

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

Report to the Secretary of State for  
Transport, Local Government and the Regions

*August 2001*

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# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes Council.



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Milton Keynes electoral arrangements on 25 July 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 27 February 2001, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing 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;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is expected to worsen, 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 109-110) 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 recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is as nearly as possible the same, bearing in mind 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 forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Newport Pagnell North, expected to vary by 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:

- **new 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 for the parish councils of Bradwell Abbey and Shenley Church End.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 18 September 2001:

**The Secretary of State  
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Bradwell	3	the parish of Bradwell; part of Great Linford parish (the Conniburrow parish ward)	Large Map
2	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford	3	the parish of Simpson; part of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish (the Central Bletchley, Fenny Stratford, Granby and Manor North parish wards); part of West Bletchley parish (the Church Green, Poets and Saints parish wards)	Large Map
3	Campbell Park	3	part of Campbell Park parish (Fishermead, Oldbrook, Springfield and Woolstone parish wards); the parish of Central Milton Keynes	Large Map
4	Danesborough	1	the parishes of Bow Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Wavendon and Woburn Sands	Large Map
5	Denbigh	2	part of West Bletchley parish (the Denbigh North East, Denbigh North West and Denbigh West parish wards)	Large Map
6	Eaton Manor	2	part of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish (the Eaton North, Eaton South and Manor South parish wards)	Large Map
7	Emerson Valley	3	part of Shenley Brook End parish (the Emerson Valley parish ward)	Large Map
8	Furzton	2	<i>Unchanged</i> part of Shenley Brook End parish (the Furzton parish ward)	Large Map
9	Hanslope Park	1	the parishes of Castlethorpe, Hanslope and Haversham-cum-Little Linford	Map 2
10	Linford North	2	<i>Unchanged</i> part of Great Linford parish (the Giffard Park & Blakelands, Linford Village and Pennyland & Bolbeck Park parish wards)	Large Map
11	Linford South	2	part of Campbell Park parish (the Campbell Park & Newlands and Willen parish wards); part of Great Linford parish (the Downhead Park & Willen Park, Downs Barn and Neath Hill parish wards)	Large Map
12	Loughton Park	3	the parishes of Loughton and Shenley Church End	Large Map
13	Middleton	2	the parishes of Broughton and Milton Keynes; part of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish (the Monkston, Monkston Park & Kingston parish ward); part of Woughton on the Green parish (the Peartree Bridge and Woughton Village & Woughton Park parish wards)	Large Map
14	Newport Pagnell North	2	part of Newport Pagnell parish (the proposed Newport Pagnell North parish ward)	Map A2
15	Newport Pagnell South	2	part of Newport Pagnell parish (the proposed Newport Pagnell South parish ward)	Map A2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
16	Olney	2	the parishes of Clifton Reynes, Cold Brayfield, Lavendon, Newton Blossomville, Olney, Ravenstone, Warrington and Weston Underwood	Map 2
17	Sherington	1	the parishes of Astwood, Chicheley, Emberton, Gayhurst, Hardmead, Lathbury, Moulsoe, North Crawley, Sherington, Stoke Goldington and Tyringham & Filgrave	Map 2
18	Stantonbury	2	the parish of Stantonbury	Large Map
19	Stony Stratford	3	the parishes of Calverton and Stony Stratford; part of Bradwell Abbey parish (the Two Mile Ash parish ward)	Large Map
20	Walton Park	3	the parish of Walton; part of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish (the Kents Hill, Kents Hill Park & Brinklow parish ward)	Large Map
21	Whaddon	2	<i>Unchanged</i> part of West Bletchley parish (the Castles, Fairways, Racecourses and Rivers parish wards)	Large Map
22	Wolverton	3	the parishes of New Bradwell and Wolverton & Greenleys; part of Bradwell Abbey parish (the Hodge Lea & Stacey Bushes parish ward)	Large Map
23	Woughton	2	part of Woughton on the Green parish (the Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Leadenhall, Netherfield and Tinkers Bridge parish wards)	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.*

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

Table 2: Final 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	2,987	1,494	-50	6,515	3,258	1
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

22	Wolverton	3	9,872	3,291	11	10,073	3,358	4
23	Woughton	2	6,943	3,472	17	7,003	3,502	8
<b>Totals</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>151,250</b>	–	–	<b>164,691</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>		–	–	<b>2,966</b>	–	–	<b>3,229</b>	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Milton Keynes Council.*

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.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the unitary authority area of Milton Keynes. We have now reviewed 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 finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Milton Keynes unitary authority. The last 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 (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 carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. 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.

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

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

6 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 also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

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

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

10 This review was in four stages. 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, Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies 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. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 27 February 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire*, and ended on 30 April 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 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 Northamptonshire to the north and west, Bedfordshire to the east and Aylesbury Vale district to the south. From May 2001, the borough has been entirely parished, with a total of 46 parishes.

13 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'.

14 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.

15 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 the 1975 review, 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.

