

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Slough

January 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Slough is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

With effect from 1 April 2002, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee for England which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Slough on 12 June 2001.

- **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 Slough:

- **in six of the 14 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 91-92) are that:

- **Slough Borough Council should have 41 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 10 of the proposed 14 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all 14 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 15 January 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the 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, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April**

2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.

- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 11 March 2002:

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Slough Review
Local Government Commission for England
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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Baylis	3	part of Baylis ward; part of Farnham ward; part of Stoke ward	Large map
2	Britwell	3	part of Britwell ward; part of Farnham ward	Large map
3	Central	3	part of Central ward; part of Baylis ward; part of Stoke ward	Large map
4	Chalvey	3	part of Chalvey ward; part of Baylis ward; part of Farnham ward	Large map
5	Cippenham Green	3	part of Cippenham ward	Large map
6	Cippenham Meadows	3	part of Cippenham ward; part of Chalvey ward	Large map
7	Colnbrook with Poyle	2	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Colnbrook with Poyle parish	Large map
8	Farnham	3	part of Farnham ward; part of Baylis ward; part of Britwell ward	Large map
9	Foxborough	3	part of Foxborough ward; part of Langley St Mary's ward	Large map
10	Haymill	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Haymill ward	Large map
11	Kedermister	3	Kedermister ward; part of Central ward	Large map
12	Langley St Mary's	3	part of Langley St Mary's ward; part of Central ward	Large map
13	Upton	3	Upton ward; part of Foxborough ward	Large map
14	Wexham Lea	3	Wexham Lea ward; part of Central ward	Large map

Notes: 1 The borough contains the parishes of Britwell, Colnbrook with Poyle and Wexham Court.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Slough

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Baylis	3	6,775	2,258	16	6,045	2,015	3
2 Britwell	3	5,843	1,948	0	5,777	1,926	-1
3 Central	3	6,558	2,186	12	5,997	1,999	2
4 Chalvey	3	5,740	1,913	-2	5,576	1,859	-5
5 Cippenham Green	3	5,963	1,988	2	5,719	1,907	-2
6 Cippenham Meadows	3	6,404	2,135	9	6,075	2,025	4
7 Colnbrook with Poyle	2	3,808	1,904	-3	3,526	1,763	-10
8 Farnham	3	6,111	2,037	4	6,032	2,011	3
9 Foxborough	3	4,360	1,453	-26	5,477	1,826	-6
10 Haymill	3	6,190	2,063	6	6,232	2,077	6
11 Kedermister	3	5,797	1,932	-1	5,841	1,947	0
12 Langley St Mary's	3	5,220	1,740	-11	5,664	1,888	-3
13 Upton	3	5,336	1,779	-9	5,845	1,948	0
14 Wexham Lea	3	6,054	2,018	3	6,184	2,061	6
Totals	41	80,159	-	-	79,990	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,955	-	-	1,951	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Slough Borough Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Slough, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the six unitary authorities in Berkshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Slough. Slough's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1979 (Report no. 363). Since undertaking that review, Slough has become a unitary authority (April 1998). The change in unitary status has led to the loss of 11 county councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Slough from 52 to 41.

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

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

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

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

6 In our *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.

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an

increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 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

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

11 Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when we wrote to Slough Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, Berkshire Local Councils Association, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Slough Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 September 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 15 January 2002 and will end on 11 March 2002, 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.**

14 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 will decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Slough comprises the north-east section of the county of Berkshire, and became a unitary authority in 1998. The borough covers an area of some 3,000 hectares and has a population of approximately 108,000. It adjoins the county of Buckinghamshire to the north and west and part of Surrey to the east. The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead is to the south. The borough is well served by road and rail communications, including the M4 to the south, the M25 to the east and a main line rail connection with central London. The borough has a traditionally strong economic base; Heathrow Airport is situated nearby and the Slough Trading Estate, one of the largest of its kind in Europe, is situated in the borough.

16 The borough contains the parishes of Colnbrook with Poyle, in the south of the borough, and Britwell and Wexham Court in the north. The three parishes comprise 13 per cent of the borough's total electorate. The total electorate of the borough is 80,159 (February 2001). The Council presently has 41 members who are elected from 14 wards – 13 of the wards are each represented by three councillors and one (Colnbrook & Poyle) is represented by two councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,955 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will decrease to 1,951 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 14 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Cippenham ward where each of its three councillors represents 54 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Slough

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Baylis	3	5,360	1,787	-9	5,118	1,706	-13
2 Britwell	3	6,153	2,051	5	6,139	2,046	5
3 Central	3	6,282	2,094	7	5,700	1,900	-3
4 Chalvey	3	7,979	2,660	36	7,662	2,554	31
5 Cippenham	3	9,034	3,011	54	8,664	2,888	48
6 Colnbrook & Poyle	2	3,808	1,904	-3	3,526	1,763	-10
7 Farnham	3	5,180	1,727	-12	5,078	1,693	-13
8 Foxborough	3	3,979	1,326	-32	5,015	1,672	-14
9 Haymill	3	6,190	2,063	6	6,232	2,077	6
10 Kedermister	3	4,743	1,581	-19	4,827	1,609	-18
11 Langley St Mary's	3	5,539	1,846	-6	6,175	2,058	6
12 Stoke	3	5,359	1,786	-9	4,631	1,544	-21
13 Upton	3	5,018	1,673	-14	5,510	1,837	-6
14 Wexham Lea	3	5,535	1,845	-6	5,713	1,904	-2
Totals	41	80,159	-	-	79,990	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,955	-	-	1,951	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Slough Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Upton ward were relatively over-represented by 14 per cent, while electors in Haymill ward were relatively under-represented by 6 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Slough Borough Council and its constituent parish councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received nine representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, The Slough Borough Council Conservative Group and the Slough Borough Council Independent, Liberal and Liberal Democrat Group, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Slough Borough Council

