

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Mid Bedfordshire District

*February 2001*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Mid Bedfordshire 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 Mid Bedfordshire:

- **in 18 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and eight wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **this unequal representation is not expected to have improved by 2005, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 22 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 14 wards.**

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

- **Mid Bedfordshire District Council should have 53 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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 18 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 wards expected to vary by no more 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 towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy and the parish of Henlow;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Aspley Heath Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 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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Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Ampthill	3	Ampthill ward (Ampthill parish); Marston ward (part – Millbrook parish)	Map 2
2 Arlesey	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Arlesey parish)	Map 2
3 Aspley Guise	1	Aspley ward (part – Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley parishes)	Map 2
4 Biggleswade Holme	2	Biggleswade Stratton ward (part – Holme ward of Biggleswade town as proposed)	Large map
5 Biggleswade Ivel	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ivel ward of Biggleswade town)	Large map
6 Biggleswade Stratton	2	Biggleswade Stratton ward (part – Stratton ward of Biggleswade town as proposed)	Large map
7 Clifton & Meppershall	2	Campton & Meppershall ward (part – Meppershall parish); Clifton & Henlow ward (part – Clifton parish)	Map 2
8 Cranfield	2	Aspley ward (part – Brogborough parish); Cranfield ward (Cranfield and Hulcote & Salford parishes)	Map 2
9 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill	1	<i>Unchanged</i> Flitton & Pulloxhill ward (Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill parishes)	Map 2
10 Flitwick East	2	Flitwick East ward (part – East ward of Flitwick town (part)); Flitwick West ward (part – West ward of Flitwick town (part))	Maps 2, A2 and A3
11 Flitwick West	3	Flitwick East ward (part – East ward of Flitwick town (part)); Flitwick West ward (part – West ward of Flitwick town (part) and Steppingley parish)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
12 Harlington	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Harlington parish)	Map 2
13 Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden	2	Haynes & Houghton Conquest ward (Haynes and Houghton Conquest parishes); Old Warden & Southill ward (Old Warden and Southill parishes)	Map 2
14 Langford & Henlow Village	2	Clifton & Henlow ward (part – Village ward of Henlow parish as proposed); Langford ward (Langford parish)	Maps 2 and A4
15 Marston	2	Marston ward (part – Lidlington and Marston Moretaine parishes)	Map 2
16 Maulden & Clophill	2	Clophill ward (Clophill parish); Maulden ward (Maulden parish)	Map 2
17 Northill & Blunham	2	Blunham ward (Blunham, Mogerhanger and Tempsford parishes); Northill ward (Northill parish)	Map 2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
18	Potton & Wensley	3	Potton ward (Everton and Potton parishes); Wensley ward (Dunton, Edworth, Eyeworth, Sutton and Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley parishes)	Map 2
19	Sandy Ivel	2	Sandy All Saints ward (part – All Saints ward of Sandy town (part)); Sandy St Swithuns ward (part – St Swithuns ward of Sandy town (part))	Large map
20	Sandy Pinnacle	3	Sandy All Saints ward (part – All Saints ward of Sandy town (part)); Sandy St Swithuns ward (part – St Swithuns ward of Sandy town (part))	Large map
21	Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst	3	Campton & Meppershall ward (part – Campton & Chicksands parish); Shefford ward (Shefford parish); Wrest ward (part – Gravenhurst parish)	Map 2
22	Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp	2	Clifton & Henlow ward (part – Camp ward of Henlow parish, as proposed); Shillington & Stondon ward (Shillington and Stondon parishes)	Maps 2 and A4
23	Silsoe	1	Wrest ward (part – Silsoe parish)	Map 2
24	Stotfold	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Astwick and Stotfold parishes)	Map 2
25	Westoning & Tingrith	1	Westoning ward (Westoning parish); Woburn ward (part – Tingrith parish)	Map 2
26	Woburn	1	Aspley ward (part – Aspley Heath parish); Marston ward (part – Ridgmont parish); Woburn ward (part – Battlesden, Eversholt, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove and Woburn parishes)	Map 2

*Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire

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 Ampthill	3	5,496	1,832	4	5,496	1,832	-3
2 Arlesey	2	3,589	1,795	2	4,285	2,143	13
3 Aspley Guise	1	2,012	2,012	15	1,990	1,990	5
4 Biggleswade Holme	2	3,363	1,682	-4	3,674	1,837	-3
5 Biggleswade Ivel	3	5,449	1,816	3	5,760	1,920	1
6 Biggleswade Stratton	2	2,540	1,270	-28	3,835	1,918	1
7 Clifton & Meppershall	2	3,390	1,695	-4	3,757	1,879	-1
8 Cranfield	2	4,113	2,057	17	4,094	2,047	8
9 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill	1	1,645	1,645	-6	1,691	1,691	-11
10 Flitwick East	2	3,563	1,782	1	3,967	1,984	5
11 Flitwick West	3	6,113	2,038	16	5,987	1,996	5
12 Harlington	1	1,832	1,832	4	1,774	1,774	-6
13 Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden	2	3,130	1,565	-11	3,582	1,791	-5
14 Langford & Henlow Village	2	3,745	1,873	7	3,987	1,994	5
15 Marston	2	3,723	1,862	6	4,180	2,090	10
16 Maulden & Clophill	2	3,571	1,786	2	3,755	1,878	-1
17 Northhill & Blunham	2	3,461	1,731	-1	3,473	1,737	-8
18 Potton & Wensley	3	5,210	1,737	-1	5,533	1,844	-3
19 Sandy Ivel	2	3,051	1,526	-13	3,504	1,752	-8
20 Sandy Pinnacle	3	5,299	1,766	1	5,203	1,734	-8
21 Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst	3	4,856	1,619	-8	5,296	1,765	-7
22 Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp	2	3,758	1,879	7	3,878	1,939	2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Silsoe	1	1,493	1,493	-15	1,785	1,785	-6
24 Stotfold	3	5,003	1,668	-5	6,169	2,056	9
25 Westoning & Tingrith	1	1,599	1,599	-9	1,640	1,640	-13
26 Woburn	1	2,091	2,091	19	2,091	2,091	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>93,095</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,386</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,757</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Mid Bedfordshire 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.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Mid Bedfordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the three districts in Bedfordshire and the Unitary Authority of Luton 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 Mid Bedfordshire. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1976 (Report No. 133). The electoral arrangements of Bedfordshire County Council were last reviewed in January 1984 (Report No. 462). 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 B).

