

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Rushmoor in Hampshire

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

July 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rushmoor in Hampshire.

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>25</i>
APPENDICES	
A Final Recommendations for Rushmoor: Detailed Mapping	<i>27</i>
B Draft Recommendations for Rushmoor (January 2000)	<i>33</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Farnborough is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

25 July 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 20 July 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Rushmoor under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in light of this consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 70) in light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Rushmoor.

We recommend that Rushmoor Borough Council should be served by 42 councillors representing 14 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Rushmoor on 20 July 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 18 January 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **In eight of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **By 2004 electoral equality is not expected to have improved, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 70–71) are that:

- **Rushmoor Borough Council should have 42 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, one fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of all the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In no ward would the number of electors per councillor vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the borough in any ward by 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 5 September 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Cove & Southwood	3	Cove ward (part)	Large map
2	Empress	3	Cove ward (part); Empress ward; Knellwood ward (part); Queens ward (part)	Large map
3	Fernhill	3	Fernhill ward (part)	Large map
4	Grange	3	Fernhill ward (part); Grange ward; Mayfield ward (part)	Large map
5	Heron Wood	3	Heron Wood ward; Newport ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5
6	Knellwood	3	Knellwood ward (part); Queens ward (part); St Mark's ward (part)	Large map
7	Manor Park	3	Manor ward (part); Newport ward (part)	Maps 2, A4 and A5
8	Mayfield	3	Mayfield ward (part); Westheath ward (part)	Large map
9	North Town	3	Belle Vue ward (part); Newport ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5
10	Rowhill	3	Alexandra ward (part); Manor ward (part)	Maps 2 and A4
11	St John's	3	St John's ward (part)	Large map
12	St Mark's	3	Knellwood ward (part); Queens ward (part); St Mark's ward (part)	Maps 2, A2, A3 and large map
13	Wellington	3	Alexandra ward (part); Belle Vue ward (part); Queens ward (part)	Maps 2, A2, A3 and A4
14	Westheath	3	St John's ward (part); Westheath ward (part)	Large map

Notes: 1 The borough contains no parishes.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Rushmoor

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Cove & Southwood	3	4,201	1,400	-1	4,201	1,400	-2
2 Empress	3	4,554	1,518	8	4,586	1,529	7
3 Fernhill	3	4,158	1,386	-2	4,158	1,386	-3
4 Grange	3	3,976	1,325	-6	4,089	1,363	-5
5 Heron Wood	3	4,452	1,484	5	4,452	1,484	4
6 Knellwood	3	4,269	1,423	1	4,334	1,445	1
7 Manor Park	3	4,085	1,362	-3	4,366	1,455	2
8 Mayfield	3	4,207	1,402	0	4,207	1,402	-2
9 North Town	3	4,357	1,452	3	4,447	1,482	4
10 Rowhill	3	4,117	1,372	-3	4,128	1,376	-4
11 St John's	3	4,442	1,481	5	4,424	1,475	3
12 St Mark's	3	4,339	1,446	3	4,387	1,462	2
13 Wellington	3	3,819	1,273	-10	4,110	1,370	-4
14 Westheath	3	4,211	1,404	0	4,211	1,404	-2
Totals	42	59,187	-	-	60,100	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,409	-	-	1,431	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Rushmoor Borough Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rushmoor in Hampshire. We have now reviewed the 11 districts in Hampshire and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils 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 was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Rushmoor. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report No. 103). The electoral arrangements of Hampshire County Council were last reviewed in October 1980 (Report No. 397). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), which 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, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. 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, or that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 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, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. 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 were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Hampshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 20 July 1999, when we wrote to Rushmoor Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Constabulary, the local authority associations, Hampshire Local Councils Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 October 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 18 January 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rushmoor in Hampshire*, and ended on 13 March 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Rushmoor covers an area of some 4,000 hectares in north-east Hampshire, bordering Surrey county to the south and east, and Hart district to the west. The River Blackwater forms the eastern boundary of the borough. The M3 motorway and the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line divide Farnborough in the north of the borough, while the Alton to London Waterloo railway line runs through Aldershot in the south. Much of the land between the two urban areas of Farnborough and Aldershot is owned by the Ministry of Defence, including Farnborough Aerodrome, Aldershot Military Town and army training areas. The borough has no parishes.