16 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*

Table 3: 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

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 %
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
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
<b>Totals</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>151,250</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>164,691</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,966</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,229</b>	<b>-</b>

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 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 18 representations, including borough-wide schemes from the Council, Milton Keynes Conservatives, Milton Keynes Labour Party, Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats and Councillor White and representations from Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, eight parish, town and neighbourhood councils, two councillors, one local group and one local resident. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the Council's proposals in the new town area, which were identical to the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' proposals. We put forward our own proposals for Newport Pagnell and the rural area, reflecting elements of the Council's and Conservatives' scheme, and based our proposals for Bletchley on the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We proposed that:

- Milton Keynes Council should be served by 51 councillors, as at present, representing 23 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parish of West Bletchley and the town of Newport Pagnell and an increase in the number of councillors serving Shenley Church End Parish Council.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Milton Keynes Council should comprise 51 councillors, serving 23 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 23 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only Newport Pagnell North ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 42 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Milton Keynes Council.

### **Milton Keynes Council**

21 The Council generally supported the Commission's draft recommendations but proposed modifications to our proposed Sherington and Newport Pagnell wards, and also proposed several ward name changes.

### **Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration**

22 Milton Keynes Labour Party & Milton Keynes Council Labour Administration ('the Labour Party') accepted our draft recommendations in the rural area but objected to our proposals in the urban area of Milton Keynes. The Labour Party submitted a reconfiguration of the urban area based on a uniform pattern of 14 three-member wards (Option 1). Four of the Labour Party's proposed wards were identical to our draft recommendations in the south-west of the borough. The Labour Party also submitted an alternative reconfiguration of 11 of the urban wards put forward in our draft recommendations, based on a mixed pattern of wards (Option 2). It stated that if the Commission were not minded to accept Option 1, it should consider Option 2 as a viable alternative.

23 The Bletchley Labour Councillors opposed our draft recommendations in the Bletchley area and submitted an alternative configuration of warding arrangements, broadly similar to those proposed by the Labour Party under Option 2.

### **Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats**

24 Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') expressed support for our draft recommendations throughout the borough and stated that our proposals "both reflect the need to keep communities together whilst providing electoral balance".

### **Parish and Town Councils**

25 We received representations from 10 parish and town councils. The parishes of Loughton, Moulsoe and Shenley Brook End supported our draft recommendations in their areas. Newport Pagnell and Woburn Sands town councils also supported our draft recommendations in their areas.

26 Bradwell Abbey, Campbell Park, Emberton, Lavendon and Woughton parish councils generally opposed our draft recommendations in their respective areas.

### **Other Representations**

27 A further 28 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. Councillors Fairweather, Tallack and Wilson (Campbell Park ward), Hardwick and Henderson (Newport Pagnell North ward), Henderson and McCall (Newport Pagnell South ward), Mabutt (Olney ward) Newcombe (Walton Park ward) and

Tilley (Linford ward) each expressed broad support for our draft recommendations in their areas. Councillor Burke (Emerson Valley ward) expressed broad support for our draft recommendations but proposed several boundary modifications in the east of the borough affecting six wards. Councillor Long, (Woughton ward) also proposed some boundary modifications affecting our proposed Middleton and Woughton wards. Councillor White (Danesborough ward) broadly supported our draft recommendations but proposed an amendment in the rural area of the borough which would transfer Moulsoe parish to the proposed Newport Pagnell South ward and would replace it with Ravenstone parish, currently in Olney ward. He also proposed several ward name changes affecting five wards. Councillor Dransfield (Loughton ward) supported our proposals but proposed a minor modification to the southern boundary of Loughton ward. Councillor Ellis (Ouse Valley ward) opposed our draft recommendations in the north-east of the borough and proposed alternative warding arrangements. Two parish councillors also broadly supported our proposals for the proposed Campbell Park and Stony Stratford wards.

28 Stony Stratford Community Association and Wolverton & District Archeological & Historical Society opposed the inclusion of the Two Mile Ash area in the proposed Stony Stratford ward and argued that our proposals would not reflect community identity and interests.

29 Tinkers Bridge Residents Association opposed our proposed Middleton ward and stated that our proposals would not reflect local community identities and interests and expressed a preference for remaining in the revised Woughton ward. We received eight submissions from local residents during Stage Three; four generally supported our draft recommendations in the urban area, two largely opposed our proposals in the Bletchley and Wolverton areas, one generally opposed our proposed Linford South ward and one generally opposed our proposed Campbell Park ward.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

30 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”.

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

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

33 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 minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorates must also be considered, and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

34 Since 1975 there has been an approximately 16 per cent increase in the electorate of Milton Keynes. At Stage One the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 9 per cent from 151,520 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. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

35 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain content with the estimates.

### **Council Size**

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

37 In our draft recommendations report we noted that there was some cross-party support for retaining the current council size, and that there was no evidence of public support for the significant reduction proposed by the Labour Party to 45 members. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

38 During Stage Three we note that our draft recommendation for a council size of 51 received some local support. 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. We are content therefore to confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 51 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

39 At Stage One we received five borough-wide schemes and, as detailed above, we proposed basing our draft recommendations on a council size of 51. Given this conclusion we were unable to adopt the Labour Party's 45-member scheme. Furthermore, the Labour Party's submission was based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards, while the other borough-wide schemes proposed a mixed pattern of wards. 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 considered 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 considered that a mixed pattern of wards would best reflect community identities and interests and would provide convenient and effective local government in Milton Keynes.

