

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Dacorum in Hertfordshire

Further electoral review

August 2006

Translations and other formats

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What is the Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Ann M. Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews 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 and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Dacorum is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. This review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. As a result of the poor levels of electoral inequality that existed in 2003, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake an electoral review of Dacorum borough on 10 February 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, four wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average. Since the last review Apsley ward has seen extensive growth, which has resulted in it having a particularly poor variance, with 46% more electors than the borough average; this is expected to rise to 84% more by 2009, if the existing arrangements remain in place.

Every review is conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	17 May 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	9 August 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	29 November 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	7 March 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

During Stage One we proposed a reduction in council size of one to 51. We made amendments to 21 of the borough ward boundaries based on a combination of the Borough Council's, the Liberal Democrats' and the Labour Group's proposals with our own amendments. We received limited community identity arguments at Stage One and therefore made amendments to the existing warding arrangements in order to improve electoral equality.

Responses to consultation

During Stage Three we received 207 representations in response to our draft recommendations. The Borough Council put forward alternative warding arrangements for Hemel Hempstead. We received particular opposition to our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. We also received a number of comments regarding the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead. We conducted a period of further consultation on these areas of Hemel Hempstead and received a further 126 responses.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The Council has forecast an increase in electorate of approximately 1% between 2004 and 2009, from 106,238 to 107,372, most of which is anticipated in Apsley ward. At Stage Three we received two responses about the 2009 electorate forecast for Aldbury parish, both considering that a planned development had not been included in the borough council's projected figures. After contacting the Borough Council regarding this, it confirmed that it was not included in the figures as permission had not yet been granted for the development. Therefore we remain satisfied that the forecast figures remain the best estimates currently available.

Council size

We proposed reducing council size by one to 51 in our draft recommendations. At Stage Three this council size was accepted and we received no other comments regarding this. Therefore we remain content that a council size of 51 will provide the borough with the best representation.

General analysis

We are endorsing our draft recommendations in all but three areas in the borough. We are proposing changes in the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead and to our draft proposal for Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. We are proposing to revert to the existing Aldbury & Wigginton ward.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 26 September 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Final recommendations: summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Adeyfield East	2	Part of the existing Adeyfield East ward
2 Adeyfield West	2	The existing Adeyfield West ward; part of the existing Adeyfield East ward
3 Aldbury & Wigginton	1	The existing Aldbury & Wigginton ward (the parishes of Aldbury and Wigginton)
4 Apsley & Corner Hall	3	The existing Apsley ward; part of the existing Corner Hall ward
5 Ashridge	1	The existing Ashridge ward (the parishes of Little Gaddesden and Nettleden with Potten End)
6 Bennetts End	2	Part of the existing Bennetts End ward; part of the existing Corner Hall ward
7 Berkhamsted Castle	2	Part of the existing Berkhamsted Castle ward (the proposed Berkhamsted Castle parish ward of Berkhamsted Parish)
8 Berkhamsted East	2	The existing Berkhamsted East ward and part of the existing Berkhamsted Castle ward (the proposed Berkhamsted East parish ward of Berkhamsted Parish)
9 Berkhamsted West	2	The existing Berkhamsted West ward (the existing Berkhamsted West parish ward of Berkhamsted parish)
10 Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	The existing Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield ward (the parishes of Bovingdon, Chipperfield and Flaunden and an unparished area)
11 Boxmoor	3	The existing Boxmoor ward; part of the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward; part of the existing Chaulden & Shrubhill ward; part of the existing Warners End ward
12 Chaulden & Warners End	3	Part of the existing Chaulden & Shrubhill ward; part of the existing Warners End ward
13 Gadebridge	2	The existing Gadebridge ward; part of the existing Warners End ward
14 Grove Hill & Piccotts End	3	The existing Grovehill ward; part of the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward; part of the existing Adeyfield East ward
15 Hemel Central	2	Part of the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward; part of the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
16 Highfield	2	Part of the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward
17 Kings Langley	2	The existing Kings Langley ward
18 Leverstock Green	3	The existing Leverstock Green ward; part of the existing Bennetts End ward
19 Nash Mills	1	The existing Nash Mills ward (the parish of Nash Mills and an unparished area)
20 Northchurch	1	The existing Northchurch ward (the parish of Northchurch)
21 Tring Central	2	The existing Tring Central ward; part of the existing Tring East ward; part of the existing Tring West ward (the proposed Tring Bunstrux parish ward of Tring parish)
22 Tring East	1	Part of the existing Tring East ward and part of the existing Tring West ward (the proposed Tring Dunsley parish ward of Tring parish)
23 Tring West & Rural	2	Part of the existing Tring West ward (the proposed Tring Miswell parish ward of Tring parish and Tring Rural parish)
24 Watling	2	The existing Watling ward (the parishes of Flamstead, Great Gaddesden and Markyate)
25 Woodhall Farm	2	The existing Woodhall ward; part of the existing Adeyfield East ward

Notes:

- 1 The borough comprises 16 parishes and the unparished area of Hemel Hempstead.
- 2 The maps accompanying this 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. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Adeyfield East	2	3,965	1,983	-5	4,022	2,011	-4
2	Adeyfield West	2	4,061	2,031	-3	3,983	1,992	-5
3	Aldbury & Wigginton	1	1,862	1,862	-11	1,847	1,847	-12
4	Apsley & Corner Hall	3	5,927	1,976	-5	6,699	2,233	6
5	Ashridge	1	2,166	2,166	4	2,168	2,168	3
6	Bennetts End	2	4,482	2,241	8	4,483	2,242	6
7	Berkhamsted Castle	2	4,567	2,284	10	4,500	2,250	7
8	Berkhamsted East	2	4,431	2,216	6	4,467	2,234	6
9	Berkhamsted West	2	4,149	2,075	0	4,399	2,200	4
10	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	6,331	2,110	1	6,262	2,087	-1

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Boxmoor	3	6,003	2,001	-4	6,305	2,102	0
12	Chaulden & Warners End	3	6,934	2,311	11	6,616	2,205	5
13	Gadebridge	2	4,026	2,013	-3	4,026	2,013	-4
14	Grovehill & Piccotts End	3	5,958	1,986	-5	5,871	1,957	-7
15	Hemel Central	2	3,928	1,964	-6	4,133	2,067	-2
16	Highfield	2	3,928	1,964	-6	4,037	2,019	-4
17	Kings Langley	2	3,889	1,945	-7	3,903	1,952	-7
18	Leverstock Green	3	6,750	2,250	8	6,671	2,224	6
19	Nash Mills	1	2,098	2,098	1	2,123	2,123	1
20	Northchurch	1	2,191	2,191	5	2,220	2,220	5
21	Tring Central	2	3,978	1,989	-5	3,974	1,987	-6

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22	Tring East	1	2,179	2,179	5	2,180	2,180	4
23	Tring West & Rural	2	3,944	1,972	-5	3,979	1,990	-5
24	Watling	2	4,136	2,068	-1	4,159	2,080	-1
25	Woodhall Farm	2	4,357	2,179	5	4,345	2,173	3
	Totals	51	106,238	-	-	107,372	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,083	-	-	2,105	-

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Dacorum.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make ongoing assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Dacorum. Dacorum's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1998. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 16 October 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Dacorum is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful both in understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission 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 any parish and town councils in the borough. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the borough or of parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make-up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews, and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just address any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from another's. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an

unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

14 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	17 May 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	9 August 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	29 November 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	7 March 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 17 May 2005, when we wrote to Dacorum Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hertfordshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Hertfordshire Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Dacorum Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 August 2005.

16 During Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

17 Stage Three began on 29 November 2005 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Dacorum in Hertfordshire*, and ended on 6 March 2006.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. During this stage we conducted a period of further consultation on wards within the Hemel Hempstead area, as we considered that alternative options for these areas were available to us and we did not consider we could recommend these in our final recommendations without first consulting with interested parties. It is now for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an electoral change Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The borough of Dacorum is partially parished and comprises the large urban settlement of Hemel Hempstead to the east and the smaller parished urban areas of Tring and Berkhamsted to the north-west and south-west respectively. Dacorum covers an area of 21,020 hectares, combining agricultural, industrial and residential areas on the fringe of the Chiltern Hills.

22 The electorate of the borough is 106,238 (December 2004). The Borough Council presently has 52 members who are elected from 27 wards, 21 of which are relatively urban and the remainder are predominantly rural. Four wards are represented by three members, 17 by two members and six by a single member. The borough average councillor:elector ratio is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a borough average of 2,043 electors (106,238 divided by 52), which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,065 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (107,372 divided by 52).

23 During the last review of Dacorum the Borough Council forecast there would be an increase of 3,788 electors between 1996 and 2001. However, electorate growth since that time has resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that, under these arrangements, electoral equality across the borough met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in one ward varies by more than 30% from the borough average. The councillor for Apsley ward represents 46% more electors than the borough average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Dacorum Borough Council on 10 February 2005.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Adeyfield East	2	4,405	2,203	8	4,462	2,231	8
2	Adeyfield West	2	3,702	1,851	-9	3,624	1,812	-12
3	Aldbury & Wigginton	1	1,862	1,862	-9	1,847	1,847	-11
4	Apsley	1	2,988	2,988	46	3,804	3,804	84
5	Ashridge	1	2,166	2,166	6	2,168	2,168	5
6	Bennetts End	2	4,332	2,166	6	4,352	2,176	5
7	Berkhamsted Castle	2	4,855	2,428	19	4,855	2,428	18
8	Berkhamsted East	2	4,137	2,069	1	4,108	2,054	-1
9	Berkhamsted West	2	4,155	2,078	2	4,403	2,202	7
10	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	6,331	2,110	3	6,262	2,087	1

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Boxmoor	2	4,358	2,179	7	4,348	2,174	5
12	Chaulden & Shrubhill	2	3,861	1,931	-6	3,804	1,902	-8
13	Corner Hall	2	4,392	2,196	7	4,333	2,167	5
14	Gadebridge	2	3,894	1,947	-5	3,894	1,947	-6
15	Grovehill	3	5,744	1,915	-6	5,657	1,886	-9
16	Hemel Hempstead Central	2	3,923	1,962	-4	4,188	2,094	1
17	Highfields & St Pauls	3	5,272	1,757	-14	5,397	1,799	-13
18	Kings Langley	2	3,889	1,945	-5	3,903	1,952	-5
19	Leverstock Green	3	5,445	1,815	-11	5,364	1,788	-13
20	Nash Mills	1	2,098	2,098	3	2,123	2,123	3
21	Northchurch	1	2,191	2,191	7	2,220	2,220	8

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Dacorum borough

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Tring Central	2	3,849	1,925	-6	3,870	1,935	-6
23 Tring East	1	2,104	2,104	3	2,063	2,063	0
24 Tring West	2	4,148	2,074	2	4,200	2,100	2
25 Warners End	2	3,699	1,850	-9	3,674	1,837	-11
26 Watling	2	4,136	2,068	1	4,159	2,080	1
27 Woodhall	2	4,302	2,151	5	4,290	2,145	4
Totals	52	106,238	-	-	107,372	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,043	-	-	2,065	-

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2004 electors in Highfields & St Pauls ward had 14% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while electors in Apsley ward had 46% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Dacorum Borough Council.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 17 submissions were received, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Dacorum Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats). We received representations from the Labour group on the Borough Council (the Labour Group), who submitted a partial scheme, and Kings Langley Labour Party. We also received submissions from four parish councils and one town council, three local councillors, one neighbourhood association and four 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 Dacorum in Hertfordshire*.

26 Our draft recommendations were based on a combination of the Borough Council's, Liberal Democrats' and Labour Group's proposals with some of our own amendments in order to form wards that secure good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries. We considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposals in Hemel Hempstead provided strong boundaries and relatively good electoral equality and were a good basis to start from. We proposed retaining the existing rural wards as proposed by the Borough Council and Liberal Democrats as these provided good levels of electoral equality and it is not possible to improve on them without dividing small villages which we considered would not reflect community identities. However, we received little argument in general for the proposed wards. The Borough Council provided no argument for its wards, while the Liberal Democrats and Labour Group did provide some although it was not always compelling. We therefore sought to improve upon the levels of electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Dacorum Borough Council should be served by 51 councillors, one fewer than at present, representing 25 wards, two fewer than at present
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries
- there should be new warding arrangements for Berkhamsted and Tring to reflect the proposed borough wards

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in none of the 25 wards varying by more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 7% from the average by 2009.

