

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Cherwell in Oxfordshire

*February 2001*

# 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 to the Government 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 statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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 and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

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## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Cherwell on 25 July 2000.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Cherwell:

- **in 23 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 13 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 24 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 14 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 95 – 96) are that:

- **Cherwell District Council should have 50 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 28 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 30 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These draft recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each district councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In 20 of the proposed 28 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 27 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 20 February 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. 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 and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 23 April 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Adderbury	1	Adderbury ward (Adderbury parish); Bloxham ward (part – Milton parish)	Map 2
2	Ambrosden & Chesterton	1	Ambrosden ward (part – Ambrosden parish); Chesterton ward (Chesterton and Wendlebury parishes)	Map 2
3	Bicester East	2	Bicester East ward (part – part of Bicester East parish ward of Bicester parish)	Map 2 and Large map
4	Bicester North	2	Bicester West ward (part – part of Bicester West parish ward of Bicester parish)	Map 2 and Large map
5	Bicester South	2	Bicester East ward (part – part of Bicester East parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester South ward (part – part of Bicester South parish ward of Bicester parish)	Map 2 and Large map
6	Bicester Town	2	Bicester East ward (part – part of Bicester East parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester South ward (part – part of Bicester South parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester West ward (part – part of Bicester West parish ward of Bicester parish)	Map 2 and Large map
7	Bicester West	3	Bicester South ward (part – part of Bicester South parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester West ward (part – part of Bicester West parish ward of Bicester parish)	Map 2 and Large map
8	Bloxham & Bodicote	2	Bloxham ward (part – Bloxham and Milcombe parishes); Bodicote ward (Bodicote parish)	Map 2
9	Calthorpe (Banbury)	3	Calthorpe ward (part – part of Calthorpe parish ward and part of Cherwell Heights parish ward of Banbury parish); Easington ward (part – part of Easington parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map
10	Caversfield	1	Ardley ward (part – Ardley, Bucknell and Caversfield parishes); Kirtlington ward (part – Middleton Stoney parish)	Map 2
11	Cropredy	1	Cropredy ward (Claydon with Clattercot, Cropredy, Mollington, Prescote and Wardington parishes); Hornton ward (part – Bourton parish)	Map 2
12	Deddington	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Barford St John & St Michael and Deddington parishes)	Map 2
13	Easington (Banbury)	2	Easington ward (part – part of Crouch Hill parish ward and part of Easington parish ward of Banbury parish); Grimsbury ward (part – part of Neithrop parish ward of Banbury parish); Neithrop ward (part – part of Crouch Hill parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
14 Fringford	1	Ardley ward (part – Stoke Lyne parish); Fringford ward (Cottisford, Finmere, Fringford, Hardwick with Tusmore, Hethe, Mixbury and Newton Purcell with Shelswell parishes); Launton ward (part – Godington and Stratton Audley parishes)	Map 2
15 Grimsbury & Castle (Banbury)	3	Calthorpe ward (part – part of Calthorpe parish ward and part of Cherwell Heights parish ward of Banbury parish); Grimsbury ward (part – Grimsbury parish ward and part of Calthorpe parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map
16 Hardwick (Banbury)	3	Hardwick ward (part – Hardwick parish ward and part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish); Ruscote ward (part – part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map
17 Hook Norton	1	Bloxham ward (part – South Newington parish); Hook Norton ward (Hook Norton and Wigginton parishes)	Map 2
18 Kidlington North	2	North West Kidlington ward (part – North parish ward and part of West parish ward of Kidlington parish); South East Kidlington ward (part – part of East parish ward of Kidlington parish)	Map 2 and Large map
19 Kidlington South	3	North West Kidlington ward (part – part of West parish ward of Kidlington parish); South East Kidlington ward (part – South parish ward and part of East parish ward of Kidlington parish)	Map 2 and Large map
20 Kirtlington	1	Kirtlington ward (part – Bletchingdon, Hampton Gay & Poyle, Kirtlington and Weston-on-the-Green parishes); Yarnton ward (part – Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp parish)	Map 2
21 Launton	1	Ambrosden ward (part – Arncott and Piddington parishes); Launton ward (part – Blackthorn and Launton parishes)	Map 2
22 Neithrop (Banbury)	2	Grimsbury ward (part – part of Crouch Hill parish ward, part of Neithrop parish ward and part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish); Hardwick ward (part – part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish); Neithrop ward (part – part of Neithrop parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map
23 Otmoor	1	Ambrosden ward (part – Merton parish); Otmoor ward (Charlton-on-Otmoor, Fencott & Murcott, Horton-cum-Studley, Islip, Noke and Oddington parishes)	Map 2
24 Ruscote (Banbury)	3	Neithrop ward (part – part of Bretch Hill parish ward and part of Neithrop parish ward of Banbury parish); Ruscote ward (part – part of Bretch Hill parish ward of Banbury parish)	Map 2 and Large map
25 Sibford	1	Sibford ward (Epwell, Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower, Swalcliffe and Tadmarton parishes); Wroxton ward (part – Broughton and North Newington parishes)	Map 2



	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
26	The Astons & Heyfords	2	Heyford ward (Fritwell, Lower Heyford, Somerton, Souldern and Upper Heyford parishes); Steeple Aston ward (Duns Tew, Middle Aston, North Aston and Steeple Aston parishes)	Map 2
27	Wroxton	1	Hornton ward (part – Hanwell, Horley and Hornton parishes); Wroxton ward (part – Drayton, Shenington with Alkerton, Shutford and Wroxton parishes)	Map 2
28	Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton	2	Gosford ward (Gosford & Water Eaton parish); Yarnton ward (part – Begbroke and Yarnton parishes)	Map 2

*Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Cherwell

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Adderbury	1	2,232	2,232	14	2,256	2,256	9
2	Ambrosden & Chesterton	1	1,891	1,891	-3	1,889	1,889	-9
3	Bicester East	2	4,445	2,223	14	4,418	2,209	7
4	Bicester North	2	2,908	1,454	-26	4,209	2,105	2
5	Bicester South	2	2,687	1,344	-31	3,887	1,944	-6
6	Bicester Town	2	4,030	2,015	3	4,030	2,015	-2
7	Bicester West	3	5,965	1,988	2	5,960	1,987	-4
8	Bloxham & Bodicote	2	4,506	2,253	15	4,529	2,265	10
9	Calthorpe (Banbury)	3	6,145	2,048	5	6,174	2,058	0
10	Caversfield	1	1,956	1,956	0	1,942	1,942	-6
11	Cropredy	1	2,160	2,160	11	2,192	2,192	6
12	Deddington	1	2,144	2,144	10	2,240	2,240	8
13	Easington (Banbury)	2	4,018	2,009	3	4,074	2,037	-1
14	Fringford	1	2,023	2,023	4	2,040	2,040	-1
15	Grimsbury & Castle (Banbury)	3	6,116	2,039	4	6,285	2,095	1
16	Hardwick (Banbury)	3	4,407	1,469	-25	5,947	1,982	-4
17	Hook Norton	1	2,044	2,044	5	2,079	2,079	1
18	Kidlington North	2	4,225	2,113	8	4,222	2,111	2
19	Kidlington South	3	6,447	2,149	10	6,460	2,153	4
20	Kirtlington	1	2,141	2,141	10	2,136	2,136	3
21	Launton	1	1,994	1,994	2	2,007	2,007	-3
22	Neithrop (Banbury)	2	4,051	2,026	4	4,052	2,026	-2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Otmoor	1	1,871	1,871	-4	1,936	1,936	-6
24 Ruscote (Banbury)	3	6,247	2,082	7	6,364	2,121	3
25 Sibford	1	1,937	1,937	-1	2,057	2,057	0
26 The Astons & Heyfords	2	3,326	1,663	-15	4,098	2,049	-1
27 Wroxton	1	2,080	2,080	6	2,092	2,092	1
28 Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton	2	3,706	1,853	-5	3,671	1,836	-11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>97,702</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103,246</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,065</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Cherwell District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Cherwell in Oxfordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five districts in Oxfordshire 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 be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Cherwell. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1977 (Report No. 243). The electoral arrangements of Oxfordshire County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 428). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2003.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. 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 general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in the district 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 a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

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

11 Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Cherwell District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 and will end on 23 April 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations 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 our draft recommendations.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an Order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.





## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Cherwell is the most northerly of the Oxfordshire districts. The district is mainly rural in character but has three urban centres, Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. The River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal both run through the district. Cherwell has good communication links, including strong rail and road links with London and the Midlands as well as Oxford Airport which is situated in the south-west of the district.

17 The district contains 78 parishes, and is wholly parished. The towns of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington comprise 32 per cent, 22 per cent and 10 per cent respectively of the district's total electorate.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 97,702 (February 2000). The Council presently has 52 members who are elected from 31 wards, 11 of which are relatively urban, covering the towns of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington and the remainder are predominantly rural. Eight of the wards are represented by three councillors each, five are represented by two councillors each and 18 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Cherwell District, with around 51 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Bicester East, Bicester West, Grimsbury and Hardwick wards.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,879 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,986 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in 13 wards by more than 20 per cent and in five wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Bicester East ward where the councillor represents 131 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Cherwell*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Adderbury	1	2,092	2,092	11	2,114	2,114	6
2 Ambrosden	1	2,055	2,055	9	2,110	2,110	6
3 Ardley	1	1,894	1,894	1	1,886	1,886	-5
4 Bicester East	2	8,667	4,334	131	9,843	4,922	148
5 Bicester South	2	3,225	1,613	-14	3,211	1,606	-19
6 Bicester West	2	8,155	4,078	117	9,449	4,725	138
7 Bloxham	2	3,207	1,604	-15	3,229	1,615	-19
8 Bodicote	1	1,685	1,685	-10	1,684	1,684	-15
9 Calthorpe (Banbury)	3	5,200	1,733	-8	5,228	1,743	-12
10 Chesterton	1	980	980	-48	977	977	-51
11 Cropredy	1	1,654	1,654	-12	1,694	1,694	-15
12 Deddington	1	2,146	2,146	14	2,240	2,240	13
13 Easington (Banbury)	3	5,031	1,677	-11	5,087	1,696	-15
14 Fringford	1	1,474	1,474	-22	1,489	1,489	-25
15 Gosford & Water Eaton	1	1,057	1,057	-44	1,036	1,036	-48
16 Grimsbury (Banbury)	3	6,774	2,258	20	6,942	2,314	17
17 Hardwick (Banbury)	3	5,394	1,798	-4	6,921	2,307	16
18 Heyford	1	1,974	1,974	5	2,729	2,729	37
19 Hook Norton	1	1,799	1,799	-4	1,837	1,837	-7
20 Hornton	1	1,257	1,257	-33	1,260	1,260	-37
21 Kirtlington	1	2,104	2,104	12	2,098	2,098	6
22 Launton	1	1,472	1,472	-22	1,479	1,479	-26
23 Neithrop (Banbury)	3	4,120	1,373	-27	4,248	1,416	-29

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 North West Kidlington	3	6,244	2,081	11	6,219	2,073	4
25 Otmoor	1	1,607	1,607	-14	1,626	1,626	-18
26 Ruscote (Banbury)	3	4,455	1,485	-21	4,468	1,489	-25
27 Sibford	1	1,421	1,421	-24	1,539	1,539	-22
28 South East Kidlington	3	4,422	1,474	-22	4,463	1,488	-25
29 Steeple Aston	1	1,352	1,352	-28	1,369	1,369	-31
30 Wroxton	1	1,845	1,845	-2	1,848	1,848	-7
31 Yarnton	2	2,940	1,470	-22	2,923	1,462	-26
<b>Totals</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>97,702</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103,246</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,879</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,986</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Cherwell District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Chesterton ward were relatively over-represented by 48 per cent, while electors in Bicester East ward were relatively under-represented by 131 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 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 Cherwell District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 15 representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

#### **Cherwell District Council**

24 The District Council proposed a council of 50 members, two fewer than at present, serving 28 wards, compared to the existing 31. The Council proposed that Banbury should be represented by 16 councillors, a decrease of two; Bicester should be represented by 11 councillors, an increase of five; Kidlington should be represented by five councillors, a decrease of one; and the rural parishes should be represented by 18 councillors, a decrease of four. It proposed new warding arrangements across the majority of the district, with only Deddington ward retaining its existing boundaries.

25 In Banbury and Kidlington the Council proposed modifications to the existing ward boundaries. In Bicester it proposed a completely new warding pattern with four two-member wards and one three-member ward. In the rural area it proposed three two-member wards, Bloxham & Bodicote, The Astons & Heyfords and Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton, with single-member wards covering the remainder of the rural area.

26 Under its proposals 12 wards would have electoral variances of more than 10 per cent from the district average initially. This level of electoral equality would improve, with only two wards having variances of more than 10 per cent by 2005. The Council's proposal is summarised at Appendix A.

#### **Oxfordshire County Council**

27 The County Council stated that "where there is a conflict between electoral equality and local community interest, the latter should prevail". It stated that the proposals for two- and three-member wards in the towns of Banbury and Bicester would cause difficulties in constructing county electoral divisions in the future and consequently suggested that "the district council wards for these areas be divided into smaller units".

