

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Oxford 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 city.

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## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Oxford 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 Oxford:

- **in six of the 17 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city, and two 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 continue to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in six wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 120-121) are that:

- **Oxford City Council should have 48 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 17 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of seven wards;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all 24 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the city in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Risinghurst & Sandhills.**

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:

**Review Manager  
Oxford 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)  
Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Abingdon Road	2	East ward (part); Iffley ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
2	Barton & Sandhills	2	Headington ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part – detached part No.2 and the proposed Sandhills parish ward of Risinghurst & Sandhills parish)
3	Blackbird Leys	2	Blackbird Leys ward (part – the proposed Blackbird Leys parish ward of Blackbird Leys parish)
4	Carfax	2	Central ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
5	Churchill	2	Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part – the proposed Wood Farm parish ward of Risinghurst & Sandhills parish); Quarry ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
6	Cowley & Lye Valley	2	Temple Cowley ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
7	Cowley Marsh	2	East ward (part); Temple Cowley ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
8	Headington	2	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Quarry ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
9	Headington Hill & Northway	2	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
10	Iffley & Rose Hill	2	Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part – the proposed Rose Hill parish ward of Littlemore parish); South ward (part)
11	Iffley Fields	2	East ward (part); South ward (part)
12	Jericho & Osney	2	West ward (part)
13	Littlemore	2	Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part – the proposed Littlemore parish ward of Littlemore parish)
14	Magdalen	2	Central ward (part); East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
15	Manor	2	Central ward (part); North ward (part); West ward (part)
16	Marston	2	Central ward (part); Marston ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part – the parish of Old Marston)
17	Northfield Brook	2	Littlemore ward (part – the proposed Sandy Lane West parish ward of Littlemore parish); Blackbird Leys ward (part – the proposed Greater Leys parish ward of Blackbird Leys parish)
18	Quarry & Risinghurst	2	Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part – the proposed Risinghurst parish ward of Risinghurst & Sandhills parish); Quarry ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
19	St Clement's	2	East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
20	St Margaret's	2	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part); Wolvercote ward (part)
21	Sunnymead	2	Cherwell ward (part); Wolvercote ward (part)
22	Templars Square	2	Iffley ward (part); Temple Cowley ward (part)
23	University	2	Central ward (part); South ward (part)
24	Wolvercote	2	Cherwell ward (part); West ward (part); Wolvercote ward (part)

*Notes: 1 Oxford City is largely unparished except for the four parishes of Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Old Marston and Risinghurst & Sandhills.*

*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 Oxford

	<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	Abingdon Road	2	4,212	2,106	-1	4,304	2,152	-1
2	Barton & Sandhills	2	4,318	2,159	1	4,483	2,242	3
3	Blackbird Leys	2	4,131	2,066	-3	4,131	2,066	-5
4	Carfax	2	4,152	2,076	-3	4,434	2,217	2
5	Churchill	2	4,509	2,255	6	4,509	2,255	4
6	Cowley & Lye Valley	2	4,534	2,267	6	4,534	2,267	5
7	Cowley Marsh	2	4,105	2,053	-4	4,105	2,053	-5
8	Headington	2	4,382	2,191	3	4,542	2,271	5
9	Headington Hill & Northway	2	3,871	1,936	-9	4,259	2,130	-2
10	Iffley & Rose Hill	2	4,237	2,119	-1	4,237	2,119	-2
11	Iffley Fields	2	4,275	2,138	0	4,275	2,138	-1
12	Jericho & Osney	2	4,475	2,238	5	4,475	2,238	3
13	Littlemore	2	4,020	2,010	-6	4,034	2,017	-7
14	Magdalen	2	4,122	2,061	-3	4,122	2,061	-5
15	Manor	2	4,358	2,179	2	4,358	2,179	0
16	Marston	2	4,574	2,287	7	4,574	2,287	5
17	Northfield Brook	2	4,162	2,081	-2	4,162	2,081	-4
18	Quarry & Risinghurst	2	4,561	2,281	7	4,561	2,281	5
19	St Clement's	2	4,415	2,208	4	4,428	2,214	2
20	St Margaret's	2	3,849	1,925	-10	4,421	2,211	2
21	Sunnymead	2	4,401	2,201	3	4,501	2,251	4
22	Templars Square	2	4,180	2,090	-2	4,180	2,090	-4

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 University	2	4,093	2,047	-4	4,132	2,066	-5
24 Wolvercote	2	4,368	2,184	2	4,368	2,184	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>102,304</b>	–	–	<b>104,129</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,131</b>	–	–	<b>2,169</b>	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Oxford City Council's and the Oxford City Labour Party'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 city. 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 city of Oxford 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 Oxford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in May 1977 (Report No. 215). Since then the LGBC also undertook a Principal Area Boundary Review of the city's external boundary in June 1987 (Report No. 536), which was followed by a consequential review in August 1988 (Report No. 561). The electoral arrangements of Oxfordshire County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 428), and we expect to review its electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
  - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (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 City Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the city.

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 that 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

Stage	Description
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, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. 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 wards 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 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Oxfordshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the December 2000 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

12 This review is in four stages. Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Oxford City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the city, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, 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 City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000.

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

14 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.**

15 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 City of Oxford is situated in the centre of Oxfordshire and covers some 4,560 hectares. The city is urban and includes a variety of residential housing, including historic university buildings at the centre of the town and large modern estates surrounding the BMW car plant in the south-east of the city. The BMW Cowley car works is the largest employer in the area and there has been significant recent development in the surrounding part of the city, although employment at the plant has decreased dramatically over the last 20 years. The universities and related printers and publishers are also significant employers in the city. The city is largely unparished, containing only four parishes, which were all incorporated into the city in 1991.

17 Oxford City currently has an electorate of 102,304 (February 2000), and this is forecast to increase to 104,129 by 2005. The main area of population growth is expected to be in the existing Wolvercote ward.

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 city average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 The Council presently has 51 members who are elected from 17 three-member wards, all of which are largely urban. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Oxford, with around 26 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of parishes being incorporated into the city and due to new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Blackbird Leys and St Clement's wards.

21 At present each councillor represents an average of 2,006 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 2,042 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 six of the 17 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average, in two wards by more than 20 per cent and in one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Blackbird Leys ward where each councillor represents 34 per cent more electors than the city average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Oxford*

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	Blackbird Leys	3	8,074	2,691	34	8,074	2,691	32
2	Central	3	6,365	2,122	6	6,379	2,126	4
3	Cherwell	3	5,210	1,737	-13	5,434	1,811	-11
4	East	3	6,014	2,005	0	6,014	2,005	-2
5	Headington	3	6,532	2,177	9	6,687	2,229	9
6	Iffley	3	5,908	1,969	-2	5,908	1,969	-4
7	Littlemore	3	5,209	1,736	-13	5,224	1,741	-15
8	Marston	3	4,898	1,633	-19	5,298	1,766	-14
9	North	3	5,804	1,935	-4	5,804	1,935	-5
10	Old Marston & Risinghurst	3	4,977	1,659	-17	5,089	1,696	-17
11	Quarry	3	6,215	2,072	3	6,282	2,094	3
12	South	3	6,280	2,093	4	6,373	2,124	4
13	St Clement's	3	7,675	2,558	28	7,675	2,558	25
14	Temple Cowley	3	5,698	1,899	-5	5,698	1,899	-7
15	West	3	5,890	1,963	-2	6,168	2,056	1
16	Wolvercote	3	5,602	1,867	-7	6,069	2,023	-1
17	Wood Farm	3	5,953	1,984	-1	5,953	1,984	-3
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>102,304</b>	-	-	<b>104,129</b>	-	-
	<b>Averages</b>	-	-	<b>2,006</b>	-	-	<b>2,042</b>	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Oxford City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Old Marston & Risinghurst ward were relatively over-represented by 17 per cent, while electors in Blackbird Leys ward were relatively under-represented by 34 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 Oxford City Council and its constituent parish councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 10 representations during Stage One, including city-wide schemes from the City Council, Oxford City Conservative Group, Oxford City Labour Party and Oxford Liberal Democrat Group, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the City Council and the Commission.

#### **Oxford City Council**

24 The City Council proposed a council of 48 members, three fewer than at present, serving 24 two-member wards, compared to the existing 17. It proposed substantially re-warding the city, with changes to all of the existing 17 wards. The City Council's scheme would provide a much improved level of electoral equality for the city as a whole, resulting in the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the city average in all 24 wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to continue in 2005.

