

# Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council

Electoral review

March 2013

### **Translations and other formats**

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## Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Vale of White Horse to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in March 2012.

This review was conducted in four stages:

<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
27 March 2012	Consultation on council size
19 June 2012	Information gathering – invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
29 August 2012	LGBCE’s analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
13 November 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
8 January 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

## Draft recommendations

We proposed a council size of 38 members, comprising a pattern of 10 single-member, 11 two-member and two three-member wards. The recommendations were broadly based on a combination of Vale of White Horse District Council’s submission and submissions received from parish councils and local residents, amended to reflect our statutory criteria.

Our draft recommendations for Vale of White Horse sought to reflect the evidence of community identities received while ensuring good electoral equality and providing for effective and convenient local government.

## Submissions received

During the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received 97 submissions, including comments covering the majority of the district from Vale of White Horse District Council (‘the Council’). We also received 12 submissions from county, district and parish councillors, 17 from parish councils, five from local organisations and 63 from members of the public. All submissions can be viewed on our website:

[www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Analysis and final recommendations

### Electorate figures

Vale of White Horse District Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of 4.2% over this period. The majority of growth in the electorate is focused in the south and south-east of the district. Elsewhere in the district, growth is expected to be reasonably modest. We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our final recommendations.

### General analysis

Throughout the review process, the primary consideration has been to achieve good electoral equality, while seeking to reflect community identities and securing effective and convenient local government. Having considered the submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our final recommendations take account of submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations. As a result, we have proposed amendments to ward boundaries in Drayton and Sutton Courtenay, Faringdon, North Hinksey, Wantage and Watchfield and Shrivenham.

Our final recommendations for Vale of White Horse are that the Council should have 38 members, with 10 single member wards and 14 two-member wards. Only one of the wards would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the district by 2018.

### What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament and will be made subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. The Order will provide for new electoral arrangements which will come into force at the next elections for Vale of White Horse District Council, in 2015.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

**You can also view our final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council on our interactive maps at [consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk)**

# 1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following a request from Vale of White Horse District Council.

2 The submission received from Vale of White Horse District Council during the initial stage of consultation of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council*, which were published on 13 November 2012. We then undertook a further period of consultation which ended on 7 January 2013.

## What is an electoral review?

3 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure ‘electoral equality’, which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

4 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation<sup>1</sup> and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Why are we conducting a review in Vale of White Horse?

5 We decided to conduct this review following a request from Vale of White Horse District Council, primarily to address council size. Currently, six out of 29 wards (21%) have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average.

## How will our recommendations affect you?

6 Our recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also determine which electoral ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish ward you vote in. Your electoral ward name may change, as may the names of parish wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change as a result of our recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

7 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)  
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)  
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL  
Sir Tony Redmond  
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE  
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill  
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

## 2 Analysis and final recommendations

8 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse.

9 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009<sup>2</sup> with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
  - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
  - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

10 Legislation also requires that our recommendations are not based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but reflect estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the end of the review. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward.

11 The achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. In all our reviews we therefore recommend strongly that, in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

12 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Vale of White Horse District Council or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

### Submissions received

13 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Vale of White Horse District Council (‘the Council’) and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 12 submissions on council size and 24 submissions during the first consultation on warding patterns. All submissions can be viewed on our website: [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

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<sup>2</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

14 We take the evidence received during consultation very seriously and the submissions were carefully considered before we formulated our final recommendations. Officers from the Commission have been assisted by officers at Vale of White Horse District Council who have provided relevant information throughout the review.

## Electorate figures

15 As part of this review, the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018, projecting an increase in the electorate of 4.2% over the period from 2012 to 2018.

16 The majority of growth in the electorate is focused in the south and south-east of the district. Elsewhere in the district, growth is expected to be reasonably modest. Having considered the information provided by the Council, we are content to use its figures as the basis of our final recommendations.

## Council size

17 The Council currently has 51 councillors elected from 11 single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and four three-member wards and operates a Leader and Cabinet model of political management. At the outset of the review, the Council proposed a council size of 38 members.