40 Our draft recommendations also had regard to the provisions of the Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000, which came into effect in May 2001. This Order created 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 made numerous parish boundary changes. As a result of the Order, the borough is now entirely parished. Where parish boundaries were not subject to change, our proposals reflected the existing boundaries and warding arrangements. Where they were subject to change, our proposals reflected the new parish boundaries and the revised parish warding arrangements as prepared by Milton Keynes Council. There were, however, two exceptions to this approach. In Newport Pagnell and West Bletchley, our draft recommendations for borough wards superceded parish warding arrangements prepared by Milton Keynes Council.

41 We based our draft recommendations for the new town area on the Council's proposals, which were identical to the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' proposals. We put forward our own proposals for Newport Pagnell and the rural area, reflecting elements of the Council's and Conservatives' schemes, and based our proposals for Bletchley on the Liberal Democrats' scheme. We

considered that our draft recommendations would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

42 We note that, at Stage Three, the Labour Party proposed a uniform pattern of 14 three-member wards covering the urban area. However, we are not persuaded that such a uniform warding arrangement would provide a satisfactory reflection of local community identities and interests across the urban area and consequently we have not given further consideration to this proposal.

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

- (a) 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.

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

### **Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards**

45 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 the 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 the average by 2005.

46 At Stage One we received a number of differing proposals for the Newport Pagnell area. The Council proposed expanding the existing Newport Pagnell South ward to include Moulsoe parish in the existing Sherington ward and proposed that Newport Pagnell North remain unchanged. The Conservatives' proposals for Newport Pagnell were identical to the Council's submission, but they proposed modifying the parish wards to improve the electoral equality of Newport Pagnell North ward. The Conservatives' submission, however, did not provide any details of the proposed warding arrangements.

47 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Newport Pagnell South ward and proposed a revised Newport Pagnell North ward which would take in parts of the existing Sherington ward. The Labour Party proposed combining Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards to form a single three-member ward. Councillor White's proposal for Newport Pagnell South ward was identical to the Council's and the Conservatives' proposals for this area. However, in relation to Newport Pagnell North ward, he proposed combining the current ward with the Blakelands area of Great Linford parish. Alternatively, he proposed combining the revised Newport Pagnell North ward with Hanslope Park ward.

48 In arriving at our draft recommendations we were not persuaded by the Council's, the Conservatives' or the Liberal Democrats' proposals to combine parts of the Newport Pagnell area with surrounding rural parishes. While we recognised that this approach would have provided improved electoral equality, we did not consider that it was appropriate in this area. We considered that, while the villages surrounding Newport Pagnell have good communication links with the town, they are quite different in nature from it. Neither were we persuaded by Councillor White's suggestion that there were significant community links between the Blakelands area and Newport Pagnell. We concurred 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. However, based on our proposed council size of 51, we proposed that the town should remain represented by four councillors, rather than three councillors as proposed by the Labour Party.

49 We were not content 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 considered that there was 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 put forward our own proposal for this area. We proposed 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.

50 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the revised Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards would each be 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average currently, and 11 per cent and 10 per cent fewer respectively by 2005.

51 At Stage Three, the Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations but proposed that Moulsoe parish should be included in the Newport Pagnell area rather than in our proposed Sherington ward. The Council also stated that our proposals for the Newport Pagnell area "diverged from our own *Guidance*".

52 We received a further six representations in relation to this area at Stage Three. Newport Pagnell Town Council expressed its "unanimous support" for our proposed Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards. Councillors Hardwick and Henderson (Newport Pagnell North ward) and Councillors Henderson and McCall (Newport Pagnell South ward) expressed support for our proposed Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards. Councillor White opposed our proposed Newport Pagnell South ward.

53 We have given careful consideration to the views received during Stage Three. While we note that Milton Keynes Council proposed an amendment to our proposed Sherington ward, we do not consider that we have received sufficient evidence in terms of the statutory criteria to justify such a change. Consequently, in view of the support we have received for our draft recommendations, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality. While we recognise that Newport Pagnell North ward would have the highest electoral variance in the borough by 2005, we believe that any alternative arrangement would be detrimental to community identity.

54 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillors in Newport Pagnell North and Newport Pagnell South wards would be 4 per cent fewer than the average in each, and 11 per cent

and 10 per cent fewer respectively by 2005. Details of our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A.

## **Hanslope Park, Olney, Ouse Valley and Sherington wards**

55 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 the average respectively (and 17 per cent, 29 per cent and 25 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.

56 Our proposals for this area were based on the various locally generated schemes, but with some modifications. We proposed retaining the existing single-member Hanslope Park ward, subject to minor boundary changes reflecting the revised parish boundaries, as proposed by the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White. We considered that the three parishes which make up this ward share an affinity, and noted that there are only three crossing points across the M1 motorway, linking this area with the neighbouring parishes to their east. We considered that this proposal would provide a relatively compact single-member ward and a reasonable level of electoral equality, and were 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.

57 We also proposed 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 considered 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 if possible maintain smaller wards in what is a relatively sparsely populated area.

58 Under our draft recommendations 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 than the average 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 than the average currently, improving to 4 per cent more by 2005.

