

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
West Oxfordshire

*February 2001*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for the towns of Carterton and Witney is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for West Oxfordshire on 25 July 2000.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in West Oxfordshire:

- **in 23 of the 33 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and ten wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 26 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 13 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 90-91) are that:

- **West Oxfordshire District Council should have 49 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, instead of 33 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 26 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of six, and seven wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 24 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by less than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Carterton and Witney.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 20 February 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 23 April 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alvescot & Filkins	1	Clanfield & Shilton ward (part – the parishes of Alvescot and Grafton & Radcot); Filkins & Langford ward (the parishes of Broadwell, Filkins & Broughton Poggs, Holwell, Kelmscott, Kencot, Langford, Little Faringdon and Westwell)	Map 2
2 Ascott & Shipton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ascott-under-Wychwood, Lyneham and Shipton-under-Wychwood)	Map 2
3 Bampton	2	Bampton ward (Bampton parish); Clanfield & Shilton ward (part – the parishes of Black Bourton and Clanfield)	Map 2
4 Brize Norton & Shilton	1	Brize Norton ward (part – Brize Norton parish); Burford ward (part – Swinbrook & Widford parish); Clanfield & Shilton ward (part – Shilton parish); Minster Lovell ward (part – Asthal parish)	Map 2
5 Burford	1	Burford ward (part – the parishes of Burford, Fulbrook and Taynton)	Map 2
6 Carterton North East	2	Carterton North ward (part)	Large Map
7 Carterton North West	2	Carterton North ward (part)	Large Map
8 Carterton South	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Carterton South ward)	Large Map
9 Chadlington	1	Chadlington ward (part – the parishes of Chadlington, Chilson and Spelsbury); Finstock & Leafield ward (part – Cornbury & Wychwood parish); Kingham ward (part – the parishes of Churchill and Sarsden)	Map 2
10 Charlbury & Finstock	2	Chadlington ward (part – Fawler parish); Charlbury ward (Charlbury parish); Finstock & Leafield ward (part – Finstock parish)	Map 2
11 Chipping Norton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Chipping Norton parish)	Map 2
12 Ducklington	1	Brize Norton ward (part – the parishes of Curbridge and Lew); Ducklington ward (part – Ducklington parish)	Map 2
13 Eynsham	3	Bladon & Cassington ward (part – Cassington parish); Eynsham ward (Eynsham parish); Stanton Harcourt ward (part – South Leigh parish)	Map 2
14 Freeland & Hanborough	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Freeland and Hanborough)	Map 2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
15	Hailey & Minster Lovell	2	Finstock & Leafield ward (part – Leafield parish); Hailey ward (the parishes of Crawley, Hailey and Ramsden); Minster Lovell ward (part – Minster Lovell parish)	Map 2
16	Kingham, Rollright & Enstone	2	Enstone ward (the parishes of Enstone, Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford); Kingham ward (part – the parishes of Chastleton, Cornwell and Kingham); Rollright ward (the parishes of Heythrop, Over Norton, Rollright and Salford)	Map 2
17	Milton-under-Wychwood	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Bruern, Fifield, Idbury and Milton-under-Wychwood)	Map 2
18	North Leigh	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (North Leigh parish)	Map 2
19	Standlake & Stanton Harcourt	2	Aston, Bampton & Standlake ward (the parishes of Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney and Standlake); Ducklington ward (part – Hardwick-with-Yelford parish); Stanton Harcourt ward (part – the parishes of Northmoor and Stanton Harcourt)	Map 2
20	Stonesfield & Tackley	2	Combe & Stonesfield ward (the parishes of Combe and Stonesfield); Tackley ward (the parishes of Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Rousham, Tackley and Wootton)	Map 2
21	The Bartons	1	Bartons ward (the parishes of Sandford St Martin, Steeple Barton, Westcot Barton and Worton)	Map 2
22	Witney Central	2	Witney West ward (part)	Large Map
23	Witney East	3	Witney East ward (part)	Large Map
24	Witney North	2	Witney East ward (part); Witney North ward	Large Map
25	Witney South	3	Witney South ward (part); Witney West ward (part)	Large Map
26	Witney West	2	Witney South ward (part); Witney West ward (part)	Large Map
27	Woodstock	2	Bladon & Cassington ward (part – Bladon parish); Woodstock ward (the parishes of Blenheim and Woodstock)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for West Oxfordshire

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 Alvescot & Filkins	1	1,383	1,383	-7	1,419	1,419	-9
2 Ascott & Shipton	1	1,614	1,614	9	1,631	1,631	5
3 Bampton	2	2,895	1,448	-2	2,923	1,462	-6
4 Brize Norton & Shilton	1	1,349	1,349	-9	1,507	1,507	-3
5 Burford	1	1,549	1,549	4	1,580	1,580	1
6 Carterton North East	2	1,598	799	-46	3,129	1,565	0
7 Carterton North West	2	3,155	1,578	6	3,126	1,563	0
8 Carterton South	2	3,098	1,549	4	3,057	1,529	-2
9 Chadlington	1	1,554	1,554	5	1,598	1,598	2
10 Charlbury & Finstock	2	3,021	1,511	2	3,125	1,563	0
11 Chipping Norton	3	4,598	1,533	3	4,793	1,598	2
12 Ducklington	1	1,587	1,587	7	1,646	1,646	6
13 Eynsham	3	4,607	1,536	3	4,612	1,537	-1
14 Freeland & Hanborough	2	3,281	1,641	11	3,326	1,663	7
15 Hailey & Minster Lovell	2	3,153	1,577	6	3,194	1,597	2
16 Kingham, Rollright & Enstone	2	3,210	1,605	8	3,262	1,631	5
17 Milton-under-Wychwood	1	1,601	1,601	8	1,616	1,616	4
18 North Leigh	1	1,540	1,540	4	1,565	1,565	0
19 Standlake & Stanton Harcourt	2	3,110	1,555	5	3,129	1,565	0
20 Stonesfield & Tackley	2	3,195	1,598	8	3,176	1,588	2
21 The Bartons	1	1,512	1,512	2	1,518	1,518	-3
22 Witney Central	2	3,036	1,518	2	3,106	1,553	0

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Witney East	3	3,476	1,159	-22	4,528	1,509	-3
24 Witney North	2	3,073	1,537	4	3,131	1,566	0
25 Witney South	3	4,450	1,483	0	4,681	1,560	0
26 Witney West	2	3,003	1,502	1	3,003	1,502	-4
27 Woodstock	2	3,078	1,539	4	3,041	1,521	-3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>72,726</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76,422</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,484</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by West Oxfordshire District Council.*

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of West Oxfordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five districts in Oxfordshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of West Oxfordshire. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1976 (Report No. 170). The electoral arrangements of Oxfordshire County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 428). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

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

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

11 Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to West Oxfordshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 and will end on 23 April 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of West Oxfordshire is bordered by the River Thames in the south-east and the Cotswold Hills to the north-west. The district is entirely parished (83 in total), covers an area of 71,494 hectares and has a population of approximately 97,000. West Oxfordshire district covers the market towns of Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney and the RAF base at Brize Norton.