4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 207 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Borough Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Dacorum Borough Council

29 The Borough Council supported our proposals in Berkhamsted town and the rural areas of the borough. It also supported our proposed Woodhall Farm ward in Hemel Hempstead. It objected to our proposals in the rest of the borough and proposed alternative arrangements which it stated was in order to better reflect community identities. The Borough Council accepted the proposed council size of 51 and based its alternative wards on this council size.

Political groups

30 The Labour Group on the Borough Council (the Labour Group) proposed alternative wards for the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead. Dacorum Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) supported our draft recommendations in all but the three wards of Nash Mills, Belswains & Bennetts End and Leverstock Green.

Members of Parliament

31 Two submissions were received from Members of Parliament. Mike Penning MP opposed our proposals for the Boxmoor and Chaulden areas. He also considered that Kings Langley parish council wards should be amended. Tobias Ellwood MP considered that Aldbury & Wigginton ward should not be combined with Tring East ward.

Parish and town councils

32 We received five submissions from parish and town councils. Kings Langley Parish Council noted our draft recommendations but made no further representation. Northchurch Parish Council agreed with our draft recommendations for Northchurch ward. Tring Town Council supported our draft recommendations for Tring. Aldbury and Wigginton parish councils opposed our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward.

Other representations

33 A further 197 representations were received from local political parties, local councillors, residents' associations and local residents. Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association considered that we should adopt the Borough Council's Stage One proposals in full, or if not then its Stage Three proposal instead. It also suggested we amend Kings Langley Parish Council's warding arrangements.

34 South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party opposed our draft recommendations for our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton and Tring town wards.

35 We received five submissions from local councillors. Councillor Anderson (Kings Langley ward) supported our proposed Kings Langley and Nash Mills wards. He supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for the borough. However, he also made comments regarding our proposed wards for Hemel Hempstead and Tring as well as Kings Langley's parish arrangements. Councillor Marshall (Boxmoor ward) objected to our proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield and Chaulden & Green End wards. Councillor Jameson (Tring town councillor), on behalf of Tring Town Council Conservative Group, opposed our draft recommendations for the Tring area. Councillor Conway (Tring East ward) opposed our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. Councillor Craufurd (Aldbury & Wigginton ward) also opposed our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward.

36 We received representations from three residents' associations. Leverstock Green Village Association considered that Leverstock Green ward should be represented by three councillors. Northend Residents Association considered that the Northend area should remain in a ward with Leverstock Green. Bennetts End Neighbourhood Association made comments regarding our proposal for the Bennetts End area.

37 We received a further 187 representations from local residents. Four of these were general comments across the borough. Two related specifically to the eastern area of Hemel Hempstead, 30 to the western area of Hemel Hempstead and 118 to the southern area of Hemel Hempstead. We also received 34 representations relating to the Tring area from residents.

Responses to further consultation

38 During Stage Three we received alternative proposals for the western and southern parts of Hemel Hempstead. We considered that given the community identity evidence we received for these areas during Stage Three the alternative proposals could better represent the communities in these areas. Therefore we conducted a period of further consultation to gauge respondents' opinions on the appropriateness of these amended wards in light of their comments made to us during Stage Three of the review. This was not an additional period of consultation inviting new proposals and ideas, rather it was to assess whether the alternative proposals put to us at Stage Three would be more suitable than our draft recommendations. As these were new proposals at Stage Three we did not feel we could recommend them in our final recommendations without first conducting some level of consultation. We conducted further consultation on this area for a period of four weeks between 5 May and 2 June 2006.

39 In the western area of Hemel Hempstead (the area that comprises the existing Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards) the Labour Group put forward alternative proposals. We asked respondents whether our draft recommendations or the alternative ward arrangement would better represent the communities in the area. We received 46 responses from local interested parties. The majority of respondents (41) considered that the Labour Group's proposals would be best suited to the area. The Borough Council, Councillor Guest (Chaulden & Shrubhill ward), Councillor Anderson and Councillor Bassadone (Leverstock Green

ward) supported the Labour Group's proposal but considered that Chaulden and Warners End areas should not be combined in one ward. Three of those respondents who supported the Labour Group's proposal also considered that Warners End and Chaulden should not be combined in one ward. The remaining respondents who supported the Labour Group's proposal and made comments considered that this proposal allowed for communities to be represented better than our draft recommendations. One local resident supported our draft recommendations.

40 In the southern area of Hemel Hempstead (the area that comprises the existing Apsley, Bennetts End, Cornerhall and Leverstock Green wards) the Borough Council proposed an amended boundary between Bennetts End and the Leverstock Green area. We considered that given the community identity argument we had received this was more sympathetic to the communities in the area than our draft recommendations. We proposed amendments to the Borough Council's proposal to allow for our proposals in Apsley & Cornerhall ward. We asked respondents whether our draft recommendations or the new arrangement would better represent the communities in the area. We received 80 responses from local interested parties. The majority of respondents (73) supported our amended proposal between Bennetts End and Leverstock Green. However, reservations were expressed by some of these respondents. The Borough Council, the Labour Group, Councillor Bassadone and Councillor Anderson supported the amended proposals but considered that neither option was particularly satisfactory. Councillor Jameson supported our amended proposal. The remaining 68 responses in support of the amended proposals were from local residents, although a number of these stated that retaining the existing arrangements in this area would best represent the communities. The remaining seven respondents (all local residents) supported our draft recommendations.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

41 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Dacorum.

42 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Dacorum is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), which defines the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972

43 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. 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 must also have regard to the desirability of fixing clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

44 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

45 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 identities and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account, and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

46 The recommendations do not affect county, borough or parish external boundaries, or local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries. We are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Electorate figures

47 As part of the previous review of Dacorum borough, the Borough Council forecast an increase in the electorate of just under 2% between 1996 and 2001. The actual increase was just over 1%. Between 2001 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by just under 2%. There has only been significant growth in Apsley and Berkhamsted Castle wards. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecast figures for the borough for the year 2009 projecting an increase in the electorate of 1% from 106,238 to 107,372 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. It expects most of the growth to be in Apsley ward.

48 We recognise that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accepted that they were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at that time.

49 We received comments on the Council's electoral forecasts during Stage Three from South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party and Councillor Jameson. Both noted that the electorate forecast did not include an impending planning application for Aldbury parish that could result in an additional 20 electors in the parish. We spoke to the Borough Council regarding this and it confirmed that this application was not included in the forecast, as it was too small to be included and also as this application has not yet had permission granted. Therefore in accordance with paragraph 3.20 of the Electoral Commission's *Guidance*, which states that 'forecasts should take account of the development expected to be completed within the five year period, in accordance with planning permissions already granted', we do not consider this application should be included in the figures. Therefore we remain satisfied that the Borough Council's electorate forecast figures represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

50 Dacorum Borough Council presently has 52 members. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed to retain the existing council size of 52, considering that '52 elected members are necessary to achieve effective local democracy while preserving the local communities that exist'. It acknowledged that this view was not supported by all members of the Council, and that both the Labour Group and Liberal Democrats had proposed alternative council sizes. The Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in council size of one, to 51. The Labour Group proposed a council size of 53.

51 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received for these proposed council sizes. We noted that both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats put forward good evidence for their proposed council sizes, in terms of the council's political management structure, which is of the Leader and Cabinet type. We also noted that the Borough Council stated that 'it was the majority opinion that a decrease in council size may be possible, if it helped to tackle the electoral inequalities that existed'. But it considered that 'any such reduction should be minimal' and anticipated 'a council size of 50–52 members' as the most appropriate.

52 We did not consider that the Labour Group had made any attempt to justify its proposed council size, and therefore we were unable to consider it in terms of the council's political management structure and effective and convenient local government. Having considered the argument put forward by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats we considered that both arguments justified their respective proposed council sizes.

53 Combined with this evidence, we examined the distribution of councillors across the borough, compared with the distribution of the electorate, in order to see which council size provided the better fit between Hemel Hempstead and the remainder of the borough. From this it was possible to see that a council size of 51 produced a better allocation of councillors between the areas and therefore a better overall level of electoral equality in Hemel Hempstead than a council size of 52. We also noted the council's comments that the majority considered that a small reduction in council

size may improve electoral variances and that if a reduction was made it should be minimal. Therefore we proposed a council size of 51 for Dacorum Borough Council.

54 At Stage Three the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats accepted our proposed council size of 51. Councillor Anderson supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for council size, stating that the council 'was right to propose an additional councillor to resolve the lack of representation in Apsley.' We received no other comments regarding the council size for Dacorum Borough Council. We note Councillor Anderson's comment; however, given the support we received we do not consider that his argument is compelling enough to amend the council size at this stage. Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we concluded that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral equality

55 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

56 During Stage One in the absence of any strong community identity argument or evidence we sought to improve electoral equality in Dacorum. The Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group appeared to have taken the approach of using the existing wards as a starting point and making amendments to these in order to improve electoral equality. Similarly, we used the existing wards as a starting point and attempted to improve upon them as far as electoral equality was concerned. Because of the lack of strong evidence, we looked to improve electoral equality even in those areas where the existing arrangements provided electoral variances of less than 10%. Therefore, in the urban areas in particular, we made amendments to the existing ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality.

57 During Stage Three we received greater levels of community identity evidence, which has meant that we have moved away from electoral equality in order to better reflect communities within the borough. We have moved away from our draft recommendations in three areas. Our amended Aldbury & Wigginton ward would have 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009.

58 The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough, currently 106,238, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 51 under our final proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,083, increasing to 2,105 by 2009.

General analysis

59 Our draft recommendations were a combination of the Borough Council's, Liberal Democrats', Labour Group's and our own proposals, based on the existing wards in order to form wards that secured good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries. All the proposed schemes suggested some boundary amendments to the existing wards in the urban area of Hemel Hempstead. We also made amendments in Berkhamsted and Tring as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We did not receive any substantial argument to maintain the existing ward arrangements. We therefore, for the most part, looked to improve on electoral equality within the borough. We proposed retaining the existing rural wards as proposed by the Borough Council as these provided good levels of electoral equality. However we received relatively little argument for the proposed wards. The Borough Council provided no argument for its wards, while the Liberal Democrats and Labour Group did provide some, although it was not always compelling. We therefore sought to improve upon the levels of electoral equality. In Hemel Hempstead we used the A roads that run through the town as a means to divide the town into four distinct areas. We considered that these provided strong boundaries and recognised existing communities. We also noted that these were used in most of the submissions we received for the town.

60 During Stage Three we received both opposition and support for our recommendations across the borough. We received support for our rural wards and Berkhamsted. However, we received particular opposition to our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward, as well as some opposition to our proposals in Tring and Hemel Hempstead towns. There was some opposition to our use of the main roads as the dividing features in Hemel Hempstead town. However, we did not receive any strong argument to suggest why these did not separate the town. In particular there was concern regarding our proposals in the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead, as well as overwhelming opposition to the Labour Group's and Liberal Democrats' Stage Three proposals to divide Leverstock Green ward. As a result of the consultation on our draft recommendations, we considered that we received strong and convincing arguments in terms of community identity leading us to amend our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward.

61 During Stage Three we received alternative proposals for the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead. In light of the community identity arguments we received regarding these areas, we considered that the Borough Council's proposal in the southern area (with some of our own amendments) and the Labour Group's proposal in the western area could better reflect communities in the areas and maintain good levels of electoral equality. However, as both of these proposals were significantly different from the existing ward arrangement, our draft recommendations and any other ward pattern discussed in our draft recommendations, we did not consider that we could recommend these in our final recommendations without first gauging local opinion. We therefore conducted a further four-week consultation period for the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead beginning on 5 May 2006 and concluding on 2 June 2006.

62 We sought views from all those who wrote to us regarding these areas at Stage Three on whether the alternative electoral arrangements available to us would be more appropriate for the area than our draft recommendations. Respondents were given maps of both proposals as well as the electoral variances that our draft recommendations and the new proposals would return for the relevant area, south or west. Respondents were then asked to complete and return a form stating which option was preferred; our draft recommendations (Option A) or the new proposal (Option B). Respondents were also given an opportunity to make comments supporting their choice. This was not an opportunity for respondents to propose new arrangements, or make comments on other areas of the borough, rather a chance for us to assess the appropriateness of the alternative proposals put to us at Stage Three compared with our draft recommendations.

