

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire

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

August 2001

© Crown Copyright 2001

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit.

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

Report no: 244

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? *39*

APPENDIX

A Final Recommendations for the Vale of White Horse:
Detailed Mapping *41*

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Abingdon 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 the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the Vale of White Horse 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 the Vale of White Horse:

- **in 21 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 11 wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 this situation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 20 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 11 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 113-114) are that:

- **Vale of White Horse District Council should have 51 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 29 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and four 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 25 of the proposed 29 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 one ward, Sutton Courtenay & Appleford, 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:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of East Challow, Grove, Longworth, Milton, St Helen Without and Wantage;**
- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors serving Abingdon Town 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 for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Abingdon Abbey & Barton	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Abbey & Barton parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
2	Abingdon Caldecott	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Caldecott parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
3	Abingdon Dunmore	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Dunmore parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
4	Abingdon Fitzharris	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Fitzharris parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
5	Abingdon Northcourt	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Northcourt parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
6	Abingdon Ock Meadow	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Ock Meadow parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
7	Abingdon Peachcroft	2	part of Abingdon parish (the proposed Abingdon Peachcroft parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
8	Appleton & Cumnor	3	the parishes of Appleton-with-Eaton and Cumnor	Map 2
9	Blewbury & Upton	1	the parishes of Blewbury and Upton	Map 2
10	Craven	1	the parishes of Ashbury, Baulking, Compton Beauchamp, Fernham, Kingston Lisle, Sparsholt, Uffington and Woolstone	Map 2
11	Drayton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Drayton)	Map 2
12	Faringdon & The Coxwells	3	the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Faringdon, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell	Map 2
13	Greendown	1	the parishes of Childrey, Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis and West Challow; part of East Challow parish (the proposed East Challow North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
14	Grove	3	part of Grove parish (the proposed Grove North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
15	Hanneys	1	the parishes of East Hanney, Frilford, Fyfield & Tubney, Garford, Lyford and West Hanney	Map 2
16	Harwell	2	the parishes of Chilton and Harwell; part of Milton parish (the proposed Village parish ward)	Maps 2 and A5
17	Hendreds	2	the parishes of Ardington, East Hendred, Lockinge, Steventon and West Hendred; part of Milton parish (the proposed Heights parish ward)	Maps 2 and A5
18	Kennington & South Hinksey	2	the parishes of Kennington and South Hinksey	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
19	Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	1	the parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor; part of Longworth parish (the proposed South parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
20	Longworth	1	the parishes of Buckland, Charney Bassett, Denchworth, Goosey, Hinton Waldrist, Littleworth and Pusey; part of Longworth parish (the proposed North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
21	Marcham & Shippon	1	the parish of Marcham; part of St Helen Without parish (the proposed Shippon parish ward)	Maps 2 and A4
22	North Hinksey & Wytham	2	the parishes of North Hinksey and Wytham	Map 2
23	Radley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Radley)	Map 2
24	Shrivenham	2	the parishes of Bourton, Longcot, Shrivenham and Watchfield	Map 2
25	Stanford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Hatford, Shellingford and Stanford in the Vale)	Map 2
26	Sunningwell & Wootton	2	the parishes of Besselsleigh, Sunningwell and Wootton; part of St Helen Without parish (the proposed Dry Sandford parish ward)	Maps 2 and A4
27	Sutton Courtenay & Appleford	1	the parishes of Appleford on Thames and Sutton Courtenay	Map 2
28	Wantage Charlton	3	part of Wantage parish (the proposed Wantage Charlton parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
29	Wantage Segsbury	2	part of East Challow parish (the proposed South East parish ward); part of Grove parish (the proposed Mably parish ward); part of Wantage parish (the proposed Wantage Segsbury parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for the Vale of White Horse

	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	Abingdon Abbey & Barton	2	3,403	1,702	0	3,757	1,879	6
2	Abingdon Caldecott	2	3,250	1,625	-5	3,431	1,671	-5
3	Abingdon Dunmore	2	3,653	1,827	7	3,658	1,829	4
4	Abingdon Fitzharris	2	3,110	1,555	-9	3,420	1,710	-3
5	Abingdon Northcourt	2	3,539	1,770	4	3,540	1,770	0
6	Abingdon Ock Meadow	2	3,292	1,646	-3	3,589	1,795	2
7	Abingdon Peachcroft	2	3,409	1,705	0	3,410	1,705	-4
8	Appleton & Cumnor	3	5,141	1,714	1	5,155	1,718	-3
9	Blewbury & Upton	1	1,619	1,619	-5	1,625	1,625	-8
10	Craven	1	1,801	1,801	6	1,800	1,800	2
11	Drayton	1	1,803	1,803	6	1,870	1,870	6
12	Faringdon & The Coxwells	3	5,229	1,743	2	5,575	1,858	5
13	Greendown	1	1,783	1,783	5	1,795	1,795	2
14	Grove	3	5,521	1,840	8	5,670	1,890	7
15	Hanneys	1	1,789	1,789	5	1,825	1,825	3
16	Harwell	2	2,933	1,467	-14	3,480	1,740	-2
17	Hendreds	2	3,144	1,572	-8	3,190	1,595	-10
18	Kennington & South Hinksey	2	3,447	1,724	1	3,485	1,743	-1
19	Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	1	1,651	1,651	-3	1,739	1,739	-2
20	Longworth	1	1,873	1,873	10	1,816	1,816	3
21	Marcham & Shippon	1	1,907	1,907	12	1,925	1,925	9

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 %
22 North Hinksey & Wytham	2	3,545	1,773	4	3,570	1,785	1
23 Radley	1	1,924	1,924	13	1,935	1,935	10
24 Shrivenham	2	3,053	1,527	-10	3,390	1,695	-4
25 Stanford	1	1,660	1,660	-2	1,755	1,755	-1
26 Sunningwell & Wootton	2	3,303	1,652	-3	3,360	1,680	-5
27 Sutton Courtenay & Appleford	1	1,970	1,970	16	2,030	2,030	15
28 Wantage Charlton	3	4,756	1,585	-7	4,909	1,636	-7
29 Wantage Segsbury	2	3,275	1,638	-4	3,406	1,703	-4
Totals	51	86,783	-	-	90,110	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,702	-	-	1,767	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Vale of White Horse 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 the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire. We have now reviewed the five districts in Oxfordshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of the Vale of White Horse. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1977 (Report no. 232). The electoral arrangements of Oxfordshire County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report no. 428). 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 put 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 the Vale of White Horse District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police Authority, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000. 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 the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire*, and ended on 23 April 2001. Comments were sought 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 Vale of White Horse district is bounded by West Oxfordshire to its north, by Oxford and South Oxfordshire to its east, by Swindon to its west and by West Berkshire to its south. The district is mainly rural in character although it contains the main town of Abingdon in the north-east, one of the fifty towns listed as worthy of special conservation for its architectural merit and historic associations, and the smaller towns of Wantage in the south and Faringdon in the north-west. Covering some 58,099 hectares and with a population of some 113,300, Vale of White Horse has a population density of just under two people per hectare. The district is entirely parished and comprises 69 parishes. Abingdon town comprises 27 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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 86,783 (February 2000). The Council presently has 51 members who are elected from 31 wards, five of which are relatively urban in the town of Abingdon, with the remainder being predominantly rural. One ward is represented by four councillors, three are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and 16 are single-member wards. The whole council is elected every four years.

15 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,702 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,767 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 21 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 11 wards by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Faringdon & Littleworth ward where each of the two councillors represents 39 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in the Vale of White Horse

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 Abbey	4	8,270	2,068	22	8,985	2,246	27
2 Appleton	1	1,197	1,197	-30	1,200	1,200	-32
3 Caldecott	3	6,026	2,009	18	6,205	2,068	17
4 Craven	1	1,640	1,640	-4	1,640	1,640	-7
5 Cumnor	2	4,413	2,207	30	4,425	2,213	25
6 Drayton	1	1,803	1,803	6	1,870	1,870	6
7 Faringdon & Littleworth	2	4,724	2,362	39	5,070	2,535	43
8 Fitzharris	2	3,363	1,682	-1	3,365	1,683	-5
9 Greendown	1	1,983	1,983	17	1,995	1,995	13
10 Grove	3	5,812	1,937	14	5,970	1,990	13
11 Harwell & Chilton	2	2,510	1,255	-26	3,030	1,515	-14
12 Hendred	1	1,520	1,520	-11	1,520	1,520	-14
13 Hinksey	3	3,817	1,272	-25	3,845	1,282	-27
14 Icknield	2	3,955	1,978	16	4,070	2,035	15
15 Island Villages	1	1,577	1,577	-7	1,615	1,615	-9
16 Kennington	2	3,175	1,588	-7	3,210	1,605	-9
17 Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor	1	1,482	1,482	-13	1,500	1,500	-15
18 Longworth	1	1,393	1,393	-18	1,400	1,400	-21
19 Marcham	1	1,604	1,604	-6	1,620	1,620	-8
20 Northcourt	2	4,355	2,178	28	4,355	2,178	23
21 Ock	1	1,642	1,642	-4	1,895	1,895	7
22 Radley	1	1,924	1,924	13	1,935	1,935	10
23 Segsbury	2	3,585	1,793	5	3,745	1,873	6

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 %
24 Shrivenham	2	2,657	1,329	-22	2,990	1,495	-15
25 St Helen Without	1	1,093	1,093	-36	1,100	1,100	-38
26 Stanford	1	1,660	1,660	-2	1,755	1,755	-1
27 Steventon	1	1,194	1,194	-30	1,200	1,200	-32
28 Sunningwell & Wootton	2	2,745	1,373	-19	2,800	1,400	-21
29 Sutton Courtenay	2	2,823	1,412	-17	2,950	1,475	-17
30 The Coxwells	1	1,222	1,222	-28	1,225	1,225	-31
31 Upton & Blewbury	1	1,619	1,619	-5	1,625	1,625	-8
Totals	51	86,783	-	-	90,110	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,702	-	-	1,767	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Vale of White Horse 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 St Helen Without ward were relatively over-represented by 36 per cent, while electors in Faringdon & Littleworth ward were relatively under-represented by 39 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

16 During Stage One we received 21 representations, including district-wide schemes from the Vale of White Horse District Council and the Labour Group on the Council. We also received representations from the Vale of White Horse Conservative Group, Oxfordshire County Council, 13 parish and town councils, Wantage Constituency Conservative Association, a joint submission from two district councillors and two local residents. 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 the Vale of White Horse in Oxfordshire*.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of one, two and three-member wards in the district. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in Abingdon town, the north-east of the district and in Wantage. We proposed that:

- Vale of White Horse District Council should be served by 51 councillors, the same as at present, representing 29 wards, two less than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Abingdon, East Challow, Grove, Longworth, Milton, St Helen Without and Wantage.