18 In support of its proposal for 38 councillors, the Council argued that it was able to operate a streamlined decision-making process, that councillor workloads would be appropriate to allow councillors to represent their constituents and that 38 councillors would provide resilience for council business.

19 We received 12 submissions during the consultation on council size. These were from seven parish and town councils, a county councillor, and four local residents. Four town and parish councils and two local residents argued against the reduction in council size. However, no other council size was adequately promoted. Drayton Parish Council argued for a council size of 45, but did not produce supporting evidence for this figure. We consider that the Council has clearly considered how to provide sustainable, efficient and representative governance for the district, and confirm a council size of 38 members for Vale of White Horse District Council as final.

## Electoral fairness

20 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

21 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate (94,786 in 2012 and 98,802 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 38 under our final recommendations. Therefore,

the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,494 in 2012 and 2,600 by 2018.

22 Under our final recommendations, one ward would vary by more than 10% from the average number of electors per councillor in the district by 2018. Overall, we are satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our final recommendations for Vale of White Horse.

## General analysis

23 Our draft recommendations were for a pattern of 10 single-member wards, 11 two-member wards and two three-member wards. We considered that our draft recommendations provided good electoral equality while providing a good reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence.

24 During the consultation on the draft recommendations, we received 97 submissions. These included submissions from the Council, 12 county, district and parish councillors, 17 parishes, five local organisations and 63 local residents.

25 In the west of the district, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Watchfield & Shrivenham ward which incorporated the parishes of Great Faringdon, Eaton Hastings, Buscot, Great Coxwell, Little Coxwell, Fernham, Longcot, Watchfield and Coleshill.

26 In the south of the district, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Grove North ward and suggesting alternative boundaries for our proposed Wantage Charlton and Wantage & Grove Brook wards. In the south-east of the district, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Blewbury & Harwell ward, which incorporated the parishes of Chilton, Upton and Blewbury and part of the parish of Harwell.

27 In the east of the district, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Sutton Courtenay ward, which incorporated the parishes of Drayton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford-on-Thames and part of the parish of Milton. In the north-east of the district, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Botley, Kennington and Wootton wards.

28 We have considered all submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations. In our final recommendations for Vale of White Horse, we have sought to address evidence received during consultation and achieve good levels of electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests.

29 Our final recommendations are for 10 single-member wards and 14 two-member wards. One ward would have a variance of more than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 22–4) and on Map 1.

## Electoral arrangements

30 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of Vale of White Horse. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- North and west (pages 8–9)
- Central and southern (pages 9–10)
- South-east (pages 10–11)
- East (pages 11–13)
- North-east (pages 13–15)

### North and west

31 This area covers the towns of Watchfield, Faringdon, Shrivenham and surrounding parishes, as well as the parishes extending east from Faringdon to Cumnor. The Council's scheme was based on whole parishes in this area.

#### **Watchfield, Shrivenham and Faringdon**

32 Our draft recommendations for this area were based on the Council's scheme, but combined the Council's proposed Watchfield and Faringdon wards in a three-member ward. Our draft recommendations were for a single-member Shrivenham ward and a three-member Watchfield & Faringdon ward. Under our draft recommendations, none of these wards was projected to have a variance greater than 10% from the district average by 2018.

33 During consultation on our draft recommendations, we received 15 submissions which commented on our proposals for Watchfield and Shrivenham. These were from a district councillor, the parish councils of Longcot and Watchfield and 12 local residents. The Council also commented on our proposed Watchfield & Faringdon ward.

34 Longcot Parish Council stated that it was in favour of the proposed Watchfield & Faringdon ward because it had been included in a ward with Watchfield. However, the remainder of submissions did not support our proposed wards in this area. Respondents argued that Watchfield and Shrivenham shared very close community ties and that they should be included in the same ward. A number of respondents from the Watchfield area also objected to being included in a ward with the town of Faringdon. They argued that as a town, Faringdon had different and competing needs to those of the rural parishes in the rest of the proposed ward.