21 The Borough Council proposed a council of 41 members, the same as at present, serving 14 wards. It proposed changes to 13 of the existing 14 wards and that there should be 13 three-member wards and one two-member ward. The Council had convened a cross-party working group of borough councillors to consider revised electoral arrangements and had conducted a consultation exercise with local interested parties and individuals. The Borough Council argued that its proposals secured an appropriate balance between the objective of electoral equality and community identities and interests. Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in 12 of the proposed 14 wards would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006, this level of electoral equality is projected to improve, with no wards having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Slough Borough Council Conservative Group

22 The Slough Borough Council Conservative Group ('the Conservative Group') had opposed the Borough Council's decision to consult locally on only a single warding option. It argued that local residents should have been able to consider alternative warding options as part of the Council's local consultation process. The Conservative Group put forward its own warding arrangements for the borough and also proposed retaining the existing council size of 41 members, serving 14 wards. Under the Conservative Group's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in 13 of the proposed 14 wards would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006, this level of electoral equality is projected to improve, with no wards having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Slough Borough Council Independent, Liberal and Liberal Democrat Group

23 The Slough Borough Council Independent, Liberal and Liberal Democrat Group ('the ILLD Group') put forward its own warding arrangements for the borough, stating that its primary aim was to secure improved electoral equality while respecting "natural boundaries that bind communities". It also proposed retaining the existing council size of 41 members, serving 14 wards. Under the ILLD Group's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the proposed 14 wards would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006, this level of electoral equality is projected to improve, with no wards having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Parish Councils

24 Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council supported the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for its area at both borough and parish council level.

Other Representations

25 We received a further five representations from local political parties and residents. Slough Conservative Association expressed support for the Conservative Group's proposals and welcomed the fact that its proposals would result in "relatively little change to the majority of wards". It argued that the Conservative Group's proposals would avoid dividing established communities between borough wards. The Chairman of Wexham Court Parish Council, responding in a personal capacity, argued that the Borough Council's proposed Wexham Lea ward was favoured by the Council as it "offers an electoral advantage to the ruling Labour Group". He opposed transferring the Rochford's Gardens area to a revised Central ward and favoured combining the Borderside area in a revised three-member Wexham Lea ward. A representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group's proposals, stating that it "retained and strengthened" the core communities of the town.

26 A local resident favoured an amendment either to the parliamentary constituency or borough boundary in the Colnbrook with Poyle area and proposed the abolition of Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council. However, these are not matters we can address as part of this review. Another local resident put forward alternative names for a number of borough wards in Slough.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

28 As described earlier, our prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Slough is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

29 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

30 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

31 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

32 Since 1975 there has been a 13 per cent increase in the electorate of Slough borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a slight decrease in the electorate of under 1 per cent from 80,159 to 79,990 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects the largest decline in electorate to be in Stoke ward, although a significant decrease is also expected in Central ward. However, there are a number of development sites in the town, and the Borough Council projects that the electorate of the existing Foxborough ward will increase by approximately 20 per cent over the next five years. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council, using a county-wide methodology, had 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. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

33 The Borough Council justified its projected decline in electorate in the existing Stoke and Central wards, arguing that there were no significant housing developments in these wards and that declining household size and birth rates made such a decline in electorate likely.

Furthermore, it noted that Stoke ward in particular had a high proportion of younger electors and argued that an element of this population would move out of the ward by 2006. In respect of Foxborough ward, the Borough Council noted that a number of major housing developments would be completed over the course of the next five years, particularly the Ditton Road site and the caravan site on Ditton Park Road.

34 The Conservative Group stated that the Borough Council's projections had formed the basis of its proposals. However, it questioned the Borough Council's projections for the existing Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards. It argued that a number of objections had been raised locally with regard to the Market Lane development in Langley St Mary's ward and considered that a further inquiry was likely to be held before consent would be given to the development. It also argued that a number of demolitions in Foxborough would have an impact on the Borough Council's projected electorate for this ward.

35 In the light of these arguments, have we carefully considered the Borough Council's electorate projections for Slough and the evidence provided by the Conservative Group. We acknowledge that the arguments are finely balanced but note that, notwithstanding its reservations, the Conservative Group has used the Borough Council's projections as the basis of its proposed warding arrangements. We also note that the ILLD Group has used the Borough Council's electorate forecasts as part of its borough-wide proposals. We know that forecasting electorates is a difficult and inexact science but note a broad consensus in support of the Borough Council's projections. However we acknowledge the difference of opinion in respect of electorate projections for some parts of the borough and the significant increases and decreases in the forecast electorate for some wards. We would therefore particularly welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

36 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case. Slough Borough Council presently has 41 members. At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Conservative Group and the ILLD Group proposed retaining the existing council size of 41 members for Slough. The Slough Conservative Association and a representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party also supported the retention of the existing council size.

37 We note the consensus in support of retaining the existing council size. 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 achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 41 members.

Electoral Arrangements

38 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, including the three borough-wide proposals put forward. From these representations, a number of considerations have emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations. We recognise that Slough is a diverse borough that has been subject to notable changes in the size and distribution of its electorate over recent years. We acknowledge that all three borough-wide schemes would secure much improved electoral equality by 2006 and note some areas of consensus. In particular, we note that all three borough-wide schemes proposed the retention of the existing

Colnbrook & Poyle ward and the substantial re-warding of the Cippenham area in order to take account of substantial residential development that has taken place in this area over recent years.