Draft Recommendation

Vale of White Horse District Council should comprise 51 councillors, serving 29 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 25 of the 29 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 Sutton Courtenay ward 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, 43 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of the Vale of White Horse District Council and the Commission.

Vale of White Horse District Council

20 The District Council agreed with the majority of our proposals but put forward a number of ward name changes across the district. It proposed a number of boundary amendments to our proposals in Abingdon town and reiterated its Stage One proposals for Wantage town. It further proposed that the boundary between Grove parish and Wantage town be realigned.

Vale of White Horse District Council Conservative Group

21 The Conservative Group on the District Council supported the majority of the proposals put forward by the District Council at Stage Three, including proposed ward name changes. They supported the District Council's proposed boundary changes to Abingdon Northcourt ward and Abingdon Wildmoor ward in Abingdon town but supported our draft recommendations in the remaining five wards in the town. They proposed that Faringdon ward be split between a two-member Faringdon ward and a single-member Faringdon Rural ward.

22 They proposed that Grove parish be represented by a single-member and a two-member ward and reiterated their preference for five single-member wards within Wantage town. However, they supported our proposals for the town should "this arrangement [not be] considered acceptable".

Oxfordshire County Council

23 Oxfordshire County Council stated that proposals for two- and three-member wards within the Abingdon and Wantage areas would cause problems for the creation of electoral divisions in the future.

Parish and Town Councils

24 We received representations from 26 parish and town councils and from one parish meeting. The parish councils of Appleford-on-Thames, Chilton, Cumnor, Harwell, Kennington, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Radley and Wootton supported our draft recommendations in their areas. Blewbury Parish Council supported our draft recommendations in its area but proposed a ward name change. Abingdon Town Council proposed similar boundary amendments to our proposals in Abingdon town as the District Council. Wantage Town Council supported our proposals, "in principle" for Wantage town, however, it proposed an alternative boundary between our proposed wards in the town. Grove Parish Council objected to our proposals for its parish. The parishes of Appleton with Eaton, Ardington & Lockinge, East Challow, East Hendred, Longworth, Marcham, Milton, Saint Helen Without, Steventon and West Hendred objected to our proposals in their areas and proposed alternative warding arrangements. Charney Bassett Parish Council and Frilford Parish Meeting objected to our proposals in their areas while the parish councils of Coleshill and Great Coxwell objected to being placed in a ward with Faringdon town. Childrey Parish Council objected to our proposed Challows ward name and suggested a number of alternatives.

Other Representations

25 A further 13 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. These came from three district councillors, two county councillors, one town councillor, six local residents and a joint submission from Councillors Langton and Nunn-Price. Councillor Bizell provided further argumentation for the District Council's proposals in Abingdon. Councillor Birch supported our proposed Sunningwell & Wootton ward. Councillor Crawford proposed an alternative boundary between our proposed Challows and Wantage Segsbury wards and proposed a ward name change. Town Councillor Hannaby supported Wantage Town Council's Stage Three proposals for Wantage town. District Councillors Langton and Nunn-Price submitted a joint proposal and stated a preference for five single-member wards within Wantage town, but supported our proposals in the town should this not be practicable. County Councillor Moley proposed that the Wantage town be divided along the A417.

26 A local resident objected to our proposals for the parishes of Milton, Steventon and the Hendred Downland Villages and proposed alternative warding arrangements in the area. His proposals were supported by County Councillor MacKenzie. Another local resident also objected to our proposals in this area and proposed alternative warding arrangements.

27 Two local residents objected to our proposals for Longworth parish while a third objected to our proposals for the current Island Villages, Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, Longworth and Marcham wards. Another local resident proposed a number of amendments to our proposals in Abingdon town.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the Vale of White Horse 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”.

29 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.

30 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.

31 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

32 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of nearly 4 per cent from 86,783 to 90,110 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Abingdon, although a significant amount was also expected in Faringdon & Littleworth and Harwell & Chilton wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 We received no comments regarding the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

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

35 Vale of White Horse District Council presently has 51 members. The District Council and the Labour Group both proposed a council of 51 members, the same as at present, which was also supported by the Conservative Group.

36 Given the general consensus for retaining the current council size of 51 members, and having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members. During Stage Three we received no specific comments regarding council size and therefore remain of the view that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral Arrangements

37 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide schemes from the District Council and the Labour Group. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

38 We noted that the District Council undertook a consultation exercise with local interested parties and that the Conservative Group supported a large number of the Council's proposals. We also noted that the District Council's scheme would result in less parish warding than the Labour Group's scheme and would therefore, in our view, provide for a slightly better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities. Furthermore, the Labour Group's scheme would also result in the creation of a detached Hanneys ward. We are of the view that detached wards do not lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas which reflect local community identities and we would not normally put them forward as part of our recommendations, other than to recognise the particular circumstances of, for example, offshore islands.

39 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the District Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

40 During both Stage One and Stage Three, Oxfordshire County Council stated that the proposed warding arrangements for Abingdon and Wantage towns could create difficulties for the County Council when a future review of its electoral divisions is carried out. However, the Commission's approach in two-tier county areas is first to review the electoral arrangements of the district councils and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. Our future recommendations for electoral division boundaries in all counties, including Oxfordshire, will utilise the new district wards as building blocks. We therefore cannot have any regard for existing or future county council divisions during this review.

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

- (a) Craven, Faringdon & Littleworth, Shrivenham, Stanford and The Coxwells wards;
- (b) Island Villages, Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, Longworth and Marcham wards;

- (c) Appleton, Cumnor, Hinksey, Kennington, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell & Wootton wards;
- (d) Drayton, Harwell & Chilton, Hendred, Steventon, Sutton Courtenay and Upton & Blewbury wards;
- (e) Greendown, Grove, Icknield and Segsbury wards;
- (f) Abingdon town (five wards).

42 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.

Craven, Faringdon & Littleworth, Shrivenham, Stanford and The Coxwells wards

43 These five wards are situated in the west of the district. Craven ward, comprising the parishes of Ashbury, Baulking, Compton Beauchamp, Kingston Lisle, Sparsholt, Uffington and Woolstone, is represented by one councillor and has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (7 per cent fewer in 2005). Faringdon & Littleworth ward, comprising the parishes of Great Faringdon and Littleworth, is represented by two councillors and is the most under-represented ward in the district, with 39 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (43 per cent more in 2005). Shrivenham ward, comprising the parishes of Bourton, Shrivenham and Watchfield, is represented by two councillors and has 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (15 per cent fewer in 2005). Stanford ward, comprising the parishes of Hatford, Shellingford and Stanford in the Vale, is represented by one councillor and has 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent fewer in 2005). The Coxwells ward, comprising the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Fernham, Great Coxwell, Little Coxwell and Longcot, is represented by one councillor and has 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (31 per cent fewer in 2005).

44 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell, Great Faringdon and Little Coxwell be combined to form a three-member Faringdon ward; proposed that the existing single-member Stanford ward be maintained; and that Fernham parish be added to the existing Craven ward to form a single-member Uffington ward. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals in the majority of this area but objected to its proposed Faringdon ward. It proposed that Great Faringdon parish be split, with the town area forming a two-member Town ward while the remaining area would be combined with the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell to form a single-member Faringdon C.B.E. ward. The Labour Group supported the District Council's proposed three-member Faringdon ward but proposed that the parish of Fernham be added to the District Council's proposed two-member Shrivenham ward. It also proposed that the parish of Shellingford be added to the existing Craven ward to form a single-member Ashbury ward. It proposed that the parishes of Goosey, Hatford and Stanford in the Vale be combined to form a single-member Stanford in the Vale ward. Great Coxwell Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposed Faringdon ward and the parishes of Longcot and Shrivenham objected to the District Council's proposed Shrivenham ward.

45 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. We considered the Conservative Group's proposal to ward the parish of Great Faringdon but noted that it would split the town area between two wards, which was opposed by Faringdon Town Council. The District Council's proposed Faringdon ward also secured a good level of electoral equality and avoided the need to ward the parish. We noted that there was some local opposition to this proposal, and that alternative configurations were proposed. However, Great Coxwell Parish Council's preference to retain the

existing The Coxwells ward would maintain a ward that would have 31 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average in 2005, which we considered to be an unacceptable level of electoral imbalance. Furthermore, a number of its other proposals involved warding parishes elsewhere in the area. We were of the opinion that we could not view any area in isolation and that we should try to secure the best balance between securing electoral equality, providing identifiable boundaries and reflecting local communities across the district as a whole. As such, we were of the view that the Council's proposal in this area would secure the best balance between securing electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We therefore proposed adopting it as part of our draft recommendations. We also noted that the areas that this arrangement proposed combining are well connected by transport links.