25 The City Council undertook a thorough local consultation. It put forward two alternative proposals which were circulated among local interested parties. The proposals were also made available to the general public at council offices and libraries around the city. The process was publicised via the local press, parish councils and residents' and tenants' associations. The responses received during this consultation period generally supported a scheme of 24 two-member wards. The Council's proposal is summarised in Appendix A.

#### **Oxford City Conservative Group**

26 The Conservative Group put forward two schemes. It proposed a 48-member scheme of 16 three-member wards, and a 51-member scheme of 17 three-member wards.

27 Under the Conservative Group's proposals there would be improved electoral equality. Under its 48-member and 51-member schemes the number of electors per councillor would vary from the city average by no more than 10 per cent in all wards. Figures were not provided for 2005. The Conservative Group's proposals are summarised in Appendix A.

#### **Oxford City Labour Party**

28 The Labour Party wrote on behalf of Oxford East Constituency Labour Party, Oxford West & Abingdon Constituency Labour Party and the Labour Group of Oxford City Council. It proposed a 48-member council, representing 24 two-member wards. This scheme varied from the City Council's scheme in only two wards. Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of

electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average in all 24 wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to continue in 2005.

### **Oxford Liberal Democrat Group**

29 The Liberal Democrats wrote on behalf of Oxford East Liberal Democrats and the Oxford Branch of Oxford West & Abingdon Liberal Democrats. They proposed a council of 45 members, representing 15 three-member wards. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average in all 15 wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to continue in 2005.

30 The Liberal Democrats also suggested alternative Headington and Wood Farm wards. However, these proposals would have a minimal effect on electoral equality. The Liberal Democrats' proposal is summarised in Appendix A.

### **Other Representations**

31 We received six further representations at Stage One from the County Council and local residents. Oxfordshire County Council expressed a preference for a scheme of 16 three-member wards, arguing that it would aid the creation of county divisions in future. A local resident supported the City Council's proposal to include the whole of Divinity Road in a ward. Four local residents objected to the City Council's proposal to combine part of Littlemore parish with part of Blackbird Leys parish.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

33 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.

34 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.

35 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 under which electoral equality will improve over this period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

36 The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 102,304 to 104,129 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Wolvercote 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 City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

## **Council Size**

38 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.

39 Oxford City Council presently has 51 members. The City Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Party proposed a decrease in the size of the council to 48 members. The City Council considered that the existing council size achieves effective and convenient local government, but that a small reduction in council size would not have an adverse effect. However, it did oppose a large decrease in council size, from 51 to 45 members, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. The City Council consulted widely on two alternative proposals based on a 48-member council, and this council size received general local support. The Conservative Group proposed an alternative scheme retaining the existing council size of 51 members. However, we consider that this scheme does not appear to best reflect community identity and does not use the clear natural boundary of the River Cherwell in its entirety. The Liberal Democrats have not provided adequate evidence to persuade us that a 45-member scheme would provide more effective and convenient local government than a 48-member council or that it would receive local support.

40 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received by us and by the City Council during its consultation period, we have concluded that the best balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would be met by a council of 48 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

41 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose substantially adopting the City Council's scheme, which has been consulted on locally and which received the majority of local support. We consider that this scheme offers the best balance between the statutory criteria and electoral equality. The proposed wards have good levels of electoral equality, utilise clearly identifiable boundaries and appear to best reflect the small communities of which Oxford is comprised. Under the City Council's proposals a number of existing anomalies would be addressed, including the abolition of the current detached ward of Old Marston & Risinghurst. They would also ensure that the whole of the Rose Hill estate would be contained in a single ward, which was supported by all parties. The City Council proposed using the city's key arterial roads as the centre of wards, asserting that these roads form the focus of surrounding communities. It also proposed using the clearly identifiable boundaries of the rivers Cherwell and Thames, which divide the city.

42 The City Council argued that a uniform pattern of two- or three-member wards would ensure equal treatment of electors across the city; would avoid confusing voters; and would be simple for the City Council to administer. It argued that a scheme of smaller, two-member wards would encourage higher voter turnout; would help electors to identify more closely with their councillors; would produce more proportional election results; and would ease councillors' workloads. The Labour Party also supported a 24 two-member ward scheme. We have concluded

that the City Council's proposals for 24 two-member wards provide the best warding pattern for the city as a whole, and the best balance between electoral equality and community identity. The Conservative Group proposed a uniform pattern of three-member wards, represented by either 51 or 48 members. We are particularly concerned that proposals for three-member wards would involve combining the majority of Littlemore parish with a large part of Blackbird Leys parish. We have not been persuaded that there would be local support for a three-member ward in this area, given that it would combine areas that appear to have few community links. Furthermore, although we made requests for the information, the Conservative Group did not provide 2005 figures. While we note that proposals for a scheme of three-member wards have received some support, we have been persuaded in the light of local views that a pattern of two-member wards would best represent the small communities within Oxford City.

43 We recognise that the County Council and the Liberal Democrats preferred schemes of three-member wards, raising concerns regarding the difficulty of creating future county divisions which would be coterminous with a scheme of two-member city wards. However, we take no account of county division boundaries during the PER given that we will be undertaking a review of Oxfordshire County Council's electoral arrangements in the near future, the outcome of which we cannot predict. Indeed, our review of the county divisions will take account of our recommendations under this review. At that point we will consider Oxford's electoral arrangements with the aim of achieving coterminosity between the new city ward boundaries and potential county division boundaries.

44 Given the support that it received, we are content to base our draft recommendations on the City Council's two-member ward scheme, but we are proposing minor boundary modifications to the City Council's proposed ward boundaries for Headington Hill & Northway, Iffley Fields, Littlemore, Marston, Northfield Brook and South wards. These amendments would address anomalies where the proposed ward boundaries vary marginally from the existing parish boundaries, and would improve levels of electoral equality.

45 The City Council did not submit ward names with its proposals, and therefore we are putting forward our own ward titles. These names are based on the Conservative Group's and Liberal Democrats' proposed ward names, and informal suggestions put to us by local interested parties. We have sought to reflect local communities as concisely and accurately as possible. We would welcome views at Stage Three with regard to the proposed ward names.

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

- (a) Cherwell, North and Wolvercote wards;
- (b) Central, South and West wards;
- (c) Headington, Marston, Old Marston & Risinghurst and Quarry wards;
- (d) East, St Clement's and Wood Farm wards;
- (e) Blackbird Leys, Iffley, Littlemore and Temple Cowley wards.

47 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.

## **Cherwell, North and Wolvercote wards**

48 The existing wards of Cherwell, North and Wolvercote cover the northern part of the city. Under the current arrangements of a 51-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the city average by 13 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in North ward, to vary by 5 per cent from the city average in 2005, while the level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Cherwell and Wolvercote ward, to vary by 11 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

49 At Stage One the City Council proposed that this area should comprise four two-member wards. It proposed that Ward 1 should combine the part of the existing Cherwell ward to the north of Elsfield Way with Godstow Holt and the Trout Inn from the existing West ward, and that part of the existing Wolvercote ward to the north-west of Paddox Close, St Edward's Avenue, Squitchey Lane, Upland Park Road and Woodstock Road. It argued that this ward would combine both parts of Wolvercote village and would draw together smaller communities around the Banbury and Woodstock roads. It put forward a Ward 2, comprising the majority of the remainder of the existing Cherwell ward, to the north of Ewert Place, and the remainder of the existing Wolvercote ward to the north of Thorncliffe Road. It argued that this ward combines the Cutteslowe and Summertown communities and the residential areas between them. It proposed that Ward 3 should include the remainder of the existing Cherwell and Wolvercote wards, with that part of the existing North ward to the north of Aristotle Lane, Canterbury Road, Farndon Road, Kingston Road, Park Town and the Boat Houses. It asserted that this ward avoids creating "artificial divisions in the neighbouring communities" and uses "rational" boundaries. It proposed that Ward 4 should comprise the part of the existing Central ward to the north of Banbury Road, Keble Road, the remainder of North ward and the part of West ward to the north of Juxon Street.

50 Under the City Council's scheme for a 48-member council, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Wards 1-4 by 2 per cent, 3 per cent, 10 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent and 2 per cent in Wards 1 and 3 and equalling the city average in Ward 4. The level of electoral equality in Ward 2 would deteriorate marginally to vary by 4 per cent from the city average in 2005.

51 Under its 51-member scheme, the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, North Oxford, Summertown & Cutteslowe and Wolvercote & Woodstock. It proposed that North Oxford ward should comprise the majority of the existing North ward and the northern part of the existing Central ward in order to allow for reasonable levels of electoral equality in the most northerly wards. It put forward a Summertown & Cutteslowe ward combining the remainder of the existing North ward and the majority of the existing Cherwell ward, arguing that these areas share a community identity. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Cherwell ward should be combined with the existing Wolvercote ward to form a Wolvercote & Woodstock ward in order to retain the existing community identity and result in improved levels of electoral equality.