17 A parish boundary review has recently been completed in West Oxfordshire. The modifications affect the parishes of Brize Norton, Carterton, Curbridge, Hailey and Witney and are due to be implemented on 1 April 2001. Our recommendations, as outlined in this report, reflect these changes.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 72,726 (February 2000). The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 33 wards, seven of which are relatively urban in character while the remainder are predominantly rural. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and 22 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in West Oxfordshire district, with around 30 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,484 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,560 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 33 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, ten wards by more than 20 per cent and five wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Witney West ward where the councillors represent 73 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in West Oxfordshire*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ascott & Shipton	1	1,614	1,614	9	1,631	1,631	5
2 Aston, Bampton & Standlake	1	1,986	1,986	34	2,008	2,008	29
3 Bampton	1	2,004	2,004	35	2,003	2,003	28
4 Bartons	1	1,512	1,512	2	1,518	1,518	-3
5 Bladon & Cassington	1	1,204	1,204	-19	1,197	1,197	-23
6 Brize Norton & Curbridge	1	1,069	1,069	-28	1,112	1,112	-29
7 Burford	1	1,660	1,660	12	1,689	1,689	8
8 Carterton North	3	4,753	1,584	7	6,255	2,085	34
9 Carterton South	3	3,098	1,033	-30	3,057	1,019	-35
10 Chadlington	1	1,079	1,079	-27	1,098	1,098	-30
11 Charlbury	2	2,372	1,186	-20	2,479	1,240	-21
12 Chipping Norton	3	4,598	1,533	3	4,793	1,598	2
13 Clanfield & Shilton	1	1,604	1,604	8	1,786	1,786	15
14 Combe & Stonesfield	1	1,807	1,807	22	1,796	1,796	15
15 Ducklington	1	1,296	1,296	-13	1,350	1,350	-13
16 Enstone	1	1,289	1,289	-13	1,294	1,294	-17
17 Eynsham	3	3,722	1,241	-16	3,726	1,242	-20
18 Filkins & Langford	1	1,000	1,000	-33	1,005	1,005	-36
19 Finstock & Leafield	1	1,245	1,245	-16	1,252	1,252	-20
20 Freeland & Hanborough	2	3,281	1,641	11	3,326	1,663	7
21 Hailey	1	1,379	1,379	-7	1,381	1,381	-11
22 Kingham	1	1,292	1,292	-13	1,351	1,351	-13
23 Milton-under-Wychwood	1	1,601	1,601	8	1,616	1,616	4
24 Minster Lovell	1	1,352	1,352	-9	1,380	1,380	-12

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 %
25 North Leigh	1	1,540	1,540	4	1,565	1,565	0
26 Rollright	1	1,157	1,157	-22	1,170	1,170	-25
27 Stanton Harcourt	1	1,318	1,318	-11	1,316	1,316	-16
28 Tackley & Wootton	1	1,388	1,388	-6	1,380	1,380	-12
29 Witney East	2	3,929	1,965	32	5,034	2,517	61
30 Witney North	2	2,620	1,310	-12	2,625	1,313	-16
31 Witney South	3	5,349	1,783	20	5,478	1,826	17
32 Witney West	2	5,140	2,570	73	5,312	2,656	70
33 Woodstock	2	2,468	1,234	-17	2,439	1,220	-22
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>72,726</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>76,422</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,484</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by West Oxfordshire District Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Filkins & Langford ward were over-represented by 33 per cent, while electors in Witney West ward were under-represented by 73 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and the Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

#### **West Oxfordshire District Council**

24 West Oxfordshire District Council undertook a significant public consultation exercise during Stage One. Officers at the Council generated eight possible schemes for the area, three of which were selected by a council working party for public inspection and forwarded to all local interest groups for consultation, including parish and town councils, County Councillors, MPs and the police authority. After making a number of modifications to reflect local opinion, the Council submitted Option B to the Commission.

25 The District Council proposed a council of 49 members, as at present, serving 28 wards, rather than the existing 33. Its proposals for the district would provide for single- and multi-member district wards that are wholly coterminous with parish boundaries. The proposals for Witney would rectify the current significant under-representation in the town.

26 The Council proposed no change to the existing cycle of elections by thirds. Under its proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 9 per cent by 2005.

#### **Liberal Democrats**

27 Witney Liberal Democrats and the West Oxfordshire District Council Liberal Democrat Group made a joint submission. They proposed amendments to the District Council's 49-member scheme and a district-wide scheme of their own, based on a council size of 50.

28 The modifications to the District Council's 49-member scheme affected wards in the north of the district, in order, in their opinion, to provide a better reflection of community identities.

29 Under their 50-member scheme there would be 28 single- and multi-member wards. The Liberal Democrats' proposals for the towns of Carterton and Witney and wards in the far south-west of the district, would mirror those of the District Council. However, its scheme for the rest of the district would include different combinations of parishes to form wards. These proposals would provide improvements in electoral equality, with no ward having an electoral variance of more than 7 per cent by 2005. The two schemes are summarised at Appendix B.

## **Oxfordshire County Council**

30 Oxfordshire County Council suggested that the proposals for two- and three-member wards in Witney “are likely to create difficulties for the County Council in formulating their proposals to meet the criteria for future divisions”.

## **Parish and Town Councils**

31 We received representations from four parish and town councils. Chipping Norton Town Council stated that it is “satisfied with the current electoral arrangements for the town” and proposed no change to the parish council electoral arrangements. Finstock Parish Council opposed the District Council’s scheme for warding arrangements in its area, particularly the proposal to include Finstock and Leaffield parishes in separate wards. It proposed an alternative arrangement for its area, which, it argued, would better reflect community identities. Enstone Parish Council expressed support for the District Council’s Option B (the District Council’s formal submission to the Commission), but suggested a number of modifications to better reflect community identities. Kencot Parish Meeting also expressed support for the District Council’s Option B, for reasons of community identity.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

32 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for West Oxfordshire 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”.

