

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Mid Bedfordshire

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

*August 2001*

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Report no: 243

# CONTENTS

page

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND? *v*

SUMMARY *vii*

1 INTRODUCTION *1*

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS *3*

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS *7*

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION *9*

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS *11*

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? *31*

## APPENDIX

A Final Recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire:  
Detailed Mapping *33*

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



# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Mid Bedfordshire.



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Mid Bedfordshire's electoral arrangements on 25 July 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 20 February 2001, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in 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;**
- **by 2005 this situation is expected to worsen, 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 102-103) 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, resulting in a net reduction of four, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each district councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind 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 forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only three wards expected to vary by 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:

- **new warding arrangements for the towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy and the parish of Henlow;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors for Aspley Heath Parish Council.**

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

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
20	Sandy Pinnacle	3	part of Sandy Town (the proposed Pinnacle town ward)	Large map
21	Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst	3	the parishes of Campton & Chicksands, Gravenhurst and Shefford	Map 2
22	Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp	2	part of Henlow parish (the proposed Camp parish ward) and the parishes of Shillington and Stondon	Maps 2 and A4
23	Silsoe	1	the parish of Silsoe	Map 2
24	Stotfold	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Astwick and Stotfold)	Map 2
25	Westoning & Tingrith	1	the parishes of Tingrith and Westoning	Map 2
26	Woburn	1	the parishes of Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Eversholt, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Ridgmont and Woburn	Map 2

*Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.*

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

*We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Final 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 Northill & 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>100,386</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,757</b>	–	–	<b>1,894</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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Mid Bedfordshire. We have now reviewed 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 finish in 2004. We expect to complete our review of Luton later this year.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Mid Bedfordshire. Mid Bedfordshire's last 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 intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council

size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

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

11 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mid Bedfordshire District*, and ended on 23 April 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 Mid Bedfordshire district is a largely rural area, covering approximately 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.

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

14 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.

15 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. The degree of imbalance across the district is also illustrated by the fact that each of the two councillors for Flitwick West ward represents nearly two and a half as many electors as the councillor for Old Warden & Southill.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Mid Bedfordshire*

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 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 & Meppershall	1	1,846	1,846	5	2,143	2,143	13
8 Clifton & 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 & 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 & 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 & 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
25 Shillington & Stondon	2	2,961	1,481	-16	2,893	1,447	-24

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 %
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 significantly under-represented by 46 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

16 During Stage One we received 10 representations, including a district-wide scheme from Mid Bedfordshire District Council and representations from Bedfordshire County Council, North East Bedfordshire Conservative Association, six parish and town councils and one local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mid Bedfordshire District*.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of wards throughout the district. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements, and we were content that the reorganisation of ward boundaries in the district as proposed by the District Council would address the serious problems of under-representation in both Flitwick and Biggleswade towns. We proposed that:

- Mid Bedfordshire District Council should be served by 53 councillors, as at present, representing 26 wards, instead of 30 as at present;
- the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the towns of Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy and the parish of Henlow.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Mid Bedfordshire District Council should comprise 53 councillors, serving 26 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the 26 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only three wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

19 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 11 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Mid Bedfordshire District Council.

### **Mid Bedfordshire District Council**

20 The District Council stated that it accepted our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire, subject to supporting a parish warding amendment submitted by Henlow Parish Council, as detailed below.