52 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 51-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in North Oxford, Summertown & Cutteslowe and Wolvercote & Woodstock wards by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Electoral projections were not provided for 2005.

53 Under its 48-member scheme the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, Summertown & Cutteslowe, Walton Manor & Norham Manor and Wolvercote & Woodstock. It proposed that Summertown & Cutteslowe ward should comprise the northern part of the existing North ward and the majority of the existing Cherwell ward, while Walton Manor & Norham Manor ward should combine the majority of the existing North ward and the northern part of the existing Central ward. It proposed that Wolvercote & Woodstock Road ward should combine the remainder of the existing Cherwell ward with the existing Wolvercote ward.

54 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 48-member council, there would be improved electoral equality based on existing electorate figures. The number of electors per councillor would vary from the city average in Summertown & Cutteslowe, Walton Manor & Norham Manor and Wolvercote & Woodstock wards by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

55 The Labour Party put forward proposals identical to the City Council's proposals for this area. It argued that Ward 1 retains links between Wolvercote Village, Lakeside, Five Mile Drive, Jordan Hill and Templar Road and that it uses the clearly identifiable boundary of Elsfield Way. It supported combining the communities of Cutteslowe and Summertown in Ward 2, abolishing the "artificial" boundary of the Banbury Road. While it acknowledged that Ward 3 falls between three clearly identifiable communities, it asserted that "it does have its own identity" and uses "rational" boundaries. It raised concerns about alternative proposals to divide Walton and Norham Manors and supported the combination of these "two distinct communities" in Ward 4, along with the smaller "distinct" areas of Park Town and Waterside. It argued that these areas share community links and are separated from Jericho, to the south, by Lucy's factory and St Sepulchre's cemetery.

56 The Liberal Democrats proposed that this area should be represented by two three-member wards, Summertown and Wolvercote. They proposed that Summertown ward should comprise the majority of the existing North ward and the southern parts of the existing Cherwell and Wolvercote wards. They argued that this would include the whole of the "main Summertown community" in a single ward. They put forward a Wolvercote ward comprising the remainder of the existing Cherwell and Wolvercote wards and the northern edge of the existing West ward.

57 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 45-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Summertown and Wolvercote wards by 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in Summertown ward, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 5 per cent from the city average, while continuing to vary by 6 per cent from the average in Wolvercote ward in 2005.

58 While we consider that there is merit in all the schemes put forward at Stage One, having decided that the City Council's scheme of 24 two-member wards would best represent the city

we are limited to the extent to which we can adopt alternative proposals. Moreover, we consider that the City Council's proposals for this area offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that these proposals are preferable, given that they would divide this area into the communities which straddle the arterial Banbury and Woodstock roads. We note that the Conservative Group proposed using these roads as boundaries, thereby dividing communities and creating wards which combine those areas to the north of the by-pass with more central parts of the city with which they share no community links. The Conservative Group agreed that there is merit in dividing this part of the city horizontally.

59 We propose that the City Council's proposed Wards 1–4 should be named Wolvercote, Sunnymead, St Margaret's and Manor respectively in order to reflect areas contained in each of the proposed wards. The Conservative Group objected to the name "Cherwell", arguing that it might be confused with Cherwell District Council or Cherwell county division. Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Central, South and West wards**

60 The existing wards of Central, South and West cover the centre, south and west of Oxford, to the west of the River Thames. Under the current arrangements of a 51-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the city average by 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Central and West wards, to vary by 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, while continuing to vary by 4 per cent from the city average in South ward in 2005.

61 At Stage One the City Council proposed that this area should comprise four two-member wards. It proposed that Ward 5 should comprise the part of the existing Central ward bounded by High Street, Little Clarendon Street and Parks Road; the parts of the existing West ward to the east of Walton Street and Worcester Street, to the south-east of Botley Road, Park End Street and the railway line; and the part of South ward to the north-west of St Aldate's and the River Thames. It argued that this combines the "historic communities" of St Ebbe's and St Thomas' with the western part of the main university area. It asserted that the Oxpens area, towards the centre of this ward, "is likely [to] be the centre of considerable development in the next ten years" and that it forms a focal point for the surrounding community. This ward also unites the whole of the main shopping centre of Cornmarket and Queen Street in a single ward. It argued that the proposed boundary also distinguishes between the different collegiate areas of the city.

62 It proposed a Ward 6 comprising the remainder of the existing West ward, less that part to the south of Hogacre Ditch. It argued that this ward respects the "historical link" between the communities of Jericho and Osney, which are similar residential areas, linked by the new development at Rewley Road. It proposed that Ward 7 should comprise the remainder of Central ward, less those parts to the east of the River Cherwell, and the part of the existing South ward to the north-east of St Aldate's and the River Thames. This ward comprises the eastern part of the city centre which is largely comprised of colleges and student residences, including the whole of the science area, and utilises the strong boundaries of the rivers Cherwell and Thames, High Street, Parks Road and St Aldate's. It proposed that Ward 8 should comprise the remainder of South ward, less the parts to the east of the River Thames and the Boat Houses, and the remainder

of West ward. It argued that this ward combines the Grandpont and New Hinksey communities which surround the Abingdon Road and uses the clear boundaries of Thames Street and the River Thames.

63 Under the City Council's scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Wards 5–8 by 3 per cent, 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 2 per cent and 3 per cent in Wards 5 and 6, while continuing to vary by 1 per cent from the city average in Ward 8. The level of electoral equality in Ward 7 would deteriorate marginally to vary by 5 per cent from the city average in 2005.

64 Under its 51-member scheme the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, Central Oxford, Jericho & West Oxford and St Aldate's & South Oxford. It proposed that Central Oxford ward should comprise the majority of the existing Central ward and the northern part of the existing St Clement's ward. It argued that there is a "strong community connection" between these areas. It put forward a Jericho & West Oxford ward comprising the majority of the existing West ward and the western part of North ward. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Central, South and West wards should form a St Aldate's & South Oxford ward. This ward would exclude the Donnington Bridge area of the existing South ward, which it argued "has never been part of South Oxford".

65 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 51-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Central Oxford, Jericho & West Oxford and St Aldate's & South Oxford wards by 1 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

66 Under its 48-member scheme, the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, Central & St Clement's, Jericho & West Oxford and St Aldate's & South Oxford. The proposed Central & St Clement's ward would comprise the centre of the existing Central ward and the northern part St Clement's ward. The Conservative Group proposed that Jericho & West Oxford ward should comprise the majority of the existing West ward and the western part of the existing North ward. It put forward a St Aldate's & South Oxford ward combining the southern part of the existing Central ward with the majority of the existing South ward, to the west of the rivers Cherwell and Thames. This proposal would also exclude the Donnington Bridge area from South Oxford.

67 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality in Jericho & West Oxford and St Aldate's & South Oxford wards, with the number of electors per councillor in each ward varying from the city average by 1 per cent, while equalling the city average in Central & St Clement's ward.

68 The Labour Party put forward proposals identical to the City Council's proposals for this area. It argued that Ward 5 combines the St Ebbe's and St Thomas' communities around the focal Oxpens area, while the boundary with Ward 7 divides the university colleges in line with geographical area, architecture and tradition. It stressed that Jericho and Osney should be combined in Ward 6 as they are historically linked, are of a similar social composition and are

separated from areas to the north by Lucy's factory and St Sepulchre's cemetery. It supported the inclusion of the major university college area of central Oxford with the whole of the science area in a single Ward 7, which generally comprises student residents. It argued that Ward 8 comprises the whole Abingdon Road community and uses the clearly identifiable boundaries of Thames Street, Trinity Street and the River Thames.

69 The Liberal Democrats proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, Central, South and West. They proposed that Central ward should comprise the northern part of the existing Central ward and the south-east part of the existing North ward. They put forward a South ward, comprising the south-west part of the existing Central ward, the majority of South ward to the west of the River Thames, and the southern tip of the existing West ward. They proposed that West ward should comprise the remainder of the existing West ward and the south-west part of the existing North ward. The Liberal Democrats also considered that the Donnington area "has more in common" with similar former council estate communities in the Iffley area than with areas to the west of the River Thames.

70 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 45-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Central, South and West wards by 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in Central and South wards, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 3 per cent and 5 per cent from the city average, while the level of electoral equality in West ward would improve to vary by 1 per cent from the average in ward in 2005.