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

15 The electorate of the borough is 59,187 (February 1999). The Council presently has 45 members who are elected from 15 three-member wards. Nine wards currently cover the Farnborough area in the north of the borough, and the remaining six cover the town of Aldershot. The Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Rushmoor borough, with around 21 per cent more electors than two decades ago. The most notable increases have been in Cove, Fernhill and St John's wards; these imbalances are partly the result of a boundary review between Rushmoor borough and Hart district undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1986. Other increases in the electorate of Rushmoor have occurred as a result of new housing developments.

17 At present each councillor represents an average of 1,315 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,336 by 2004 if the current number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, as detailed above, the number of electors per councillor in eight of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, three wards vary by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in St John's ward, where each of the three councillors represents 37 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Rushmoor

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alexandra	3	3,863	1,288	-2	3,855	1,285	-4
2 Belle Vue	3	3,223	1,074	-18	3,311	1,104	-17
3 Cove	3	4,938	1,646	25	4,920	1,640	23
4 Empress	3	3,686	1,229	-7	3,717	1,239	-7
5 Fernhill	3	4,447	1,482	13	4,454	1,485	11
6 Grange	3	3,460	1,153	-12	3,538	1,179	-12
7 Heron Wood	3	3,098	1,033	-21	3,099	1,033	-23
8 Knellwood	3	3,945	1,315	0	3,996	1,332	0
9 Manor	3	4,477	1,492	13	4,715	1,572	18
10 Mayfield	3	3,826	1,275	-3	3,812	1,271	-5
11 Newport	3	3,547	1,182	-10	3,599	1,200	-10
12 Queens	3	3,447	1,149	-13	3,851	1,284	-4
13 St John's	3	5,398	1,799	37	5,416	1,805	35
14 St Mark's	3	3,950	1,317	0	3,948	1,316	-1
15 Westheath	3	3,882	1,294	-2	3,869	1,290	-3
Totals	45	59,187	-	-	60,100	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,315	-	-	1,336	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Heron Wood ward were relatively over-represented by 21 per cent, while electors in St John's ward were relatively under-represented by 37 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received three representations, including borough-wide schemes from Rushmoor Borough Council and a local resident, Dr Appleton, and a submission from Aldershot Branch of Aldershot Constituency Labour Party. In light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rushmoor in Hampshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved a significant improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of 14 three-member wards in the borough. We proposed additional minor amendments to the boundaries between Grange, Mayfield and Westheath wards, between Cove and Empress wards, between St John's and Westheath wards and between Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards. We proposed that:

- Rushmoor Borough Council should be served by 42 councillors, compared with the current 45, representing 14 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Rushmoor Borough Council should comprise 42 councillors, serving 14 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 14 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This improved level of electoral equality was forecast to continue, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, four representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Rushmoor Borough Council and the Commission.

Rushmoor Borough Council

22 The Borough Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but proposed several minor amendments to ward boundaries in order to unite whole streets and provide clearer ward boundaries. The Council also proposed alternative names for five of the proposed wards. The Council stated that it had consulted with all members on the proposed ward names, with particular emphasis given to members' comments regarding their own wards.

Aldershot Branch Labour Party

23 Aldershot Branch of Aldershot Constituency Labour Party also supported our draft recommendations for Rushmoor. It proposed one minor amendment to ward boundaries, and also suggested renaming several wards in order to better reflect well-established community names.

Other Representations

24 We received two further representations at Stage Three. Councillor Wall, who represents Empress ward, supported the Borough Council's comments in relation to our draft recommendations. A resident of Farnborough also supported our draft recommendations but suggested amending the boundary between the proposed Newport & Belle Vue and Queens wards in order to unite all properties on Government Road within Queens ward. Hampshire County Council did not make any specific comments regarding our draft recommendations for Rushmoor Borough Council.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

25 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Rushmoor 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”.

26 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 ensuing five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

27 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.

