

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Wycombe in Buckinghamshire

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

*November 2001*

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Wycombe 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 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 Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Wycombe's electoral arrangements on 5 September 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 2001. The Commission's Stage Three consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 to 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; therefore, the closing date for the receipt of submissions at the end of Stage Three was 6 August 2001.

- **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 Wycombe:

- **in 20 of the 32 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the District and nine wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 this situation is expected to remain constant, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 19 wards and by more than 20 per cent in nine wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 145-146) are that:

- **Wycombe District Council should have 60 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 28 wards, instead of 32 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and five should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole-council 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 23 of the proposed 28 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 all of the 28 proposed wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **Revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Marlow Town Council and Hazlemere parishes.**

- **Revised warding arrangements for Chepping Wycombe parish.**

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 2 January 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Abbey (in High Wycombe)	3	Part of Booker & Castlefield ward; part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward; part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward; part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward and part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward.	Large map
2	Bledlow & Bradenham	1	The parishes of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton and Bradenham.	Map 2
3	Booker & Cressex (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Booker & Castlefield ward and part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward.	Large map
4	Bourne End-cum-Hedsor	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Hedsor and the parish of Wooburn (the existing Bourne End ward).	Map 2
5	Bowerdean (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward.	Large map
6	Chiltern Rise	2	The parishes of Lane End, Piddington & Wheeler End and West Wycombe.	Map2
7	Disraeli (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward and part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward.	Large map
8	Downley & Plomer Hill	2	Part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward; part of West Wycombe & Sands ward (unparished area) and the parish of Downley.	Large map
9	Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow	3	The parish of Little Marlow; the parish of Chepping Wycombe (the existing Flackwell Heath ward (less detached areas)); the parish of Chepping Wycombe (part of the existing Loudwater ward (detached area)).	Map 2
10	Greater Hughenden	3	The Parish of Hughenden (the existing Hughenden Valley, Great Kingshill, Widmer End and Naphill wards).	Map 2
11	Greater Marlow	2	The parish of Great Marlow (the existing Bovingdon Green, Great Marlow with Booker and Marlow Bottom wards); the parish of Medmenham (the existing Danesfield ward).	Map 2
12	Hambleton Valley	1	The parishes of Fawley, Hambleton, Ibstone and Turville and the parish of Medmenham (the existing Medmenham Village ward).	Map 2
13	Hazlemere North	2	The parish of Hazlemere (the proposed North parish ward).	Large map and map 2
14	Hazlemere South	2	The parish of Hazlemere (the proposed South Parish ward).	Large map and map 2
15	Icknield	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Ellesborough, Great & Little Kimble and Longwick-cum-Ilmer.	Map 2
16	Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the existing Lacey Green & Hampden ward) – the parishes of Lacey Green and Great & Little Hampden.	Map 2
17	Marlow North & West	3	The parish of Marlow (the proposed North & West parish ward).	Maps 2 and A2
18	Marlow South East	2	The parish of Marlow (the proposed South East parish ward).	Maps 2 and A2
19	Micklefield (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward and part of Marsh & Micklefield ward.	Large map
20	Oakridge & Castlefield (in High Wycombe)	3	Part of Booker & Castlefield ward; part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward and part of West Wycombe & Sands ward.	Large map
21	The Risboroughs	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the existing Princes Risborough ward)– the parish of Princes Risborough.	Map 2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
22	Ryemead (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward; part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward and part of Marsh & Micklefield ward.	Large map
23	Sands (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Booker & Castlefield ward and part of the unparished area of West Wycombe & Sands ward.	Large map
24	Stokenchurch & Radnage	2	The parishes of Radnage and Stokenchurch.	Map 2
25	Terriers & Amersham Hill (in High Wycombe)	3	Part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward and part of Green Hill & Totteridge ward.	Large map
26	Totteridge (in High Wycombe)	2	Part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward; part of Green Hill & Totteridge ward and part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward.	Large map
27	Tylers Green & Loudwater	3	The parish of Chepping Wycombe (the existing Flackwell Heath ward (detached areas)); the parish of Chepping Wycombe (the existing Loudwater ward (less detached area) and the parish Chepping Wycombe (the existing Tylers Green ward).	Large map and map 2
28	The Wooburns	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Wooburn (the existing Wooburn Green and Wooburn Town wards).	Map 2

*Notes: 1 High Wycombe is the only unparished part of the district and comprises the 10 wards indicated above.*

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

*3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail.*

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Wycombe

	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 (in High Wycombe)	3	5,685	1,895	-7	5,889	1,963	-5
2	Bledlow & Bradenham	1	2,144	2,144	5	2,270	2,270	10
3	Booker & Cressex (in High Wycombe)	2	3,808	1,904	-6	4,055	2,028	-1
4	Bourne End-cum-Hedsor	2	4,392	2,196	8	4,170	2,085	1
5	Bowerdean (in High Wycombe)	2	3,687	1,844	-9	3,939	1,970	-4
6	Chiltern Rise	2	4,130	2,065	1	4,210	2,105	2
7	Disraeli (in High Wycombe)	2	4,134	2,067	2	4,108	2,054	0
8	Downley & Plomer Hill	2	3,646	1,823	-10	4,055	2,028	-1
9	Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow	3	5,836	1,945	-4	5,630	1,877	-9
10	Greater Hughenden	3	6,679	2,226	9	6,700	2,233	9
11	Greater Marlow	2	3,951	1,976	-3	3,960	1,980	-4
12	Hambleton Valley	1	2,097	2,097	3	1,910	1,910	-7
13	Hazlemere North	2	3,684	1,842	-9	3,840	1,920	-7
14	Hazlemere South	2	3,557	1,779	-13	3,750	1,875	-9
15	Icknield	1	2,460	2,460	21	2,260	2,260	10
16	Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens	1	2,101	2,101	3	2,050	2,050	0
17	Marlow North & West	3	6,686	2,229	10	6,449	2,150	5
18	Marlow South East	2	4,519	2,260	11	4,401	2,201	7
19	Micklefield (in High Wycombe)	2	3,638	1,819	-11	4,292	2,146	4
20	Oakridge & Castlefield (in High Wycombe)	3	5,404	1,801	-11	5,901	1,967	-4
21	The Risboroughs	3	6,428	2,143	5	6,110	2,037	-1
22	Ryemead (in High Wycombe)	2	3,957	1,979	-3	4,152	2,076	1
23	Sands (in High Wycombe)	2	4,042	2,021	-1	4,057	2,029	-1
24	Stokenchurch & Radnage	2	4,253	2,127	4	4,190	2,095	2
25	Terriers & Amersham Hill (in High Wycombe)	3	6,472	1,976	-3	6,273	1,909	-7
26	Totteridge (in High Wycombe)	2	4,352	2,176	7	4,045	2,023	-2
27	Tylers Green & Loudwater	3	6,556	2,185	7	6,690	2,230	8

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
28	The Wooburns	2	3,807	1,904	-6	3,990	1,995	-3
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122,105</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>123,346</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,056</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wycombe District Council.*

*Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in per centage 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 Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. We have now reviewed the four districts in Buckinghamshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wycombe. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1980 (Report no. 371). The electoral arrangements of Buckinghamshire County Council were last reviewed in December 1982 (Report no. 438). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we have had regard to:

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

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

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

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor

that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 5 September 2000, when we wrote to Wycombe District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Buckinghamshire County Council, Buckinghamshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Buckinghamshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the 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 27 November 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 9 May 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wycombe in Buckinghamshire*, and ended on 6 August 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. The Commission's Stage Three consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 to 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; therefore, the closing date for the receipt of submissions at the end of Stage Three was 6 August 2001. 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 Wycombe district covers an area of approximately 32,500 hectares in the south-west of Buckinghamshire, midway between London and Oxford. Wycombe is a district of considerable contrast and character, including the urban environment of High Wycombe and the smaller towns of Marlow and Princes Risborough, and the scenic countryside of the Chilterns and the Thames Valley. The district is breached by the M40 motorway and contains the Chiltern railway line which runs into London Marylebone station.