35 The Council reiterated its view that Faringdon warranted separate representation and should not be combined with neighbouring parishes. It argued that Faringdon faced social and economic challenges and required regeneration, which the Council considered outweighed any improvement to electoral equality that could be achieved by including the town in a ward with neighbouring parishes.

36 We are persuaded that the parishes of Watchfield and Shrivenham share very close community ties and that residents use services across both parishes. We have therefore decided to include both parishes in a two-member ward, along with the rural parishes in this area, but excluding the parish of Great Faringdon. We propose

a two-member Faringdon ward coterminous with the parish of Great Faringdon. Whilst these modifications result in relatively poor electoral equality in Faringdon, we believe they better reflect a balance of the statutory criteria and the evidence received during consultation.

37 Our final recommendations are for a two-member Watchfield & Shrivenham ward and a two-member Faringdon ward. These wards would have 3% fewer and 13% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

### **Thames**

38 The north of the district is covered by a group of rural parishes bounded to their north by the River Thames. Our draft recommendations were for a single-member Thames ward which would have a number of electors equal to the district average by 2018.

39 We did not receive any submissions relating to our proposed Thames ward and therefore confirm our recommendation for this ward as final. This ward will have a number of electors equal to the district average by 2018.

### **Central and southern**

40 This area covers the villages of Stanford, Uffington, Steventon, Kingston Bagpuize and surrounding parishes, as well as the towns of Grove and Wantage and the southern parishes to their west.

### **Central**

41 Our draft recommendations in this area were for single-member Stanford, Kingston Bagpuize and Steventon & the Hanneys wards. Under our draft recommendations, none of these wards was projected to have a variance greater than 10% from the district average by 2018.

42 We have received no submissions regarding this area and confirm our recommendations as final. Our final recommendations are for single-member Stanford, Kingston Bagpuize and Steventon and the Hanneys wards with 4% more, 5% fewer and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

### **South**

43 Our draft recommendations in this area were for two-member Grove North, Wantage & Grove Brook and Wantage Charlton wards and single-member Ridgeway and Hendreds wards. Under our draft recommendations, none of these wards was projected to have a variance greater than 10% from the district average by 2018. We received submissions from Grove Parish Council and Wantage Town Council and from the county councillor for Grove & Wantage electoral division.

44 Grove Parish Council reiterated its objections to being divided between district wards, whilst providing suggested alternative boundaries if this proved necessary. Councillor Patrick argued that parts of Grove and Wantage should not be combined.

45 Under a council size of 38, the parishes of Grove and Wantage are allocated six district councillors. Two three-member wards, entirely coterminous with the parish boundaries of Grove and Wantage, would result in unacceptably high electoral variances of 19% more electors than the average for the district in Wantage and 11%

fewer electors than the average for the district in Grove by 2018. Such a pattern would also ignore the planned Crab Hill development which will extend Wantage across the present parish boundary with Grove.

46 Grove Parish Council suggested two alternative boundaries within the town, if it was not possible to include the whole of the town within a single ward. The Parish Council's suggested east–west divide would follow a line behind Mandarin Place, behind Evenlode Close and Brunel Crescent, along Sycamore Walk onto School Lane and along Pill Ditch. The Parish Council argued that this would avoid placing newer and older developments in separate wards and the perpetuation of social divides. The Parish Council's suggested north–south divide would follow either Brereton Drive or Letcombe Brook in order to avoid crossing residential roads.

47 We do not consider that either of Grove Parish Council's suggestions is viable. Because of the size of electorate in Wantage, it is necessary to combine part of Wantage with part of Grove in a two-member ward. Grove Parish Council's suggested east–west divide would ignore the need to combine part of Wantage with part of Grove. The Parish Council's suggested north–south divide would result in an unacceptably-high variance of 56% fewer electors than the average for the district in Grove North and 63% more electors than the average for the district in Wantage & Grove Brook by 2018.

48 We received a submission from Wantage Town Council, largely supporting our draft recommendations, but requesting two modifications to the northern boundary of our proposed Wantage Charlton ward. The Town Council requested that the boundary be amended to take account of developments at Stockham Farm and Crab Hill.