#### **Parish Councils**

28 We received representations from 10 parish councils. Kidlington Parish Council opposed the District Council's initial proposal to place Begbroke and Yarnton parishes in a ward with part of

Kidlington and the remainder of Kidlington in a ward with Gosford & Water Eaton parish. The Parish Council proposed that the parishes of Begbroke, Gosford & Water Eaton and Yarnton should form a two-member ward, with Kidlington being represented by a two- and a three-member ward. Launton Parish Council stated that it opposed Cherwell District Council's proposal to include it in a ward with Caversfield parish as it wished "to be warded with like-minded rural communities". It proposed that Launton parish be placed in a ward with the parishes of Blackthorn, Stratton Audley, Newton Purcell, Goddington and Piddington. Kidlington Parish Council's proposal was subsequently adopted by Cherwell District Council and put forward as part of its Stage One submission, and the District Council also amended its initial scheme in the light of Launton Parish Council's opposition to being included in a ward with Caversfield parish.

29 Souldern Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposal to include it in a two-member ward and it stated that it "would prefer to be in a single ward, grouped with the [parishes] of Fritwell, Ardley, Somerton and possibly Bucknell, with which Souldern has been traditionally linked". It also objected to the inclusion of Upper Heyford parish in the District Council's proposed two-member ward. Lower Heyford Parish Council proposed that it should be included in a ward with the parishes of Somerton and Upper Heyford. Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council stated that it wished to retain the existing arrangements for its parish; however, "with reluctance [it] would not be averse to joining with Orchard and/or St Mary's wards [Kidlington]".

30 The parish councils of Bletchington and Piddington stated that they would both like to see the existing electoral arrangements, affecting their respective parishes, retained. Broughton Parish Council stated that the electoral arrangements of its parish should remain unchanged. The parish councils of Caversfield and Stratton Audley stated that they "had no comments to make".

## **Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats**

31 Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') made the following comments on Cherwell District Council's initial proposals.

- They were opposed to the District Council's proposals to include the parishes of Bloxham and Bodicote in a single district ward and stated that South Newington should be included with Bloxham as opposed to Hook Norton.
- They considered that Upper Heyford and Lower Heyford parishes should be included in the same ward and that Fritwell and Souldern parishes should also be placed in a ward together.
- They stated that Deddington parish should not be warded.
- Caversfield and Launton parishes should not be included in a ward together.
- Wendlebury parish should not be transferred into Otmoor ward and the parishes of Begbroke and Yarnton should not be separated.

32 Cherwell District Council revised its initial proposals following consultation and with the exception of the Liberal Democrats' comments for Bloxham, Bodicote, South Newington, Fritwell and Souldern parishes all their other suggestions were incorporated in the District Council's Stage One submission.

### **Other Representations**

33 We received a further two submissions from local residents. A resident of Little Bourton stated that the village of Little Bourton relates to Cropredy ward rather than Hornton ward. A resident of Souldern opposed the District Council's proposed The Astons & Heyfords ward, proposing instead that the parishes of Ardley, Fritwell and Souldern should be included in a single-member ward, with the parishes of Bucknell, Somerton and Stoke Lyne added to improve electoral equality if necessary.

34 As part of its Stage One submission the District Council provided copies of submissions which it had received in response to its own consultation exercise. It outlined the representations it had received, whether or not they had been included in the Council's final submission, and gave argumentation for its decisions.





## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

37 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for 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.

38 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

39 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 6 per cent from 97,702 to 103,246 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the wards of Bicester East and Bicester West, although a significant amount is also expected in Hardwick ward. The Council has 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 District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

40 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## **Council Size**

41 As already explained, the Commission’s starting point is to assume 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.

42 Cherwell District Council presently has 52 members. The Council considered retaining a council of 52 members, but it discovered that this would necessitate large two-member wards in the rural area as well as the warding of Deddington parish and felt that such proposals would generate widespread opposition from the parishes. Therefore in its Stage One submission the District Council considered council sizes between 50 and 54 members. The Council stated that “schemes for 53 and 54 members ... did not produce good results from an electoral equality standpoint”. Consequently the Council considered a 50-member council and found that this council size provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

43 The Commission is pleased to note that widespread consultation was conducted on a 50-member scheme and that the proposals put forward by Cherwell District Council enjoy cross-party consensus. We did not receive any further representations regarding council size at Stage One.

44 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 50 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

45 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the district-wide scheme put forward by Cherwell District Council.

46 Oxfordshire County Council stated that the proposals for two- and three-member wards in Banbury and Bicester “are likely to create difficulties for the County Council in formulating their proposals to meet the criteria for future electoral divisions”. It suggested that “the proposed district council wards for these areas should be divided into smaller units for parish and town council warding purposes” in order that they can be used as building blocks. However, the Commission's approach in two-tier county areas is first to review the electoral arrangements of the district council and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. Our future recommendations for electoral division boundaries in all counties, including Oxfordshire, will utilise the new district wards as building blocks. We therefore cannot have any regard for existing or future county council divisions during this review.

47 The Commission has examined alternative configurations of parishes to those put forward by the District Council in order to assess whether further improvements to electoral equality could be obtained. However, we have concluded that further improvements to electoral equality in the

majority of the district's rural wards would be at the expense of the statutory criteria, namely the need to reflect community identities and secure effective and convenient local government.

48 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in Banbury town, while making minor modifications to its proposals in Bicester and Kidlington towns. We have also made two minor modifications to the Council's proposed groupings of parishes between Bicester and the Cherwell Valley. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Calthorpe, Easington, Grimsbury, Hardwick, Neithrop and Ruscote wards (Banbury);
- (b) Bicester East, Bicester South and Bicester West wards (Bicester);
- (c) North West Kidlington and South East Kidlington wards (Kidlington) and Gosford, Kirtlington and Yarnton wards;
- (d) Cropredy, Hornton, Sibford and Wroxton wards;
- (e) Adderbury, Bloxham, Bodicote and Hook Norton wards;
- (f) Ardley, Deddington, Heyford and Steeple Aston wards;
- (g) Ambrosden, Chesterton, Fringford, Launton and Otmoor wards.

49 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

#### **Calthorpe, Easington, Grimsbury, Hardwick, Neithrop and Ruscote wards (Banbury)**

50 These six wards cover the town of Banbury, which is situated in the north of the district. Currently these six wards return three councillors each. The wards of Calthorpe, Easington, Hardwick, Neithrop and Ruscote currently have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent, 11 per cent, 4 per cent, 27 per cent and 21 per cent below the district average respectively (12 per cent below, 15 per cent below, 16 per cent above, 29 per cent below and 25 per cent below by 2005). Grimsbury ward currently has a councillor:elector ratio 20 per cent above the district average (17 per cent by 2005).

