

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Dacorum in Hertfordshire

Further electoral review

November 2005

Translations and other formats

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Executive summary

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

Current electoral arrangements

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

Every review is conducted in four stages:

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

Submissions received

During Stage One we received 17 submissions. The Borough Council and Dacorum Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) submitted borough-wide schemes. The Dacorum Labour Group proposed a scheme for Hemel Hempstead town. We received submissions from a local political party, five parish and town councils regarding their respective wards, and eight representations from local councillors, two residents associations and local residents.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The Council has forecast an increase in electorate of approximately 1% between 2004 and 2009, most of which is anticipated in Apsley ward. Having discussed these figures with the council officers, seen the development which is currently under construction and received details of how the Borough Council calculated the figures we are satisfied that they currently provide the most accurate estimation of the 2009 electorate of Dacorum, and we have used them when making our recommendations.

Council size

During Stage One we received proposals from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group for council sizes of 52, 51 and 53 respectively. Both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats provided good council size argument. However, after further investigation, we considered that the Liberal Democrats proposed council size of 51 would provide for the best representation in the district. We therefore propose to decrease the council size by one to 51 members.

General analysis

We are proposing recommendations based largely on the existing arrangements using a combination of the proposals of the Borough Council, Liberal Democrats and the Dacorum Labour Group as well as some of our own amendments in order to form wards that secure good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries. We are recommending 25 wards in the borough; three single-member, 18 two-member and four three-member wards.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Dacorum contained in the report. We welcome views from all parts of the community and believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by 6 March 2006. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Dacorum and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decision regarding the existing Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards and Tring and Kings Langley parishes to be difficult judgements between our statutory criteria. We would welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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This report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Adeyfield East	2	Part of Adeyfield East ward
2	Adeyfield West	2	Part of Adeyfield West ward; part of Adeyfield East ward; part of Corner Hall ward
3	Apsley & Corner Hall	3	Part of Apsley ward; part of Bennetts End ward; part of Corner Hall ward
4	Ashridge	1	(Unchanged) Ashridge ward (the parishes of Little Gaddesden and Nettleden with Potten End)
5	Belswains & Bennetts End	2	Part of Bennetts End ward; part of Corner Hall ward
6	Berkhamsted Castle	2	Part of Berkhamsted Castle ward (proposed Berkhamsted Castle parish ward of Berkhamsted parish)
7	Berkhamsted East	2	Berkhamsted East ward (part of proposed Berkhamsted East parish ward of Berkhamsted parish); part of Berkhamsted Castle ward (part of proposed Berkhamsted East parish ward of Berkhamsted parish); part of Berkhamsted West ward (part of proposed Berkhamsted East parish ward of Berkhamsted parish).
8	Berkhamsted West	2	Part Berkhamsted West ward (proposed Berkhamsted West parish ward of Berkhamsted parish)
9	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	(Unchanged) Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield ward (the parishes of Bovingdon, Flaunden and Chipperfield and an unparished area)
10	Boxmoor & Hammerfield	2	Part of Boxmoor ward; part of Hemel Hempstead Central ward; part of Apsley ward
11	Chaulden & Green End	2	Part of Boxmoor ward; part of Chaulden & Shrubhill ward; part of Warners End ward
12	Gadebridge & Bury	2	Part of Gadebridge ward; part of Hemel Hempstead Central ward
13	Grove Hill & Piccotts End	3	Grove Hill ward; part of Hemel Hempstead Central ward; part of Adeyfield East ward; part of Gadebridge ward

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

Notes:

1. The borough comprises 16 parishes and the unparished area of Hemel Hempstead.
2. The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
3. We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors but are listed in this table.

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Adeyfield East	2	3,965	1,983	-5	4,022	2,011	-4
2	Adeyfield West	2	4,061	2,031	-3	3,983	1,992	-5
3	Apsley & Corner Hall	3	5,927	1,976	-5	6,699	2,233	6
4	Ashridge	1	2,166	2,166	4	2,168	2,168	3
5	Belswains & Bennetts End	2	4,428	2,214	6	4,433	2,217	5
6	Berkhamsted Castle	2	4,567	2,284	10	4,500	2,250	7
7	Berkhamsted East	2	4,431	2,216	6	4,467	2,234	6
8	Berkhamsted West	2	4,149	2,075	0	4,399	2,200	4
9	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	6,331	2,110	1	6,262	2,087	-1
10	Boxmoor & Hammerfield	2	4,281	2,141	3	4,347	2,174	3