39 Having carefully considered the three borough-wide schemes put forward at Stage One, we intend basing our draft recommendations for the east of Slough on the Borough Council's proposals. We consider that its proposed warding arrangements for this area will provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that its proposals will result in the establishment of wards that adhere to clearly defined ground detail. We are not persuaded that the Conservative Group's and ILLD Group's proposals for this area would provide sufficiently clear and logical ward boundaries, particularly in the Kedermister area. In the west of the borough, we intend basing our draft recommendations on the Conservative Group's proposals. We note that they will provide excellent long-term levels of electoral equality while not radically altering the existing warding configuration in this area. We have concluded that the ILLD Group's proposals would not provide sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries and therefore would not facilitate the effective and convenient representation of electors in Slough. However, we note that the ILLD Group's proposed warding arrangements reflect parts of the Conservative Group's proposals, particularly in the north and west of the borough.

40 In order to accommodate both the Borough Council's and the Conservative Group's proposals as part of our draft recommendations, we have put forward our own warding arrangements for the centre of the borough and propose revised three-member Central and Wexham Lea wards. We consider that our proposals in this area provide an accurate reflection of the views expressed by interested parties at Stage One. We have also made minor amendments to several of the proposed wards, affecting no electors, to ensure that ward boundaries are tied to clearly identifiable ground detail. We consider that our draft recommendations would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements and ensure the effective and convenient representation of electors in Slough. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards;
- (b) Baylis, Central, Stoke and Wexham Lea wards;
- (c) Chalvey, Cippenham and Upton wards;
- (d) Britwell, Farnham and Haymill wards;
- (e) Colnbrook & Poyle ward.

41 As stated earlier, the Slough Conservative Association expressed support for the Conservative Group's proposals, arguing that Slough is a diverse town which contains wards of distinct "socio-economic composition". It stated that the Conservative Group's proposals would avoid "unnecessary change" and separation of established communities. Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards

42 The existing wards of Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's are located in the east of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards have 32 per cent, 19 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (14 per cent fewer, 18 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more than the average by 2006).

43 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a revised three-member Foxborough ward comprising that part of the existing ward broadly to the east of Ditton Park Road, and that part of Langley St Mary's ward to the south of Willoughby Road, Kennet Road and Burroway Road. The Borough Council stated that local amenities and facilities situated on Parlaunt Road (which forms the current boundary between the existing Foxborough and Langley St Mary's wards) provide a community focus for residents on either side of this road. It proposed a revised three-member Langley St Mary's ward comprising the remainder of the existing ward and that part of Central ward broadly to the north of Langley Road and up to the rear of properties on the west side of Gilmore Crescent and Foxherne. The Borough Council argued that the proposed ward would combine similar medium density housing developments in the same borough ward. The Council proposed a revised three-member Kedermister ward comprising the existing ward, that part of Central ward to the south of Langley Road and that part of Foxborough ward broadly to the west of Ditton Park Road. It argued that its proposed ward utilised clear boundaries and would unite communities that share numerous local amenities and facilities.

44 The Conservative Group put forward its own proposals for this area. It proposed a revised three-member Foxborough ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the north of the A4 London Road and that part of Kedermister ward to the east of the footpath that runs adjacent to Langleywood School. It stated that the proposed ward would combine housing estates of a similar nature and would enable the "core community to be retained". The Conservative Group proposed that the rest of Kedermister ward be combined with that part of Foxborough ward to the south of the A4 London Road and that part of Central ward to the east of the A412 Uxbridge Road in a revised three-member Kedermister ward. It acknowledged that its proposals would divide the Trelawney housing estate but argued that this was "inevitable and necessary" to achieve electoral equality. While acknowledging that its proposed Kedermister ward was an unusual shape, it argued that the particular topography of the town made this inevitable and stated that the proposed ward would not divide the core communities of the area. The Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing three-member Langley St Mary's ward, stating that the current ward secured good electoral equality and utilised clear and well-defined boundaries. It argued that any change to the existing ward would "disrupt its community base".

45 The ILLD Group proposed a revised three-member Langley St Mary's ward comprising that part of the existing ward up to the rear of properties on the west side of Chestnut Avenue and The Drive. It argued that the proposed ward would contain the "core of the ancient village of Langley Marsh". It proposed a revised three-member Foxborough ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the north of the A4 London Road and that part of Kedermister ward to the east of the footpath that runs south from Langley Road to the A4 London Road. The ILLD Group stated that the proposed ward would combine similar post-war London overspill housing, and noted that many residents in this area work at Heathrow Airport. As detailed below, it proposed that the remainder of the existing Foxborough ward (and including a number of properties to the north of the A4 London Road) be transferred to a revised three-member Upton ward and that the remainder of the existing Kedermister ward be combined in a new three-member Central North ward.

46 A local resident and representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group's proposals and noted in particular that it proposed retaining the existing Langley St Mary's ward. While he recognised that the proposed Kedermister ward was "somewhat of an anomaly", he argued that this was due to the topography of the town and stated that the Conservative Group's proposals utilised clear and distinct ward boundaries. Another local resident proposed that Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards should be renamed Langley East, Langley South and Langley North respectively.

47 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note that all the proposals for this area would ensure much improved electoral equality by 2006. However, we have concluded that the Borough Council's proposals would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We consider that both the Conservative Group's and the ILLD Group's proposals would divide communities in the Kedermister area. We consider that the Conservative Group's proposed Kedermister ward would not utilise a sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundary and would combine a number of distinct communities that are separated from each other by a number of main roads. In particular, we consider that the Goodman Park area identifies with adjoining communities towards the centre of Slough, and we note that the Conservative Group proposed combining it with communities to the south of the A4 London Road with which it shares few direct communication links.