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 wards 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 Mid Bedfordshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Bedfordshire County Council, Bedfordshire Police, the local authority associations, Bedfordshire Association of Parish 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 Eastern 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

15 Mid Bedfordshire district is a largely rural area, covering some 50,000 hectares between Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire. It has a population of some 115,000. The district contains 55 parishes, including the towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy. These three towns comprise approximately 30 per cent of the district's total electorate. Mid Bedfordshire has excellent road and rail links with London and the Midlands, via the M1 in the west and the A1 in the east.

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

17 The electorate of the district is 93,095 (February 2000). The Council presently has 53 members who are elected from 30 wards, six of which cover the relatively urban areas of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Seven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, nine are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The whole council is elected every four years.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been a significant increase in the electorate in Mid Bedfordshire district, with around 45 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,757 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,894 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 18 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, eight wards by more than 20 per cent and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Flitwick West ward, where each of the two councillors represents 46 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Mid Bedfordshire*

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 Ampthill	3	5,389	1,796	2	5,389	1,796	-5
2 Arlesey	2	3,589	1,795	2	4,285	2,143	13
3 Aspley	2	2,731	1,366	-22	2,731	1,366	-28
4 Biggleswade Ivel	3	5,449	1,816	3	5,760	1,920	1
5 Biggleswade Stratton	3	5,903	1,968	12	7,509	2,503	32
6 Blunham	1	1,688	1,688	-4	1,680	1,680	-11
7 Campton and Meppershall	1	1,846	1,846	5	2,143	2,143	13
8 Clifton and Henlow	3	4,435	1,478	-16	4,887	1,629	-14
9 Clophill	1	1,319	1,319	-25	1,339	1,339	-29
10 Cranfield	3	3,870	1,290	-27	3,851	1,284	-32
11 Flitton and Pulloxhill	1	1,645	1,645	-6	1,691	1,691	-11
12 Flitwick East	2	4,551	2,276	30	4,573	2,287	21
13 Flitwick West	2	5,125	2,563	46	5,381	2,691	42
14 Harlington	1	1,832	1,832	4	1,774	1,774	-6
15 Haynes and Houghton Conquest	1	2,025	2,025	15	2,495	2,495	32
16 Langford	1	2,303	2,303	31	2,358	2,358	24
17 Marston	2	4,157	2,079	18	4,614	2,307	22
18 Maulden	1	2,252	2,252	28	2,416	2,416	28
19 Northhill	1	1,773	1,773	1	1,793	1,793	-5
20 Old Warden and Southill	1	1,105	1,105	-37	1,087	1,087	-43
21 Pottton	2	3,755	1,878	7	4,104	2,052	8
22 Sandy All Saints	2	3,051	1,526	-13	3,185	1,593	-16
23 Sandy St Swithuns	3	5,299	1,766	1	5,522	1,841	-3
24 Shefford	2	3,753	1,877	7	4,177	2,089	10

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 Shillington and Stondon	2	2,961	1,481	-16	2,893	1,447	-24
26 Stotfold	3	5,003	1,668	-5	6,169	2,056	9
27 Wensley	1	1,455	1,455	-17	1,429	1,429	-25
28 Westoning	1	1,487	1,487	-15	1,533	1,533	-19
29 Woburn	1	1,400	1,400	-20	1,373	1,373	-28
30 Wrest	1	1,944	1,944	11	2,245	2,245	19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>93,095</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100,386</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,757</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Mid Bedfordshire 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 Old Warden & Southill ward were relatively over-represented by 37 per cent, while electors in Flitwick West ward were relatively under-represented by 46 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 10 representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

#### **Mid Bedfordshire District Council**

22 The District Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 53 and reducing the number of wards from 30 to 26. The Council proposed increasing the total number of councillors for Biggleswade from six to seven and creating a new two-member Biggleswade Holme ward, and increasing the number of councillors representing Flitwick from four to five. It also proposed reducing the number of councillors for Cranfield ward from three to two, and reducing the number of councillors serving the Aspley area from two to one.

23 The District Council stated that it had undertaken an extensive consultation exercise with local interests, in particular with parishes and town councils in the district. The Council received 118 responses as part of its consultation exercise, 78 of which related to its original proposal to combine Eversholt, Tingrith and Westoning parishes in one ward. As a result of these comments, the Council stated that it had amended its proposals in order to retain Eversholt parish within Woburn ward. The Council also stated that its proposals for warding arrangements in the towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy had been formulated in conjunction with the respective town councils.

24 The District Council's proposals would provide for improved levels of electoral equality across the district. In 18 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district as a whole, and 25 wards would vary by no more than 20 per cent from the average. By 2005, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in 23 of the proposed 26 wards.

#### **Bedfordshire County Council**

25 Bedfordshire County Council noted that several councillors had expressed concerns regarding the District Council's scheme. In particular, Councillor Duggan (Aspley Guise division) had

expressed concern over the proposed division of the current Aspley ward, and Councillor Younger (Shefford & Campton division) objected to the proposal to divide the current Clifton & Henlow ward. Councillor Thompson (Flitwick division) supported the District Council's proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and also expressed support for the Council's proposals for in relation to Flitwick.