51 Cherwell District Council proposed that the overall representation of Banbury should be reduced from 18 to 16 councillors, representing six wards as at present. The District Council proposed using Southam Road and Oxford Road as a boundary dividing the town, north to south. East of this boundary it put forward a two-member Calthorpe ward, broadly covering the area south of Dashwood Road and west of Oxford Canal, and a three-member Grimsbury & Castle ward covering the remainder of the east of the town. To the west of the Southam Road/Oxford Road boundary the Council proposed three three-member wards: Easington ward, covering broadly the same area as the existing Easington ward and parts of Grimsbury and Neithrop wards;

Ruscote ward covering the majority of the existing Ruscote ward, and the part of Neithrop ward that lies west of Woodgreen Avenue; and Hardwick ward, covering the part of the existing Hardwick ward north of the former Mineral Railway footpath and west of Ruscote School, and the remainder of Ruscote ward. We have noted that the District Council's proposed Hardwick ward would initially have a relatively high electoral variance of 25 per cent; however, this would improve to 4 per cent by 2005 due to projected housing development within the proposed ward. The Council also put forward a two-member Neithrop ward comprising the remainder of Grimsbury, Hardwick and Neithrop wards.

52 Under the District Council's proposals the wards of Calthorpe, Grimsbury & Castle and Neithrop would have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent, 7 per cent and 13 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005). Easington, Hardwick and Ruscote wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent, 25 per cent and 1 per cent below the district average respectively (7 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005).

53 We have carefully considered the District Council's proposals for Banbury and we endorse the District Council's proposal to reduce the overall representation of the town to 16 councillors, as the town merits under a 50-member scheme. The Commission considers that in most cases it is possible to have lower electoral variances in urban areas than in rural areas, while still having regard to the statutory criteria. We have therefore looked to improve on the relatively high electoral variances in Banbury provided under the District Council's scheme. We are proposing a significant alteration to the District Council's proposed Calthorpe and Easington wards. We propose that Calthorpe ward should return three councillors and should include the electors south of, and including, Farmfield Road, south of Banbury School and east of Salt Way, currently in Easington ward. We propose that the remainder of the District Council's proposed Easington ward, with the exception of 74 electors situated north of People's Park who would be transferred into Neithrop ward, should form a new two-member Easington ward. We have also put forward an amendment to the District Council's proposed boundary between Calthorpe and Grimsbury & Castle wards; we propose running the boundary along St Johns Road and Gatteridge Street. We consider that this minor modification would provide a clear and identifiable boundary. We have made a modification to the boundary between Neithrop and Ruscote wards and we propose transferring the electors west of Park Road and south of Poolside Close from the District Council's proposed Neithrop ward into a modified Ruscote ward. We propose adopting the District Council's proposed Hardwick ward without modification. We have noted the initially high electoral variance, however the District Council's projected 2005 electorate for the proposed Hardwick ward has not been challenged and we are content that it represents the best estimate that can reasonably be made at this time. This provides good electoral equality in the proposed Hardwick ward by 2005. The amendments to the District Council's proposals in Banbury, as outlined above, would provide much improved levels of electoral equality in the town as a whole while in our opinion still having regard to the statutory criteria.

54 Under our proposals the wards of Calthorpe, Easington, Grimsbury & Castle, Neithrop and Ruscote would have councillor:elector ratios 5 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent above the district average respectively (equal to the district average, 1 per cent below, 1 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 3 per cent above by 2005). Hardwick ward would have

a councillor:elector ratio 25 per cent below the district average (4 per cent by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Bicester East, Bicester South and Bicester West wards (Bicester)**

55 These three wards cover the town of Bicester, which is situated in the south-east of the district. Currently these three wards return two councillors each. Under the existing arrangements the wards of Bicester East and Bicester West have councillor:elector ratios 131 per cent and 117 per cent above the district average respectively (148 per cent and 138 per cent by 2005). Bicester South ward currently has a councillor:elector ratio 14 per cent below the district average (19 per cent by 2005).

56 Cherwell District Council proposed that the overall representation of Bicester should be increased from six to 11 councillors, representing five wards, two more than at present. It proposed that the area to the north of the Banbury to London railway line should be divided into two two-member wards, Bicester East and Bicester North, using the A421 Buckingham Road as the boundary between the two wards. It proposed a two-member Bicester South ward covering the area to the east of the Oxford to Bedford railway line. The Council proposed a two-member Bicester Town ward covering the area east of Leach Road, south of George Street, east of the A421 and west of the Oxford to Bedford railway line; and a Bicester West ward, returning three councillors, covering the remainder of the town. The District Council's proposed Bicester East, Bicester North and Bicester South wards would initially have relatively high electoral variances; however, all three of these wards are planned to have substantial residential development, resulting in improved levels of electoral equality by 2005.

57 Under the District Council's proposals Bicester West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (5 per cent below by 2005). Bicester East and Bicester Town wards would have councillor:elector ratios 14 per cent and 5 per cent above the district average respectively (7 per cent above and equal to the district average by 2005). Bicester North and Bicester South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 26 per cent and 31 per cent below the district average respectively (2 per cent above and 6 per cent below by 2005).

58 We have carefully considered the District Council's proposals for Bicester and we endorse the District Council's proposal to increase the overall representation of the town to 11 councillors, as the town merits under a 50-member scheme. We have, however, looked to improve on the relatively high electoral variances in Bicester provided under the District Council's scheme. In the proposed Bicester East, Bicester North and Bicester South wards we have been unable to improve on the levels of electoral equality due to the strength of the boundaries put forward, i.e. the railways and the A421. Consequently we are adopting the District Council's proposed Bicester East, Bicester North and Bicester South wards without amendment, and our recommendations for these three wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the District Council's proposals.

59 We are, however, putting forward a modification to the District Council's proposed boundary between Bicester Town and Bicester West wards. We have noted that the District Council's proposal to run the boundary along Leach Road would leave the electors of Danes Road,

Langford Gardens, Ruck Keene Close, St Ediths Way and Tubb Close with no direct access into the remainder of Bicester West ward, in which they would vote. We considered that these electors should be included in the same ward as the electors between, and including, Leach Road and Ashby Road. Consequently we propose running the boundary along the rear of the properties on Ashby Road, including those electors to the east in Bicester West ward. This modification would have an adverse affect on electoral equality in both wards and we consequently propose a further modification to the boundary. We propose including the electors to the north of Bicester Community College and east of the Bure stream in Bicester Town ward rather than Bicester West ward, as proposed by the District Council. We consider that these modifications would provide strong, clearly identifiable boundaries and secure effective and convenient local government for the electors of Danes Road and the surrounding streets while providing marginally better electoral equality.