49 We have not received evidence which indicates that the Stockham Farm development will commence prior to 2018. However, we have received figures from the Council indicating that 325 electors will reside in the Crab Hill development by 2018. We have therefore decided to modify our recommendations to include the site of the Crab Hill development within our proposed Wantage Charlton ward.

50 We received no submissions regarding our proposed Ridgeway ward and therefore confirm it as final.

51 Our final recommendations are for two-member Grove North, Wantage & Grove Brook and Wantage Charlton wards and a single-member Ridgeway ward with 7% more, equal to, 6% more and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

## South-east

52 The south-east of the district comprises the villages of East Hendred, Harwell, Chilton and Blewbury and surrounding parishes.

53 Our draft recommendations for this area were for a two-member Blewbury & Harwell ward and a single-member Hendreds ward. Under our draft recommendations, neither of these wards was projected to have a variance greater than 10% from the district average by 2018.

54 We received submissions on our draft recommendations in this area from the parishes of Harwell, Chilton and East Hendred and three local residents. The Council also commented on our draft recommendations in this area.

55 East Hendred Parish Council supported our draft recommendations as they created a single-member ward covering the Hendreds. Harwell and Chilton parish councils supported being included in our proposed Blewbury & Harwell ward. However, both parishes argued against inclusion of part of Harwell parish in the proposed Hendreds ward. This view was echoed by two local residents, who stated that they looked to Harwell and Chilton rather than to East Hendred.

56 We explored the possibility of including the whole of Harwell parish within our proposed Blewbury & Harwell ward. Removing the part of Harwell Campus contained in Harwell parish whilst not including any alternative area in our proposed Hendreds ward would result in an unacceptably poor electoral variance of 21% fewer electors than the average for the district by 2018. Linking our proposed Hendreds ward with any alternative area, such as the remainder of Milton or with Steventon, would have an unacceptable knock-on effect on electoral equality in neighbouring wards.

57 The Council objected to our proposal to link the parishes of Harwell and Chilton, stating that there was no road link between the parishes via the A34. The Council argued that residents would have to travel via neighbouring West Hagbourne in South Oxfordshire to get between the parishes.

58 We acknowledge that there is no road link between the two parishes via the A34. However, when we toured the area, we found that the A4185, which skirts the Harwell parish boundary, provides a good link between these parishes. This is supported by the comments of Harwell and Chilton parishes, as well as local residents. During our tour, we also examined the link between the Harwell Campus area and North Drive and the village of East Hendred. We found that there is good road access via the A4185 and Wantage Road and observed that there was a regular bus service between the Harwell Campus and East Hendred.

59 We are confirming our draft recommendations in the south-east of the district as final. Our final recommendations are for a two-member Blewbury & Harwell ward and a single-member Hendreds ward with equal to and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

## East

60 The east of the district comprises the villages of Drayton, Sutton Courtenay, Marcham, the Shippon area of the parish of St Helen Without and the town of Abingdon.

### **Drayton and Sutton Courtenay**

61 Our draft recommendations in the east of the district included a two-member Sutton Courtenay ward comprising the parishes of Appleford-on-Thames, Sutton Courtenay, Drayton and part of Milton parish. This ward would have had 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

62 We received 20 submissions regarding our proposed ward. These were from the parishes of Drayton, Milton and Sutton Courtenay, 16 local residents and the Vice-Chair of Drayton Parish Council.

63 All of the submissions from Drayton opposed the name of the proposed ward, arguing that it did not reflect the communities it contained. Several of the submissions from Drayton and Sutton Courtenay also argued against a two-member ward for these parishes. Milton Parish Council reiterated its request that it not be divided between wards, arguing that the Milton Heights and Milton Villages looked more to each other than to neighbouring settlements. Drayton Parish Council, the Vice-Chair of Drayton Parish Council and a local resident all suggested that the Milton Villages area had natural links and should be combined with Drayton parish to form a single-member ward. Another resident argued that some part of Milton should be combined with Drayton or Sutton Courtenay. The Council argued that Drayton and Sutton Courtenay did not share strong communication links because they were situated either side of the Thames flood plain.