63 We note that there was concern over the way in which this additional consultation was conducted, particularly from the Borough Council. It considered that the 'tick box' approach was 'futile if those asked feel that neither option adequately addresses their concerns for the area'. The Borough Council continued to say that our consultation was restricted to 'only those who had already commented' and 'could mean that one well mobilised or organised section of the community, or one group of people could unduly influence the course of the review'. However, as we stated previously, this was not an additional consultation period to Stages One and Three of the review. Given that the proposal within our further consultation was the result of evidence provided as part of the 12-week consultation period, and that we only wrote to those who had made submissions, we do not believe any group will have been able to unduly influence the course of the review. We also do not consider the consultation to be futile as we were not requesting new or alternative proposals but taking the opportunity to assess whether the alternative proposals put to us at Stage Three would better reflect the communities than our draft recommendations as a result of the quality of community identity argument we received.

64 As a result of this further consultation we are proposing to move away from our draft recommendations in the southern and western areas of Hemel Hempstead and adopt the alternative options available to us due to the community identity evidence provided and the overwhelming support for them.

Warding arrangements

65 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- Grove Hill and Woodhall wards (page 34)
- Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield & St Pauls and Hemel Hempstead Central wards (page 36)
- Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards (page 39)
- Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards (page 45)
- Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards (page 52)
- Tring Central, Tring East, Tring West and Aldbury & Wigginton wards (page 53)
- Ashridge, Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards (Page 58)

66 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Grove Hill and Woodhall wards

67 Under the existing arrangements Grove Hill and Woodhall wards are currently unparished. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place. These wards are located to the north of the A4147.

68 We received four submissions in relation to Grove Hill and Woodhall wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Group and Grovehill Neighbourhood Association. The Borough Council proposed to combine the area to the east of Three Cherry Trees Lane from the existing Adeyfield East ward with the existing Woodhall ward to create a two-member Woodhall Farm ward. It proposed to divide the existing Grove Hill ward into two wards. It proposed that the area between the playing fields, Grove Hill Park, and to the west of Aycliffe Drive should become a single-member ward to be named Grove Hill West. The remainder of the ward would become a two-member Grove Hill ward with the addition of the 14 properties on Redbourn Road from Adeyfield East ward.

69 The Liberal Democrats provided an overview of Hemel Hempstead, stating that it is 'made up of neighbourhoods that have grown over the years into communities in their own right', and that it made sense to 'base electoral wards around these communities'. The Liberal Democrats described this area as the northern part of the town separated from the rest of the town by the A4147. It proposed to retain the existing Woodhall ward, but provided no argument for this. It made the same proposal as the Borough Council to transfer 14 houses from Adeyfield East ward into Grove Hill ward. However, it also proposed to transfer the Piccotts End area from Hemel Hempstead Central ward. It considered that Piccotts End was a 'community in its own right but is clearly too small to form a ward'. It noted that Piccotts End 'sits comfortably within the northern boundaries [of the town]' (north of the A4147) and has 'three road links into Grove Hill'. It went on to say that it did not consider 'that this proposal would or could threaten the community environment and spirit of this small village'. Similarly it considered that Grove Hill is 'one community that is not easily broken down' with a 'shopping centre at the heart of it'. It proposed to name this ward Grove Hill & Piccotts End.

70 The Labour Group proposed the same wards as the Liberal Democrats. It considered that Grove Hill was a 'natural community' and that 'to divide the ward, as proposed by the Council's submission would create an artificial division'. Grovehill Neighbourhood Association considered that the existing arrangement for Grove Hill ward should be retained. It considered that 'it has well defined boundaries with shops and community facilities [...] it forms an area for local working [...] and] the church also uses Grove Hill as a distinct area in which to organise its work'.

71 We carefully considered the options put to us for this area. As discussed in the 'council size' section of this report, we proposed a reduction of one in council size from 52 to 51 members. Under a council size of 51 the Borough Council's proposed Grove Hill and Grove Hill West wards would have electoral variances of 12% and 7% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009, respectively. We considered that

as the Borough Council had not submitted any argument for its proposed wards we could not justify a variance of 12% when an alternative existed. We noted the Liberal Democrats' and the Labour Group's argument to include Piccotts End in the existing Grove Hill ward, and given the lack of evidence to suggest that these two areas could not be combined in the same ward, and the fact that there are good road links between the areas, we adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. We noted that the addition of the 14 properties from Adeyfield East ward breaches Redbourn Road (A4147), which we noted was a strong dividing boundary. However, this was proposed in three of the submissions we received for the area and on closer inspection we considered that these properties would be better placed in Grove Hill ward as they faced towards this ward rather than the industrial estate behind. We therefore adopted the Liberal Democrats' Grove Hill & Piccotts End ward.

72 We adopted the Borough Council's proposed Woodhall Farm Ward for similar reasons as the Redbourn Road amendment. We considered that the properties on Three Cherry Trees Road in Adeyfield East ward would be better placed away from the industrial estate with which they are grouped under the existing arrangements. We considered that these amendments improved electoral equality while also providing strong boundaries in the area.

73 We considered that these amendments would still reflect the communities. Under our draft recommendations the proposed Grove Hill & Piccotts End and Woodhall Farm wards would have 7% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

74 During Stage Three we received four representations relating specifically to our draft recommendations in the northern area of Hemel Hempstead from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association and Councillor Anderson.

75 The Borough Council supported our proposed Woodhall Farm ward. However, it proposed an alternative arrangement for our proposed Grove Hill & Piccotts End ward. It considered that the Piccotts End area should be retained in the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward, and that 'the Dales' from our proposed Highfield ward should be transferred into the Grove Hill area to create a Grovehill & the Dales ward. Its proposed ward would have 1% more electors than the borough average by 2009. It stated that the Dales has a 'strong sense of its own community' and that it 'encompasses the Hammond School which is attended by children in both Grovehill and the Dales'. It considered that this achieves better 'geographic cohesion' than our draft recommendations.

76 The Liberal Democrats supported our draft proposals. Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association considered that we should adopt the Borough Council's alternative proposal in this area. Councillor Anderson concurred with the Borough Council's Stage Three proposal, considering that it 'would make more sense'.

77 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Woodhall Farm and Grove Hill & Piccotts End as final. We note the support we received for our proposed Woodhall Farm ward from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, and we are therefore proposing it as part of our final recommendations.

78 We have considered the argument put forward by the Borough Council for its proposed Grovehill & the Dales ward, and we note that its proposed ward returns slightly better electoral equality than our draft recommendations for the area. However, its proposals significantly breach the A roads, which during the formation of our draft recommendations we considered divided the town into four recognisable areas. We consider that the Borough Council's argument for its proposed wards does not challenge our view that the roads divide up the town and we have not been convinced that its proposed wards would better represent communities given the limited argument it put forward. We also note that its amendments in the northern area would have knock on effects to the wards in the remainder of the town, and therefore ignore the A roads as boundaries that we consider divide Hemel Hempstead into four distinct areas. We note the support the Borough Council's proposal received from Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association and Councillor Anderson; however, we do not consider that either of these submissions provided any strong or compelling argument to encourage us to move away from our draft recommendations. We therefore do not consider that the small improvement in electoral equality is justified given the limited community identity evidence received and the knock-on effect this amendment would have on wards in the remainder of Hemel Hempstead town.

79 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Grove Hill & Piccotts End and Woodhall Farm wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield & St Pauls and Hemel Hempstead Central wards

80 Under the existing arrangements Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield & St Pauls and Hemel Hempstead Central wards are currently unparished. Table 4 (on page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place. These wards are located in the centre of the town to the south of the A4147.

81 We received three submissions in relation to these wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group. The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing Adeyfield East ward with the exception of the areas it proposed to transfer into Grove Hill and Woodhall Farm wards, as detailed above. It proposed to transfer part of Highfield & St Pauls ward into Adeyfield West ward, the area to the south west of Highfield & St Pauls ward bounded by Randall Park, Cattsdell and the existing ward boundaries of Hemel Hempstead Central and Adeyfield West wards. The Borough Council proposed that this ward be named Adeyfield West & St Pauls. The remainder of the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward would form a two-member ward to be named Highfield. The Borough Council also proposed to retain the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward, but to rename it Central ward.

82 The Liberal Democrats considered this area to be the eastern central part of Hemel Hempstead. It stated that the existing Adeyfield East and Adeyfield West wards could be combined to make one ward, but considered that 'this would clearly be too large'. It considered therefore that as the 'community is indeed that of

Adeyfield [...] the actual boundary need only be drawn for numerical purposes'. Therefore the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring properties bounded by the north of The Reiths Fields, Everest Way and behind the properties of Adeyfield Gardens from Adeyfield East ward into the existing Adeyfield West ward. It also proposed a further amendment to Adeyfield East ward through the transfer of the 14 properties from Redbourn Road, as noted previously. The Liberal Democrats stated that if we were not minded to accept its proposal it would support that of the Labour Group.

83 The Liberal Democrats considered that the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward is 'clumsy' and groups a number of 'identifiable communities'. It proposed a new Hemel Central ward comprising of polling district AAC and the remainder of polling district AAA (given the amendment discussed above). It also proposed transferring the housing cul-de-sac between Fletcher Way and Smithfield Road and also part of polling district ABC (except properties east of Baylie Lane) from Highfield & St Pauls into its proposed Hemel Central ward. Its proposed Highfield ward would retain the existing boundaries with the exception of the amendment mentioned above.

84 The Labour Group proposed transferring properties on and between Ranleigh Road and Vauxhall Road from Adeyfield East ward into Adeyfield West ward. It proposed removing polling district AAB from Hemel Hempstead Central ward, along with the previous amendment mentioned above. It also proposed to transfer an area of Hemel Hempstead Central ward into Highfield & St Pauls ward, the area between Sunmead Road and St Marys Road. The Labour Group considered that the 'boundary between Boxmoor and Central wards is best defined by the Leighton Buzzard Road which separates the town area from neighbourhoods focused on local shopping areas'.

85 We carefully considered the proposals for this area. We noted the Liberal Democrats' comments about Adeyfield being one area, and that therefore the boundary need only be drawn for numerical purposes. We proposed to adopt the Labour Group's proposed amendment between these two wards combined with the amendments outlined previously for Adeyfield East ward. We considered that the Labour Group's proposal took a more identifiable area and provided for a more identifiable boundary than had been proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We also noted that these amendments provided better electoral equality between these two wards. We based our Hemel Central and Highfield wards on those proposed by the Liberal Democrats as we considered that these facilitated better electoral equality elsewhere in Hemel Hempstead, combined with a further amendment of our own to improve electoral equality. We proposed to leave the area north of Queensway in our proposed Highfield ward rather than adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposal to transfer it to Hemel Central ward. We noted that this provided better levels of electoral equality.

86 Our proposed Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Hemel Central and Highfield wards would have 4%, 5%, 2% and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009, respectively.

87 During Stage Three we received six representations from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association, Councillor Anderson and two local residents. The Borough Council considered that the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward should be retained. It noted that the ward 'has never

been satisfactory but some cohesion has been achieved by using the Leighton Buzzard Road as a spine that combines both sides of the ward' rather than dividing it. It considered that altering this ward as under our draft recommendations would 'disrupt the sense of community' in the surrounding wards. The Borough Council resubmitted its Stage One proposal for Adeyfield East ward. It considered that our proposed amendment between Adeyfield East and Adeyfield West wards would lead to confusion during an election as the Vauxhall Road electorate would be split. It proposed that the St Pauls Road area be transferred into Adeyfield West ward from our proposed Hemel Central ward, considering that although the area is separated from the rest of Adeyfield West ward by a large open area (Keens Field), it 'is known as part of lower Adeyfield'. It considered that this amendment would balance its proposal to retain the existing boundary between Adeyfield East and Adeyfield West wards.

88 The Borough Council also proposed a revised Highfield ward that retained the Smithfield area of the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward, the area we proposed to transfer into our proposed Hemel Central ward in our draft recommendations. It considered that this area 'scores highly in terms of social deprivation' and considered that the 'realignment of ward boundaries could have an adverse effect on the efficiency of targeting help' to address the high levels of deprivation. The Borough Council also considered that the Smithfield community had nothing in common with the other areas in our proposed Hemel Central ward. Its proposal to remove the Dales area from its proposed Highfield ward into its proposed Grovehill & the Dales ward would balance this amendment in terms of electoral equality. The Borough Council's proposed Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Central and Highfield wards would have 4% more, 3% less, 1% less and 1% more electors than the borough average by 2009, respectively.