60 Under our proposals, illustrated on the large map at the back of the report, Bicester Town and Bicester West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent and 2 per cent above the district average respectively (2 per cent and 4 per cent below by 2005).

#### **North West Kidlington and South East Kidlington wards (Kidlington) and Gosford, Kirtlington and Yarnton wards**

61 These five wards are situated in the south-west of the district. The wards of North West Kidlington and South East Kidlington cover the town of Kidlington; Gosford ward comprises the parish of Gosford & Water Eaton; Kirtlington ward covers the parishes of Bletchington, Hampton Gay & Poyle, Kirtlington, Middleton Stoney and Weston-on-the-Green. Yarnton ward is currently a detached ward, with the parishes of Begbroke and Yarnton separated from the parish of Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp by the town of Kidlington. North West Kidlington and South East Kidlington wards are both represented by three councillors each, Yarnton is a two-member ward, while Gosford and Kirtlington are both single-member wards. The wards of Gosford, South East Kidlington and Yarnton currently have councillor:elector ratios 44 per cent, 22 per cent and 22 per cent below the district average respectively (48 per cent, 25 per cent and 26 per cent by 2005). Kirtlington and North West Kidlington currently have councillor:elector ratios 12 per cent and 11 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005).

62 Cherwell District Council initially consulted locally on a proposal to create three new wards covering the parishes of Begbroke, Kidlington, Gosford & Water Eaton and Yarnton. This proposal was to create a single-member ward comprising the parish of Yarnton; a three-member ward comprising the parish of Begbroke and part of Kidlington parish; and a three-member ward comprising Gosford & Water Eaton parish and part of Kidlington parish. However, this initial proposal was opposed in representations, both to Cherwell District Council and to the Commission, from Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats, who stated that placing the parishes of Begbroke and Yarnton in separate wards would result in a “separation of common interests”, and from Kidlington Parish Council.

63 Kidlington Parish Council stated that the boundaries of wards covering Kidlington should be coterminous with the parish boundary, as in the towns of Banbury and Bicester. It consequently proposed a two-member Kidlington North ward and a three-member Kidlington

South ward covering the parish of Kidlington. It also proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Begbroke, Gosford & Water Eaton and Yarnton. Kidlington Parish Council put forward proposals for new parish electoral arrangements, which are outlined later in the chapter. Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council stated that “with reluctance the Parish Council would not be adverse to joining with Orchard and/or St Mary’s [parish] wards which are in neighbouring Kidlington”. However, having seen Kidlington Parish Council’s submission later in Stage One, Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Council informed Cherwell District Council that it wished to support the proposal to be included in a ward with the parishes of Begbroke and Yarnton. Blethingdon Parish Council stated that it “is happy with the current electoral arrangements and would like them to be left as such”.

64 In its official submission to the Commission, Cherwell District Council adopted the alternative proposal put forward by Kidlington Parish Council, but proposed alternative ward names of St Mary’s ward, instead of Kidlington North, and Garden City ward, instead of Kidlington South. The District Council adopted Kidlington Parish Council’s proposal as it was locally supported and it considered that it provided the “best available combination of parishes” for this area. The District Council also proposed that the existing single-member Kirtlington ward should be modified to include the parish of Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp, currently in Yarnton ward, while the parish of Middleton & Stoney, currently in Kirtlington ward, should be included in Ambrosden & Chesterton ward.

65 Under the District Council’s proposals Garden City, Kirtlington and St Mary’s wards would have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent, 10 per cent and 7 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average (11 per cent by 2005).

66 We have carefully considered all the representations received, and conclude that the District Council’s proposals for these wards would provide the best levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are also pleased to note that the District Council’s proposals were consulted on locally and the views expressed during this consultation exercise have been incorporated, where possible, in its submission. We therefore intend adopting the District Council’s proposals for Kirtlington and Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton wards. Consequently our draft recommendations for these two wards will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the District Council’s proposals. We have noted that the proposed Yarnton, Gosford & Water Eaton ward would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent by 2005. The ward is situated in the south-west corner of the district, surrounded on two sides by the district boundary and to the north by the town of Kidlington. There has been a great deal of opposition to proposals to include any part of Yarnton or Gosford & Water Eaton parishes in a district ward with any part of Kidlington. This opposition has come from both parishes in the area and the town of Kidlington, during both this review and the parish review which was carried out last year. The Commission considers that, given the geographical position of these parishes and the support in the area for the District Council’s proposal, an electoral variance of 11 per cent by 2005 is balanced by the particular community and geographic circumstances in the area.

67 We propose making only minor modifications to the District Council's proposed boundary between Garden City and St Mary's wards. We noted that under the District Council's proposal The Phelps, a residential road in Kidlington, would be divided between St Mary's ward and Garden City ward. We propose that the 170 electors of The Phelps situated in Garden City ward under the Council's proposals should be transferred into St Mary's ward. This modification would have an adverse effect on electoral equality in the town, so we propose to alter the boundary between Garden City and St Mary's wards so that it would run all the way along the High Street and along Mill Street. This modification would involve the transfer of 156 electors north of School Road and west of The Town Green, situated in the District Council's proposed St Mary's ward, into a revised Garden City ward. We also propose one further modification, transferring electors in The Woodlands from Garden City ward into St Mary's ward. We have concluded that these three boundary modifications would provide strong, easily identifiable boundaries while providing effective and convenient government and marginally improving electoral equality. We intend adopting Kidlington Parish Council's proposed ward names of Kidlington North and Kidlington South as opposed to the District Council's proposed Garden City and St Mary's, but we would welcome further comments on these proposed ward names from local people during Stage Three.

68 Under our proposals the wards of Kidlington North and Kidlington South would have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent and 10 per cent above the district average respectively (2 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Cropredy, Hornton, Sibford and Wroxton wards**

69 These four wards are situated to the north of the district and are all currently single-member wards. Cropredy ward comprises the parishes of Claydon with Clattercot, Cropredy, Mollington, Prescote and Wardington; Hornton ward comprises the parishes of Bourton, Hanwell, Horley and Hornton; Sibford ward comprises the parishes of Epwell, Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower, Swalcliffe and Tadmarton; and Wroxton ward comprises the parishes of Broughton, Drayton, North Newington, Shennington with Alkerton, Shutford and Wroxton. The wards of Cropredy, Hornton, Sibford and Wroxton currently have councillor:elector ratios 12 per cent, 33 per cent, 24 per cent and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (15 per cent, 37 per cent, 22 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005).