64 We acknowledge that Drayton and Sutton Courtenay are separate communities as argued by some of the submissions. During our tour of the area, we noted that the A34 was a strong boundary between the Milton Heights and Milton Villages areas. We are persuaded that, on balance, the Council's original proposal for two single-member wards would better reflect communities. Our final recommendations are for single-member Drayton and Sutton Courtenay wards with 9% fewer and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

### **Marcham**

65 Our draft recommendations were for a single-member Marcham ward with 8% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. We received three submissions regarding Cothill Road, which we had included in our proposed Marcham ward. These were from the parish of St Helen Without and two local residents. We also received a submission from the parish of Marcham.

66 The submissions argued that residents on Cothill Road were part of the Dry Sandford community and looked north rather than south towards the Shippon community. Respondents stated that their local church, shops and primary school were in Dry Sandford and that buses ran in that direction rather than to Shippon.

67 Marcham Parish Council stated that it supported our draft recommendations, as they ensured it was combined in a ward with St Helen Without Parish Council.

68 We are persuaded that Cothill Road should be included in a ward with the rest of the Dry Sandford area and therefore propose that the northern boundary of our proposed Marcham ward be modified to follow the existing ward boundary around the Dry Sandford Nature Reserve. Our final recommendations are for a single-member Marcham ward with 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

### **Abingdon**

69 Our draft recommendations in Abingdon were for five two-member wards, none of which would vary by more than 10% from the average number of electors per councillor for the district by 2018.

70 We received 14 submissions commenting on our draft recommendations for Abingdon. These were largely opposed to our draft recommendations, with some submissions indicating that they favoured the single-member ward scheme submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group during the initial consultation on warding arrangements. Respondents argued that communities with Abingdon would benefit more from discrete representation.

71 The Council objected to the boundary between our proposed Fitzharris and Central wards, stating that its proposed boundary running along the length of Wootton Road and Bath Street would better reflect communities. Abingdon Town Council initially made a submission also contending that the boundary should follow Wootton Road and Bath Street. We contacted the Town Council to clarify its preferred boundary, given that it would necessitate the creation of an extra town ward. Subsequently, the Town Council made a second submission withdrawing its request for a modification. Otherwise, Abingdon Town Council and the Council supported the boundaries of our proposed two-member wards.

72 Several of the submissions argued that the Tithe Farm and Albert Park areas did not share any links and that residents living south of the River Ock in the Tithe Farm area looked instead east to the Caldecott area.

73 Two local residents and the Town Council commented on the names of our proposed wards in Abingdon. A local resident argued that our proposed Northcourt ward should be named Dunmore or Long Furlong as it contained that community and no part of Northcourt. The local resident also argued that our Central ward should be renamed Abbey Northcourt. The Town Council argued that our proposed Central, Fitzharris, Northcourt and Peachcroft wards should be renamed Abbey Northcourt, Fitzharris & Ock, Long Furlong and Barton & Peachcroft, respectively. The Council and another local resident argued that the name of the town be added to ward names to avoid confusion.

74 We are not persuaded that sufficient evidence has been provided to depart from our proposed pattern of two-member wards in Abingdon. We are not persuaded to adopt the Council's proposed modification to the boundary between our proposed Fitzharris and Central wards, because this would necessitate the creation of an extra town ward. Whilst several respondents argued in favour of single-member wards on principle, little evidence was provided in favour of a specific pattern, or how that pattern would better reflect our statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We acknowledge that our proposed wards should be renamed and prefixed with the town's name to better reflect community identities. Our final recommendations are for two-member Abingdon Dunmore, Abingdon Abbey Northcourt, Abingdon Fitzharris, Abingdon Caldecott and Abingdon Peachcroft wards with 10% fewer, 4% fewer, 2% fewer, 5% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

## North-east

75 The north-east of the district stretches from the parishes of Wytham, Cumnor and North Hinksey in the north to the parishes of Kennington and Radley in the south.

