

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire

March 2004

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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. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on the 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No.3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

We began a review of Buckinghamshire County Council's electoral arrangements on 4 February 2003.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Buckinghamshire:

- **In 20 of the 54 divisions, each of which is currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors varies by more than 10% from the average for the county and nine divisions vary by more than 20%.**
- **By 2007 this situation is expected to worsen with the number of electors forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 29 divisions and by more than 20% in nine divisions.**

Our main proposals for Buckinghamshire County Council's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and Paragraphs 130 – 131) are that:

- **Buckinghamshire should have 57 councillors, three more than at present, representing 47 divisions;**
- **As the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves been changed as a result of recent district reviews, the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each county councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 13 of the proposed 47 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 20% from the average;**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 11 divisions expected to vary by no more than 19% from the average by 2007.**

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

- **Revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Farnham Royal and Great Marlow.**

This report sets out draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 9 March 2004. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, which will then be responsible for implementing change to the local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes will come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 10 May 2004.

**The Team Leader
Buckinghamshire County Council Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards	
Aylesbury Vale			
1	Aston Clinton	1	Aston Clinton ward
2	Aylesbury East	2	Bierton ward; Elmhurst & Watermead ward; Oakfield ward
3	Aylesbury North	2	Aylesbury Central ward; Gatehouse ward; Quarrendon ward; Weedon parish of Weedon ward
4	Aylesbury South	1	Mandeville & Elm Farm ward
5	Aylesbury South East	1	Bedgrove ward
6	Aylesbury West	2	Coldharbour ward; Southcourt ward; Walton Court & Hawkslade ward
7	Bernwood	1	Brill ward; Long Crendon ward; Dorton, Ludgershall, Kingswood, Westcott, Woodham and Wotton Underwood parishes of Grendon Underwood ward; Ashendon, Chearsley, Lower Winchendon and Upper Winchendon parishes of Waddesdon ward
8	Buckingham North	1	Buckingham North ward; Luffield Abbey ward
9	Buckingham South	1	Buckingham South ward; Tingewick ward; Hillesden, Preston Bissett and Twyford parishes of Marsh Gibbon ward
10	Great Brickhill	1	Great Brickhill ward; Newton Longville ward; Stewkley ward
11	Grendon Underwood	1	Steeple Claydon ward; Edgcott and Grendon Underwood parishes of Grendon Underwood ward; Charndon, Marsh Gibbon, Poundon parishes of Marsh Gibbon ward; Hogshaw and Quainton parishes of Quainton ward; Fleet Marston and Waddesdon parishes of Waddesdon ward
12	Haddenham	1	Haddenham ward
13	Ivinghoe	1	Cheddington ward; Edlesborough ward; Pitstone ward
14	Wendover	1	Wendover ward
15	Wing	1	Wing ward; Wingrave ward; Creslow, Hardwick and Whitchurch parishes of Weedon ward; North Marston, Oving and Pitchcott parishes of Quainton ward
16	Winslow	1	Great Horwood ward; Winslow ward
Chiltern			
17	Amersham	2	Amersham Common ward; Amersham-on-the-Hill ward; Amersham Town ward; Chesham Bois & Weedon Hill ward
18	Chalfont St Giles	2	Chalfont Common ward; Chalfont St Giles ward; Little Chalfont ward; Seer Green ward
19	Chalfont St Peter	1	Austenwood ward; Central ward; Gold Hill ward
20	Chesham East	1	Hilltop & Townsend ward; Newtown ward; Vale ward
21	Chesham North West	1	Asheridge Vale & Lowndes ward; Ridgeway ward
22	Chesham Rural	1	Ballinger, South Heath & Chartridge ward; Cholesbury, The Lee & Bellingdon ward; Great Missenden ward

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
23 Chesham South & Rural	1	Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies ward; St Mary's & Waterside ward
24 Holmer Green, Coleshill & Penn	1	Holmer Green ward; Penn & Coleshill ward
25 Little Missenden, Prestwood & Heath End	1	Little Missenden ward; Prestwood & Heath End ward
South Bucks		
26 Alderbourne	1	Denham South ward; Iver Heath ward
27 Beaconsfield	1	Beaconsfield North ward; Beaconsfield West ward
28 Bulstrode	1	Beaconsfield South ward; Gerrards Cross South ward; Hedgerley & Fulmer ward
29 Burnham Beeches	1	Burnham Beeches ward; Burnham Church ward; part of Farnham Royal ward (the proposed Farnham Royal Central and Farnham Royal South parish wards of Farnham Royal parish)
30 Gerrards Cross & Denham North	1	Denham North ward; Gerrards Cross East & Denham South West ward; Gerrards Cross North ward
31 Iver	1	Iver Village & Richings Park ward; Wexham & Iver West ward
32 Stoke Poges & Farnham Common	1	Stoke Poges ward; part of Farnham Royal ward (the proposed Farnham Royal North parish ward of Farnham Royal parish)
33 Taplow, Dorney & Lent Rise	1	Burnham Lent Rise ward; Dorney & Burnham South ward; Taplow ward
Wycombe		
34 Abbey	1	Abbey ward
35 Bowerdean & Totteridge	2	Bowerdean ward; Micklefield Ward; Totteridge ward
36 Booker, Cressex & Sands	1	Booker & Cressex ward; part of Sands ward
37 Chiltern Valley	1	Hambleden Valley ward; Lane End parish of Chiltern Rise ward; part of Greater Marlow ward (the proposed Marlow Common parish ward of Great Marlow parish)
38 Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge & Castlefield	2	Disraeli ward; Downley & Plomer Hill ward; Oakridge & Castlefield ward
39 Greater Hughenden	1	Greater Hughenden ward
40 Hazlemere	1	Hazlemere North ward; Hazlemere South ward
41 Icknield and Bledlow	1	Bledlow & Bradenham ward; Icknield ward; Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens ward;
42 Marlow	2	Marlow North & West ward; Marlow South East ward; part of Greater Marlow ward (the proposed Marlow Bottom parish ward of Great Marlow parish)
43 Ryemead, Tylers Green & Loudwater	2	Ryemead ward; Tylers Green & Loudwater ward
44 Stokenchurch, Radnage and West Wycombe	1	Stokenchurch & Radnage ward; Piddington & Wheeler End and West Wycombe parishes of Chiltern Rise ward; part of Sands ward
45 Terriers & Amersham Hill	1	Terriers & Amersham Hill ward

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
46 Thames	2	Bourne End-cum-Hedsor ward; Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow ward; The Wooburns ward
47 The Risboroughs	1	The Risboroughs ward

Notes:

1. *The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the four Buckinghamshire districts which were completed in 2001. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*
2. *The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above and the maps in Appendix A illustrate some of the proposed boundaries in more detail.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Buckinghamshire

	Division name (by district council name)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2007)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Aylesbury Vale								
1	Aston Clinton	1	7,048	7,048	10	7,015	7,015	6
2	Aylesbury East	2	11,709	5,855	-9	12,078	6,039	-9
3	Aylesbury North	2	10,420	5,210	-19	12,684	6,342	-4
4	Aylesbury South	1	6,016	6,016	-6	6,085	6,085	-8
5	Aylesbury South East	1	6,938	6,938	8	6,818	6,818	3
6	Aylesbury West	2	13,185	6,593	3	14,735	7,368	12
7	Bernwood	1	7,544	7,544	18	7,513	7,513	14
8	Buckingham North	1	6,710	6,710	5	6,877	6,877	4
9	Buckingham South	1	7,023	7,023	10	7,155	7,155	8
10	Great Brickhill	1	6,433	6,433	0	6,403	6,403	-3
11	Grendon Underwood	1	6,761	6,761	6	7,261	7,261	10
12	Haddenham	1	6,496	6,496	1	6,502	6,502	-2
13	Ivinghoe	1	6,904	6,904	8	7,460	7,460	13
14	Wendover	1	5,759	5,759	-10	6,002	6,002	-9
15	Wing	1	6,025	6,025	-6	5,974	5,974	-10
16	Winslow	1	6,657	6,657	4	6,921	6,921	5
Chiltern								
17	Amersham	2	13,005	6,503	2	13,234	6,617	0
18	Chalfont St Giles	2	14,183	7,092	11	14,744	7,372	12
19	Chalfont St Peter	1	6,625	6,625	3	6,908	6,908	5
20	Chesham East	1	7,019	7,019	10	7,035	7,035	6
21	Chesham North West	1	5,319	5,319	-17	5,629	5,629	-15
22	Chesham Rural	1	5,589	5,589	-13	5,715	5,715	-13
23	Chesham South & Rural	1	5,259	5,259	-18	5,339	5,339	-19
24	Holmer Green, Coleshill & Penn	1	6,827	6,827	7	7,057	7,057	7
25	Little Missenden, Prestwood & Heath End	1	7,210	7,210	13	7,336	7,336	11
South Bucks								
26	Alderbourne	1	6,198	6,198	-3	6,277	6,277	-5
27	Beaconsfield	1	5,783	5,783	-10	6,023	6,023	-9
28	Bulstrode	1	6,016	6,016	-6	6,041	6,041	-9

	Division name (by district council name)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2007)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29	Burnham Beeches	1	6,177	6,177	-4	6,275	6,275	-5
30	Gerrards Cross & Denham North	1	5,789	5,789	-10	6,149	6,149	-7
31	Iver	1	6,055	6,055	-5	6,270	6,270	-5
32	Stoke Poges & Farnham Common	1	6,446	6,446	1	6,769	6,769	2
33	Taplow, Dorney & Lent Rise	1	5,917	5,917	-8	6,656	6,656	1
Wycombe								
34	Abbey	1	5,973	5,973	-7	6,066	6,066	-8
35	Bowerdean & Totteridge	2	11,988	5,994	-6	12,397	6,199	-6
36	Booker, Cress ex & Sands	1	6,446	6,446	1	6,403	6,403	-3
37	Chiltern Valley	1	6,143	6,143	-4	6,118	6,118	-7
38	Downley, Disraeli & Oakridge & Castlefield	2	13,755	6,878	7	13,981	6,991	6
39	Greater Hughenden	1	6,615	6,615	3	6,617	6,617	0
40	Hazlemere	1	7,431	7,431	16	7,396	7,396	12
41	Icknield & Bledlow	1	6,718	6,718	5	6,785	6,785	3
42	Marlow	2	13,820	6,910	8	13,831	6,916	5
43	Ryemead, Tylers Green & Loudwater	2	10,798	5,399	-16	11,527	5,764	-13
44	Stokenchurch, Radnage and West Wycombe	1	7,236	7,236	13	7,363	7,363	11
45	Terriers and Amersham Hill	1	6,543	6,543	2	6,640	6,640	1
46	Thames	2	14,088	7,044	10	14,101	7,051	7
47	The Risboroughs	1	6,398	6,398	0	6,400	6,400	-3
Totals		57	364,977	-	-	376,565	-	-
Averages		-	-	6,403	-	-	6,606	-

Source: Electorate figures are provided by Buckinghamshire County Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the county of Buckinghamshire, on which we are now consulting. Our review of the county is part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. This programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 In carrying out these county reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 no. 3692), i.e. the need to;
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation;
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.
- 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:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

3 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reports* (published by the EC, July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when the Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made, then to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Buckinghamshire in July 2002 and we are now embarking on our county review in this area.