70 Cherwell District Council proposed that these four wards should be modified to form three revised single-member wards. It proposed that the parish of Bourton, currently in Hornton ward, should be transferred into Cropredy ward and the parishes of Broughton and North Newington, currently in Wroxton ward, should be transferred into Sibford ward. A revised Wroxton ward would then comprise the remaining parishes of the existing Hornton and Wroxton wards. Consequently Hornton ward would cease to exist.

71 Under the District Council's proposals the wards of Cropredy and Wroxton would have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent and 6 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). Sibford ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent below the district average (equal to the district average by 2005).



72 We received two further submissions regarding this area. A resident of Little Bourton stated that the parish of Bourton should be transferred into Cropredy ward, with which it has more in common. Broughton Parish Council made comments on its parish electoral arrangements, which are discussed later in the chapter.

73 We have carefully considered all the representations received, and conclude that the District Council's proposals for these wards provide the best levels of electoral equality currently available while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are also pleased to note that the District Council's proposals were consulted on locally and the views expressed during this consultation exercise have been incorporated where possible in its submission. We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the District Council's proposals. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Adderbury, Bloxham, Bodicote and Hook Norton wards**

74 These four wards are situated in the centre of the district. Bloxham ward is currently a two-member ward while the wards of Adderbury, Bodicote and Hook Norton each return a single councillor. Adderbury and Bodicote wards are coterminous with the parishes of the same names, while Bloxham ward comprises the parishes of Bloxham, Milcombe, Milton and South Newington, and Hook Norton ward includes the parishes of Hook Norton and Wigginton. The wards of Bloxham, Bodicote and Hook Norton have councillor:elector ratios 15 per cent, 10 per cent and 4 per cent below the district average respectively (19 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005). Adderbury ward has a councillor:elector ratio 11 per cent above the district average (6 per cent by 2005).

75 Cherwell District Council proposed that these four wards should be modified to form two single-member wards and a two-member ward. It proposed that Bodicote ward should be expanded to form a new two-member ward with the parishes of Bloxham and Milcombe, currently in Bloxham ward. The parish of South Newington, currently in Bloxham ward, should be transferred into Hook Norton ward, and the parish of Milton, currently in Bloxham ward, should be transferred into Adderbury ward. The proposed Adderbury and Hook Norton wards would each return a single member.

76 Under the District Council's proposals the wards of Adderbury, Bloxham & Bodicote and Hook Norton would have councillor:elector ratios 14 per cent, 15 per cent and 5 per cent above the district average respectively (9 per cent, 10 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

77 Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats stated that the parishes of Bloxham and Bodicote should not be included in a district ward together as they are "separate communities". They also stated that South Newington parish "has greater interests in Bloxham than Hook Norton".

78 We have carefully considered all representations received, and conclude that the District Council's proposals for these wards provide the best levels of electoral equality currently available while having regard to the statutory criteria. We considered the possibility of separating the parishes of Bloxham and Bodicote; however, to place them in single-member wards

coterminous with the parishes would provide high levels of electoral inequality. We were also pleased to note that the District Council's proposals were consulted on locally. We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the District Council's proposals. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Ardley, Deddington, Heyford and Steeple Aston wards**

79 These four wards are situated in the centre of the district, and each returns a single councillor. Ardley ward covers the parishes of Ardley with Fewcott, Bucknell, Caversfield and Stoke Lyne; Deddington ward comprises the parishes of Barford St John & St Michael and Deddington; Heyford ward comprises the parishes of Fritwell, Lower Heyford, Somerton, Souldern and Upper Heyford; and Steeple Aston ward comprises the parishes of Duns Tew, Middle Aston, North Aston and Steeple Aston. The wards of Ardley, Deddington and Heyford currently have councillor:elector ratios 1 per cent, 14 per cent and 5 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent below, 13 per cent above and 37 per cent above by 2005). Steeple Aston ward has a councillor:elector ratio 28 per cent below the district average (31 per cent by 2005).

80 Cherwell District Council proposed that the ward of Deddington should remain unchanged. It proposed that Steeple Aston ward should be expanded to form a new two-member The Astons & Heyfords ward incorporating the parishes of Lower Heyford, Upper Heyford, Somerton and Souldern, currently in Heyford ward. The Council proposed transferring Fritwell parish, currently in Heyford ward, into Ardley ward, while transferring Stoke Lyne parish from Ardley ward into a revised Fringford ward. It also proposed that Ardley ward be renamed Caversfield and be represented by a single councillor.

81 Under the District Council's proposals the wards of Caversfield and Deddington would have councillor:elector ratios 12 per cent and 10 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent and 8 per cent by 2005). The Astons & Heyfords ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 27 per cent below the district average (13 per cent below by 2005).

82 Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats stated that the parish of Deddington should not be divided between two district wards, as considered in an earlier scheme by the District Council, that the parishes of Lower Heyford and Upper Heyford should be in the same ward, as should the parishes of Fritwell and Souldern which "share common interests", and that Caversfield parish should not be placed in the same district ward as Launton parish because they "lack common interests".

83 We received three submissions from parish councils in this area. Lower Heyford Parish Council stated that the parishes "on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley [have] affinities quite different to those on the western side". It also stated that the parishes around the former airbase at Upper Heyford share "a common and united interest ... in relation to its forthcoming development". It proposed a district ward containing the parishes of Lower Heyford, Upper Heyford and Somerton which, based on a 52-member council, would be "extremely close to an average per ward of 1,986". Souldern Parish Council stated that the District Council's proposed The Astons & Heyfords ward "is a totally artificial grouping of villages, with little in common".

It also opposed the proposal to include Souldern parish in a ward with the parish of Upper Heyford as “this would destroy the mainly rural balance of the ward”. It proposed that Souldern parish should be included in a ward with the parishes of Ardley, Fritwell, Somerton and possibly Bucknell, with which it has community ties. Caversfield Parish Council made no specific comments on Cherwell District Council’s proposals.

84 We received a further submission from a resident of Souldern, opposing the Council’s proposed The Astons & Heyfords ward as it would be divided by the River Cherwell. She also stated that a single-member ward would be preferable to a two-member ward as proposed by the District Council. She proposed a ward comprising the parishes of Ardley, Fritwell and Souldern; however, she noted that this would not provide suitable levels of electoral equality and therefore proposed that the parishes of Bucknell, Somerton and Stoke Lyne be included to improve electoral equality.