### **Bedfordshire County Council**

21 Bedfordshire County Council noted that “the discrete urban areas of Flitwick and Sandy have limited affinity to the surrounding parishes”. They also stated that there is a general need to ensure equality of representation for both urban and rural electorates. The Council also made a number of comments regarding the intended review of electoral arrangements for the county of Bedfordshire, to which we can have no regard at this time.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

22 We received a further eight submissions from parish and town councils in Mid Bedfordshire. Potton Town Council expressed support for our draft recommendations. Cranfield Parish Council supported the proposed Cranfield ward, Eversholt Parish Council supported the proposed Woburn ward and Westoning Parish Council supported the proposed Westoning & Tingrith ward. Ampthill Town Council noted our draft recommendations and had no observations to make. As at Stage One, Dunton Parish Council opposed the proposed three-member Potton and Wensley ward. It argued that this would have a detrimental effect on the quality of representation for smaller villages such as Dunton. On this basis, it proposed a council of 53 single-member wards, allowing for the over-representation of rural wards and retaining the existing Wensley ward. It also queried the estimated decline in the electorate of the existing Wensley ward by 2005.

23 Henlow Parish Council opposed the warding of Henlow parish between the proposed district wards of Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp. It argued that this would be perceived as inviting a change in the parish boundary. In the event of the draft recommendations being adopted despite its opposition, it suggested a redistribution of councillors between the proposed Camp and Village parish wards. Northhill Parish Council reiterated its Stage One submission and proposed retaining the existing single-member Northhill and Blunham wards.

### **Other Representations**

24 One further representation was received in response to our draft recommendations from a Mid Bedfordshire district councillor. Councillor Harrowell (Arlesley ward) supported the draft recommendations for Arlesley ward. She also stated that the proposed Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards, although “perhaps not ideal”, were the best arrangement that could have been made for the district as a whole.



## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

25 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”.

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

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

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

29 Since 1975 there has been a 46 per cent increase in the electorate of Mid Bedfordshire district. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 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. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

30 During Stage Three, Dunton Parish Council queried the electorate projections for the existing Wensley ward. We therefore asked officers at the District Council to revisit their projections in this area; they indicated that they remained satisfied that their original projections represented the best estimates for change in electorate over the five-year period. Therefore, having examined the Council’s projections, we are content that they represent the best estimates currently available.

## **Council Size**

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

32 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the District Council's proposal for a council of 53 members, as at present. In its submission, the District 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 District 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. We considered that, taking into account the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, electoral equality would best be secured with a council size of 53.

33 During Stage Three we received no further representations on council size, and are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations for a council size of 53 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

34 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme submitted by the District Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

35 When formulating our draft recommendations we noted that the District Council had undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving both parish and town councils in the district and the general public. In particular, we noted that the proposals for Biggleswade, Flitwick and Sandy towns had been developed in conjunction with the relevant town councils. We were content that the District Council had also taken other issues raised into consideration wherever possible, and that there was a degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's proposals. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements, and that the reorganisation of ward boundaries in the district as proposed by the District Council would address the serious problems of under-representation in both Flitwick and Biggleswade towns. We were therefore content to base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme.

36 At Stage Three our draft recommendations received a degree of local support, including that of the District Council. However, we also recognised that several proposed wards had been opposed by affected parish councils, one of which, Dunton Parish Council, proposed alternative warding arrangements for the district, as detailed below. Having reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, we none the less propose that they should be substantially endorsed. We consider that our proposals for the district reflect the interests and identities of local communities while providing for much improved electoral equality both now and in five years' time. We have, however, decided to move away from our draft recommendations in one area, in order to adopt the proposal from Henlow Parish Council regarding its own warding arrangements. This does not affect the proposed pattern of district wards.

37 Dunton Parish Council proposed alternative warding arrangements for the district based on a pattern of 53 single-member wards, allowing for the over-representation of rural wards. It argued that single-member wards improve contact with and the accountability of district councillors, and provide effective and convenient local government. As stated in our *Guidance*, we are not prescriptive and make no judgement as to the advantages or disadvantages of single- or multi-member wards. However, we have not been persuaded that Dunton Parish Council's district-wide scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We note that it included neither evidence of local consultation, nor details of warding arrangements, nor is there any provision in legislation for us to allow the over-representation of rural areas. We have therefore been unable to give any further consideration to this scheme.

38 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.

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

## **Aspley and Woburn wards**

40 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.