89 The Liberal Democrats supported our proposed wards in this area and provided arguments against the Borough Council's Stage Three proposals. It considered that the St Pauls Road area has 'geographical links and sits more comfortably with [our proposed] Hemel Central ward', and it considered that the Keens Field forms a 'strong identifiable boundary' between these areas. The Liberal Democrats considered that the Dales area should remain within our proposed Highfield ward due to its 'close proximity to the Highfield Community Centre' and one of the two shopping parades.

90 Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association supported the Borough Council's Stage Three proposals for this area. Councillor Anderson also supported the retention of the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward but considered it should be renamed Gadevalley. He also supported the Borough Council's proposal to transfer out the Dales area from Highfield ward into the Grove Hill area, and the St Pauls area into Adeyfield West ward, in order to retain the existing boundary between Adeyfield East and Adeyfield West wards. One local resident opposed our proposed Hemel Central ward. She considered that both sides of the Leighton Buzzard Road should be represented in the same ward. Another local resident from the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward opposed our proposal to transfer out the St Pauls area from the existing Highfield & St Pauls ward; she stated that while she does shop in Hemel Central, she uses Highfield shops more often.

91 Having considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Hemel Central and Highfield wards as final. We have considered the alternative warding arrangement

put forward by the Borough Council, and note the support this received from Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association and Councillor Anderson. We note that the Borough Council considers that the Leighton Buzzard Road forms the 'spine' that unites the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward. However, we also note that it acknowledges that the existing ward is not 'satisfactory'. In order to retain the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward the Borough Council's proposals significantly breach the A roads, which during the formation of our draft recommendations we considered divided the town into four recognisable areas. We do not consider that the Borough Council's argument for its proposed wards sufficiently challenges our view that the A roads divide the town into recognisable areas, and we have not been convinced that its proposed wards would better represent communities given the limited argument it put forward.

92 We acknowledge the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the St Pauls area into Adeyfield West ward on the ground that it is linked to this area. However, we also note the conflicting argument put forward by the Liberal Democrats regarding this area, which stated that it would be better placed in our proposed Hemel Central ward. We also note the view of the local resident who considered the area should remain in Highfield. Given that these views are in opposition to one another, we do not consider that we have received any compelling argument to move away from our draft recommendations in this area.

93 We acknowledge the argument regarding social deprivation in the Highfield ward area; however, this is not something that we consider in itself affects effective and convenient local government or community identity. We note that the Borough Council's amendments are to retain the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward. However, these breach the main roads which we consider divide the town, and we are not of the opinion that sufficient argument has been provided to move us away from this view, particularly in light of the support we received from the Liberal Democrats. Therefore we do not propose amending our Hemel Central ward. Because we do not propose amending our Hemel Central ward, adopting the Borough Council's amendments to Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West and Highfield wards would result in worse electoral equality in the area. Therefore it has not been possible to adopt the Borough Council's revised proposals in this area.

94 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield Pauls and Hemel Central wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards

95 Under the existing arrangements Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards are currently unparished. Table 4 (on page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place. These wards are situated in the west of Hemel Hempstead, west of the Leighton Buzzard Road and north of the A41.

96 During Stage One we received four submissions from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Group and Warners End Neighbourhood Association.

The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing two-member Gadebridge ward. It proposed transferring the area to the west of Hollybush Lane into the existing Warners End ward from Chaulden & Shrubhill ward to create a two-member Warners End ward. It also proposed to transfer the Grove Road, Morland Road and Cangel's Close areas from Boxmoor ward into its proposed Chaulden & Shrubhill ward.

97 The Liberal Democrats considered that Gadebridge was a 'clearly defined area'. However, it noted that Gadebridge Court had 'a lot in common' with the Bury Road area in Hemel Hempstead Central ward. It therefore proposed to include an area between Bury Road and Cemmas Court Road and Cemmas Meadow into its two-member Gadebridge & Bury ward in order to improve electoral equality and represent community identity. It proposed moving the western boundary of Gadebridge ward in order to allow those houses on Warners End Road opposite the school in Boxmoor ward to be included in its proposed Warners End ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed to transfer the area north of Long Chaulden from Chaulden & Shrubhill ward into Warners End ward. It also proposed transferring the properties along Northridge Way, south of Barberry Road from Warners End ward into its proposed Chaulden & Green End ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed to transfer the Green End area of Boxmoor ward into its proposed two-member Chaulden & Green End ward. It considered that the Green End area is an 'area in its own right' and would therefore create a ward that would recognise 'the individuality of both areas'. It proposed a Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward to comprise the remainder of Boxmoor ward with the remainder of polling district AAB from Hemel Central ward. It also proposed to move Hemel Hempstead railway station into its Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward.

98 The Labour Group proposed a different arrangement for the wards in this area of Hemel Hempstead. It proposed to transfer a small section of housing from Warners End ward into the existing Gadebridge ward to create a two-member Gadebridge ward. Its proposed three-member Warners End & Shrubhill ward combined the remainder of Warners End ward with the area between Shrubhill Common and Northridge Way and Green End Road and Gravel Lane from Chaulden & Shrubhill and Boxmoor wards. It proposed that the remainder of Chaulden & Shrubhill ward create a single-member ward to be named Chaulden. It considered that these wards 'better reflected community identity, providing the valley as a natural boundary'. It also proposed a three-member Boxmoor ward to incorporate the remainder of Boxmoor ward and the areas west of the A4146 (polling district AAB) from Hemel Hempstead Central ward.

99 Warners End Neighbourhood Association considered that a new three-member ward for Warners End should be created. From the description given such a ward would be similar to that proposed by the Labour Group.

100 We carefully considered all the representations received for this area of Hemel Hempstead. We acknowledged Warners End Neighbourhood Association's point, and how this related to what was proposed by the Labour Group. However, as the Labour Group's proposal was based on a council size of 53, it was not possible to adopt its proposals without creating wards with high levels of electoral inequality. We did not consider that this was acceptable given the level of argument put to us and the fact that alternative warding arrangements existed that provided better levels of electoral equality.

101 Due to the fact that we had removed the area west of the A4146 from Hemel Central ward it was not possible to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for this area. We therefore based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposals and made a number of our own amendments in order to improve electoral equality. We proposed to retain the boundary between Gadebridge and Warners End wards. We considered the Labour Group's proposal to move the Knights Orchard area into Gadebridge ward; however, we considered that its access was better to Warners End ward and therefore did not make this amendment. We also did not adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals to include the properties along Warners End Road from the existing Boxmoor ward in our proposed Gadebridge & Bury ward. We proposed to transfer the Paddock Way area of housing from the Liberal Democrats' proposed Chaulden & Green End ward into our proposed Warners End ward as we considered this provided a more identifiable boundary. We also proposed to retain the properties along Northridge Way in Warners End ward. To improve electoral equality we proposed that the area south of Astley Road remain in Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward. In order to further improve electoral equality between Boxmoor & Hammerfield and Chaulden & Green End wards, we proposed transferring the Counters End area from the existing Boxmoor ward into our proposed Chaulden & Green End ward.

102 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield, Chaulden & Green End, Gadebridge & Bury and Warners End wards would have 3% more, 1% more, less than 1% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average.

103 During Stage Three we received 36 submissions relating to our draft recommendations for these areas from the Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Anderson, the Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association, Mike Penning MP and 30 local residents.

104 The Borough Council proposed an alternative arrangement for the wards in the western area of Hemel Hempstead, based on retaining the existing Hemel Central ward. It proposed to retain the existing Gadebridge ward, stating that it was 'difficult to see how the inclusion of the Cemmas Meadow area can be justified'. It considered that the Warners End Road is a 'strong geographical feature' that should be given more consideration. The Borough Council expressed its support for the 'majority' of our proposed Warners End ward, stating that our amendment will be 'warmly welcomed by local residents' as this area was located in Warners End ward prior to the last electoral review of the district. However, it considered that Paddock Way should remain in Chaulden & Shrubhill ward. It proposed an alternative Chaulden & Shrubhill ward; it considered that the boundary between it and the Boxmoor area should run along Green End Road. It considered this was a better boundary than our draft recommendations and did not ignore the road network as a natural boundary. Its proposed Boxmoor ward would comprise the existing Boxmoor ward minus the area west of Green End Road that it proposed to transfer into Chaulden & Shrubhill ward, and would include an area south of the moor from the existing Apsley ward to include properties to the west of Two Waters.

105 The Labour Group proposed an alternative pattern of wards in this area based on using the Leighton Buzzard Road to define the western area of Hemel Hempstead, as in our draft recommendations. The Labour Group considered that there was no sense of community between the Gadebridge area and the Cemmas Road area which we proposed combining with it in our draft recommendations. It

considered that the area was of a similar style and architecture to Boxmoor. It proposed that the Knights Orchard area should be transferred into Gadebridge ward, as in its Stage One proposal, and considered that this 'establishes a much better community' than our draft recommendations. It proposed a three-member Chaulden & Warners End ward that combines our proposed Warners End and Chaulden & Green End wards less that area of Knights Orchard and properties to the east of Northridge Way (with the exception of a few houses that abut Northridge Park on the western side of the road), and a three-member Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward comprising the remainder of the western area of Hemel Hempstead. It considered that Chaulden and Warners End are separated by Northridge Way and that its proposed wards would allow the locality of both Boxmoor and of Chaulden to be reflected. The Labour Group continued that its proposed Boxmoor ward reflects the changes in the town, where the area between Heath Lane and the Leighton Buzzard Road is described as the 'Boxmoor borders to Boxmoor itself'. Its proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield, Chaulden & Warners End and Gadebridge wards would have fewer than 1%, 5% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009, respectively.

106 The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations in this area. It opposed the Borough Council's proposal for Boxmoor ward and considered that the Borough Council's proposal to include the area south of the moor would create an 'imbalance in electoral representation [and] it is clearly separated from Boxmoor by the Moor itself'. Councillor Anderson, however, supported the Borough Council's proposal for this amendment and considered it would be better placed with Boxmoor as it has 'no association with Apsley [ward] and is located on the moor'. He also considered that Hammerfield should be dropped from our proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward name, as 'residents would say that they have never heard of the name'. The Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association also objected to this name, saying that it did not reflect the community. It considered that the Borough Council's proposals should be adopted.

107 Mike Penning MP considered that a line had been drawn through communities and that Boxmoor had been split. He did not consider that part of Boxmoor should be united with Chaulden as under our draft recommendations. Councillor Marshall objected to our proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward. She considered that the area of the existing Boxmoor ward we proposed to transfer into the Chaulden area had no 'affinity to Chaulden'. Councillor Marshall considered that Northridge Way, Northridge Park, Shrubhill Common and Chaulden Lane playing fields form natural boundaries. She continued that 'the two communities do not generally mix in terms of using shopping and other neighbourhood facilities such as community centres, doctors' and dentists' surgeries etc'. She also noted that the area we proposed to transfer is part of the ecclesiastical parish of St Johns Church in Boxmoor. She also noted that the eastern boundary is less obvious when looking at a map, but considered that the area of the existing Central ward we proposed to transfer into our proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward has 'a natural physical affinity to the town area of Hemel Hempstead'. However, she did not detail any reasons why this is the case.

108 We also received 30 submissions from local residents, all in opposition to our draft recommendation to divide the existing Boxmoor ward. Joint comments from two local residents concurred with Councillor Marshall that the western boundary of Boxmoor is Northridge Way. They considered that this busy road clearly gives the Boxmoor and Chaulden communities 'definite individual identities'. They stated that

those residents we proposed to transfer into our proposed Chaulden & Green End ward 'support the local shops, restaurants, churches and clubs in Boxmoor rather than Chaulden. They will continue to do so, partly because Northridge Way is a very busy, and crossing it takes time, especially with children'. They continued that the Green End and Counters End areas we proposed to transfer are described as being 'deep in the heart of Boxmoor'. Another resident noted our proposal to include Fishery Road in our proposed Chaulden & Green End ward. He considered that the issues facing residents on Fishery Road are the same as those in Boxmoor, such as 'commuter parking'. He also considered that this road is on the moor land and therefore should be a part of Boxmoor. This opinion was shared by one other resident. Another resident considered that Boxmoor is a 'discrete area' with a 'focus on the village [of Boxmoor...] Box Moor itself and the trust which runs it. It has its own churches, schools and theatre'. One resident felt that if Boxmoor had to be split then the wards should be named Boxmoor East and Boxmoor West.