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Chaulden & Green End	2	4,310	2,155	3	4,253	2,127	1
12	Gadebridge & Bury	2	4,198	2,099	1	4,198	2,099	0
13	Grove Hill & Piccotts End	3	5,958	1,986	-5	5,871	1,957	-7
14	Hemel Central	2	3,928	1,964	-6	4,133	2,067	-2
15	Highfield	2	3,928	1,964	-6	4,037	2,019	-4
16	Kings Langley	2	3,889	1,945	-7	3,903	1,952	-7
17	Leverstock Green	3	6,802	2,267	9	6,721	2,240	6
18	Nash Mills	1	2,098	2,098	1	2,123	2,123	1
19	Northchurch	1	2,191	2,191	5	2,220	2,220	5
20	Tring Central	2	3,978	1,989	-5	3,974	1,987	-6
21	Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton	2	4,041	2,021	-3	4,027	2,014	-4
22	Tring West & Rural	2	3,944	1,972	-5	3,979	1,990	-5

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Warners End	2	4,176	2,088	0	4,149	2,075	-1
24 Watling	2	4,136	2,068	-1	4,159	2,080	-1
25 Woodhall Farm	2	4,357	2,179	5	4,345	2,173	3
Totals	51	106,238	-	-	107,372	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,083	-	-	2,105	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Dacorum, on which we are now consulting.

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

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

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

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

5 In carrying out our work, The Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework¹. This refers to the need to:

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

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

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

7 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for any parish and town councils in the borough. We do not in these reviews consider changes to the external boundaries of areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

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

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

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

17 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 29 November 2005 and will end on 6 March 2006, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation about them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report The Boundary Committee has had regard to:

- The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:

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

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

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

2 Current electoral arrangements

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

22 If the existing arrangements remained, seven wards would be expected to have an electoral variance of over 10% by 2009. Apsley ward would be expected to have 84% more electors than the district average by 2009. Therefore, having considered these levels of electoral inequality which are forecast to worsen over time, The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee for England to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Dacorum Borough Council on 12 February 2005.

23 The borough contains 16 parishes, but Hemel Hempstead town itself is unparished. Hemel Hempstead town comprises 57% of the borough's total electorate.

24 The electorate of the borough is 106,238 (December 2004). The Borough Council presently has 52 members who are elected from 27 wards, 21 of which are relatively urban and the remainder being predominantly rural. Four wards are represented by three members, 17 by two members and six by a single member.

25 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,043 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,065 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to the fact that more development was undertaken than was expected, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 27 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and one ward by more than 30%.

26 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough, presently, 106,238, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, currently 52. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor is currently 2,043. In Apsley ward, currently represented by one councillor, there are currently 2,988 electors, 46% more than the current borough average.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Dacorum borough

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Adeyfield East	2	4,405	2,203	8	4,462	2,231	8
2	Adeyfield West	2	3,702	1,851	-9	3,624	1,812	-12
3	Aldbury & Wigginton	1	1,862	1,862	-9	1,847	1,847	-11
4	Apsley	1	2,988	2,988	46	3,804	3,804	84
5	Ashridge	1	2,166	2,166	6	2,168	2,168	5
6	Bennetts End	2	4,332	2,166	6	4,352	2,176	5
7	Berkhamsted Castle	2	4,855	2,428	19	4,855	2,428	18
8	Berkhamsted East	2	4,137	2,069	1	4,108	2,054	-1
9	Berkhamsted West	2	4,155	2,078	2	4,403	2,202	7
10	Bovingdon, Flaunden & Chipperfield	3	6,331	2,110	3	6,262	2,087	1
11	Boxmoor	2	4,358	2,179	7	4,348	2,174	5

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Chaulden & Shrubhill	2	3,861	1,931	-6	3,804	1,902	-8
13	Corner Hall	2	4,392	2,196	7	4,333	2,167	5
14	Gadebridge	2	3,894	1,947	-5	3,894	1,947	-6
15	Grove Hill	3	5,744	1,915	-6	5,657	1,886	-9
16	Hemel Hempstead Central	2	3,923	1,962	-4	4,188	2,094	1
17	Highfield & St Pauls	3	5,272	1,757	-14	5,397	1,799	-13
18	Kings Langley	2	3,889	1,945	-5	3,903	1,952	-5
19	Leverstock Green	3	5,445	1,815	-11	5,364	1,788	-13
20	Nash Mills	1	2,098	2,098	3	2,123	2,123	3
21	Northchurch	1	2,191	2,191	7	2,220	2,220	8
22	Tring Central	2	3,849	1,925	-6	3,870	1,935	-6
23	Tring East	1	2,104	2,104	3	2,063	2,063	0
24	Tring West	2	4,148	2,074	2	4,200	2,100	2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Warners End	2	3,699	1,850	-9	3,674	1,837	-11
26 Watling	2	4,136	2,068	1	4,159	2,080	1
27 Woodhall	2	4,302	2,151	5	4,290	2,145	4
Totals	52	106,238	-	-	107,372	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,043	-	-	2,065	-

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

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

3 Submissions received

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

28 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met with officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their cooperation and assistance. We received 17 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Dacorum Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of Borough Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Dacorum Borough Council

29 Dacorum Borough Council (the Borough Council) proposed a council of 52 members, the same as at present, serving 29 wards, compared to the existing 27. Its scheme was based on a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards. The Borough Council did not provide any community identity argument for its wards.