5 Prior to the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000 each county council division could only return one member. This restraint has now been removed by section 89 of the 2000 Act, and we may now recommend the creation of multi-member county divisions. In areas where we are unable to identify single-member divisions that are coterminous and provide acceptable levels of electoral equality we will consider recommending two-member divisions if they provide a better balance between these two factors. However, we do not expect to recommend large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps, in the more urban areas of a county.

6 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements*. These statutory Rules state that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

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

8 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the local authority as a whole. 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 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that each district area within the county is allocated the correct number of county councillors with respect to the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The Rules provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. The term 'coterminosity' is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say where county divisions comprise either one or more whole district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise, however, that it is unlikely to be possible to achieve absolute coterminosity throughout a county area while also providing for the optimum level of electoral equality. In this respect, county reviews are different to those of districts. We will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions. The average level of coterminosity secured under our final recommendations for the first eleven counties that we have reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. We would normally expect to recommend levels of coterminosity of around 60 to 80%.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we must recognise that it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining rural and urban areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews, in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations would continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 As a part of this review we may also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. We therefore only expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

The review of Buckinghamshire

16 We completed the reviews of the four district council areas in Buckinghamshire in November 2001 and orders for the new electoral arrangements have since been made. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Buckinghamshire County Council. The last such review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1982 (Report No.438).

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

18 Stage One began on 4 February 2003, when we wrote to Buckinghamshire County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the four district councils in the county, Thames Valley Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the county, Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Buckinghamshire County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 7 July 2003.

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

20 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 9 March 2004 and will end on 10 May 2004, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

21 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

22 In preparing this report the Team has had regard to the general duty under section 71(1) of the Race Relation Act 1976 to promote racial equality and to the approach set out in BCFE (03) 35, *Race Relations Legislation*, which the Committee considered and agreed at its meeting on 9 April 2003.

2 Current electoral arrangements

23 The county of Buckinghamshire comprises the four districts of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe. Buckinghamshire lies in the heart of the Home Counties. Since 1975 the population has increased by 35% to 475,686. Buckinghamshire covers an area of approximately 156,509 hectares, with 60% of the county being designated Metropolitan Green Belt or areas of outstanding natural beauty. Buckinghamshire also contains the urban settlements of Aylesbury and High Wycombe and the towns of Marlow and Beaconsfield.

24 The electorate of the county is 364,977 (February 2002). The Council presently has 54 members, with one member elected from each division. At present each councillor represents an average of 6,759 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 6,973 by the year 2007 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the last two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 54 divisions varies by more than 10% from the district average, nine divisions by more than 20% and four divisions by more than 40%. The worst imbalance is in Buckinghamshire South division where the councillor represents 60% more electors than the county average.

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

26 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Buckinghamshire, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions; our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards, and changes in the electorate over the past twenty years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

Division name (by district council area)		Number of councillors	Electorate 2002	Variance from average %	Electorate 2007	Variance from average %
Aylesbury Vale						
1	Aston Clinton & Aston Turville	1	10,004	48	9,954	43
2	Aylesbury East & Berton	1	7,385	9	7,693	10
3	Aylesbury Bedgrove	1	5,113	-24	5,023	-28
4	Aylesbury North Western	1	8,006	18	8,205	18
5	Aylesbury Northern	1	8,217	22	8,476	22
6	Aylesbury South Western	1	8,284	23	8,347	20
7	Aylesbury Southcourt	1	6,279	-7	6,270	-10
8	Buckingham North	1	6,807	1	7,011	1
9	Buckingham South	1	10,842	60	11,437	64
10	Haddenham & Stone	1	9,198	36	10,774	55
11	Ivinghoe	1	7,172	6	7,724	11
12	Long Crendon & Brill	1	6,368	-6	6,341	-9
13	Waddesdon Whitchurch	1	6,611	-2	8,450	21
14	Wendover	1	5,762	-15	6,002	-14
15	Wing	1	7,483	11	7,421	6
16	Winslow	1	8,097	20	8,355	20
Chiltern						
17	Amersham East	1	5,898	-13	6,006	-14
18	Amersham North & Chesham Bois	1	7,511	11	7,584	9
19	Amersham Town & Penn	1	6,795	1	7,250	4
20	Chalfont St Giles	1	5,179	-23	5,274	-24
21	Chalfont St Peters East	1	6,440	-5	6,595	-5
22	Chalfont St Peters West	1	5,825	-14	6,135	-12
23	Chesham East	1	6,495	-4	6,471	-7
24	Chesham North	1	6,980	3	7,102	2
25	Chesham West	1	6,575	-3	7,010	1
26	Missenden Prestwood	1	6,288	-7	7,160	3

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate 2002	Variance from average %	Electorate 2007	Variance from average %
27 Missenden Ridings	1	7,050	4	6,410	-8
South Bucks					
28 Beaconsfield	1	5,777	-15	6,174	-11
29 Burnham & Old Beaconsfield	1	7,401	9	7,261	4
30 Denham	1	5,297	-22	5,561	-20
31 Fulmer, Wexham & Iver Heath	1	6,432	-5	6,803	-2
32 Gerrards Cross	1	5,475	-19	5,800	-17
33 Iver	1	4,272	-37	4,210	-40
34 Stoke Poges & Farnham Royal	1	7,802	15	8,050	15
35 Taplow, Dorney & Lent Rise	1	5,925	-12	6,601	-5
Wycombe					
36 Booker & Castlefield	1	6,658	-1	6,608	-5
37 Bowerdean & Daws Hill	1	6,657	-2	6,626	-5
38 Cressex & Frogmoor	1	6,558	-3	6,764	-3
39 Flackwell Heath	1	7,793	15	7,772	11
40 Green Hill & Totteridge	1	6,074	-10	6,290	-10
41 Hazlemere North	1	7,894	17	7,856	13
42 Icknield & Bledlow	1	7,017	4	7,096	2
43 Keep Hill & Hicks Farm	1	5,557	-18	6,120	-12
44 Marlow North	1	6,070	-10	6,040	-13
45 Marlow Rural	1	6,957	3	6,946	0
46 Marlow South	1	5,121	-24	5,183	-26
47 Marsh & Micklefield	1	5,495	-19	6,106	-12
48 Naphill	1	5,735	-15	5,900	-15
49 Oakridge & Tinkers Wood	1	7,066	5	7,052	1
50 Princes Risborough	1	6,403	-5	6,405	-8
51 Stokenchurch	1	7,076	5	7,049	1

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate 2002	Variance from average %	Electorate 2007	Variance from average %
52 Tylers Green	1	5,836	-14	5,601	-20
53 West Wycombe & Sands	1	8,278	22	8,401	20
54 Wooburn	1	5,707	-16	5,809	-17
Totals	54	364,997	-	376,565	-
Averages	-	6,759	-	6,973	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Buckinghamshire County Council.

Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, and the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol(-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2002, electors in Iver division in South Bucks were relatively over-represented by 37%, while electors in Buckingham South division in Aylesbury Vale were relatively under-represented by 60%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

27 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire County Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

28 During this initial stage of the review, officers from The Boundary Committee visited the area and met officers and members of the County Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received fourteen submissions during Stage One, including a county-wide scheme from the County Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council.

Buckinghamshire County Council

29 Buckinghamshire County Council proposed that its council size be increased to 57 members from the current 54, with the districts of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe having 19, 11, eight and 19 members respectively. It proposed that Aylesbury Vale have an increase of three electoral divisions while the remaining districts stay the same. It further proposed that all the electoral divisions in the county be represented by a single councillor with the exception of Marlow division in Wycombe district and Aylesbury North West division in Aylesbury district, which it proposed be represented by two councillors each. Under its proposals 15 of the proposed 55 divisions would have an electoral variance of more than 10% by 2007 and three divisions a variance of more than 20%.

Political groups

30 Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats put forward proposals for Aylesbury Vale based on 19 members, including a two-member Thame Valley division. Wycombe Constituency Liberal Democrats generally supported the County Council's proposals, but requested that we keep the Marlow Bottom area with Great Marlow parish.

Parish and town councils

31 We received responses from eleven parish and town councils. In Aylesbury Vale, The Parish Council of Nash expressed a wish to remain in Buckinghamshire county. In Chiltern, Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council, Little Missenden Parish Council and Chalfont St Peter Parish Council all made general comments about the review process.

32 In South Bucks, Denham Parish Council objected to the division of the parish during the district review. It put forward two proposals, giving either seven or six single-member divisions, which retained the whole parish in a single electoral division. Hedgerley Parish Council proposed that it be included under the title 'Fulmer, Wexham & Iver Heath'. Gerrards Cross Parish Council objected to the division of the parish, adding that it did not mind other areas being added to it. Iver Parish Council objected to the division of the parish, expressing a preference for a two-member division if this avoided a split.