28 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

29 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of less than 2 per cent, from 59,187 to 60,100 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in Queens ward, which is forecast to experience an increase in electorate of some 12 per cent by 2004, although the electorate in other wards will also increase as a result of housing developments scheduled to take place over the next five years.

30 The Council noted the high degree of under-registration of electors in Alexandra and Queens wards due to the large transitory military population, and also noted that the forthcoming Strategic Defence Review may have implications for Aldershot Military Town, currently in Queens ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Dr Appleton concurred with the electorate forecasts provided by the Council. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration

to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 We received no comments in relation to the Borough Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

32 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.

33 Rushmoor Borough Council is served by 45 councillors at present. At Stage One the Council proposed a reduction in council size to 42. It stated that it had established a cross-party Electoral Arrangements Sub-Committee to consider the most appropriate warding arrangements for the borough, which recommended retaining a minimum council size of 40 members, and accepted the need "to move away from the existing division of nine Farnborough wards and six Aldershot wards". The Council also stated that it wished to retain the present pattern of three-member wards in the borough. Dr Appleton supported the Council's proposed council size of 42.

34 In our draft recommendations report we noted that changes made to the borough boundaries since the last review of the electoral arrangements of Rushmoor have significantly affected the size and distribution of the borough's electorate. As a result, although the Farnborough area is currently entitled to between 28 and 29 councillors, it is represented by only 27 councillors. Conversely, while the Aldershot area is presently covered by six three-member wards, given the size of the town's electorate it is entitled to between 16 and 17 councillors under a council size of 45. We were content that, under the Borough Council's proposed council size of 42, the allocation of 27 councillors to the Farnborough area and 15 councillors to Aldershot would more accurately reflect the levels of representation to which each town is entitled. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, as well as the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 42 members.

35 At Stage Three the Borough Council confirmed its support for a council of 42 members representing 14 wards. We note that our proposals have received a degree of local support, and remain content that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria in Rushmoor would best be met by a council of 42 members. Accordingly, we confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 42 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

36 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Dr Appleton. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations. While we accepted that Dr Appleton's proposals for the nine

Farnborough wards would achieve marginally better electoral equality than the Council's scheme, we were not persuaded that his proposed warding arrangements would better reflect the identities and interests of communities within Farnborough as a whole. Although his proposals would have provided for the unification of areas such as Rafborough and Farnborough Park, they would have divided communities elsewhere in the borough. In particular, his proposed Cove ward would have united areas either side of the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line which have no direct road links, and would have divided the Southwood community. Similarly, in the north of the borough, the Medway Drive area would be physically detached from the main body of his proposed Fernhill ward.

37 Given the degree of cross-party support for the Borough Council's proposals for Rushmoor, and in view of the extensive public consultation exercise which it undertook as part of the review process, we were satisfied that its proposals would achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality and most appropriately reflect the identities and interests of the various communities of Aldershot and Farnborough. We were not persuaded that the marginal improvement in electoral equality provided by Dr Appleton's proposals for Farnborough would justify the potential impact on community identities and interests in the area, and considered that by building on existing ward structures the Council's proposals would best reflect existing community ties. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the alternative scheme submitted at Stage One, and concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme.

38 In light of further evidence received at Stage Three, we are content that our draft recommendations have received a degree of local support, and we therefore propose that our recommendations should be substantially endorsed, subject to a number of minor amendments. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Fernhill, Grange and Mayfield wards;
- (b) Cove, St John's and Westheath wards;
- (c) Empress, Knellwood and St Mark's wards;
- (d) Alexandra, Manor and Queens wards;
- (e) Belle Vue, Heron Wood and Newport wards.

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

Fernhill, Grange and Mayfield wards

40 Fernhill, Grange and Mayfield wards are in the north of the borough and cover parts of Farnborough to the north of the M3 motorway and to the east of Mayfield Road, and are each represented by three councillors. At present, Fernhill ward has 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while Grange and Mayfield wards have 12 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively. These levels of electoral equality are not expected to improve by 2004, when Fernhill ward is forecast to have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, and Grange and Mayfield wards are forecast to have 12 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors than the average respectively.