Political groups

30 The Dacorum Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) proposed a council of 51 members, one less than at present, serving 25 wards compared to the existing, 27 based on a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards. It provided some argument to justify its proposed wards. Its proposal differed from that of the Borough Council in the town areas, but was the same in the rural areas.

31 The Labour Group on the Borough Council proposed a council size of 53, one more than at present. It submitted a partial scheme, covering the Hemel Hempstead area of Dacorum, based on a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards. Its proposal varied from both the Borough Council's and the Liberal Democrats'.

32 Kings Langley Labour Party submitted a proposal regarding the parish warding arrangements of Kings Langley Parish. It considered that the existing parish warding arrangements should be retained. However, it also proposed an alternative arrangement if we did not consider the existing arrangements to be satisfactory.

Parish and town councils

33 Representations were received from four parish and one town council. Northchurch Parish Council considered that Northchurch ward should not be combined in a ward with Berkhamsted, and that the existing arrangements for the ward should be retained. Tring Town Council put forward alternative warding arrangements for the town of Tring and Aldbury & Wigginton that were the same as the Liberal Democrats for the area. It also considered that any parish wards should be coterminous with the new borough wards. Aldbury Parish Council considered that it should not be joined with Tring East ward, and objected to any proposals to do

so. Kings Langley Parish Council put forward proposals for alternative parish warding arrangements within the Kings Langley parish. Markyate Parish Council did not want to make any comments at this stage.

Other representations

34 A further eight representations were received from three Councillors, one Neighbourhood Association and four local residents. Councillor Jameson (Tring Town Council) opposed proposals to combine Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards and submitted a petition to this effect. Councillor Anderson (Kings Langley ward) considered that the existing Kings Langley ward should be retained and proposed new parish warding for the parish. Councillor Stevens (Berkhamsted East parish ward of Berkhamsted Parish) proposed the same amendments for Berkhamsted as the Liberal Democrats.

35 Warners End Neighbourhood Association considered that the community of Warners End should be acknowledged in a three-member ward. Grovehill Neighbourhood Association considered that the existing Grove Hill ward should be retained. Local resident, Mr Harris considered that Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards should be combined to form a two-member ward. Local resident, Mr Standen considered that Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards should not be combined. Local resident, Mrs Taylor submitted proposals for new parish warding arrangements for Kings Langley Parish.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

36 Before finalising our recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Dacorum we invite views on our initial thoughts as expressed in these draft recommendations. We welcome comments from all those interested relating to the number of councillors, proposed ward boundaries, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decision regarding our draft two-member Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats) to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. This was due to the conflicting views received from local interested parties during Stage One. In this case, we have sought to achieve the best levels of electoral equality, in the absence of strong evidence reflecting the other two criteria. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

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

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

38 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

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

40 If electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

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

Electorate figures

42 As part of the previous review of Dacorum borough, the Borough Council forecast an increase in the electorate of just under 2% between 1996 and 2001. The actual increase was just over 1%. Between 2001 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by just under 2%. There has only been significant growth in Apsley and Berkhamsted Castle wards. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 106,238 to 107,372 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. It expects most of the growth to be in Apsley ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to local development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

43 We recognise that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

44 Dacorum Borough Council presently has 52 members. The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing council size of 52, considering that '52 elected members are necessary to achieve effective local democracy while preserving the local communities that exist'. It acknowledged that this view was not supported by all members of the Council, and that both the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups had proposed alternative council sizes.

45 The Borough Council stated that it had consulted on this issue with the whole council and that 'it was the majority opinion that a decrease in council size may be possible, if it helped to tackle the electoral inequalities that existed'. But it considered that 'any such reduction should be minimal' and anticipated 'a council size of 50-52 members' as the most appropriate. The Borough Council held the opinion that due to the rising population of the borough, and therefore increasing electorate, under the existing council size each councillor would represent a larger electorate than at present. It therefore considered that any reduction in council size would mean councillors representing a greater electorate and would therefore 'place unreasonable demands on members'.

46 It also compared its councillor elector ratio to its neighbouring local authorities, claiming that it 'already has a higher number of electors per councillor than many of its "nearest neighbour" authorities'. It did, however, acknowledge that this is not something The Boundary Committee considers when forming decisions on council size.