46 We noted that the District Council's proposed Shrivenham ward would secure a good level of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We considered other combinations of parishes in this area but noted that they would produce higher levels of electoral imbalance. We considered the Labour Group's proposed Ashbury ward, but were of the view that the parish of Shellingford shares better links with the parishes of Hatford and Stanford in the Vale. We noted that the current Stanford ward already secured a good level of electoral equality and that maintaining the current arrangements would better reflect community identity in the area. We also noted that there are good transport links between the parish of Fernham and the current Craven ward and were therefore persuaded that the District Council's proposed Uffington ward would be the most appropriate reflection of community identity while also securing a good level of electoral equality. We were therefore content to endorse the District Council's proposed Faringdon, Shrivenham, Stanford and Uffington wards as we considered that they provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

47 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposed Faringdon, Shrivenham, Uffington and Stanford wards but proposed that Faringdon ward be renamed Faringdon & The Coxwells and that Uffington ward be renamed Craven.

48 The Conservative Group supported the District Council's response to our draft recommendations for Shrivenham, Uffington and Stanford but objected to our proposed Faringdon ward. They proposed that our proposed Faringdon ward be split between a single-member Faringdon Rural ward, comprising the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell, Little Coxwell and that part of Faringdon town to the south of Lechlade Road and the properties on Gravel Walk, to the west of Coxwell Street and to the east of and including the properties on Coxwell Road, and a two-member Faringdon ward comprising the remainder of Faringdon town. They argued that the rural parishes "unanimously and strongly feel they need a single-member to look after their interests". Under the Conservative Group's proposals Faringdon and Faringdon Rural wards would both have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average in 2005.

49 Coleshill Parish Council objected to our proposed Faringdon ward, arguing that the rural parishes would become "electorally second class". Great Coxwell Parish Council supported Coleshill Parish Council's comments and objected to our proposed Faringdon ward.

50 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. Given the support for our proposed Shrivenham and Stanford wards we are content to confirm our draft proposals as final. We are also confirming our proposed Uffington ward as final, but have been persuaded that, given that the majority of our proposed ward comprises the current Craven ward, it should retain the name Craven ward.

51 We have also carefully considered the Conservative Group's proposals, and the opposition to our proposed Faringdon ward. However, while we have sympathy with the views expressed during the consultation period, we note that the Conservative Group's proposals would split Faringdon town between two wards. Although their proposals achieved a good level of electoral equality we were not convinced that they best reflected community identity in the area. We therefore remain of the view that our proposed Faringdon ward would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we note the District Council's proposal that the ward be renamed Faringdon & The Coxwells and have been convinced that this would better reflect the composite parts of our proposed ward.

52 Under our final recommendations our proposed Faringdon & The Coxwells ward (comprising the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Great Coxwell, Great Faringdon and Little Coxwell), Shrivenham ward (comprising the parishes of Bourton, Longcot, Shrivenham and Watchfield), Stanford ward (comprising the parishes of Hatford, Shellingford and Stanford in the Vale) and Craven ward (comprising the parishes of Ashbury, Baulking, Compton Beauchamp, Fernham, Kingston Lisle, Sparsholt, Uffington and Woolstone) would have 2 per cent more, 10 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more in 2005).

Island Villages, Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, Longworth and Marcham wards

53 These four wards are situated in the north and centre of the district. Island Villages ward comprises the parishes of Charney Bassett, Denchworth, East Hanney, Goosey, Lyford and West Hanney and is represented by a single councillor. Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor ward comprises the parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and is represented by a single councillor. Longworth ward comprises the parishes of Buckland, Hinton Waldrist, Longworth and Pusey and is represented by a single councillor. Marcham ward comprises the parishes of Frilford, Garford and Marcham and is represented by a single councillor. Island Villages, Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, Longworth and Marcham wards currently have 7 per cent fewer, 13 per cent fewer, 18 per cent fewer and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer, 21 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer in 2005).

54 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the parish of Longworth be split between two wards. It proposed dividing Longworth parish along the A420 and that the area to the north of this road be combined with the parishes of Buckland, Charney Bassett, Denchworth, Goosey, Hinton Waldrist, Littleworth, Longworth and Pusey in a single-member Longworth ward. It proposed that the area to the south of the A420 be combined with the parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor to form a revised Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor ward. It proposed that the parishes of East Hanney, Frilford, Fyfield & Tubney, Garford, Lyford and West Hanney be combined to form a single-member Hanneys ward. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals in this area. The Labour Group proposed that the parishes of Buckland, Charney Bassett, Hinton Waldrist, Littleworth, Longworth and Pusey be combined to form a single-member Longworth ward. It also proposed that the parishes of Denchworth, East Hanney, Frilford, Lyford and West Hanney be combined to form a single-member Hanneys ward. It proposed that the parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor be combined with the parish of Garford and the remainder of the parish of Fyfield and Tubney in a single-member Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor ward. Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for its area while a local resident objected to the District Council's proposals for the Longworth area.

55 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that the Labour Group's proposals would secure a good level of electoral equality but that it would create a detached Hanneys ward. As outlined in our draft recommendations, we were of the view that detached wards do not lend themselves to the creation of wards which reflect local communities, and we therefore did not propose endorsing the Labour Group's proposals in this area. We also noted a local resident's objection to the District Council's proposal to divide Longworth parish between two wards. However, we considered that the area to the south of the A420 does look more towards its east than its north and that the A420 provides for an identifiable boundary in this area. Therefore, given the degree of support for the District Council's proposals we were content to endorse its proposed Hanneys, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and Longworth wards as part of our draft recommendations.

56 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposed Hanneys, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and Longworth wards. Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Parish Council supported our proposals for Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor ward. Longworth Parish Council objected to our proposals for their parish and proposed the addition of the parishes of Littleworth and Charney Bassett to the existing Longworth ward. Charney Bassett Parish Council objected to our proposed Longworth ward and the break up of the current Island Villages ward. It argued that the A420 provided an identifiable boundary between the parish and the remainder of our proposed Longworth ward. It argued further that it shared "very strong social and geographic links" with Lyford parish. Frilford Parish Meeting objected to our proposed Hanneys ward, stating that its links were with Marcham parish and that a shared representative with Marcham parish would have a more "instinctive feeling" for their affairs. Three local residents objected to our proposals to split Longworth parish between two wards, arguing that the A420 by-pass does not cut off those electors to the south from those to the north.

57 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We have noted the objections to our proposed Longworth ward but have not been persuaded that our proposed South parish ward of Longworth parish shares better links to the north of the A420 than it does to Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor to its east. We have carefully considered Longworth Parish Council's alternative proposal in this area but are of the view that we cannot view any area in isolation, and that although their proposed ward would have a good level of electoral equality, it would adversely affect the levels of electoral equality in neighbouring wards. We have also carefully considered the objections of Charney Bassett Parish Council. However, we have carefully considered the alternative proposals for the area and remain of the view that our draft proposals would strike the best balance between a good level of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Therefore, in the light of the support that our proposals have received, and the absence of viable alternative proposals, we propose confirming our proposed Hanneys, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and Longworth wards as final.

58 Under our final recommendations our proposed Hanneys ward (comprising the parishes of East Hanney, Frilford, Fyfield & Tubney, Garford, Lyford and West Hanney), Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor ward (comprising the parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor and our proposed South parish ward of Longworth parish) and Longworth ward (comprising the parishes of Buckland, Charney Bassett, Denchworth, Goosey, Hinton Waldrist, Littleworth and Pusey, and our proposed North parish ward of Longworth parish) would have 5 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more in 2005).

Appleton, Cumnor, Hinksey, Kennington, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell & Wootton wards

59 These seven wards are situated in the north-east of the district. Appleton ward comprises the parishes of Appleton with Eaton, Besselsleigh and Fyfield & Tubney and is represented by a single councillor. Cumnor ward comprises the parish of Cumnor and is represented by two councillors. Hinksey ward comprises the parishes of North Hinksey, South Hinksey and Wytham and is represented by three councillors. Kennington ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by two councillors. Radley ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. St Helen Without ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. Sunningwell & Wootton ward comprises the parishes of Sunningwell and Wootton and is represented by two councillors. Appleton, Cumnor, Hinksey, Kennington, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell & Wootton wards have 30 per cent fewer, 30 per cent more, 25 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer, 13 per cent more, 36 per cent fewer and 19 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (32 per cent fewer, 25 per cent more, 27 per cent fewer, 9 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 38 per cent fewer and 21 per cent fewer in 2005).

60 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the parishes of Appleton with Eaton and Cumnor be combined to form a three-member Appleton & Cumnor ward. It proposed that the parishes of North Hinksey and Wytham be combined to form a revised two-member Hinksey ward and that the parishes of Kennington, Radley and South Hinksey be combined to form a new three-member Kennington & Radley ward. It also proposed that the parish of St Helen Without be split between two wards. It proposed that the Dry Sandford area of St Helen Without parish, to the north of Honeybottom Lane, be combined with the parishes of Besselsleigh, Sunningwell and Wootton to form a two-member Sunningwell & Wootton ward. It proposed that the Shippon area, to the south of Honeybottom Lane, be combined with the parish of Marcham to form a single-member Marcham ward.