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

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

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

36 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 72,726 to 76,422 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Carterton North and Witney East wards. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

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

## **Council Size**

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

39 West Oxfordshire District Council presently has 49 members and the District Council proposed no change to this number. However, the Liberal Democrats proposed schemes based on the retention of the existing council size or an increase in council size of one, to 50. However, they did not provide any evidence in support of the increase. Having considered the evidence received, we do not consider that an increase in council size has been justified, particularly as it is not necessary to provide electoral equality and meet the statutory criteria.

40 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 49 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

41 We have considered all the representations received during Stage One. We have noted that the Liberal Democrats' schemes would provide relatively similar warding arrangements to those proposed by the District Council and would facilitate significant improvements in electoral equality. However, to the best of our knowledge, neither scheme was made available for public inspection. Additionally, having noted the comments made by parish councils to the District Council, as part of its Stage One consultation exercise (which it attached to its formal submission), we are concerned that where the Liberal Democrats' schemes differ from the District Council's, they would not command a similar degree of local support.

42 In view of the degree of consensus evident behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the extensive consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that it would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One.

43 Oxfordshire County Council stated that the proposals for two- and three- member wards in Witney "are likely to create difficulties for the County Council in formulating their proposals to meet the criteria for future electoral divisions" and suggested that "the proposed district council wards for these areas will need to be divided into smaller units for parish and town council warding purposes" in order that they can be used as building blocks. However, the Commission's approach in two-tier county areas is to first review the electoral arrangements of the district council and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. Our future recommendations for electoral division boundaries, in all counties, including Oxfordshire, would utilise the new district wards as building blocks. We therefore cannot have any regard for existing or future county council divisions during this review.

44 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Bartons, Chipping Norton, Enstone and Rollright wards;
- (b) Chadlington, Charlbury, Combe & Stonesfield, Finstock & Leafield and Tackley & Wootton wards;
- (c) Ascott & Shipton, Kingham and Milton-under-Wychwood wards;
- (d) Bampton, Burford, Clanfield & Shilton and Filkins & Langford wards;
- (e) Brize Norton & Curbridge, Ducklington, Hailey and Minster Lovell wards;
- (f) Bladon & Cassington, Freeland & Hanborough and Woodstock wards;
- (g) Aston, Bampton & Standlake, Eynsham, North Leigh and Stanton Harcourt wards;
- (h) Carterton North and Carterton South wards;
- (i) Witney East, Witney North, Witney South and Witney West wards.

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

### **Bartons, Chipping Norton, Enstone and Rollright wards**

46 These four wards cover the north of the district. The existing single-member Bartons ward comprises the parishes of Sandford St Martin, Steeple Barton, Westcot Barton and Worton and is currently 2 per cent under-represented (3 per cent over-represented by 2005). The three-member Chipping Norton ward is coterminous with Chipping Norton parish, and is currently 3 per cent under-represented (2 per cent by 2005). The single-member Enstone ward comprises the parishes of Enstone, Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford and is currently 13 per cent over-represented (17 per cent by 2005). The single-member Rollright ward comprises the parishes of Heythrop, Over Norton, Rollright and Salford and is currently 22 per cent over-represented (25 per cent by 2005).

47 The District Council proposed no change to the existing Bartons and Chipping Norton wards. However, Bartons ward would be renamed The Bartons. It also proposed a modified single-member Enstone ward, to include the parishes of Enstone, Great Tew and Swerford (part of the existing Enstone ward) and Heythrop and Over Norton (part of the existing Rollright ward). The remainder of the existing Enstone and Rollright wards (Little Tew, Rollright and Salford parishes) would form part of a new single-member Kingham & Rollright ward with the parishes of Chastleton, Cornwell and Kingham (part of the existing Kingham ward). Rollright ward would then cease to exist. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average in The Bartons ward (3 per cent below by 2005), 3 per cent above the average in Chipping Norton ward (2 per cent by 2005), 9 per cent above the average in Enstone ward (4 per cent by 2005) and 7 per cent above the average in Kingham & Rollright ward (5 per cent by 2005).

48 Under both its 49- and 50-member schemes the Liberal Democrats proposed no change to the existing Chipping Norton ward. However, under its 49-member scheme there would be a modified Rollright ward, to include the parishes of Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford (part of

the existing Enstone ward), Heythrop, Over Norton and Rollright (part of the existing Rollright ward) and Sandford St Martin and Worton (part of the existing Bartons ward). The remainder of Enstone and Bartons wards (the parishes of Enstone, Steeple Barton and Westcot Barton) would be included in a new Enstone & The Bartons ward with the parishes of Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Rousham and Tackley (part of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward). The remainder of the existing Rollright ward would form part of a new Churchill & Kingham ward (see below). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Enstone & The Bartons ward would be 5 per cent above the average (equal to the average by 2005) and 1 per cent above the average in Rollright ward (3 per cent below the average by 2005).

49 Under the Liberal Democrats' 50-member scheme there would be a new The Bartons ward, comprising the whole of the existing Bartons ward and Rousham parish (part of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward). There would also be a modified single-member Rollright ward, comprising the existing Rollright ward and the parishes of Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford (part of the existing Enstone ward). Enstone parish (the remainder of the existing Enstone ward) would form part of a new Enstone & Stonesfield ward (see below). Under this scheme, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above the average in Rollright ward (2 per cent by 2005) and 7 per cent above the average in The Bartons ward (2 per cent by 2005).

50 Chipping Norton Town Council proposed that the existing arrangements for its area be retained, while Enstone Parish Council expressed a degree of support for the District Council's scheme.

51 We have carefully considered the representations received regarding warding arrangements in this area. We are pleased to note that there is local consensus for a three-member Chipping Norton ward (coterminous with Chipping Norton parish) and therefore recommend that such a proposal form part of our draft recommendations. Elsewhere, we consider the District Council's scheme for this area to provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are particularly conscious that its proposal would command a higher degree of local support than the Liberal Democrats' scheme. However, in the light of views expressed during the District Council's own consultation process, we are aware that Great Tew and Little Tew parishes are opposed to the District Council's proposal to include them in separate district wards. In the light of this, we suggest that the proposed Enstone and Kingham & Rollright wards be merged to form a new two-member Kingham, Rollright & Enstone ward. This arrangement would include both Great Tew and Little Tew parishes in a single ward, whilst continuing to provide excellent levels of electoral equality. Under these proposals, outlined on Map 2, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Chipping Norton and Bartons would be the same as under the District Council's scheme and 8 per cent above the average for the district in Kingham, Rollright & Enstone ward (5 per cent by 2005).