47 The Borough Council outlined the new system of governance that it had adopted in 2001. The Cabinet consists of the Leader and seven councillors who are each assigned a portfolio. The Borough Council went on to describe its structure, referring to councillors' membership on overview and scrutiny committees and task and finish groups, stating that the average councillor is a member of five committees'. It

detailed meetings attended, and said that the Borough Council overview and scrutiny committees held approximately 133 meetings in the last year, excluding task and finish groups.

48 It also stated that, as a part of the changing role and operation of the council, 'there has been development of more extensive partnership working with other agencies', such as Hertfordshire County Council on the Dacorum Joint Highways Panel and local health agencies on the Dacorum Joint Health Scrutiny Committee. It considered that reducing the council size would also 'restrict efforts to contribute positively to these forums and foster the partnerships that will deliver benefits to the local area'.

49 As part of its consultation with members on council size, the Borough Council conducted a short questionnaire to attain further information on members workload. Most respondents felt that they spent over 16 hours a week undertaking councillor duties, with the majority claiming that the demands placed on them had increased in the last year. However, only 15 of the 52 councillors responded to this questionnaire.

50 The Borough Council concluded by stating that even a slight reduction in council size would necessitate 'boundary amendments that were to the detriment of local communities'. It did not consider that any possible improvements to electoral equality were 'sufficient justification' for this, and considered that a council of 52 members, would result in 'minimal disruption [...] to established wards and communities'.

51 The Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in council size of one, to 51. The Liberal Democrats stated that it had examined the distribution of councillors in relation to the size of the projected electorate and considered that a council size of 51 would provide the best fit between Hemel Hempstead and the parished areas in the borough. It considered that its proposal 'provides for a near perfect representation between the two areas'.

52 The Liberal Democrats also explained the council's structure under the leader and cabinet system adopted in 2001 outlining similar points to the Borough Council. It stated that Cabinet members do not usually sit on any other committee and usually meet once a month, although 'it has been known to meet more frequently where a specific issue has made it necessary'. It discussed the four overview and scrutiny committees each with a membership of 11 councillors, that meet every eight weeks. It noted that this could sometimes be more frequent. The Liberal Democrats also gave details of regulatory committees and the number of councillors these affect and the frequency of meetings held. It highlighted the fact that the Appeals Committee meetings are often held during the day and many councillors 'are unable to attend due to work commitments'.

53 They also highlighted that 'the Independent Advisory Panel On Members' Remuneration of May 2001 concluded that it was appropriate for non-executive councillors (of which there are currently 45) to put in 13.3 hours per week', and it therefore considered that 'reducing the non-executive members to 44 would mean an increase in work of 2% to 13.6 hours per week on average' which they considered to be a 'minimal' increase in workload.

54 They concluded by arguing that ‘there is a feeling of disenfranchisement among non-executive members’ because of the new cabinet system, not lack of workload, and therefore ‘the reduction of one member overall will not have any significant bearing on the council’s management’.

55 The Dacorum Labour Group considered that a council size of 43-45 members could ‘effectively manage the business of the council.’ However, it acknowledged that such a reduction would ‘create problems of preserving local communities and representation’. It therefore proposed a council size of 53, an increase of one member, which it considered ‘best enables ward boundaries to reflect local communities on an equitable basis’. The Labour party did not put forward any further argument or rationale behind this proposal.

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

57 Combined with this evidence, we examined distribution of councillors across the borough, compared with the distribution of electorate, in order to see which council size provides the best fit between Hemel Hempstead, and the remainder of the borough. From this it was possible to see that a council size of 51 produces a better allocation of councillors between the areas and therefore a better overall level of electoral equality in Hemel Hempstead rather than a council size of 52. The differing council sizes would only affect Hemel Hempstead, as under the Borough Council’s proposal it would be allocated 30 councillors and under the Liberal Democrats’ proposal, 29 councillors, therefore the councillor allocation would make no difference to the rest of the borough. We also noted the council’s comments that the majority considered a small reduction in council size may improve electoral variances, and that if a reduction was made it should be minimal. Therefore we are proposing to adopt the Liberal Democrats’ council size of 51.

58 It is the case that electoral equality is difficult to achieve where areas are not allocated the correct number of councillors. Therefore, on the basis of producing a better allocation of councillors (and hence higher levels of electoral equality) across the borough, we considered that a council size of 51 provided the most appropriate council size. Such an approach ensures that the constituent areas have the correct number of councillors that the electorate is entitled to. A council size of 51 (a reduction of one) would allow us to achieve greater levels of electoral equality across the borough and in Hemel Hempstead in particular. We therefore consider that it would be inappropriate to retain or increase the council size.