61 The Conservative Group proposed that Dean Court parish ward of Cumnor parish form a single-member Dean Court ward, and that the parishes of Appleton with Eaton and Besselsleigh be combined with the parish wards of Cumnor Village and Cumnor Farmoor to form a two-member Cumnor & Appleton ward. It also proposed that the Dry Sandford area of the parish of St Helen Without be combined with the parish of Marcham to form a single-member Marcham ward while the Shippon area would be combined with the parish of Sunningwell and the Whitecross area of Wootton parish to form a single-member Sunningwell & Shippon ward. It proposed that the remainder of Wootton parish form a single-member Wootton ward. It also proposed that the parish of Kennington be split between a Kennington North ward, combining Kennington North parish ward and South Hinksey parish, and a Kennington South & Radley ward, combining Kennington South parish ward and the parish of Radley.

62 The Labour Group proposed that the parishes of Appleton with Eaton, Besselsleigh and Wytham be combined with part of Cumnor parish to form a single-member Appleton & Farmoor ward. It further proposed that the remainder of Cumnor parish form a two-member Central & North Cumnor ward, that the parishes of Kennington and South Hinksey be combined to form a two-member South Hinksey & Kennington ward and that North Hinksey parish form a two-member North Hinksey ward. In addition, it proposed that the existing single-member Radley ward largely be maintained but that a small area of the parish be combined with part of Abingdon, however, it did not provide detailed proposals. It also proposed that the parish of St Helen Without be split, with part being combined with Marcham parish in a single-member Marcham ward and part being combined with the parishes of Sunningwell and Wootton in a two-member Sunningwell ward. Kennington Parish Council proposed that the parishes of Kennington and South Hinksey be combined to form a two-member Kennington South Hinksey

ward. The Parish Council of St Helen Without stated that a clear majority of its council supported the proposals put forward by the Conservative Group for the area. Councillors S Patterson & J Patterson argued that a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Kennington, Radley and South Hinksey would “make the greatest sense in community terms”, supporting the District Council’s proposed Kennington & Radley ward.

63 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. We noted that the District Council’s proposals for the parishes of Appleton with Eaton and Cumnor secured a good level of electoral equality without the necessity of parish warding. Therefore, we considered that the District Council’s proposed Appleton & Cumnor ward would best secure a good level of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We also considered that the District Council’s proposed Hinksey ward would better reflect the local communities than the proposals of the Labour Group. We also considered all the proposals affecting the parishes of Kennington, South Hinksey and Radley. We noted that there was little consensus locally as to the most appropriate ward pattern in this area. However, we noted that Kennington Parish Council supported the Labour Group’s proposal to join the parishes of Kennington and South Hinksey in a two-member ward. In view of this level of local support we agreed that these proposals would provide for the best balance between securing electoral equality and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities, and would avoid the need to ward the parish of Kennington. We also proposed that, as a consequence of our proposals in the north-east of the district, Radley ward be maintained on its current boundaries.

64 While we noted the Conservative Group’s proposals for the parish of St Helen Without and its contention that the Spey Road area of Wootton parish shares more affinity with the Shippon area of St Helen Without parish, we considered that the Dry Sandford area of the parish shares a greater community identity and better links with the parishes of Besselsleigh, Sunningwell and Wootton and that the District Council’s proposals would provide for the most appropriate warding in this area. We therefore endorsed the District Council’s proposed Appleton & Cumnor, Hinksey, Marcham and Sunningwell & Wootton wards.

65 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposed Appleton & Cumnor, Hinksey, Kennington & South Hinksey, Marcham, Radley and Sunningwell & Wootton wards but proposed that our proposed Hinksey ward be renamed North Hinksey & Wytham ward and that our proposed Marcham ward be renamed Marcham & Shippon ward.

66 The Conservative Group supported the District Council’s proposals in this area. Appleton with Eaton Parish Council objected to our proposed Appleton & Cumnor ward, arguing that it is different in character to Cumnor parish. It proposed a single-member Appleton & Farmoor ward comprising the parishes of Appleton with Eaton, Besselsleigh and Whytham, and Farmoor parish ward of Cumnor parish. Cumnor Parish Council supported our proposed Appleton & Cumnor ward. Kennington Parish Council supported our proposed Kennington & South Hinksey ward. Radley Parish Council supported our proposed Radley ward. Wootton Parish Council stated that our proposed Sunningwell & Wootton ward was “acceptable to the Council”. The Parish Council of Saint Helen Without objected to our proposals for its parish. It proposed that the parishes of Marcham, Saint Helen Without, Sunningwell and Wootton be combined in a three-member Marcham & Wootton ward, arguing that this would avoid the warding of Saint Helen Without parish. It proposed that should we endorse our proposed Marcham ward, it should be renamed Marcham & Shippon ward. Marcham Parish Council objected to our proposed Marcham ward, arguing that it shares no affinity with the parish of Saint Helen Without. It stated that it was essential that it be combined in a ward with Frilford parish, in order that the area around the A338 between the parishes be effectively represented. It stated further that it supported the

retention of the existing Marcham ward name. Frilford Parish Meeting objected to our proposals, arguing that it has close links with Marcham parish. Councillor Birch supported our proposed Sunningwell & Wootton ward.

67 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. Given the support we have received for our proposals we are content to confirm Kennington & South Hinksey and Radley wards as final. We are also content to confirm our proposed Hinksey ward as final, however we note the District Council's proposal to rename the ward North Hinksey & Wytham ward and have been convinced that this would better reflect the composite parts of our proposed ward. We have carefully considered Appleton with Eaton Parish Council's proposal but note that their proposed Appleton & Farmoor ward would have an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality, 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average in 2005. Therefore, given that our proposals have received some support, we are confirming our proposed Appleton & Cumnor ward as final.

68 In our proposed Marcham and Sunningwell & Wootton wards we have noted a general lack of consensus as to the best warding arrangements in the area, but that our proposals have received support from the District Council, the Conservative Group and Councillor Birch. We further note that Saint Helen Without Parish Council's proposals for the area would secure a good level of electoral equality but have not been convinced that these proposals secure local support. We have also carefully considered Marcham Parish Council's proposals. While we have sympathy with the views expressed by the parish council we note that their proposals would not secure an acceptable level of electoral equality in the area. Therefore, given the lack of consensus as to the best warding pattern in the area, and having noted that our proposals have received some support, we are confirming our proposed Marcham and Sunningwell & Wootton wards as final. However, we have considered the proposal put forward by the District Council and Saint Helen Without Parish Council and we are of the view that our proposed Marcham ward should be renamed Marcham & Shippon ward, as we consider that this would better reflect the composite parts of the proposed ward.

69 Under our final recommendations our proposed Appleton & Cumnor ward (comprising the parishes of Appleton-with-Eaton and Cumnor), Kennington & South Hinksey ward (comprising the parishes of the same name), Marcham & Shippon ward (comprising the parish of Marcham and our proposed Shippon parish ward of Saint Helen Without parish), North Hinksey & Wytham ward (comprising the parishes of the same name), Radley ward (comprising the parish of the same name) and Sunningwell & Wootton ward (comprising the parishes of Besselsleigh, Sunningwell and Wootton and our proposed Dry Sandford parish ward of Saint Helen Without parish) would have 1 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 12 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 13 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 9 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 10 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer in 2005).

Drayton, Harwell & Chilton, Hendred, Steventon, Sutton Courtenay and Upton & Blewbury wards

70 These six wards are situated in the south east of the district. Drayton ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. Harwell & Chilton ward comprises the parishes of the same names and is represented by two councillors. Hendred ward comprises the parishes of Ardington, East Hendred, Lockinge and West Hendred and is represented by a single councillor. Steventon ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. Sutton Courtenay ward comprises the parishes of Appleford, Milton and Sutton Courtenay and is represented by two councillors. Upton & Blewbury ward comprises the parishes of Blewbury and Upton and is

represented by a single councillor. The wards of Drayton, Harwell & Chilton, Hendred, Steventon, Sutton Courtenay and Upton & Blewbury have, respectively, 6 per cent more, 26 per cent fewer, 11 per cent fewer, 30 per cent fewer, 17 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (6 per cent more, 14 per cent fewer, 14 per cent fewer, 32 per cent fewer, 17 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer in 2005).

71 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the current Drayton ward be maintained on its existing boundaries as a single-member ward. It proposed that the current single-member Upton & Blewbury ward be maintained on its current boundaries but be renamed Blewbury ward. It also proposed that the parishes of Appleford and Sutton Courtenay be combined to form a single-member Sutton Courtenay ward. It proposed that the Milton Village area of Milton parish be placed in a ward with the parishes of Chilton and Harwell to form a two-member Harwell ward, while the Milton Heights area would be combined with the parishes of Ardington, East Hendred, Lockinge, Steventon and West Hendred to form a two-member Hendreds ward. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals in the area. The Labour Group supported the District Council's proposals for Blewbury and Drayton wards but proposed that Blewbury ward be named Blewbury & Upton ward. However, it proposed that the parishes of Chilton, East Hendred, Steventon and West Hendred be combined to form a two-member Hendreds, Chilton & Steventon ward, that the parishes of Appleford, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and part of Harwell be combined to form a two-member Sutton Courtenay, Appleford & Milton ward, and that the village area of Harwell form a single-member ward. It opposed the Council's proposal to divide the parish of Milton along the A34. Drayton Parish Council supported the Council's proposal to retain the existing single-member Drayton ward. Appleford-on-Thames Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to combine the parish with Sutton Courtenay parish in a ward, represented by a single councillor, which was also supported by a local resident. Harwell Parish Council proposed that Milton be added to the current Harwell & Chilton ward to form a revised two-member ward.