59 At Stage Three we received seven representations in relation to this area. As noted above, Milton Keynes Council invited us to modify our proposal to include Moulsoe parish council in a revised Sherington ward and proposed including it in the Newport Pagnell area. The Council stated that the

parish has road links with the Newport Pagnell area. Moulsoe Parish Council, currently in Sherington ward, supported our draft recommendations to include it in a revised Sherington ward, and stated that it needs an elected councillor who “understands the needs of and services required by a village community”. Emberton Parish Council opposed our proposal to include it in a revised Sherington ward and stated that the proposed Sherington ward would be “too vast an area to be covered” by a single councillor. The Parish Council stated that it was opposed to the division of the Ouse Valley ward under our proposals but offered no alternative warding arrangements. The Parish Council also stated a preference for remaining in a rural ward should the Commission propose such changes. Councillor White (Danesborough ward) also opposed our revised Sherington ward and proposed transferring Moulsoe parish to Newport Pagnell South ward and replacing Moulsoe parish with Ravenstone parish.

60 Lavendon Parish Council, currently in Ouse Valley ward, opposed our proposal to include Lavendon parish in a revised Olney ward and stated that Lavendon has a “particular identity which is very different from that of the town of Olney”. Councillor Mabutt (Olney ward) expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, in particular our revised Olney ward, and stated that there was a “common community of interest” between the communities of the proposed Olney ward. Councillor Mabutt also stated that he would be opposed to any warding or division of Olney on the grounds that Olney is a “unified community”. Councillor Ellis (Ouse Vally ward), supported by Emberton Parish Council, opposed our proposals for revised Sherington and Olney wards, and made particular reference to the Lavendon area. He stated that the “Lavendon area is predominantly rural with rural problems and Olney is a small market town with quite different urban interests”. Councillor Ellis proposed warding the proposed two-member Olney ward into two single-member wards, Olney West and Olney East, using the High Street as the boundary between the two wards. He also proposed including Emberton parish in Olney East ward on the grounds that Emberton parish has “closer connections with that area than with Sherington”.

61 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received at Stage Three. As noted above, we have not been persuaded to transfer Moulsoe parish from Sherington ward to the Newport Pagnell area, as proposed by the Council and Councillor White. We note that Moulsoe Parish Council support our draft recommendations, which we continue to consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

62 We also note the concerns of Emberton and Lavendon parish councils. However, as we have not received new evidence or proposals for viable alternative arrangements we remain convinced that our proposals continue to provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Neither have we been persuaded by Councillor Ellis to divide the town of Olney between two wards. As clearly stated in our draft recommendations, and supported by Councillor Mabutt, we do not consider that such a proposal would reflect community ties. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final.

63 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hanslope Park, Sherington and Olney wards would at first be 8 per cent, 8 per cent and 5 per cent more than the average respectively (5 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent more by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated in Map 2.

### **Bradwell Abbey, Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards**

64 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.

65 Our draft recommendations for this area were based on schemes proposed by the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White (although Councillor White differed in his proposals for the Stony Stratford ward). The Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed dividing the existing Bradwell Abbey ward between revised Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards, which would each be represented by three councillors. Wolverton ward would comprise the new parishes of Wolverton & Greenleys, New Bradwell and also Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes parish wards of Bradwell Abbey parish. The revised Stony Stratford ward would comprise the two new parishes of Stony Stratford and Calverton together with the Two Mile Ash parish ward of Bradwell Abbey parish. We considered that the proposals had cross-party support and we were content to put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

66 Under our draft recommendations Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards would currently contain 4 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively, improving to 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005.

67 At Stage Three we received eight representations in relation to this area. Councillor Dransfield (Loughton ward) expressed support for our proposed Stony Stratford ward and stated that there are "no real links between Two Mile Ash and Hodge Lea & Stacy Bushes" and welcomed our proposal to transfer Two Mile Ash to the proposed Stony Stratford ward. Councillor Cawley, a member of Loughton parish, also supported our proposal to include Two Mile Ash in the proposed Stony Stratford ward and stated that Two Mile Ash has "important links of social and local government body affiliation" with Stony Stratford. A local resident expressed support for our proposed Wolverton ward and stated that the communities of Hodge Lea and Stacy Bushes have "very strong community links" with the Wolverton area. However, he opposed our proposals for the Two Mile Ash area and suggested including it in the proposed Loughton Park ward, stating that this is where "their sense of community lies, particularly with Great Holm parish ward".

68 The Labour Party supported our draft recommendations for our proposed Stony Stratford ward but opposed the proposed Wolverton ward and submitted two sets of alternative warding arrangements for Wolverton ward. The Labour Party's Option 2 proposed transferring New Bradwell from the proposed Wolverton ward to the revised Bradwell ward and replacing it with the Bancroft parish ward from our proposed Stantonbury ward. The Labour Party stated that this proposal "further highlights the connections between Wolverton and Bancroft, an area of growing population links".

69 Bradwell Abbey Parish Council opposed our proposal to include Two Mile Ash in the proposed Stony Stratford ward. The Parish Council stated that Two Mile Ash has links with Crownhill and Great Holm, rather than the Stony Stratford area, but did not provide any details of alternative warding arrangements. Stony Stratford Community Association and Wolverton & District Archaeological & Historical Society also opposed the proposed Stony Stratford ward, arguing that there is no community

of interest between Two Mile Ash and Stony Stratford, but provided no alternative warding arrangements for this area. One local resident opposed our proposal to include New Bradwell in a revised Wolverton ward and favoured putting New Bradwell in our proposed Stantonbury ward, but did not submit any detailed warding arrangements.