71 Having decided that the City Council's scheme of 24 two-member wards would best represent the City, we are limited to the extent to which we can adopt alternative proposals. Having carefully considered the representations received, we also consider that the City Council's proposals for this area offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Its proposal to divide the Donnington Bridge area from the part of south Oxford to the west of the River Thames has been supported by all parties. The City Council has used clearly identifiable boundaries and has combined areas with strong community links. While we are somewhat concerned regarding the geographical size of the proposed Ward 6, we recognise that this is necessary in the interests of electoral equality. Also, the areas combined in this ward are well connected by road and footpath. The City Council's proposals also ensure that the city centre and the main university area of the city are represented in single wards. We are particularly concerned that the Conservative Group's proposals would involve straddling the River Cherwell, which we consider should be respected as a significant natural boundary throughout the city. We also note that its proposed St Aldate's & South Oxford ward, under its 48-member scheme, would combine the centre of Oxford with areas on the edge of the city. We do not consider that these areas share community links and have not been persuaded that this would offer the best representation of local communities.

72 However, we propose a minor amendment to the City Council's proposed Ward 8. Given that we have used the River Thames as a boundary for the rest of this ward, we do not consider that there is any reason to diverge from the river boundary in order to include part of the east bank of the river, comprising the University Boat Houses, in Ward 8. Therefore we propose transferring

this area to Ward 17. This area does not contain any electors. Similarly, we propose defining the boundary of Ward 8 to follow the centre of the river Thames. This would not affect any electors.

73 We propose that the City Council's proposed Wards 5–8 should be named Carfax, Jericho & Osney, University and Abingdon Road after the key areas and roads contained in each of the proposed wards. While we note that there are colleges of the university elsewhere in the city, the proposed Ward 7 contains little besides colleges, university land and buildings and the population in this area is largely comprised of students. Therefore we consider that the proposed title would best reflect the composition of this area. Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, on Map 2 and on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Headington, Marston, Old Marston & Risinghurst and Quarry wards**

74 The existing wards of Headington, Marston, Old Marston & Risinghurst (comprising the parishes of Old Marston and Risinghurst & Sandhills) and Quarry cover the north-eastern part of the city. Under the current arrangements of a 51-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the four wards varies from the city average by 9 per cent, 19 per cent, 17 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Marston ward, to vary by 14 per cent, while continuing to vary by 9 per cent, 17 per cent and 3 per cent from the city average in Headington, Old Marston & Risinghurst and Quarry wards in 2005.

75 At Stage One the City Council proposed that this area should comprise six two-member wards. It proposed that Ward 9 should comprise the part of the existing Headington ward to the west of Franklin Road and Headley Way, the part of Marston ward to the east of Marston Road, less William Street and the parts to the west of Ambleside Drive, Foxwell Drive and Ingle Close and the part of the existing St Clement's ward bounded by Marston Road and Headington Road. It also proposed including that part of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward which comprises the properties on Marsh Lane. This ward combines the Northway and Lake District estates with Headington Hill, areas which the City Council argues are well connected by road and public transport and whose residents share leisure facilities. It also ensures that the Headington Hill and Jack Straw's Lane area is no longer divided between wards. The Council proposed a Ward 10 combining the part of the existing Central ward to the east of the River Cherwell, the remainder of the existing Marston ward, to the west of Marston Road, including William Street, and the remainder of the Old Marston parish part of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward. It argued that this ward combines the two historic communities of Old Marston and New Marston, and also avoids dividing Old Marston parish between wards. While the whole of New Marston cannot be included in this ward for reasons of electoral equality, the City Council proposed dividing this area using the clear boundary of the Marston Road. It asserted that the areas to the west of Marston Road "identify with Marston".

76 The City Council proposed that those parts of the existing Headington and Quarry wards bounded by Bickerton Road, Brookside, Franklin Road, Headley Way, Holyoake Road, North Place, Wharton Road, York Road and the Northern By-Pass should form Ward 12, together with the remainder of the existing Marston ward and the part of the existing Wood Farm ward that is bounded by Old Road and York Road. This ward combines the whole of the Headington shopping area, and Old and New Headington, within a single ward. The Council proposed that Ward 13

should comprise the remainder of Headington ward, the detached part (No.2) of Old Marston & Risinghurst ward, and the part of Old Marston & Risinghurst ward to the north of London Road. It argued that this ward “maintains the integrity” of the Barton and Sandhills communities, using clearly identifiable boundaries. It put forward a Ward 14 comprising the remainder of Old Marston & Risinghurst ward to the north of Dorchester Close and Old Road, the part of Quarry ward to the east of Holyoake and Wharton roads, and the remainder of Wood Farm ward, to the north of Old Road. It argued that this ward combines the “clearly defined communities” of Headington Quarry and Risinghurst with the recent developments around New Headington. It proposed that Ward 15 should comprise the remainder of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst and Quarry wards, the part of the existing St Clement’s ward to the east of Headington Road and Morrell Avenue, and the remainder of Wood Farm ward, to the north of Horspath Driftway, Lye Valley, Mascall Avenue, Peat Moors and The Slade. It argued that this ward combines a number of small, separate communities which each have their own identity but are linked by Old Road. The ward also ensures that the Chillingworth Crescent and Wood Farm estate area are not divided between wards.

77 Under the City Council’s scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in wards 9, 10, 12,13,14 and 15 by 10 per cent, 8 per cent, 3 per cent, 1 per cent, 7 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 3 per cent, 7 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent in wards 9, 10, 14 and 15 respectively. The level of electoral equality in wards 12 and 13 would deteriorate marginally to vary by 5 per cent and 3 per cent from the city average in 2005.

78 Under its 51-member scheme, the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst, Marston, New Headington and Old Headington & Northway. It proposed that Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst ward should combine the north-eastern part of Headington ward, the northern parts of the detached areas of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward, and the north-eastern parts of Quarry and Wood Farm wards. It argued that there is an “established link” between Risinghurst and Headington Quarry, which should be respected. It proposed that Marston ward should comprise the part of the existing Central ward to the east of the River Cherwell, the western parts of the existing Headington and Marston wards, the majority of Old Marston parish of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward, and the northern corner of the existing St Clement’s ward. It supported combining Old Marston and Marston in a single ward, arguing that the Lake District and Northway estates “consider themselves as part of Headington”. It put forward a New Headington ward, comprising the north-eastern part of the existing St Clement’s ward and the remainder of the existing Quarry ward. It proposed an Old Headington & Northway ward comprising the remainder of the existing Headington and Marston wards and the north-western part of the existing Wood Farm ward. It argued that this ward is “natural and logical” in drawing together areas that are locally considered to be part of Headington.

79 Under the Conservative Group’s scheme for a 51-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst, Marston, New Headington and Old Headington & Northway wards by 4 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

80 The Conservative Group also proposed a 48-member scheme in which this area would be represented by four three-member wards, Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst, Marston, New Headington & Wood Farm and Old Headington & Northway. It proposed that Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst ward should comprise the north-eastern parts of the existing Headington, Quarry and Wood Farm wards and the majority of the detached sections of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward. It put forward a Marston ward combining the part of Central ward to the east of the River Cherwell, the south-western corner of Headington ward, the majority of the existing Marston ward and of the Old Marston parish area of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst parish, together with the northern corner of St Clement's ward. It proposed that New Headington & Wood Farm ward should combine the majority of the existing Quarry ward, the southern part of Risinghurst & Sandhills parish from the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward, and the northern part of the existing Wood Farm ward. It put forward an Old Headington & Northway ward comprising the remainder of Headington, Marston and Quarry wards.

81 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality in Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst, Marston, New Headington & Wood Farm and Old Headington & Northway wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average by 1 per cent, 1 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

82 The Labour Party put forward proposals identical to the City Council's proposals for Wards 12–15. However, it put forward alternative proposals for the Marston area. It argued that Ward 12 is clearly separate from adjoining communities, while Ward 13 respects the strong community identities of Barton and Sandhills and uses clear and "easily understood" boundaries. It supported Ward 14 for combining the "clearly defined communities" of Risinghurst and Headington Quarry with adjoining parts of New Headington, and for generally using "very clear" boundaries. It argued that the constituent communities of Ward 15 are of a similar character and "social mix".