### **Chadlington, Charlbury, Combe & Stonesfield, Finstock & Leafield and Tackley & Wootton wards**

52 These five wards cover the north-eastern part of the district. Chadlington ward comprises the parishes of Chadlington, Chilson, Fawler and Spelsbury and is served by one member who currently represents 27 per cent fewer electors than the district average (30 per cent by 2005).

Charlbury district ward is coterminous with Charlbury parish and is served by two members who currently represent 20 per cent fewer electors than the district average (21 per cent by 2005). Combe & Stonesfield ward comprises the parishes of the same name and is served by one member who currently represents 22 per cent more electors than the district average (15 per cent by 2005). Finstock & Leaffield ward comprises the parishes of Cornbury & Wychwood, Finstock and Leaffield and it is served by one member who currently represents 16 per cent fewer electors than the district average (20 per cent by 2005). Tackley & Wootton ward comprises the parishes of Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Rousham, Tackley and Wootton and it is also served by one member who currently represents 6 per cent fewer electors than the district average (12 per cent by 2005).

53 The District Council proposed a modified Chadlington ward, to include the parishes of Chadlington, Chilson and Spelsbury (part of the existing Chadlington ward), Churchill and Sarsden (part of the existing Kingham ward) and Cornbury & Wychwood (part of the existing Finstock & Leaffield ward). The existing Charlbury ward would be extended southwards to include Fawler parish (the remainder of Chadlington ward) and Finstock parish (part of the existing Finstock & Leaffield ward) in a new Charlbury & Finstock ward. The remainder of Finstock & Leaffield ward (Leaffield parish) would form part of a new Hailey & Minster Lovell ward (see below). The District Council also proposed that the existing Combe & Stonesfield and Tackley & Wootton wards be combined to form a new two-member Stonesfield & Tackley ward. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the average in Chadlington ward (2 per cent by 2005), 2 per cent above the average in Charlbury & Finstock ward (equal to the average by 2005) and 8 per cent above the average in Stonesfield & Tackley ward (2 per cent by 2005).

54 Under its 49-member scheme, the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Charlbury & Chadlington ward, comprising Charlbury parish and the parishes of Chadlington and Spelsbury (part of the existing Chadlington ward). The remainder of the existing Chadlington ward (the parishes of Chilson and Fawler) would be included in a modified single-member Finstock & Leaffield ward with the existing Finstock and Leaffield ward. Wootton parish (part of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward) would form part of a new Stonesfield & Wootton ward with Stonesfield parish (part of the existing Combe & Stonesfield ward). The remainder of Tackley & Wootton ward (Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Rousham and Tackley parishes) would form part of a new Enstone & The Bartons ward (see above). The remainder of the existing Combe & Stonesfield ward (Combe parish) would form part of a new North Leigh, Hailey & Combe ward (see below). Under this scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the district average in Charlbury & Chadlington ward (10 per cent by 2005), 5 per cent below the average in Finstock & Leaffield ward (9 per cent by 2005) and 11 per cent above the average in Stonesfield & Wootton ward (5 per cent by 2005).

55 Under their 50-member scheme the Liberal Democrats' proposed Charlbury & Finstock ward would mirror that of the District Council. They also proposed a new single-member Leaffield & Chadlington ward comprising Chadlington and Chilson parishes (part of the existing Chadlington ward) and Cornbury & Wychwood and Leaffield parishes (part of the existing Finstock & Leaffield ward). Spelsbury parish (part of the existing Chadlington ward) would be included in a two-member Enstone & Stonesfield ward with Stonesfield parish (part of the existing Combe &

Stonesfield ward) and Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh and Wootton parishes (part of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward). The remainder of Combe & Stonesfield ward (Combe parish) would be included in a modified Freeland & Hanborough ward (see below). Rousham and Tackley parishes (the remainder of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward) would be included in a modified The Bartons ward (see above) and Woodstock ward (see below) respectively. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in Charlbury & Finstock ward (2 per cent by 2005), 1 per cent above the average in Enstone & Stonesfield ward (4 per cent below by 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in Leaffield & Chadlington ward (4 per cent by 2005).

56 Finstock Parish Council opposed the District Council's scheme for warding arrangements in its area, particularly the proposal to include Finstock and Leaffield parishes in separate wards. It proposed two alternatives, which in its opinion, better reflected community identities. It proposed that Cornbury & Wychwood, Finstock, Leaffield and Ramsden parishes form a district ward or that Fawler, Finstock, Leaffield or Ramsden parishes form a ward.

57 We have carefully considered all the proposals submitted during Stage One for this area. We have noted the local concerns regarding the proposals for Finstock parish and in the light of these have considered the alternative arrangements suggested (by both the Liberal Democrats and Finstock Parish Council itself). However, we are concerned that the Liberal Democrats' 49-member scheme would provide for a Charlbury & Chadlington ward with an electoral variance of 10 per cent by 2005. Additionally, the implementation of such a proposal would require the departure from a scheme in the north of the district that has been locally consulted on and commands a degree of local support, particularly from other parishes in the area. In addition, in formulating recommendations we are unable to consider an area in isolation, and must have regard for the consequential effect of any changes we make to a scheme.

58 We have also considered the alternatives proposed by Finstock Parish Council. As outlined earlier in the chapter, we propose that the draft recommendations be based on the District Council's scheme, and in the light of this we have considered the proposals from Finstock Parish Council in the context of the District Council's scheme. We are concerned that although its proposals would provide electoral equality for the ward to include Finstock parish, they would result in electoral variances of over 20 per cent in neighbouring wards. We have not been persuaded by the evidence supplied during Stage One regarding community identities, that such electoral variances are justified, particularly as locally generated alternatives exist. We have attempted to find an alternative arrangement for the area to address the concerns of Finstock Parish Council, but have been unable to find one for the area as a whole that would provide an equally good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the light of this, we propose that the District Council's scheme in this area be adopted as part of our draft recommendations, as we consider that it strikes the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The electoral equality achieved under the draft recommendations, as outlined on Map 2, would be the same as under the District Council's scheme.

## **Ascott & Shipton, Kingham and Milton-under-Wychwood wards**

59 These three single-member wards are situated in the north-west of the district. Ascott & Shipton ward, which comprises the parishes of Ascott-under-Wychwood, Lyneham and Shipton-under-Wychwood, is currently 9 per cent under-represented (5 per cent by 2005). Kingham ward, which comprises the parishes of Chastleton, Churchill, Cornwell, Kingham and Sarsden, is currently 13 per cent over-represented (unchanged by 2005). Milton-under-Wychwood ward, which comprises the parishes of Bruern, Fifield, Idbury and Milton-under-Wychwood, is currently 8 per cent under-represented (4 per cent by 2005).