13 The district contains 27 parish and town councils, but High Wycombe town itself is unparished, and comprises approximately 40 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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

15 The electorate of the district is 122,105 (February 2000). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 32 wards, eight of which are relatively urban in High Wycombe with the remainder being predominantly rural. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and 15 are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected every four years.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,035 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,056 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 currently varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average in 20 of the 32 wards, by more than 20 per cent in nine wards and by more than 30 per cent in five wards. The worst imbalance is in Loudwater ward where the councillor represents 56 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Wycombe*

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	Bledlow-cum-Saunderton	1	2,425	2,425	19	2,300	2,300	12
2	Booker & Castlefield (in High Wycombe)	3	6,311	2,104	3	6,890	2,297	12
3	Bourne End-cum-Hedsor	2	4,392	2,196	8	4,170	2,085	1
4	Bowerdean & Daws Hill (in High Wycombe)	3	6,399	2,133	5	6,210	2,070	1
5	Cressex & Frogmoor (in High Wycombe)	3	6,083	2,028	0	6,175	2,058	0
6	Downley	1	1,645	1,645	-19	1,755	1,755	-15
7	Flackwell Heath	2	4,737	2,369	16	4,575	2,288	11
8	Great Marlow	1	1,295	1,295	-36	1,278	1,278	-38
9	Green Hill & Totteridge (in High Wycombe)	3	6,035	2,012	-1	6,051	2,017	-2
10	Hambleton Valley	1	1,887	1,887	-7	1,712	1,712	-17
11	Hazlemere Central	1	2,415	2,415	19	2,756	2,756	34
12	Hazlemere East	1	2,416	2,416	19	2,376	2,376	16
13	Hazlemere West	1	2,410	2,410	18	2,458	2,458	20
14	Hughenden Valley	1	1,607	1,607	-21	1,546	1,546	-25
15	Icknield	1	2,460	2,460	21	2,260	2,260	10
16	Keep Hill & Hicks Farm (in High Wycombe)	3	5,280	1,760	-14	5,736	1,912	-7
17	Kingshill (in High Wycombe)	1	2,847	2,847	40	2,827	2,827	38
18	Lacey Green & Hampden	1	2,101	2,101	3	2,050	2,050	0
19	Lane End & Piddington	2	3,205	1,603	-21	3,310	1,655	-19
20	Little Marlow	1	1,099	1,099	-46	1,065	1,065	-48
21	Loudwater	1	3,170	3,170	56	3,119	3,119	52
22	Marlow Bottom	1	2,656	2,656	31	2,682	2,682	30
23	Marlow North	3	6,161	2,054	1	5,960	1,987	-3
24	Marlow South	3	5,044	1,681	-17	4,890	1,630	-21
25	Marsh & Micklefield (in High Wycombe)	3	5,394	1,798	-12	5,675	1,892	-8

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26	Naphill-cum-Bradenham	1	2,550	2,550	25	2,869	2,869	40
27	Oakridge & Tinkers Wood (in High Wycombe)	3	6,959	2,320	14	7,410	2,470	20
28	Princes Risborough	3	6,428	2,143	5	6,110	2,037	-1
29	Stokenchurch	2	3,857	1,929	-5	3,811	1,906	-7
30	The Wooburns	2	3,807	1,904	-6	3,990	1,995	-3
31	Tylers Green	2	3,386	1,693	-17	3,571	1,786	-13
32	West Wycombe & Sands	3	5,644	1,881	-8	5,759	1,920	-7
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>122,105</b>	–	–	<b>123,346</b>	–	–
	<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,035</b>	–	–	<b>2,056</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wycombe District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in per centage 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 Little Marlow ward were relatively over-represented by 46 per cent, while electors in Loudwater ward were relatively under-represented by 56 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received eight representations, including a district-wide scheme from Wycombe District Council, five from parish and town councils, and two from 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 Wycombe in Buckinghamshire*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved an improved level of electoral equality, provided a mixed pattern of one, two and three-member wards and utilised strong boundaries. However, we departed from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas in order to provide better levels of electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Wycombe District Council should be served by 60 councillors, as at present, representing 28 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors should be made for Marlow Town and Chepping Wycombe and Hazlemere parishes.

**Draft Recommendation**

Wycombe District Council should comprise 60 councillors, serving 28 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 24 of the 28 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 27 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Wycombe District Council

### **Wycombe District Council**

21 Wycombe District Council broadly supported our draft recommendations, subject to nine minor amendments based largely on the reiteration of its Stage One proposals. The Council had particular concerns in regard to our proposed boundary between Hazlemere South and Hazlemere North wards, arguing that the boundary line used should be the A404. It also objected to our proposal to combine the proposed Tylers Green North Parish ward, the area to the west of Oaktree Close, Channer Drive and east of Greenacre Lane, with part of the proposed Hazlemere South ward. The District Council also proposed a modification to the boundary between our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Ryemead wards which would place the whole of the Pentlands within the Ryemead ward. In addition the council proposed minor amendments to our proposed boundaries between Abbey and Booker & Cressex wards and Abbey and Oakridge & Castlefield wards.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

22 We received eight representations from parish and town councils. Bradenham Parish Council opposed our proposal to combine Bradenham Parish and Bledlow-cum-Saunderton in a new Bledlow & Bradenham ward. It proposed alternative district warding arrangements in this area, based on a revised external parish boundary for Bradenham Parish Council. In a separate submission, Bradenham Parish Council also unanimously supported the proposals of Great Marlow Parish Council as outlined below.

23 Chepping Wycombe Parish Council objected to our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward. It also expressed concern that “taking a wedge out of Tylers Green ward to create a new Hazlemere South ward does not seem logical. This would lead to confusion amongst Tylers Green residents who would find themselves split between two wards”. It also opposed our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater wards and it expressed support for the existing warding arrangements in this area being retained. In addition it proposed that the boundary between our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards should follow the M40.

24 Great Marlow Parish Council reiterated their Stage One proposals for a district-wide council size of 43, arguing that a reduction in council size would provide for greater accountability, lower costs and a uniform pattern of single member wards. The Parish Council also objected to the proposed combining of Great Marlow with Marlow Bottom. Ellesborough Parish Council and Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council expressed support for Great Marlow Parish Council’s alternative proposals.

25 Little Marlow Parish Council supported the proposed creation of a Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow ward. However, it objected to any future amalgamation between Tylers Green and Loudwater.

26 West Wycombe Parish Council reiterated its Stage One objection to our proposed two-member Chiltern Rise ward. It proposed combining Piddington & Wheeler End and West Wycombe parish councils in a single district ward.

27 Marlow Town Council objected to our proposed ward names of Marlow East and Marlow West, arguing that they should be renamed Marlow South East and Marlow North & West wards respectively. In addition, it expressed concern at the loss of one of its district councillors. However, it supported the retention of 12 town councillors.

## **Members of Parliament**

28 David Lidington MP, supported our draft recommendations for wards within his constituency. The constituency includes the towns of Princes Risborough and the rural areas to the North and West of High Wycombe.

## **Other Representations**

29 A further seven representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations and councillors. Tylers Green Conservatives and The Penn & Tylers Green Society objected to our proposed Loudwater & Tylers Green and Hazlemere South wards. The view was expressed that Tylers Green and Loudwater share few community links, being “inconveniently separated by several miles and by Hammersley Lane”. Penn & Tylers Green Residents’ Association expressed support for elements of our proposed Hazlemere South ward, although it objected to the inclusion of our proposed Tylers Green North parish ward. They also proposed that the existing Tylers Green ward be retained.

30 Naphill & Walter’s Ash Residents Association objected to our proposed Bledlow & Bradenham ward and expressed support for the proposals submitted by Bradenham Parish Council, as detailed above.

31 Councillor Priestley expressed support for our recommendations subject to the minor amendments put forward by Wycombe District Council. Councillor Collingwood supported our proposed Marlow East and Marlow West wards; however, he proposed that Marlow West ward be renamed Marlow North & West. At Town Council level, he questioned the proposed distribution of town councillors; however no specific proposals were outlined. Councillor Blanksby objected to our proposed Greater Marlow ward. Support was expressed for the existing warding arrangements to be retained.

32 We received a further nine representations from local residents. Three residents expressed broad support for our recommendations, while one expressed support for our proposed Bledlow & Bradenham ward. Five residents conveyed their objections to our proposed Greater Marlow ward.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

34 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.

35 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.

36 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**

37 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1 per cent from 122,105 to 123,346 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Booker & Castlefield ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward and Oakridge & Tinkers Bridge ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

### **Council Size**

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

40 Wycombe District Council presently has 60 members. At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing council size, noting that it considered that the existing number of councillors provides for effective and convenient local government. The Council stated that “having taken into account the proposed changes in the political management of the Authority we consider that the number of councillors should remain at 60”.

41 We also received a district-wide proposal for warding arrangements from Great Marlow Parish Council, which put forward a uniform pattern of 43 single-member wards. The Parish Council argued that this significant reduction in council size would provide a number of benefits to the electorate, including reduced cost and greater “clarity of responsibility and accountability”.