83 The Labour Party proposed that Ward 9 should comprise the north-western edge of Headington ward, the northern parts of the existing Marston ward and Old Marston parish of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward. It proposed that Ward 10 should comprise the part of the existing Central ward to the east of the River Cherwell, the southern parts of the existing Marston ward and Old Marston parish of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward, and the northern corner of the existing St Clement's ward. It supported this option in preference to the City Council's Wards 9 and 10 because it does not divide the community to either side of Marston Road. The Labour Party's alternative Ward 9 would vary from the city average by 2 per cent, while Ward 10 would equal the city average. This level of electoral equality would deteriorate marginally over the next five years, with wards 9 and 10 varying by 3 per cent and 7 per cent respectively in 2005.

84 The Liberal Democrats proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Barton & Quarry, Headington, Marston and Wood Farm; they also put forward alternative proposals for Headington and Wood Farm. They proposed that Barton & Quarry ward should comprise the eastern parts of the existing Headington and Quarry wards and the northern detached sections of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward. They proposed that Headington ward should combine the majority of the remainder of the existing Headington and Quarry wards with the eastern part of the existing Marston ward and the north-eastern corner of the existing St Clement's ward. They argued that there are "close community links" between east Headington

and Quarry village, as well as between Quarry village and Risinghurst and between Risinghurst and Sandhills. They proposed a Marston ward, comprising the remainder of Headington and Marston wards and Old Marston parish of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst ward. They proposed that the remainder of the existing Quarry and Old Marston & Risinghurst wards should be combined with the majority of the existing Wood Farm ward to form a Wood Farm ward.

85 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 45-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Barton & Quarry, Marston and Wood Farm wards by 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, while equalling the city average in Headington ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in Headington and Marston wards, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 6 per cent and 5 per cent from the city average, while continuing to vary by 5 per cent from the city average in Barton & Quarry ward. The level of electoral equality in Wood Farm ward would improve to vary by 2 per cent from the average in 2005.

86 The Liberal Democrats also proposed alternative Headington and Wood Farm wards in order to avoid splitting the New Headington community. They proposed that Headington ward should comprise the western parts of the existing Headington and Quarry wards, the eastern edge of the existing Marston ward and the north-eastern corner of the existing St Clement's ward. They proposed that the alternative Wood Farm ward should combine the eastern part of the existing Quarry ward, the southern part of Risinghurst & Sandhills parish of Old Marston & Risinghurst ward and the majority of Wood Farm ward. Under these proposals the level of electoral equality in Headington and Wood Farm wards would vary from the city average by 1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in Headington ward, to vary by 6 per cent from the city average, while improving in Wood Farm ward, to vary by 2 per cent from the city average by 2005.

87 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. Having decided that the City Council's scheme of 24 two-member wards would best represent the city as a whole, we are limited to the extent to which we can adopt alternative proposals in this area. In addition, we consider that the City Council's proposals for this area offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that the City Council's proposals offer improved representation of the Marston area by combining Old Marston with New Marston. We are concerned that the Labour Party's and Liberal Democrats' proposals to combine Old Marston with Northway would link areas that are not directly connected by road. In contrast, the City Council's scheme seems to best reflect community identities in this area by respecting the community links between Old Marston and New Marston. The City Council's proposals also ensure that the Old and New Headington communities are united within a single ward. We note that the City Council's proposals would involve dividing Sandhills from Risinghurst, with which it is historically linked. However, it is necessary to divide Risinghurst & Sandhills parish in the interests of electoral equality, and in order to ensure that areas are linked to adjoining areas; the City Council's proposals seem to offer the best division of this parish by using the clear boundary of the London Road and by respecting the community links between Barton and Sandhills and between Headington Quarry and Risinghurst. We propose that the City Council's proposed Wards 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15 should be named Headington Hill & Northway, Marston, Headington, Barton & Sandhills, Quarry & Risinghurst and Churchill respectively, to reflect the constituent

areas of each of the proposed wards and after the Churchill Hospital, which is central to the proposed Ward 15.

88 While we consider that the City Council's proposals offer the best warding arrangement for this area, we are proposing minor amendments in order to create more coherent ward boundaries and to improve levels of electoral equality. We propose a minor amendment to the proposed boundary of Marston ward, in order to include the part of Marsh Lane which lies within Old Marston parish and the remainder of Marsh Lane to the north of Brookfield Crescent. This ensures that the city ward boundary is coterminous with the parish ward boundary, while avoiding dividing this part of Marsh Lane between wards. To address the resulting levels of electoral inequality, we propose that William Street should be transferred to Headington Hill & Northway ward, where it will be combined in a ward with other areas to the east of Marston Road. Under our draft recommendations, the level of electoral equality in Headington Hill & Northway and Marston wards would vary from the city average by 9 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years to vary by 2 per cent and 5 per cent from the city average in 2005. Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, on Map 2 and on the large map at the rear of this report.

### **East, St Clement's and Wood Farm wards**

89 The existing wards of East, St Clement's and Wood Farm cover the area to the south-east of the centre of the city. Under the current arrangements of a 51-member council the number of electors per councillor varies from the city average by 28 per cent and 1 per cent in St Clement's and Wood Farm wards while equalling the city average in East ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in East and Wood Farm wards, varying by 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively, while improving in St Clement's ward, to vary by 25 per cent from the city average in 2005.

90 At Stage One the City Council proposed that this area should comprise six two-member wards. It proposed that Ward 11 should comprise the part of the existing East ward containing the houses on the south side of Hill Top and Southfield roads, together with the part of the existing St Clement's ward to the north-east of Cowley Road, less the parts to the north-east of Morrell Avenue and Marston Road. This ward comprises half of the St Clement's community, divided along the clearly identifiable boundary of Cowley Road. It put forward a Ward 15, as detailed above. It proposed that Ward 16 should comprise the part of the existing Wood Farm ward to the south of Lye Valley, Mascall Avenue, Peat Moors and The Slade, and the part of Temple Cowley ward bounded by Garsington Road and Hollow Way. It asserted that this ward combines the "distinct" community of the Lye Valley Estate and the eastern part of Cowley. It argued that this ward divides the Cowley area in a clearly identifiable way, given that this part of Cowley is "clearly separate" from the older Temple Cowley area to the west of Hollow Way, and is separated from the remainder of Cowley, to the south, by the former car factory site. It proposed excluding those areas of new development in the existing Wood Farm ward, to the east of Lye Valley, as they comprise largely private, owner-occupied housing, which are of a different character to the properties in this ward. It proposed that Ward 17 should combine the remainder of the existing Central and St Clement's wards to the south of the River Cherwell and Cowley Road, together with the part of the existing East ward bounded by Iffley Road and Magdalen

Road. This ward comprises the other half of the St Clement's community. The City Council argued that Magdalen Road forms "an easily defined and recognisable dividing line".

91 The City Council proposed that the remainder of the existing East ward to the east of Cricket Road, Cowley Road and Howard Street, the part of the existing Temple Cowley ward bounded by Hollow Way, Littlehay Road, Oxford Road and Rymers Lane, and the remainder of the existing Wood Farm ward, to the south of Hollow Way, Town Furze and the Churchill Hospital site, should form Ward 18. It argued that this ward combines the "distinct community" of Old Temple Cowley with areas to the north-west with which it is connected by the Cowley Road. It asserted that the proposed ward boundaries are "easily identifiable". It proposed that Ward 19 should comprise the remainder of the existing East ward and the parts of the existing South ward to the east of the River Thames, south of Jackdaw Lane and north of Swinburne Road. It argued that this ward combines the "separate but closely linked areas" of Boundary Brook Road, Donnington Bridge Road, Iffley Fields and the area that lies between Howard Street and Magdalen Road. It argued that the proposed boundaries are "clear".

92 Under the City Council's scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Wards 11, 15, 16, 17 and 18 by 4 per cent, 7 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, while equalling the city average in Ward 19. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Wards 11, 15 and 16, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 2 per cent, 5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. The level of electoral equality in Wards 17, 18 and 19 would deteriorate marginally to vary by 5 per cent, 5 per cent and 1 per cent from the city average in 2005.

93 The Conservative Group proposed a 51-member scheme in which this area would be represented by three three-member wards, Cowley Road, East Oxford and Wood Farm & Lye Valley. It proposed that Cowley Road ward should comprise the remainder of the existing St Clement's ward, and that East Oxford ward should combine the remainder of the existing East ward with the part of the existing South ward to the east of the River Thames, south of Jackdaw Lane and north of Donnington Bridge Road. Under this proposal the northern part of the Donnington Bridge Road area, which is currently in South ward, would be combined with adjoining areas to the east of the River Thames. The Conservative Group proposed that Wood Farm & Lye Valley ward should comprise the parts of the existing Old Marston & Risinghurst and Wood Farm wards to the south of Old Road, and the part of the existing Temple Cowley ward to the north of Horspath Road. It argued that this addresses the existing "anomalous" northern boundary of Temple Cowley ward.

