, to reflect the proposed borough wards. In the event of the Council not undertaking changes to parish warding arrangements we would, as part of our final recommendations, make some additional modifications to parish warding arrangements to ensure that parish warding arrangements reflect our proposed borough wards.

148 Newport Pagnell Town Council currently has three parish wards – Central, West and Tickford. However, the Council is current preparing modifications to its current parish warding arrangements. It is proposing that Newport Pagnell should be represented by 16 town councillors, as at present, and should in future be divided between two town council wards: North ward, represented by eight town councillors; and South ward, also represented by eight town councillors. The two wards would reflect the existing borough warding arrangements.

149 However, as part of our draft recommendations, we propose modifications to the existing borough wards in Newport Pagnell in order to improve electoral equality. As a result, we propose modifying the boundaries of North and South town council wards in order to reflect our new proposed borough wards in the town.

Draft Recommendation

Newport Pagnell Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North ward (returning eight town councillors) and South ward (returning eight town councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

150 West Bletchley Parish Council is one of the new parish councils being formed in Milton Keynes as the result of The Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000. The Council is proposing that the parish be represented by 23 councillors, and be divided between 10 parish wards. As part of our draft recommendations, we have proposed that West Bletchley parish be divided between the three borough wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Denbigh and Whaddon. In order to unite similar areas and to improve electoral equality, we propose that both sides of Whalley Drive to the north of Bletchley Park should form part of a revised Denbigh borough ward, and that the whole of the east side of Shenley Road to the south of its junction with Whaddon Way should form part of a new Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward. We therefore also propose that these areas be transferred from Church Green parish ward to Denbigh North East parish ward, and from Denbigh West parish ward to Church Green parish ward respectively. The number of electors which would be transferred between the relevant parish wards is minimal, and we therefore propose no change to the number of parish councillors for each ward.

Draft Recommendation

West Bletchley Parish Council should comprise 23 councillors, as at present, representing 10 wards: Castles, Church Green, Denbigh West, Fairways, Poets, Racecourses and Saints wards would each return two parish councillors, while Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Rivers wards would each return three parish councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

151 The parish of Shenley Church End is currently represented by five parish councillors. At Stage One, the Parish Council requested an increase of two parish councillors, arguing that it is finding it difficult to share the workload amongst the existing parish councillors. We are content to put forward the Parish Council's proposal for the purpose of consultation, and would welcome further views at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Shenley Church End Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, two more than at present.

152 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the borough. A Campbell Park parish councillor, Councillor Osbourne, requested that parish council elections should take place by thirds at the same time as Milton Keynes Council. Currently, there is no provision in legislation for such a change, and we therefore propose no change to the electoral cycle for parish and town councils.

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Milton Keynes

5 NEXT STEPS

154 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 30 April 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

155 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

156 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Milton Keynes: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Milton Keynes 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, A3 and A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Newport Pagnell town.

Maps A3 and A4 illustrate the proposed warding of West Bletchley parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the new town of Milton Keynes and Bletchley areas.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Milton Keynes: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Newport Pagnell Town

Map A3: Proposed Warding of West Bletchley Parish (Northern Area)

Map A4: Proposed Warding of West Bletchley Parish (Southern Area)

APPENDIX B

Milton Keynes Council and Milton Keynes Conservatives' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

As stated in Chapter 3 of this report, the proposals for new warding arrangements put forward by the Council and Milton Keynes Conservatives were identical. Our draft recommendations, as detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those put forward by the Council and the Conservatives in nine wards, where the proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Milton Keynes Council's and Milton Keynes Conservatives' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Caldecotte	3	9,448	3,149	6	9,681	3,227	0
Denbigh	3	8,716	2,905	-2	9,861	3,287	2
Fenny Stratford	3	9,058	3,019	2	9,653	3,218	0
Newport Pagnell North	2	5,295	2,648	-11	5,383	2,692	-17
Newport Pagnell South	2	6,314	3,157	6	6,451	3,226	0
Olney	2	6,055	3,028	2	6,540	3,270	1
Sherington	1	3,152	3,152	6	3,271	3,271	1
West Bletchley	3	9,179	3,060	3	9,140	3,047	-6

Source: Electorate figures are based on Milton Keynes Council's submission.