42 We carefully considered the representations received, and noted the disparity in council size proposed by the two district-wide schemes. We were not persuaded that the significant reduction in council size proposed by Great Marlow Parish Council had been justified by sufficient evidence. In particular, we received no evidence as to how the internal management structure of the District Council would operate as a result of a reduction in council size, or how any revised structures would be implemented. Moreover, we received no evidence of any local consultation on the Parish Council’s proposals, or of any widespread support for a reduction in council size on the scale proposed. We also noted that the Parish Council’s proposals were accompanied by only approximate electorate figures, and that the proposed single-member wards would vary in size significantly, from approximately 2,000 electors to 3,900 electors, resulting in significant electoral imbalances.

43 In examining the two schemes, and arriving at our draft recommendations, we considered that a council size of 60 would reflect the appropriate levels of representation to which the town of High Wycombe and the surrounding rural areas are entitled, and that the interests of all parts of the district would continue to be appropriately represented. 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 60 members.

44 At Stage Three, Great Marlow Parish Council reiterated its Stage One district-wide proposal based on a council size of 43, which was supported by Ellesborough Parish Council and Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council. However, it did not submit any significant or new evidence in support of this council size as part of its response to our draft recommendations. The District Council expressed support for our proposed council size of 60.

45 We have not been persuaded that such a radical reduction in council size from 60 to 43 is justified, and, as detailed above, we remain of the view that a council size of 60 would provide for the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In addition, notwithstanding the significant reduction in council size, we note that by creating a revised warding pattern for Wycombe based on 43 single-member wards, unacceptably high levels of electoral inequality would result with wards of approximately 127 per cent more and 70 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we are confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 60 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

46 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide schemes from Wycombe

District Council and Great Marlow Parish Council. From these representations, a number of considerations emerged. As detailed above, we considered that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members. We were therefore unable to consider fully the proposals submitted by Great Marlow Parish Council, which were based on a council size of 43.

47 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we were content to base our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme. We considered that its scheme provided a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than either the current arrangements or any other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, in order to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we moved away from the Council's proposals in a number of areas.

48 At Stage Three, the District Council broadly supported our draft recommendations, subject to minor amendments in the High Wycombe area together with the reiteration of some of its Stage One proposals.

49 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) Great Marlow, Marlow Bottom, Marlow North and Marlow South wards;
- (b) Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards;
- (c) Lane End & Piddington and West Wycombe & Sands wards;
- (d) Bledlow-cum-Saunderton, Hambleton Valley and Stokenchurch wards;
- (e) Icknield, Lacey Green & Hampden and Princes Risborough wards;
- (f) Hughenden Valley, Kingshill and Naphill-cum-Bradenham wards;
- (g) Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow, Loudwater and Tylers Green wards;
- (h) Hazlemere Central, Hazlemere East and Hazlemere West wards;
- (i) Booker & Castlefield, Downley and Oakridge & Tinkers Wood wards;
- (j) Bowerdean & Daws Hill, Cressex & Frogmoor and Green Hill & Totteridge wards;
- (k) Keep Hill & Hicks Farm and Marsh & Micklefield wards.

50 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.

### **Great Marlow, Marlow Bottom, Marlow North and Marlow South wards**

51 The four wards of Great Marlow, Marlow Bottom, Marlow North and Marlow South are situated in the south of the district, broadly to the south of the M40 motorway. Great Marlow ward is currently represented by a single councillor and comprises Bovington Green and Great Marlow with Booker wards of Great Marlow parish, together with Danesfield ward of Medmenham parish. Marlow Bottom ward is also represented by a single councillor and is coterminous with Marlow Bottom ward of Great Marlow parish. Marlow North and Marlow South wards are each currently represented by three councillors. Marlow North ward is coterminous with North ward of Marlow town, while Marlow South ward is coterminous with South ward of Marlow town. Under existing arrangements, Great Marlow and Marlow Bottom wards have 36 per cent fewer and 31 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (38 per cent fewer and 30 per cent more than the average by 2005). Marlow North and Marlow South wards have 1 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer electors per

councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent and 21 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

52 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the existing single-member Great Marlow and Marlow Bottom wards to form a new two-member Greater Marlow ward. In order to address the level of electoral inequality in the current Marlow South ward, the Council proposed a new two-member Marlow East ward comprising the part of the existing Marlow South ward to the east of the High Street, Portlands and the Court Garden Leisure complex. It proposed combining the remaining part of Marlow South ward with the existing Marlow North ward to form a new three-member Marlow West ward.

53 Under the District Council's proposals, the new Marlow East and Marlow West wards would have 15 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 11 per cent and 2 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005. Greater Marlow ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent fewer by 2005).

54 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Marlow Town Council proposed retaining the existing three-member Marlow North and Marlow South wards, and proposed amending the boundary between the two wards in order to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed transferring 553 electors from the area bounded by Wycombe Road and Bobmore Lane from Marlow North ward to a revised Marlow South ward. It argued that the current warding arrangements are "long standing, known and recognised by the two distinct communities". Under Marlow Town Council's proposals, the revised three-member Marlow North and Marlow South wards would each have 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially. However, as a result of developments and demographic changes which are expected to take place across the district over the next five years, the two wards are each projected to have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

55 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we were content to largely base our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals, subject to a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Marlow East and Marlow West wards. We noted Marlow Town Council's proposal to broadly retain the existing three-member Marlow North and Marlow South wards. However, under a council size of 60, the Marlow town area is entitled to a total of 5.5 councillors now, declining to 5.3 councillors by 2005. We concurred with the District Council's proposal to allocate a total of five councillors to the Marlow area, which we considered would most appropriately reflect the level of representation to which the town is entitled, and we were therefore not able to consider further the Town Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. While we were content to adopt the District Council's two-member Marlow East and three-member Marlow West wards, we proposed amending the boundary between the two wards in order to further improve electoral equality. We proposed enlarging the proposed Marlow West ward to include the area to the west of the High Street, between Portlands and the River Thames. Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Marlow East and Marlow West wards would have 11 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 7 per cent and 5 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005. Greater Marlow ward would contain 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent fewer by 2005).

56 At Stage Three, the District Council and Councillor Priestley expressed support for our draft recommendations for this area. Marlow Town Council and Councillor Collingwood objected to

our proposed ward names of Marlow East and Marlow West, arguing that the names are considered “confusing by the Town Council consultees”. It was proposed that they should be renamed Marlow South East and Marlow North & West wards respectively. In addition, the Town Council expressed concern at the proposed reduction of district level representation from six to five councillors. Great Marlow Parish Council objected to our proposed Greater Marlow ward, providing argumentation for single-member Great Marlow and Marlow Bottom wards. Ellesborough Parish Council and Bledlow cum Saunderton Parish Council expressed support for Great Marlow Parish Council’s proposals. Councillor Blanksby and five residents also objected to our proposed Greater Marlow ward. .

57 We note the strong opposition expressed by a number of respondents with regard to our proposed Greater Marlow ward. However, we have been unable to determine any alternative options for this area which would provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality. If the existing warding arrangements were to be retained as requested by a number of respondents in this area, Great Marlow and Marlow Bottom wards would contain 38 per cent fewer and 30 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005. We have not been persuaded by the evidence provided that such a high level of electoral inequality is justified. In relation to the concern expressed by Marlow Town council with regard to the reduction in councillors serving the area from six to five, as stated in our draft recommendations report, the Marlow Town area is entitled to a total of 5.3 councillors by 2005 under a council size of 60. We therefore consider that a allocation of five councillors to the Marlow area would most appropriately reflect the level of representation to which the town is entitled.

58 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendation for this area as final, as it would achieve reasonable electoral equality and has received some local support. However, we propose two modifications in relation to ward names. We have been persuaded to change our proposed names of Marlow East ward to Marlow South East ward and Marlow West ward to Marlow North & West ward, as proposed by Marlow Town Council and Councillor Collingwood. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. The proposed boundary between Marlow South East and Marlow North & West wards is illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A.

### **Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards**

59 Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards are situated in the south-east of the district, adjacent to South Buckinghamshire District and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. The two-member Bourne End-cum-Hedsor ward comprises Hedsor parish and Bourne End ward of Wooburn parish. The Wooburns ward, also represented by two councillors, comprises Wooburn Green and Wooburn Town wards of Wooburn parish. At present, Bourne End-cum-Hedsor ward has 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, while The Wooburns ward has 6 per cent fewer than the average (1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

60 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing two-member Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards, without amendment. We received no further representations in relation to this area at Stage One.