94 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 51-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Cowley Road, East Oxford and Wood Farm & Lye Valley wards by 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

95 Under the Conservative Group's 48-member scheme, it proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Central & St Clement's (as detailed above), East Oxford, New Headington & Wood Farm (as detailed above) and Southfield & Lye Valley. It proposed that East Oxford ward should comprise the north-western part of the existing East ward

and the remainder of the existing St Clement's ward. It proposed that Southfield & Lye Valley ward should comprise the remainder of the existing East and Wood Farm wards, and that part of Temple Cowley ward to the north of Horspath Road.

96 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality in East Oxford, New Headington & Wood Farm and Southfield & Lye Valley wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average by 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, while equalling the city average in Central & St Clement's ward.

97 The Labour Party put forward proposals identical to the City Council's proposals for Wards 11, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19. It supported the division of the St Clement's community into two wards using clearly identifiable boundaries. It also supported the fact that the Divinity Road community would not be divided between wards under these proposals. It argued that the Lye Valley and Cowley areas, to be combined in Ward 16, are distinct communities which share strong road links. It asserted that Ward 18 combined areas which are distinct, but which share strong road and pedestrian/cycle route links. It also considered that the proposed boundaries are "easily identifiable" and avoid splitting roads between wards as much as possible. It argued that Ward 19 offers good levels of electoral equality, represents closely linked communities and uses "clear" boundaries. The Labour Party put forward amended figures for Wards 15 and 16 in order to take account of properties on Town Furze that are contained in Ward 16 rather than in Ward 15. As a result Wards 15 and 16 would each have electoral variances of 6 per cent. This level of electoral equality would improve to vary by 4 per cent and 5 per cent from the city average respectively by 2005.

98 The Liberal Democrats proposed that this area should be represented by three three-member wards, Cowley St John, St Clement's and Wood Farm (as detailed above). They proposed that Cowley St John ward should comprise the majority of East ward, the south-west part of the existing St Clement's ward, and the part of the existing South ward to the east of the rivers Cherwell and Thames. They proposed that St Clement's ward should comprise the part of the existing Central ward to the south of the River Cherwell, the northern edge of the existing East ward and the remainder of the existing St Clement's ward. The Liberal Democrats' alternative proposal for Wood Farm is detailed above.

99 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 45-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Cowley St John and Wood Farm wards by 6 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, while equalling the city average in St Clement's ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in St Clement's ward, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 2 per cent from the city average. The level of electoral equality in Wood Farm ward would improve to vary by 2 per cent from the city average in 2005, while continuing to vary by 6 per cent from the city average in Cowley St John ward.

100 We also received a representation from a local resident who objected to the City Council's consultation proposal, which would divide the Divinity Road area between wards. He asserted that Divinity Road and Southfield Road have "the strongest community identity of any part of Oxford" and should therefore be combined in a single ward.

101 Having decided that the City Council's scheme of 24 two-member wards would best represent the city as a whole, we are limited to the extent to which we can adopt alternative proposals in this area. Also, having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One we have been persuaded that the City Council's proposals for this area offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and would appear to resolve the major issues of concern in this area. The City Council's proposals address the anomaly under which the Donnington Bridge Road area is currently linked with areas to the west of the river instead of those adjoining areas with which it shares community links. The transfer of this area to the east of the river was supported by the Conservative Group, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. The City Council's proposal would also ensure that the Divinity Road area is included in a single ward, as supported by a local resident. We propose that the City Council's proposed wards 11, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 should be named St Clement's, Churchill, Magdalen, Cowley & Lye Valley, Cowley Marsh and Iffley Fields respectively in order to reflect the constituent areas contained in each of the proposed wards and to focus on the Churchill Hospital as the central feature of Ward 15. The Liberal Democrats argued that the abolition of the ward name "East" would help to avoid confusion with the parliamentary constituency of the same name.

102 We propose making a minor amendment to the City Council's proposed Iffley Fields ward in order to address an anomaly whereby they have moved away from using the River Thames as a ward boundary. We consider that the river forms a significant boundary particularly in this area where there is no bridge. We therefore propose transferring the part of the existing South ward to the east of the River Thames to Iffley Fields ward. This area only contains boat houses so our amendment does not affect any electors. Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, on Map 2 and on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Blackbird Leys, Iffley, Littlemore and Temple Cowley wards**

103 The existing wards of Blackbird Leys (comprising Blackbird Leys parish), Iffley, Littlemore (comprising Littlemore parish) and Temple Cowley cover the southern part of the city. Under the current arrangements of a 51-member council the number of electors per councillor varies from the city average by 34 per cent, 2 per cent, 13 per cent and 5 per cent respectively in these four wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in Iffley, Littlemore and Temple Cowley wards, to vary by 4 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent respectively, while improving somewhat in Blackbird Leys ward, to vary by 32 per cent from the city average in 2005.

104 At Stage One the City Council proposed that this area should comprise seven two-member wards. Wards 16 and 18 are detailed above. It proposed that Ward 20 should comprise the part of the existing Iffley ward to the west of Beauchamp Lane, Church Cowley Road, Henley Avenue, Kelburne Road and Rose Hill, the part of Littlemore ward to the north-west of the Eastern By-Pass and Oxford Road, and the part of the existing South ward to the south-west of Cavell Road and Henley Avenue. This ward addresses the existing anomaly under which Rose Hill is divided between wards, and also ensures that Iffley village is retained within a single ward. The City Council stated that the proposed boundaries between Donnington and Iffley and Littlemore and Rose Hill are "clear". Its Ward 21 would comprise the remainder of the existing Iffley ward, less the part to the south of Bartholomew Road, the part of the existing South ward

to the south-east of Cornwallis Road and Henley Avenue, and the remainder of the existing Temple Cowley ward, to the south-west of Garsington, Littlehay and Oxford roads. It argued that this ward combines the “distinct” areas of Florence Park and Cowley, which are linked by the focal point of the Templars Square centre. It argued that both these communities are readily identifiable from surrounding areas. It proposed that Ward 22 should comprise the remainder of Iffley ward and the majority of Littlemore ward, less the part to the north-west of the Eastern By-Pass and Oxford Road, the part to the east of Champion Way, the Eastern By-Pass and school playing field, and the Minchery Farm area. It argued that, while Littlemore is a clearly identifiable community, it is essential to electoral equality that part of an adjoining area be combined with it. It argued that the only option which avoids affecting the representation of adjoining communities is to include in this ward part of the closely connected area of Cowley, to the south of the “clear” boundary of Bartholomew Road. It proposed that Ward 23 should combine the part of the existing Blackbird Leys ward to the south-west of Blackbird Leys Road, Kestrel Crescent, Windale Road and Northfield Brook with the remainder of the existing Littlemore ward. It argued that it is necessary to divide the clear community of Blackbird Leys between wards in the interest of electoral equality. It asserted that this ward combines the “clearly identifiable” adjoining “sub-communities” of Blackbird Leys and Littlemore. Similarly, it proposed that the remainder of Blackbird Leys ward should form Ward 24. It argued that this ward uses clearly defined boundaries.

105 Under the City Council’s scheme for a 48-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Wards 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 by 5 per cent, 4 per cent, 1 per cent, 2 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Ward 16, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 3 per cent from the city average. The level of electoral equality in Wards 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 would deteriorate marginally, to vary by 5 per cent, 2 per cent, 4 per cent, 7 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent from the city average in 2005.

106 Under its 51-member scheme the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys, Cowley, Iffley & Rose Hill and Littlemore. It proposed that Blackbird Leys ward should comprise the north-eastern part of the existing Blackbird Leys ward. It argued that two two-member wards would fit “more easily” with the structure of this area, but it did not consider that there was merit in moving away from the proposed uniform pattern of three-member wards in one area. It proposed a Cowley ward comprising the remainder of Temple Cowley ward and the south-eastern corner of the existing Iffley ward. It proposed that the majority of the existing Iffley ward, together with the Rose Hill area of the existing Littlemore ward, and the remaining western area of the existing South ward should form an Iffley & Rose Hill ward. It argued that this addresses the existing boundary which “arbitrarily” divides the Rose Hill estate. It also ensures that the eastern parts of the existing Iffley ward, which it states are actually parts of Cowley, are combined with adjoining parts of Cowley. It proposed that Littlemore ward should comprise the remainder of the existing Blackbird Leys, Iffley and Littlemore wards.