109 We carefully considered all the representations we received during Stage Three. We acknowledge the Borough Council's alternative proposal, and the support it received from the Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association. However in order to retain the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward the Borough Council's proposals significantly breach the A roads which during the formation of our draft recommendations we considered divided the town into four recognisable areas. We do not consider that the Borough Council's argument for its proposed wards sufficiently challenges our view that the A roads divide the town into recognisable areas, and we have not been convinced that its proposed wards would better represent communities given the limited argument it put forward. We also note the Liberal Democrats' opposition to the Borough Council's proposal and the support it gave our draft proposals.

110 We carefully considered the Labour Group's alternative warding arrangement for the area. We note that this would return good levels of electoral equality. We also note that this proposal divides the Boxmoor and Chaulden areas along Northridge Way, which is supported by Councillor Marshall and local residents, and takes into account the community identity evidence for Boxmoor. We considered that we received strong and convincing arguments why the Boxmoor community should not be split. We consider that Councillor Marshall and the local residents' descriptions of services and facilities used only by the Boxmoor community as well as the ecclesiastical parish in Boxmoor illustrates a strong community that would be better represented in a single ward. However, we do not consider that we received any compelling evidence as to why other areas could not be combined with the Boxmoor area and effectively represented in a single ward. We note the argument put forward by the Labour Group that the area between Heath Lane and the Leighton Buzzard Road is described as the 'Boxmoor borders to Boxmoor itself'. We also note that Councillor Marshall considers that this area is associated with Hemel Hempstead Central ward. However, given this conflicting argument, and given that she has not illustrated how the area is associated with Hemel Hempstead Central ward, we consider that it would be reasonable to combine this area with Boxmoor, as well as that area between the existing Boxmoor western boundary and Northridge Way. We also note that the Labour Group's proposal keeps the Fishery Road area in Boxmoor as argued for by a local resident. We therefore consider that the Labour Group's proposal would effectively represent communities in the western area of Hemel Hempstead.

111 We note that the Labour Group's proposed Gadebridge ward would include the Knights Orchard area that we considered had better links to Warners End ward at Stage One. However, at this stage, given that the Labour Group's proposal facilitates a better representation of communities elsewhere in the western area of Hemel Hempstead, we consider that this amendment is acceptable. We also note that its proposals would combine the Warners End and Chaulden areas, which we consider could be a satisfactory union, particularly given the Borough Council's comment that the area transferred from the existing Chaulden & Shrubhill ward into Warners End ward in our draft recommendations would be welcomed. This would remain the case under the Labour Group's proposals. We also note Councillor Anderson's proposal to retain the existing ward name of Boxmoor for this area, as Hammerfield is not recognised by local people. We are therefore proposing to name this ward Boxmoor.

112 Having considered the representations received we decided to conduct a period of further consultation on the western area of Hemel Hempstead. We considered that the Labour Group's alternative proposals would enable the community of Boxmoor to remain in a single ward that incorporated all the community identity arguments we received regarding the area, as well as returning good electoral equality. Because the Labour Group's proposal is significantly different from the existing arrangements and our draft recommendations we did not consider that we could recommend these wards without first gauging opinion from local interested parties. We therefore wrote to all those who had submitted a response to us regarding the western area of Hemel Hempstead during Stage Three and asked them to choose which option they preferred, either our draft recommendations or the Labour Group's proposals. Respondents were also given an opportunity to make comments in support of their preferred ward arrangement for the area. Respondents received details of the electoral equality that each of the proposed wards would have, mapping showing the existing wards, our draft recommendations and the Labour Group's proposed wards.

113 We conducted further consultation on this area for a period of four weeks between 5 May and 2 June 2006. In that time we received 46 responses from local interested parties. The majority of respondents (41) considered that the Labour Group's proposals would be better suited to the area. One resident supported our draft recommendations, and the remaining four put forward alternative proposals. The Borough Council supported the Labour Group's proposal 'with reservations', considering it 'better reflects the historical and community boundaries of the affected areas'. However, it proposed a further amendment to this by splitting the proposed Chaulden & Warners End ward to create a single-member Chaulden ward. Councillor Guest stated that while supporting the Labour Group's proposal she opposed the Chaulden & Warners End ward. She considered it would create 'ill feeling amongst local people' and that we should create separate wards for the two areas of Chaulden and Warners End. Councillor Anderson said that he would only support the Labour Group's proposal if Chaulden and Warners End are represented in separate wards. Councillor Bassadone also considered these areas should not be combined. Three of those respondents who supported the Labour Group's proposal also considered that Warners End and Chaulden should not be combined in one ward. Of those remaining respondents who made comments and supported the Labour Group's proposal it was considered that this proposal allowed for communities to be represented better than under our draft recommendations.

114 Given the overwhelming support for the Labour Group's proposal we are proposing to adopt this ward arrangement as final for the western part of Hemel Hempstead. We note the opinion that Warners End and Chaulden should remain

separate wards. However, as discussed previously this further consultation was not an opportunity to put forward new proposals, but to allow us to gauge the appropriateness of those proposals we received during Stage Three as these had not previously been consulted upon. We are unable to accept new proposals as these would require another period of further consultation.

115 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Boxmoor, Chaulden & Warners End and Gadebridge wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards

116 Under the existing arrangements Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall and Leverstock Green wards are currently unparished. Nash Mills ward contains the parish of Nash Mills and an unparished area. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place. These wards are located in the southern part of Hemel Hempstead, south of St Albans Road.

117 We received three submissions in relation to Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group. The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing two-member Corner Hall ward. It also proposed to retain the existing boundaries for Apsley ward, but proposed making this a two-member ward. According to its mapping the Borough Council proposed to transfer out of Nash Mills ward the unparished areas along Chambersbury Lane, Barnacers Road and Hill Common.

118 The Borough Council proposed a two-member Leverstock Green ward and an additional single-member ward in this area to be named Tile Kiln. It proposed a two-member Bennetts End ward comprising the existing Bennetts End ward less the area from polling district AQA transferred into its proposed Tile Kiln ward, and with the addition of the Chambersbury Lane area transferred from Nash Mills ward.

119 The Liberal Democrats considered this area to be the southern part of the town. It proposed combining the existing Apsley ward (minus the railway station) with polling district AEA (less St Albans Hill, Ivory Court and Semphill Road) from the existing Corner Hall ward in a three-member Apsley & Corner Hall ward. It considered that this created a ward 'based around the central areas of Lawn Lane and Apsley' and that 'uniting these areas unites all the areas in the hinterland of these centres, rather than dividing them'. It proposed combining the remainder of Corner Hall ward (less the area between and including Athelstan Road and Belmont Road) with polling district AQB (less the area east of and including Hobbs Hill Road, Barnfield and Sanders Close) from Bennetts End ward and with Nash Mills parish and polling district BAA in a two-member Belswains & Nash Mills ward. It considered that this would 'ensure that all of the community of Bennetts End would remain in Bennetts End whilst recognising the different community of those residents in Nash Mills'.

120 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the remainder of the existing Bennetts End ward be combined with polling district ALC and part of ALA (the area west of Tile Kiln Lane) from Leverstock Green ward and polling district BAB from Nash Mills ward to create a two-member Bennetts End & Northend ward. It proposed that the remainder of Leverstock Green ward form a two-member ward. It considered that it 'is a community in its own right'. It also noted that a single-member Tile Kiln ward could be made from part of Leverstock Green ward, but it considered this would 'create a ward with clumsy borders that is not a community but rather named after a long road'.

121 The Labour Group proposed a two-member Apsley ward. It proposed to remove the area to the west of and including Stratford Way south of London Road from the existing Apsley ward into its proposed Boxmoor ward. It also proposed to transfer Cedar Walk and Corner Hall Avenue from Corner Hall ward into its proposed Apsley ward. However, this amendment would create a detached ward as it does not include properties along Lawn Lane that attach the areas. It proposed a two-member Corner Hall ward based on the existing ward less Cedar Walk and Corner Hall Avenue. The Labour Group proposed a two-member Leverstock Green Village ward comprising polling districts ALB, ALC and BAB as well as an area of polling district BA (Linsey Close, Longdean Park, Highclere Drive, Silverthorn Drive and The Leas). The Labour Group considered that 'Leverstock Green is a distinct community with its own village association'. The Labour Group also proposed a single-member Tile Kiln ward comprising polling district ALA and part of the existing Bennetts End ward (Rant Meadow, Three Corners, Flatfield Road, Goldcroft and Peascroft Road). It proposed a three-member Bennetts End ward comprising the remainder of Bennetts End and Nash Mills wards.

122 We carefully considered all the representations we received during Stage One. Because we proposed a council size of 51, the southern area of Hemel Hempstead and Nash Mills is entitled to nine councillors. Both the Borough Council and the Labour Group allocated this area 10 councillors, to which it would be entitled under their proposed council sizes of 52 and 53 respectively. Therefore it was difficult to incorporate their proposals in this area.

123 We considered the three different proposals for Apsley and Corner Hall wards. The Borough Council's proposal to retain the existing Apsley ward would result in 10% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009 under a council size of 51. In the absence of any argument in favour of retaining this ward, we considered that electoral equality could be improved upon. We did not consider that the Labour Group's proposals including the detached area would better recognise communities than other proposals for the area. We also noted that under a council size of 51 its proposed Apsley ward would have 12% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009. We noted that the Liberal Democrats' proposal had an electoral variance of 6% from the borough average by 2009 and used a strong boundary to separate Corner Hall ward; we therefore recommended this ward.

124 We considered the proposal to use the Nash Mills parish boundary as the ward boundary, however, we did not consider that it was particularly clear as it crosses through properties. We also noted that the Labour Group's proposals for this ward would involve parish warding. We noted that the existing ward provides excellent electoral equality with only 1% more electors than the borough average by 2009. Bearing these factors in mind we were reluctant to move away from the existing ward particularly in light of the limited evidence in support of any of the proposed wards in

this area. We therefore proposed to retain the existing Nash Mills ward as part of our draft recommendations. Because of this it was not possible to adopt any of the proposals for the rest of the wards in this area, as they relied on altering Nash Mills ward. Therefore we based our draft recommendations for the proposed Leverstock Green and Belswains & Bennetts End wards on those proposed by the Liberal Democrats with some of our own amendments to improve electoral equality. We proposed to transfer the area north of Peascroft Road and Leas Road from Belswains & Bennetts End ward into the existing Leverstock Green ward. We acknowledged that this ward could cover a greater area than that just known as Leverstock Green and stated that we would welcome comments on the naming of this ward during Stage Three. Our proposed two-member Belswains & Bennetts End ward would comprise the remainder of Bennetts End ward and Corner Hall ward, and we welcomed comments on the naming of this ward.

125 Our proposed Apsley & Corner Hall, Belswains & Bennetts End, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards are expected to have 6% more, 5% more, 6% more and 1% more electors than the borough average by 2009 respectively.

126 During Stage Three we received 126 submissions regarding the southern area of Hemel Hempstead from the Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Anderson, Leverstock Green Village Association, Bennetts End Neighbourhood Association, Northend Residents Association, Councillor Foster and 118 local residents.

127 The Borough Council supported our proposed Nash Mills ward. However, it proposed alternative wards in the rest of the area based on our draft recommendations. It objected to our proposed Belswains & Bennetts End and Leverstock Green wards. It considered that in our proposal 'no weight has been given to community or geography' and that the Bennetts End Road is a strong geographical feature which our proposals 'absorbed' into Leverstock Green. It therefore proposed an amended version of this ward. It proposed that the Rant Meadow and Goldcroft Road area, and the area to the south east of Peascroft Road, Leys Road and Barnacres Road, should be transferred from our proposed Belswains & Bennetts End ward into the existing Leverstock Green ward. The Borough Council also proposed to transfer electors along Newell Road and the properties to the north of St Albans Hill out of our proposed Belswains & Bennetts End ward into its proposed Apsley & Corner Hall ward. From this ward it proposed transferring out those properties to the west of Stratford Way into its proposed Boxmoor ward. The Borough Council considered that our proposed Apsley & Cornerhall ward was 'too large' and that its proposal was a compromise that would allow for a council size of 51. It considered its proposal to remove Newell Road from its proposed Bennetts End ward 'helps achieve a fare better community and geographic element [...] in that part of Hemel Hempstead'.

128 The Labour Group proposed an alternative arrangement for the wards in this area. It considered that the deprivation score for 'Bennetts End is double that of Leverstock Green and there is a far greater Asian population'. It continued that dividing Bennetts End 'would have the effect of diluting the available data, which in turn would affect the support available to the community'. The Labour Group also included detailed profiles of the population and deprivation data for each of the existing wards. The Labour Group proposed four wards to cover this area. It proposed a two-member Leverstock Green ward to comprise the existing Leverstock Green ward less that area to the west of the Tile Kiln Lane and Kilncroft area. It

proposed transferring this area into its proposed three-member Bennetts End ward. It proposed transferring the area broadly north west of Belswains Primary School, Belswains playing fields and Lime Walk Primary School into the existing Cornerhall ward, to retain this name. It also proposed transferring the area around Cedar Walk from Cornerhall into the existing Apsley ward, to retain the Apsley name. It did not express support for or opposition to our proposed Nash Mills ward.