61 Having carefully considered the District Council’s proposals for this area, we were content to retain the existing Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards, without amendment. We considered that the two wards reflect local community identities and interests well, and noted

that the current arrangements provided for reasonable levels of electoral equality, both now and in five years' time. Under our draft recommendations Bourne End-cum-Hedsor and The Wooburns wards would have 8 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

62 At Stage Three, the District Council and Councillor Priestley expressed support for our draft recommendations to retain the existing wards in this area. We received no further representations in relation to this area at Stage Three. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Lane End & Piddington and West Wycombe & Sands wards**

63 The two wards of Lane End & Piddington and West Wycombe & Sands are situated in the centre of the district, broadly to the west of High Wycombe town. The two-member Lane End & Piddington ward comprises the parishes of Lane End and Piddington & Wheeler End. West Wycombe & Sands ward is currently represented by three councillors, and comprises West Wycombe parish together with the unparished Sands area of High Wycombe. At present, Lane End & Piddington ward has 21 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while West Wycombe & Sands ward has 8 per cent fewer than the average (19 per cent and 7 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

64 At Stage One, the District Council proposed enlarging the current Lane End & Piddington ward to include West Wycombe parish, from the existing West Wycombe & Sands ward, to form a new two-member The Dashwoods ward. It argued that the area includes the Dashwoods Estate, and noted that the Dashwood family have strong links with West Wycombe. The remaining part of the current West Wycombe & Sands ward, the unparished Sands area, would be combined with part of the existing Booker & Castlefield ward to form a new two-member Sands ward, as detailed below. Under the Council's proposals, the two-member The Dashwoods ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (2 per cent more than the average by 2005).

65 We received two further representations in relation to this area. West Wycombe Parish Council opposed the Council's proposed The Dashwoods ward, arguing that the parish "would be considerably disadvantaged as the parish of Lane End will demand a great deal of time and could well occupy both District Councillors on an almost full time basis". However, the Parish Council supported combining West Wycombe and Piddington & Wheeler End parishes in a single ward. Piddington & Wheeler End Parish Council objected to the name of the proposed The Dashwoods ward, and put forward the alternative name of Chiltern Rise ward.

66 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals. While we noted the concerns of West Wycombe Parish Council regarding its inclusion in a ward with Lane End parish, we considered that the Council's proposed The Dashwoods ward would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. We considered alternative warding arrangements for these parishes, but were unable to identify an appropriate arrangement which would provide reasonable levels of electoral equality. Based on a council size of 60, the electorate of Lane End parish would entitle it to between one and two district councillors, and we were unable to create an alternative two-member ward with acceptable levels of electoral equality in this area, given the electorates of the neighbouring

parishes in question. We recognised that there was some local opposition to the name of the Council's proposed The Dashwoods ward, and we noted that the Council itself had put forward the name as a working title. We were therefore content to rename the ward as Chiltern Rise ward, as proposed by Piddington & Wheeler Parish Council, for the purposes of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Chiltern Rise ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (2 per cent more than the average by 2005).

67 At Stage Three, the District Council, Councillor Priestley and David Lidington MP expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. West Wycombe Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposals, objecting to our proposed two-member Chiltern Rise ward.

68 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. We remain of the view that our draft recommendations would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area.

69 While we note the concerns of West Wycombe Parish Council, as argued in our draft recommendations report, we have considered alternative proposals, but have been unable to find a solution which would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. We therefore consider that the District Council's proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

70 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Bledlow-cum-Saunderton, Hambleden Valley and Stokenchurch wards**

71 The largely rural Bledlow-cum-Saunderton, Hambleden Valley and Stokenchurch wards are situated in the west of the district, adjacent to Oxfordshire County. The single-member Bledlow-cum-Saunderton ward comprises the parishes of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton and Radnage. Hambleden Valley ward, also represented by a single councillor, comprises the parishes of Fawley, Hambleden and Turville, together with Medmenham Village ward of Medmenham parish. Stokenchurch ward is currently represented by two councillors, and comprises the parishes of Ibstone and Stokenchurch. At present, Hambleden Valley and Stokenchurch wards have 7 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (17 per cent and 7 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). Bledlow-cum-Saunderton ward is currently relatively under-represented, with 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (12 per cent more by 2005).

72 At Stage One, the District Council proposed enlarging the single-member Hambleden Valley ward to include Ibstone parish, currently in Stokenchurch ward. It noted that Ibstone is situated on the Hambleden Valley side of the M40 Motorway and argued that the parish is "characteristically similar to other small villages in the Hambleden Valley ward". The Council proposed combining the remaining part of the current Stokenchurch ward, comprising Stokenchurch parish, with Radnage parish (currently in Bledlow-cum-Saunderton ward) to form a new two-member Stokenchurch & Radnage ward, arguing that "Radnage has closer ties with Stokenchurch than with its existing ward." Finally, Bledlow-cum-Saunderton parish would be combined with Bradenham parish, from the existing Naphill-cum-Bradenham ward, to form a new single-member Bledlow & Bradenham ward.

73 Under the District Council's proposals, Stokenchurch & Radnage ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. Bledlow & Bradenham and Hambleden Valley wards would have 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (10 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

74 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Ibstone Parish Council opposed the Council's proposed Hambleden Valley ward, arguing that the parish is "geographically a part of Stokenchurch" and shares few community ties with Hambleden.

75 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we adopted the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. We considered that the Council's proposals would address the relatively high levels of electoral inequality in both Bledlow-cum-Saunderton and Hambleden Valley wards, and we were content that they would continue to reflect local community identities well. We recognised the concerns expressed by Ibstone Parish Council in relation to the proposal to transfer the parish from Stokenchurch ward to a revised Hambleden Valley ward. However, we noted that the small rural community of Ibstone is physically detached from the larger settlement of Stokenchurch, and we were not been persuaded that the parish is sufficiently separate and distinct from Hambleden to justify retaining the high level of over-representation in the current Hambleden Valley ward. Under our draft recommendations, the single-member Bledlow & Bradenham and Hambleden Valley wards would have 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (10 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

76 At Stage Three, the District Council, Councillor Priestley and David Lidington MP expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. Bradenham Parish Council opposed our proposal to combine Bradenham and Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Councils in a new Bledlow & Bradenham ward, stating that, "It would only serve to split up the village of Walter's Ash even further by dividing it not only into three parishes but also into three wards". It proposed alternative district warding arrangements in this area, based on a revised external parish boundary for Bradenham Parish Council. Naphill & Walter's Ash Residents Association objected to our proposed Bledlow & Bradenham ward and expressed support for the proposals submitted by Bradenham Parish Council.

77 Having given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. In relation to the proposals by Bradenham Parish Council and supported by Naphill & Walter's Ash Residents' Association, we note that a parish boundary amendment is fundamental to these proposals and it is not within the remit of this PER for such an amendment to be made. We therefore advise that this issue be considered as part of a future parish review. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

### **Icknield, Lacey Green & Hampden and Princes Risborough wards**

78 The three wards of Icknield, Lacey Green & Hampden and Princes Risborough are situated in the north of the district, adjacent to Aylesbury Vale District. The single-member Icknield ward comprises the parishes of Ellesborough, Great & Little Kimble and Longwick-cum-Ilmer. Lacey Green & Hampden ward, also represented by a single councillor, comprises the parishes of Great & Little Hampden and Lacey Green. Princes Risborough ward is currently represented by three councillors and is coterminous with Princes Risborough Town. Icknield ward is

relatively under-represented at present, with 21 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (10 per cent more by 2005). Lacey Green & Hampden and Princes Risborough wards have 3 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the average and 1 per cent fewer respectively by 2005).

79 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing Icknield, Lacey Green & Hampden and Princes Risborough wards, without amendment. However, it proposed renaming Lacey Green & Hampden ward as Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens ward, and renaming Princes Risborough ward as The Risboroughs ward, in order to reflect more accurately the communities covered by the two wards. Under the Council's proposals, the three-member The Risboroughs ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The single-member Icknield and Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens wards would have 21 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (10 per cent more and equal to the average respectively by 2005).

80 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we adopted the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. We were content that the current arrangements continued to reflect local community identities and interests well, and provided reasonable levels of electoral equality which are forecast to further improve over the next five years. We were also content to put forward the Council's proposed ward name changes for further consultation.

81 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member The Risboroughs ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The single-member Icknield and Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens wards would have 21 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (10 per cent more and equal to the average respectively by 2005).

82 At Stage Three the District Council, Councillor Priestley and David Lidington MP expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area.