33 In Wycombe, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council made general comments about the review process. Great Marlow Parish Council and Princes Risborough Town Council requested we retain the existing electoral arrangements.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

34 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire County Council and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed division boundaries, number of councillors, division names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

35 As with our reviews of districts, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). 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 division of the county’.

36 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 identifiable boundaries and maintaining local ties, and to the boundaries of district wards.

37 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters which apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards and in order to achieve coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that, having reached conclusions on the appropriate number of councillors to be elected to the county council, each district council area is allocated the number of county councillors to which it is entitled.

38 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every division of a county.

39 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum. Accordingly, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as the boundaries of district wards and community identity. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be taken into account and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

40 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, 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, and we are not therefore able to take into account any representations that are based on these issues.

Electorate forecasts

41 Since 1975 there has been a 3.5% increase in the electorate of Buckinghamshire County Council. The County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2007,

projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3% from 364,977 to 376,565 over the five-year period from 2002 to 2007. It expects most of the growth to be in Aylesbury Vale, although a significant amount is also expected across the county. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

42 We have had a number of significant problems getting accurate electorate forecasts from the County Council. Following our questions about specific developments in the Quarrendon area, the County Council modified its electoral projections for Aylesbury Vale. In addition to this, in requesting a further break down of the figures for Wycombe, the County Council provided us with revised projections.

43 In Aylesbury Vale we queried its electoral projections for the Quarrendon area, in which the County Council had forecast an increase of 5,738 electors, due to two new housing developments. Given the size of the increase, we requested substantial additional evidence. Unfortunately, at this point the County Council stated that it had revisited its projections and that the actual increase would be 1,828, leaving a shortfall of 3,910. We also questioned its projected 629 decrease in electorate in Basingstoke South ward. Again, the County Council stated that it had revisited the figures and the ward was now expected to increase by 238 electors. This revision resulted in the County Council's projected electorate for Aylesbury Vale falling from 127,562 to 123,662.

44 However, the situation was further complicated when as a consequence of being requested to review these specific areas, the County Council decided to review its figures across Aylesbury Vale. Given more up-to-date planning figures, the County Council subsequently amended the electorate projections across the district back up to 127,483.

45 As a consequence, these revised figures produced a high variance in both the County Council and Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats' proposals for a two-member Aylesbury North West division.

46 In Wycombe, the County Council's original submission gave an electorate forecast of 128,198, but this was later revised down to 125,232, a decrease of 2,966. The County Council submitted this revision when we asked for a specific breakdown of the figures across the district. We queried this revision, but were informed that it took into account the 'expected reduction in the number of persons per dwelling during the [forecast] period'. We would concur with the reasoning behind this revision, although we would usually expect such factors to be considered in the initial calculation.

47 While most of the reduction was spread across Wycombe, having limited impact on electoral equality, it had particular impact on the County Council's proposed Oakridge & Castlefield division, which would consequently be 29% under-represented by 2007.

48 Given the late stage at which we received both revisions, we were unable to ask the County Council to revisit its proposals. As a result, this has effected our consideration of its proposals and the formulation of our draft recommendations in Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe.

Council size

49 As explained earlier, we now require justification for any council size proposed, whether it is an increase, decrease, or retention of the existing council size.

50 Buckinghamshire County Council currently has 54 members. Its Stage One submission proposed increasing this by three to 57 members. In reaching its decision on council size, the County Council considered a number of factors.

51 The County Council 'adopted a Leader and Cabinet model who manage the business of the Council in May 2001'. This comprises a Leader, a Deputy Leader and six Cabinet Members. All members are representatives on one or more [Policy Advisory Group]. The County Council has five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including Corporate Performance, Environment of Buckinghamshire, Health, Lifelong Learning and Personal Care. In addition to this it has six standing committees carrying out its functions. These are, Appeals & Complaints, Development & Control, Regulatory, Rights of Way, Senior Appointments & Bucks Pay Award and Standards committees. The County Council also has panels dealing with adoption issues, schools governance questions, the County Structural Plan and other ad hoc groups.

52 The County Council also highlighted the role that 'members also play [...] as leaders of their local communities'. The County Council has four local committees that meet quarterly, adding 'all councillors for the area are invited to attend these committees, where matters of local interest are discussed'. It stated 'The new political management arrangements will increase the numbers of councillors who are available to carry out the executive functions of the Council. This will enable all the councillors to represent their wards more effectively. It is the Council's view that an increase in the council size to 57 members would give every member an opportunity to spend additional time in their divisions, by spreading the current workload around more members, and by ensuring that members could give their attention to a manageable number of electors'.

53 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note from the County Council's Stage One submission that members continue to have exacting demands placed on their time. Under the new constitution they will continue to carry out many roles, including the important role of representing local communities. However, while we note these arguments, we would express some concern that the County Council did not give any consideration to a possible reduction in council size. From the evidence received, it appears that they have only considered an increase. We note that it has argued from the point of view of growth in electorate and the impact this has on members' ability to represent electors. However, we cannot accept this as an argument in itself. It is the case that across the country, the average number of electors per councillors in all counties varies enormously. We would usually expect a number of options to be considered as we must guard against an upward drift in council members.

54 However, given the evidence received, we would concur with the County Council's view that a reduction in council size would make its task harder. Indeed, we support its evidence for an increase in council size.

55 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 57 members.

Electoral arrangements

56 The County Council's submission, while providing the basis for our own recommendations across the county and containing proposals for all the proposed divisions, did not provide any argumentation for the arrangements chosen. In addition to this, the problems with the electoral forecasts, described above, have led us to make a number of major modifications to its proposals.

57 It should be noted, that in addition to poor council size argument, the County Council did not provide any community identity argument for its proposed electoral divisions. It also expressed a preference for single member divisions. However, this was contradicted by the creation of two-member Aylesbury North West and Marlow divisions. Its proposed Aylesbury North West division was created to address the growth in electorate that it originally

predicted in the Quarrendon area, which it subsequently revised downwards. Its proposals for the Marlow division were designed to keep the town in a single division. Given that the County Council has found the necessity to propose a number of multi-member divisions, to either improve electoral equality, coterminosity or reflect community identity, we have considered them an option in our draft recommendations. As a consequence, we propose creating a number of two-member divisions.

58 We note the County Council's objection to multi-member wards, but we also note that it has found it necessary to propose them in a number of areas. We acknowledge that multi-member divisions are not always popular. However, in the interests of securing good levels of coterminosity and electoral equality, we consider that in a number of areas these are suitable while still having regard for the statutory criteria. In the areas where multi-member divisions have been put forward, we consider that the proposed divisions still reflect community identity. However, where people have a specific objection to the creation of multi-member divisions, we would seek submissions that not only object to the proposals, but also offer evidence and where possible suggest viable alternatives, bearing in mind the need to secure good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity.

59 In Aylesbury Vale, as stated above, the electoral projections have been amended a number of times. This initially led to a reduction in the electorate in the Quarrendon area and subsequently an increase across the district. The reduction in Quarrendon particularly affected the County Council's proposed Aylesbury North West division and the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats' proposed Thame Valley division, which as a two-member division, under either of the revised figures (123,662 or 127,483) would be significantly over-represented. As a consequence we have been unable to consider either the County Council or Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats' schemes in their entirety. This is particularly the case for the Aylesbury town area, but it has also had a knock-on effect into the surrounding rural area. In addition to this, we have also had to accommodate the amended figure for Buckingham South ward.

60 In the Aylesbury town area, we are proposing our own recommendations, including the creation of three two-member divisions, Aylesbury East, Aylesbury North and Aylesbury West. In the central and south west areas of the district, we plan adopting a combination of the County Council's and Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats' proposals, but with a number of amendments to reflect changes made to accommodate the revised figures in Aylesbury and Buckingham towns. These divisions have reasonable levels of electoral equality and excellent levels of coterminosity. Our draft recommendations secure a level of 69% coterminosity.

61 In Chiltern we note that the County Council's proposals seek to retain, as near as possible, the existing division pattern. We also note that its proposals do not secure good levels of coterminosity or electoral equality. We were also concerned about its warding of Chalfont St Giles parish and its mixing of the urban Chesham area with surrounding rural areas. Given this, the size of wards, our aim to improve coterminosity and the lack of community identity argument, we have examined a number of options aimed at improving these proposals. As a consequence it has not been possible to adopt any of the County Council's proposals for Chiltern.

62 We propose creating a single-member Chalfont St Peter division, covering the majority of the Chalfont St Peter parish. However, given the size of the parish, it has not been possible to retain it all in a single division. We propose transferring the remainder of the parish to our two-member Chalfont St Giles division. We also propose creating a two-member Amersham division, covering the whole of this urban community. In the east we propose the creation of three mainly rural single-member divisions. In Chesham we propose creating two wholly urban single-member divisions. In the third it has not been possible to avoid transferring a neighbouring rural ward into our proposed Chesham South & Rural division. Our draft recommendations would secure 100% coterminosity.

63 In South Bucks, we note that the County Council's proposals provide excellent levels of electoral equality and good levels of coterminosity. We also note the proposals put forward by Denham Parish Council, but these are based on the wrong allocation of councillors and cannot be considered further. We have, however, examined a number of options aimed at addressing the concerns of Denham, Gerrards Cross and Iver parish councils over the division of these individual parishes between divisions. Unfortunately, we have been unable to find any solution that avoids this division, without either giving poor levels of electoral equality or creating unwieldy two-member divisions. Therefore, we propose adopting the County Council's proposals in their entirety. Under our draft recommendations 75% of our proposed divisions would be coterminous.

64 In Wycombe, as stated earlier, the County Council amended the figures for this area, which has created a high variance in its proposed Oakridge & Castlefield division. However, we also note that its proposed Abbey, Hazlemere, Greater Hughenden, Icknield & Bledlow, Terriers & Amersham Hill and The Risboroughs divisions secure good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity, while also reflecting community identity. Therefore we propose adopting these divisions in their entirety. We also propose adopting its proposals for a two-member Marlow division and a single-member Chiltern Valley division. We have examined the possibility of improving coterminosity in these divisions, but consider that these proposals reflect community identity.