72 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. Given the degree of local support shown for the District Council's proposals we proposed adopting them in this area as part of our draft recommendations, as we considered that this would best reflect local communities. We were content that Drayton ward be maintained on its current boundaries. Given the constraints of the district boundary, we were also content that Upton & Blewbury ward be maintained on its current boundaries and supported the District Council's proposal that it be renamed Blewbury ward. We noted that the District Council's proposed Sutton Courtenay ward would vary from the district average by more than 15 per cent by 2005 but given the constraints of the district boundary in this area we accepted the District Council's argument that "special circumstances prevail" and were therefore content to endorse the District Council's proposed Sutton Courtenay ward as part of our draft recommendations. We were content to endorse the District Council's proposed Harwell and Hendreds wards as we considered that they secured a good level of electoral equality while better reflecting local communities. We also considered the Labour Group's proposals which secured a comparable level of electoral equality, but noted that they had received little support locally and would result in the rural parishes of Ardington and Lockinge being combined with the town of Wantage, which in our opinion would not provide for the best reflection of local community identity.

73 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposed Blewbury, Drayton, Harwell, Hendreds and Sutton Courtenay wards but proposed that our proposed Blewbury ward be renamed Blewbury & Upton ward and that our proposed Sutton Courtenay ward be renamed Sutton Courtenay & Appleford ward. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals in this area.

74 Appleford-on-Thames Parish Council supported our proposed Sutton Courtenay ward. Blewbury Parish Council supported our proposed Blewbury ward but proposed that it be renamed Blewbury & Upton ward. The parish councils of Chilton and Harwell supported our proposed Harwell ward.

75 Ardington & Lockinge Parish Council objected to our proposed Hendreds ward, stating that it would prefer that the existing Hendred ward be maintained. However, it stated that if change had to occur it preferred that the AERE area of Chilton Parish be combined with the existing Hendred ward. Milton Parish Council objected to our proposals for the parish. It stated that its preferred option would be that the existing arrangements be maintained but proposed as an alternative that the parishes of Chilton, Harwell, Milton and Steventon be combined to form a three-member ward and that the existing Hendred ward be maintained. They argued that this would keep Milton parish together as a “cohesive community” and that retaining the current Hendred ward was necessary due to their “special relationship as Estate Villages”. Steventon Parish Council objected to our proposals for the parish and proposed that Steventon parish be combined with the Milton Heights area of Milton and that the current Hendred ward be maintained. As a second choice they supported Milton Parish Council’s proposals. West Hendred Parish Council objected to our proposals in the area and proposed that the existing arrangements be maintained.

76 A local resident objected to our proposals and proposed that the parish of Steventon be combined with the Milton Village and Milton Heights area of Milton Parish to form a single-member ward while the current Hendred ward be combined with part of Rowstock to form a single-member ward, with the possible addition of a small number of electors from the Milton Hill area of Milton Parish. He proposed further that Harwell parish become a single-member ward or be combined with Chilton parish in a two-member ward, arguing that there would be considerable growth in the area. He argued further that since the area was split in 1975 by the building of the A34, a “cohesive Milton community now exists” and that the Downland Villages should be treated as a special case. East Hendred Parish Council supported the local resident’s proposals for the area, arguing that “Steventon is inclined towards Abingdon and its associations and the Downland villages towards Wantage”. County Councillor MacKenzie also supported the proposals of the local resident, arguing that Milton parish has no ties with either Harwell parish or the Downland villages. Another local resident objected to our proposals for Milton parish and proposed that the current arrangements be maintained. However, he also proposed, as an alternative, that the parishes of Chilton, Harwell, Milton and Steventon be combined in a three-member ward while the current Hendred ward be maintained.

77 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during the consultation period. Given the support for our proposed Drayton, Blewbury and Sutton Courtenay wards we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. However, we note the District Council and Blewbury Parish Council’s proposal to rename Blewbury ward as Blewbury & Upton ward and the District Council’s proposal that our proposed Sutton Courtenay ward be renamed Sutton Courtenay & Appleford ward and have been convinced that these name changes would better reflect the composite parts of our proposed wards.

78 We have also carefully considered the proposals that the current Hendred ward be maintained on its current boundaries but note that this would result in an unacceptable level of electoral inequality, (14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average in 2005). We have considered Ardington & Lockinge Parish Council’s proposal that the AERE area of Chilton parish be combined with the current Hendred ward, but have not been convinced that this would better reflect community identity in the area than our draft recommendations. We have also carefully considered the proposals of the local resident which received support from East Hendred Parish Council and County Councillor

MacKenzie and concluded that although the proposals would achieve an excellent level of electoral equality in the Downland villages, they would not secure an acceptable level of electoral equality in the remainder of the area. Indeed, the proposals for Steventon and Milton parishes would result in the ward being under-represented by 13 per cent by 2005, while a ward comprising Chilton and Harwell parishes would be over-represented by 14 per cent by 2005. We have also noted that Chilton and Harwell Parish Councils supported our proposals for a two-member Harwell ward. Therefore, given the high levels of electoral imbalance that would occur as a result of the alternative proposals we have received during the consultation period, we remain of the view that our proposed Harwell and Hendreds wards would secure a good level of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are therefore content to confirm our proposed Harwell and Hendreds wards as final.

79 Under our final recommendations our proposed Drayton ward (comprising the parish of the same name), Blewbury & Upton ward (comprising the parishes of Blewbury and Upton), Sutton Courtenay & Appleford ward (comprising the parishes of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford-on-Thames), Harwell ward (comprising the parishes of Chilton and Harwell and our proposed Village parish ward of Milton parish) and Hendreds ward (comprising the parishes of Ardington, East Hendred, Lockinge, Steventon and West Hendred, and our proposed Heights parish ward of Milton parish) would have 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 16 per cent more, 14 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (6 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer, 15 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 10 per cent fewer in 2005).

Greendown, Grove, Icknield and Segsbury wards

80 These four wards are situated in the south of the district. Greendown ward comprises the parishes of Childrey, East Challow, Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis and West Challow and is represented by a single councillor. Grove ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by three councillors. Icknield ward comprises Icknield parish ward of Wantage Town and is represented by two councillors. Segsbury ward comprises Segsbury parish ward of Wantage Town and is represented by two councillors. The wards of Greendown, Grove, Icknield and Segsbury have 17 per cent more, 14 per cent more, 16 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent more, 13 per cent more, 15 per cent more and 6 per cent more in 2005).

81 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the current Greendown ward be maintained with the exception of the south-eastern part of East Challow parish which it argued “abuts the town of Wantage” and should be included in a Wantage ward. It proposed that this revised ward be renamed Challows ward. In Wantage it proposed that the town be split between two new wards, Wantage North and Wantage South. It proposed that the small area of urban overspill in the south-east of East Challow parish be included within Wantage South ward and that the area of urban overspill to the south of Mably Way, within the parish of Grove, be combined with Wantage North ward. It proposed that the remainder of the current three-member Grove ward be maintained, with the exception of the area to the south of Mably Way, as detailed above. The Conservative Group supported the District Council’s proposed Challows ward and the proposal that the two areas of urban overspill in the parishes of East Challow and Grove be included in Wantage wards. However, it proposed that the town of Wantage be split into five single-member wards. It proposed that Grove ward be divided into three new single-member wards, excluding the area to be transferred to Wantage.

82 The Labour Group proposed five single-member wards for the town of Wantage which had some similarities to the Conservative Group’s scheme in the north and east of the town. However, it proposed that the parishes of Ardington and Lockinge be included in a single-member Icknield ward in the south-

east of the town. The Labour Group also proposed that the parish of Grove be divided into three new single-member wards, which were broadly similar to the Conservative Group's proposals. The Labour Group further proposed a single-member Challows ward comprising the remainder of East Challows ward and the parishes of West Challow, Childrey, Letcombe Bassett and Letcombe Regis. Wantage Constituency Conservative Association proposed an identical scheme to that put forward by the Conservative Group for the town of Wantage. Wantage Town Council supported the District Council's proposals. Grove Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals to include part of the parish in a Wantage ward and proposed that the parish be split into two two-member wards. East Challow Parish Council also objected to the District Council's proposals to divide it between two district wards.

83 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. In the Wantage area we noted that all three schemes proposed including the urban overspill in the south-east of East Challow parish and the south of Grove parish in Wantage wards, which was supported by Wantage Town Council, although it was opposed by the two parishes concerned. However, we were of the view that these two areas share greater links with the town of Wantage and concurred with the view that they should be included in a Wantage ward. We also considered the Labour Group's proposal to include the parishes of Lockinge and Ardington in a revised Icknield ward. However, we were of the view that this would not secure the best reflection of local communities in the area.

84 We were aware that there was little consensus as to the most appropriate ward pattern in Wantage town. Given that our proposals for district wards would impact on the Town Council electoral arrangements, we noted that the Town Council supported the District Council's proposals for one two-member and one three-member ward in the town rather than five single-member wards. We therefore proposed putting forward, for consultation purposes, a scheme based on this ward pattern. However, we were of the view that the Council's proposals would not provide for an easily identifiable boundary and would result in two areas which do not share any direct road links forming a northern ward. Therefore, we proposed creating two new wards using the Conservative Group's proposals as building blocks. We proposed merging its single-member Wayland and Segsbury wards in the north-west of the town to create a two-member Segsbury ward, with the remaining three single-member Alfreds, Icknield and Charlton wards creating a new three-member Charlton ward. We were of the view that this would provide for a better boundary while securing a comparable level of electoral equality and reflecting local communities.