129 The Liberal Democrats supported our proposed Apsley & Cornerhall ward; however, it proposed alternative Belswains & Bennetts End, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards. It proposed the same amendment to the boundary between Leverstock Green and Belswains & Bennetts End as the Labour Group. However, it also proposed to transfer Hill Common from Belswains & Bennetts End into Nash Mills ward, as well as Woodfield Gardens and Drive from Leverstock Green ward. It considered that 'concentrating Leverstock Green around the main part of the village' would allow the 'community of Bennetts End to be maintained as a unit'. It considered that the area we proposed to transfer into Leverstock Green was 'clearly part of Bennetts End', however it acknowledged that the existing boundary could not be retained in order to achieve electoral equality and therefore considered that its amendment allowed for the communities to be better represented. The Liberal Democrats considered that its amendment to Nash Mills ward would improve electoral equality in the southern area of Hemel Hempstead.

130 Councillor Anderson considered that part of Bennetts End is already in Leverstock Green and that our proposal 'exacerbates the problem rather than reduces it'. He also considered that Apsley and Cornerhall wards should not be combined in one ward. He also noted the naming of our proposed Belswains & Bennetts End ward and stated that Belswains is not a name that residents would recognise. Leverstock Green Village Association considered that Leverstock Green should be represented by three councillors 'adhering to most of the current boundaries'. It considered that Woodfield Gardens, currently in Nash Mills ward, should be included in Leverstock Green ward. Bennetts End Neighbourhood Association considered that Bennetts End is a 'unique area and has established itself and now has the character of a very large village'. Northend Residents Association opposed proposals to remove Northend Farm estate from Leverstock Green ward. It stated that it was represented on and had close links to the Leverstock Village Association Committee, but that it did not have such links to Bennetts End. It also stated it is part of the ecclesiastical parish of Leverstock Green.

131 We received a further 118 submissions from local residents regarding the boundary between Leverstock Green and Bennetts End. Thirteen residents and one petition from the residents of Fir Tree Close supported recommendations to transfer electors from Bennetts End into Leverstock Green ward as under our draft recommendations and the Borough Council's Stage Three proposal. One of these local residents suggested that 'the obvious boundary to the west of Leverstock Green is Bennetts End Road' and considered that this would be a more suitable place to divide the area, in agreement with the Borough Council's Stage Three proposal. A further 96 residents objected to the Labour Group's and Liberal Democrats' proposals to reduce Leverstock Green to a two-member ward. One local resident considered that Leverstock Green is 'not just a name, it is a community. We have our own school, tennis clubs, cricket club, football club, church, scout group, village green, village shops ...'. He described other facilities and memberships of the various groups he mentioned. He stated that 'there is a very strong feeling of community and people support each other' in Leverstock Green. Another resident outlined his

associations with Leverstock Green and described the community in terms of the local church and societies which Leverstock Green residents are members of. He also noted that there is an area of social housing already in Leverstock Green ward and considered that to remove this from the ward would mean that 'Leverstock Green will not have a balanced voice from all strata of society'. Other residents also highlighted the community groups used by Leverstock Green residents to give a picture of the community, including neighbourhood watch groups, football teams, Scouts and Brownies. Another resident highlighted his attendance at Holy Trinity Church in Leverstock Green as well as the library; he continued that he felt 'no affinity with Bennetts End'.

132 Six local residents considered that the existing arrangements should remain in place. However, one of these considered that areas from Nash Mills should be transferred into Leverstock Green ward, those same areas as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. She also stated that 'residents considered the area along and adjoining Tile Kiln Lane as being the very heart of Leverstock Green'. She also stated that the 'historical Bennetts End area [...] has always been considered part of Leverstock Green (both politically as well as by the local residents)'. She noted that this area was focused around the Tile Kiln area. She also stated that if a part of Bennetts End were to be combined with Leverstock Green, the name should reflect this, and suggested it be named 'Leverstock Green & Bennetts End'. Another one of these residents suggested that if an area of Leverstock Green had to be removed then it should be the Northend area. However, we also received objections to the Northend area being transferred from Leverstock Green from other residents and from Northend Residents Association.

133 We also received two representations from local residents who objected to transferring part of Bennetts End into Leverstock Green ward. One (Mr Jones) considered that our proposals 'cut Bennetts End neighbourhood in the middle' and that it would be 'better for the vast majority of the community of Bennetts End to be in a single ward'. He proposed a two-member Leverstock Green ward and a three-member Belswains & Bennetts End ward similar to those of the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats. He also considered that the Cornerhall area has limited links to Apsley ward and suggested retaining the existing Cornerhall ward and combining Apsley ward with the south west part of Bennetts End ward.

134 Having considered the representations received we are confirming our proposed Nash Mills ward as final. We note the proposal from the Leverstock Green Village Association to transfer the southern side of Woodfield Gardens into Leverstock Green ward. However, to do this it would be necessary to make a parish ward of the few houses to be transferred. We would not recommend a parish ward with less than 100 electors as we do not consider that this would provide for convenient and effective local government. We consider that this area is too small to form a parish ward of Nash Mills parish and therefore do not propose this amendment. We also note the contrary proposal of the Liberal Democrats to move those properties on the northern side of Woodfield Gardens from Leverstock Green ward into Nash Mills ward. However, we consider this area looks towards Leverstock Green ward and would be isolated from the remainder of Nash Mills ward. We also note the Liberal Democrats proposal to transfer part of the existing Bennetts End ward into Nash Mills ward. However, we do not consider that this improves electoral equality, as the Liberal Democrats suggest as the electoral variance of the ward would increase from 1% under our draft recommendations to 6% under the Liberal Democrats' proposal.

135 We note that the Borough Council considered that our proposed Apsley & Cornerhall ward was too large, and proposed an alternative that breached the A road. We also note the Labour Group's proposed amended wards for this area. However, both the Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals rely on making additional changes to other wards in the area that we do not propose to adopt. We also note the local resident's proposal to retain Apsley and Cornerhall as separate wards. However, we do not consider that his opinion has been backed up by any convincing argument. Therefore in light of the support our proposed Apsley & Cornerhall ward received from the Liberal Democrats and the limited supporting argument provided in the alternative proposals, we propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final for this ward, with the exception of one amendment. Given that we have adopted the Labour Group's proposal in the western part of Hemel Hempstead, we are proposing to return the train station to our proposed Apsley & Cornerhall ward from our proposed Boxmoor ward.

136 We note the Liberal Democrats', the Labour Group's and a local resident's proposal to transfer the Tile Kiln area of Leverstock Green into the existing Bennetts End ward. However, we consider that we received good community identity arguments to suggest that Leverstock Green should remain a three-member ward. We are therefore not proposing to adopt either of these proposals. We consider that some local residents provided good evidence to illustrate the community of Leverstock Green in terms of its clubs, shops and facilities. We also note the argument of one local resident stating that the Tile Kiln area is traditionally part of Leverstock Green and is still considered to be so by residents. We note the Labour Group's argument regarding deprivation scores and communities based on race. However, this is not something that we take into consideration when forming our recommendations.

137 While we do not consider that Leverstock Green should be divided, as proposed by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats, we do acknowledge the argument put forward by the Borough Council and a local resident that the Bennetts End Road clearly separates the communities of Bennetts End and Leverstock Green. We therefore considered that the boundary proposed by the Borough Council could better represent these communities than our draft recommendations. However, accepting the Borough Council's proposed boundary between Leverstock Green and Bennetts End wards would have a knock on effect across the other wards in the area and indeed across all of Hemel Hempstead. Under the Borough Council's proposal part of Belswains & Bennetts End ward would be transferred into Apsley & Cornerhall ward and would also move electors from this ward into Boxmoor ward, in order to maintain good levels of electoral equality. This results in breaching the main roads which, during the formation of our draft recommendations we considered divided the town into four recognisable areas. We do not consider that the Borough Council's argument for its proposed wards sufficiently challenges our view that the A roads divide up the town into recognisable areas, and we have not been convinced that its proposals better represent communities given the limited arguments it put forward.

138 We therefore propose a number of amendments to the Borough Council's proposed boundary, taking more electors from the existing Bennetts End ward into Leverstock Green ward. We propose to take the boundary along the centre of the Bennetts End Road, so that all those properties to the east of Bennetts End Road would be included in our proposed Leverstock Green ward, as well as those properties north of St Albans Hill also on Bennetts End Road. We also propose transferring additional electors from, and south of, Great Elms Road into our

proposed Leverstock Green ward. We note Councillor Anderson's proposal that Belswains is not an area recognised by local people and therefore we propose to retain the existing ward name of Bennetts End.

139 We consider that our amendment to the Borough Council's proposed boundary between Bennetts End and Leverstock Green wards is significantly different from the existing arrangements and our draft recommendations and therefore we did not consider that we could recommend this in our final recommendations without first gauging opinion from local interested parties. Therefore we conducted a period of further consultation on the southern area of Hemel Hempstead. We considered that our amendment to the Borough Council's alternative boundary between Leverstock Green and Bennetts End wards would enable these communities to be predominately represented in individual wards that incorporated all the community identity arguments we received regarding the area, as well as returning good electoral equality. We therefore wrote to all those who had submitted a response to us regarding the southern area of Hemel Hempstead during Stage Three and asked them to choose which option they preferred, either our draft recommendations or our amended proposals, respondents were also given an opportunity to make comments regarding the proposals. Respondents received details of the electoral equality each of the proposed wards would have and mapping showing the existing wards, our draft recommendations and our amended wards.

140 We conducted further consultation on this area for a period of four weeks between 5 May and 2 June 2006. In that time we received 80 responses from local interested parties. The majority of respondents (73) supported our amended proposal for Bennetts End and Leverstock Green. However, a number of reservations were expressed by some of these respondents. The Borough Council considered that our amended proposal was the least detrimental of the two options. However, it considered that we should reconsider its initial proposal of a separate Tile Kiln ward. The Labour Group considered both proposals were unsatisfactory, but that the amended proposal was 'the least worst'. Councillor Bassadone noted that although she supported the amended proposal it would not be her 'favoured means of allowing these electors to gravitate towards their natural community centres'. Councillor Anderson considered that the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for a separate Tile Kiln ward should be reconsidered. Councillor Jameson considered our amended proposal allowed for the community that uses the Reddings Primary School to remain in one ward, rather than being divided between two, and therefore supported it. We received a number of comments stating that although the amended proposal was the preferred option of the two we consulted on, retaining the existing arrangements in this area would best represent the communities in this area.

141 Seven respondents supported our draft recommendations. Of those who made comments, one resident considered its boundaries were clearer, and another considered it comes closer to reflecting communities.

142 Given the overwhelming support for our amended proposal we are proposing to move away from our draft recommendations and adopt this warding arrangement as final for the southern part of Hemel Hempstead. We note the opinion that a separate Tile Kiln ward as proposed at Stage One would better reflect the communities in this area. However, the Stage One proposal was based on a council size of 52, allocating this area an additional councillor. It is not possible under our recommended council size of 51 to create a separate Tile Kiln ward as this part of Hemel Hempstead is not entitled to an additional councillor under a council size of 51. We also note the

opinion that retaining the existing wards would best reflect the communities. However, this is not possible given that the number of councillors allocated to the area is reduced under a council size of 51, nor has retaining the existing arrangements been argued for convincingly during this review. While we do acknowledge these opinions, we would highlight that as discussed previously this further consultation was not an opportunity to put forward new proposals, but to allow us to gauge the appropriateness of those proposals we received during Stage Three as these had not previously been consulted on.