65 However, in the remaining area, we note a number of high electoral variances and a low level of coterminosity. We also note that the County Council's proposed Booker & Cressex division has accidentally created a detached division. Given that its proposals are not supported by any community identity argument, we have sought to make a number of improvements to its proposals, including the creation of a number of two-member divisions.

66 We propose combining its non-coterminous Flackwell Heath & Wooburn Green and Thames divisions. We have also amended its proposed Booker Cressex & Sands division, by transferring the detached part of Sands ward to its Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe division in exchange for another area of Sands ward to the south. We propose combining the County Council's proposed Downley Park and Oakridge & Castlefield divisions to create a two-member Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge & Castlefield division. We also propose combining its Bowerdean & Totteridge and Micklefield & Hatters Lane divisions to create a two-member Bowerdean & Totteridge division. Finally, we propose combining its Ryemead and Tylers Green & Loudwater divisions to create a two-member Ryemead, Tylers Green & Loudwaters division. Under our draft recommendations 71% of our proposed divisions would be coterminous

67 Overall, our draft recommendations secure a level of 77% coterminosity.

68 Our proposals would also involve warding or re-warding a number of parishes in order to facilitate a balance between electoral equality and community identity. For county division purposes, the four district areas in the county are considered in turn, as follows:

- i. Aylesbury Vale district (pages 28 & 34)
- ii. Chiltern district (pages 34 & 36)
- iii. South Bucks district (pages 36 & 38)
- iv. Wycombe district (pages 38 & 41)

69 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Aylesbury Vale district

70 Under the current arrangements, the district of Aylesbury Vale is represented by 16 county councillors serving 16 divisions. Aston Clinton & Aston Turville is currently 48% under-represented (43% by 2007). Aylesbury East & Berton is currently 9% under-represented (10% by 2007). Aylesbury Bedgrove is currently 24% over-represented (28% by 2007). Aylesbury North Western is currently 18% under-represented (both now and by 2007). Aylesbury Northern is currently 22% under-represented (both now and by 2007). Aylesbury South Western is currently 23% under-represented (20% by 2007). Aylesbury Southcourt is currently 7% over-represented (10% by 2007). Buckingham North is 1% over-represented (both now and in 2007). Buckingham South is currently 60% under-represented (64% by 2007). Haddenham & Stone is currently 36% under-represented (55% by 2007). Ivinghoe is currently 6% under-represented (11% in 2007). Long Crendon & Brill is currently 6% over-represented (9% in 2007). Waddesdon Whitchurch is currently 2% over-represented (21% under-represented by 2007). Wendover is currently 15% over-represented (14% by 2007) Wing is currently 11% under-represented (6% by 2007). Winslow is currently 20% under-represented (both now and in 2007). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Aylesbury Vale is under-represented on the County Council.

71 At Stage One, the County Council put forward proposals for 17 single-member divisions and one two-member division. Its proposed Aston Clinton division would comprise Aston Clinton ward. It would be 10% under-represented (7% by 2007). Its proposed Aylesbury East & Berton division would comprise Aylesbury Central, Berton and Oakfield wards. It would be 14% under-represented (20% by 2007). Its proposed two-member Aylesbury North West division would comprise Gatehouse ward and the Quarrendon polling district in Quarrendon ward. It would be 48% over-represented (41% by 2007). Its proposed Aylesbury Southcourt division would comprise Southcourt ward and polling districts AAV and AAW in Walton Court & Hawkslade ward. It would be 7% under-represented (6% by 2007). Its proposed Aylesbury South West division would comprise Mandeville & Elm Farm ward and polling district AAZ in Walton Court & Hawkslade ward. It would be 15% under-represented (13% by 2007). Its proposed Aylesbury Bedgrove division would comprise Bedgrove ward. It would be 8% under-represented (4% by 2007). Its proposed Aylesbury Elmhurst & Watermead division would comprise Elmhurst & Watermead ward. It would be 1% under-represented (1% over-represented by 2007). Its proposed Buckingham North division would comprise Buckingham North and Luffield Abbey wards. It would be 5% under-represented, both now and in 2007. Its proposed Buckingham South division would comprise Buckingham South and Tingewick wards. It would be 3% over-represented, both now and in 2007.

72 Its proposed Great Brickhill division would comprise Great Brickhill, Newton Longville and Stewkley wards. It would be 1% under-represented (2% over-represented by 2007). Its proposed Grendon Underwood division would comprise Grendon Underwood, Marsh Gibbon, Quainton and Steeple Claydon wards. It would be 24% under-represented (29% by 2007). Its proposed Haddenham & Stone division would comprise Haddenham ward. It would be 2% under-represented (1% over-represented by 2007). Its proposed Ivinghoe division would comprise Cheddington, Edlesborough and Pitstone wards. It would be 8% under-represented (14% by 2007). Its proposed Long Crendon & Brill division would comprise Brill and Long Crendon wards. It would also comprise Ashendon, Lower Winchendon and Upper Winchendon parishes of Waddesdon ward. It would be 3% under-represented, having an electoral variance equal to the county average by 2007. Its proposed Waddesdon with Coldharbour division would comprise Coldharbour ward, polling districts AAQ and AAR from Quarrendon ward, and Fleet Marston and Waddesdon parishes from Waddesdon ward. It would be 22% under-represented (42% by 2007). Its proposed Wendover & Halton division would comprise Wendover ward. It would be 10% over-represented (8% by 2007). Its proposed Wing division would comprise Weedon, Wing and Wingrave wards. It would be 16% over-represented (4% by 2007). Its proposed Winslow

division would comprise Great Horwood and Winslow wards. It would be 4% over-represented (5% by 2007).

73 The County Council stated that had created a two-member Aylesbury North West division 'in order to give flexibility' as Quarrendon development takes place. However, it should be noted, as stated earlier, following our request for further information on the development in the Quarrendon development, the County Council revised its electorate figures significantly downwards. As a consequence, its proposals for a two-member Aylesbury North West division resulted in a division that would be 41% over-represented, as outlined above. We can see no possible justification for such a high variance and therefore cannot consider adopting this division. We note that the County Council later requested that the division should only be represented by a single member. However, this has a knock-on effect as the additional councillor needs to be allocated somewhere.

74 At Stage One the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats put forward proposals for 17 single-member divisions and one two-member division. Five of its proposed divisions were identical to those put forward by the County Council, although one had a different name. It proposed identical Aston Clinton, Haddenham, Ivinghoe and Wendover divisions. It also proposed Bedgrove division, which is identical to the County Council's Aylesbury Bedgrove division.

75 In Aylesbury town, the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed Ashmead division, comprising Walton Court & Hawkslade ward and an area of Southcourt ward. It proposed a Bearbrook division would comprise Coldharbour ward and an area of Southcourt ward. Its proposed Mandeville & Elm Farm division, comprising Mandeville & Elm Farm ward. It proposed a Park division, comprising Aylesbury Central ward and an area of Elmhurst & Watermead ward. Its proposed St Louis division, comprising Oakfield ward and an area of Elmhurst & Watermead ward. It proposed a two-member Thame Valley division comprising Quarrendon ward, part of Gatehouse ward and Weedon parish of Weedon ward.

76 In the surrounding rural area the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed an Aston Abbots division comprising Bierton, Wing and Wingrave wards, Oving and Pitchcott parishes of Quainton ward and Hardwick and Whitchurch parishes of Weedon ward. It would be 7% under-represented (2% by 2007).

77 Its proposed Bernwood division would comprise Brill and Long Crendon wards, Dorton and Wotton Underwood parishes of Grendon Underwood ward and Ashendon and Winchendon parishes of Waddesdon ward. It would be 6% under-represented (1% by 2007). Its proposed Buckingham North & Stowe division would comprise Buckingham North ward, Akeley, Maids Moreton and Stowe parishes of Luffield Abbey ward and Biddlesden, Shalstone, Turweston and Westbury parishes of Tingewick ward. It would be 5% under-represented (4% by 2007). Its proposed Buckingham South & West division would comprise Buckingham South and Marsh Gibbon wards and Barton Hartshorn, Chetwode, Radclive-cum-Chackmore, Tingewick and Water Stratford parishes of Tingewick ward. It would be 20% under-represented (27% by 2007). Its proposed Drayton Parslow division would comprise Great Brickhill, Newton Longville and Stewkley wards and Whaddon parish of Great Horwood ward. It would be 7% under-represented (2% by 2007).

78 Its proposed Wescott & the Claydons division would comprise Steeple Claydon ward, Edgcott, Grendon Underwood, Kingswood, Ludgershall, Westcott and Woodham parishes of Grendon Underwood ward, Hogshaw, North Marston and Quainton parishes of Quainton ward and Fleet Marston, Upper Winchendon and Waddesdon parishes of Waddesdon ward. It would be 9% under-represented (5% by 2007). Its proposed Winslow & Silverstone ward would comprise Winslow ward, Great Horwood, Little Horwood, Nash and Thornborough parishes of Great Horwood ward and Bechampton, Foscott, Leckhampstead, Lillingstone Dayrell with Luffield Abbey, Lillingstone Lovell and Thornton parishes of Luffield Abbey ward. It would be 6% under-represented (5% by 2007).

79 In Aylesbury town the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats stated that its proposals for Bedgrove and Mandeville & Elm Farm divisions form 'established electoral area[s]' and given that they secure reasonable levels of electoral equality they do not consider it necessary to divide either of these communities to achieve minor improvements to electoral equality.