60 The District Council proposed no change to the existing Ascott & Shipton and Milton-under-Wychwood wards. However, it proposed that Kingham ward cease to exist, with Churchill and Sarsden parishes forming part of a modified Chadlington ward and Chastleton, Cornwell and Kingham parishes forming part of a new single-member Kingham & Rollright ward (see above). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Ascott & Shipton ward (5 per cent by 2005) and 8 per cent above the average in Milton-under-Wychwood ward (4 per cent by 2005).

61 Under its 49-member scheme the Liberal Democrats' proposed Ascott & Shipton and Milton-under-Wychwood wards would mirror those of the District Council, providing identical levels of electoral equality. However, they proposed a Churchill & Kingham ward comprising the whole of the existing Kingham ward and Salford parish (part of the existing Rollright ward). Churchill & Kingham ward would be 6 per cent under-represented (5 per cent by 2005).

62 The proposals included under the Liberal Democrats' 50-member scheme mirrored those included under their 49-member scheme, except that Lyneham parish would be included in Churchill & Kingham ward (called Kingham ward under this scheme), rather than Ascott & Shipton ward and Salford parish would be included in a modified Rollright ward (see above). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the average in Ascott & Shipton ward (3 per cent below by 2005), 2 per cent below the average in Kingham ward (unchanged by 2005) and 10 per cent above the average in Milton-under-Wychwood ward (6 per cent by 2005).

63 After careful consideration of the evidence received and in the light of our proposal for a 49-member council, we propose adopting the District Council's scheme in this area without modification. We consider that the revised wards would accurately reflect local communities, whilst providing improved levels of electoral equality. We are also concerned that the alternative arrangements, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, were not, to the best of our knowledge, made available for public inspection and are unlikely to command a similar degree of local support as the District Council's scheme. The recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

## **Bampton, Burford, Clanfield & Shilton and Filkins & Langford wards**

64 These four single-member wards cover the south-western part of the district. Bampton district ward is coterminous with Bampton parish, and the number of electors per councillor is currently 35 per cent above the district average (28 per cent by 2005). Burford ward comprises the parishes

of Burford, Fulbrook, Swinbrook & Widford and Taynton. The number of electors per councillor in this ward is 12 per cent above the average (8 per cent by 2005). Clanfield & Shilton ward comprises the parishes of Alvescot, Black Bourton, Clanfield, Grafton & Radcot and Shilton. The number of electors per councillor in this ward is currently 8 per cent above the average for the district (15 per cent by 2005). Filkins & Langford ward comprises the parishes of Broadwell, Filkins & Broughton Poggs, Holwell, Kelmscott, Kencot, Langford, Little Faringdon and Westwell. The number of electors per councillor in this ward is currently 33 per cent below the district average (36 per cent by 2005).

65 The District Council proposed a modified two-member Bampton ward, comprising the existing Bampton ward (and parish) and Black Bourton and Clanfield parishes (part of the existing Clanfield & Shilton ward). A new single-member Alvescot & Filkins ward would include the whole of the existing Filkins & Langford ward and the parishes of Alvescot and Grafton & Radcot (part of the existing Clanfield & Shilton ward). A modified single-member Burford ward would comprise the parishes of Burford, Fulbrook and Taynton. The remainder of the existing Clanfield & Shilton ward (Shilton parish) and the remainder of the existing Burford ward (Swinbrook & Widford parish) would form part of a new Brize Norton & Shilton ward (see below). Clanfield & Shilton and Filkins & Langford wards would then cease to exist. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the average in Alvescot & Filkins ward (9 per cent by 2005), 2 per cent below the average in Bampton ward (6 per cent by 2005) and 4 per cent above the average in Burford ward (1 per cent by 2005).

66 Under their 49- and 50-member schemes the Liberal Democrats' proposals for these three wards would mirror those of the District Council, therefore providing almost identical levels of electoral equality. However, under their 50-member scheme they proposed naming Alvescot & Filkins ward, Filkins & Langford. Kencot Parish Meeting expressed support for the District Council's Option B (its formal submission to the Commission), for reasons of community identity.

67 We have carefully considered all the representations received regarding warding arrangements in this area, and have been pleased to note the degree of consensus between the District Council's and Liberal Democrats' schemes. In the light of this and the significant improvements in electoral equality that would be achieved, we propose endorsing this scheme as part of our draft recommendations. Due to our proposal for a council size of 49, the electoral equality achieved under our draft recommendations, outlined on Map 2, would be the same as that achieved under the District Council's scheme.

### **Brize Norton & Curbridge, Ducklington, Hailey and Minster Lovell wards**

68 These four single-member wards cover the central part of the district, and each of them is currently over-represented. Brize Norton & Curbridge ward, which comprises the three parishes of Brize Norton, Curbridge and Lew, has an electoral variance of 28 per cent (29 per cent by 2005). Ducklington ward, which comprises the parishes of Ducklington and Hardwick-with-Yelford, has an electoral variance of 13 per cent (unchanged by 2005). Hailey ward, which comprises the parishes of Crawley, Hailey and Ramsden, has an electoral variance of 7 per cent

(11 per cent by 2005). Minster Lovell ward, which comprises the parishes of Asthal and Minster Lovell, has an electoral variance of 9 per cent (12 per cent by 2005).

69 The District Council proposed a new single-member Brize Norton & Shilton ward comprising Asthal parish (part of the existing Minster Lovell ward), Brize Norton parish (part of the existing Brize Norton & Curbridge ward), Shilton parish (part of the existing Clanfield & Shilton ward) and Swinbrook & Widford parish (part of the existing Burford ward). The remainder of Brize Norton & Curbridge ward (the parishes of Curbridge and Lew) would form part of a modified single-member Ducklington ward, with Ducklington parish. The remainder of the existing Ducklington ward (Hardwick-with-Yelford parish) would be included in a new Standlake & Stanton Harcourt ward (see below). The whole of the existing Hailey ward would be included in a new two-member Hailey & Minster Lovell ward with Minster Lovell parish (the remainder of the existing Minster Lovell ward) and Leaffield parish (part of the existing Finstock & Leaffield ward). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the district average in Brize Norton & Shilton ward (3 per cent by 2005), 7 per cent above the average in Ducklington ward (6 per cent by 2005) and 6 per cent above the average in Hailey & Minster Lovell ward (2 per cent by 2005).