85 In the Grove area we noted that there was limited agreement as to the most appropriate warding for the parish. We noted that Grove Town Council proposed that the parish be divided between two two-member wards, although it did not submit any detailed boundaries. We were aware, however, that under a 51-member council, the entire parish of Grove is entitled to 3.4 councillors both initially and in 2005, and as such, on its current boundary, the three-member Grove ward is slightly under-represented. However, with the transfer of the area to the south of Mably Way into a new Segsbury ward, the remainder of Grove ward is entitled to just over three councillors. Therefore, in order to secure the correct allocation of councillors, we proposed that this area be represented by three councillors. We considered the proposals to divide this area into three single-member wards, but were of the view that the Council's proposal for a revised three-member Grove ward would secure more identifiable boundaries and provide for a more cohesive ward with a better reflection of the local community. We therefore proposed adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

86 As a consequence of our proposals for Grove and Wantage we also proposed adopting the Council's proposed Challows ward, given that it commanded local support and would provide for identifiable boundaries and a better reflection of local communities.

87 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that the boundary between our proposed Grove and Wantage Segsbury wards be extended from Mably Way along Downsview Road. It stated that it accepted that there should be two wards for Wantage town but proposed that the boundary should run along the A417 "with a deviation taking the boundary line down the centre of Grove Street and Garston Lane". It argued that Wantage could not be divided in any standard way and that the A417 provided a "significant barrier". It argued further that it did not accept that its proposals were flawed because of a lack of road links, stating that there are several purpose-built cycleway and footway links. It proposed that these wards be named Wantage North and Wantage South wards.

88 The Conservative Group objected to our proposed Grove ward and proposed a two-member Grovelands ward and a single-member Church ward. It proposed that the boundary between these two wards run along the centre of Main Street. Its proposed Groveland and Church wards would have 10 per cent more and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average in 2005. The Conservative Group reiterated their preference for their Stage One proposals for five single-member wards within Wantage town but stated that if this was not considered acceptable then they were of the opinion that our proposed Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury wards were "far superior to that proposed in the latest District Council submission and should be retained".

89 Wantage Town Council proposed that the northern boundary in Wantage should run along Downsview Road, arguing that there was a prospect of future development here and that it would provide a more identifiable boundary. It proposed further that Wantage be split between two wards along the A417, proposing that the ward to the north of this road be named Wantage Charlton and that the ward to the south be named Wantage Segsbury. It argued that the A417 naturally separates the town between the northern and southern areas. Town Councillor Hannaby supported Wantage Town Council's proposals. County Councillor Moley proposed that Wantage town be divided along the A417 and that the natural boundary of the town was Downsview Road. He supported our proposal that the urban overflows in East Challow and Grove be included within our proposed Wantage wards. Councillors Langton and Nunn-Price reiterated their preference for five single-member wards within the town but stated that if this was not practicable then our draft proposals "would combine good representation for the people of the town with geographical logic". They also suggested that Reeds Close on Mill Street should be included within our proposed Wantage Charlton ward and that the boundary between our proposed Wantage Segsbury ward and Grove parish should run along Downsview Road.

90 Grove Parish Council objected to our proposals for the Mably Way area of Grove parish. East Challow Parish Council objected to our proposals to include part of the parish within our proposed Wantage Segsbury ward, specifically objecting to our proposal to include King Alfreds Sports & Community College, arguing that any future development of the school site would greatly affect the parish. Childrey Parish Council objected to our proposed Challows ward name and proposed that the current ward name be maintained. They also suggested the names Downland or Letcombes as alternatives. Councillor Crawford objected to our proposal that Kings Alfreds School be included within our proposed Wantage Segsbury ward and proposed that Challows ward be renamed Greendown ward.

91 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We have not been convinced that, given the Town Council's preference for the town to be divided between one two-member ward and one three-member ward, five single-member wards would best reflect the statutory criteria in the area. Having visited the area we remain unconvinced that the statutory criteria would best be met by dividing Wantage between two wards along the A417, and have not been sufficiently convinced that the road forms a significant barrier and that we should therefore move away from our draft recommendations in this area. We also remain of the view that these proposals would combine two areas in a ward to the north of the A417 with no direct road links.

92 We have also considered the proposal that the northern district ward boundary between Grove and Wantage Segsbury wards should run along Downsview Road but have not been convinced by the argumentation received at Stage Three, particularly regarding potential future development that may occur in the area. We therefore remain of the view that our proposals, while securing a good level of electoral equality, would better reflect local community in the area and unite areas with more direct links than the alternative proposals we have received. However, we note the proposal of Councillors Langton and Nunn-Price that Reeds Close be transferred from our proposed Wantage Segsbury ward to our proposed Wantage Charlton ward and have been persuaded that the properties on the Close look towards our proposed Wantage Charlton ward. We therefore propose that the boundary between the two wards run to the north of the properties on Reeds Close.

93 We have carefully considered the objections to our proposals for Grove parish. However, we remain of the view that the Mably Way area forms an area of urban overspill of Wantage town. We also note that by transferring this area to our proposed Wantage Segsbury ward, Grove parish, as a whole, has the correct allocation of three councillors. We have also considered the Conservative Group's proposals for the parish but note Grove Parish Council's objections to further sub division in the parish. Therefore, we are content to confirm our proposed Grove ward as final.

94 We have also carefully considered the objections to our proposed Challows ward. We note East Challow Parish Council's objections to our proposals for their parish but remain of the view that our proposed South East parish ward of East Challow forms an area of urban overspill from Wantage town. We have also carefully considered the proposal that the boundary between our proposed Challows and Wantage Segsbury wards run to the east of King Alfreds School. However, we have not been convinced that this proposal would provide for a more identifiable boundary in the area. We have carefully considered the proposal of Childrey Parish Council and Councillor Crawford that our proposed Challows ward be renamed and are content that the current Greendown ward name be retained for our proposed ward, which we consider to be more representative of the area as a whole.

95 Under our final recommendations our proposed Greendown ward (comprising the parishes of Childrey, Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis and West Challow, and our proposed East Challow North parish ward of East Challow parish), Grove ward (comprising the proposed Grove North parish ward of Grove parish), Wantage Charlton (comprising the proposed Wantage Charlton parish ward of Wantage parish) and Wantage Segsbury ward (comprising the proposed Wantage Segsbury parish ward of Wantage parish) would have 5 per cent more, 8 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (2 per cent more, 7 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer in 2005).

Abingdon town (five wards)

96 The town of Abingdon comprises five wards. Abbey ward is represented by four councillors, Caldecott ward by three councillors, Fitzharris ward by two councillors, Northcourt ward by two councillors and Ock ward by one councillor. The wards currently have 22 per cent more, 18 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 28 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (27 per cent more, 17 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 23 per cent more and 7 per cent more in 2005).

97 At Stage One the District Council proposed that Abingdon be represented by 14 councillors overall, representing four two-member wards and two three-member wards. Its proposed three-member Abbey/Barton ward comprised part of the current Northcourt ward to the east of Oxford Road and the majority of the current Abbey ward with the exception of the area to the north-east of Cherwell Close/Loddon Close, which it proposed should form a new two-member Peachcroft ward, with the exception of the areas to the west of Bridge Street and Stratton Way. Its proposed two-member Northcourt ward comprised the remainder of Northcourt ward to the west of Oxford Road, with the exception of Hillview Road and Lammas Close. Its proposed two-member Fitzharris ward comprised the current Fitzharris ward and Hillview Road and Lammas Close from the current Northcourt ward. Its proposed two-member Ock ward comprised the current Ock ward, that part of the current Abbey ward to the west of Stratton Way and Winsmore Lane and that part of Caldecott ward to the west of Drayton Road. Its proposed three-member South ward comprised the current Caldecott ward to the east of Drayton Road and that part of the current Abbey ward between Bridge Street and Winsmore Lane.

98 The Conservative Group proposed a uniform pattern of seven two-member wards, further suggesting that each of these wards form revised Town Council wards to be represented by three town councillors. Its proposed Caldecott ward comprised the current Caldecott ward to the east of Drayton Road, and south of and including Saxton Road. Its proposed Ock ward comprised the remainder of Caldecott ward, that part of the current Ock ward to the south of Marcham Road and Ock Street, and that part of the current Abbey ward to the west of Winsmore Lane. Its proposed Fitzharris ward comprised the remainder of the current Ock ward, part of the current Abbey ward to the west of Stratton Way and that part of the current Fitzharris ward to the west of Wootton Road and south of Boxhill Walk. Its proposed Northcourt ward comprised that part of the current Fitzharris ward to the east of Wootton Road and north of Northcourt Road, and that part of the current Northcourt ward to the north of Sellwood Road and to the west of Oxford Road. Its proposed Peachcroft ward comprised that part of Northcourt ward to the east of Oxford Road and those parts of the current Abbey ward to the north of Norman Avenue, Galley Field, Kennet Road, St Peter's Road and Radley Road. Its proposed Barton ward comprised the area of Abbey ward to the south of this area and to the east of St John's Road, Sherwood Avenue and Curtis Avenue. Its proposed Abbey ward comprised the remaining part of Abbey ward, that part of the current Fitzharris ward to the east of Wootton Road and south of Northcourt Road, and to the south of and including Sellwood Road. The Labour Group also proposed that Abingdon should be represented by 14 councillors overall. Abingdon Town Council proposed that the number of district councillors representing the town be increased from 12 to 14.