80 In the west of Aylesbury town it highlighted the fact that the town is split by the railway line and that Coldharbour, Southcourt and Walton Court & Hawkslade wards are 'naturally divide[d]' from the other half. It added that there is 'very little community interest between the two halves'. It therefore sought to create two single-member divisions covering these wards. It stated 'two county divisions could best be formed by splitting Southcourt ward and adding part to the existing Coldharbour [ward] and part to the existing Walton Court & Hawkslade [ward]. It proposed transferring Southcourt polling districts AAT and AAU to Walton Court & Hawkslade to create Ashmead division and polling district AAS to Coldharbour to create Bearbrook division. It stated 'it is worth noting that, in this case, these polling districts do have some meaning on the ground, in that the resulting divisional boundary is similar [to] the boundary between the former Southcourt and Mandeville wards prior to the last redistribution', adding 'the nature of the area is that the community known as Southcourt cannot all end up in a single division'.

81 In the remaining area of Aylesbury town it stated that it sought to 'provide [...] a more central division consisting primarily of long established parts of the town and two divisions consisting primarily of the later development and being more towards the outskirts of Aylesbury'. It added that its St Louis division 'covers a number of areas with similar but separate identities' and its Park division also 'covers a number of different communities of similar types but it also contains the town's two main parks'. It stated that its proposals for a two-member Thame Valley represented 'the "least worst" option' given the proposed development, while acknowledging that the division would be significantly over-represented to begin with.

82 In the surrounding area it acknowledged that its proposed Aston Clinton division is marginally under-represented, but considered this acceptable given that the area is 'Sandwiched [...] between Wendover and Aylesbury and between Wycombe district and effectively open countryside around Broughton'. It added 'electors could only be moved elsewhere by splitting parishes or parish wards but they would, inevitably be [...] out of place'. Its Aston Abbots division sought to unite a number of parishes that it said are 'closely associated', highlighting the links of Oving and Pitchcott parishes with Whitchurch parish. Its Bernwood division sought to 'take in most of the [...] parishes wholly south of the A41 [which] which forms a logical geographical patch'. It added 'we favour a wider geographical name, such as Bernwood, since much of the remains of the historic Bernwood forest is within its proposed boundaries'. It stated that its Haddenham division had good electoral equality and was coterminous and that there are no obvious areas to add to it. Referring to the constituent wards of its proposed Ivinghoe division it stated that there is 'no practical alternative to keeping them together as a single division'. It stated that its Wendover division was over-represented given its location at the edge of the district. It stated that its Westcott & The Claydons division created a division that did not take in 'villages closely associated with Buckingham'. It acknowledged that 'this division cuts across a number of district wards but we believe that [this] will inevitably happen somewhere'.

83 In the Buckingham town area the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats acknowledged that 'wards to the north and west of the town need to be included with parts of the town itself', adding 'we accept that there should be two divisions based on Buckingham South and Buckingham North wards respectively'. It stated that 'the logical approach would seem to be to recognise that Marsh Gibbon ward must form part of the same division as Buckingham South as must some parts of Tingewick ward'. It did not propose transferring those parishes in Tingewick ward that are north of Buckingham South

ward. It then proposed that those parishes in Tingewick (Biddlesden, Turweston, Shalstone and Westbury) to the north of Buckingham South ward should be combined with Buckingham North ward. In addition to this it proposed transferring Akeley, Maids Moreton and Stowe parishes of Luffield Abbey ward. It stated 'this is a well defined group of parishes to the north and north west of Buckingham [...] look towards Buckingham as their natural centre'.

84 The Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats acknowledged that its Drayton Parslow division is slightly under-represented, but added that the inclusion of Whaddon parish from Great Horwood ward reflects community identity since it 'faces the same major issues as Newton Longville and is likely to for the next 30 years'. In creating its Winslow & Silverstone division the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats stated that 'it will never be possible to amalgamate [...] communities without some of them feeling that their identity is lost', adding 'we have sought to avoid [this], but when you have to have county divisions with Winslow or parts of Buckingham in them, it is inevitable that [this] will happen to some degree'.

85 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As stated previously, the revised electoral projections have impacted on the proposals of both the County Council and the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats, particularly their plans to create a two-member division covering the Quarrendon area. This has had particular impact in the Aylesbury town area and we have been forced to move away from both sets of proposals. The revised electoral projections have also had some knock-on effect across the district. Therefore, we have had to move away from both sets of proposals in a number of areas, although where possible, we have tried to reflect the divisions proposed.

86 However, we note that both the County Council and Liberal Democrats agreed on the composition of five divisions, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury Bedgrove (Bedgrove under the Liberal Democrats' proposals) Haddenham, Ivinghoe and Wendover & Halton. These divisions have been relatively unaffected by the revised projections and still secure good levels of electoral equality and reflect community identity. They are also fully coterminous. Therefore, we propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations. Although we propose adopting the name Aylesbury South East division rather than Aylesbury Bedgrove division. We consider that this name fits better with the names of the other Aylesbury town divisions.

87 In Aylesbury town, as a result of the revision to the figures for the Quarrendon area, both the County Council's two-member Aylesbury North West division and the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats' two-member Thame Valley divisions would be significantly over-represented. We acknowledge that these divisions were both proposed when the County Council had predicted growth of over 5,000 electors, but given that this is no longer the case, the impact has been considerable. However, as stated above, we propose adopting the County Council's Aylesbury Bedgrove division, as this still provides good electoral equality and coterminosity while reflecting community identity.

88 We propose creating a two-member Aylesbury East division, comprising Berton, Elmhurst & Watermead and Oakfield wards. This would combine the rural Berton ward with an area of Aylesbury town. While we try to avoid mixing urban and rural areas, we note that the County Council had also proposed combining Berton ward with the town. We also note that Berton ward has good links with Oakfield ward and given the need to secure good levels of electoral equality, we do not consider that this would adversely affect community identity. In addition to this, we note that the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats considered that there is an east west split in the town, caused by the railway line and while it proposed two single-member divisions to cover this area, we were not persuaded by its argumentation that there were large differences between the communities. Our Aylesbury East division would be coterminous and 9% over-represented, both now and in 2007. We propose creating a two-member Aylesbury North division, comprising Aylesbury Central,

Gatehouse, Quarrendon wards and Weedon parish of Weedon ward. As with our proposed Aylesbury East division, this would combine an outlying rural area with parts of the town, but this is unavoidable in securing good levels of electoral equality. In addition, this proposal reflects, in part, the proposals put forward by the County Council and Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats. We note that these rural areas have good links into the town. Our Aylesbury North division would be 19% over-represented (4% by 2007) and coterminous.

89 We propose adopting the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposals for Mandeville & Elm Farm division, subject to a name change. We consider that this reflects local communities and secures good levels of electoral equality. Given the names of the other Aylesbury town divisions, we propose naming this Aylesbury South division. Our Aylesbury South division would be 6% over-represented (8% by 2007). We also propose creating a two-member Aylesbury West division, comprising Coldharbour, Southcourt and Walton Court & Hawkslade wards. This proposal combines the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats Ashmead and Bearbrook divisions, while maintaining the east west split of the town that it highlighted. We note that the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats sought to divide Southcourt ward between its two proposed divisions, arguing that the boundary broadly reflected the existing situation. However, we also note that it did not consider it possible to retain the whole of Southcourt ward in a single division. We cannot give consideration to existing boundaries, but rather must reflect local communities while securing good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity. Therefore, we consider that combining its proposed Ashmead and Bearbrook divisions would reflect community identity while improving coterminosity. Under our proposal the whole of Southcourt ward would remain in a single two-member division. As stated earlier, we acknowledge the reservations about two-member divisions, but given the area's urban nature, we do not consider that this would adversely affect the ability of two councillors to represent the electorate.

90 In the surrounding rural area, as stated earlier, the knock on effect of the County Council's further revision to the electorate projections has forced us to move away from both its proposals and those put forward by the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats. However our draft recommendations for this area seek to represent aspects of the County Council and Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposals, but moving away from both in a number of areas to improve electoral equality and coterminosity.

91 In the area to the north of Aylesbury town we propose creating a Wing division comprising Wing and Wingrave wards and North Marston, Oving and Pitchcott parishes of Quanton ward and Creslow, Hardwick and Whitchurch parishes of Weedon ward. We acknowledge that the County Council's proposed Wing division secures good levels of electoral equality and is coterminous. However, given that we propose transferring Weedon parish to our proposed Aylesbury North division, this would leave the County Council's proposed Wing division significantly over-represented. Therefore, we have proposed transferring North Marston, Oving and Pitchcott parishes to Wing division. This has the advantage of reflecting the links that the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats highlighted between Oving, Pitchcott and Whitchurch parishes, with the addition of North Marston parish. The transfer of North Marston parish has been necessitated by the need to further improve electoral equality in Wing division. We consider that North Marston has good links with Oving and Pitchcott parishes and therefore reflects community identity. Our proposed Wing division would be 6% over-represented (10% by 2007).

92 We propose adopting the County Council's Great Brickhill division as this secures good levels of electoral equality and is also coterminous. We also note that the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposals for a Drayton Parslow division were broadly similar to the County Council's Great Brickhill division, but with the addition of Whaddon parish from Great Horwood ward. Its proposals secured a good level of electoral equality, but its division was not coterminous. We note the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats argument that Whaddon parish will face the same issues as Newton Longville. However,

they do not make clear what these issues are. Therefore, we have not been persuaded by the evidence and the subsequent reduction of coterminosity that would result. We propose adopting the County Council's Great Brickhill division as part of our draft recommendations. It would have an electoral variance equal to the county average (3% over-represented by 2007).

93 We also propose adopting the County Council's proposed Winslow division. This secures a good level of electoral equality and is also coterminous. We have not been persuaded by the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed Winslow & Silverstone division, particularly given that this was not coterminous. In addition to this, they did not provide any argumentation as to what the community links were between the parishes in its proposed division. Finally, adopting the County Council's Winslow division enables us to adopt its coterminous Buckingham North division. The County Council's Buckingham North division secures good electoral equality and is coterminous. Although we would seek to avoid mixing rural and urban areas, this has not been possible in this area given the size of the wards. We note that the rural area to the north of Buckingham has links into the town. Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats also recognise this, but put forward a different configuration of parishes to include with the urban area. We have not been persuaded by their argumentation for the inclusion of these parishes, when weighed against the County Council's coterminous division. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government. Our Winslow division would be 4% under-represented (5% by 2007). Our Buckingham North division would be 5% under-represented (4% by 2007).