143 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Apsley & Corner Hall, Bennetts End and Leverstock Green wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards

144 Under the existing arrangements Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards are currently parished. Combined, the three wards make up the parish of Berkhamsted and each is a parish ward of the same name as its corresponding borough ward name. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

145 We received four submissions in relation to Berkhamsted during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Stevens and Northchurch Parish Council. The Borough Council proposed transferring part of Berkhamsted Castle ward into Berkhamsted East ward to address the imbalance in Berkhamsted Castle ward. It proposed transferring properties between Castle Street, Chapel Street, High Street and the Grand Union Canal up to Little Heath Lane. It proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Berkhamsted West ward. The Borough Council did not provide any arguments for its proposal. The Liberal Democrats also proposed transferring part of Berkhamsted Castle into Berkhamsted East ward to address the electoral imbalance in Berkhamsted Castle ward. It proposed transferring those properties east of and including Robertson Road taking the boundary up to the Grand Union Canal and along Bullbeggars Lane. The Liberal Democrats acknowledged that the existing boundary following High Street 'provides a natural boundary'. However, it considered that there was no other way of reorganising the wards without breaching it, and considered that following the canal provided 'a logical option that can be readily understood by the citizen'. It also proposed transferring two properties from Chesham Road in Berkhamsted West ward into Berkhamsted East ward in order to amend an 'anomaly' in the existing boundary.

146 Councillor Stevens proposed an identical amendment to the Liberal Democrats. Northchurch Parish Council considered that it should not be combined in a ward with any part of Berkhamsted since Northchurch parish has a 'great sense of community'.

147 We carefully considered the submissions we received for Berkhamsted. The Borough Council's submission differed between its mapping for the area and the textual description given for the area. Its electoral figures did not account for all the electors in the area that it mapped. The Borough Council confirmed that its mapping

was correct, resulting in a Berkhamsted East ward with an electoral variance of 15% from the borough average. We considered both the Liberal Democrats’ and Councillor Stevens’s proposal. We considered that the use of the canal as the boundary is strong and recognisable. We also considered that the small boundary amendment to address the ‘anomaly’ on Chesham Road was a sensible adjustment. We noted the comments of Northchurch Parish Council; we did not propose to combine these areas as both had more electors than the borough average and combining parts of these areas would not result in better electoral equality.

148 We therefore adopted the Liberal Democrats’ proposals in full for Berkhamsted. Under our draft recommendations our proposed Berkhamsted wards are expected to have electoral variances within 7% of the borough average by 2009.

149 During Stage Three we received three submissions in relation to our proposals for Berkhamsted. Both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations. Northchurch Parish Council was pleased that we had not proposed to combine the parish with Berkhamsted.

150 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Berkhamstead Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards as final.

151 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11 respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Berkhamstead Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Tring Central, Tring East, Tring West and Aldbury & Wigginton wards

152 Under the existing arrangements Tring Central, Tring East, Tring West and Aldbury & Wigginton wards are currently parished. Table 5, overleaf, shows the constituent parts of these wards. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

153 We received seven submissions in relation to the Tring and Aldbury & Wigginton wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Tring Town Council, Aldbury Parish Council, Councillor Jameson and two local residents. The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing Aldbury & Wigginton and the three Tring wards. It provided no argument for its proposal.

Table 5: Existing arrangements

Ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Aldbury & Wigginton	Aldbury parish and Wigginton parish	1
Tring Central	Tring Bunstrux parish ward of Tring parish	2
Tring East	Tring Dunsley parish ward of Tring parish	1
Tring West	Tring Miswell parish ward of Tring parish and Tring Rural parish	2

154 The Liberal Democrats proposed combining part of Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards to create a two-member Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. It explained that this proposal 'seeks to satisfy the need to provide equality of representation whilst maintaining the sincere communities of Aldbury village and Wigginton village'. It considered that this proposal was justified because 'the parish boundaries of both Aldbury and Wigginton are currently intertwined with Tring East'. It continued: 'Tring station falls within Aldbury parish, children from Aldbury and Wigginton generally attend Tring School.' It also noted that Tring East ward already houses the 'rural area of Hastoe within its ward and [it] would not therefore be an unnatural marriage' and that 'Tring West ward is made up similarly to that which we propose [...] insofar as it has a large part of the town of Tring together with the two villages of Wilstone and Long Marston'.

155 The Liberal Democrats proposed further amendments to the existing Tring wards in order to improve electoral equality. It proposed to transfer a small area in the New Mill area from Tring East ward into Tring Central ward. It also proposed to transfer an area of Tring West ward into its proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward, those properties off the High Street between Akeman Street and Mansion Drive. It noted that this was returning to the boundary in this area prior to the last review carried out by the Local Government Commission for England. It also proposed to transfer Fantail Lane and part of Christchurch Road into Tring Central ward from Tring West ward. It considered that transferring areas between these wards was 'difficult' and that its proposals were the 'most acceptable'. It acknowledged that this 'breaches what is currently a natural boundary'. Tring Town Council submitted proposals identical to the Liberal Democrats.

156 Aldbury Parish Council opposed the proposal to combine Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. It considered that the 'rural parishes of Aldbury and Wigginton are very different [in] character from the urban area of Tring East'. It also noted that this was the decision taken in the last review. Councillor Jameson was also of this opinion. He considered that its 'rural character entitled it to separate representation'. He also opposed all the proposals made by the Liberal Democrats saying that changes would 'confuse voters'. He also sent a petition with 172 signatures all in opposition to the proposals to combine Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. This was signed by residents from Tring East, Aldbury and Wigginton. Mr Standen, a local resident, also opposed the Liberal Democrats' proposal, and considered that a 'merger would be a retrograde step'. He also noted that Aldbury and Wigginton are 'distinct rural communities with their own amenities and sense of identity'. Mr Harris, also a local resident, considered that the two wards should be combined so that both areas can 'have a bigger voice at Dacorum Borough Council'.

157 We carefully considered all the submissions we received in relation to the three Tring wards and Aldbury & Wigginton ward. We noted the opposition to the Liberal Democrats' and Tring Town Council's proposal for the area, in particular the opposition to combining Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. We also noted Councillor Jameson's petition regarding this union. However, it was quality of argument rather than quantity of submissions that we were concerned with, and despite this opposition we did not feel that the reasons given why these areas should not be combined were decisive. We noted the argument put forward that the Local Government Commission for England did not combine these wards in the last review of Dacorum; however, while we are mindful of decisions made previously we cannot assume that what was the case eight years ago is still the case now without a full

argument. We considered that the argument put forward by the Liberal Democrats gave better reasoning as to why combining these areas would not detract from the identity of either area. Given the similar nature of the existing Tring West ward and also that a large part of Tring East ward is already rural in nature, we did not consider this to be a totally inappropriate union.

158 We therefore adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals in full for this area. Under our draft recommendations the proposed Tring Central, Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton and Tring West & Rural wards had 6%, 4% and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average.

159 We received 45 submissions at Stage Three from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, the South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party, Tring Town Council, Aldbury Parish Council, Wigginton Parish Council, Councillor Anderson, Councillor Jameson, Councillor Conway, Councillor Craufurd, Tobias Ellwood MP and 34 local residents.

160 The Borough Council considered that Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton should remain as separate wards. It considered there was 'strong local opposition' to this amalgamation. It also opposed our proposal to transfer the Fantail Lane area into Tring Central from Tring West ward and considered it should remain in Tring West, as the improvement in electoral equality is only minimal. The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations in full. Regarding our proposed Tring East & Aldbury & Wigginton ward the Liberal Democrats considered that the split between the urban and rural electorate would be 'approximately 50% each' and that transport links between the areas are 'adequate'. It also considered that the boundary between our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton and Tring West wards is stronger than the existing boundary.

161 The South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party opposed our draft recommendations. It considered that a large part of Tring East was not rural in nature as 'barely 5% of the Tring East electors live outside the wholly urban majority of the ward'. It continued that there is no intertwining between the areas and that in fact only five houses on Chesham Road are in Tring and the rest are in Wigginton. It stated that there is a 'limited bus service' between the communities'. It went on to stress that both Aldbury & Wigginton villages have 'active local societies and sports clubs with membership almost entirely drawn from one village or the other, whereas Tring East's electors normally belong to Tring wide bodies of this kind'. It added that 'each of the two villages has a pre-school, a primary school, a parish church and an active parish council'. The Conservative Party also discussed an impending planning application for new builds in Aldbury, which it considered might add an additional 10 to 20 electors, and therefore bring the electoral variance of Aldbury & Wigginton ward to under 10%. It also considered that we should retain the existing Tring town wards, considering our amendments 'have attracted no support'.

162 Tring Town Council supported our draft proposals in full. It submitted the majority and minority groups' opinions, the majority representing its own opinion. In the majority group's argument it defended arguments it had put forward at Stage One which have been contested by the South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party, stating that Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards are intertwined and listed three areas, affecting eight properties and farm buildings where this can be said. It also noted that transport links would remain as they are under the proposed ward

and that a combined ward would not detract away from the 'distinct communities that these areas enjoy'.

163 Aldbury Parish Council objected to our draft proposal to combine the existing Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. It considered that local community identities and interests cannot be reflected by an 'amalgamation of disparate areas'. Wigginton Parish Council strongly opposed our draft recommendations regarding our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. It stated that the village communities have different concerns from those of the town, and have their own 'social and community groups based around the interests and concerns of a rural village'.

164 Councillor Anderson considered that the Christchurch Road boundary should remain unchanged, and instead electors should be moved into Tring Central ward from the area between Wingrave Road and Grove Road Primary School from Tring East ward. This would result in the councillor for Tring East ward representing 12% fewer electors than the borough average, and the councillors for Tring Central ward representing fewer than 1% electors than the borough average.

165 Councillor Jameson, on behalf of the Conservative Group on Tring Town Council, submitted the same submission as the South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party; however, he added some additional information. He enclosed a copy of the *Aldbury Outlook* highlighting the differences between the two villages and Tring town. The magazine discussed how the needs of the areas are different. It illustrated the different concerns and needs of the areas by discussing how in Tring block paving of the high street is important whereas a lawnmower for the village sports ground was an issue in Aldbury. Councillor Conway, the sitting member for Tring East ward, also considered that the wards should not be combined and wished for the status quo to be retained. Councillor Craufurd also spoke of the development expected in Aldbury and considered that the areas have 'little in common'. Tobias Elwood MP considered that Aldbury & Wigginton ward should remain separate from Tring.

166 We also received 34 representations from local residents all objecting to our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. All outlined the difference between urban and rural life, considering that the areas have opposing requirements and therefore considered that the rural wards should retain their status rather than being combined in an urban ward. One resident outlined how issues affecting the urban and rural areas differed. They described how local priorities are different in the town and the villages; the villages focus 'upon local facilities' such as shops, libraries and transportation whereas the town's 'priorities are significantly different'. Another resident from Tring considered that the characteristics of the areas were different, stating that Aldbury and Wigginton parishes have a 'common commitment to countryside and rural matters' whereas Tring 'has become metropolitan in its focus, and has a much larger group of commuters'. He considered that our draft recommendations would be detrimental to both Tring town and Aldbury and Wigginton parishes.

167 Another resident considered that our draft recommendations would not provide effective and convenient local government and outlined an example of the conflicts between the urban and rural areas. She discussed an extension to the car park at Tring Station which is located in Aldbury parish and stated that 'the village of Aldbury opposes an extension to the old car park as an intrusion into an AONB' whereas, 'the

town of Tring would like an extension in order that more of its residents can park there when using the train'. Another resident from Tring Rural parish noted our argument that combining Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards was not dissimilar to the existing Tring West ward. However, he considered that the grouping of Tring West and Tring Rural parish, done for electoral purposes, 'is unavoidable because of the small size of our parish, but it is certainly not very satisfactory. The approach of local residents is totally different in the rural and urban areas, and councillors who come from the urban area find it difficult to keep in touch with the village's concerns'. He continued that 'the improvement to electoral ratios is marginal compared with the damage to community identity, caused by putting together two villages with extremely strong communities and Tring East, which is really a dormitory suburb'. He also noted the comments regarding the intertwining of the two areas, and considered that this only involved small numbers of electors and was due to 'parish reviews conducted in Dacorum [... being] less than thorough'.

168 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for Tring West & Rural and Tring Central wards as final. We are proposing to revert to the existing Aldbury & Wigginton ward, and propose a revised Tring East ward, as in our draft recommendations less the existing Aldbury & Wigginton ward, as we consider we received strong community identity evidence not to combine these areas.

169 We note the widespread opposition to our draft recommendation for a Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. We also note the support our draft recommendations received from Tring Town Council and the Liberal Democrats. We carefully considered the arguments both for and against this proposed ward. We note that Tring Town Council considered that the communities and the services in these areas would not change and therefore would not take away the 'distinct communities' that exist. However, it did not explain how the grouping of these communities would better represent their interests than if the areas had separate representation. We also acknowledge Tring Town Council's continued argument from Stage One that the areas are intertwined; however, this affects eight properties and some farm buildings, and given the contrary evidence from a resident that this was due to 'less than thorough' parish reviews, we are not of the opinion that such a small number of affected properties illustrates the cohesiveness of the communities. We also note the argument from the South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party that residents of the rural villages of Aldbury and Wigginton residents use separate clubs, societies, schools and parish councils that do not draw members from Tring East. We also note the similar argument from a local resident regarding the facilities and priorities relating to these issues varying between the urban and rural areas. We consider that these arguments also illustrate how the two communities are not as connected as we were originally led to believe.