## **Political Parties**

26 North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals.

## **Parish and Town Councils**

27 We received a further six submissions from parish councils in Mid Bedfordshire. Aspley Guise Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposal to divide the current Aspley ward, and proposed a two-member ward comprising the nine parishes of Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Brogborough, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Ridgmont and Woburn. Clophill Parish Council requested that the parish be linked with the neighbouring Maulden parish as the two parishes share similar concerns and interests.

28 Dunton Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposal to combine the current Potton and Wensley wards to form a new three-member ward. It argued that levels of electoral equality would not be unreasonable under the existing arrangements for this area, and proposed transferring Everton parish from Potton ward to a revised single-member Wensley ward as an alternative solution. Eversholt Parish Council requested that the parish remain linked with Woburn parish in a single-member ward. Langford Parish Council requested that the parish retain its existing allocation of 13 parish councillors. Potsgrove Parish Council supported the Council's proposal to retain Potsgrove parish within the proposed Woburn ward, but opposed an initial proposal put forward for consultation by the Council to transfer Eversholt parish from Woburn ward to a revised Westoning ward.

## **Other Representations**

29 A resident of Potsgrove also expressed opposition to the Council's initial proposal to transfer Eversholt parish from Woburn ward to a revised Westoning ward, arguing that Eversholt and Westoning parishes share few community ties.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

31 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on 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.

32 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.

33 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be 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 also 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**

34 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 8 per cent from 93,095 to 100,386 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Biggleswade Stratton ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Stotfold ward. 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.

35 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**

36 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.

37 Mid Bedfordshire District Council presently has 53 members. In its submission, the Council stated that its Review and Policy Panel had appointed a cross-party working group to consider proposals for warding arrangements in Mid Bedfordshire. The Council had agreed a broad guideline of between 50 and 55 councillors for the district, and the working group subsequently concluded that the achievement of electoral equality in Mid Bedfordshire would best be met by retaining the current council size.

38 We received no further specific comments on the issue of council size, although North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association fully supported the District Council's proposals. 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 retaining a council of 53 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

39 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme submitted by the District Council. From these representations some considerations have emerged. As outlined above, our proposals for Mid Bedfordshire are based on a council size of 53, which we consider to be the most appropriate council size for the district, having regard to the evidence submitted and to the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area. We note that the Council has undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving both parish and town councils in the district and the general public. In particular, we note that the proposals for Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy towns have been developed in conjunction with the town councils themselves, and we are content that the Council has also taken other issues raised into consideration wherever possible.

40 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we are content to base our recommendations on the Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a

better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements, and we are content that the reorganisation of ward boundaries in the district as proposed by the Council would address the serious problems of under-representation in both Flitwick and Biggleswade towns. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Aspley and Woburn wards;
- (b) Ampthill, Cranfield and Marston wards;
- (c) Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards;
- (d) Flitton & Pulloxhill, Harlington and Westoning wards;
- (e) Clophill, Maulden and Wrest wards;
- (f) Campton & Meppershall, Clifton & Henlow, Shefford and Shillington & Stondon wards;
- (g) Arlesey, Langford and Stotfold wards;
- (h) Biggleswade Ivel and Biggleswade Stratton wards;
- (i) Sandy All Saints and Sandy St Swithuns wards;
- (j) Blunham, Northill, Potton and Wensley wards;
- (k) Haynes & Houghton Conquest and Old Warden & Southill wards.

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

### **Aspley and Woburn wards**

42 Aspley and Woburn wards lie in the south-west of the district, adjacent to the district boundary with Milton Keynes to the west. Aspley ward, represented by two councillors, comprises the parishes of Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Brogborough and Husborne Crawley. The single-member Woburn ward comprises the six parishes of Battlesden, Eversholt, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Tingrith and Woburn. At present both Aspley and Woburn wards are significantly over-represented, with 22 per cent and 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Electoral equality is not expected to improve in these wards over the next five years, with each ward forecast to have 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

43 The District Council proposed several amendments to warding arrangements in this area in order to provide improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed enlarging the current Woburn ward to include Aspley Heath parish from Aspley ward, and Ridgmont parish from Marston ward, arguing that the parishes surrounding Woburn look primarily to the larger village for their services. The Council also noted that Aspley Heath and Ridgmont parishes share good communication links with the current Woburn ward. It proposed that Tingrith parish be transferred from Woburn ward to a new Westoning & Tingrith ward, as detailed below. The Council stated that it had considered transferring Eversholt parish to the proposed Westoning &

Tingrith ward, but had revised its proposals in the light of the response to its public consultation exercise. Of the 118 responses which were received during the consultation process, 78 expressed opposition to the original proposal to transfer Eversholt parish to the proposed Westoning & Tingrith ward, arguing that the parish shares long historical links with Woburn ward.

44 The Council also proposed a new single-member Aspley Guise ward, comprising Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley parishes. It proposed that Brogborough parish be transferred from the current Aspley ward to a revised Cranfield ward, as detailed below. Under the Council's proposals the single-member Aspley Guise ward would have 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent more than the average over the next five years. The single-member Woburn ward would have 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (10 per cent more than the average by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

45 We received five further representations in relation to this area. Bedfordshire County Council noted that Councillor Duggan (Aspley Guise division) had expressed concern at the proposal to divide Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath parishes between district wards. Aspley Guise Parish Council also opposed the District Council's proposal to divide Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath parishes between the single-member Aspley Guise and Woburn wards, arguing that "Aspley Heath has long had a close relationship with Aspley Guise". The Parish Council argued that a two-member ward would provide a number of benefits to the electorate, including cover in case of illness or holiday, and proposed a two-member ward comprising the nine parishes of Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Brogborough, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Ridgmont and Woburn. Eversholt Parish Council requested that the parish remain linked with Woburn parish in a single-member ward, arguing that "as a rural community Eversholt and Woburn support a commonality of issues". Potsgrove Parish Council and a local resident also objected to the Council's initial proposal to transfer Eversholt parish to a revised Westoning & Tingrith ward.