76 Our draft recommendations were for a three-member Kennington ward, a two-member Cumnor ward and single-member Botley and Wootton wards. Under our draft recommendations, none of these wards was projected to have a variance greater than 10% from the district average by 2018.

77 We received 33 submissions regarding this area. These were from the parish councils of North Hinksey, Sunningwell, Kennington and Radley, Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association, a county councillor, a district councillor, two parish councillors and 24 local residents. The Council also commented on our draft recommendations in this area.

78 None of the respondents supported our draft recommendations. Residents and parish councils in Kennington and Radley argued that they had no shared identity with any areas of North Hinksey and relatively little in common with the parishes of Sunningwell and South Hinksey.

79 Kennington Parish Council reiterated its request to be combined with the parish of Radley in a two-member ward. It argued that in reality, the parishes of Sunningwell and North and South Hinksey were 'quite disparate'. Radley Parish Council argued that the proposed Kennington ward was only linked from north to south by the A34 and that that road acted as a barrier between Sunningwell parish and the parishes of Kennington and Radley.

80 Sunningwell Parish Council argued that to include it in a ward with the parishes of Kennington or North Hinksey would represent an 'artificial construct'. It argued that the A34 and A4183 acted as barriers and that residents used transport, education and commerce facilities within the area of the present district ward, which incorporates the parish of Wootton. It also argued that the draft recommendations would split the community of Boars Hill between the proposed Wootton and Kennington wards. This concern was echoed by two local residents. The parish council stated that its preference was to be included in a ward with the parishes of Wootton and North and South Hinksey.

81 North Hinksey Parish Council and respondents living in the Botley area objected to the division of North Hinksey parish along Lime Road and Yarnell's Hill. The Parish Council argued that residents in the section of North Hinksey included in our proposed Kennington ward looked north 'to the main community shopping, library and other centres' in Botley. The Parish Council also argued that access south into South Hinksey via the A34 was difficult. The Parish Council's views were echoed by local residents and the Harcourt Hill Estate Residents Association. Residents and the association provided evidence of their links to the rest of the Botley area.

82 North Hinksey Parish Council proposed alternative multi-member wards that combined the parish of North Hinksey with parts of Cumnor parish. Councillor Hoddinott proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of North Hinksey, South Hinksey, Wytham and Sunningwell. This proposal was echoed by one of the local residents. One of the residents from Kennington and Radley stated his preference for the Council's proposed Botley and Kennington & Radley wards.

83 On the basis of the evidence received, we consider that our draft recommendations should be modified in order to include the whole of the parish of North Hinksey within one ward. We examined the possibility of creating an alternative

warding pattern in the north-east of the district. This would include a three-member ward combining the parishes of Wytham and North Hinksey with the Dean Court, Cumnor Hill and Farmoor areas within the parish of Cumnor. The alternative pattern would result in modified wards covering the remainder of the neighbouring parishes. While this alternative would unite the community of Boars Hill within a single ward and avoid a division of the parish of North Hinksey, we do not feel we have received sufficiently persuasive evidence to recommend an entirely new warding pattern affecting the whole of the north-east of the district.

84 We consider that while Councillor Hoddinott’s proposed two-member ward would not have full internal access, as Foxcombe Road skirts the parish boundary between Sunningwell and Kennington, it would provide the best balance of the statutory criteria overall. We have therefore decided to adopt it as part of our final recommendations.

85 Our final recommendations are for two-member Botley & Sunningwell, Cumnor and Kennington & Radley wards and a single-member Wootton ward with 3% fewer, equal to, 3% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

**Conclusions**

86 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2012 and 2018 electorate figures.

**Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements**

	<b>Final recommendations</b>	
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2018</b>
Number of councillors	38	38
Number of wards	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,494	2,600
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

**Final recommendation**  
 Vale of White Horse District Council should comprise 38 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

**Parish electoral arrangements**

87 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

88 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendation for principal warding arrangements. However, Vale of White Horse District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

89 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Abingdon, Grove, Harwell, Milton, St Helen Without and Wantage.