48 We acknowledge that the existing Langley St Mary's ward would ensure good electoral equality and accept that Parlaunt Road, the southern boundary of the Conservative Group's and ILLD Group's proposed Langley St Mary's ward, provides a clear and recognisable feature on which to base borough ward boundaries. However, we concur with the Borough Council that residents on either side utilise local amenities and facilities situated on this road. We must adopt a borough-wide approach when formulating our recommendations and have concluded that the Borough Council's proposals for this part of Slough will respect existing community identities while ensuring clearly identifiable borough ward boundaries.

49 We are not persuaded that the proposed ward names put forward by a local resident would sufficiently identify the geographical extent of the proposed wards in this area. We consider that the existing ward names of Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's have regard for community identities and continue to reflect the constituent communities of the proposed wards. We also recognise that all three borough-wide schemes proposed retaining the existing ward names for this area. While we acknowledge the limitations caused by the particular shape of the borough in this area we have concluded that the Borough Council's proposals reflect the statutory criteria while utilising clearly identifiable ward boundaries. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposed Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, Foxborough, Kedermister and Langley St Mary's wards would have 26 per cent, 1 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer, equal to and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Baylis, Central, Stoke and Wexham Lea wards

50 The existing wards of Baylis, Central, Stoke and Wexham Lea are situated in the central and northern part of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. Wexham Lea ward comprises the parish of Wexham Court and an unparished area of the borough. Under existing arrangements, Baylis, Central and Stoke wards have 9 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. (13 per cent, 3 per cent and 21 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Wexham Lea ward has 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor to the borough average currently, which is forecast to improve to 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006.

51 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a revised three-member Wexham Lea ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the west of the A412 Uxbridge Road and that part of the existing Central ward to the north of the Grand Union Canal. It argued that Wexham Road provided a focus for communities situated either side of this road and stated that its proposed

ward utilised clearly identifiable boundaries. It proposed a revised three-member Central ward comprising that part of the existing ward broadly to the west of Gilmore Crescent and Foxherne, that part of the existing Baylis ward broadly to the east of the B416 Stoke Road and William Street, and the Rochford's Gardens area from the existing Wexham Lea ward. The Borough Council acknowledged that its proposed Central ward had an "irregular shape" but stated that its boundaries adhered to clear geographical detail and untied communities that identify with the centre of Slough. Furthermore, it noted that its proposals would retain the whole of the commercial area known as the Business Village in the same borough ward.

52 The Borough Council proposed a revised three-member Baylis ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the west of the B416 Stoke Road and north of the London to Penzance railway line, and that part of the existing Stoke ward broadly to the south of Granville Avenue. It also proposed that part of the existing Farnham ward broadly to the east of Liverpool Road and south of Hampshire Drive, and including the south-east part of Slough Trading Estate, be incorporated in the proposed ward. As detailed below, the Borough Council proposed that the rest of the existing Stoke ward, broadly to the north of Baylis Court School and Granville Playing Field be combined in a new three-member Manor Park ward. The Borough Council stated that its proposed Baylis ward utilised clear ward boundaries and comprised areas of high density housing that share clear and convenient communication links.

53 The Conservative Group proposed a revised three-member Central ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the west of the A412 Uxbridge road, that part of Baylis ward to the north of the London to Penzance railway line and east of Stoke Poges Lane, and that part of Stoke ward to the east of Stoke Poges Lane. It argued that the proposed ward followed a clear and logical boundary and would combine areas that share a distinct socio-economic make-up. The Conservative Group proposed that the remainder of Stoke ward be combined with that part of Baylis ward to the north of the London to Penzance railway line and broadly to the rear of properties on Belfast Avenue in a revised three-member Baylis ward. It stated that the proposed ward would "create a more cohesive community" and noted that residents in both the Baylis and Stoke areas make use of retail facilities situated on Oatlands Drive. The Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing three-member Wexham Lea ward. It argued that the existing ward would ensure good electoral equality and reflect community identities in this area.

54 The ILLD Group proposed a new three-member Central North ward comprising that part of the existing Kedermister ward to the west of the footpath that runs south from Langley Road to the A4 London Road, that part of Central ward broadly to the east of Wexham Road and William Street, and that part of Langley St Mary's ward to the west of Chestnut Avenue and The Drive. It stated that the proposed ward would contain an "eclectic" mix of industry, social and private housing and would reflect the diverse social composition of Slough as a whole. The ILLD Group proposed a new three-member Stoke North ward comprising the existing ward and that part of Central ward broadly to the north of Kendal Drive. It also proposed a new three-member Stoke South or Baylis ward comprising that part of the existing Baylis ward to the north of the London to Penzance railway line and that part of Central ward to the west of Wexham Road and south of Shaggy Calf Lane. The ILLD Group stated that its proposed wards would contain a mix of private and ex-council housing and argued that communities on either side of Stoke Road (which would be situated in its proposed Stoke North ward) have a strong relationship in that they share tenants meetings and a housing association. It proposed that the existing Wexham Lea ward be retained, arguing that the area has a strong community identity.

55 The Chairman of Wexham Court Parish Council argued that the Borough Council's proposed Wexham Lea ward was intended to offer an electoral advantage to the Labour Group, which has

a majority on the council. He argued that the Rochford's Gardens area identifies with communities in Wexham Lea, and that both areas share numerous local amenities and facilities. He stated that the Borderside area of the existing Central ward has a "natural affinity" with the Wexham Lea area and considered its transfer to a revised Wexham Lea ward to be an "appropriate grouping" for the purposes of borough warding.