170 We also acknowledge the concerns relating to the Chilterns AONB that runs east of Tring Town. We consider that our draft recommendations are mindful of the requirements set out in section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. However, we do acknowledge the potential problems associated with combining urban and rural areas. We note the arguments of the local resident who considered that the existing Tring West ward was not a satisfactory union of urban and rural wards, but was unavoidable. We considered that his argument regarding the convenient and effective representation of this ward clearly illustrated why such a union would not be satisfactory for the residents in our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. We note that in the case of the existing Tring West ward the

combining of urban and rural wards is inevitable given the shape of the district and the small numbers of electors in the rural parish, rather than the union being ideal in terms of representation.

171 We consider that we received enough evidence during Stage Three to suggest that combining urban and rural areas in this area would not reflect community identities. We also consider that the community identity argument we received that illustrates how these areas have individual identities and concerns justifies the increase in electoral inequality resulting from retention of the existing Aldbury & Wigginton ward (-12% by 2009).

172 We note the views received regarding the boundary amendments between our proposed Tring West & Rural, Tring Central and our now revised Tring East ward. We note Councillor Anderson's proposal to retain the Christchurch Road boundary and transfer electors from Tring East ward into Tring Central ward. We also note the lack of argument he provided for his proposed amendment. This proposal would result in higher levels of electoral inequality in Tring East ward than our draft recommendations or indeed the existing arrangements by 2009; therefore we do not consider that we can adopt his proposal. We do not consider that we received any strong compelling community identity argument as to why our proposed amendments within Tring town could not provide effective and convenient local government, particularly in light of the argument we received in relation to our proposed Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward.

173 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Aldbury & Wigginton, Tring Central, Tring East and Tring West & Rural wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

Ashridge, Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards

174 Under the existing arrangements Ashridge, Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards are parished. Table 1 (on page 9) and Map 1 included with this report show the constituent parts of these wards. Table 4 (on page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

175 We received four submissions in relation to the rural areas of Dacorum borough during Stage One from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Northchurch Parish Council and Councillor Anderson. The Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed to retain the existing arrangements in these wards. Neither submission gave any justification for doing so. Northchurch Parish Council considered that Northchurch ward should remain unchanged and that it should not be combined in a ward with Berkhamsted town. Councillor Anderson considered that the existing Kings Langley ward should be retained. We carefully considered the proposals, and we noted that there was little argument in favour of retaining the existing arrangements. We therefore looked at alternatives to improve electoral equality in the rural areas however, we considered that it was not possible to create more suitable wards with good levels of electoral equality that reflected community

identities and avoided parish warding. We therefore proposed to retain the existing electoral arrangements for these wards.

176 Under our draft recommendations the Ashridge, Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards are expected to have electoral variances within 7% of the borough average by 2009.

177 During Stage Three we received three submissions relating to these borough wards from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and Northchurch Parish Council. All three submissions supported our draft recommendations to retain the existing arrangements. We received a further 11 submissions relating to the parish warding arrangements of Kings Langley parish. This issue is discussed later in the parish electoral arrangements section of this report.

178 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Ashridge, Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards as final. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for these wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

179 Table 6 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 6: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	52	52	51	51
Number of wards	27	27	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	2,043	2,065	2,083	2,105
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	4	7	2	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	1	1	0	0

180 As shown in Table 6, our final recommendations for Dacorum Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more

than 10% from four to two. By 2009 only one ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to decrease the council size and are recommending a council size of 51 members.

Final recommendation

Dacorum Borough Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

181 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the borough council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the borough council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

182 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with borough councils.² If a borough council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

183 During Stage One we received proposals for revised parish council electoral arrangements in relation to Tring Town Council and Kings Langley Parish Council. We did not consider that we had received compelling arguments for the parish wards proposed within these parishes and therefore proposed to retain the existing arrangements in our draft recommendations. However, in our draft recommendations we put forward the alternative proposals submitted to us for these parishes and asked for comments at Stage Three.

184 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Berkhamstead and Tring to reflect the proposed borough wards.

185 At Stage Three we received no further comments relating to Berkhamstead parish and therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final. The parish of Berkhamsted is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West. We do not propose

² Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

changing the number of councillors but are making amendments to the parish ward boundaries to reflect our proposed borough wards.

Final recommendation

Berkhamsted Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Berkhamsted Castle (returning five councillors), Berkhamsted East (returning five councillors) and Berkhamsted West (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 1 and 3.

186 The parish of Tring is currently served by 12 councillors representing three wards: Tring Bunstrux, Tring Dunsley and Tring Miswell. We received two submissions in relation to Tring Town Council, from Tring Town Council and Councillor Jameson during Stage One. Tring Town Council considered that the parish wards should be coterminous with the borough wards for Tring. Councillor Jameson proposed creating a new parish ward from part of Tring Bunstrux parish ward. He considered that the New Mill area, including Bulbourne, within Tring Bunstrux parish ward should become a single-member parish ward. He said that New Mill ‘has historically been separate from Tring. It has its own community centre, polling station and community association’. He went on to say that the area has issues that are ‘distinct from those of the rest of [Tring] Bunstrux.’ His proposed New Mill ward would comprise the area north of New Road in the existing Tring Bunstrux parish ward, this proposal is summarised below.

- **Councillor Jameson’s proposal:** Tring Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Bunstrux (returning four councillors), Dunsley (returning three councillors), Miswell (returning four councillors) and New Mill (returning one councillor).

187 We acknowledged Councillor Jameson’s proposal; however, we did not consider that it was supported by compelling evidence. Therefore we requested that local people, including the Borough Council, write to us at Stage Three regarding this proposal with supporting evidence.

188 At Stage Three we received comments on our draft recommendations for the parish wards of Tring from Tring Town Council, South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party and Councillor Jameson. Tring Town Council supported our draft recommendations to retain three wards based on the borough ward boundaries. It considered that the proposal for the New Mill ward ‘bears little resemblance to the historic area of New Mill and leaves out all the major features which once made up this community’. The Conservative Party supported Councillor Jameson’s Stage One proposal. It noted that the New Mill area had its own community centre, polling station, pensioners group and youth club. It also stated there was strong support for a parish ward from an ‘oral survey’ that was taken in the area in July. Councillor Jameson submitted identical information to the Conservative Party.

189 We do not consider that we have received any more detailed argument in support of this ward than we received during Stage One. We note the South West Hertfordshire Conservative Party’s argument regarding its survey. However, without any evidence of this, or without any opinion from local people regarding this, we do not consider this to be strong argument in favour of creating a New Mill parish ward. Therefore, given the support for our draft recommendations from Tring Town Council

and the opposing evidence it gives in relation to the Conservative Party's proposal, combined with the fact that we do not consider we have received any new evidence in support of the New Mill parish ward, we are proposing to confirm our draft recommendations as final for Tring parish wards.

190 Our proposed borough warding arrangements would result in small changes to this area. We do not propose changing the number of councillors but are making amendments to the parish ward boundaries to reflect our proposed borough wards.

Final recommendation

Tring Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Tring Bunstrux (returning five councillors), Tring Dunsley (returning three councillors) and Tring Miswell (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 1 and 4.

191 The parish of Kings Langley is currently divided into three parish wards, North, South and Central, served by 10 councillors. We received four submissions in relation to Kings Langley parish during Stage One, from Kings Langley Parish Council, Kings Langley Labour Party, Councillor Anderson and local resident Mrs Taylor. Each put forward proposals for the parish warding arrangements in Kings Langley.

192 Kings Langley Parish Council proposed to create three new wards for the parish. It proposed a Gade parish ward for the area east of Watford Road, High Street and Hempstead Road from the existing Central and South parish wards. It proposed that Barnes Farm should be combined with North parish ward to create a rural parish ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Central parish ward and South parish ward form a new Palace parish ward. Kings Langley Parish Council considered that the existing Central parish ward is over-represented and considered that its proposals would go some way to addressing this imbalance. Councillor Anderson also proposed the same parish wards as Kings Langley Parish Council.

193 Kings Langley Labour Party considered that the existing arrangements should be retained for Kings Langley parish. It noted that the existing wards are well established and have been in place for 'over 30 years'. However, it considered that if the existing arrangements should be changed then it proposed an alternative arrangement for Kings Langley Parish Council. It proposed to increase the council size by two from 10 to 12. It proposed to create four parish wards. It considered that the existing South parish ward should be divided into two parish wards along the Watford Road and High Street to create South East and South West parish wards. It also proposed that 119 Hempstead Road be transferred from North ward into the existing Central parish ward, and that the remaining area become a new North ward.

194 Local resident Mrs Taylor put forward two options for the re-warding of Kings Langley parish, both based on a council size of 10 members. She proposed to retain North parish ward in both options. In the first option she proposed to transfer the area between Common Lane, the Nap, Blackwell Road and Church Lane from South parish ward into the existing Central parish ward. In the second option she proposed only to transfer the area of South parish ward between Common Lane, the Nap and Mill Lane into Central parish ward, leaving a slightly larger South parish ward.

195 We considered that it was evident from the varied submissions we received at Stage One, regarding the electoral arrangements of Kings Langley parish, that there were a number of local groups who wish to see revised arrangements for the parish council. While we acknowledged that the existing arrangements could be changed we did not consider that the proposals we received were supported by compelling evidence. Therefore we proposed retaining the existing arrangements. However, we requested that local people, including the Borough Council, write to us at Stage Three outlining their preferred option with supporting evidence. The four proposals for Kings Langley are summarised below.

- **Option 1, Kings Langley Parish Council:** Kings Langley Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Gade (returning three councillors), Palace (returning five councillors) and Rural (returning two councillors).
- **Option 2, Kings Langley Labour Party:** Kings Langley Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, two more than at present, representing four wards: Central (returning two councillors), North (returning two councillors), South East (returning four councillors) and South West (returning four councillors).
- **Option 3, Mrs Taylor's option 1:** Kings Langley Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central (returning three councillors), North (returning two councillors) and South (returning five councillors).
- **Option 4, Mrs Taylor's option 2:** Kings Langley Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central (returning two councillors), North (returning two councillors) and South (returning six councillors).

196 At Stage Three we received comments on our draft recommendations from the Borough Council, Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association, Kings Langley Labour Party, Kings Langley Parish Council, Councillor Anderson, Mike Penning MP and six local residents. The Borough Council supported Kings Langley Parish Council's Stage One submission. It considered that the electoral imbalance of Central ward should be addressed, and that it would be inconsistent for us to change the borough wards to reduce electoral variances and not do the same for the parish council wards. Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association, Councillor Anderson, Mike Penning MP and three local residents also supported this view. Hemel Hempstead Conservative Association and Councillor Anderson put forward similar arguments to the Borough Council's. Mike Penning MP considered that we should adopt Kings Langley Parish Council's Stage One proposals as it is the elected body and represents the majority of residents. Three of the local residents also supported this proposal; the other three residents stated that they supported change but did not state which proposal they supported. Kings Langley Parish Council stated that it noted our recommendations but had no further comments to make.

197 Kings Langley Labour Party supported our draft recommendation to retain the existing arrangements. It considered that the existing parish wards have overwhelming support with their boundaries 'clearly having stood the test of time'.

198 Having considered the representations received, we note the support for Kings Langley Parish Council's Stage One proposal. However, we do not consider that this has been supported by any convincing evidence. We acknowledge the argument relating to electoral equality; however, the legislation does not provide for us to take account of the electoral variances of parish wards and therefore we cannot propose changes to parish wards based on this argument. Given that we did not receive any evidence relating to community identity or effective and convenient local government to support the proposed amendments we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. We are recommending retaining the existing arrangements for Kings Langley parish.

Final recommendation

Kings Langley Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central (returning two councillors), North (returning two councillors) and South (returning six councillors).

6 What happens next?

199 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Dacorum and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.³

200 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not 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 26 September 2006, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

³ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for Dacorum

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Dacorum borough.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Dacorum borough, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Hemel Hempstead.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in Berkhamsted.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in Tring.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
The Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
The Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the borough
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nations benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single borough enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories: a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the borough average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the borough council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm) requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We comply with this requirement.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.