70 Under their 49-member scheme the Liberal Democrats' proposed Brize Norton & Shilton and Ducklington wards would reflect those of the District Council, providing identical levels of electoral equality. However, they also proposed a modified Minster Lovell ward, comprising Crawley and Ramsden parishes (part of the existing Hailey ward) and Minster Lovell parish (part of the existing Minster Lovell ward). Hailey parish (the remainder of the existing Hailey ward) would be included in a new North Leigh, Hailey & Combe ward (see below). Minster Lovell ward would have an electoral variance of 6 per cent (2 per cent by 2005).

71 Under the Liberal Democrats' 50-member scheme there would be a new Brize Norton ward, comprising the existing Brize Norton & Curbridge ward and Shilton parish (part of the existing Clanfield & Shilton ward). They also proposed a modified Ducklington ward, comprising Ducklington parish (part of the existing Ducklington ward) and South Leigh parish (part of the existing Stanton Harcourt ward). The existing Hailey ward would form the basis of a new Hailey & North Leigh ward, which would also include North Leigh parish. The existing Minster Lovell ward would form the basis of a modified Minster Lovell ward, which would also include Swinbrook & Widford parish (part of the existing Burford ward). Under this scheme, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the district average in Brize Norton ward (2 per cent above by 2005), 2 per cent above the average in Ducklington ward (1 per cent by 2005), equal to the average in Hailey & North Leigh ward (4 per cent below the average by 2005) and 1 per cent above the average in Minster Lovell ward (3 per cent below by 2005).

72 After careful consideration of the evidence received and in the light of our proposal for a 49-member council, we propose adopting the District Council's scheme in this area without modification. We consider that the revised wards would balance the need to reflect local communities, while providing improved levels of electoral equality. We are also concerned that the alternative arrangements, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, were not, to the best of our knowledge, made available for public inspection and are unlikely to command a similar degree of local support as the District Council's scheme. The recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

## **Bladon & Cassington, Freeland & Hanborough and Woodstock wards**

73 These three wards cover a small area in the east of the district. The single member for Bladon & Cassington ward, which comprises the parishes of the same name, currently represents 19 per cent fewer electors than the district average (23 per cent by 2005). The two members for Freeland & Hanborough ward, which also comprises the parishes of the same name, currently represent 11 per cent more electors than the district average (7 per cent by 2005). The two members for Woodstock ward, which comprises the parishes of Blenheim and Woodstock, currently represent 17 per cent fewer electors than the district average (22 per cent by 2005).

74 The District Council proposed no change to the existing Freeland & Hanborough ward. It also proposed that the existing Woodstock ward be extended southwards to include Bladon parish (part of the existing Bladon & Cassington ward) and that Cassington parish (the remainder of this ward) be included in a modified Eynsham ward (see below). Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the average in Freeland & Hanborough ward (7 per cent by 2005) and 4 per cent above the average in Woodstock ward (3 per cent below by 2005).

75 Under their 49-member scheme the Liberal Democrats' proposed Freeland & Hanborough and Woodstock wards would reflect those of the District Council and, therefore, give identical levels of electoral equality.

76 However, under their 50-member scheme the Liberal Democrats proposed a modified Woodstock ward, to include the existing Woodstock ward and Tackley parish (part of the existing Tackley & Wootton ward). They also proposed that the existing Freeland & Hanborough ward be extended northwards to include Combe parish (part of the existing Combe & Stonesfield ward) and eastwards to include Bladon parish (part of the existing Bladon & Cassington ward). The remainder of Bladon & Cassington ward (Cassington parish) would be included in a modified Eynsham ward (see below). Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Freeland & Hanborough ward (1 per cent below by 2005) and 11 per cent above the average in Woodstock ward (5 per cent by 2005).

77 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements in this area. We have been pleased to note a degree of consensus between the District Council's scheme and those of the Liberal Democrats, particularly its 49-member scheme. In the light of this, and our proposal for a 49-member council, we are endorsing the District Council's scheme as part of our draft recommendations. We note that it would command some local support and consider it would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The electoral equality achieved under our draft recommendations, outlined on Map 2, would be the same as under the District Council's scheme.

## **Aston, Bampton & Standlake, Eynsham, North Leigh and Stanton Harcourt wards**

78 These four wards cover the far south-eastern part of the district. Aston, Bampton & Standlake, North Leigh and Stanton Harcourt wards are each represented by a single member,

while Eynsham ward is represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor in Aston, Bampton & Standlake ward, which comprises the parishes of Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney and Standlake, is currently 34 per cent above the district average (29 per cent by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in Eynsham ward, which is coterminous with Eynsham parish, is currently 16 per cent below the average (20 per cent by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in North Leigh ward, which is coterminous with North Leigh parish, is currently 4 per cent above the average (equal to the average by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in Stanton Harcourt ward, which comprises the parishes of Northmoor, South Leigh and Stanton Harcourt, is currently 11 per cent below the district average (16 per cent by 2005).

79 The District Council proposed no change to the existing North Leigh ward. It proposed a new three-member Eynsham ward, comprising the existing Eynsham ward, South Leigh parish (part of the existing Stanton Harcourt ward) and Cassington parish (part of the existing Bladon & Cassington ward). A new two-member Standlake & Stanton Harcourt ward would include the whole of the existing Aston, Bampton & Standlake ward, Northmoor and Stanton Harcourt parishes (the remainder of the existing Stanton & Harcourt ward) and Hardwick-with-Yelford parish (part of the existing Ducklington ward). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Eynsham ward (1 per cent below by 2005), 4 per cent above the average in North Leigh ward (equal to the average by 2005) and 7 per cent above the average in Standlake & Stanton Harcourt ward (2 per cent by 2005).

80 In this area, the Liberal Democrats' proposals, based on a council size of 49, would mirror those of the District Council, except for a new North Leigh, Hailey & Combe ward, comprising Hailey parish (part of the existing Hailey ward), North Leigh parish (and district ward) and Combe parish (part of the existing Combe & Stonesfield ward). This ward would have an electoral variance of 4 per cent (1 per cent by 2005). Under their 50-member scheme, the Liberal Democrats' proposed Standlake ward would mirror the District Council's Standlake & Stanton Harcourt ward. They also proposed a modified Eynsham ward, comprising the existing Eynsham ward and Cassington parish (part of the existing Bladon & Cassington ward). Finally in this area, they proposed that North Leigh district ward and parish would be included in a new Hailey & North Leigh ward (see above). Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the average in Eynsham ward (6 per cent by 2005) and 5 per cent above the average in Standlake ward (equal to the average by 2005).