83 We received no further representations in relation to this area and are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Hughenden Valley, Kingshill and Naphill-cum-Bradenham wards**

84 Hughenden Valley, Kingshill and Naphill-cum-Bradenham wards are situated in the centre and east of the district, directly to the north of High Wycombe town. At present, each of the three wards is represented by a single councillor. Hughenden Valley ward is coterminous with Hughenden Valley ward of Hughenden parish, while Kingshill ward comprises Great Kingshill and Widmer End wards of Hughenden parish. Naphill-cum-Bradenham ward comprises Naphill ward of Hughenden parish, together with Bradenham parish. Hughenden Valley ward is relatively over-represented at present, with 21 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. This level of electoral inequality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and Hughenden Valley ward is forecast to have 25 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005. Kingshill and Naphill-cum-Bradenham wards are significantly under-represented at present, with 40 per cent and 25 per cent more electors per

councillor than the district average (38 per cent and 40 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

85 At Stage One, the District Council proposed transferring Bradenham parish from the current Naphill-cum-Bradenham ward to a new Bledlow & Bradenham ward, as detailed above. It proposed combining the remaining part of Naphill-cum-Bradenham ward, Naphill ward of Hughenden parish, with the current Hughenden Valley and Kingshill wards to form a new three-member Greater Hughenden ward, arguing that “community identity is well established through a common parish council.” Under the Council’s proposals, the new Greater Hughenden ward would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, both now and in five years’ time. We received no further representations in relation to this area at Stage One.

86 Having considered the Council’s proposals, we were content to put forward the District Council’s proposals as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. We concurred with the view that the areas to be combined in the proposed Greater Hughenden ward share a degree of community ties, and considered that the Council’s proposals would reflect local community identities well, while providing an improved level of electoral equality in this area. Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Greater Hughenden ward would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, both now and in five years’ time.

87 At Stage Three, the District Council, Councillor Priestley and David Lidington MP expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. As detailed above, Bradenham Parish Council opposed our creation of a new Bledlow & Bradenham ward and proposed alternative proposals which were supported by Naphill & Walter’s Ash Residents Association. Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. As detailed above, we are unable to consider the proposals outlined by Bradenham parish as they are based on an amendment to the external boundary of Bradenham Parish Council. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow, Loudwater and Tylers Green wards**

88 The four wards of Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow, Loudwater and Tylers Green are situated to the south and east of High Wycombe town, adjacent to the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and the districts of Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire. Little Marlow ward is currently represented by a single councillor, and is coterminous with Little Marlow parish. The single-member Loudwater ward is coterminous with Loudwater ward of Chepping Wycombe parish, while the two-member Flackwell Heath and Tylers Green wards are coterminous with Flackwell Heath and Tylers Green wards of Chepping Wycombe parish respectively. At present, Flackwell Heath ward has two detached parts, to the south and east of Loudwater ward, while Loudwater ward has a detached part to the south of Flackwell Heath ward.

89 Little Marlow ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 46 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. Electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and Little Marlow ward is forecast to have 48 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2005. Conversely, Loudwater ward has 56 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average at present, and is forecast to have 52 per cent more than the average in five years’ time. Flackwell Heath and Tylers Green wards have 16 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (11 per cent more and 13 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

90 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the existing Little Marlow ward with the Flackwell Heath area (currently in Flackwell Heath ward) and Wilfrids Wood Close from Loudwater ward to form a new three-member Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward. It also proposed combining the parts of the current Flackwell Heath ward to the east of Sniggs Wood and Upper Dearham's Farm and to the south of Boundary Road with Loudwater and Tylers Green wards of Chepping Wycombe parish to form a new three-member Tylers Green & Loudwater ward. As a result of these amendments, there would no longer be any detached wards in this area.

91 Under the District Council's proposals, Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while Tylers Green & Loudwater ward would have 7 per cent more than the average (9 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

92 We received one further submission in relation to this area. A resident of Tylers Green expressed concern regarding the Council's proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards, arguing that, under the Council's proposals, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council would cover a geographically large area.

93 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we largely based our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals. We considered that the Council's proposals would address the significant levels of electoral inequality in Little Marlow and Loudwater wards, and we were content that the proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards would reflect local community identities and interests well. In particular, we noted that the Council's proposals would resolve the prior anomaly of three detached wards. We, however, proposed amending the northern boundary of the Council's proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward, in order to improve levels of electoral equality further in this area. Under our draft recommendations, the area to the west of Oaktree Close, St Johns Close and Channer Drive and north of King's Wood would be transferred from the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward to a new Hazlemere South ward, as detailed below.

94 While we noted the concerns expressed by the resident of Tylers Green in relation to the large geographic area covered by Chepping Wycombe parish, this issue falls outside the remit of this review, and should be addressed as part of any future parish review carried out by the District Council. We considered alternative options for warding arrangements which would reduce the size of wards in this area, but were unable to identify an alternative proposal which would provide acceptable levels of electoral equality. However, we noted that our proposed amendment to the northern boundary of Tylers Green & Loudwater ward would result in a small reduction in the size of the proposed ward.

95 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Tylers Green & Loudwater ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (9 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

96 At Stage Three, the District Council objected to our proposal to combine the proposed Tylers Green North parish ward, the area to the west of Oaktree Close, Channer Drive and east of Greenacre Lane, with part of the proposed Hazlemere South ward, stating that, "the area selected has no direct road links with Hazlemere South and the residents of the area are very much a part of the community of Tylers Green". The District Council also proposed a modification to the

boundary between our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Ryemead wards proposing that, “by following the railway line to the point where it crosses Hammersley Lane, and then following the centre of that road to the A40 a better boundary is achieved”, thus placing the whole of The Pentlands within the Ryemead ward. These proposals were supported by Councillor Priestley.

97 Chepping Wycombe Parish Council objected to our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward, arguing that “the two communities are not linked”. It also expressed concern that “taking a wedge out of Tylers Green ward to create a new Hazlemere South ward does not seem logical. This would lead to confusion amongst Tylers Green residents who would find themselves split between two wards”. It also opposed our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward stating that, “residents are concerned that the village’s identity is being lost”. In addition, it expressed support for the existing warding arrangements in this area being retained, arguing that “the present ward arrangements identified the three villages of Tylers Green, Loudwater and Flackwell Heath”. In addition it proposed that the boundary between our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards should follow the M40.

98 Little Marlow Parish Council supported our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward. However, it also objected to any future amalgamation with Tylers Green and Loudwater.

99 Tylers Green Conservatives and The Penn & Tylers Green Society strongly objected to our proposed Loudwater & Tylers Green ward, arguing that it would fail to “reflect the identities and interests of local communities”. The view was expressed that Tylers Green and Loudwater share few community links, being “inconveniently separated by several miles and by Hammersley Lane”. Penn & Tylers Green Residents Association objected to the proposed inclusion of our proposed Tylers Green North parish ward in a proposed Hazlemere South ward. They also proposed that the existing Tylers Green ward be retained.

100 Having carefully considered the evidence and representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to some amendments. These amendments are based on the District Council’s proposals and a proposal put forward by Chepping Wycombe Parish Council and provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries and a better reflection of community identities and interests. We propose amending the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere South and the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater wards by retaining the existing ward boundary, as proposed by the District Council at Stage One. We note that, while this would result in a marginal deterioration in electoral equality to that achieved under our draft recommendations, this proposal gained wide local support at Stage Three and we have therefore been persuaded to modify our draft recommendations accordingly.

101 We also propose that the boundary between our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow wards should follow the M40, as proposed by Chepping Wycombe Parish Council. We consider that this amendment would have no effect on electoral equality and will provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. This amendment would also result in a revised parish ward boundary between the parish wards of Flackwell Heath and Loudwater. Following advice from Ordnance Survey, we also propose amending the parish ward boundary between Tylers Green and Loudwater parish wards. The proposed boundary will follow identifiable features thus providing for a more clearly identifiable boundary. This amendment will effect no electors.

102 In relation to the proposal to amend the boundary between our proposed Ryemead and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards, as proposed by the District Council, we are unable to make

such an amendment as it is a parish boundary and it is not within our remit to alter the external boundaries of parishes or recommend changes to the boundaries between parishes as part of a PER.

103 In relation to the views expressed by Tylers Green Conservatives and The Penn & Tylers Green Society. Regarding our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward, we have not been persuaded that Tylers Green and Loudwater should not be combined in a single ward. While we note that there is an element of separation between the two settlements, we note that they are linked by Hammersley Lane. In addition, we note that if the existing warding arrangements were to be retained in this area, Tylers Green and Loudwater wards would contain 13 per cent fewer and 52 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005.