70 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period, and are confirming our draft recommendations for this area. We note that we have not received evidence of local support for the Labour Party's proposed Wolverton and Bradwell wards, and we also note that our draft recommendations for this area received a degree of local support. We are not therefore persuaded that the Labour Party's alternative warding arrangements would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations and we are not therefore proposing to include them as part of our final recommendations.

71 We have also carefully considered the views expressed by Bradwell Abbey Parish Council, Stony Stratford Community Association and Wolverton & District Archaeological & Historical Society, but we do not consider that we have received sufficient new evidence or alternative warding arrangements to justify making further amendments in this area and we are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations for the proposed Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards as final. Under our final recommendations Stony Stratford and Wolverton wards would currently contain 4 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively, improving to 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards**

72 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.

73 At Stage One our proposals for this area were largely based on schemes proposed by the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White. We noted that each scheme proposed retaining the existing Furzton ward, however in the remainder of the area Councillor White put forward his own proposals. The Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats each proposed that Emerson Valley ward should be represented by three councillors (instead of the current two), with only one minor boundary modification between Emerson Valley and Loughton Park wards. The three schemes also proposed a revised Loughton Park ward, which would continue to be represented by three councillors, but would in future comprise only Loughton and Shenley Church End parishes. All three schemes proposed combining the new Central Milton Keynes parish with part of Campbell Park parish to form a revised Campbell Park ward. We adopted these proposals as our draft recommendations for this area.

74 Under our draft recommendations Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards would have 30 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005).

75 We received five submissions in relation to this area at Stage Three. The Council, while expressing broad support for our draft recommendations, proposed renaming Loughton Park ward as Loughton Valley ward. The Labour Party broadly supported our proposed Loughton Park and Emerson Valley wards under Option 1. Under Option 2 the Labour Party's proposed Furzton ward was identical to the Furzton ward put forward in our draft recommendations. Loughton Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for the proposed Loughton Park ward and stated that the proposed ward would be coterminous with the constituent parishes. Shenley Brook End Parish Council also supported our draft proposal to increase the number of councillors from two to three in the proposed Emerson Valley ward. Councillor Dransfield (Loughton Park ward) expressed broad support for our draft recommendations and made specific reference to our proposed Loughton Park ward, stating that "Central Milton Keynes has no real links with Loughton Park ward" and our proposals therefore would resolve this "anomaly". He also proposed a minor modification to the proposed boundary between Loughton Park and Emerson Valley wards, which would run southwards along the entire length of Childs Way.

76 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we have considered the Council's proposal to rename Loughton Park ward we note that we have not received evidence of local support for such a name change and are content to confirm as final the name of the ward as Loughton Park. We also note Councillor Dransfield's proposal, but in the light of the degree of local support for our proposed Loughton Park and Emerson Valley wards we have not been persuaded that such an amendment would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria and the aims of this review than our draft recommendations. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park as final.

77 Under our final recommendations Emerson Valley, Furzton and Loughton Park wards would currently have 30 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Denbigh, Eaton Manor, Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards**

78 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 the 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.

79 At Stage One we received four borough-wide schemes in relation to this area. We noted 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. However, we

based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' scheme in this area. They proposed a new three-member Bletchley Central ward, revising the current Denbigh and Eaton Manor wards and retaining the existing Whaddon ward. We considered that their proposed warding arrangements would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the other borough-wide schemes, and subject to a ward name amendment and some boundary modifications in order to provide stronger ward boundaries in the area we proposed adopting the Liberal Democrats' scheme in the Bletchley area.

80 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 initially contain equal to the borough average number of electors per councillor, and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Our proposed Whaddon ward would contain 11 per cent more electors per councillor currently, and 3 per cent more than the average by 2005.

81 We received five submissions in relation to this area at Stage Three. The Labour Party opposed our proposed Denbigh, Eaton Manor, Bletchley & Fenny Stratford and Whaddon wards and submitted two alternative proposals for this area. Under Option 2 the Labour Party proposed that Denbigh and Bletchley South wards should be identical to our proposed Denbigh and Eaton Manor wards respectively. In the remainder of the area the Labour Party proposed an alternative configuration of wards based on a mixed pattern of wards. The Labour Party proposed transferring Church Green and Saints parishes from our proposed Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward to our proposed Whaddon ward and increasing the representation from two to three councillors. The Labour Party argued that their proposals for the Bletchley area would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. The Bletchley Labour councillors opposed our draft recommendations in this area and submitted alternative warding arrangements that were "the same as that of the Milton Keynes Labour Party".

82 Councillor Burke (Emerson Valley ward) broadly supported our draft recommendations but proposed a minor boundary amendment between the Church Green parish ward of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish and Denbigh West and Denbigh North East parish wards of West Bletchley parish. However, he did not submit any detailed argumentation in support of this amendment. Councillor White (Danesborough ward) also expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but proposed re-naming Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward as Walting. One local resident opposed our proposed Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward on the grounds of community identity.