41 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed largely retaining the existing ward structure in this area, suggesting only minor modifications to the boundaries of the three wards in order to improve electoral equality. Under its proposals, a revised Mayfield ward would include the part of Westheath ward to the north of Burns Close, Ballantyne Road and Austen Road, thereby uniting Mayfield Road and adjoining roads within Mayfield ward. Grange ward would be enlarged to include part of Mayfield ward to the east of Blackthorn Crescent and south of Chapel Lane, and part of Fernhill ward to the east of Hawley Lane.

42 Dr Appleton proposed more extensive change in this area, creating new Hawley and Oak Farm wards and a revised Fernhill ward. Under his proposals, the eastern parts of the current Fernhill and Mayfield wards would be combined with the northern part of Grange ward to form a new Hawley ward, and the remaining part of Grange ward would form part of a new Farnborough Park ward, as discussed later. A new Oak Farm ward would lie to the south of Hawley ward, and would include parts of the current Mayfield and Westheath wards, while Fernhill ward would be expanded to include part of Mayfield ward to the west of North Farm Road and the Medway Drive area of St John's ward.

43 In our draft recommendations report we largely adopted the Borough Council's scheme in this area. While we acknowledged that Dr Appleton's proposals would provide better levels of electoral equality than those of the Council, we were not persuaded that they would better reflect community identities and interests in this area. In particular, we considered that the interests of residents in the Medway Drive area south of the motorway would not be appropriately served by their inclusion in a Fernhill ward, as proposed by Dr Appleton. On balance, we considered that, by building on existing ward structures, the Council's proposals would provide the most appropriate ward structure in this area. However, we proposed several minor amendments to the Council's scheme in order to more appropriately reflect community interests, transferring Peach Tree Close from Grange ward to Mayfield ward, and including Burns Close in Mayfield ward. We also proposed including several properties on the southern side of Mayfield Road within the revised Mayfield ward.

44 At Stage Three the Borough Council broadly supported our recommendations for the northern part of Farnborough, but proposed several amendments to ward boundaries. The Council proposed retaining Peach Tree Close within Grange ward, arguing that Cherrywood Road is a significant local distributor road, which "functions to delineate the distinct communities on either side rather than acting as a focus". It also noted that, while Burns Close has road access only from Mayfield Road, it shares strong community ties with Shelley Rise to its south, "having been designed and built as a single housing association development". Councillor Wall supported the Council's comments on our draft recommendations.

45 Having considered all the evidence received, we propose amending our recommendations in light of comments made by the Borough Council. We propose retaining Peach Tree Close within Grange ward, rather than transferring it to Mayfield ward. We acknowledge that Cherrywood Road forms a strong and easily identifiable community boundary in this area, and are content that the existing boundary reflects community identities and interests well. In light of further evidence presented at Stage Three, we accept that Burns Close shares an affinity with Shelley Rise in Westheath ward, being part of the same development, and are content that both should continue to form part of Westheath ward. We are content to confirm our draft recommendations for Fernhill ward as final.

Under our final recommendations, Fernhill and Grange wards would have 2 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, and Mayfield ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (3 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2004).

Cove, St John's and Westheath wards

46 Cove, St John's and Westheath wards lie to the south of the M3 motorway in the north west of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. St John's and Westheath wards cover the area between the M3 motorway and the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line, while Cove ward extends south from the railway line as far as Farnborough Aerodrome, and includes the Raffborough and Southwood areas. At present Cove and St John's wards are the most acutely under-represented wards in the borough, partially as a result of the boundary review between Hart district and Rushmoor borough, and contain 25 per cent and 37 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (23 per cent and 35 per cent more than the average respectively by 2004). Westheath ward has 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (3 per cent fewer than the average by 2004).

47 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifying the boundaries of these wards in order to improve electoral equality in the area. Under the Council's proposals, the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line would be retained as a boundary between St John's and Westheath wards and Cove ward. However, in order to improve electoral equality, the Council proposed transferring the part of St John's ward to the east of Severn Road and Newfield Avenue to a revised Westheath ward, and transferring part of the Raffborough area to the east of Fowler Road, Busk Crescent and St Christopher's Road from Cove ward to a revised Empress ward. It also proposed transferring part of Westheath ward to a revised Mayfield ward, as detailed above.