104 We note the concerns expressed by Chepping Wycombe Parish Council in relation to our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward. However, we have not been persuaded that the two communities would be adversely affected by being combined in a single district ward. In addition, we note that if the existing wards were to be retained, Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow wards would contain 11 per cent more and 48 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005.

105 Under our final recommendations the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (8 per cent more than the average by 2005). Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (9 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Hazlemere Central, Hazlemere East and Hazlemere West wards**

106 The three wards of Hazlemere Central, Hazlemere East and Hazlemere West are situated in the east of the district and cover the small town of Hazlemere. Hazlemere Central, Hazlemere East and Hazlemere West wards are currently each represented by a single councillor, and are coterminous with Manor & Central, Hill Farm & Penn Road and Park & Brackley wards of Hazlemere parish respectively. At present, each of the three Hazlemere wards is relatively under-represented. Hazlemere Central and Hazlemere East wards each have 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently, while Hazlemere West ward has 18 per cent more than the average. These levels of electoral inequality are not expected to improve over the next five years, and Hazlemere Central, Hazlemere East and Hazlemere West wards are forecast to have 34 per cent, 16 per cent and 20 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005.

107 At Stage One, the District Council proposed new Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards, each represented by two councillors. The new Hazlemere North ward would comprise the existing Hazlemere West ward together with the part of Hazlemere Central ward to the north-west of the A404 Amersham Road. The remaining part of the current Hazlemere Central ward would be combined with Hazlemere East ward to form a new Hazlemere South ward. The Council argued that its proposed boundary would follow “a division along the A404 which is a natural dividing line between the two wards”. Under the Council’s proposals, Hazlemere North ward would have 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Hazlemere South ward would have 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 9 per cent fewer by 2005.

108 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we largely based our draft recommendations for Hazlemere on the District Council's proposals. We were content that the Council's proposals would reflect local community ties well, and would address the significant level of under-representation in Hazlemere at present. In particular, we noted that, based on its current electorate, Hazlemere is entitled to a total of 3.5 councillors (3.7 councillors by 2005) rather than three as at present, and we concurred with the Council's proposal to increase the total number of councillors representing Hazlemere to four. However, we proposed two minor amendments to the new Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards in order to improve levels of electoral equality further. We proposed transferring the development area to the south of Amersham Road and west of Magnolia Dene from Hazlemere South ward to the proposed Hazlemere North ward, and transferring the area to the west of Oaktree Close, St Johns Close and Channer Drive and north of King's Wood from the current Tylers Green ward to the proposed Hazlemere South ward, as detailed above.

109 Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Hazlemere North ward would have 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. Hazlemere South ward, also represented by two councillors, would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005.

110 At Stage Three, the District Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for this area, objecting to our proposed boundary between Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards, and arguing that the boundary line used should be the A404. It also objected to our proposal to include the proposed Tylers Green North Parish ward in a proposed Hazlemere South ward, as detailed above. These objections were reiterated by Councillor Priestley.

111 Tylers Green Conservatives and The Penn & Tylers Green Society strongly objected to our proposed Hazlemere South ward, as detailed above, while Penn & Tylers Green Residents Association expressed support for elements of our proposed Hazlemere South ward; however it objected to the inclusion of our proposed Tylers Green North parish ward, as detailed above.

112 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during the consultation period and in the light of this have decided to modify our draft recommendations. We propose amending the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere South and the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater wards by retaining the existing ward boundary, as proposed by the District Council at Stage One, as detailed above. We note that this proposal gained wide local support at Stage Three and have therefore been persuaded to modify our draft recommendations accordingly. In conjunction with this change, we also propose an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards, aligning the boundary to the A404 as proposed by the District Council at Stage One. We note that these modifications would result in a marginal deterioration of electoral equality; however, we consider that our final recommendations would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and community identity.

113 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Hazlemere North ward would have 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Hazlemere South ward would have 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 9 per cent fewer than the district average by 2005.

## **Booker & Castlefield, Downley and Oakridge & Tinkers Wood wards**

114 The three wards of Booker & Castlefield, Downley and Oakridge & Tinkers Wood are situated in the centre of the district, and cover the western part of High Wycombe town. Downley ward is currently represented by a single councillor and is coterminous with Downley parish. Booker & Castlefield and Oakridge & Tinkers Wood wards are currently each represented by three councillors, and form part of the unparished area of High Wycombe. Under the existing arrangements, Booker & Castlefield and Downley wards have 3 per cent more and 19 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12 per cent more and 15 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward is more significantly under-represented, with 14 per cent more electors per councillor than the average at present, increasing to 20 per cent more than the average over the next five years.

115 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new two-member Downley & Plomer Hill ward, comprising the existing Downley ward together with the part of the existing West Wycombe & Sands ward to the north of the London to Bicester railway line and the part of the existing Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward to the north-west of Downs Park. The Council argued that, while Downley parish has a strong identity, “it also has good community links with the adjoining Plomer Hill area”. The remaining part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward to the north of the railway line would be combined with the part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward to the north of the railway line to form a new two-member Disraeli ward. The Council proposed combining the part of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward to the south of the railway line and west of Desborough Avenue, Plumer Road and Carrington Road with the part of Booker & Castlefield ward to the east of New Road to form a new three-member Oakridge & Castlefield ward, arguing that the new ward would “provide better community identity”. The remaining parts of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward would be transferred to a new Abbey ward, as detailed below.

116 The District Council also proposed a new two-member Sands ward comprising the part of the unparished Sands area of West Wycombe & Sands ward to the south of the London to Bicester railway line, together with the part of Booker & Castlefield ward to the west of New Road and north of Squirrel Lane and Graham Drive. The Council noted that the Sands area is “a distinct community within the town of High Wycombe”. The remaining part of the current Booker & Castlefield ward would be combined with the part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward to the south of Cressex Road and east of Coronation Road, to form a new two-member Booker & Cressex ward. Under the District Council’s proposals, Disraeli ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to equal to the average by 2005. Booker & Cressex, Downley & Plomer Hill and Oakridge & Castlefield wards would have 3 per cent, 10 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

117 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. A resident of Downley opposed the Council’s proposal to include Downley parish in a new Downley & Plomer Hill ward, arguing that the parish is a primarily rural area which shares few community ties with the more urban High Wycombe. She noted that “Downley has always had a separate identity from the town of High Wycombe” and that residents of the parish continue to share stronger community ties with the West Wycombe and Piddington areas. She proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area, either retaining the current single-member Downley ward, or transferring Downley parish to the proposed The Dashwoods ward.

118 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations on the District Council’s proposals, subject to one minor boundary

amendment. We were content that the Council's proposals would reflect the identities and interests of the various communities in the western part of High Wycombe well, and would utilise strong natural boundaries, such as the London to Bicester railway line. We also noted that the Council's proposals would provide for improved levels of electoral equality in this area, in particular addressing the significant level of under-representation in the current Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward. However, we proposed amending the eastern boundary of the proposed Booker & Cressex ward to run to the rear of properties on the eastern side of New Road, and then to the rear of properties on the south of Cressex Road. This minor amendment would unite both sides of New Road in the proposed Booker & Cressex ward, and would retain both sides of Cressex Road and the adjacent industrial estate in the proposed Abbey ward. We considered that this change provided for a more clearly identifiable boundary, and noted that it also provided a small improvement in electoral equality in the proposed Booker & Cressex ward. While we recognised the concerns expressed by the resident of Downley regarding the inclusion of Downley parish in the proposed Downley & Plomer Hill ward, we noted that the southern part of the parish comprises areas of housing which have developed from within the town of High Wycombe, and which share excellent communication links with the Plomer Hill community to the north of the London to Bicester railway line. We considered that Downley parish shares strong community links with the Plomer Hill area, and were content that the Council's proposals would reflect local community identities and interests well.

119 Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Disraeli ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to equal to the district average by 2005. The two-member Booker & Cressex and Downley & Plomer Hill wards would have 6 per cent and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average each by 2005. The three-member Oakridge & Castlefield ward would have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (4 per cent fewer by 2005).

120 At Stage Three, the District Council broadly supported our proposals for this area, subject to some minor boundary amendments. It proposed that Little Close be transferred to the proposed Abbey ward, arguing that, "Little Close is accessed only from Cressex Road in Abbey ward". It also proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Oakridge & Castlefield wards to include 120 Desborough Avenue in Abbey ward, "to retain the run of Desborough Avenue addresses within Abbey ward". It reiterated its Stage One proposals in relation to the boundary between our proposed Disraeli and Downley & Plomer Hill wards arguing that our proposed boundary, "cuts through properties and gardens".