85 We have carefully considered all representations received, and we propose adopting the District Council’s proposal to retain the existing Deddington ward. Consequently our recommendation for Deddington ward would provide the same level of electoral equality as the District Council’s proposal. However, we are proposing modifications to the District Council’s proposals for Caversfield and The Astons & Heyfords wards. We noted that the proposed The Astons & Heyfords ward would have an electoral variance of 13 per cent by 2005. Including the parish of Fritwell in the proposed The Astons & Heyfords ward, rather than a new Caversfield ward, would greatly improve the electoral variance to 1 per cent by 2005. This modification also places the parishes of Fritwell and Souldern in the same ward, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We therefore propose a modified two-member The Astons & Heyfords ward, comprising the whole of the existing Heyford and Steeple Aston wards. We also propose including Middleton Stoney parish in Caversfield ward, rather than Ambrosden & Chesterton ward as proposed by the District Council. This modification provides better electoral equality in the area as a whole. We considered the proposals put forward by Souldern Parish Council and the resident of Souldern. Due to the variation in size of the parishes in this area it became clear that a two-member ward would be necessary to provide good electoral equality, and we considered an alternative two-member ward comprising the existing wards of Deddington and Steeple Aston; however, this would provide higher levels of electoral inequality than our proposals. We further considered including Souldern parish in a ward with the parishes of the existing Ardley ward and Lower Heyford Parish Council’s proposal to create a ward comprising the parishes of Lower Heyford, Upper Heyford and Somerton. However we are unable to consider any one area in isolation, and either of these proposals would necessitate a complete reconfiguration of parishes in the southern half of the district.

86 Under our proposals, illustrated on Map 2, the ward of Caversfield would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (6 per cent below by 2005), and The Astons & Heyfords ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 15 per cent below the district average (1 per cent below by 2005).

## **Ambrosden, Chesterton, Fringford, Launton and Otmoor wards**

87 These five wards cover the south and east of the district, and each returns a single councillor. Ambrosden ward comprises the parishes of Ambrosden, Arncott, Merton and Piddington; Chesterton ward comprises the parishes of Chesterton and Wendlebury; Fringford ward comprises the parishes of Cottisford, Finmere, Fringford, Hardwick with Tusmore, Hethe, Mixbury and Newton Purcell with Shelswell; Launton ward comprises the parishes of Blackthorn, Godington, Launton and Stratton Audley; and Otmoor ward comprises the parishes of Charlton-on-Otmoor, Fencott & Murcott, Horton-cum-Studley, Islip, Noke and Oddington. Chesterton, Fringford, Launton and Otmoor wards currently have councillor:elector ratios 48 per cent, 22 per cent, 22 per cent and 14 per cent below the district average respectively (51 per cent, 25 per cent, 26 per cent and 18 per cent by 2005). Ambrosden ward has a councillor:elector ratio 9 per cent above the district average (6 per cent by 2005).

88 Cherwell District Council proposed that the parishes in these five wards should be reconfigured to form four single-member wards. It proposed that the parishes of Stoke Lyne, currently in Ardley ward, and Stratton Audley and Goddington, currently in Launton ward, should be transferred into Fringford ward. It proposed that the remainder of Launton ward and the parishes of Arncott and Piddington, currently in Ambrosden ward, should form a revised Launton ward. It put forward a new Ambrosden & Chesterton ward, comprising the existing Chesterton ward and the parishes of Ambrosden (currently in Ambrosden ward) and Middleton Stoney (currently in Kirtlington ward). Finally it proposed that the parish of Merton should be transferred from Ambrosden ward, into Otmoor ward.

89 Under the District Council's proposals the wards of Ambrosden & Chesterton, Fringford and Launton would have councillor:elector ratios 10 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent above the district average respectively (3 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2005). Otmoor ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4 per cent below the district average (6 per cent by 2005).

90 Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats stated that the parishes of Caversfield and Launton should not be included in a district ward together due to a "lack of common interests" and that Wendlebury parish should not be included in a modified Otmoor ward as it would have no "access or common interest".

91 We received three submissions from parish councils in this area. Launton Parish Council stated that "it would very much like to be grouped with like-minded rural communities". It therefore opposed the District Council's initial proposal to include Launton parish in a district ward with Caversfield parish, and Cherwell District Council consequently proposed that Launton and Caversfield parishes should not be included in the same ward. Launton Parish Council proposed that Launton parish should be included in a ward with the parishes of Blackthorn, Stratton Audley, Newton Purcell, Goddington and Piddington. Piddington Parish Council stated that it wished to remain in the existing ward of Ambrosden with the parishes of Ambrosden, Arncott and Merton as at present. Stratton Audley Parish Council stated that it had no comment to make on the District Council's proposals.

92 We have carefully considered all the representations received, and conclude that the District Council's proposed Fringford, Launton and Otmoor wards would provide the best levels of electoral equality currently available while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are also pleased to note that the District Council's proposals were consulted on locally and the views expressed during this consultation exercise have been incorporated where possible in its submission. Consequently the parish of Launton has not been included in the same ward as Caversfield parish, the initial District Council proposal which was opposed by both Launton Parish Council and Banbury Constituency Liberal Democrats. We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposals without modification for these three wards, and consequently our recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the District Council's proposals. However, we are putting forward a modification to the District Council's proposed Ambrosden & Chesterton ward. We propose transferring the parish of Middleton Stoney from Kirtlington ward into a new Caversfield ward, as outlined earlier in the chapter, as opposed to a new Ambrosden & Chesterton ward as proposed by the District Council. This modification would provide better levels of electoral equality in the area as a whole while, in our opinion, continuing to have regard for the statutory criteria.

93 Under our proposals Ambrosden & Chesterton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the district average (9 per cent by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

## **Electoral Cycle**

94 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

## **Conclusions**

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 52 to 50;
- there should be 28 wards;
- the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

96 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- in Banbury we have put forward our own proposals for a three-member Calthorpe ward and a two-member Easington ward. We have made minor modifications to the Council's proposed Grimsbury & Castle, Neithrop and Ruscote wards.

- we have made minor modifications to the District Council’s proposals in Bicester and Kidlington.
- we propose that Fritwell parish should be included in The Astons & Heyfords ward and Middleton Stoney parish should be included in Caversfield ward.

97 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

*Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	52	50	52	50
Number of wards	31	28	31	28
Average number of electors per councillor	1,879	1,954	1,986	2,065
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	23	8	24	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	13	3	14	0

98 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Cherwell District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 23 to eight. By 2005 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

**Draft Recommendation**

Cherwell District Council should comprise 50 councillors serving 28 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 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 and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

99 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be

divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington to reflect the proposed district wards.