46 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We recognise the concerns expressed by Aspley Heath Parish Council and County Councillor Duggan regarding the division of Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath parishes between district wards. However, we note that there would be a significant deterioration in electoral equality in the single-member Aspley Guise ward if Aspley Heath parish were to be included (31 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average by 2005). In addition, we have not been persuaded that Aspley Heath Parish Council's proposal for a two-member ward, as detailed above, would provide for more convenient and effective local government than the District Council's scheme in this area. As our *Guidance* makes clear, we are not prescriptive and make no judgement as to the advantages or disadvantages of single- or multi-member wards, but seek to put forward proposals which reflect the characteristics of the local area. We note that the Parish Council's proposed ward would cover a large geographical area and would comprise a large number of parishes, and consider, on balance, that this proposal would be less conducive to convenient and effective local government.

47 We are content that, as far as is possible, the Council has taken into account local concerns in its proposals for this area. We therefore propose putting forward its proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. Under our proposals, the proposed single-member Aspley Guise ward would have 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent more than the average by 2005. The single-member Woburn ward would have 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (10 per cent more by 2005).

### **Ampthill, Cranfield and Marston wards**

48 Ampthill, Cranfield and Marston wards lie in the west of the district, broadly to the north of the M1 motorway. Cranfield ward, comprising Cranfield and Hulcote & Salford parishes, is represented by three councillors. Marston ward, which comprises the four parishes of Lidlington, Marston Moretaine, Millbrook and Ridgmont, is represented by two councillors. The three-member Ampthill ward is coterminous with Ampthill Town. Cranfield ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 27 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality in Cranfield ward is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, with Cranfield ward forecast to have 32 per cent fewer electors per councillor than average by 2005. Ampthill and Marston wards have 2 per cent and 18 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively (5 per cent fewer and 22 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

49 The District Council proposed enlarging Cranfield ward to include Brogborough parish, currently in Aspley ward, arguing that Brogborough is “physically separated from its current Aspley ward partners by the M1” and shares closer community ties with Cranfield than with the parishes to its south. Under the Council’s proposals, the revised Cranfield ward would be represented by two councillors, one fewer than at present. In order to address the level of under-representation in Marston ward, the Council proposed transferring Ridgmont parish to a revised Woburn ward, as detailed above, and Millbrook parish to a revised Ampthill ward. The Council’s proposed Ampthill ward, comprising Ampthill and Millbrook parishes, would continue to be represented by three councillors. Under its proposals, the proposed Ampthill and Cranfield wards would have 4 per cent and 17 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005). The Council’s revised two-member Marston ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially and 10 per cent more than the average in five years’ time. North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council’s proposals for this area.

50 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We consider that the District Council’s proposals would address the high levels of electoral inequality in both Cranfield and Marston wards, and would reflect local community ties well. We are therefore content to put forward the Council’s proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. Under our proposals, the two-member Cranfield ward would have 17 per

cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 8 per cent more than the average by 2005. The three-member Ampthill and two-member Marston wards would have 4 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

### **Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards**

51 The town of Flitwick lies to the south of Ampthill, and comprises two two-member wards. Flitwick East ward is coterminous with East ward of Flitwick Town, while Flitwick West ward comprises West ward of Flitwick Town and the parish of Steppingley. At present, both Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards are significantly under-represented, with 30 per cent and 46 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Electoral equality in these wards is not expected to improve significantly over the next five years. Flitwick East ward is forecast to have 21 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average by 2005, while Flitwick West ward will have 42 per cent more than the district average.

52 The District Council noted that, as a result of the increase in the electorate of Flitwick since the last review, the town is now entitled to a total of five councillors, one more than at present, based on the current council size of 53. It proposed amending the boundary between Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards to follow the main Luton to Bedford railway line, and allocating an additional councillor to the revised Flitwick West ward. The Council stated that its proposals for Flitwick had been formulated in conjunction with Flitwick Town Council. Under the Council's proposals, the three-member Flitwick West ward would have 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent more than the average over the next five years. The two-member Flitwick East ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more than the average by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

53 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Bedfordshire County Council noted that Councillor Thompson (Flitwick division) supported the District Council's proposals for Flitwick.

54 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We consider that the District Council's proposals would address the high levels of electoral inequality in both Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards, and would reflect local community ties well. In particular, we consider that the Luton to Bedford railway line forms a strong and clearly identifiable boundary in Flitwick. We also note that there is a degree of local support for the Council's proposals. We are therefore content to put forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. Under our proposals, the three-member Flitwick West ward would have 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent more than the average over the next five years. The two-member Flitwick East ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average

(5 per cent more than the average by 2005). Our proposals for Flitwick are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

### **Flitton & Pulloxhill, Harlington and Westoning wards**

55 Flitton & Pulloxhill, Harlington and Westoning wards lie to the south of Flitwick town and east of the M1 motorway. Each ward is represented by a single councillor. Flitton & Pulloxhill ward comprises the two parishes of Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill, while Harlington and Westoning wards are coterminous with Harlington and Westoning parishes respectively. At present, Harlington ward has 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, and is forecast to have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005. Flitton & Pulloxhill and Westoning wards have 6 per cent and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively (11 per cent and 19 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

56 The District Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Harlington ward, noting that the existing arrangements provide for reasonable electoral equality, both now and in five years' time. It also proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Flitton & Pulloxhill ward, arguing that "the three villages are linked by a quadrangle of roads and have many community links". The Council noted that, as part of its own consultation exercise, Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill parish councils had both expressed support for the proposed ward. Under the Council's proposals, the single-member ward would be renamed as Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill, in order to more accurately reflect its geographical composition. The new Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill ward would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (11 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

57 In order to address the relatively high level of over-representation in Westoning ward, the District Council proposed combining Westoning parish with Tingrith parish from Woburn ward to form a new single-member Westoning & Tingrith ward. As detailed above, the Council had considered including Eversholt parish in a revised Westoning & Tingrith ward, but had amended its scheme in the light of significant opposition to the proposal from local interests. The Council's proposed Harlington and Westoning & Tingrith wards would have 4 per cent more and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent and 13 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

58 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Bedfordshire County Council noted that Councillor Thompson (Flitwick division) supported the District Council's proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill ward.