56 A local resident and representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group's proposals in this area, arguing that its proposals would retain and strengthen established communities. Another local resident proposed that Wexham Lea ward be renamed Upton Lea & Wexham Court in order to reflect the constituent communities of this area.

57 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. Notwithstanding the much improved levels of electoral equality achieved by all three borough-wide schemes, we have not been persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals would adequately reflect community identities and interests in this area. In particular, we consider that the Rochford's Gardens area shares close links with communities to its west and we have concerns over the extent to which it identifies with areas contained within the Borough Council's proposed Central ward. We consider that the Grand Union Canal provides an effective community boundary between the Rochford's Gardens and Goodmans Park areas and have concluded that it should be retained as the ward boundary between the Central and Wexham Lea areas of the borough. Furthermore, we consider that electors to the south of Shaggy Calf Lane identify with communities towards the centre of Slough and we have not been persuaded that this area should be transferred to a revised Wexham Lea ward. We are not therefore adopting the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

58 Having considered the ILLD Group's proposals, we are not persuaded that they adequately reflect community identities and interests. In particular, we note that its proposed Central North ward would include that area to the east of Hawtrey Close. We consider that this area, which is currently situated in Langley St Mary's ward, identifies with communities to its east rather than with areas situated towards the centre of Slough. We also consider that this area shares convenient communication links with the Langley St Mary's area. We recognise that its proposed Stoke North and Baylis wards utilise clear ward boundaries and would result in the least change to warding arrangements in this area. However, we consider that further improvement in the long-term level of electoral equality for these wards is achievable and have therefore not been persuaded to adopt the ILLD Group's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

59 We have concluded that the Conservative Group's proposed Baylis ward will provide a more accurate reflection of community identities and interests than the other two warding proposals. However, we propose a number of relatively minor amendments to the proposed ward in order to further reflect community identities while also ensuring clear and distinct ward boundaries. As detailed below, we consider that Buckingham Avenue East should be incorporated in the Conservative Group's proposed Farnham ward. We consider that this amendment will have greater regard for community identities in this area. Secondly, while we accept that the Hawthorne Avenue area is separated from the rest of the proposed Baylis ward by Stoke Poges Lane, we consider that communities identify with each other across this road. We therefore intend moving away from the Conservative Group's scheme in this area and propose that the Hawthorne Crescent area be incorporated in our proposed Baylis ward.

60 As stated earlier, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals in the east of the borough. In order to accommodate its proposals, and those of the Conservative Group to the

west, we are proposing our own warding arrangements for the Central and Wexham Lea areas of the borough. As stated above, we consider that the Rochford's Gardens area should remain within a revised Wexham Lea ward. However, we concur with the views expressed by the Chairman of Wexham Court Parish Council that the Borderside area identifies with adjacent communities in the Wexham Lea area. We therefore propose a revised three-member Wexham Lea ward comprising the existing ward and that part of Central ward to the rear of properties on the north side of Shaggy Calf Lane. We also propose a revised three-member Central ward comprising that part of the existing ward up to the rear of properties on the east side of Goodmans Park and Hawtrey Close, up to the rear of properties on the north side of Shaggy Calf Lane and broadly to the north of Wellington Street. Our proposed Central ward will also include that part of Baylis ward to the east of Stoke Poges Lane, to the north of the London to Penzance railway line, and that part of Stoke ward up to the rear of Hawthorne Crescent. We consider that our proposed Baylis, Central and Wexham Lea wards provide an appropriate balance between the views expressed at Stage One and reflect parts of all three borough-wide schemes submitted.

61 In respect of ward names, we are not persuaded to adopt the alternative name of Upton Lea & Wexham Court that was put forward by a local resident at Stage One. We consider that the existing ward name of Wexham Lea adequately reflects the constituent communities of our proposed ward and note that all three borough-wide schemes proposed retaining this ward name. Under our draft recommendations, Baylis, Central and Wexham Lea wards would have 16 per cent, 12 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor to the borough average respectively (3 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Chalvey, Cippenham and Upton wards

62 The existing wards of Chalvey, Cippenham and Upton are situated in the south of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Chalvey, Cippenham and Upton wards have 36 per cent more, 54 per cent more and 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (31 per cent more, 48 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

63 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed only a minor realignment to the eastern boundary of Upton ward, proposing the transfer of that area broadly to the east of Courtlands Avenue and Drake Avenue to a revised three-member Kedermister ward (as detailed earlier). The Borough Council stated that its proposed Upton ward combined areas that share clear communication and transport links and had proposed only a small realignment to the existing ward boundary to ensure that the identity of the Upton area be preserved. It proposed combining that part of the existing Chalvey ward broadly to the east of the A355 Tuns Lane, but including the Chalvey Grove area, with that part of Baylis ward to the south of the London to Penzance railway line and west of Stoke Poges Lane in a revised three-member Chalvey ward. It argued that the proposed ward recognised community identities and interests in the Chalvey area and combined similar pre-war residential areas in the same borough ward.