100 The parish of Banbury is currently served by 22 councillors representing nine wards: Bretch Hill parish ward (returning four councillors); Grimsbury and Hardwick parish wards (returning three councillors each); Calthorpe, Cherwell Heights, Crouch Hill, Easington, Hill View and Neithrop parish wards (returning two councillors each). Cherwell District Council initially proposed six parish wards coterminous with its proposed district wards. However, during Stage Two we held informal discussions with officers at the council concerning the implications of Schedule 11 in relation to the existing parish wards, which were created following a recent parish review which had been based on widespread consultation in Banbury, and the District Council’s proposed district wards. Following these discussions we are proposing to create 11 parish wards reflecting, as nearly as possible, the recently created parish wards. We would welcome comments from local people on these proposals during Stage Three.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Banbury Parish Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing 11 wards: Ruscote parish ward (returning four councillors); Calthorpe, Grimsbury and Hardwick parish wards (returning three councillors each); Crouch Hill and Neithrop parish wards (returning two councillors each); and Easington North, Easington South, Hill View, Longelandes and Town parish wards (returning one councillor each). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

101 The parish of Bicester is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: East, South and West parish wards, each returning five councillors. Cherwell District Council proposed five parish wards coterminous with the five district wards it put forward for Bicester. We have adopted the District Council’s proposals for Bicester with two modifications, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Therefore we propose that the parish ward boundaries for Bicester be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries for the same area.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Bicester Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: East, North, South, Town and West parish wards (each returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries and are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

102 The parish of Kidlington is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: East, North, South and West parish wards, each returning four councillors. Kidlington Parish Council proposed a new pattern of three-member parish wards for Kidlington. It proposed new Dogwood, Exeter and Orchard parish wards covering the proposed Kidlington South district ward; and

Roundham and St Mary’s parish wards covering the proposed Kidlington North parish ward. Cherwell District Council adopted Kidlington Parish Council’s proposals at both district and parish levels, and we have subsequently adopted these proposals for Kidlington with three minor modifications at district ward level, as outlined earlier in the chapter. We therefore propose adopting Kidlington Parish Council’s parish wards with minor modifications to reflect our proposed district wards and a modification to the proposed boundary between the parish wards of Dogwood and Exeter, which would include all of the electors of Hardwick Avenue in Dogwood parish ward.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Kidlington Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, one less than at present, representing five wards: Dogwood, Exeter, Orchard, Roundham and St Mary’s parish wards (each returning three councillors). The boundary between Roundham and St Mary’s parish wards would run along the A2460, Banbury Road; all other proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

103 We received two further submissions from Bletchingdon Parish Council and Broughton Parish Council stating that they wished to retain their existing parish electoral arrangements. We do not propose any change to their electoral arrangements, or those of any other parish council in Cherwell district.

104 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

**Draft Recommendation**  
For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

**105 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Cherwell and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward 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.**



*Map 2: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for Cherwell*



## 5 NEXT STEPS

106 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 23 April 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

107 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Cherwell 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](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

108 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 Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.



## APPENDIX A

### Cherwell District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council in 12 wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

*Figure A1: Cherwell District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ambrosden & Chesterton	Ambrosden ward (part – Ambrosden parish); Chesterton ward (Chesterton and Wendlebury parishes); Kirtlington ward (part – Middleton Stoney parish)
Bicester Town	Bicester East ward (part – part of Bicester East parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester South ward (part – part of Bicester South parish ward of Bicester parish)
Bicester West	Bicester South ward (part – part of Bicester South parish ward of Bicester parish); Bicester West ward (part – part of Bicester West parish ward of Bicester parish)
Calthorpe (Banbury)	Calthorpe ward (part – part of Calthorpe parish ward and part of Cherwell Heights parish ward of Banbury parish)
Caversfield	Ardley ward (part – Ardley, Bucknell and Caversfield parishes); Heyford ward (part – Fritwell parish)
Easington (Banbury)	Easington ward (part – part of Crouch Hill parish ward and Easington parish ward of Banbury parish); Grimsbury ward (part – part of Neithrop parish ward of Banbury parish); Neithrop ward (part – part of Crouch Hill parish ward of Banbury parish)
Garden City (Kidlington)	North West Kidlington ward (part – part of West parish ward of Kidlington parish); South East Kidlington ward (part – South parish ward and part of East parish ward of Kidlington parish)
Grimsbury & Castle (Banbury)	Calthorpe ward (part – part of Calthorpe parish ward and part of Cherwell Heights parish ward of Banbury parish); Grimsbury ward (part – Grimsbury parish ward and part of Calthorpe parish ward of Banbury parish)
Neithrop (Banbury)	Grimsbury ward (part – part of Neithrop parish ward and part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish); Hardwick ward (part – part of Hill View parish ward of Banbury parish); Neithrop ward (part – part of Neithrop parish ward of Banbury parish)
Ruscote (Banbury)	Neithrop ward (part – part of Bretch Hill parish ward of Banbury parish); Ruscote ward (part – part of Bretch Hill parish ward of Banbury parish)
St Mary's (Kidlington)	North West Kidlington ward (part – North parish ward and part of West parish ward of Kidlington parish); South East Kidlington ward (part – part of East parish ward of Kidlington parish)
The Astons & Heyfords	Heyford ward (part – Lower Heyford, Somerton, Souldern and Upper Heyford parishes); Steeple Aston ward (Duns Tew, Middle Aston, North Aston and Steeple Aston parishes)

Figure A2: Cherwell District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ambrosden & Chesterton	1	2,144	2,144	10	2,136	2,136	3
Bicester Town	2	4,115	2,058	5	4,115	2,058	0
Bicester West	3	5,880	1,960	0	5,875	1,958	-5
Calthorpe (Banbury)	2	4,341	2,171	11	4,369	2,185	6
Caversfield	1	2,192	2,192	12	2,196	2,196	6
Easington (Banbury)	3	5,727	1,909	-2	5,783	1,928	-7
Garden City (Kidlington)	3	6,495	2,165	11	6,508	2,169	5
Grimsbury & Castle (Banbury)	3	6,268	2,089	7	6,436	2,145	4
Neithrop (Banbury)	2	4,432	2,216	13	4,432	2,216	7
Ruscote (Banbury)	3	5,809	1,936	-1	5,929	1,976	-4
St Mary's (Kidlington)	2	4,177	2,089	7	4,174	2,087	1
The Astons & Heyfords	2	2,837	1,419	-27	3,597	1,799	-13

Source: Electorate figures are based on Cherwell District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

## APPENDIX B

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

### **Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements**

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:



- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.



## APPENDIX C

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

1 The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm](http://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, are encouraged to follow the Code.

2 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.

*Figure C1: Commission 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.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	The Commission complies 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.	The Commission complies 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.	The Commission complies 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.	The Commission consults 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.	The Commission complies with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	The Commission complies with this requirement.