59 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note that the District Council's proposals would improve electoral equality in Westoning ward, and provide

reasonable levels of electoral equality in Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and Harlington wards. We note that there is some local support for the Council's proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill ward, and we are content that both Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and Harlington wards would reflect local community ties well. We also note that local concerns regarding the inclusion of Eversholt parish in the proposed Westoning & Tingrith ward have been addressed by the Council.

60 We are content to adopt the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. While the electoral inequality in the proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and Westoning & Tingrith wards by 2005 would be greater than the Commission generally seeks, we have been unable to identify alternative proposals which would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. The single-member Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and Harlington wards would have 6 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, 11 per cent and 6 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005. Westoning & Tingrith ward, also represented by one councillor, would have 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (13 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

### **Clophill, Maulden and Wrest wards**

61 The single-member Clophill, Maulden and Wrest wards lie in the centre of Mid Bedfordshire district, and are linked by the A6 trunk road. Clophill and Maulden wards are coterminous with Clophill and Maulden parishes respectively, while Wrest ward comprises the two parishes of Gravenhurst and Silsoe. Clophill ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 25 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, with Clophill ward forecast to have 29 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005. Maulden and Wrest wards currently have 28 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively, and are forecast to have 28 per cent and 19 per cent more than the average respectively in five years' time.

62 The District Council proposed combining the current Clophill and Maulden wards to form a new two-member Maulden & Clophill ward and noted that, as part of its own consultation process, Maulden Parish Council had expressed support for the proposed Maulden & Clophill ward. The Council also proposed a new single-member Silsoe ward, comprising Silsoe parish, arguing that "the size of Silsoe justifies a single-member ward on its own". Gravenhurst parish would be transferred to a new Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst ward, as detailed below. The Council's proposed Silsoe ward would have 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Maulden & Clophill ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

63 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Clophill Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to combine Clophill and Maulden parishes to form a new Maulden & Clophill ward, noting that "these parishes have for many years shared similar concerns and interests and have very strong links with each other".

64 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We are content that the District Council's proposed Maulden & Clophill ward would address the significant levels of electoral inequality in this area, and note that there is some local support for its proposal. We also consider that there is some merit to the Council's proposed Silsoe ward, and propose putting it forward as part of our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire. Our proposed single-member Silsoe ward would have 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The two-member Maulden & Clophill ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, 1 per cent fewer by 2005.

### **Campton & Meppershall, Clifton & Henlow, Shefford and Shillington & Stondon wards**

65 Campton & Meppershall, Clifton & Henlow, Shefford and Shillington & Stondon wards lie in the south of the district, broadly to the south of the River Ivel Navigation and the A507 Ampthill Road. The two-member Shefford ward is coterminous with Shefford parish, while Shillington & Stondon ward comprises the parishes of Shillington and Stondon and is also represented by two councillors. The single-member Campton & Meppershall ward comprises the two parishes of Campton & Chicksands and Meppershall, while Clifton & Henlow ward comprises the parishes of Clifton and Henlow and is represented by three councillors.

66 At present, Shillington & Stondon ward is relatively over-represented, with 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality in Shillington & Stondon ward is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and the two-member ward is forecast to have 24 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2005. Clifton & Henlow ward also has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently, 14 per cent fewer than the average in five years' time. Campton & Meppershall and Shefford wards currently have 5 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, and are forecast to have 13 per cent and 10 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005.

67 The District Council proposed enlarging the current Shillington & Stondon ward to include the part of Henlow parish broadly to the south of Henlow Airfield. The new Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward would be represented by two councillors. While the Council stated that it had attempted to avoid dividing parishes between district wards, it noted that the Henlow Camp area, including the RAF establishment, is "physically separate from Henlow Village and is contiguous with Lower Stondon". The Council noted that, as part of its own consultation process,

Henlow Parish Council had expressed implacable opposition to the proposal to divide the parish between district wards. The remaining part of Henlow parish, including Henlow Village, would be transferred to a new Langford & Henlow Village ward, as detailed below. Under the Council's proposals Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, improving to 2 per cent more than average by 2005.

68 The District Council also proposed a new two-member Clifton & Meppershall ward comprising Clifton parish from Clifton & Henlow ward, and Meppershall parish, currently in Campton & Meppershall ward. Under its proposals, Shefford parish would be combined with Campton & Chicksands parish (currently in Campton & Meppershall ward) and Gravenhurst parish (currently in Wrest ward) to form a new three-member Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst ward. The Council's proposed Clifton & Meppershall and Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst wards would have 4 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent and 7 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

69 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Bedfordshire County Council noted that Councillor Younger (Shefford & Clifton division) had expressed concern regarding the District Council's proposals for this area, arguing that "there is no natural link between the Clifton and Meppershall communities". While Councillor Younger recognised that there were some links between Shefford and Campton & Chicksands parishes, he did not consider that there are any ties between Shefford and Gravenhurst parishes.