41 At Stage One the District Council proposed several amendments to warding arrangements in this area in order to provide improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed a new single-member Aspley Guise ward, comprising Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley parishes, and that Brogborough parish be transferred from the current Aspley ward to a revised Cranfield ward, as detailed below. The District Council also 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 District 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.

42 In our draft recommendations we considered that, as far as was possible, the District Council had taken into account local concerns in its proposals for this area while ensuring a substantial improvement in electoral equality. We therefore put 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).

43 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Aspley Guise and Woburn wards. Eversholt Parish Council supported the inclusion of Eversholt parish in the proposed Woburn ward. We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. Noting that our draft recommendations have received a degree of support and provide reasonable electoral equality, we propose confirming them as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Amphill, Cranfield and Marston wards**

44 Amphill, 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 Amphill ward is coterminous with Amphill Town. Cranfield ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 27 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality in the 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. Amphill 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).

45 At Stage One 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 District Council’s proposals, the revised Cranfield ward would be represented by two councillors, one fewer than at present. To address the level of under-representation in Marston ward, the District Council proposed transferring Ridgmont parish to a revised Woburn ward, as detailed above, and Millbrook parish to a revised Amphill ward. The District Council’s proposed Amphill ward, comprising Amphill and Millbrook parishes, would continue to be represented by three councillors.

46 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We considered 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 were 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 (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 by 2005).

47 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Ampthill, Cranfield and Marston wards. Ampthill Town Council noted our draft recommendations, but had no observations to make on the proposed Ampthill ward. Cranfield Parish Council supported the proposed Cranfield ward. Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendation for these wards, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received a degree of support. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

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

48 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 together with 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 electors per councillor than the district average.

49 At Stage One 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 District Council stated that its proposals for Flitwick had been formulated in conjunction with Flitwick Town Council.

50 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We considered 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 considered that the Luton to Bedford railway line forms a strong and clearly identifiable boundary in Flitwick. We also noted that there was a degree of local support for the District Council's proposals. We were therefore content to put forward the District 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 (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).

51 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards. Bedfordshire County Council commented that the discrete urban area of Flitwick had limited affinity to the surrounding parishes. We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we note the County Council's comments, we have not been made aware of any alternative

warding proposals for this area. We have therefore decided to endorse our draft recommendations for Flitwick East and Flitwick West wards, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and received some local support as part of the District Council's own consultation process. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

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

52 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 the parishes of the same names. 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 by 2005).

53 At Stage One 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, to be renamed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill ward, arguing that "the three villages are linked by a quadrangle of roads and have many community links". The District Council noted that, as part of its own consultation exercise, Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill parish councils had both expressed support for the proposed ward.

54 In order to address the relatively high level of over-representation in Westoning ward, the District Council proposed combining Westoning parish with Tingrith parish, currently in Woburn ward, to form a new single-member Westoning & Tingrith ward. As detailed above, the District 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.

55 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted 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 noted that there was some local support for the District Council's proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill ward, and we were content that both Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill and Harlington wards would reflect local community ties well. We also noted that local concerns regarding the inclusion of Eversholt parish in the proposed Westoning & Tingrith ward had been addressed by the District Council.

56 We were content to adopt the District 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 were 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).

57 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill, Harlington and Westoning & Tingrith wards. Westoning Parish Council supported the proposed Westoning & Tingrith ward, arguing that the parishes of Westoning and Tingrith share “many common aspects”. As stated above, Eversholt Parish Council supported the retention of Eversholt parish in the proposed Woburn ward.

58 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and note that our draft recommendations for this area have received a degree of local support at Stage Three of the review. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

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

59 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 the parishes of the same names, 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.

60 At Stage One 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 District 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.

61 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We were content that the District Council’s proposed Maulden & Clophill ward would address the significant levels of electoral inequality in this area, and noted that there was some local support for its proposal. We also considered that there was some merit to the District Council’s proposed Silsoe ward, and put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. 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.