59 Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral equality

60 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects The Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. Therefore, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where inadequate justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

61 In the absence of any strong community identity argument or evidence we have sought to improve electoral equality in Dacorum. The Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group appear to have taken the approach of using the existing wards as a starting point and making amendments to these in order to improve electoral equality. Similarly, we have used the existing wards as a starting point and improved upon them as far as electoral equality is concerned while having regard for communities. Because of the lack of strong evidence, we have looked to improve electoral equality even in those areas where the existing arrangements provide electoral variances under 10% of the district average. Therefore, in the urban areas in particular, we have made amendments to the existing ward boundaries and in one rural area in the west of the borough in order to improve electoral equality.

62 The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough 106,238 (existing electorate), by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 51 under our draft proposals. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,083 currently, and 2,105 by 2009.

General analysis

63 Our draft recommendations are a combination of the Borough Council, Liberal Democrats, the Labour Group and our own proposals, based on the existing wards in order to form wards that secure good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries. All the proposed schemes suggested some boundary amendments to the existing wards in the urban area of Hemel Hempstead. We also made amendments in Berkhamsted and Tring as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We did not receive any substantial argument to maintain the existing ward arrangements. We have therefore, in the most part, looked to improve on electoral equality within the borough. We propose retaining the existing rural wards as proposed by the Borough Council and Liberal Democrats as these provide good levels of electoral equality and it is not possible to improve on them without dividing small villages

which we consider to be an unsuitable approach given the levels of electoral equality achieved.

64 We received a general lack of argument for the proposed wards. The Borough Council provided no argument for its wards, whilst the Liberal Democrats and Labour Group did provide some, although it was not always compelling. We therefore sought to improve upon the levels of electoral equality.

65 In Hemel Hempstead we have used the A-Roads that run through the town as a means to divide the town into four distinct areas. We consider that these provide strong boundaries and recognise existing communities. We also note that these were used in the most part in the submissions we received for the town.

66 We received alternative parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Kings Langley and Tring. We did not consider that any of the proposals were supported by compelling evidence, and are therefore proposing to retain the existing arrangements. However, we would request that local people, including the Borough Council write to us at Stage Three with their opinions of the proposals put to us. Further details of these can be seen in the Parish electoral arrangements section of this report.

67 We are recommending 25 wards in the borough; three single-member wards, 18 two-member wards and four three-member wards. In the urban areas we have proposed small boundary amendments to all but one of the existing wards to achieve better levels of electoral equality. Although there was a lack of substantive evidence in the submissions we received, we have taken account of the issues of community identity where possible. We have recommended one ward Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton that combines urban and rural areas because this was locally proposed, and is similar to another ward in the area (Tring West & Rural) and we consider the argument in favour of the ward outweighed that in opposition to it at this stage.

68 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by these proposals.

Warding arrangements

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

- a Grove Hill and Woodhall wards (page 31)
- b Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield & St Pauls and Hemel Hempstead Central wards (page 32)
- c Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards (page 34)
- d Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards (page 36)
- e Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards (page 39)
- f Tring Central, Tring East, Tring West and Aldbury & Wigginton wards (page 40)

g Ashridge, Bovington, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards (page 42)

70 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Grove Hill and Woodhall wards

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

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

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

74 The Labour Group proposed the same wards as the Liberal Democrats, but proposed to name these wards Woodhall and Grove Hill. It considered that Grove Hill is a 'natural community' and that 'to divide the ward, as proposed by the Council's submission would create an artificial division.'

75 Grovehill Neighbourhood Association considered that the existing arrangement for Grove Hill ward should be retained. She stated that 'it has well defined boundaries with shops and community facilities [...] it forms an area for local working [...] and] the church also uses Grove Hill as a distinct area in which to organise its work.'

76 We carefully considered the options put to us for this area. As discussed in the 'council size' section of this report, we are proposing a reduction of one in council size from 52 to 51 members. Under a council size of 51 the Borough Council's proposed Grove Hill and Grove Hill West wards would have electoral variances of 12% and 7% fewer electors than the borough average by 2009, respectively. We considered that as the Borough Council had not submitted any argument for its proposed wards we could not justify a variance of 12% when an alternative existed. We noted the Liberal Democrats' and the Labour Group's argument to include Piccotts End in the existing Grove Hill ward, and given the lack of evidence to suggest that these two areas could not be combined in the same ward, and the fact that there are good road links between the areas, we are adopting this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. We also note that the addition of the 14 properties from Adeyfield East ward breaches Redbourn Road, which we note is a strong dividing boundary. However, this was proposed in three of the submissions we received for the area and on closer inspection we consider that these properties would be better placed in Grove Hill ward as they face towards this ward rather than the industrial estate behind. We also considered the argument put forward by Ms Fisher and we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposal would not affect the community that exists in the current ward. We are therefore adopting the Liberal Democrats' and Labour Groups, Grove Hill & Piccotts End ward.