81 After careful consideration of the evidence received and in the light of our proposal for a 49-member council, we propose adopting the District Council's scheme in this area without modification. We consider that the revised wards would accurately reflect local communities, whilst providing improved levels of electoral equality. We are also concerned that the alternative arrangements, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, were not, to the best of our knowledge, made available for public inspection and are unlikely to command a similar degree of local support as the District Council's scheme, as explained earlier in the chapter. The recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

## **Carterton North and Carterton South wards**

82 These two wards cover Carterton parish, and each is represented by three members. The number of electors in Carterton North ward is currently 7 per cent above the district average (34 per cent above by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in Carterton South ward is currently 30 per cent below the district average (35 per cent by 2005).

83 The District Council proposed that the town of Carterton be divided into three wards, rather than two as at present. It proposed no change to the boundaries of the existing Carterton South ward, but recommended that it be represented by two, rather than three, members. However, it proposed that the existing Carterton North ward be divided into two two-member wards, Carterton North East and Carterton North West. The boundary between the two wards would broadly follow Burford Road, part of Swinbrook Road, Bonham Place and Beverley Crescent. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 46 per cent below the district average in Carterton North East ward (equal to the average by 2005) due to the significant development, 6 per cent above the average in Carterton North West ward (equal to the average by 2005) and 4 per cent above the average in Carterton South ward (2 per cent below by 2005).

84 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Carterton (under both the 49- and 50-member schemes) would mirror those of the District Council. In the light of this, the local consultation exercise undertaken with interested parties, the excellent levels of electoral equality achieved and the utilisation of identifiable boundaries, we propose endorsing these recommendations in full. We consider that they would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under these proposals, outlined on the large map at the back of the report, the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the District Council's scheme. These proposals would have consequential implications for the parish warding of Carterton, the details of which are outlined later in the chapter.

## **Witney East, Witney North, Witney South and Witney West wards**

85 Situated in the south of the district Witney is West Oxfordshire's main town; its electorate accounts for 23 per cent of the district's total electorate. The four wards cover the whole of Witney parish. The two-member Witney East ward is currently 32 per cent under-represented (61 per cent by 2005), the two-member Witney North ward is currently 12 per cent over-represented (16 per cent by 2005), the three-member Witney South ward is currently 20 per cent under-represented (17 per cent by 2005) and the two-member Witney West ward is currently 73 per cent under-represented (70 per cent by 2005).

86 As a result of a recent parish review undertaken by the District Council, a number of changes to the external parish boundary of Witney have been made. Our proposals would reflect these changes.

87 The District Council proposed that the town of Witney be represented by 12 councillors (three more than at present), serving five wards (one more than at present). Revised Witney East and Witney North wards would cover that part of Witney town east of the River Windrush; the boundary between the two wards would follow Woodgreen Hill and Woodstock Road. The

remainder of the town would be divided into three wards. A revised Witney West ward would broadly cover that part of Witney town west of Apley Way and Thorney Leys. The central part of the town would be covered by two wards; a new Witney Central ward and a modified Witney South ward. The boundary between the two wards would broadly follow Curbridge Road and Welch Way. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the average in Witney Central ward (equal to the average by 2005), 22 per cent below the average in Witney East ward (3 per cent by 2005), 4 per cent above the average in Witney North ward (equal to the average by 2005), equal to the average in Witney South ward (unchanged by 2005) and 1 per cent above the average in Witney West ward (4 per cent below by 2005).

88 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Witney (under both the 49- and 50-member schemes) would mirror those of the District Council. In the light of this, the local consultation exercise undertaken with interested parties, the excellent levels of electoral equality achieved and the utilisation of identifiable boundaries, we propose endorsing these recommendations in full. We consider that they would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under these proposals, outlined on the large map at the back of the report, the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the District Council's scheme. These proposals would have consequential implications for the parish warding of Witney, the details of which are outlined later in the chapter.

## **Electoral Cycle**

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

## **Conclusions**

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

- a council of 49 members should be retained;
- there should be 27 wards;
- the boundaries of seven of the existing wards should be retained, resulting in a net reduction of six wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

91 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme, but propose departing from them in the following area:

- the District Council's proposed single-member Enstone and Kingham & Rollright wards should be merged to form a two-member ward, to better reflect community identities.

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

*Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	49	49	49	49
Number of wards	33	27	33	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,484	1,560	1,484	1,560
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	23	3	26	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	2	13	0

93 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for West Oxfordshire District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 23 to three. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

**Draft Recommendation**  
 West Oxfordshire District Council should comprise 49 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 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**

94 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Carterton and Witney, to reflect the proposed district wards.

95 The parish of Carterton is currently served by 16 councillors representing five wards: Gateway, Rock Farm, Shillbrook and Upavon (returning three councillors each) and Milestone (returning four councillors). The District Council proposed that the existing number of councillors be retained, that there should be six town wards, rather than five as at present and that each of the proposed district wards be divided into two parish wards. We propose endorsing the District Council’s proposed Gateway, Milestone, Rock Farm and Shillbrook town wards as part of our draft recommendations. However, the District Council also proposed a modified Upavon town ward and a new Kilkenny town ward, the boundary between the two being drawn to include the new Shilton housing estate in a single ward. However, the Commission is unable to propose a parish ward that would not include any electors on the 2000 electoral register and therefore recommends that the District Council’s proposed Upavon and Kilkenny town wards be merged to form a single Upavon ward.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Carterton Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Gateway ward (returning two councillors), Milestone ward (returning three councillors), Rock Farm ward (returning three councillors), Shillbrook ward (returning three councillors) and Upavon ward (returning five councillors). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

96 The parish of Witney is currently served by 16 councillors, representing four wards: East ward (returning four councillors), North ward (returning two councillors) and South and West wards (returning five councillors each). The District Council proposed an increase in the number of parish wards, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, and an increase in the number of members, from 16 to 17. We propose endorsing these proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Witney Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, one more than at present, representing five wards: Central ward (returning three councillors), East ward (returning four councillors), North ward (returning three councillors), South ward (returning four councillors) and West ward (returning three councillors). The boundaries between the five town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

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

**Draft Recommendation**

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

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for West Oxfordshire*



## 5 NEXT STEPS

99 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 23 April 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

100 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for West Oxfordshire: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the West Oxfordshire area.