121 Having given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to two minor amendments. Firstly, we propose amending the boundary between our proposed Abbey and Oakridge & Castlefield wards to incorporate 120 Desborough Avenue in Abbey ward, as proposed by the District Council. We also propose transferring Little Close to the proposed Abbey ward from Booker & Cressex ward in as much as it can only be accessed from Cressex Road in Abbey ward. This proposal would have no effect on electoral equality and would provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries. In relation to the District Council's objection to a section of the proposed boundary between our proposed Downley & Plomer Hill and Disraeli wards, we recognise that the boundary partially divides gardens; however it retains the whole of Heathercroft Road and The Pastures addresses in our proposed Disraeli ward, which we consider provides for a better reflection of community identity. These proposals were reiterated by Councillor Priestley.

122 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Bowerdean & Daws Hill, Cressex & Frogmoor and Green Hill & Totteridge wards**

123 The three wards of Bowerdean & Daws Hill, Cressex & Frogmoor and Green Hill & Totteridge are situated in the centre of the district. All three wards are currently represented by three councillors each and cover the southern and central parts of the unparished area of High Wycombe town. At present, Bowerdean & Daws Hill and Green Hill & Totteridge wards have 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Cressex & Frogmoor ward currently has equal to the average number of electors per councillor, and is expected to continue to have equal to the average number of electors per councillor in five years' time.

124 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining parts of the existing Oakridge & Tinkers Wood and Cressex & Frogmoor wards to form a new two-member Disraeli ward, as detailed above. The Council also proposed a new three-member Abbey ward, comprising the remaining part of Cressex & Frogmoor ward to the south of the London to Bicester railway line, less the areas to the north of Cressex Road and east of Coronation Road, together with the parts of Oakridge & Tinkers Wood ward to the east of Desborough Avenue, Plumer Road and Carrington Road. The new Abbey ward would also include the part of the existing Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward to the south of the London to Bicester railway line, and the parts of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward to the west of Florida Street and First Street and the Queen's Road area to the west of Totteridge Avenue. The Council argued that Wycombe Abbey School is "a physical feature dominating the ward".

125 The District Council also proposed a new three-member Terriers & Amersham Hill ward comprising the part of the current Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward to the north of the London to Bicester railway line and west of Lucas Road and Totteridge Avenue, together with the existing Green Hill & Totteridge ward less the area to the east of Highworth Close. The Council argued that the proposed ward would comprise "the community on either side of the arterial A404 as it runs from Terriers to the centre of High Wycombe". The remaining part of Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward to the north of the London to Bicester railway line, less the West Drive area, would form a new two-member Bowerdean ward. The remaining parts of Bowerdean & Daws Hill and Green Hill & Totteridge wards would be transferred to a new Totteridge ward, as detailed below.

126 Under the District Council's proposals the new Abbey, Bowerdean and Terriers & Amersham Hill wards would have 3 per cent, 9 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). We received no further representations in relation to this area at Stage One.

127 Having carefully considered the representations received, we based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, subject to some minor boundary modifications. We were content that the Council's proposals would better reflect local community identities and interests than the current warding arrangements in these areas, and would also maintain reasonable levels of electoral equality. In particular, we noted that the proposals would utilise the London to Bicester railway line as a boundary in the centre of High

Wycombe town, and we considered that the proposed Bowerdean and Terriers & Amersham Hill wards would delineate the distinct and discrete communities to the north of the railway line well.

128 However, we proposed a number of minor modifications to the Council's proposals, in order to reflect local community ties and further improve electoral equality. As detailed above, we proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Booker & Cressex wards in order to retain both sides of New Road in Booker & Cressex ward, and both sides of Cressex Road and the adjacent industrial estate in Abbey ward. We also proposed retaining the Queen's Road area of the current Keeps Hill & Hicks Farm ward within a new Ryemead ward, as detailed below. We consider that this amendment provided a more clearly identifiable boundary in the east of the proposed Abbey ward, and noted that it would result in improved levels of electoral equality in the proposed Ryemead ward. Finally, we also proposed retaining the part of Green Hill & Totteridge ward bounded by Highworth Close and Wynbury Drive, less part of Old Hardenwaye, in the proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill ward. This amendment united the communities adjoining the northern part of Totteridge Lane within the proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill ward, and we noted that it also provided for improved levels of electoral equality in both Terriers & Amersham Hill and Totteridge wards. We adopted the Council's proposed Bowerdean ward as part of our draft recommendations without amendment.

129 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Terriers & Amersham Hill ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. The three-member Abbey and two-member Bowerdean wards would have 7 per cent and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 5 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005.

130 At Stage Three, the District Council broadly supported our proposals for this area, but proposed some minor amendments. As detailed above, it proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between the proposed Abbey and Booker & Cressex wards and Abbey and Oakridge & Castlefield wards. These proposals would have no effect on electoral equality. It also proposed the reiteration of its Stage One proposals in relation to the boundary between the proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill and Totteridge wards resulting in the "area adjoining Totteridge Common and containing the Dolphin Public House" being transferred from our proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill ward to our proposed Totteridge ward arguing that, "this area is traditionally viewed by local residents as Totteridge". These proposals were supported by Councillor Priestley.

131 Having given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to two minor amendments. As detailed above, we propose amending the boundary between our proposed Abbey and Oakridge & Castlefield wards to incorporate 120 Desborough Avenue into Abbey ward, and we also propose transferring Little Close to the proposed Abbey ward from Booker & Cressex ward as we concur with the view that it can only be accessed from Cressex Road in Abbey ward. In addition, we propose an amendment to the proposed boundary between Terriers & Amersham Hill and Bowerdean wards, in order to reflect the District Council's intended boundary under its Stage One submission. This change will have no effect on electoral equality.

132 In relation to the District Council's proposed amendment between the proposed Totteridge and Terriers & Amersham Hill wards to reflect its Stage One proposals, we note the concerns of the District Council; however, under these proposals, Totteridge and Terriers & Amersham Hill

wards would contain 8 per cent more and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005. We consider that these levels of electoral equality can be improved and have not been persuaded that our proposals would have an adverse effect on the local community.

133 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Abbey, Terriers & Amersham Hill and Bowerdean wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Keep Hill & Hicks Farm and Marsh & Micklefield wards**

134 The three-member Keep Hill & Hicks Farm and Marsh & Micklefield wards are situated in the centre of the district, and form part of the unparished area of High Wycombe. At present Keep Hill & Hicks Farm and Marsh & Micklefield wards are relatively over-represented, with 14 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. However, these levels of electoral equality are forecast to improve slightly over the next five years, and the two wards are expected to have 7 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively by 2005.

135 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new two-member Ryemead ward comprising the parts of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm and Marsh & Micklefield wards to the south of the London to Bicester railway line, less the Queens Road and Florida Street areas of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward, as detailed above. The part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward to the north of the railway line and east of Hicks Farm Rise and Hennerton Way would be combined with the part of the current Bowerdean & Daws Hill ward to the east of West Drive and the part of Green Hill & Totteridge ward to the east of Highworth Close to form a new two-member Totteridge ward. The part of the current Marsh & Micklefield ward to the north of the railway line would be combined with the part of Keep Hill & Hicks Farm ward to the east of Hicks Farm Rise and Hennerton Way to form a new two-member Micklefield ward.

136 Under the District Council's proposals, Totteridge ward would have 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average initially, improving to 8 per cent more than the average by 2005. Micklefield and Ryemead wards would have 6 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (9 per cent more and 8 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005). We received no further representations in relation to this area at Stage One.

137 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we were content to base our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, subject to some minor boundary modifications. We considered that the Council's proposals would provide an appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and noted that its proposals would reflect the distinct communities either side of the London to Bicester railway line. However, we proposed some minor modifications to the proposed wards, in order to provide for clearer boundaries, and to improve further levels of electoral equality. As detailed above, we proposed retaining the Queen's Road area within the proposed Ryemead ward, and retaining the Highworth Close and Rush Brooke Close area in the proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill ward. In order to further improve levels of electoral equality in the proposed Micklefield and Totteridge wards, we also proposed transferring Hennington Way and part of Hicks Farm Rise from Micklefield ward to the proposed Totteridge ward.

138 Under our draft recommendations, the two-member Micklefield and Ryemead wards would have 11 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005). Totteridge ward, also represented by two councillors, would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005.