64 The Borough Council recognised that warding arrangements in the Cippenham area needed to reflect the extensive housing development that had occurred in recent years. As a consequence, it proposed a new three-member Cippenham Meadows ward comprising that part of the existing Cippenham ward broadly to the south of Mercian Way and up to the rear of properties on the north side of Lower Cippenham Lane. It proposed that this ward also contain that part of Chalvey ward broadly to the west of the A355 Tuns Lane and the Ajax Avenue area from the existing Farnham ward. The Borough Council argued that the proposed ward would

contain all the recent housing development in the Cippenham area and combine areas of similar demographic composition. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Cippenham ward be combined with that part of Farnham ward to the south of the London to Penzance railway line and west of Leigh Road, and that part of Haymill ward to the south of the London to Penzance railway line and east of Whittle Parkway in a new three-member Cippenham Green ward. The Borough Council argued that its proposed ward recognised the identity of the more established communities in the Cippenham area and argued that communities to the north of the A4 Bath Road which are currently situated in Haymill ward, identify with the Cippenham area.

65 The Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing three-member Upton ward stating that this would have regard for community identities. It proposed a revised three-member Chalvey ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the east of the A355 Tuns Lane, Paxton Avenue and Tintern Close, that part of Baylis ward to the south of the London to Penzance railway line and that part of Farnham ward to the east of Galvin Road. It considered that its proposed ward would combine areas that have a distinct “socio-economic composition”. The Conservative Group proposed that the remainder of Chalvey ward, broadly to the west of the A355 Tuns Lane, be combined with that part of the existing Cippenham ward to the south of Mercian Way, Warner Close and Lower Cippenham Lane in a new three-member Cippenham Meadows ward. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Cippenham ward form a new three-member Cippenham Green ward. The Conservative Group argued that its proposed warding arrangements in the Cippenham area would adhere to clearly identifiable ward boundaries that respected community identities. It argued that the Borough Council’s proposal to combine part of Haymill ward to the north of the A4 Bath Road in a new Cippenham Green ward was illogical and would not secure an easily identifiable ward boundary.

66 The ILLD Group proposed a revised three-member Upton ward comprising that part of the existing ward broadly to the east of Datchet Road, St Lawrence Way and Wexham Road and that part of Foxborough ward broadly to the south of the A4 London Road. It proposed that the remainder of Upton ward be combined with that part of Chalvey ward broadly to the east of the A355 Tuns Lane and the railway line, and north of Church Street in a new three-member Central South ward. The ILLD Group stated that its proposed Upton ward would contain a “solid homogeneous community” and argued that its proposed Central South ward combined areas that have the town centre as their focal point. The ILLD Group proposed that the part of Chalvey ward broadly to the south of Cippenham Lane and Church Street be combined with that part of Cippenham ward broadly to the south of Warner Close and containing areas of recent housing development in a new Chalvey or Windsor Meadows ward. It proposed that the remainder of Cippenham ward form a revised three-member Cippenham West ward. The ILLD Group argued that a majority of its proposed Chalvey ward comprised recent housing developments with no “centre of community” under the existing arrangements. It argued that its proposals would combine a natural socio-economic community and “generate community spirit”. It stated that its proposed Cippenham West ward would comprise the established Cippenham community to the south of the A4 Bath Road.

67 A local resident and representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group’s proposals in this area. He argued that its proposals would retain and strengthen the established communities and noted that it proposed only minor changes to the existing Chalvey ward. He stated that Upton was one of the oldest settlements in the town and supported the Conservative Group’s proposals to retain the existing ward. Another local resident proposed that Chalvey ward retain its existing name and that the proposed Cippenham Green and Cippenham Meadows ward be named Cippenham West and Cippenham East wards respectively in order to reflect the distinctive nature of communities in this area.

68 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise that all three borough-wide schemes put forward would provide much improved electoral equality. We also note a degree of consensus as to the most appropriate warding arrangements in the Cippenham area. We have concluded that the Borough Council's proposed Upton ward provides the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and consider that it utilises clear and distinguishable features as the basis of its proposed ward boundary. While we acknowledge that the existing ward would facilitate reasonable electoral equality, we consider that the minor amendment to its boundary with Foxborough ward would further improve electoral equality in the long term. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposed Upton ward as part of our draft recommendations.

69 Overall, we have not been persuaded that the ILLD Group's proposed warding arrangements in this area would utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries. In particular, we consider that its proposed Chalvey/Windsor Meadows ward will divide established communities in the Chalvey area. Furthermore, we consider the A4 Bath Road to provide a clear divide between communities situated either side of this road. As detailed below, we are not persuaded that the transfer of that area to the north of Cippenham Lane to a revised Farnham ward would have sufficient regard for community identities and interests.

70 Having considered the proposals put forward in the Chalvey area, we have concluded that the Conservative Group's proposals would best reflect community identities and interests in this area. We consider that Tuns Lane provides an effective boundary in the west of the proposed ward and are not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals to include the Chalvey Grove area in a revised Chalvey ward would sufficiently reflect community identities. We therefore intend basing our draft recommendations in the Chalvey area on the Conservative Group's proposals, subject to one amendment. We note that the Conservative Group also proposed including a number of properties to the west of Tuns Lane in its proposed Chalvey ward. In order to reflect community identities and ensure a clearly identifiable ward boundary in this area, we propose that Paxton Avenue and Tintern Close are warded with areas to their west and therefore propose that the west boundary of the proposed Chalvey ward be amended to follow Tuns Lane from the A4 Bath Road to the M4 Motorway in the south.

71 As stated above, we note a degree of consensus with regard to warding arrangements in the Cippenham area of the borough. Having considered the evidence put forward at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for Cippenham ward on the Conservative Group's proposals. While we acknowledge that the Borough Council's proposals will facilitate improved electoral equality in this area, we have not been persuaded that its proposed Cippenham Green ward has sufficient regard for community identities. In particular, we consider that the A4 Bath Road provides a strong community boundary and have concluded that it constitutes a clearly defined feature on which to base ward boundaries in this area. Furthermore, we consider that communities to the north of the A4 Bath Road identify more closely with the Haymill area than the Cippenham area to the south. We note that under the existing arrangements, several wards straddle the London to Penzance railway line and consider that communities on either side of this feature identify with each other. We consider that the Conservative Group's proposed Cippenham Green and Cippenham Meadows wards have regard for community identities and interests while ensuring that the established Cippenham community and those areas of more recent development are not divided between borough wards.