107 Under the Conservative Group’s scheme for a 51-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys, Cowley, Iffley & Rose Hill and Littlemore wards, by 6 per cent,

6 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Electoral projections were not provided for 2005.

108 Under the Conservative Group's 48-member scheme, it proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys, Cowley, Iffley & Rose Hill and Littlemore. It proposed that Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys ward should comprise the north-eastern part of the existing Blackbird Leys ward. It put forward a Cowley ward comprising the south-eastern corner of Iffley ward and the remainder of the existing Temple Cowley ward. It proposed that Iffley & Rose Hill ward should combine the majority of the existing Iffley ward, the Rose Hill area of the existing Littlemore ward and the Donnington Bridge Road area of the existing South ward. It proposed that Littlemore ward should comprise the western part of the existing Blackbird Leys ward, the southern part of the existing Iffley ward and the majority of the existing Littlemore ward.

109 Under the Conservative Group's scheme for a 48-member council, there would be improved electoral equality in Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys, Cowley and Littlemore wards with the number of electors per councillor in each ward varying from the city average by 1 per cent, while equalling the city average in Iffley & Rose Hill ward.

110 The Labour Party put forward proposals identical to the City Council's proposals for Wards 16 (as detailed above), 18 (as detailed above), 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 . It argued that Ward 20 respects community identities, in particular by addressing the existing "artificial" division of the Rose Hill estate. It asserted that the proposed boundaries of this ward are "clear" and do not divide roads unnecessarily. It argued that Ward 21 combines the two distinct areas of Cowley and Florence Park, which both focus on the shopping area which would form the centre of this area. It considered that Wards 22 and 23 offer the best balance between electoral equality and the representation of community identities in this area, using identifiable boundaries and sub-communities to create wards with reasonable levels of electoral equality. It argued that Ward 24 combines "clearly definable" areas of Blackbird Leys in a ward which addresses the electoral inequalities in the existing Blackbird Leys ward.

111 The Liberal Democrats proposed that this area should be represented by four three-member wards, Blackbird Leys, Iffley, Littlemore & Rose Hill and Temple Cowley. They proposed that Blackbird Leys ward should comprise the majority of the existing Blackbird Leys ward. They put forward an Iffley ward, combining the south-western corner of the existing East ward, the majority of the existing Iffley ward the northern edge of the existing Littlemore ward and the Donnington Bridge Road area of the existing South ward. This ward combines the Littlemore and Rose Hill communities. They proposed that Littlemore ward should comprise the remainder of the existing Littlemore ward and the remainder of the existing Blackbird Leys and Iffley wards. They argued that this warding arrangement is preferable as it ensures that the majority of Blackbird Leys is combined in a single ward. They proposed that Temple Cowley ward should comprise the existing Temple Cowley ward and the south-eastern part of the existing Wood Farm ward. They considered that this ward respects the "discrete" community of Temple Cowley and combines it with the part of the existing Wood Farm ward which is considered to be "Greater Temple Cowley" and shares community links with the Temple Cowley area.

112 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 45-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the city average in Iffley, Littlemore & Rose Hill and Temple Cowley wards by 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, while equalling the city average in Blackbird Leys ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years in Blackbird Leys, Iffley, and Temple Cowley wards, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent from the city average. The level of electoral equality in Littlemore & Rose Hill ward would improve to vary by 3 per cent from the city average in 2005.

113 We also received four representations from local residents opposing the City Council's proposal to combine part of Littlemore parish with part of Blackbird Leys parish. They argued that those parts of Blackbird Leys with which the City Council proposed combining the Sandy Lane West area of Littlemore are different in character. Two of the residents argued that there are "strong ties" among the Littlemore community, while the Sandy Lane West area does not share community links with Blackbird Leys.

114 We have decided that the City Council's scheme of 24 two-member wards would best represent the city as a whole and as a result we are limited to the extent to which we can adopt alternative proposals. Moreover, we consider that the City Council's proposals for this area offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. While its proposals met with a degree of opposition, we note that it has attempted to combine similar communities. It has proposed changes which address anomalies in the existing boundaries of Iffley ward, which were a cause of concern to all the political groups. Under the City Council's proposals the whole of the Rose Hill estate would be combined in a single ward, the parts of the existing Iffley ward which have more in common with Cowley would be combined with adjoining parts of Cowley, and the Iffley and Littlemore village communities would be combined in a single ward.

115 We recognise that we have received a number of representations opposing the City Council's proposal to combine part of Littlemore parish with part of Blackbird Leys parish. However, given that Blackbird Leys parish merits three and a half city councillors overall under a 48-member council, in the interest of electoral equality it is necessary to divide the parish and combine part of it with an adjoining area. The City Council's proposals divide Blackbird Leys into the distinct communities of which it is comprised, and use clearly identifiable boundaries. While we note that it is not ideal to combine part of Littlemore parish with the Greater Leys area of Blackbird Leys parish, we consider that this is the best option available given that this part of Littlemore is geographically separate from the rest of Littlemore. Given the resulting level of electoral equality, we consider that the only comparable alternative would be to combine part of Cowley village with Blackbird Leys. We do not consider that this would offer a better reflection of community representation given that Cowley village is a distinct community, separated from Blackbird Leys by the significant boundary of the Eastern By-Pass. Also we do not consider that the three-member wards proposed for this area would offer improved community representation, given that they would combine greater parts of Blackbird Leys and Littlemore, which have stronger community links elsewhere. However, we would particularly welcome views on our draft recommendations for this area at Stage Three.

116 We suggest that the City Council's proposed wards 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 should be named Cowley & Lye Valley, Cowley Marsh, Iffley & Rose Hill, Templars Square, Littlemore,

Northfield Brook and Blackbird Leys in order to reflect the constituent areas of the proposed wards. Templars Square is the shopping centre which is the focus of the communities combined in the proposed Ward 21.

117 We propose a minor modification to the boundary of the proposed Littlemore ward in order to ensure that the city ward boundary is coterminous with the boundaries of Blackbird Leys and Littlemore parishes. We propose that the part of the proposed Northfield Brook ward comprising Minchery Farm should be transferred to Littlemore ward. This area is the site of the new Oxford United ground and would not affect any electors. Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, on Map 2 and on the large map at the rear of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

118 We received three representations regarding the City Council's electoral cycle. The City Council supported biennial elections so that the electorate would continue to have a regular say in the running of the Council under a scheme of two-member wards. The Conservative Group favoured retaining the existing system of election by thirds "for reasons of voter familiarity and electoral accountability". The Labour Party supported a scheme of biennial elections.

119 We have carefully considered all these representations. While we note that there is support for elections every two years, until such time as the Secretary of State makes an Order under the Local Government Act 2000 we can only continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas. Statutorily, we have no power to recommend a change to biennial elections. We therefore propose no change to the Council's present system of election by thirds.

## **Conclusions**

120 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 51 to 48 members;
- there should be 24 wards;
- the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of seven wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- the boundary between the proposed Headington Hill & Northway and Marston wards should be amended in line with the existing Old Marston parish boundary and to address electoral inequalities;

- the boundary between the proposed Littlemore and Northfield Brook wards should be amended in line with the existing Blackbird Leys and Littlemore parish boundary;
- the part of the proposed Abingdon Road ward to the east of the River Thames should be transferred to the proposed Magdalen ward;
- we have proposed names for each of the 24 wards.

122 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	51	48	51	48
Number of wards	17	24	17	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,006	2,131	2,042	2,169
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	0	2	0

123 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Oxford City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the city average from six to none. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 7 per cent from the average for the city.

**Draft Recommendation**

Oxford City Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inside the back cover of the report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

# Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

124 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 Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Risinghurst & Sandhills to reflect the proposed city wards.

125 The parish of Blackbird Leys is currently served by 15 parish councillors and is unwarded. We received no proposals regarding the parish warding arrangements at Stage One, although the County Council generally supported the parish being warded. As a result of our proposals at city level, we suggest that the parish should be divided into two parish wards, Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys, to be coterminous with those parts of the parish that lie within the proposed city wards of Blackbird Leys and Northfield Brook. Given that our proposals at city level divide the parish into two equally sized wards, we propose increasing the size of the parish council by one, in order to create an even number of parish councillors. We recommend that the proposed parish wards should each be represented by eight councillors in line with their proportion of the parish electorate. We would welcome representations at Stage Three from the Parish Council and other local interested parties regarding our proposals.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Blackbird Leys Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys (each returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed city ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

126 The parish of Littlemore is currently served by 21 councillors and is not warded. As a result of our proposals at city level, we suggest that the parish should be divided into three parish wards, Littlemore, Rose Hill and Sandy Lane West, to be coterminous with the proposed city wards of Littlemore, Iffley & Rose Hill and Northfield Brook respectively. We recommend that the proposed Littlemore parish ward should be represented by 15 councillors, Rose Hill parish ward should be represented by five councillors and Sandy Lane West parish ward should be represented by a single councillor in line with the proportion of the parish electorate in each of the proposed wards.