77 We are, however, adopting the Borough Council's proposed Woodhall Farm Ward for similar reasons as the Redbourn Road amendment. We consider that the properties on Three Cherry Trees Road in Adeyfield East ward would be better placed away from the industrial estate to which they face under the existing arrangements. We consider that this improves electoral equality while also providing strong boundaries in the area.

78 We consider that these amendments will still reflect the communities. Our proposed Grove Hill & Piccotts End and Woodhall Farm wards are expected to have electoral variances within 7% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Grove Hill & Piccotts End and Woodhall Farm wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

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

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

80 We received three submissions in relation to these wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party. The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing Adeyfield East ward with the exception of the areas it proposed to transfer into Grove Hill and Woodhall Farm wards as detailed above. It proposed to transfer part of Highfield & St Pauls ward into Adeyfield West

ward, the area to the south west of Highfield & St Pauls ward bounded by Randall Park, Cattsdell and the existing ward boundaries of Hemel Hempstead Central and Adeyfield West wards. The Borough Council proposed that this ward be named Adeyfield West & St Pauls. It therefore proposed that the remainder of Highfield & St Pauls ward form a two-member ward to be named Highfield. The Borough Council also proposed to retain the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward, but to rename it Central ward. The Borough Council's proposed Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West & St Pauls, Highfield and Central wards would have 6%, 9%, 10% and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009, respectively (under a council size of 52).

81 The Liberal Democrats considered this to be the eastern central part of Hemel Hempstead. It stated that the existing Adeyfield East and Adeyfield West wards could be combined to make one ward, but considered that 'this would clearly be too large.' It considered therefore that as the 'community is indeed that of Adeyfield [...] the actual boundary need only be drawn for numerical purposes'. Therefore the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring properties bounded by the north of The Reiths Fields, Everest Way and behind the properties of Adeyfield Gardens from Adeyfield East ward into the existing Adeyfield West ward. It also proposed a further amendment to Adeyfield East ward through the transfer of the 14 properties from Redbourn Road as noted previously. The Liberal Democrats stated that if we were not minded to accept its proposal it would support that of the Labour Group.

82 The Liberal Democrats considered that the existing Hemel Hempstead Central ward is 'clumsy' and groups a number of 'identifiable communities.' It proposed a new Hemel Central ward comprising of polling district AAC and the remainder of polling district AAA (given the amendment discussed above). It also proposed transferring the housing cul-de-sac between Fletcher Way and Smithfield Road and also part of polling district ABC (except properties east of Baylie Lane) from Highfield & St Pauls into its proposed Hemel Central ward. Its proposed Highfield ward would retain the existing boundaries with the exception of the amendment mentioned above. The Liberal Democrats proposed Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Highfield and Hemel Central wards would have 3%, 6% and 7% less and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009, respectively.

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

84 We carefully considered the proposals for this area. We note the Liberal Democrats' comments about Adeyfield being one area, and that therefore the boundary need only be drawn for numerical purposes. We are proposing to adopt the Labour Group's proposed amendment between these two wards combined with the amendments outlined previously for Adeyfield East ward. We consider that the Labour Group's proposal takes a more identifiable area and provides for a more

identifiable boundary than that proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We also note that these amendments provide better electoral equality between these two wards. We are basing our Hemel Central and Highfield wards on those proposed by the Liberal Democrats as we consider that these facilitate better electoral equality elsewhere in Hemel Hempstead, combined with a further amendment of our own to improve electoral equality. We propose to leave the area north of Queensway that the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring to Hemel Central ward in our proposed Highfield ward. We note that this provides better levels of electoral equality. Our proposed Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Hemel Central and Highfield wards are expected to have electoral variances within 5% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for these wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards

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

86 We received four submissions in relation to Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Group and Warners End Neighbourhood Association. The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing two-member Gadebridge ward. It proposed transferring the area to the west of Hollybush Lane into the existing Warners End ward from Chaulden & Shrubhill ward to create a two-member Warners End ward. It also proposed to transfer the Grove Road, Morland Road and Cangles Close areas from Boxmoor ward into its proposed Chaulden & Shrubhill ward. Both its proposed Chaulden & Shrubhill and Boxmoor wards would be represented by two members. The Borough Council's proposed Boxmoor, Chaulden & Shrubhill, Gadebridge and Warners End wards are expected to have 2% more and 9%, 6% and 7% less electors per councillor than the borough average by 2009, respectively (under a council size of 52).