72 Having considered the alternative ward names put forward by a local resident at Stage One, we are not persuaded that they would adequately reflect the constituent communities of the proposed Cippenham Green and Cippenham Meadows wards. We note the broad degree of

consensus at Stage One in favour of the proposed ward names of Cippenham Green and Cippenham Meadows and consider that they most accurately reflect community identities in this area. We therefore intend adopting them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, Chalvey and Upton wards would have 2 per cent fewer and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent fewer and equal to the borough average by 2006). Cippenham Green and Cippenham Meadows wards would have 2 per cent more and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Britwell, Farnham and Haymill wards

73 Britwell, Farnham and Haymill wards are situated in the north-west of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. Britwell ward comprises the parish of Britwell as well as an unparished area of the borough, while Haymill and Farnham wards are unparished. Under existing arrangements, Britwell, Farnham and Haymill wards have 5 per cent more, 12 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent more, 13 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more than the average by 2006).

74 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a new three-member Manor Park ward comprising that part of Stoke ward broadly to the north of Baylis Court School and Granville Playing Field, and that part of Farnham ward up to and including properties on the south side of Hampshire Avenue. The Borough Council argued that the proposed ward reflected an identifiable community with clearly defined ward boundaries. It stated that retail facilities on the A335 Farnham Road were utilised by residents on either side of this road, and that the proposed ward contained housing of similar construction and design. The Borough Council proposed a revised three-member Haymill ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the north of the A4 Bath Road, up to Whittle Parkway, and that part of the existing Farnham ward broadly to the west of Liverpool Road. The Borough Council argued that its proposed Haymill ward would utilise recognisable ward boundaries and have greater regard to community identities and interests than the existing arrangements. The Borough Council proposed that the remainder of Cowper Road and Long Redding's Lane, which are currently situated in Farnham ward, be transferred to a revised three-member Britwell ward. As stated earlier, it proposed that the remainder of the existing Haymill ward, to the south of the London to Penzance Railway line, be transferred to a new three-member Cippenham Green ward.

75 The Conservative Group proposed largely retaining the existing three-member Farnham ward, but proposed incorporating that part of Baylis ward up to the rear of properties on the south side of Belfast Avenue, and including Melbourne Avenue and Northampton Avenue, in its proposed ward. It also proposed transferring those properties that access onto the north side of Crofthill Road from Britwell ward to its proposed Farnham ward. It proposed that the remainder of Britwell ward continue to be represented by three councillors. The Conservative Group stated that the proposed Farnham ward would secure good electoral equality while retaining the "core community" and argued that its proposed Britwell ward respected community identities and interests. The Conservative Group argued that given its distinct community and geographical location, the existing Haymill ward should be retained for borough warding purposes.

76 The ILLD Group proposed retaining the existing three-member Britwell and three-member Haymill wards. It stated that the existing Britwell ward utilised "natural boundaries" and constituted a cohesive geographical area. In respect of Haymill ward, it argued that the existing ward utilised clear and distinct ward boundaries and would ensure the continuation of a "strong

community spirit". It proposed a revised three-member Farnham ward comprising the existing ward and that part of Chalvey ward up to and including properties on the south side of Cippenham Lane. It argued that expansion of the existing Farnham ward was essential in order to meet the "Commission's numerical criteria".

77 A local resident and representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group's proposals in this area. He noted that it proposed retaining the existing Haymill ward and put forward only minor amendments to the existing Britwell ward arguing that its proposals would retain and strengthen established communities in Slough. Another local resident proposed that Britwell ward retain its existing name arguing that it reflects community identities in this area.

78 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise that all three borough-wide schemes would secure much improved electoral equality. However, having considered the Borough Council's proposals, we are not persuaded that they would reflect the identities and interests of local communities. We note that the Borough Council proposed that part of Haymill ward be transferred to a new Cippenham Green ward. While we acknowledge that the London to Penzance railway line would appear to provide a significant feature on which to base borough ward boundaries, we consider that communities in the Haymill area identify with each other across the railway line. We are persuaded that the A4 Bath Road provides a strong and clearly identifiable feature on which to base borough ward boundaries and note that the existing ward configuration combines areas on either side of the railway line. We consider that the Conservative Group's and ILLD Group's proposal to retain the existing Haymill ward would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and have concluded that the A4 Bath Road should be retained as the ward boundary between Haymill and Cippenham Green wards.

79 We have carefully considered the Borough Council's proposed Manor Park ward. We acknowledge that it utilises a clearly defined ward boundary and would ensure improved electoral equality in this area. However, we consider that areas in the west of this proposed ward identify with the Haymill area. Moreover, we consider the Conservative Group's and ILLD Group's proposal to broadly maintain existing ward boundaries in this area would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We must adopt a borough-wide approach when formulating our draft recommendations, and consider the impact on adjoining wards of adopting the Borough Council's proposals in this area. As stated above, we consider that the existing Haymill ward should be retained and are not persuaded that its proposed Manor Park ward has sufficient regard for community identities and interests in the west of the proposed ward. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Manor Park ward as part of our draft recommendations.