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

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Carterton and Witney.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for West Oxfordshire: Key Map*

## APPENDIX B

### West Oxfordshire District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those put forward by the District Council in only two wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

*Figure B1: West Oxfordshire District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Enstone	Enstone ward (part – the parishes of Enstone, Great Tew and Swerford); Rollright ward (part – the parishes of Heythrop and Over Norton)
Kingham & Rollright	Enstone ward (part – Little Tew parish); Kingham ward (part – the parishes of Chastleton, Cornwell and Kingham); Rollright ward (part – the parishes of Rollright and Salford)

*Figure B2: West Oxfordshire District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Enstone	1	1,625	1,625	9	1,629	1,629	4
Kingham & Rollright	1	1,585	1,585	7	1,633	1,633	5

*Source: Electorate figures are based on West Oxfordshire District Council's submission.*

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

## The Witney Liberal Democrats' and West Oxfordshire District Council Liberal Democrat Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats in their 49-member scheme in eight wards, where their proposals were as follows:

*Figure B3: The Liberal Democrats' Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Charlbury & Chadlington	Chadlington ward (part – the parishes of Chadlington and Spelsbury); Charlbury ward (Charlbury parish)
Churchill & Kingham	Kingham ward (the parishes of Chastleton, Churchill, Cornwell, Kingham and Sarsden); Rollright ward (part – Salford parish)
Enstone & The Bartons	Bartons ward (part – the parishes of Steeple Barton and Westcot Barton); Enstone ward (part – Enstone parish); Tackley & Wootton ward (part – the parishes of Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Rousham and Tackley)
Finstock & Leafield	Chadlington ward (part – the parishes of Chilson and Fawler); Finstock & Leafield ward (the parishes of Cornbury & Wychwood, Finstock and Leafield)
Minster Lovell	Hailey ward (part – the parishes of Crawley and Ramsden); Minster Lovell ward (part – Minster Lovell parish)
North Leigh, Hailey & Combe	Combe & Stonesfield ward (part – Combe parish); Hailey ward (part – Hailey parish); North Leigh ward (North Leigh parish)
Rollright	Bartons ward (part – the parishes of Sandford St Martin and Worton); Enstone ward (part – the parishes of Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford); Rollright ward (part – the parishes of Heythrop, Over Norton and Rollright)
Stonesfield & Wootton	Combe & Stonesfield ward (part – Stonesfield parish); Tackley & Wootton ward (part – Wootton parish)

*Figure B4: The Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Charlbury & Chadlington	2	3,289	1,645	11	3,417	1,709	10
Churchill & Kingham	1	1,578	1,578	6	1,638	1,638	5
Enstone & The Bartons	2	3,120	1,560	5	3,122	1,561	0

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 %
Finstock & Leafield	1	1,407	1,407	-5	1,412	1,412	-9
Minster Lovell	1	1,567	1,567	6	1,594	1,594	2
North Leigh, Hailey & Combe	2	3,076	1,538	4	3,097	1,549	-1
Rollright	1	1,500	1,500	1	1,520	1,520	-3
Stonesfield & Wootton	1	1,648	1,648	11	1,638	1,638	5

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

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

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats in their 50-member scheme in 13 wards, where their proposals were as follows:

Figure B5: The Liberal Democrats' Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ascott & Shipton	Ascott & Shipton ward (part – the parishes of Ascott-under-Wychwood and Shipton-under-Wychwood)
Brize Norton	Brize Norton & Curbridge ward (the parishes of Brize Norton, Curbridge and Lew); Clanfield & Shilton ward (part – Shilton parish)
Ducklington	Ducklington ward (part – Ducklington parish); Stanton Harcourt ward (part – South Leigh parish)
Enstone & Stonesfield	Chadlington ward (part – Spelsbury parish); Combe & Stonesfield ward (part – Stonesfield parish); Enstone ward (part – Enstone parish); Tackley & Wootton ward (part – the parishes of Glymton, Kiddington with Asterleigh and Wootton)
Eynsham	Bladon & Cassington ward (part – Cassington parish); Eynsham ward (Eynsham parish)
Freeland & Hanborough	Bladon & Cassington ward (part – Bladon parish); Combe & Stonesfield ward (part – Combe parish); Freeland & Hanborough ward (the parishes of Freeland and Hanborough)
Hailey & North Leigh	Hailey ward (the parishes of Crawley, Hailey and Ramsden); North Leigh ward (North Leigh parish)
Kingham	Ascott & Shipton ward (part – Lyneham parish); Kingham ward (the parishes of Chastleton, Churchill, Cornwell, Kingham and Sarsden)

Leaffield & Chadlington	Chadlington ward (part – the parishes of Chadlington and Chilson); Finstock & Leaffield ward (part – the parishes of Cornbury & Wychwood and Leaffield)
Minster Lovell	Burford ward (part – Swinbrook & Widford parish); Minster Lovell ward (the parishes of Asthal and Minster Lovell)
Rollright	Enstone ward (part – the parishes of Great Tew, Little Tew and Swerford); Rollright ward (the parishes of Heythrop, Over Norton, Rollright and Salford)
The Bartons	Bartons ward (the parishes of Sandford St Martin, Steeple Barton, Westcot Barton and Worton); Tackley & Wootton ward (part – Rousham parish)
Woodstock	Tackley & Wootton ward (part – Tackley parish); Woodstock ward (the parishes of Blenheim and Woodstock)

*Figure B6: The Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ascott & Shipton	1	1,482	1,482	2	1,490	1,490	-3
Brize Norton	1	1,399	1,399	-4	1,564	1,564	2
Ducklington	1	1,490	1,490	2	1,545	1,545	1
Enstone & Stonesfield	2	2,931	1,466	1	2,922	1,461	-4
Eynsham	3	4,316	1,439	-1	4,321	1,440	-6
Freeland & Hanborough	3	4,490	1,497	3	4,519	1,506	-1
Hailey & North Leigh	2	2,919	1,460	0	2,946	1,473	-4
Kingham	1	1,424	1,424	-2	1,492	1,492	-2
Leaffield & Chadlington	1	1,438	1,438	-1	1,472	1,472	-4

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
Minster Lovell	1	1,463	1,463	1	1,489	1,489	-3
Rollright	1	1,544	1,544	6	1,559	1,559	2
The Bartons	1	1,550	1,500	7	1,555	1,555	2
Woodstock	2	3,234	1,617	11	3,202	1,601	5

*Source: Electorate figures are based on the Liberal Democrats' submission.*

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



## APPENDIX C

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

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

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

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

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

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



## APPENDIX D

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

*Figure D1: Commission compliance with Code criteria*

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