62 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Maulden & Clophill and Silsoe wards. We received no further comments, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

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

63 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.

64 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.

65 At Stage One 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 District 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 District 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.

66 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.

67 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we were content that the District Council's proposals in this area would provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and proposed putting them forward as the basis for our draft recommendations. We recognised that there was some local opposition to the District Council's proposal to divide Henlow parish between two district wards. However, we considered 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. To achieve more reasonable levels of electoral equality in this area we considered that it was necessary to enlarge the current Shillington & Stondon ward to include either part or all of an adjacent parish. We considered alternative options for warding arrangements in this area, including transferring Gravenhurst or Meppershall parishes to a revised Shillington & Stondon ward, but were unable to identify an alternative which would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the District Council's proposals. We were 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 proposed 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.

68 In the absence of alternative proposals which would provide for improved electoral equality, we adopted the District Council's proposed Clifton & Meppershall and Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst wards as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. We were content that the Council's proposals would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. 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).

69 At Stage Three the District Council broadly supported our proposals for this area, but made no specific reference to the proposed Clifton & Meppershall, Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards. Henlow Parish Council opposed the proposed Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward, arguing that "this would be perceived as inviting a change in the parish boundary", and that it had never been made aware that dividing the parish for the purposes of district representation would also result in the parish being warded. In the event of the draft recommendations being adopted despite its opposition, the Parish Council proposed amended parish warding arrangements, supported by the District Council. These proposals are discussed below in "Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements".

70 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we understand the concerns of Henlow Parish Council, we are unable to consider the effect of our recommendations on the possible outcome of future parish boundary reviews in the district. We remain of the view that the proposed district wards of Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp and Langford & Henlow Village would enable good electoral equality to be achieved across the south-eastern area of the district, whilst meeting the statutory criteria. We note that we have received no new argumentation to the contrary at Stage Three, nor have we been informed of any viable alternative schemes. We have therefore decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the proposed Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp ward as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. 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 also received no further comments at Stage Three regarding the proposed Clifton & Meppershall and Shefford, Campton & Gravenhurst wards, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

## **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 the same name. 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, at Stage One 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 District 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 District Council noted that Arlesey parish has “no natural combination with a neighbour”.

74 As discussed previously, while we recognised that there was some local opposition to the proposal to divide Henlow parish between district wards, we considered 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 considered that the District Council’s proposed Langford & Henlow Village ward would address the significant level of under-representation in the current Langford ward. We were also content that the existing Arlesey and Stotfold wards reflected local community identities and interests well and we were persuaded that, despite deteriorating levels of electoral equality, we should adopt the District 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.

75 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Arlesley, Langford & Henlow Village and Stotfold wards. Councillor Harrowell (Arlesley ward) supported the proposed Arlesley ward. She also stated that the proposals for the warding of Henlow parish, although “perhaps not ideal”, were “the best arrangement that could be made in the circumstances” for the district as a whole. As discussed previously, Henlow Parish Council opposed the proposed Langford & Henlow Village ward but proposed amended parish warding arrangements should the draft recommendations be adopted despite its opposition.

76 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and note that our draft recommendations for this area have received a degree of support at Stage Three of the review. While we note the submission of Henlow Parish Council, as stated above, we remain of the view that the proposed district wards of Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp and Langford & Henlow

Village would enable a good level of electoral equality to be achieved across the south-eastern area of the district while meeting the statutory criteria.

77 We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2; the proposed boundary between Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp wards is illustrated on Map A4 in Appendix A.

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

78 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.

79 At Stage One 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 District 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 District Council stated that its proposals for Biggleswade had been formulated in conjunction with Biggleswade Town Council.