94 Given the adoption of the County Council's Buckingham North division we have been unable to fully consider the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats Buckingham South & West division. While we had sought to adopt the County Council's coterminous Buckingham South division, this has not been possible given the modification to the electoral forecasts. As a consequence, we propose transferring Hillesden, Preston Bissett and Twyford parishes of Marsh Gibbon ward to our Buckingham South division. We consider that these parishes have good links with the south of Buckingham. We acknowledge that this does not create a coterminous division or transfer the whole of Marsh Gibbon ward as recommended by the Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats. We have been unable to transfer the whole of Marsh Gibbon ward as since this would worsen electoral equality in our Buckingham South division and the division to the south. Our Buckingham South division would be 10% under-represented (8% by 2007).

95 In the south west area we propose creating a single-member Grendon Underwood division and single-member Bernwood division. Our Grendon Underwood division would comprise Steeple Claydon ward and Charndon, Marsh Gibbon and Poundon parishes of Marsh Gibbon ward. It would also contain Edgcott and Grendon Underwood parishes of Grendon Underwood ward, Hogshaw and Quainton parishes of Quainton ward and Fleet Marston and Waddesdon parishes of Waddesdon ward. We note that the County Council's proposed Grendon Underwood division would be coterminous. However, given the modification to the electoral projections, it would be 29% under-represented by 2007. Given this high variance and the need to address high variances in our proposed Buckingham South and Wing divisions we have moved away from its proposals. We acknowledge that our proposed division is not coterminous, but it secures reasonable levels of electoral equality. This division joins together a number of rural communities. While we acknowledge that they may not all be directly linked, it avoids the need for mixing urban and rural areas and given the difficulties highlighted elsewhere in the district, we consider that this works. Our proposed Grendon Underwood division would be 6% under-represented (10% by 2007).

96 Our Bernwood division would comprise Brill and Long Crendon wards, Dorton, Kingswood, Ludgershall, Westcott, Woodham and Wotton Underwood parishes of Grendon

Underwood ward and Ashendon, Lower Winchendon and Upper Winchendon parishes of Waddesdon ward. In this area, as with Grendon Underwood division, we have been unable to fully consider the proposals of either the County Council or Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats. We consider that our proposed division groups together a number of rural parishes, which share similar rural issues. Our Bernwood division would be 18% under-represented (14% by 2007).

97 Under our draft recommendations 12 (or 75%) of our proposed divisions would be coterminous, with three having electoral variances of over 10% by 2007. Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Chiltern district

98 Under the current arrangements, the district of Chiltern is represented by 11 county councillors serving 11 divisions. Amersham East is currently 13% over-represented (14% by 2007). Amersham North & Chesham Bois is currently 11% under-represented (9% by 2007). Amersham Town and Penn is currently 1% under-represented (4% under-represented by 2007). Chalfont St Giles is currently 23% over-represented (24% by 2007). Chalfont St Peters East is currently 5% over-represented, both now and in 2007. Chalfont St Peters West is currently 14% over-represented (12% by 2007). Chesham East is currently 4% over-represented (7% by 2007). Chesham North is currently 3% under-represented (2% by 2007). Chesham west is currently 3% over-represented (1% under-represented by 2007). Missenden Prestwood is currently 7% over-represented (3% under-represented by 2007). Missenden Ridings is currently 4% under-represented (8% over-represented by 2007). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Chiltern is over-represented on the County Council.

99 At Stage One, the County Council put forward proposals for 11 single-member divisions. Under its proposals, five (or 45%) of its proposed divisions would be coterminous. Its proposed Amersham East division would comprise Amersham Common and Little Chalfont wards and Latimer parish of Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies ward. It would be 5% under-represented (1% by 2007). Its proposed Amersham North & Chesham Bois division would comprise Amersham-on-the-Hill and Chesham Bois & Weedon Hill wards. It would be 17% under-represented (15% by 2007). Its proposed Amersham Town & Penn division would comprise Amersham Town and Penn & Coleshill wards. It would be 6% under-represented (11% by 2007). Its proposed Chalfont St Giles division would comprise Chenies parish of Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies ward and Chalfont St Giles parish ward of Chalfont St Giles ward. It would be 23% over-represented (20% by 2007). Its proposed Chalfont St Peter East division would comprise Chalfont Central and Chalfont Common wards. It would be 1% under-represented (4% by 2007). Its proposed Chalfont St Peter West division would comprise Chalfont Austenwood, Chalfont Gold Hill and Seer Green wards and the Jordans parish ward of Chalfont St Giles parish. It would be 9% over-represented (12% by 2007).

100 The County Council's proposed Chesham East & South division would comprise Hilltop & Townsend and St Mary's & Waterside wards. It would be 18% under-represented (7% by 2007). Its proposed Chesham North division would comprise Newtown, Ridgeway and Vale wards and Ashley Green parish of Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies ward. It would be 3% over-represented (2% by 2007). Its proposed Chesham West division would comprise Asheridge Vale & Lowndes and Cholesbury, The Lee & Bellingdon wards and Chartridge parish ward of Ballinger, South Heath & Chartridge ward. It would be 14% over-represented (4% by 2007). Its proposed Missenden Prestwood division would comprise Great Missenden and Prestwood & Heath End wards. It would be 10% under-represented (9% by 2007). Its proposed Missenden Ridings division would comprise Holmer Green and Little Missenden wards and Ballinger & South Heath parish ward of Ballinger, South Heath & Chartridge ward. It would be 1% over-represented (2% by 2007).

101 The County Council did not provide any argumentation for its proposed division arrangement.

102 Chalfont St Peter Parish Council, Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards and Little Missenden Parish Councils all put forward general comments about the review process.

103 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the County Council's proposals appear to retain, as near as possible, the existing division pattern in Chiltern district. We also note that its proposals do not secure good levels of coterminosity or electoral equality, with four divisions having a variance of over 10% by 2007. We were also concerned that its proposals created divisions that mixed the urban Chesham area with the surrounding rural area, something we would generally try to avoid. Finally, as stated above, we also note that the County Council did not provide any community identity argument for the composition of its proposed divisions, or justification for the poor levels of coterminosity and electoral equality that resulted.

104 Therefore, we have found it necessary to examine a number of options aimed particularly at improving the levels of coterminosity, but also improving electoral equality, while reflecting community identity. We have sought to give consideration to the County Council's proposals for the district. However, given the size of the wards in the district it has not been possible to adopt any of its proposed divisions for Chiltern in trying to secure good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity. Indeed, we have found it necessary to create a number of two-member divisions, in order to avoid the division of communities and the mixing of rural and urban areas.

105 We propose creating a two-member Amersham division, covering the whole of this urban community. This would comprise Amersham Common, Amersham-on-the-Hill, Amersham Town and Chesham Bois & Weedon Hill wards. It would be 2% over-represented (having a variance equal to the county average by 2007). We consider that the wards comprising this division are of a similar urban nature, falling for the most part, in Amersham town. We were not convinced that the rural Penn & Coleshill ward had a common community identity to Amersham town. While we acknowledge that the area to the south of Amersham Town ward is rural, we note that it has good links with the town area and creates a coterminous division. We note that the County Council expressed a preference for single-member divisions. However, we also note that in its own proposals it found two exceptions and we consider that our proposed division reflects the statutory criteria.

106 We note that under the County Council's proposals, both Chesham North and particularly Chesham West divisions combined rural and urban communities. As stated earlier, where possible, we seek to avoid this. Therefore we propose alternative arrangements for this area. We propose creating a Chesham East division, comprising Hilltop & Townsend, Newton and Vale wards. This would be 10% under-represented (6% by 2007). We also propose the creation of a Chesham North West division, comprising Asheridge Vale & Lowndes and Ridgeway wards. It would be 17% over-represented (15% by 2007). Finally in Chesham, we propose creating a Chesham South & Rural division, comprising Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies and St Mary's & Waterside wards. It would be 18% over-represented (19% by 2007). We acknowledge that our proposed Chesham North West division has a high electoral variance, but this has been unavoidable given that we have sought to avoid mixing these urban wards with the surrounding rural wards. We also acknowledge that the proposed Chesham South & Rural division has a high electoral variance, as well as combining the more rural Ashley Green, Latimer & Chenies ward with St Mary's & Waterside ward. Unfortunately, we have been unable to find a better solution and we consider that the Latimer parish area has reasonable links into the St Mary's & Waterside area.

107 We propose creating a single-member Chalfont St Peter division, covering the majority of the Chalfont St Peter parish; Chalfont Austenwood, Chalfont Central and

Chalfont Gold Hill wards. Our proposed Chalfont St Peter division groups together a different combination of wards to those proposed by the County Council. This has been necessary in order to facilitate the division arrangements for Chalfont St Giles. In addition, we consider that our Chalfont St Peters division better reflects community identity, grouping together the wards in the south of the town. Our Chalfont St Peter division would be 3% under-represented (5% under-represented by 2007). Given the lack of argumentation, we were not convinced by the County Council's proposals to divide Chalfont St Giles ward. In addition, we consider that Chalfont Common ward has better links to Chalfont St Giles, as does Seer Green ward. We also note that under the County Council's proposals, the southern part of Little Chalfont village would be divided from the north of the town. We consider that Little Chalfont village ward should be in the same division as the remainder of Little Chalfont ward, which is in the north of Chalfont St Giles. Therefore, given the size of Chalfont St Giles ward itself and the size and nature of the links to the surrounding wards, we propose the creation of a two-member Chalfont St Giles division. This would comprise Chalfont Common, Chalfont St Giles, Little Chalfont and Seer Green wards. It would be 11% under-represented (12% by 2007). These divisions seeks to unite a number of fairly urban areas, all with reasonable transport links.