127 We would welcome representations at Stage Three from the Parish Council and other local interested parties regarding our proposals.

**Draft Recommendation**

Littlemore Parish Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Littlemore (returning 15 councillors), Rose Hill (returning five councillors) and Sandy Lane West (returning one councillor). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed city ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

128 The parish of Risinghurst & Sandhills is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. As a result of our proposals at city level, we suggest that the parish should be divided into three parish wards, Risinghurst, Sandhills and Wood Farm, to be coterminous with the proposed city wards of Quarry & Risinghurst, Barton & Sandhills and Churchill respectively. In order to ensure a fair distribution of parish councillors between the parish wards, we propose increasing the total number of councillors representing the parish to 16. We recommend that the proposed parish wards should be represented by eight, five and three councillors respectively in line with their proportion of the parish electorate.

129 We would welcome representations at Stage Three from the Parish Council and other local interested parties regarding our proposals.

**Draft Recommendation**

Risinghurst & Sandhills Parish Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Risinghurst (returning eight councillors), Sandhills (returning five councillors), and Wood Farm (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed city ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

130 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the city.

**Draft Recommendation**

For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

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

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

## 5 NEXT STEPS

132 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 City Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

133 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Oxford 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)

134 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

### Oxford City Conservative Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure A1: Oxford City Conservative Group's 51-Member Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part); Quarry ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys	Blackbird Leys ward (part)
Central Oxford	Central ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
Cowley	Iffley ward (part); Temple Cowley ward (part)
Cowley Road	East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
East Oxford	East ward (part); South ward; Temple Cowley ward (part)
Iffley & Rose Hill	Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part); South ward (part)
Jericho & West Oxford	West ward (part)
Littlemore	Blackbird Leys ward (part); Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part)
Marston	Marston ward (part); Old Headington & Northway ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part)
New Headington	Quarry ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
North Oxford	Central ward (part); North ward (part)
Old Headington & Northway	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part)
St Aldate's & South Oxford	Central ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
Summertown & Cutteslowe	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part)
Wolvercote & Woodstock Road	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part); Wolvercote ward
Wood Farm & Lye Valley	Temple Cowley ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)

Figure A2: Oxford City Conservative Group's 51-Member Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	3	6,249	2,083	4
2	Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys	3	6,380	2,127	6
3	Central Oxford	3	6,082	2,027	1
4	Cowley	3	6,303	2,101	6
5	Cowley Road	3	6,092	2,031	3
6	East Oxford	3	6,202	2,067	3
7	Iffley & Rose Hill	3	6,064	2,021	1
8	Jericho & West Oxford	3	5,967	1,989	-1%
9	Littlemore	3	6,067	2,022	1
10	Marston	3	5,588	1,863	-7
11	New Headington	3	5,752	1,917	-3
12	North Oxford	3	5,863	1,954	-2
13	Old Headington & Northway	3	5,821	1,940	-2
14	St Aldate's & South Oxford	3	5,897	1,966	-2
15	Summertown & Cutteslowe	3	6,019	2,006	2
16	Wolvercote & Woodstock Road	3	5,959	1,986	-1
17	Wood Farm & Lye Valley	3	5,921	1,974	-2
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>102,226</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,004</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oxford City Conservative Group's submission (no figures were provided for 2005).

*Notes: 1. Due to inaccuracies in the information provided, the total electorate figure differs marginally from the total for 2000 in Figures 2, 3 and A6; however, we would expect this to have a marginal impact on electoral variances.*

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

Figure A3: Oxford City Conservative Group's 48-Member Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part); Quarry ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys	Blackbird Leys ward (part)
Central & St Clement's	Central ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); South ward (part)
Cowley	Iffley ward (part); Temple Cowley ward (part)
East Oxford	East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); South ward (part)
Iffley & Rose Hill	Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part); South ward (part)
Jericho & West Oxford	North ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
Littlemore	Blackbird Leys ward (part); Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part)
Marston	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part)
New Headington & Wood Farm	Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part); Quarry ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
Old Headington & Northway	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part); Quarry ward (part)
St Aldate's & South Oxford	Central ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
Southfield & Lye Valley	East ward (part); South ward (part); Temple Cowley ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)
Summertown & Cutteslowe	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part)
Walton Manor & Norham Manor	Central ward (part); North ward (part)
Wolvercote & Woodstock Road	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part); Wolvercote ward

Figure A4: Oxford City Conservative Group's 48-Member Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst	3	6,372	2,124	-1
2	Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys	3	6,380	2,127	-1
3	Central & St Clement's	3	6,441	2,147	0
4	Cowley	3	6,380	2,127	-1
5	East Oxford	3	6,707	2,236	4
6	Iffley & Rose Hill	3	6,450	2,150	0
7	Jericho & West Oxford	3	6,507	2,169	1
8	Littlemore	3	6,377	2,126	-1
9	Marston	3	6,460	2,153	1
10	New Headington & Wood Farm	3	6,535	2,178	2
11	Old Headington & Northway	3	6,363	2,121	-1
12	St Aldate's & South Oxford	3	6,502	2,167	1
13	Southfield & Lye Valley	3	6,152	2,051	-4
14	Summertown & Cutteslowe	3	6,308	2,103	-2
15	Walton Manor & Norham Manor	3	6,548	2,183	2
16	Wolvercote & Woodstock Road	3	6,361	2,120	-1
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>102,843</b>	–	–
	<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,143</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oxford City Conservative Group's submission (no figures were provided for 2005).

*Notes: 1 Due to inaccuracies in the information provided, the total electorate figure differs marginally from the total for 2000 in Figures 2, 3 and A6; however, we would expect this to have a marginal impact on electoral variances.*

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

## Oxford Liberal Democrat Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure A5: Oxford Liberal Democrat Group's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Barton & Quarry	Headington ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part); Quarry ward (part)
Blackbird Leys	Blackbird Leys ward (part)
Central	Central ward (part); North ward (part)
Cowley St John	East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part); South ward (part)
Headington	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Quarry ward (part)
Iffley	East ward (part); Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part); South ward (part)
Littlemore & Rose Hill	Blackbird Leys ward (part); Iffley ward (part); Littlemore ward (part)
Marston	Headington ward (part); Marston ward (part); Old Marston & Risinghurst ward (part)
St Clement's	Central ward (part); East ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
South	Central ward (part); South ward (part); West ward (part)
Summertown	Cherwell ward (part); North ward (part); Wolvercote ward (part)
Temple Cowley	Temple Cowley ward; Wood Farm ward (part)
West	North ward (part); West ward (part)
Wolvercote	Cherwell ward (part); West ward (part); Wolvercote ward (part)
Wood Farm	Quarry ward (part); Wood Farm ward (part)

Figure A6: Oxford Liberal Democrat Group'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 (%)
1	Barton & Quarry	3	7,135	2,378	5	7,300	2,433	5
2	Blackbird Leys	3	6,849	2,283	0	6,849	2,283	-1
3	Central	3	6,670	2,223	-2	6,709	2,236	-3
4	Cowley St John	3	6,681	2,227	-6	6,681	2,227	-6
5	Headington	3	6,802	2,267	0	7,393	2,464	6
6	Iffley	3	6,627	2,209	-3	6,627	2,209	-5
7	Littlemore & Rose Hill	3	7,107	2,369	4	7,132	2,377	3
8	Marston	3	6,538	2,179	-4	6,570	2,190	-5
9	South	3	6,516	2,172	-4	6,608	2,203	-5
10	St Clement's	3	6,789	2,263	0	6,802	2,267	-2
11	Summertown	3	6,879	2,293	-3	7,451	2,484	5
12	Temple Cowley	3	6,774	2,258	-1	6,774	2,258	-2
13	West	3	6,596	2,199	-3	6,878	2,293	-1
14	Wolvercote	3	7,247	2,416	6	7,347	2,449	6
15	Wood Farm	3	7,094	2,365	4	7,094	2,365	2
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>102,304</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>104,215</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,273</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,316</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oxford City Liberal Democrats' submission.

Notes: 1 Due to inaccuracies in the information provided, the total electorate figure differs marginally from the total for 2005 in Figures 2 and 3; however, we would expect this to have a marginal impact on electoral variances.

2 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. 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.

6 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

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.

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