83 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we note the views of the Labour Party and the Bletchley Labour Councillors we also note the lack of evidence of local support for their proposals and we have not therefore been persuaded that their proposals provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. Likewise, we have not been persuaded to modify the parish boundary as proposed by Councillor Burke or amend our proposed Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward due to the absence of detailed argumentation and the absence of evidence of local support for such modifications. We are content therefore to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Denbigh, Eaton Manor and Whaddon wards would initially be equal to, 3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more respectively by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on maps A3 and A4 and on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Danesborough ward**

84 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.

85 At Stage One the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Councillor White each proposed identical warding arrangements in this area. In arriving at our draft recommendations, we noted this 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 concurred with this view, and noted 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 therefore adopted these arrangements as our draft recommendations for the area. 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.

86 We received one representation in relation to this area at Stage Three. Woburn Sands Town Council expressed support for our proposed single-member Danesborough ward.

87 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and note that we have not received evidence of opposition to our proposed Danesborough ward and are content to confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final. Under our final 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 proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Campbell Park, Walton Park and Woughton wards**

88 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 was formed, consisting primarily of part of the existing Milton Keynes parish. In addition, the eastern boundary of Broughton parish was modified to follow the M1 motorway, and Walton parish was 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 per cent 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.

89 At Stage One the Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and Councillor White each proposed borough-wide schemes in relation to this area. We noted that there was some agreement between the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats regarding the most appropriate warding arrangements for revised Campbell Park, Caldecotte and Woughton wards. The

Liberal Democrats, however, proposed that Caldecotte ward should retain its existing name of Walton Park, and we welcomed further views on this at Stage Three. We also proposed adopting the Council's proposed new Middleton ward as this had the support of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. We therefore proposed a three-member Campbell Park ward, a three-member Walton Park ward, a two-member Middleton ward and a two-member Woughton ward as part of our draft recommendations, as proposed by the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

90 Under our draft recommendations our proposed 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. Walton Park and Woughton wards would initially 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. Middleton ward 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.

91 We received 15 submissions in relation to this area at Stage Three. The Council, while expressing broad support for our draft recommendations, proposed some ward name changes. It proposed changing Campbell Park ward to Campbell ward and Woughton ward to Eaglestone ward. The Labour Party opposed our proposed Campbell Park, Middleton, Walton Park and Woughton wards and submitted two alternative proposals for this area. Under the Labour Party's Option 2 an alternative configuration of our proposed Campbell Park, Middleton and Woughton wards was proposed based on a mixed pattern of wards. The Labour Party proposed transferring the Coffee Hall and Leadenhall estates from our proposed Woughton ward to their proposed Campbell Park ward arguing that the two estates are "closely linked by geography and school links" and that "Oldbrook was traditionally linked to Coffee Hall". The Labour Party also proposed transferring the Fishermead and Springfield estates from our proposed Campbell Park ward and the Tinkers Bridge area from the proposed Middleton ward to their revised Woughton ward. It argued that these estates had "traditionally been grouped together in community terms". Finally the Labour Party proposed transferring the Woolstones estate from our proposed Campbell Park ward to their revised Middleton ward. It argued that the estate does not "sit naturally with either the Woughton or Campbell Park areas as it rests to the east of the Grand Union canal".

92 Campbell Park Parish Council expressed concern over the proposed Campbell Park ward and stated that the "current arrangements are more productive and would prove to be less confusing" than our proposals. Woughton Parish Council expressed concern over some of our draft proposals and the effect they would have on the Woughton area. The Parish Council proposed retaining the Tinkers Bridge and Peartree Bridge estates in the proposed Woughton ward and argued that the two estates have "traditionally been grouped" with the estates in the proposed Woughton ward. The Parish Council also argued that there were "no community and few communication links" between the two estates and the estates of the proposed Middleton ward. The Parish Council also favoured linking the "original New Town estates of Woughton ward" with the Bletchley & Fenny Stratford area on the grounds of community and transport links. It also favoured retaining the current three-member representation of the Woughton area as it would "ensure the effective representation of the needs of the residents" in the area and the links with estates to the south or the north of the parish and to the west of the Grand Union canal. Finally, Woughton Parish Council proposed renaming the Woughton ward to avoid making reference to a single estate. It submitted four ward name alternatives - Hospital, Bletchley North, Sir Frank Markham and Sir Norman Foster - but did not express a preference for a particular ward name.

93 Councillor Burke (Emerson Valley ward) proposed an alternative configuration of the proposed Campbell Park, Middleton and Walton Park wards. He proposed putting the Campbell Park area in the proposed Campbell Park ward and transferring the Woolstone area from Campbell Park ward to the proposed Middleton ward, stating that the connection between Campbell Park and Central Milton Keynes is very strong. He also stated that this modification would enable the ward to retain its name. Councillor Burke also proposed transferring the Tinkers Bridge and Woughton Park areas from our proposed Middleton ward to our proposed Walton Park ward and suggested renaming Walton Park as Walton ward.

94 Councillor Nigel Long (Woughton ward) expressed broad support for our proposed Middleton ward, in particular supporting the proposal to retain the link between the Woughton on the Green area and the villages of the Ouzel Valley. However, he opposed our proposal to place Tinkers Bridge and Peartree Bridge estates in the proposed Middleton ward on the grounds of community identity, and stated that “electoral equality alone does not justify” our proposals in this area. He suggested revising the proposed Campbell Park, Middleton and Woughton wards. He highlighted the community links between the Fishermead, Oldbrook, Coffee Hall and Leaden Hall estates and proposed that Tinkers Bridge and Peartree Bridge should form a ward with the estates of Fishermead, Springfield and Eaglestone on the grounds of community identity. Councillor Long also proposed that the Woolstones area should replace Tinkers Bridge and Peartree Bridge in the proposed Middleton ward.