108 Given our treatment of the Amersham area, in the west of the district we have again found it necessary to move away from the County Council's Stage One proposals. As stated earlier, while we note some links between Penn & Coleshill ward and Amersham town, we were not convinced that the rural Penn & Coleshill ward would share community identity with the urban Amersham. Therefore, we propose combining Penn & Coleshill ward with the more rural Holmer Green ward. We acknowledge that this divides Little Missenden parish, but it does provide for a coterminous division. Our Holmer Green, Coleshill & Penn division would be 7% under-represented, both now in 2007. We propose combining the remainder of Little Missenden parish, Little Missenden ward, with Prestwood & Heath End ward. This division groups together a number of urban wards with good links. Our proposed Little Missenden, Prestwood & Heath End division would be 13% under-represented (11% by 2007). Finally, we propose the creation of a Chesham Rural division, comprising Ballinger, South Heath & Chartridge, Cholesbury, The Lee & Bellingdon and Great Missenden wards. We consider that this creates a predominantly rural ward, with similar community interests. It would be 13% over-represented, both now and in 2007.

109 As a consequence of our proposals, our draft recommendations would secure 100% coterminosity. As stated earlier, the County Council did not provide any supporting evidence for its proposals and given the poor levels of coterminosity and electoral equality secured, we considered it necessary to explore alternatives. We would look to interested parties to comment on our proposals at Stage Three. However, while we would be prepared to move away from our draft recommendations, it should be noted that we will only do so where strong evidence is provided along with alternative options that reflect the statutory criteria as a whole and make consideration for the knock-on effects that could affect the surrounding divisions. Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

South Bucks district

110 Under the current arrangements, the district of South Bucks is represented by eight county councillors serving eight divisions. Beaconsfield division is currently 15% over-represented (11% by 2007). Burnham & Old Beaconsfield division is currently 9% under-represented (4% by 2007). Denham division is currently 22% over-represented (20% by 2007). Fulmer, Wexham & Iver Heath division is currently 5% over-represented (2% by 2007). Gerrards Cross division is currently 19% over-represented (17% by 2007). Iver division is currently 37% over-represented (40% by 2007). Stoke Poges & Farnham Royal division is currently 15%, both now and in 2007. Taplow, Dorney & Lent Rise division is currently 12% over-represented (5% by 2007). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, South Bucks is under-represented on the County Council.

111 At Stage One the County Council put forward proposals for eight single-member divisions. Under its proposals, six, (or 75%) of its proposed divisions would be coterminous. Its proposed Alderbourne division would comprise Denham South and Iver Heath wards. It would be 3% over-represented (5% by 2007). Its proposed Beaconsfield division would comprise Beaconsfield North and Beaconsfield West wards. It would be 10% over-represented (9% by 2007). Its proposed Bulstrode division would comprise Beaconsfield South, Gerrards Cross South and Hedgerley & Fulmer wards. It would be 6% over-represented (9% by 2007). Its proposed Burnham Beeches division would comprise Burnham Beeches and Burnham Church wards. It would also comprise the Farnham Royal and Farnham Royal South West parish wards of Farnham Royal ward. It would be 3% over-represented (5% by 2007).

112 Its proposed Gerrards Cross & Denham North division would comprise Denham North, Gerrards Cross East & Denham South West and Gerrards Cross North wards. It would be 10% over-represented (7% by 2007). Its proposed Iver division would comprise Iver Village & Richings Park and Wexham & Iver West wards. It would be 5% over-represented, both now and in 2006. Its proposed Stoke Poges and & Farnham Common division would comprise Stoke Poges ward and the Farnham Common parish ward of Farnham Royal ward. It would be 1% under-represented (2% by 2007). Its proposed Taplow, Dorney & Lent Rise division would comprise Burnham Lent Rise, Dorney & Burnham South and Taplow wards. It would be 8% over-represented (1% under-represented by 2007).

113 As stated above, we note that the County Council's submission did not provide any community identity argument for the composition of its proposed divisions.

114 At Stage One, Denham Parish Council submitted two options for South Bucks, whilst also objecting to the division of the parish during the district review. It put forward proposals for either seven or six single-member divisions. It stated 'the parish council has no direct view over whether [South Bucks should have] six, seven or eight [councillors]. The Parish Council is simply concerned to ensure that the method of revising the division boundaries to achieve this change is satisfactory to as many electors in South Bucks as possible and to those in Denham in particular'. Hedgerley Parish Council requested that it be included under the title 'Fulmer, Wexham & Iver Heath'. Gerrards Cross Parish Council objected to the division of the parish between county divisions, adding that it did not mind other areas being added to it. Iver Parish Council also objected to the division of the parish between divisions, expressing a preference for a two-member division if this avoided a split.

115 Given the lack of evidence to support the County Council's proposals, we have given careful consideration to the proposals put forward by the parish councils. We note that Denham Parish Council expressed a preference for seven or six divisions for the district. Unfortunately, the parish council has not given the district the correct allocation of councillors under a 57-member council. Therefore, we have been unable to consider their proposals further. However, we also note that Denham Parish Council, along with Gerrards Cross and Iver parish councils, objected to the splitting of their parishes between divisions.

116 We have examined a number of options aimed at achieving this in one or more of the parishes that wrote to us, while retaining good levels of electoral equality, coterminosity and community identity. We have given consideration to a Gerrards Cross division comprising Gerrards Cross East & Denham South West, Gerrards Cross North and Gerrards Cross South wards. It would be 2% over-represented. However, in order to facilitate this, given the size of the constituent wards, we would have to create a two-member Denham & Iver division, comprising Denham North, Denham South, Iver Heath and Iver Village & Richings Park wards. It would be 3% under-represented. In addition to this, we would have to create a two-member Burnham, Taplow & Dorney division, comprising Burnham Beeches, Burnham Church, Burnham Lent Rise, Dorney & Burnham South and Taplow wards. It would be 13% over-represented. It would involve the creation of a

Beaconsfield division, comprising Beaconsfield North and Beaconsfield West wards. It would be 10% over-represented. The Beaconsfield & Farnham Royal division would comprise Beaconsfield South, Farnham Royal and Hedgerley & Fulmer wards. It would be 9% under-represented. The Stoke Poges & Wexham division would comprise Stoke Poges and Wexham & Iver West wards. It would be 4% over-represented. It should be noted under this option that the Denham & Iver division would not contain the whole of Denham or Iver parishes. This option would secure 67% coterminosity.

117 While we can see some merit in this option, given that it only unites the whole of Gerrards Cross in a single division, while worsening electoral equality and coterminosity, we are not convinced that it would secure local support. Therefore, given that the County Council's proposals secure good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity while having regard for the statutory criteria we propose adopting the County Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. However, we would welcome the opinions of local people at Stage Three. Our draft recommendations would secure the same levels of electoral equality and coterminosity as described above under the County Council's proposals. Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Wycombe district

118 Under the current arrangements, the district of Wycombe is represented by 19 county councillors serving 19 divisions. Booker & Castlefield division is currently 1% over-represented (5% by 2007). Bowerdean & Daws Hill division is currently over-represented by 2% (5% by 2007). Cressex & Frogmoor division is 3% over-represented, both now and in 2007. Flackwell Heath division is currently 15% under-represented (11% by 2007). Green Hill & Totteridge division is currently 10% over-represented, both now and in 2007. Hazlemere North division is currently 17% under-represented (13% by 2007). Icknield & Bledlow division is currently 4% under-represented (2% by 2007). Keep Hill & Hicks Farm division is currently 18% over-represented (12% by 2007).

119 Marlow North division is currently 10% over-represented (13% by 2007). Marlow Rural division is currently 3% under-represented, with an electoral variance equal to the county average by 2007. Marlow South division is currently 24% over-represented (26% by 2007). Marsh & Micklefield division is currently 19% over-represented (12% by 2007). Naphill division is currently 15% over-represented, both now and in 2007. Oakridge & Tinkers Wood division is currently 5% under-represented (1% by 2007). Princes Risborough division is currently 5% over-represented (8% by 2007). Stokenchurch division is currently 5% under-represented (1% by 2007). Tylers Green division is currently 14% over-represented (20% by 2007). West Wycombe & Sands division is currently 22% under-represented (20% by 2007). Wooburn division is currently 16% over-represented (17% by 2007). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Wycombe is over-represented on the County Council.

120 At Stage One, the County Council put forward proposals for 17 single-member divisions and one two-member division. Under its proposals, six (or 33%) of its proposed divisions would be coterminous. However, as stated above, the County Council submitted revised electoral projections for Wycombe, which had a knock-on effect on the levels of electoral equality. Its proposed Abbey division would comprise Abbey ward. It would be 7% over-represented (8% by 2007). Its proposed Booker Cressex & Sands division would comprise Booker Cressex ward and HQ and HS polling districts of Sands ward. It would be 2% under-represented (1% by 2007). Its proposed Bowerdean & Totteridge division would comprise Bowerdean ward and HW polling district in Totteridge ward. It would be 7% over-represented (10% by 2007). Its proposed Chiltern Valley division would comprise Hambleden Valley ward and Lane End parish of Chiltern Rise ward. It would also include Bovingdon Green and Marlow Common parish wards of Greater Marlow ward. It would be 4% over-represented (7% by 2007). Its proposed Downley Park division would comprise Downley & Plomer Hill ward and HJ and HI polling districts of Disraeli ward. It would be 16%

over-represented (17% by 2007). Its proposed Flackwell Heath & Wooburn Green division would comprise Flackwell Heath parish ward of Chepping Wycombe ward and Wooburn Green parish ward of The Wooburns ward. It would be 17% under-represented (14% by 2007). Its proposed Greater Hughenden division would comprise Greater Hughenden ward. It would be 3% under-represented, having an electoral variance equal to the county average by 2007. Its proposed Hazlemere division would comprise Hazlemere North and Hazlemere South wards. It would be 16% under-represented (12% by 2007).