80 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that, by 2005, Biggleswade town is forecast to be entitled to a total of seven councillors, and we therefore concurred with the District Council's proposal to allocate an additional councillor to the Biggleswade town area. We considered that the District 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 considered 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 noted that there was a degree of local support for the District Council's proposals. We were therefore content to put forward the District 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 (3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

81 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed warding arrangements for Biggleswade. We received no other comments regarding this area. Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the wards of Biggleswade Holme, Biggleswade Ivel

and Biggleswade Stratton, as they would achieve very good electoral equality and received some local support as part of the District Council's own consultation process at Stage One. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. The boundaries between the proposed 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**

82 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.

83 At Stage One the District Council noted that, under a council size of 53, the town of Sandy would continue to be entitled to five councillors. However, it proposed amending the boundary between the two Sandy wards to address the relatively high level of electoral inequality in the current Sandy All Saints ward. Under the District 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 District Council also stated that its proposals for Sandy had been formulated in conjunction with Sandy Town Council.

84 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We considered 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 considered 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 noted that there was a degree of local support for the District Council's proposals. We were therefore content to put forward the District 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).

85 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed warding arrangements for Sandy. Bedfordshire County Council commented that the discrete urban area of Sandy had limited affinity to the surrounding parishes.

86 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the wards of Sandy Ivel and Sandy Pinnacle as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and received some local support as part of the Council's own consultation process at Stage One. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral

equality as our draft recommendations. 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**

87 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 the parish of the same name. 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.

88 At Stage One the District Council proposed creating two new wards for this area. To improve electoral equality, it proposed combining the current Blunham and Northill wards to form a new two-member Northill & Blunham ward. The District Council noted that, as part of its own consultation process, Northill Parish Council had expressed opposition to the proposed ward, preferring to retain the existing single-member Northill ward. The District 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”.

89 While we recognised that Potton is a relatively large settlement, we were not persuaded that it is sufficiently separate and distinct from the remaining parishes in the proposed ward to justify retaining the existing high electoral inequality in Wensley ward. We were 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 put 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.

90 We also noted that there were some local concerns regarding the District Council’s proposed Northill & Blunham ward. However, we considered that the District Council’s proposals, which would address the level of over-representation in Blunham ward, would provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area and we were content to adopt the proposed Northill & 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).

91 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Northill & Blunham and Potton & Wensley wards. Potton Town Council supported the proposed Potton & Wensley ward; as at Stage One, this ward was opposed by Dunton Parish Council. The Parish Council argued that the proposed three-member ward would

“disadvantage the smaller villages” such as Dunton and not reflect the interests and identities of local communities or provide effective and convenient local government. As stated earlier in this report, the Parish Council also queried the estimated decline in electorate in the existing Wensley ward by 2005. It proposed a pattern of single-member wards for the entire district, allowing for over-representation in rural areas, thereby enabling the retention of the existing Wensley ward.

92 Northill Parish Council opposed the proposed Northill & Blunham ward, arguing that the resulting improvement in electoral equality was not sufficient to warrant change, and that a number of wards in the draft recommendations had higher variances than that of the existing Blunham ward. It reiterated its position, expressed at Stage One, that a two-member ward might not provide effective and convenient local government and proposed retaining the existing single-member Northill ward.

93 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. As stated previously, we have not been persuaded on the basis of the evidence provided to adopt Dunton Parish Council’s district-wide scheme. Our *Guidance* makes it clear that there is no provision in legislation for us to allow for over-representation in rural areas. Having examined the District Council’s electoral projections, we are content that they have provided the best estimate currently available for the electorate of the existing Wensley ward in 2005, and we therefore consider that its substantial electoral variance should be addressed by this review. Further, we also consider that at Stage Three we received no new substantive evidence from Dunton Parish Council that the proposed three-member Potton & Wensley ward would not facilitate effective and convenient local government or reflect local interests and identities. We note that Potton Town Council wrote in support of our draft recommendations. Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the ward of Potton & Wensley as it would achieve good electoral equality and has received some local support.