99 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that there was only limited agreement as to the most appropriate warding for Abingdon. We noted that the District Council and Abingdon Town Council proposed a mixture of two- and three-member wards, that the Conservatives proposed a pattern of all two-member wards whereas the Labour Group proposed a mix of one- and two-member wards. We considered all the different configurations of wards, and were of the view that we should adopt the Conservatives' proposals in the south and west of the town as they

would provide more identifiable boundaries while also securing excellent electoral equality and reflecting local communities. We therefore proposed adopting the Conservative Group's proposed two-member Caldecott, Fitzharris and Ock wards, subject to a slight boundary amendment to provide a more identifiable boundary between the two wards of Caldecott and Ock. We proposed that the boundary between Caldecott and Ock wards should run north along Drayton Road as far as Saxton Road, then eastward behind the properties on the northern side of Saxton Road as far as Blacknall Road. We then proposed that the boundary run along the centre of Saxton Road to the district boundary.

100 We also proposed adopting the Conservative Group's proposed Northcourt ward. However, we proposed a minor boundary amendment to its proposed ward and we also proposed that it be renamed Abingdon Wildmoor ward. We proposed that the southern boundary run along Northcourt Road as far as Shelley Road. We then proposed that the boundary run behind the properties on Shelley Road and Northcourt Road as far as Oxford Road where the boundary should run north along the centre of the road. In the north-east of the town we proposed endorsing the District Council's proposed two-member Peachcroft ward as we were of the view that it secured good electoral equality and a more identifiable boundary than the Conservative Group's proposal. However, we proposed two boundary amendments in order to slightly better reflect community identity in the area. We proposed that the boundary run south along the brook behind Rainbow Way and then behind the properties on Appleford Drive and Chilton Close, Cherwell Close and then Radley Road before following the brook as far as the town boundary. We considered that our proposed Abingdon Wildmoor and Abingdon Peachcroft wards would secure a good level of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria.

101 In the centre of the town we put forward our own proposals in order to secure more identifiable boundaries while also reflecting local communities and securing good electoral equality. We proposed a new Abingdon Northcourt ward in the centre of the town. We proposed that it comprise that area of the current Fitzharris ward to the east of Wootton Road, south of Northcourt Road and north of Boxhill Walk. We proposed that its northern boundary run behind the properties of Shelley Close and Northcourt Road to the east of Shelley Close, and that it also include that part of the current Northcourt ward to the east of Oxford Road and that part of the current Abbey ward between Oxford Road and the rear of the properties on Rainbow Way. We proposed that its south-eastern boundary run along the rear of the properties on Chilton Close and Cherwell Close and that its southern boundary run along the centre of Radley Road as far as St John's Road. We proposed that the boundary run to the rear of the properties on the western side of St John's Road and those on the southern side of Boxhill Road. We considered that this provided for strong ward boundaries and would secure a good level of electoral equality without having a detrimental effect on community identity.

102 We also proposed a new Abingdon Abbey ward which would comprise the area to the south of Radley Road as far as the boundary along the brook which it shares with our proposed Abingdon Peachcroft ward. We also proposed that the major part of the town centre area be included in the ward. We considered that our proposal kept together similar areas of housing, secured strong boundaries and kept the town centre area predominantly within one ward.

103 At Stage Three the District Council proposed a number of boundary modifications to our proposed wards in the town. It proposed that the boundary between our proposed Abingdon Caldecott and Abingdon Ock wards run to the north of Caldecott County Junior and First Schools, Blacknall Road and the playing fields and then south to the rear of the properties on Wharf Close and John Morris Road. It argued that there is a strong community around Saxon Road. It proposed that the boundary between our proposed Abingdon Fitzharris and Abingdon Ock wards run to the rear of the properties on the southern side of Ock Street. It argued that Ock Street has a "strong sense of community" and

noted the ancient local customs of the election of a Mayor of Ock Street and the annual Michaelmas Fair. It proposed that Abingdon Ock ward be renamed Abingdon Ock Meadow ward. It suggested that in order to increase the size of its proposed Ock Meadow ward the properties to the west of Bride Street and to the south of High Street be transferred from our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward. It proposed that the southern area of our proposed Abingdon Peachcroft ward, to the south of Radley Road and to the west of Audlett Drive, be transferred to our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward, arguing that the area has nothing in common with our Abingdon Peachcroft ward. It also proposed that the Abbott Road area to the north-west of the Catholic Church of Our Lady and St Edmund be transferred from our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward to our proposed Abingdon Northcourt ward, arguing that the area has more in common with the properties to its north. It proposed transferring the electors on Northcourt Road in our proposed Wildmoor ward to our proposed Northcourt Road, thus uniting all the properties in one ward. It proposed that Abingdon Abbey ward be renamed Abingdon Abbey/Barton. It also proposed that the Mattock Way estate be transferred from our proposed Abingdon Northcourt ward to our proposed Abingdon Peachcroft ward, arguing that it is accessed from the same road as the Peachcroft Road estate with which it shares the same residents association. It also proposed that our proposed Abingdon Wildmoor ward be renamed Abingdon Dunmore ward.

104 The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposed boundary amendment between our proposed Abingdon Northcourt and Abingdon Wildmoor wards but objected to the District Council's proposals for the remaining five wards, stating that "we feel that the boundaries proposed by the Local Government Commission for England should remain unchanged". They argued that they had some sympathy with the proposals in and around Saxon Road but that "this change necessitates splitting the town centre in order to maintain reasonable numbers of electors". They also opposed the District Council's proposals for boundary amendments between our proposed Abingdon Fitzharris and Abingdon Ock wards, arguing that a boundary along the centre of Ock Street was "absolutely clear".

105 Abingdon Town Council proposed identical boundary amendments to those of the District Council with the exception of its proposals for Abingdon Fitzharris and Abingdon Ock wards. It proposed that all the properties to the south of Ock Street, and to the west of Conduit Road in the current Ock ward be included within our proposed Abingdon Fitzharris ward. It argued that although this proposal would result in an electoral variance of 10 per cent the river Ock is a "strong natural boundary" and that our proposals "artificially divide a community area". It also proposed that our proposed Abingdon Wildmoor ward be renamed Abingdon Dunmore ward, that Abingdon Fitzharris ward be renamed Abingdon Fitzharrys, arguing that Fitzharris is a corruption of the local name Fitzharrys, and that our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward be renamed Abingdon Abbey Barton ward.

106 Councillor Bizzell provided further argumentation for the District Council's proposals. He argued that our proposed Abingdon Caldecott and Abingdon Ock wards would create a "socio-economic mix" which would make it more difficult to attract funding for the area. He also argued that Ock Street is an ancient community and that there is a strong sense of community. A local resident proposed that the area around Saxton Road be united within our proposed Caldecott ward and that the Mattock Way estate be transferred from our proposed Northcourt ward to our proposed Peachcroft ward. He also argued that both sides of Ock Street would be "much better looked after by one councillor".

107 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during the consultation period. We have carefully considered the proposals received regarding our proposals for the Saxton Road area of our proposed Abingdon Caldecott and Abingdon Ock wards. However, we note that these proposals would divide the town centre between two wards, as the proposals necessitate a transfer of electors between our proposed Abingdon Abbey and Abingdon Caldecott wards in order to

secure an acceptable level of electoral equality. While we acknowledge that our proposals for the Saxton Road area of our proposed Abingdon Caldecott ward are not ideal, we remain of the view that dividing the town centre between two wards would be more detrimental to community identity in the area than the proposals we put forward as part of our draft recommendations. Therefore, we are content to confirm our proposed Abingdon Caldecott ward as final. We have also considered all the proposals we have received for the Ock Street area and note that the District Council's proposals would isolate Tower Close and Meadowside from the remainder of Abingdon Ock ward. We also note that the proposals of Abingdon Town Council and the local resident would not secure a comparable level of electoral equality to those which were secured in our draft recommendations. However, we note the comments we have received with regard to the Ock Street area and have been convinced that both sides of Ock Street share community ties. Therefore, as we do not consider that the worsened levels of electoral equality achieved by uniting both sides of the street in our proposed Abingdon Fitzharris ward are acceptable, we propose that the properties on the northern side of Ock Street and Marcham Road be transferred to our proposed Ock ward. We consider that this would better reflect community identity in the Ock Street area, while securing comparable levels of electoral equality in our proposed Abingdon Ock and Abingdon Fitzharris wards to that secured in our draft recommendations.

108 We have also carefully considered the proposals for the Abbott Road area of our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward. However, we have not been convinced that these alternative proposals for this area would better reflect community identity in the area than our draft proposals. We have been convinced that community identity in the area would be better served by uniting both sides of Northcourt Road within our proposed Abingdon Northcourt ward, but we propose modifying the District Council and Abingdon Town Council's proposals in order to secure a more easily identifiable boundary. We propose that the boundary between our proposed Abingdon Northcourt and Abingdon Wildmoor wards run to the rear of Abingdon College, Fitzharrys School and Dunmore County Junior and Infant Schools. In the north of our proposed Northcourt ward we have carefully considered the proposal to transfer the Mattock Way estate to our proposed Peachcroft ward. However, we note that as we have decided not to transfer electors from our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward to our proposed Abingdon Northcourt ward, the transfer of electors from the Mattock Way estate would result in Northcourt ward having 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average in 2005. We have also not been convinced that community identity would be better reflected by the transfer of these electors. Similarly we have not been convinced that the proposal to transfer those electors in the south of our proposed Abingdon Peachcroft ward to our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward would better reflect community identity in the area. We remain of the view that the properties to the east of Audlett Drive share better links with our proposed Abingdon Peachcroft ward than with our proposed Abingdon Abbey ward.