121 The County Council's proposed Icknield & Bledlow division would comprise Bledlow & Bradenham, Icknield and Lacey Green, Speen & the Hampdens wards. It would be 5% under-represented (3% by 2007). Its proposed two-member Marlow division would comprise Marlow North & West and Marlow South East wards and Marlow Bottom parish ward of Greater Marlow ward. It would be 8% under-represented (5% by 2007). Its proposed Micklefield & Hatters Lane division would comprise Micklefield ward and HW polling district of Totteridge ward. It would be 6% over-represented (2% by 2007). Its proposed Oakridge & Castlefield division would comprise Oakridge & Castlefield ward and HJ polling district of Disraeli ward. It would be 31% under-represented (29% by 2007). Its proposed Ryemead division would comprise Ryemead ward and part of Tylers Green & Loudwater ward to the north and west of Kings Mead Road. It would be 24% over-represented (15% by 2007). Its proposed Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe division would comprise Stokenchurch & Radnage ward and HR polling district of Sands ward. It would be 12% under-represented (8% by 2007). Its proposed Terriers & Amersham Hill division would comprise Terriers & Amersham Hill ward. It would be 2% under-represented (1% by 2007). Its proposed The Risboroughs division would comprise the Risboroughs ward. It would have an electoral variance equal to the county average (3% over-represented by 2007). Its proposed Tylers Green & Loudwater division would comprise Tylers Green & Loudwater ward less the area to the south and east of Kings Mead Road. It would be 7% over-represented (10% by 2007).

122 The County Council stated it proposed creating a two-member division covering the Marlow town area as it did not wish to 'hiv[e] off other parts of [the] town into another division which has no real identity with the town of Marlow itself'. This included transferring Marlow Bottom into Marlow division, as it considered that this area of Greater Marlow identifies with the town. For the remainder of Wycombe, as with the other districts, the County Council did not provide any argumentation for its proposed division arrangement. In addition to this, it should be noted that the knock-on effect of the County Council's revised figures has been particularly pronounced in its proposed Oakridge & Castlefield division.

123 At Stage One, Chepping Wycombe Parish Council made general comments about the review process. In addition to this it stated that 'it [is] believed that the county [divisions] should be based on the district wards'. Great Marlow Parish Council expressed a preference for the existing electoral arrangements. Princes Risborough Town Council also expressed a preference for the existing electoral arrangements. Finally, Wycombe Constituency Liberal Democrats expressed concern about the County Council's proposals to transfer Marlow Bottom to Marlow Town, requesting that it remain in a division with the other parts of Great Marlow parish.

124 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the County Council's revised electoral projections have created an electoral variance in Oakridge & Castlefield division of 29%. Given that this was an unexpected result of the electoral projections figure and that there was no supporting evidence for such a variance, we do not consider that we can adopt the County Council's proposals for Oakridge & Castlefield division. We also have some concerns about the poor levels of coterminosity, 33%, that the County Council's proposals secure.

125 We note that the County Council's proposed Abbey, Hazlemere, Greater Hughenden, Icknield & Bledlow, Terriers & Amersham Hill and The Risboroughs divisions secure good levels of electoral equality and coterminosity, while also creating divisions that

reflect community identity. Therefore we propose adopting these divisions in their entirety. We also propose adopting its proposals for a two-member Marlow division and a single-member Chiltern Valley division. We have examined the possibility of improving coterminosity in these divisions, but consider that these proposals reflect community identity. We acknowledge the concerns of the Wycombe Constituency Liberal Democrats about the Marlow Bottom area, but we consider that this small urban area of Greater Marlow has good links and similar community relations to Marlow town. Therefore, as stated earlier, we propose adopting the County Council's two-member Marlow division.

126 However, in the remaining area, we note that the County Council's proposals produce a number of high electoral variances, particularly a 29% over-representation in its proposed Oakridge & Castlefield division, and a low level of coterminosity across the district. We also note that its proposed Booker & Cressex division has created a detached division, with HQ polling district sharing no boundary with the rest of the proposed division. Given that its proposals are not supported by any community identity argument we have sought to make a number of improvements. Indeed, given the size of the wards and the need to reflect community identity, we have found it necessary to create four more two-member divisions. While we acknowledge that there may be some objections to the creation of multi-member divisions, we have put them forward in the interests of securing good levels of coterminosity and electoral equality, while reflecting community identity. We have only proposed two-member divisions in the High Wycombe town area, where we consider issues of representation of a larger number of electors, by one or more councillor is less significant, given the proximity of the communities. We do not generally consider that two-member divisions provide a good solution in large rural areas, where the councillors have a large area to cover. However, where people have a specific objection to the creation of multi-member division, we would seek submissions that not only object to the proposals, but also offer evidence and, where possible, suggest viable alternatives, bearing in mind the need to secure electoral equality and coterminosity.

127 We propose combining the County Council's non-coterminous Flackwell Heath & Wooburn Green and Thames divisions. These two mainly urban divisions have variances of 14% and 0% by 2007, respectively. Given the high difference in variance between these two neighbouring divisions and that they cover a single urban area without securing coterminosity, we consider that the creation of a coterminous two-member Thames division provides a better solution. Our proposed Thames division would be 10% under-represented (7% by 2007). As stated above, we note that the County Council's proposed Booker Cressex & Sands division creates a detached part of the division, polling district HQ. We do not consider that the creation of a detached division would reflect community identity or provide effective and convenient local government. Therefore, we propose transferring the detached polling district HQ to the County Council's Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe division. In turn, we propose transferring polling district HS from the County Council's Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe division to its Booker & Cressex division. While our modified divisions would not secure coterminosity, they would address the issue of a detached division, and give reasonable levels of electoral equality. Our proposed Booker Cressex & Sands division would be 1% over-represented (3% by 2007). Our proposed Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe division would be 13% under-represented (11% by 2007).

128 We also propose combining the County Council's proposed non-coterminous Downley Park and Oakridge & Castlefield divisions to create a two-member Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge & Castlefield division. This improves coterminosity and electoral equality, whilst also uniting a number of urban areas. Our proposed Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge & Castle division would be 7% under-represented (6% by 2007). We also propose combining the County Council's proposed non-coterminous Bowerdean & Totteridge and Micklefield & Hatters Lane divisions to create a two-member Bowerdean & Totteridge division. We consider that this amendment combines a compact urban area, whilst also improving coterminosity and electoral equality. Our Bowerdean & Totteridge division would be 6%

over-represented, both now and in 2007. Finally, we propose combining the County Council's non-coterminous Ryemead and Tylers Green & Loudwater divisions. While part of this division is closer to Hazlemere, it is not possible to transfer this area there without affecting electoral equality. In addition, the County Council proposed combining this area with an area of Ryemead ward. Our proposals seek to join these two areas in a two-member division. Our proposed Ryemead, Tylers Green & Loudwater division would be 16% over-represented (13% by 2007).

129 Under our draft recommendations 11 (or 73%) of our proposed divisions would be coterminous, with three having electoral variances of over 10% by 2007. Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Conclusions

130 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- There should be an increase in council size from 54 to 57 members.
- The boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the district reviews.

131 As already indicated, we have attempted to base our draft recommendations on the County Council's proposals. However, given issues of poor coterminosity, electoral equality and the late modifications to the electoral projections, we propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- In Aylesbury Vale we propose our own adopting our own arrangements for the Aylesbury town area and a combination of the County Council and Aylesbury Constituency Liberal Democrats for the surrounding area.
- In Chiltern we propose adopting our own draft recommendations.
- In South Bucks we propose adopting the County Council's proposals without amendment.
- In Wycombe, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the County Council's proposals, subject to amendments to Thames, Booker Cressex & Sands, Stokenchurch, Radnage & West Wycombe, Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge & Castle, Bowerdean & Totteridge, Ryemead, Tylers Green & Loudwater divisions, to improve coterminosity, electoral equality and community identity.

132 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2002 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2007.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2002 Electorate		2007 Forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft arrangements	Current arrangements	Draft arrangements
Number of councillors	54	57	54	57
Number of divisions	54	47	54	47
Average number of electors per councillor	6,753	6,397	6,973	6,606
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% the average	20	13	29	11
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	9	0	9	0

133 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Buckinghamshire County Council would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 20 to 16. By 2006 only 11 divisions are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Buckinghamshire County Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 47 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A, and on the large map inside the back cover.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

134 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different county divisions it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Farnham Royal and Great Marlow to reflect the proposed county divisions in those areas.

135 The parish of Farnham Royal is currently served by 11 councillors representing two wards: Farnham Royal North and Farnham Royal South. In order to reflect the county divisions in the area, the County Council proposed that Farnham Royal North parish ward be further divided. The County Council did not provide any proposed ward names for these parish wards or allocation of councillors. Therefore, we propose retaining the existing Farnham Royal South parish ward, to be represented by one member. We also propose dividing Farnham Royal North parish ward into Farnham Royal Central and Farnham Royal North parish wards, both to be represented by five members.

Draft recommendation

Farnham Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Farnham Royal Central (returning five councillors), Farnham Royal North (returning five councillors) and Farnham Royal South (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed county division boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 3 at the back of this report.

136 The parish of Great Marlow is currently served by 11 councillors representing three wards: Bovingdon Green, Marlow Bottom and Marlow Common. The County Council

proposed transferring Marlow Bottom parish ward to its Marlow division. As part of our draft recommendations we have adopted the County Council's Marlow division. However, despite a request for mapping of the Great Marlow parish wards, we did not receive anything. Therefore, we have been unable to map and adopt the existing parish wards and propose creating two new parish wards. We propose creating a Marlow Bottom parish ward represented by seven members and Marlow Common parish ward represented by four members.

5 What happens next?

137 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Buckinghamshire County Council contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 10 May 2004. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

138 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**The Team Leader
Buckinghamshire County Council Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

139 In the light of responses received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Buckinghamshire County Council: **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed division boundaries for the Buckinghamshire County Council area.

Sheet 1 of 3 inserted at the back of this report illustrates in outline form the proposed divisions for Buckinghamshire, including constituent borough wards and parishes.

Sheet 2 of 3 illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in Wycombe.

Sheet 3 of 3 illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in South Bucks.

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.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: 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 consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
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.