139 At Stage Three, the District Council broadly supported our proposals for this area, subject to some minor amendments. The District Council proposed a modification to the boundary between our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Ryemead wards, proposing that, “by following the railway line to the point where it crosses Hammersley Lane, and then following the centre of that road to the A40 a better boundary is achieved”, thus placing the whole of the Pentlands within the Ryemead ward. It also proposed moving the “area adjoining Totteridge Common and containing the Dolphin Public House” from our proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill ward and placing it in our proposed Totteridge ward to reflect community links, as detailed above. It also reiterated its Stage One proposals in relation to the boundary between our proposed Micklefield and Totteridge wards.

140 Having given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. In relation to the District Council’s minor amendments to the proposed Totteridge and Terriers & Amersham Hill wards to reflect its Stage One proposals, we note that under these proposals, Totteridge and Terriers & Amersham Hill wards would contain 8 per cent more and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005. As detailed above, we consider that these levels of electoral equality can be improved and have not been persuaded that our proposals would have an adverse effect on the local community.

141 In relation to the proposal for amending the boundary between our proposed Ryemead and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards, we note that this would result in a modification to the external boundary of Chepping Wycombe parish. We are unable to make such an amendment as it is not within our remit to alter the external boundaries of parishes or recommend changes to the boundaries between parishes as part of a PER.

142 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in this area would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

## **Electoral Cycle**

143 We received only one representation in relation to the District Council’s electoral cycle at Stage One. The Council itself stated that it “has a strong preference for elections of the whole Council every four years to continue”. In light of this view we recommended no change to the current cycle of whole-council elections.

144 At Stage Three, the District Council reiterated its support for the retention of the existing electoral cycle to be retained. No further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## Conclusions

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

- We propose renaming the proposed Marlow East ward as Marlow South East ward and Marlow West ward as Marlow North & West ward.
- We propose retaining the existing ward boundary between the proposed Hazlemere South and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards.
- We propose aligning the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards to follow the A404.
- We propose that the boundary between the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow wards should follow the M40.
- We propose transferring 120 Desborough Avenue from the proposed Oakridge & Castlefield ward to the proposed Abbey ward.
- We propose transferring Little Close from the proposed Booker & Cressex ward to the proposed Abbey ward.

146 We conclude that, in Wycombe:

- A council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 28 wards, four fewer than present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, and five wards should be retain their existing boundaries;
- the whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

147 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	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	32	28	32	28
Average number of electors per councillor	2,035	2,035	2,056	2,056
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	20	5	19	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	1	9	0

148 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 the district average from 20 to five. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### **Final Recommendation**

Wycombe District Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 28 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 Whole Council should be elected every four years.

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

149 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 Marlow Town and the parishes of Chepping Wycombe and Hazlemere to reflect the proposed district wards.

150 Marlow Town Council is currently represented by 12 councillors serving two wards: North ward (returning seven councillors) and South ward (returning five councillors). At Stage One the District Council proposed new Marlow East and Marlow West district wards, while Marlow Town Council itself proposed broadly retaining the existing Marlow North and Marlow South wards. In our draft recommendations, we proposed adopting the District Council's proposals for Marlow, subject to a minor boundary amendment between the two wards. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we proposed creating new East and West wards of Marlow town to reflect the proposed district ward boundary. We proposed that East ward should return five town councillors, and that West ward should return seven councillors.

151 At Stage Three, the District Council expressed support for our draft recommendations for this area. Marlow Town Council and Councillor Collingwood objected to our proposed ward names of Marlow East and Marlow West, arguing that the names are considered “confusing by the Town Council consultees”. It was proposed that they should be renamed Marlow South East and Marlow North & West wards respectively. The Town Council also supported our proposed retention of 12 town councillors, while Councillor Collingwood questioned our proposed number of town councillors together with the allocation between the two wards. He argued that, if the current number of councillors was to be retained, then “there appears an inequality between the two wards”.

152 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 as final. We have however, been persuaded to change our proposed district ward names of Marlow East ward to Marlow South East ward and Marlow West ward to Marlow North & West ward, as proposed by Marlow Town Council and Councillor Collingwood. In addition, we propose changing the names of the town wards accordingly. In relation to the comments made by Councillor Collingwood in relation to the number of town councillors representing Marlow Town Council, we note that there is no legal requirement for the achievement of electoral equality at parish council level. However, under the current and proposed council size of 12, the proposed South East ward would be entitled to 4.5 town councillors and the proposed North & West ward would be entitled to 7.4 town councillors. We therefore allocated the councillors accordingly. In addition, we note that the retention of 12 town councillors has been supported by the Town Council.

**Final Recommendation**

Marlow Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: South East ward (returning five councillors) and North & West ward (returning seven councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary in Marlow, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

153 The parish of Chepping Wycombe is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Flackwell Heath ward, Loudwater ward and Tylers Green ward, each returning five councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed transferring the Flackwell Heath area to a new Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward, and combining the Loudwater and Tylers Green areas to form a new Tylers Green & Loudwater ward. In our draft recommendations, we adopted the Council’s proposed Little Marlow & Flackwell Heath ward without amendment. However, we proposed transferring part of the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater ward to a revised Hazlemere South ward.

154 As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we proposed amending the boundary between Flackwell Heath and Loudwater wards of Chepping Wycombe parish, and creating new Tylers Green North and Tylers Green South wards of Chepping Wycombe parish. The boundary between the revised Flackwell Heath and Loudwater wards of Chepping Wycombe parish would reflect the proposed boundary between the new Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater district wards, and the boundary between the new Tylers Green North and Tylers Green South wards of Chepping Wycombe parish would reflect the proposed boundary between Tylers Green & Loudwater ward and the new Hazlemere South district ward. The revised Flackwell Heath ward would return six councillors, and the revised Loudwater ward

would return four councillors. The new Tylers Green North ward would return one councillor, and Tylers Green South ward would return four councillors.

155 At Stage Three, the District Council, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council, Tylers Green Conservatives, The Penn & Tylers Green Society and Penn & Tylers Green Residents Association objected to our proposal to combine the proposed Tylers Green North Parish ward with part of the proposed Hazlemere South ward. In addition, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council proposed that the boundary between our proposed Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow and Tylers Green & Loudwater wards should follow the M40.

156 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of broadly confirming our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation as final, subject to three minor amendments. We propose amending the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere South and the proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater wards by retaining the existing ward boundary, as proposed by the District Council at Stage One. The existing parish ward of Tylers Green would therefore remain largely unchanged, subject to a minor amendment to its southern boundary with Loudwater parish ward. Following advice from Ordnance Survey and consultation with the District Council, we propose amending the parish ward boundary between Tylers Green and Loudwater parish wards in order to align the existing boundary to ground detail.

157 We also propose that the boundary between our proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater and Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow district wards should follow the M40 as proposed by Chepping Wycombe Parish Council. Consequently this amendment would result in a revised parish ward boundary between the parish wards of Flackwell Heath and Loudwater.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Chepping Wycombe Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Flackwell Heath ward (returning six councillors), Loudwater ward (returning four councillors) and Tylers Green ward (returning 5 councillors). The revised Tylers Green and Loudwater parish wards would form a new Tylers Green & Loudwater district ward, while Flackwell Heath parish ward would form part of a new Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

158 The parish of Hazlemere is currently served by 12 councillors, representing three wards: Hill Farm & Penn Road ward (returning four councillors), Manor & Central ward (returning four councillors) and Park & Brackley ward (returning four councillors). At Stage One, the District Council proposed two new district wards for Hazlemere, Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South. In our draft recommendations, we adopted the District Council's proposals, subject to a minor amendment to the boundary between the two wards. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we proposed creating new North and South wards of Hazlemere parish to reflect the proposed district wards. We proposed that North ward should return seven councillors, and that South ward should return five councillors.

159 At Stage Three, the District Council objected to our proposed boundary between Hazlemere South and Hazlemere North wards, arguing that the boundary line used should be the A404. It also objected to our proposal to combine the proposed Tylers Green North Parish ward with part of the proposed Hazlemere South ward, as detailed above.

160 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of broadly confirming our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation final, subject to one amendment. We propose an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards, aligning the boundary to the A404 as proposed by the District Council at Stage One. This amendment would also result in a revised parish ward boundary between the parish wards of North and South in Hazlemere parish.

**Final Recommendation**

Hazlemere Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North ward (returning six councillors) and South ward (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted inside the back cover of this report.

161 In our final 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 Wycombe*

## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

163 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 2 January 2002.

164 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  
Democracy & Local Leadership Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Wycombe: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wycombe area.

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed boundaries for Marlow South East and Marlow North & West wards

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

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for Wycombe: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed boundaries for Marlow South East and Marlow North and West wards*