70 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we are content that the District Council's proposals in this area would provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and propose putting them forward as the basis for our draft recommendations. We recognise that there is some local opposition to the Council's proposal to divide Henlow parish between two district wards. However, we consider that the existing Shillington & Stondon ward has an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality, which is forecast to further deteriorate over the next five years. In order to achieve more reasonable levels of electoral equality in this area we consider that it is necessary to enlarge the current Shillington & Stondon ward to include either part or all of an adjacent parish. We have considered alternative options for warding arrangements in this area, including transferring Gravenhurst or Meppershall parishes to a revised Shillington & Stondon ward, but have been unable to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the Council's proposals. We are content that Shillington and Stondon parishes and the Henlow Camp area share some common interests and have good communication links, and that the Council's proposal would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. However, we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward and the proposed Langford & Henlow Village ward (as detailed below) in order to retain all of the Henlow Airfield site within Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward. This change would affect no electors. Under our draft recommendations,

the two-member Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. The proposed boundary between Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp and Langford & Henlow Village wards is illustrated on Map 2 and Map A4 in Appendix A.

71 We note the concerns expressed by County Councillor Younger regarding the District Council's proposals for this area, and we have carefully considered alternative options for warding arrangements. However, in the absence of alternative proposals which would provide for improved electoral equality, we are content that the Council's proposals would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. We propose adopting the Council's proposed Clifton & Meppershall and Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst wards as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. Under our proposals, the two-member Clifton & Meppershall ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 1 per cent fewer than average by 2005. Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst ward would be represented by three councillors, and would have 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

### **Arlesey, Langford and Stotfold wards**

72 Arlesey, Langford and Stotfold wards lie in the south-eastern corner of the district, adjacent to the district boundary with Hertfordshire county. The two-member Arlesey ward is coterminous with the parish of Arlesey, while Stotfold ward comprises the parishes of Astwick and Stotfold and is represented by three councillors. The single-member Langford ward is coterminous with the parish of Langford. At present, Arlesey ward has 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average, rising to 13 per cent more than the average by 2005. Stotfold ward has 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (9 per cent more than the average by 2005). Langford ward is significantly under-represented at present, with 31 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. However, electoral equality is expected to improve marginally over the next five years, and the ward is forecast to have 24 per cent more electors per councillor than average by 2005.

73 As detailed above, the District Council proposed transferring part of Henlow parish to a new Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward. The remaining part of Henlow parish would be combined with Langford parish to form a new two-member Langford & Henlow Village ward. As discussed previously, Henlow Parish Council opposed the proposal to divide the parish between district wards. The Council also proposed retaining the current Arlesey and Stotfold wards without amendment. While it recognised that the proposed Arlesey ward would have a relatively high electoral variance by 2005, the Council noted that Arlesey parish has "no natural combination with a neighbour". Under the Council's proposals, Langford & Henlow Village would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, improving to 5 per cent more than average by 2005. The two-member Arlesey and three-member Stotfold wards

would have 2 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent and 9 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

74 As discussed previously, while we recognise that there is some local opposition to the proposal to divide Henlow parish between district wards, we consider that the District Council's proposals would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the south-eastern part of Mid Bedfordshire district. In particular, we consider that the Council's proposed Langford & Henlow Village ward would address the significant level of under-representation in the current Langford ward. We are also content that the existing Arlesey and Stotfold wards reflect local community identities and interests well and we have been persuaded that, despite deteriorating levels of electoral equality, we should adopt the Council's proposals for these wards without amendment. Our proposed two-member Langford & Henlow Village ward would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent more than the average by 2005. The two-member Arlesey ward and three-member Stotfold ward would have 2 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. By 2005, Arlesey ward is forecast to have 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, and Stotfold ward is expected to have 9 per cent more than the average. The proposed boundary between Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards is illustrated on Map 2 and Map A4 in Appendix A.

### **Biggleswade Ivel and Biggleswade Stratton wards**

75 The town of Biggleswade is the largest settlement in Mid Bedfordshire district, and is currently divided between two three-member wards. Biggleswade Ivel ward is coterminous with Ivel ward of Biggleswade Town, and has 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more than the average by 2005). Biggleswade Stratton ward is coterminous with Stratton ward of Biggleswade Town and has 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. However, as a result of further developments which are expected to take place in the eastern part of the town over the next five years, Biggleswade Stratton ward is forecast to have 32 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average by 2005.

76 The District Council noted that the electorate of Biggleswade town is forecast to increase significantly over the next five years. Consequently, by 2005, the town would be entitled to a total of seven councillors, rather than six as at present. The Council proposed dividing the current Biggleswade Stratton ward, which is forecast to experience the greatest degree of growth in electorate, to form a new two-member Biggleswade Holme ward and a revised two-member Biggleswade Stratton ward. The boundary between the proposed Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Stratton wards would run to the rear of properties on the east side of Drove Road and the A6001 London Road (including The Old Orchard and properties on Eagle Farm Road).

The current three-member Biggleswade Ivel ward would be retained without amendment. The Council stated that its proposals for Biggleswade had been formulated in conjunction with Biggleswade Town Council. Under the Council's proposals, Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Ivel wards would have 4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005). Biggleswade Stratton ward would have 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, but is forecast to improve significantly to 1 per cent more than the average by 2005. North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

77 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note that, by 2005, Biggleswade town is forecast to be entitled to a total of seven councillors, and we therefore concur with the District Council's proposal to allocate an additional councillor to the Biggleswade town area. We consider that the Council's proposals would address the high levels of electoral inequality forecast for Biggleswade town, and would reflect local community ties well. In particular, we consider that Drove Road and the A6001 London Road form a strong and clearly identifiable boundary which delineates communities in the eastern part of Biggleswade well. We also note that there is a degree of local support for the Council's proposals. We are therefore content to put forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire, without amendment. Our proposed Biggleswade Stratton ward would have 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 1 per cent more than the average by 2005. Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Ivel wards would have 4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005). The boundaries between the proposed Biggleswade Holme, Biggleswade Ivel and Biggleswade Stratton wards are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

### **Sandy All Saints and Sandy St Swithuns wards**

78 Sandy All Saints and Sandy St Swithuns wards cover the town of Sandy, to the north of Biggleswade, and are coterminous with All Saints and St Swithuns wards of Sandy Town respectively. At present, the two-member Sandy All Saints ward is relatively over-represented, with 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Sandy St Swithuns ward, which is represented by three councillors, has 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. Electoral equality in these two wards is not expected to improve over the next five years, and Sandy All Saints and Sandy St Swithuns wards are forecast to have 16 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005.