95 Councillor John Fairweather (Campbell Park ward) expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, in particular our proposed Campbell Park ward. He stated that the four estates of Fishermead, Oldbrook, Springfield and Woolstone “fit together and should obviously be kept together in any scheme”, and he also supported the proposal to include Central Milton Keynes in the Campbell Park ward. Councillors Tallack and Wilson (Campbell Park ward) also expressed broad support for our draft recommendations and proposed retaining “Campbell” in the name of the proposed ward. Councillor White (Danesborough ward) also expressed broad support for our draft recommendations but proposed three alternative names for the proposed Campbell Park ward. He suggested “Central Milton Keynes”, “Central” or “Saxon” ward but did not express a preference for a specific name. Councillor Newcombe (Walton Park ward), on behalf of the Walton Park councillors, expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but proposed renaming Walton Park ward as Walton ward. One parish councillor expressed broad support for our proposed Campbell Park ward, in particular the proposal to join both Central Milton Keynes parish wards and place them in the proposed Campbell Park ward. He stated, however, that retaining the Woolstones area in the proposed Campbell Park ward did not reflect local community identity and proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. He also proposed renaming the proposed Woughton and Campbell Park wards as Redmoor and Winterhill respectively.

96 Tinkers Bridge Residents’ Association opposed our proposed Middleton ward. It stated that there has been a long association between the Woughton parish and Campbell Park parish council areas of the communities working together. It expressed a preference for remaining in the proposed Woughton ward. One local resident expressed broad support for our draft recommendations and proposed renaming Walton Park ward as Walton. One local resident opposed our proposed Campbell Park ward and expressed a preference for retaining the current warding arrangements in the area.

97 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We are content that the proposal to transfer the Tinkers Bridge estate to the proposed Woughton ward, as proposed by Woughton Parish Council and the Tinkers Bridge Residents’ Association, would retain reasonable electoral equality while providing an improved reflection of local community identity. We

also note the degree of local support for such an amendment and are content to put it forward as part of our final recommendations. We therefore propose amending the boundary to the west of the Grand Union Canal, thereby transferring 527 electors to the revised Woughton ward.

98 While we note the Labour Party's Option 2 proposal for a reconfiguration of wards in this area, we have also noted the absence of local support for the Labour Party's proposals. We have not therefore been persuaded that they would offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations and we are not therefore proposing to adopt them as part of our final recommendations. We also note the concerns of Campbell Park Parish Council and one local resident, but in the absence of significant new evidence in this area we have not been persuaded that the current warding arrangements would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We also note Woughton Parish Council's proposal, but in the absence of detailed warding arrangements we do not propose amending our draft recommendations to reflect this proposal, and in the absence of local support, neither do we propose renaming Woughton ward, as proposed by the Parish Council. Furthermore, while we also note Councillor Burke's proposal, we are not persuaded that it would provide a better balance of the need to seek improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. Similarly we note Councillor Long's proposals in this area, but we do not believe they would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We do not therefore propose adopting them as part of our final recommendations. Finally, we have not been persuaded by Councillor Barton that his proposals would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations and do not propose amending our draft recommendations. Due to the lack of consensus and local support regarding ward name changes we do not propose renaming the Campbell Park, Walton Park or Woughton wards. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Campbell Park, Middleton, Walton Park and Woughton as final, subject to transferring Tinkers Bridge to Woughton ward.

99 Under our final recommendations Campbell Park, Middleton and Woughton wards would have 11 per cent more, 50 per cent fewer, and 17 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now (5 per cent, 1 per cent and 8 per cent more by 2005). Our proposed Walton Park ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now, improving to equal to the average number of electors per councillor by 2005. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards**

100 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.

101 At Stage One we noted that the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats each proposed identical warding arrangements in relation to this area. Each proposed retaining the existing two-member Linford North and Stantonbury wards, subject to a minor alternation to the northern

boundary of Stantonbury ward. The three schemes also proposed expanding the existing Bradwell ward to include the Conniburrow area and increasing the number of councillors from two to three. The schemes also proposed a revised Linford South ward. Due to the degree of cross-party support in this area, we were content to put forward the Council's proposals for this area, which were identical to those put forward by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, as our draft recommendations.

102 Under our draft recommendations Linford North and Stantonbury wards would contain 11 per cent and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (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 year's time, while Bradwell ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now (5 per cent fewer by 2005).

103 At Stage Three the Council generally supported our draft recommendations but proposed renaming Linford South ward as Willen ward and Linford North ward as Linford ward. The Labour Party opposed our proposed Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards and submitted two alternative proposals for this area. Under Option 2 the Labour Party proposed an alternative configuration of our proposed Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards. The Labour Party proposed transferring Bancroft parish from our proposed Stantonbury ward to a revised Wolverton ward, as previously discussed. It argued that this amendment would "improve electoral equality and community identity", while the revised Stantonbury ward would "bring together adjoining estates with long-term links". The Labour Party supported our proposal to include the Willen and Campbell Park areas in our proposed Linford South ward. However, it proposed a revised Linford North & South ward comprising Great Linford, Giffard Park, Bolbeck Penny and Downhead Park.