87 The Liberal Democrats considered that Gadebridge is a 'clearly defined area.' However, it noted that Gadebridge Court is 'separated from the main part of the ward'. It considered that Gadebridge Court has 'a lot in common' with the Bury Road area in Hemel Hempstead Central ward. It therefore proposed to include an area between Bury Road and Cemmas Court Road and Cemmas Meadow into its two-member Gadebridge & Bury ward in order to improve electoral equality and represent community identity.

88 The Liberal Democrats described this area as the western part of the town. It proposed moving the western boundary of Gadebridge ward in order to allow those houses on Warners End Road opposite the school in Boxmoor ward to be included in its proposed Warners End ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed to transfer the area north of Long Chaulden from Chaulden & Shrubhill ward into Warners End

ward. It also proposed transferring those properties along Northridge Way, south of Barberry Road from Warners End ward into its proposed Chaulden & Green End ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed to transfer the Green End area of Boxmoor ward into its proposed two-member Chaulden & Green End ward. It considered that the Green End area is an 'area in its own right' and would therefore create 'a numerically acceptable [two-] member ward' that would recognise 'the individuality of both areas.' It considered that 'a similar course of action has been taken' in its proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward. Its proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward would comprise the remainder of Boxmoor ward with the remainder of polling district AAB from Hemel Central ward. It also proposed to move Hemel Hempstead Railway station into its Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield, Chaulden & Green End, Gadebridge & Bury and Warners End wards are expected to have 4% more, 3% less, 4% more and 2% less electors than the borough average by 2009 (under a council size of 51).

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

90 Warners End Neighbourhood Association considered that a new three-member ward for Warners End should be created to reflect what 'has been historically associated' with Warners End. From the description given such a ward would be similar to that proposed by the Labour Group. It considered that an area 'east of Northridge Way [would be] needed to reflect the electorate required to meet you [sic] criteria.'

91 We have carefully considered all the representations received for this area of Hemel Hempstead. We acknowledge Warners End Neighbourhood Association's point, and how this related to what was proposed by the Labour Group. However, as we are recommending a council size of 51 for the borough, and the Labour Group's proposal is based on a council size of 53, it is not possible to adopt its proposals without creating wards with variances that we do not consider to be justified. Also the Labour Group's proposal allocates an additional councillor to this western section of Hemel Hempstead, which it is not entitled to under a council size of 51. The Labour Group's proposed three-member Warners End & Shrubhill ward would only be entitled to two councillors creating a ward with an electoral variance of 31% by 2009. We do not consider that this is acceptable given the level of argument put to us and when alternative warding arrangements exist that provide better levels of electoral equality.

92 Due to the fact that we have removed the area west of the A4146 Road from Hemel Central ward it has not been possible to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for this area. We have therefore based our recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposals and made a number of amendments of our own in order to improve electoral equality. We are proposing to retain the boundary between Gadebridge and Warners End wards. We note however that an unpopulated area has been moved in order to attach the boundary to strong ground detail. We considered the Labour Group's proposal to move Knights Orchard, Little Catherells and Sandals Spring into Gadebridge ward, however, we consider that the access links are better into Warners End ward and therefore are not proposing to make this amendment. We are therefore, also not proposing to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals to include the properties along Warners End Road from the existing Boxmoor ward into our proposed Gadebridge & Bury ward, as we consider that the Warners End Road provides a good boundary. We are proposing to transfer the Paddock Way area of housing from the Liberal Democrats proposed Chaulden & Green End ward into our proposed Warners End ward as we consider this provides a more identifiable boundary. We are also proposing to retain the properties along Northridge Way in Warners End ward unlike in the Liberal Democrats' proposal to improve electoral equality. To improve electoral equality we are proposing the area south of and including Astley Road, that the Liberal Democrats proposed to be transferred into Gadebridge & Bury ward, remain in Boxmoor & Hammerfield ward. In order to further improve electoral equality between Boxmoor & Hammerfield and Chaulden & Green End wards, we are proposing to transfer the Counters End area from the existing Boxmoor ward into our proposed Chaulden & Green End ward. Each of these amendments provides better electoral equality.

93 Our proposed Boxmoor & Hammerfield, Chaulden & Green End, Gadebridge & Bury and Warners End wards are expected to have electoral variances within 3% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for these wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

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

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

95 We received three submissions in relation to Apsley, Bennetts End, Corner Hall, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards during Stage One, from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group. The Borough Council proposed to retain the existing two-member Corner Hall ward. It also proposed to retain the existing boundaries for Apsley ward, however, it proposed making this a two-member ward (under the existing arrangements the ward is represented by one councillor). According to its mapping the Borough Council proposed to transfer those unparished areas from Nash Mills ward along Chambersbury Lane (225-253 odd

numbers), Barnacers Road and Hill Common, however, in its figures it only refers to the properties along Chambersbury Lane, and does not specify which part. We asked Officers at the Borough Council to confirm whether the mapping or figures were correct. We have not had a response regarding this matter.