109 We are content to endorse the District Council's proposals that our proposed Abingdon Ock ward be renamed Abingdon Ock Meadow, and that our proposed Abingdon Wildmoor ward be renamed Abingdon Dunmore ward. We note that although we have included Dunmore County Junior and Infant School within our proposed Abingdon Northcourt ward in order to provide a more identifiable boundary, our proposed Dunmore ward is bounded by Dunmore Road. We are also content to adopt the District Council's proposal that Abingdon Abbey ward be renamed Abingdon Abbey/Barton, subject to it being amended to Abingdon Abbey & Barton ward. We have also considered Abingdon Town Council's proposal that Abingdon Fitzharris ward be renamed Abingdon Fitzharrys ward. However, we have not been convinced that this proposal secures widespread support.

110 Under our final recommendations our proposed Abingdon Abbey & Barton, Abingdon Caldecott, Abingdon Dunmore, Abingdon Fitzharris, Abingdon Northcourt, Abingdon Ock Meadow and

Abingdon Peachcroft would have equal to, 5 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and equal to the district average number of electors per councillor currently (6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, equal to, 2 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer in 2005).

Electoral Cycle

111 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

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

Conclusions

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

- in Abingdon we propose that there should be a boundary amendments between Abingdon Fitzharris and Abingdon Ock Meadow wards, and between Abingdon Dunmore and Abingdon Northcourt wards;
- there should be a minor boundary realignment between Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury ward;
- the proposed Abingdon Abbey ward should be renamed Abingdon Abbey & Barton ward;
- the proposed Abingdon Ock ward should be renamed Abingdon Ock Meadow ward;
- the proposed Abingdon Wildmoor ward should be renamed Abingdon Dunmore ward;
- the proposed Blewbury ward should be renamed Blewbury & Upton ward;
- the proposed Uffington ward should be renamed Craven ward;
- the proposed Faringdon ward should be renamed Faringdon & The Coxwells ward;
- the proposed Challows ward should be renamed Greendown ward;
- the proposed Marcham ward should be renamed Marcham & Shippon ward;
- the proposed Hinksey ward should be renamed North Hinksey & Wytham ward;
- the proposed Sutton Courtenay ward should be renamed Sutton Courtenay & Appleford ward.

114 We conclude that, in the Vale of White Horse:

- a council of 51 members should be retained;
- there should be 29 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	51	51	51	51
Number of wards	31	29	31	29
Average number of electors per councillor	1,702	1,702	1,767	1,767
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	21	4	20	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	11	0	11	0

116 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 21 to four, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with only one ward, Sutton Courtenay & Appleford, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 15 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Vale of White Horse District Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 29 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

117 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 parishes of Abingdon, East Challow, Grove, Longworth, Milton, St Helen Without and Wantage to reflect the proposed district wards.

118 Abingdon Town Council is currently served by 18 councillors representing seven wards: Abbey, Barton, Caldecott East, Caldecott West, Fitzharris, Northcourt and Ock. At Stage One Abingdon Town Council proposed that the number of town councillors be increased from 18 to 20. It proposed that they be distributed amongst seven wards but did not provide detailed boundaries. The Conservative Group proposed increasing the number of town councillors to 21, suggesting that the revised town council wards should reflect its proposed district council wards, with each ward being represented by three town councillors.

119 In our draft recommendations for district warding in Abingdon town, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the proposed district wards within the town. We also proposed increasing the number of town councillors representing the town from 18 to 21, as proposed by the Conservative Group, with each ward being represented by three councillors. We were of the view that this would facilitate a more equal distribution of representation at town council level.

120 In response to our consultation report, Abingdon Town Council stated that as our proposals resulted in seven “approximately evenly sized wards” it accepted that it was logical to increase the number of councillors representing the town from 18 to 21.

121 We are proposing that the district ward boundary between Fitzharris and Ock Meadow wards, and Dunmore and Northcourt wards be amended. We therefore propose that the parish ward boundaries be amended accordingly. We confirm these and the remainder of our draft recommendations as final.

Final Recommendation

Abingdon Town Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Abbey & Barton (returning three councillors), Caldecott (returning three councillors), Dunmore (returning three councillors), Fitzharris (returning three councillors), Northcourt (returning three councillors), Ock Meadow (returning three councillors) and Peachcroft (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

122 The parish of East Challow is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group all proposed that the south-eastern part of the parish, containing urban overspill from Wantage, should be warded with part of Wantage. However, East Challow Parish Council opposed this proposal. As detailed earlier, we agreed that this area should be warded with Wantage for district council purposes. Therefore, in order to reflect

our draft recommendations, we proposed that East Challow parish should comprise two parish wards: East Challow North (represented by five councillors) and South East (represented by two councillors).

123 In response to our consultation report, East Challow Parish Council objected to our proposals to ward the parish.

124 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 East Challow parish as final.

Final Recommendation

East Challow Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of East Challow parish which lies within the proposed Greendown district ward should be named East Challow North parish ward and be represented by five councillors. That part of East Challow parish which lies within the proposed Wantage Segsbury district ward should be named South East parish ward and be represented by two councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

125 The parish of Grove is currently served by 16 councillors representing two parish wards, East and West, each represented by eight councillors. At Stage One, the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group all proposed that the southern part of the parish, to the south of Mably Way, containing urban overspill from Wantage, should be warded with Wantage for district council purposes. However, Grove Parish Council opposed the proposal that this part of the parish be warded with Wantage. As detailed earlier, we agreed that the area to the south of Mably Way should be warded with Wantage for district council purposes. Therefore, in order to reflect our draft recommendations, we proposed that Grove parish should comprise two parish wards: Mably parish ward, represented by one councillor and Grove North parish ward, represented by 15 councillors.

126 In response to our consultation report, Grove Parish Council stated that it had “long requested that our parish be un-warded” and objected to our proposed Mably parish ward.

127 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 Grove parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Grove Parish Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of Grove parish which lies within the proposed Wantage Segsbury district ward should be named Mably parish ward and be represented by one councillor. That part of Grove parish which lies within the proposed Grove district ward should be named Grove North parish ward and be represented by 15 councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

128 The parish of Longworth is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. As detailed earlier, we proposed adopting the Council's proposals in this area for district council purposes. Therefore, in order to reflect our draft recommendations, we proposed that Longworth parish should be divided into two parish wards: North parish ward (represented by four councillors) and South parish ward (represented by three councillors).

129 In response to our consultation report, Longworth Parish Council objected to our proposal to divide the parish for district warding purposes. We note that our proposals have had a consequential effect on the parishing arrangements and that it has necessitated the parish being divided between two parish wards.

130 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 Longworth parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Longworth Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of Longworth parish which lies within the proposed Longworth district ward should be named North parish ward and be represented by four councillors. That part of Longworth parish which lies within the proposed Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor district ward should be named South parish ward and be represented by three councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

131 The parish of Milton is currently served by seven parish councillors and is not warded. As detailed earlier, we proposed adopting the Council's proposals in this area for district council purposes. Therefore, in order to reflect our draft recommendations, we proposed that Milton parish should be divided into two parish wards: Heights parish ward (represented by three councillors) and Village parish ward (represented by four councillors).

132 In response to our consultation report, Milton Parish Council objected to our proposal to divide the parish between two parish wards.

133 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 Milton parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Milton Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of Milton parish which lies within the proposed Harwell district ward should be named Village parish ward and be represented by four councillors. That part of Milton parish which lies within the proposed Hendreds district ward should be named Heights parish ward and be represented by three councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A.

134 The parish of St Helen Without is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. As detailed earlier, we proposed adopting the Council's proposals in this area for district council purposes. Therefore, in order to reflect our draft recommendations, we proposed that St Helen Without parish should be divided into two parish wards: Dry Sandford parish ward (represented by five councillors) and Shippon parish ward (represented by five councillors).

135 In response to our consultation report, Saint Helen Without Parish Council objected to our proposal to divide the parish for district warding purposes. We note that our proposals have had a consequential effect on the parishing arrangements and that it necessitated the parish being divided between two parish wards.

136 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 Saint Helen Without parish as final.

Final Recommendation

St Helen Without Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of St Helen Without parish which lies within the proposed Sunningwell & Wootton district ward should be named Dry Sandford parish ward and be represented by five councillors. That part of St Helen Without parish which lies within the proposed Marcham & Shippon district ward should be named Shippon parish ward and be represented by five councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

137 Wantage Town Council is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: Icknield and Segsbury, which are conterminous with the current district wards of the same name. In our draft recommendations we proposed that Wantage should be divided between the two district wards of Wantage Segsbury and Wantage Charlton. Therefore, in order to reflect our proposed district wards in this area, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards, creating a Wantage Charlton ward (represented by 10 councillors) and a Wantage Segsbury ward (represented by six councillors).

138 In response to our consultation report, Wantage Town Council objected to our proposed district ward boundaries in the town, proposing that the boundary between our proposed wards run along the A417.

139 We are proposing that the district ward boundary between Wantage Charlton and Wantage Segsbury wards be slightly amended. We therefore propose that the parish ward boundaries be amended accordingly. We confirm these and the remainder of our draft recommendations as final.

Final Recommendation

Wantage Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Wantage Charlton (returning 10 councillors) and Wantage Segsbury (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

140 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 the Vale of White Horse

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

142 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.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for the Vale of White Horse: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Vale of White Horse 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 A5 and the large map at the back of this report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding for the Wantage area.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Longworth parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of St Helen Without parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Milton parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Abingdon.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for the Vale of White Horse: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding for the Wantage area

Map A3 : Proposed warding of Longworth parish

Map A4 : Proposed warding of St Helen Without parish

Map A5 : Proposed warding of Milton parish