90 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Abingdon parish.

**Final recommendation**

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council should return 21 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Abbey (returning three members), Caldecott (returning three members), Dunmore (returning three members), Fitzharris North (returning three members), Fitzharris South (returning three members), Northcourt (returning three members) and Peachcroft (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

91 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Grove parish.

**Final recommendation**

Grove Parish Council should return 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Crab Hill (returning one member), Grove Brook (returning four members) and Grove North (returning 11 members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

92 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Harwell parish.

**Final recommendation**

Harwell Parish Council should return 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Harwell (returning nine members) and Harwell Oxford Campus (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

93 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Milton parish.

**Final recommendation**

Milton Parish Council should return seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Heights (returning four members) and Village (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

94 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for St Helen Without parish.

**Final recommendation**

St Helen Without Parish Council should return 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Dry Sandford (returning five members) and Shippon (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

95 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Wantage parish.

**Final recommendation**

Wantage Town Council should return 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Segsbury (returning six members) and Wantage Charlton (returning 10 members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.



### 3 What happens next?

96 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Vale of White Horse District Council. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The Order, once made, will provide for new electoral arrangements which will come into force at the next elections for Vale of White Horse District Council in 2015.

#### Equalities

97 This report has been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.



## 4 Mapping

### Final recommendations for Vale of White Horse

The following map illustrates our proposed ward boundaries for Vale of White Horse District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Vale of White Horse District Council.

**You can also view our final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council on our interactive maps at [consultation.lgbce.org.uk](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk)**

## Appendix A

**Table A1: Final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2012)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2018)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Abingdon Abbey Northcourt	2	4,956	2,478	-1%	4,968	2,484	-4%
2	Abingdon Caldecott	2	5,537	2,769	11%	5,467	2,734	5%
3	Abingdon Dunmore	2	4,721	2,361	-5%	4,663	2,332	-10%
4	Abingdon Fitzharris	2	5,096	2,548	2%	5,100	2,550	-2%
5	Abingdon Peachcroft	2	5,609	2,805	12%	5,528	2,764	6%
6	Blewbury & Harwell	2	4,326	2,163	-13%	5,210	2,605	0%
7	Botley & Sunningwell	2	4,670	2,335	-6%	5,041	2,521	-3%
8	Cumnor	2	4,776	2,388	-4%	5,200	2,600	0%
9	Drayton	1	2,369	2,369	-5%	2,360	2,360	-9%
10	Faringdon	2	5,494	2,747	10%	5,860	2,930	13%

**Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2012)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2018)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
11	Grove North	2	4,357	2,179	-13%	5,574	2,787	7%
12	Hendreds	1	2,070	2,070	-17%	2,530	2,530	-3%
13	Kennington & Radley	2	5,404	2,702	8%	5,380	2,690	3%
14	Kingston Bagpuize	1	2,505	2,505	0%	2,475	2,475	-5%
15	Marcham	1	2,403	2,403	-4%	2,369	2,369	-9%
16	Ridgeway	1	2,322	2,322	-7%	2,359	2,359	-9%
17	Stanford	1	2,718	2,718	9%	2,706	2,706	4%
18	Steventon & the Hanneys	1	2,464	2,464	-1%	2,434	2,434	-6%
19	Sutton Courtenay	1	2,241	2,241	-10%	2,478	2,478	-5%
20	Thames	1	2,602	2,602	4%	2,591	2,591	0%
21	Wantage & Grove Brook	2	5,231	2,616	5%	5,195	2,598	0%

**Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Vale of White Horse District Council**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2012)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2018)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
22	Wantage Charlton	2	5,069	2,535	2%	5,519	2,760	6%
23	Watchfield & Shrivenham	2	5,047	2,524	1%	5,026	2,513	-3%
24	Wootton	1	2,799	2,799	12%	2,769	2,769	6%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>94,786</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>98,802</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,494</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>-</b>

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 in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# Appendix B

## Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at <a href="http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk">www.nationalparks.gov.uk</a>
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or district, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the borough or district council