48 Dr Appleton again proposed a more radical reorganisation of warding arrangements in this area. Under his proposals, the western part of the current Cove ward would be combined with part of St John's ward to the west of Minley Road to form a revised Cove ward. The remaining part of the current Cove ward would be combined with part of the current Empress ward in a new Raffborough ward. Dr Appleton also proposed combining parts of the current Mayfield, St John's and Westheath wards in a revised West Heath ward.

49 In our draft recommendations report we considered that the Borough Council's scheme would provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identities and interests in this area, and proposed adopting it as the basis of our draft recommendations. We were not persuaded that Dr Appleton's proposals would appropriately reflect the identities of communities in western Farnborough. In particular, we considered that there are few links between areas either side of the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line in the west of the borough, and were not persuaded that the unification of the Raffborough area within the proposed Raffborough ward would justify the potential impact of Dr Appleton's proposals on the Southwood area. In order to more accurately reflect community identities in the Raffborough area, we proposed amending the boundary between the Council's proposed Cove and Empress wards to include Wood Lane in Cove ward and unite Fowler Road, Busk Crescent, Halifax Close and Highfield Road within Empress ward. We put forward the Borough Council's proposed St John's and Westheath wards as part of our draft

recommendations, subject to retaining several properties on Fernhill Road within St John's ward, and a minor amendment to the boundary between Westheath and Mayfield wards, as detailed above.

50 At Stage Three the Borough Council broadly supported our proposed warding arrangements for this area, but noted that levels of electoral equality in Empress ward would be worse under our proposals than under the scheme which it had proposed at Stage One. While it accepted our proposal to transfer Highfield Road to Empress ward and retain Wood Lane in Cove ward, the Council proposed that both sides of Busk Crescent, Fowler Road and Halifax Close should be retained within Cove ward in order to improve electoral equality in Empress ward. The Council also proposed that Cove ward be renamed Cove & Southwood ward. Councillor Wall supported the Council's comments on our draft recommendations. Aldershot Branch Labour Party proposed that Cove ward be renamed Southwood ward, as "the new community of Southwood is the base for the ward".

51 Having considered all the evidence received, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to renaming Cove ward as Cove & Southwood ward. While we accept that, under our draft recommendations, electoral equality in Empress ward would be worse than under the Borough Council's proposals, we are content that our proposals would more appropriately reflect community identities and interests in the Southwood and Rafborough areas. In particular, we are not persuaded that improved levels of electoral equality in Empress ward would justify the potential impact of the Council's proposals on community ties in the area, and consider that the Fowler Road and Busk Crescent area should be retained within the proposed Empress ward. We are content that the Council's proposal to rename Cove ward as Cove & Southwood ward would better reflect the area covered by the ward, and propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations. Under our final recommendations, Cove & Southwood and St John's wards would have 1 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Westheath ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (2 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2004).

Empress, Knellwood and St Mark's wards

52 Empress, Knellwood and St Mark's wards are located in the east of the borough and comprise the Empress Park area and the Farnborough Park and South Farnborough areas to the east of the A325 Farnborough Road. The three-member Empress ward contains 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in 2004. Knellwood and St Mark's wards currently both have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (equal to and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2004), and are also each represented by three councillors.

53 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed minimal change to arrangements in this area, building on the reasonable levels of electoral equality which currently exist in the area. Under its proposals, Empress ward would be enlarged to include part of Cove ward, as detailed above, together with part of the current Queens ward, comprising Pinehurst Avenue, Pinehurst Cottages and Elles Close. Rectory Road would also be united within the revised Empress ward. Knellwood ward would remain largely unchanged, although it would include areas of Ministry of Defence land to the west

of the A325 Farnborough Road, currently in Queens ward, and part of the current St Mark's ward to the east of Oxford Road and north of Reading Road. The Council also proposed transferring the part of Queens ward to the north of the Basingstoke Canal, including Farnborough Airfield and North Camp, to a revised St Mark's ward.