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

Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats in six wards, where the Liberal Democrats' proposals were as follows:

Figure B2: Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bletchley Central	3	8,746	2,915	-2	9,351	3,117	-3
Denbigh	2	5,881	2,941	-1	6,251	3,126	-3
Newport Pagnell North	2	5,982	2,991	1	6,098	3,049	-6
Newport Pagnell South	2	6,074	3,037	2	6,207	3,104	-4
Olney & Rural	3	8,760	2,920	-2	9,340	3,113	-4

Source: Electorate figures are based on Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats' submission.

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

Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B3: Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bradwell	3	11,050	3,683	10	11,206	3,735	2
Canalside	3	10,057	3,352	0	10,746	3,582	-2
Four Bridges	3	10,555	3,518	5	10,859	3,620	-1
Howe Park Wood	3	7,831	2,610	-22	11,177	3,726	2
Ouse Valley	3	9,678	3,226	-4	10,347	3,449	-6
Ouzel Valley	3	8,645	2,882	-14	11,183	3,728	2
Linford Wood	3	10,888	3,629	8	11,042	3,681	1
Milton Keynes East	3	8,716	2,905	-14	10,282	3,427	-6
Mount Farm	3	10,550	3,517	5	10,610	3,537	-3
Newport Pagnell	3	11,369	3,790	13	11,590	3,863	6
South Bletchley	3	10,406	3,469	3	10,986	3,662	0
Stony Stratford	3	10,248	3,416	2	10,881	3,627	-1
Teardrop	3	9,742	3,247	-3	11,457	3,819	4
West Bletchley	3	10,544	3,515	5	11,267	3,756	3
Wolverton	3	10,970	3,657	9	11,060	3,687	1
Totals	45	151,249	-	-	164,693	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,361	-	-	3,660	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Milton Keynes Labour Party's submission.

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

Councillor White's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B4: Councillor White's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bradwell	2	7,001	3,501	18	7,010	3,505	9
Caldecotte	3	9,448	3,149	6	9,681	3,227	0
Central Milton Keynes	3	9,135	3,045	3	9,481	3,160	-2
Danesborough	1	3,303	3,303	11	3,369	3,369	4
Emerson Valley	3	6,235	2,078	-30	9,581	3,194	-1
Hanslope Park	1	3,217	3,217	8	3,391	3,391	5
Linford North	2	6,504	3,252	10	6,530	3,265	1
Linford South	2	6,226	3,113	5	6,285	3,143	1
Loughton Park	3	9,081	3,027	2	9,890	3,297	2
Middleton	2	2,776	1,388	-53	6,766	3,383	5
Newport Pagnell North	2	6,018	3,009	1	6,108	3,054	-5
Newport Pagnell South	2	6,314	3,157	6	6,477	3,224	-0
Olney	2	6,055	3,028	2	6,540	3,270	1
Shenley	3	7,882	2,627	-11	9,316	3,105	-4
Sherington	1	3,152	3,152	6	3,271	3,271	1
Stantonbury	2	6,828	3,414	15	6,873	3,437	6
Stony Stratford	2	6,152	3,076	4	6,257	3,129	-3
Water Eaton	3	8,765	2,922	-1	9,376	3,125	-3
Watling	3	9,040	3,013	2	9,772	3,257	1
West Bletchley	3	9,148	3,049	3	9,506	3,169	-2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Wolverton	3	9,872	3,291	11	10,073	3,358	4
Woughton	3	9,098	3,033	2	9,168	3,056	-5
Totals	51	151,250	–	–	164,696	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,966	–	–	3,229	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Councillor White's submission.

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

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

(f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

(g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

(h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.

APPENDIX D

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Commission compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	The Commission consults on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	The Commission complies with this requirement.