79 The District Council noted that, under a council size of 53, Sandy would continue to be entitled to five councillors. However, it proposed amending the boundary between the two Sandy wards in order to address the relatively high level of electoral inequality in the current Sandy All

Saints ward. Under the Council's proposals, the revised boundary would follow the A1 Tempsford Road south, run to the rear of properties on the west side of St Neots Road, to the rear of properties on the north side of the High Street and then east along Potton Road to the boundary with Potton parish. Sandy All Saints ward would be renamed Sandy Ivel ward, and Sandy St Swithuns ward would be renamed Sandy Pinnacle ward. The Council also stated that its proposals for Sandy had been formulated in conjunction with Sandy Town Council. The proposed two-member Sandy Ivel ward would have 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 8 per cent fewer than average by 2005. The proposed Sandy Pinnacle ward, represented by three councillors, would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (8 per cent fewer than average by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

80 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We consider that the District Council's proposals would address the high levels of electoral inequality in the current Sandy All Saints ward, and would reflect local community ties well. In particular, we consider that the A1 Tempsford Road, St Neots Road, the High Street and Potton Road form a strong and clearly identifiable boundary which delineates communities in Sandy well. We also note that there is a degree of local support for the Council's proposals. We are therefore content to put forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. The two-member Sandy Ivel ward would have 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The three-member Sandy Pinnacle ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). The boundary between the proposed Sandy Ivel and Sandy Pinnacle wards is illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

### **Blunham, Northill, Potton and Wensley wards**

81 Blunham, Northill, Potton and Wensley wards are situated in the north-east of the district, adjacent to the district boundary with Bedford borough and Cambridgeshire county. Blunham and Northill wards lie broadly to the west of Sandy and the A1, and are each represented by a single councillor. Blunham ward comprises Blunham, Mogerhanger and Tempsford parishes, and Northill ward is coterminous with Northill parish. Potton ward, to the north-east of Sandy, comprises Everton and Potton parishes and is represented by two councillors. The single-member Wensley ward, which lies to the east of Sandy and Biggleswade towns, comprises the five parishes of Dunton, Edworth, Eyeworth, Sutton and Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley. At present, Blunham ward has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average, while Northill ward has 1 per cent more than the average (11 per cent and 5 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). Potton ward has 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently, 8 per cent more than the average by 2005. Wensley ward is relatively over-represented at present, with 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and the ward is forecast to have 25 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

82 The District Council proposed creating two new wards for this area. In order to improve electoral equality, it proposed combining the current Blunham and Northhill wards to form a new two-member Northhill & Blunham ward. The Council noted that, as part of its own consultation process, Northhill Parish Council had expressed opposition to the proposed ward, preferring to retain the existing single-member Northhill ward. The Council also proposed a new three-member Potton & Wensley ward comprising the current Potton and Wensley wards. It considered that, while Dunton Parish Council had expressed opposition to the proposal to combine Potton and Wensley wards, it had been “unable to produce a practical alternative”. Under the Council’s proposals, Northhill & Blunham ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, and 8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The proposed Potton & Wensley ward would also have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council’s proposals for this area.

83 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Dunton Parish Council opposed the District Council’s proposals for Potton and Wensley and requested that the current single-member Wensley ward be retained, arguing that the proposed three-member ward would have a detrimental effect on the quality of representation for Dunton parish. It stated that the current single-member ward “works extremely well for the Parish Council”, and argued that “following up problems and getting answers would be virtually impossible” if the parish were to be included in a three-member ward. It also expressed concern that the larger settlement of Potton might overwhelm the smaller villages under the Council’s proposals, and proposed transferring Everton parish from Potton ward to a revised single-member Wensley ward as an alternative to the District Council’s scheme.

84 As discussed previously, we are not prescriptive and make no judgement as to the advantages or disadvantages of single- or multi-member wards. Rather, we seek to put forward proposals which best reflect the characteristics of the local area. While we recognise that Potton is a relatively large settlement, we have not been persuaded that it is sufficiently separate and distinct from the remaining parishes in the proposed ward to justify retaining the existing high level of electoral inequality in Wensley ward. We note that Dunton Parish Council’s proposal to transfer Everton parish to a revised single-member Wensley ward would provide for good electoral equality in both Potton and Wensley wards. However, as our *Guidance* makes clear, we consider that detached wards, comprising two geographically separate areas, lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas which lack community identity, and we take the view that their use is undesirable. We do not consider that Dunton Parish Council’s alternative proposal would appropriately reflect community identities and interests in this area, and we have not been persuaded to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. We are content that the District Council’s proposals would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and therefore propose putting forward their proposed ward as part of our draft recommendations. The three-member Potton & Wensley ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2005.

85 We also note that there are some local concerns regarding the District Council's proposed Northhill & Blunham ward. However, we consider that the Council's proposals, which would address the level of over-representation in Northhill ward, would provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area and we are content to adopt the proposed Northhill & Blunham ward as part of our draft recommendations. Under our proposals, the two-member ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

### **Haynes & Houghton Conquest and Old Warden & Southill wards**

86 Haynes & Houghton Conquest and Old Warden & Southill wards lie in the north of the district adjacent to the boundary with Bedford borough, and are each represented by a single councillor. Haynes & Houghton Conquest ward comprises the two parishes of Haynes and Houghton Conquest, and Old Warden & Southill ward comprises Old Warden and Southill parishes. Haynes & Houghton Conquest ward has 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average at present. However, as a result of developments which are expected to take place in the Elstow area of Haynes parish over the next five years, the ward is forecast to have 32 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2005. Conversely, Old Warden & Southill ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and the ward is forecast to have 43 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

87 The District Council proposed minimal change in this area. In order to address the high levels of electoral inequality in both wards, it proposed combining the current Haynes & Houghton Conquest and Old Warden & Southill wards to form a new two-member Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden ward. The proposed Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden ward would have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association supported the Council's proposals for this area.