54 Dr Appleton also proposed largely retaining St Mark's ward, but proposed combining parts of the current Empress, Grange and Knellwood wards to form two new wards, to be named Farnborough Park and Farnborough Town. Under his proposals, the southern part of Grange ward would be combined with parts of the current Empress ward to the north of the Basingstoke to London Waterloo railway line and east of the A325 Farnborough Road and part of Knellwood ward to the north of Sycamore Road to form a new Farnborough Park ward. The remaining part of Knellwood ward would be combined with the southern part of Empress ward and part of the current Queens ward to the north of Farnborough Aerodrome in a new Farnborough Town ward, which would also include part of St Mark's ward to the north of Reading Road. Dr Appleton broadly supported the Borough Council's proposed St Mark's ward.

55 In our draft recommendations report we largely adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Empress and Knellwood wards, subject to some minor amendments to the boundary between Cove and Empress wards in the Raffborough area, as detailed above. We were content that the Council's proposals, which built on existing ward structures, would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. While we recognised that Dr Appleton's proposals for southern Farnborough had some merit, we were not persuaded that they would appropriately reflect community identities and interests in the area. In particular, we were concerned that his proposals would divide the relatively recent development based around Woburn Avenue, and that the eastern part of the estate would be isolated from the majority of his proposed Farnborough Town ward.

56 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed support for our proposed Knellwood and St Mark's wards, although it objected to our proposal to include Busk Crescent, Fowler Road and Halifax Close within Empress ward, as discussed previously. It also noted that the proposed boundary between Queens and St Mark's wards would divide Mons Barracks, which is "intended to be redeveloped for military purposes", and suggested amending the boundary to follow the Basingstoke Canal and Camp Farm Road to the east of the barracks. Councillor Wall supported the Council's comments on our draft recommendations. Aldershot Branch Labour Party proposed that St Mark's ward be renamed North Camp ward, arguing that North Camp is "the well-established community name" for the area.

57 Having considered all the evidence received, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to adopting the Borough Council's proposed amendment to the boundary between Queens and St Mark's wards. Given the local support expressed for our draft recommendations, we consider that our proposals represent the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. In light of the Council's comments in relation to the boundary between Queens and St Mark's wards, we are content to amend the boundary to run to the south of Mons Barracks, north along Camp Farm Road, and east from Prince's Avenue to meet the borough boundary. While we acknowledge Aldershot Branch Labour Party's proposal to rename St Mark's ward as North Camp ward, we note that the Council supported the retention of the current ward name. On balance, in view of the lack of consensus in this area, we have

not been persuaded to modify the current ward name. Under our final recommendations, Empress, Knellwood and St Mark's wards would have 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent more than the average respectively by 2004). The proposed warding arrangements in this area are illustrated on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report and Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

Alexandra, Manor and Queens wards

58 Alexandra, Manor and Queens wards comprise much of western Aldershot, as well as the Ministry of Defence land to the north of the town, including Farnborough Aerodrome. Alexandra and Queens wards are each represented by three councillors and have 2 per cent and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (both with 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2004). Manor ward is also represented by three councillors, and has 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average at present (18 per cent more than the average by 2004).

59 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed substantially modifying warding arrangements in Aldershot, reducing the number of wards from six to five in order to more accurately reflect the level of representation to which the town is entitled and provide improved electoral equality. It proposed dividing Queens ward along the Basingstoke Canal, as detailed above, and combining the part of the current Queens ward to the south of the canal with the part of Alexandra ward to the east of Perowne Street, York Road and York Crescent to form a revised Queens ward. Under the Council's proposals, the remaining part of Alexandra ward would be combined with the part of Manor ward to the west of the Alton to London Waterloo railway line to form a revised Alexandra ward. The eastern part of the current Manor ward would be combined with part of the current Newport ward to the west of Mount Pleasant Road, Haig Road, Wolfe Road and Crossways to form a revised Manor ward. Dr Appleton and Aldershot Branch Labour Party stated that they supported the Council's proposals in this area.