104 Councillor Burke (Emerson Valley ward) and one local resident opposed our proposed Linford North and Linford South wards and proposed an alternative configuration in this area. Councillor White (Danesborough ward) expressed broad support for our draft recommendations but proposed renaming Linford North ward as Linford and re-naming Linford South ward as Willen ("reflecting the lake") or Campbell Park but did not express a preference for a particular name. One local resident supported our proposed Bradwell ward but opposed our proposed Stantonbury ward on the grounds of community identity and put forward alternative warding arrangements in this area. One local resident expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, in particular our proposed Linford North and Linford South wards.

105 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period, and we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. While we note the Labour Party's Option 2 proposals we have also noted the absence of evidence of substantive local support for them. We have not been persuaded that the Labour Party's proposals would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations, and are not therefore proposing to adopt them as part of our final recommendations. We also note the proposals of Councillor Burke and two local residents, but in the absence of detailed argumentation and local support we have not been persuaded to amend our draft recommendations for the proposed Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury wards. Neither have we been persuaded to rename Linford North and Linford South wards as proposed by Councillor White, as we note the absence of local support for such a ward name alteration. We are content therefore to confirm as final our draft recommendations for the wards of Bradwell, Linford North, Linford South and Stantonbury.

106 Under our final recommendations Linford North and Stantonbury wards would initially contain 11 per cent and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (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 year's time, while Bradwell ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now (5 per cent fewer by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

107 At Stage One 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. We carefully considered all representations on this issue. At present, there appears to be a majority view that the existing electoral cycle should be retained, and we therefore proposed no change to the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds.

108 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

109 Having carefully considered all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- in the urban area we propose transferring the Tinkers Bridge estate from our proposed Middleton ward to a revised Woughton ward.

110 We conclude that, in Milton Keynes:

- there should be 51 councillors, the same as at present;
- there should be 23 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

111 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

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

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final 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

112 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 13 to eight, with two wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with only one ward, Newport Pagnell North, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### **Final Recommendation**

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

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

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

114 As stated in our draft report, the Milton Keynes (Parishes) Order 2000 came into effect in May 2001. 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 proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Newport Pagnell and West Bletchley, to reflect the proposed borough wards. The Council proposed 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.

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

116 In response to our consultation report, Newport Pagnell Town Council expressed support for our proposals in this area. Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Newport Pagnell as final.

**Final 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.

117 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 proposed that the parish be represented by 23 councillors, and be divided between 10 parish wards. In our draft recommendations we proposed new warding arrangements for West Bletchley parish and proposed dividing it between the three borough wards of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Denbigh and Whaddon. The number of electors transferred between the relevant parish wards was minimal, and we therefore proposed no change to the number of parish councillors for each ward.

118 In response to our consultation report, we received two representations regarding the proposed parish warding arrangements in the West Bletchley parish. The Labour Party and the Bletchley Labour councillors submitted identical parish warding arrangements which we have not endorsed. We are content therefore to confirm our draft recommendations for the West Bletchley parish as final.

**Final 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.

119 Woughton Parish Council is currently served by 19 councillors who represent eight wards. Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone, Netherfield, Peartree Bridge, Tinkers Bridge, Woughton Village & Woughton Park and Leadenhall. Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone and Netherfield are each represented by three councillors, Peartree Bridge,

Tinkers Bridge and Woughton Village & Woughton Park are each represented by two councillors, while Leadenhall is represented by a single councillor.

120 At Stage Three, as a consequence of the amendment which we have proposed in our final recommendations to transfer the Tinkers Bridge area from Middleton ward to Woughton ward, it has been necessary to modify parish warding arrangements in Woughton parish. We therefore propose that the boundary between the parish wards of Tinkers Bridge and Woughton Village & Woughton Park should be modified to reflect the borough ward boundary in this area. As part of our final recommendations we are proposing to retain the existing representation for the parish wards of Woughton parish.

**Final Recommendation**

Woughton Parish Council should comprise 19 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards: Beanhill & Redmoor, Coffee Hall & Bleak Hall, Eaglestone and Netherfield (returning three councillors each), Peartree Bridge, Tinkers Bridge and Woughton Village & Woughton Park (returning two councillors each) and Leadenhall (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

121 In our draft recommendations we proposed that the parish of Shelney Church End be represented by seven parish councillors, an increase of two.

122 In response to our consultation report we received no representations regarding the proposed increase to seven parish councillors. We are content to confirm our draft recommendations for Shelney Church End parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

123 The parish of Bradwell Abbey is currently represented by five parish councillors. At Stage Three the Parish Council requested an increase of two parish councillors, arguing that it would “make the parish council easier to run”. We are content to put forward the Parish Council’s proposals as part of our final recommendations and are therefore content to confirm that Bradwell Abbey be represented by seven parish councillors, two more than at present.

**Final Recommendation**

Bradwell Abbey Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, two more than at present.

124 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Parish and town council elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Milton Keynes*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

125 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Milton Keynes and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

126 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 18 September 2001.

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

The Secretary of State  
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Milton Keynes: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate our 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 this report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Newport Pagnell town.

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

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

*Map A1: Final 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)*