88 We consider that the District Council's proposed Houghton, Haynes, Southill and Old Warden ward would provide a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and we are content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire. The two-member ward would have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005.

### **Electoral Cycle**

89 The District Council stated that it favoured retaining the present system of whole-council elections every four years. We received no further comments in relation to the electoral cycle of the district, and accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

## Conclusions

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

- a council of 53 members should be retained;
- there should be 26 wards;
- the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

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

- We propose amending the boundary between Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards in order to retain all of Henlow Airfield within the proposed Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward.

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	53	53	53	53
Number of wards	30	26	30	26
Average number of electors per councillor	1,757	1,757	1,894	1,894
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	18	8	22	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	8	1	14	0

93 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 18 to eight. By 2005 only three wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Mid Bedfordshire District Council should comprise 53 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

### **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 towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy and the parish of Henlow to reflect the proposed district wards. At the request of Aspley Heath Parish Council, we also propose amendments to the number of councillors representing the parish.

95 Biggleswade Town Council is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: Ivel ward, which is represented by eight town councillors; and Stratton ward, represented by seven councillors. The District Council proposed dividing the current Stratton ward to form a new Holme ward and a revised Stratton ward, in order to reflect the boundaries between its proposed Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Stratton district wards.

96 In our draft recommendations we have proposed adopting the District Council's proposed Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Stratton wards without amendment. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we propose dividing the current Stratton ward of Biggleswade town to form a new Holme ward and a revised Stratton ward, thereby reflecting the proposed district wards. The Council proposed that Holme ward should return four councillors, Ivel ward should return six councillors and Stratton ward should return five councillors. For the purposes of consultation, we are content to put forward the Council's proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**

Biggleswade Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Holme ward (returning four councillors); Ivel ward (returning six councillors); and Stratton ward (returning five councillors). The town council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in Biggleswade, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

97 Flitwick Town Council is currently served by 17 councillors, representing two wards: East ward, which is represented by nine town councillors; and West ward, represented by eight councillors. The District Council proposed amending the boundary between East and West wards of Flitwick town to reflect the revised boundary between its proposed Flitwick East and Flitwick West district wards.

98 In our draft recommendations we have proposed adopting the District Council’s proposed Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards without amendment. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we propose amending the boundary between East and West wards of Flitwick town to reflect the proposed district wards. The Council proposed that East ward should return seven councillors, while West ward should return 10 councillors. For the purposes of consultation, we are content to put forward the Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**

Flitwick Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East ward (returning seven councillors); and West ward (returning 10 councillors). The town council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in Flitwick, as illustrated and named on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

99 Sandy Town Council is currently served by 15 councillors, representing two wards: All Saints ward, which is represented by six town councillors; and St Swithuns ward, represented by nine councillors. The District Council proposed amending the boundary between All Saints and St Swithuns wards in order to reflect the boundary between its proposed Sandy Ivel and Sandy Pinnacle district wards. It proposed renaming All Saints ward as Ivel ward, and St Swithuns ward as Pinnacle ward.

100 In our draft recommendations we have proposed adopting the District Council’s proposed Sandy Ivel and Sandy Pinnacle wards without amendment. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we propose amending the boundary between the current All Saints and St Swithuns wards of Sandy town to reflect the proposed district wards and renaming All Saints

ward as Ivel ward, and St Swithuns ward as Pinnacle ward. The Council proposed that the new Ivel ward should return six councillors and Pinnacle ward should return nine councillors. For the purposes of consultation, we are content to put forward the Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Sandy Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Ivel ward (returning six councillors); and Pinnacle ward (returning nine councillors). The town council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in Sandy, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

101 Henlow Parish Council is currently served by 12 councillors, and is unwarded. The District Council proposed creating two new parish wards, Camp and Village, in order to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp district wards. The boundary between the proposed Camp and Village wards of Henlow parish would reflect the boundary between the proposed Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp district wards. The Council noted that, as part of its own consultation process, Henlow Parish Council had expressed implacable opposition to the proposal to divide the parish between district wards.

102 In our draft recommendations we have proposed adopting the District Council’s proposed Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards. In order to facilitate the proposed district warding arrangements in this area, we propose creating two new parish wards, Camp and Village. The Council proposed that the new Camp ward should return four councillors, while the new Village ward should return eight councillors. For the purposes of consultation, we are content to put forward the Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Henlow Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Camp ward (returning four councillors); and Village ward (returning eight councillors). The boundary between the parish wards should reflect the proposed boundary between Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp district wards, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

103 Aspley Heath Parish Council is currently served by seven councillors, and is unwarded. The District Council noted that, as part of its own consultation process, Aspley Heath Parish Council had requested that the number of councillors for the parish be increased from seven to nine. The Council stated that it supported this request, and we are content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Aspley Heath Parish Council should comprise nine parish councillors, instead of the current seven.

104 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, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

**105 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Mid Bedfordshire 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 Mid Bedfordshire*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

106 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.

107 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Mid Bedfordshire 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)

108 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 Mid Bedfordshire: Detailed Mapping**

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

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 to A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

**Maps A2 and A3** illustrate the proposed warding of Flitwick town.

**Map A4** illustrates the proposed warding of Henlow parish.

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

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed Warding of Flitwick Town (northern part)*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Flitwick Town (southern part)*

*Map A4: Proposed Warding of Henlow Parish*



## APPENDIX B

### The Statutory Provisions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## APPENDIX C

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm](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.

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

#### *Commission compliance with Code criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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