60 In our draft recommendations report, we endorsed the Borough Council's proposals for western Aldershot, subject to a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards. We were satisfied that the Council's proposals had achieved a degree of cross-party support, and considered that the scheme would provide substantially improved levels of electoral equality and reflect community identities and interests in the area well. We gave further consideration to the proposed boundary between Alexandra and Queens wards in relation to Perowne Street, which would be divided between the proposed Alexandra and Queens wards, and invited further comments on this issue at Stage Three. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed a minor amendment to the Council's proposed Manor and Newport & Belle Vue ward, uniting both sides of Mount Pleasant Road within Manor ward.

61 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed support for our proposals in this area, and confirmed its view that Perowne Street is the most appropriate boundary between Alexandra and Queens wards. The Council proposed further amending the boundary between Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards in order to include all properties on Windmill Road and Staff Road in Manor ward, arguing that those properties "have a greater affinity to the Mount Pleasant Road area". It also suggested amending the boundary between Queens and St Mark's wards, as detailed above, and

proposed that Alexandra, Manor and Queens wards be renamed Rowhill, Manor Park and Wellington wards respectively. Councillor Wall supported the Council's comments on our draft recommendations. Aldershot Branch Labour Party also proposed including the whole of Windmill Road and Staff Road in Manor ward, and proposed that Alexandra and Manor wards be renamed Rowhill and Manor Park wards respectively. We received one further comment in relation to this area at Stage Three, from a resident of Farnborough, who proposed amending the boundary between Newport & Belle Vue and Queens wards to follow the Basingstoke Canal to the south of Gold Valley Lakes.

62 Having considered all the evidence received, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Queens and St Mark's wards and a further modification to the boundary between Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards. We note that there is a degree of local support for our draft recommendations, and are content that they represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. However, we concur with the comments received in relation to the Gold Valley Lakes area, and note that the sole road access to the area to the east of the Alton to London Waterloo railway line and north of the Basingstoke Canal is from within Queens ward. We therefore propose amending the boundary between Newport & Belle Vue and Queens wards to follow the Basingstoke Canal to the south of Gold Valley Lakes. We also note the degree of support for the proposal to include all of Windmill Road and Staff Road in Manor ward, and are content to adopt it as part of our final recommendations. We are also content to put forward the Borough Council's proposal to rename Alexandra, Manor and Queens wards, as Rowhill, Manor Park and Wellington wards respectively, as part of our final recommendations. Under our final recommendations, Manor Park, Rowhill and Wellington wards would have 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2004). The proposed boundary between Manor Park, Rowhill and Wellington wards is illustrated on Map 2 and Map A4 in Appendix A.

Belle Vue, Heron Wood and Newport wards

63 Belle Vue, Heron Wood and Newport wards cover the eastern part of Aldershot, including the North Town, Tices Meadow and Aldershot Park areas, and are each represented by three councillors. All three wards are significantly over-represented at present, and levels of electoral inequality are not expected to improve over the next five years. Belle Vue ward currently has 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, Heron Wood ward has 21 per cent fewer and Newport ward has 10 per cent fewer than the average (17 per cent, 23 per cent and 10 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2004).

64 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed transferring parts of the existing Newport ward to revised Manor and Heron Wood wards and a new Newport & Belle Vue ward. Under its proposals, the part of Newport ward to the east of Church Road and Elston Road and south of Ash Road would be transferred to a revised Heron Wood ward, while part would be transferred to a revised Manor ward, as discussed previously. The current Belle Vue ward would be combined with the part of Newport ward to the east of Mount Pleasant Road, Haig Road, Wolfe Road and Crossways and to the north of Ash Road to form a new Newport & Belle Vue ward. Dr Appleton and Aldershot Branch Labour Party also supported the Borough Council's proposals in this area.

65 In our draft recommendations report we largely endorsed the Borough Council’s proposals for a revised Heron Wood ward and new Newport & Belle Vue ward, and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that the Council’s proposals would address the significant problems of over-representation in Belle Vue and Heron Wood wards, and would make good use of the A323 Ash Road as a ward boundary. As previously discussed, we proposed one minor amendment to the boundary between Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards, uniting Mount Pleasant Road within Manor ward.