94 We have also considered the proposal by Northill Parish Council to retain the existing single-member Northill and Blunham wards. We note that there is some merit in reducing the level of over-representation in the existing Blunham ward by combining it with Northill ward. Further, we note that by 2005 it is expected that significant improvements in electoral equality will have been achieved in the majority of those proposed wards with high electoral variances referred to by the Parish Council. We consider that we have not received sufficient substantive evidence to convince us that retaining the status quo would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. Having carefully considered the representations received, we have therefore decided to endorse our draft recommendation for Northill & Blunham ward.

95 Consequently our final recommendations for both Northill & Blunham ward and Potton & Wensley ward will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

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

96 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.

97 At Stage One, The District Council proposed minimal change in this area. 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.

98 We considered that the District Council's proposed Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden ward would provide a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and we were 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.

99 At Stage Three the District Council expressed broad support for our draft recommendations, but made no specific reference to the proposed Houghton, Haynes, Southill & Old Warden ward. We received no further comments, and we have decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for this ward. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

## **Electoral Cycle**

100 At Stage One 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 made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

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

## **Conclusions**

102 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations:

103 We conclude that, in Mid Bedfordshire:

- 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.

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

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

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	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

105 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 18 to eight, with one ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with only three wards, Arlesley, Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill, and Westoning & Tingrith varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 13, 11 and 13 per cent respectively. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### **Final Recommendation**

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

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

106 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states 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, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the 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 proposed amendments to the number of councillors representing the parish.

107 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. In our draft recommendations we proposed adopting the District Council's proposed Biggleswade Holme and Biggleswade Stratton district wards without amendment. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we proposed 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 District 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 were content to put forward the District Council's proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

108 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Town Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Biggleswade town as final.

**Final 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.

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

110 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Town Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Flitwick town as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Flitwick Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East ward (returning seven councillors); and West ward (returning ten 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.

111 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. In our draft recommendations we proposed adopting the District Council’s proposed Sandy Ivel and Sandy Pinnacle district wards without amendment. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we proposed 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 District Council proposed that the new Ivel ward should return six councillors and Pinnacle ward should return nine councillors. For the purposes of consultation, we were content to put forward the District Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

112 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Town Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Sandy town as final.

**Final 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.

113 Henlow Parish Council is currently served by 12 councillors, and is unwarded. At Stage One the District Council proposed creating two new parish wards, Camp and Village, 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 District 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.

114 In our draft recommendations we proposed adopting the District Council’s proposed Langford & Henlow Village and Shillington, Stondon & Henlow Camp district wards. To facilitate the proposed district warding arrangements in this area, we proposed creating two new parish wards, Camp and Village. The District 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 were content to put forward the District Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

115 At Stage Three, Henlow Parish Council reiterated its opposition to the proposal to divide the parish between district wards. However, in the event of the draft recommendations being adopted despite its opposition, the Parish Council “reluctantly” proposed a redistribution of councillors between the proposed parish wards. It requested that Camp ward return two councillors, rather than four, and Village ward return ten councillors, rather than eight. The Parish Council argued that it would be impractical to allocate four councillors to Camp ward, as RAF personnel resident in Camp ward are not integrated into the community, and may be serving short terms of duty or be absent abroad. This amendment was also supported by the District Council.

116 Having considered all the evidence received, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for district warding in the area as stated previously. However, we also propose amending the distribution of parish councillors between the proposed Camp and Village parish wards, as requested by the Parish Council.

**Final Recommendation**

Henlow Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Camp ward (returning two councillors); and Village ward (returning ten 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.

117 Aspley Heath Parish Council is currently served by seven councillors, and is unwarded. At Stage One 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 District Council stated that it supported this request, and we were content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire.

118 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council. Therefore we confirm our draft recommendation for increasing the number of parish councillors for Aspley Heath as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

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

**Final Recommendation**

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire*

## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

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

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Mid Bedfordshire: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate our 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 & A3** illustrate the proposed warding of Flitwick town.

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

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

*Map A1: Final 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*