80 We have concluded that the Conservative Group's proposed Farnham ward would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are not persuaded that the ILLD Group's proposal to combine areas to the south of the A4 Bath Road in its proposed Farnham ward has sufficient regard for community identities and interests. As stated above we consider this road provides a clear and distinct feature on which to base borough ward boundaries in this area. We therefore intend adopting the Conservative Group's proposed Farnham ward as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one amendment. As stated earlier, we propose that Buckingham Avenue East be included in the proposed ward to ensure a more clearly defined ward boundary.

81 We recognise a broad degree of consensus in respect of proposed warding arrangements in the Britwell area and note that all three borough-wide proposals put forward only minimal change to the existing ward. However, we consider that the Conservative Group's proposal to transfer that part of the existing Britwell ward to the north of Crofthill to its proposed Farnham ward would better reflect community identities and ensure excellent levels of electoral equality in the proposed Britwell and Farnham wards. We also consider that this area shares more convenient communication links with areas to the south of Crofthill Road, than with communities to its north. We therefore intend adopting the Conservative Group's proposed Britwell ward as part of our draft recommendations.

82 Under our draft recommendations, Britwell, Farnham and Haymill wards would have equal to, 4 per cent more and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and 6 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Colnbrook & Poyle ward

83 The existing ward of Colnbrook & Poyle is located in the south-east of the borough, to the south of the M4 Motorway, and is coterminous with the parish of Colnbrook with Poyle. Under existing arrangements, Colnbrook & Poyle ward has 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average and is forecast to have 10 per cent fewer than the average by 2006.

84 At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Conservative Group and the ILLD Group proposed retaining the existing two-member Colnbrook & Poyle ward. The Borough Council and the Conservative Group proposed that its name be changed to Colnbrook with Poyle to reflect the parish with which it is coterminous. While acknowledging that the existing ward would have a relatively high electoral variance by 2006, all argued that retaining the existing ward was justified due to its relatively isolated location, to the south of the M4 Motorway.

85 Slough Conservative Association expressed support for the Conservative Group's proposals, stating that they would avoid both "unnecessary change" and the separation of established communities in the Colnbrook with Poyle area. Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council supported the retention of the existing ward. It argued that coterminosity between parish and borough ward boundaries made a "positive contribution to the community situation". A local resident and representative of the United Kingdom Independence Party supported the Conservative Group's proposals in this area, noting that it proposed no change to the existing two-member Colnbrook & Poyle ward.

86 A local resident noted that while the Colnbrook with Poyle area is situated in Slough Borough, it forms part of Windsor parliamentary constituency. He proposed that either the borough or constituency boundary be amended to rationalise the situation. He also stated that the Parish Council was a "burden" to the local community and favoured its abolition. As stated earlier, we are unable as part of this review to recommend the abolition of parish councils. Neither can we have regard to existing district or parliamentary boundaries. Another local resident proposed that Colnbrook & Poyle ward be renamed Colnbrook with Poyle to reflect the name of the parish and have regard to community identities in this area.

87 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note the consensus in support of retaining the existing ward. While we note that it will contain a relatively high electoral variance in five years time, we recognise that the M4 Motorway provides a clear demarcation line between communities either side of the motorway. We have therefore

concluded that the retention of the existing ward would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's, the Conservative Group's and the ILLD Group's proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

88 In respect of an appropriate name for the proposed ward, we recognise that the Borough Council's and the Conservative Group's proposed ward name of Colnbrook with Poyle would reflect the name of the parish of Colnbrook with Poyle and therefore more accurately identify the geographical extent of the proposed ward. We therefore intend that this ward be named Colnbrook with Poyle. Under our draft recommendations Colnbrook with Poyle ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average now and 10 per cent fewer than the average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

89 We received two representations regarding the Borough Council's electoral cycle. The Conservative Group supported the retention of the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds. However, it considered that the Borough Council had not carried out a sufficiently extensive consultation in respect of this issue and had not given local interested parties the opportunity to comment on the electoral cycle of the Council. The Slough Conservative Association also supported retaining the current electoral cycle.

90 We have considered carefully all representations. At present, there appears to be a majority view that the present electoral cycle should be retained and we therefore propose no change.

Conclusions

91 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 41 members should be retained;
- there should be 14 wards;
- the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

92 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on a combination of the Borough Council's and the Conservative Group's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we have proposed our own warding arrangements for the existing Central and Wexham Lea wards;
- we propose minor amendments to the Conservative Group's proposed Chalvey and Farnham wards in order to provide more clearly defined ward boundaries that reflect community identities;

- we have proposed minor amendments to a number of wards, affecting no electors, to ensure that ward boundaries are tied to clear ground detail.

93 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	41	41	41	41
Number of wards	14	14	14	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,955	1,955	1,951	1,951
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 percent from the average	6	4	7	0
Number of wards with variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	1	3	0

94 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Slough Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from six to four. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Slough Borough Council should comprise 41 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

95 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 provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. At Stage One, no proposals for change to the electoral arrangements of the constituent parish councils of Slough were received. Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council stated that it supported the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for the parish, while a local resident proposed the abolition of the Parish Council, arguing that it was a burden to the local community.

96 We do not have the power as part of this review to abolish existing parish councils. Under the 1997 Local Government Act this power resides with the local authority. A parish can be abolished as part of a parish review but no such changes can be effected without prior consultation with local interested parties and residents. Accordingly, we propose no change to

the existing electoral arrangements for Britwell, Colnbrook with Poyle and Wexham Court parish councils as part of our draft recommendations.

97 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Parish council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the borough ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Slough

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

98 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Slough contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 11 March 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

99 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Slough Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

www.lgce.gov.uk

100 In the light of representations 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

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. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission 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 A1: LGCE 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.