66 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our proposals for Heron Wood ward, but proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Manor ward and the new Newport & Belle Vue ward, as detailed above. The Council also proposed that Newport & Belle Vue ward be renamed North Town ward, and Councillor Wall supported its comments on our draft recommendations. As discussed previously, Aldershot Branch Labour Party also proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Manor and Newport & Belle Vue wards, and proposed that Newport & Belle Vue ward be renamed North Town ward.

67 Having considered all the evidence received, we are content that there is a degree of local support for our proposals for this area, and therefore propose largely confirming our draft recommendations as final. As discussed previously, we propose amending the boundary of Newport & Belle Vue ward in order to unite Windmill Road and Staff Road within the new Manor Park ward. In light of the degree of support for the proposal to rename Newport & Belle Vue ward as North Town ward, we are content to adopt it as part of our final recommendations. Under our final recommendations, Heron Wood and North Town wards would have 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent and 4 per cent more than the average respectively by 2004). The proposed boundary between Heron Wood, Manor Park and North Town wards is illustrated on Map 2 and Map A5 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

68 At Stage One we received one representation in relation the Borough Council’s electoral cycle. The Borough Council stated that it wished to retain the current pattern of elections by thirds, arguing that the existing electoral cycle provides regular access to participation in the democratic process, and avoids major changes in the composition of the council, thus allowing for “greater continuity in direction and policies”.

69 At Stage Three the Borough Council confirmed its preference for the current pattern of elections by thirds. No further comments were received in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough, and we are content to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- We propose retaining Peach Tree Close in Grange ward rather than transferring it to Mayfield ward.
- We propose amending the boundary between Queens and St Mark’s wards.
- We propose amending the boundary between Newport & Belle Vue and Queens wards.
- We propose uniting the whole of Windmill Road and Staff Road in Manor ward.
- We propose modifying the names of five wards.

71 We conclude that, in Rushmoor:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 45 to 42;
- there should be 14 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

72 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	45	42	45	42
Number of wards	15	14	15	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,315	1,409	1,336	1,431
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	8	0	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	3	0

73 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from eight to none, both now and in

2004. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Rushmoor Borough Council should comprise 42 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Rushmoor

6 NEXT STEPS

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

75 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 5 September 2000.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Rushmoor: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 to A5 and the large map at the back of this report.

Maps A2 and A3 illustrate the proposed boundary between St Mark's and Wellington wards.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed boundary between Manor Park, Rowhill and Wellington wards.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed boundary between Heron Wood, Manor Park and North Town wards.

The **large map** inserted inside the back cover of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Farnborough.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Rushmoor: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Boundary between St Mark's and Wellington wards (western part)

Map A3: Proposed Boundary between St Mark's and Wellington wards (eastern part)

Map A4: Proposed Boundary between Manor Park, Rowhill and Wellington wards

Map A5: Proposed Boundary between Heron Wood, Manor Park and North Town wards

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Rushmoor

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only six wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose to rename Alexandra, Cove, Manor, Newport & Belle Vue and Queens wards as Rowhill, Cove & Southwood, Manor Park, North Town and Wellington wards respectively.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Grange	Fernhill ward (part); Grange ward (part); Mayfield ward (part)
Manor	Manor ward (part); Newport ward (part)
Mayfield	Grange ward (part); Mayfield ward (part); Westheath ward (part)
Newport & Belle Vue	Belle Vue ward; Newport ward (part)
Queens	Alexandra ward (part); Queens ward (part)
Westheath	St Johns ward (part); Westheath ward (part)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Grange	3	3,936	1,312	-7	4,049	1,350	-6
Manor	3	4,069	1,356	-4	4,350	1,450	1
Mayfield	3	4,300	1,433	2	4,300	1,433	0
Newport & Belle Vue	3	4,375	1,458	3	4,465	1,488	4
Queens	3	3,817	1,272	-10	4,108	1,369	-4
Westheath	3	4,158	1,386	-2	4,158	1,386	-3

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

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