96 The Borough Council proposed a two-member Leverstock Green ward comprising polling districts ALB, ALC and part of ALA (Tile Kiln Crescent, Brickfield Avenue, Kiln Close and The Wayside). It proposed an additional single-member ward in this area to be named Tile Kiln comprising the remainder of polling district ALA and part of polling district AQA from the existing Bennetts End ward (Rant Meadow, Three Corners, Flatfield Road, Goldcroft and Peascroft Road). It proposed a two-member Bennetts End ward comprising the existing Bennetts End ward less the area from polling district AQA transferred into its proposed Tile Kiln ward, and the addition of the Chambersbury Lane area transferred from Nash Mills ward.

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

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

99 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Apsley & Corner Hall, Leverstock Green, Belswains & Nash Mills and Bennetts End & Northend wards would have 6%, 3%, 6% and 6% more electors than the borough average by 2009.

100 The Labour Group proposed a two-member Apsley ward. It proposed to remove the area to the west of and including Stratford Way south of London Road from the existing Apsley ward into its proposed Boxmoor ward. It also proposed to transfer Cedar Walk and Corner Hall Avenue from Corner Hall ward into its proposed Apsley ward. However, this amendment would create a detached ward as it does not include properties along Lawn Lane that attach the areas. It proposed a two-member Corner Hall ward based on the existing ward less Cedar Walk and Corner Hall Avenue. The Labour Group proposed a two-member Leverstock Green Village ward comprising

polling districts ALB, ALC and BAB as well as an area of polling district BA (Linsey Close, Longdean Park, Highclere Drive, Silverthorn Drive and The Leas). The Labour Group considered that 'Leverstock Green is a distinct community with its own village association'. The Labour Group also proposed a single-member Tile Kiln ward comprising polling district ALA and part of the existing Bennetts End ward (Rant Meadow, Three Corners, Flatfield Road, Goldcroft and Peascroft Road). It proposed a three-member Bennetts End ward comprising the remainder of Bennetts End and Nash Mills wards.

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

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

103 We considered the proposals to use Nash Mills parish boundary as the ward boundary, however, we do not consider that the parish boundary is particularly clear as it crosses through properties. We also note that the Labour Group's proposals for this ward would involve parish warding. We note that the existing ward provides excellent electoral equality with only 1% more electors than the borough average by 2009. Bearing these factors in mind we were reluctant to move away from the existing ward particularly in light of the limited evidence in support of any of the proposed wards in this area. We are therefore proposing to retain the existing Nash Mills ward as part of our draft recommendations. Because of our proposal for Nash Mills ward it has not been possible to adopt any of the proposals for the rest of the wards in this area, as they rely on altering Nash Mills ward. As mentioned previously it has also been difficult to incorporate the Borough Council's and Labour Group's proposals as they are based on different council sizes. Therefore we have based our draft recommendations for our proposed Leverstock Green and Belswains & Bennetts End wards on those proposed by the Liberal Democrats with some of our own amendments to improve electoral equality. We are proposing to transfer the area north of Peascroft Road and Leas Road from Belswains & Bennetts End ward into the existing Leverstock Green ward, to create a three-member Leverstock Green ward.

104 We acknowledge that this ward may cover more area than that just known as Leverstock Green and we would therefore welcome comments on the naming of this ward during Stage Three. Our proposed two-member Belswains & Bennetts End

ward would comprise the remainder of Bennetts End ward and Corner Hall ward. Again we would welcome comments on the naming of this ward at Stage Three.

105 Our proposed Apsley & Corner Hall, Belswains & Bennetts End, Leverstock Green and Nash Mills wards are expected to have electoral variances within 6% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for these wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards

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

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

108 Councillor Stevens proposed an identical amendment as the Liberal Democrats between Berkhamsted Castle and Berkhamsted East wards and gave identical justification for the boundary. Northchurch Parish Council considered that it should not be combined in a ward with any part of Berkhamsted considering that Northchurch Parish has a 'great sense of community.'

109 We carefully considered the submissions we received for Berkhamsted. The Borough Council's submission differed between its mapping for the area and the textual description given for the area. Its electoral figures did not account for all the electors in the area that it mapped. We asked the Borough Council to confirm whether the mapping or the text description was correct. It considered that its

mapping was correct. Therefore, including the additional electors shown on its mapping, its proposed Berkhamsted East ward would have an electoral variance of 15% from the borough average, which does not greatly improve electoral equality between the wards. We considered both the Liberal Democrats' and Councillor Stevens' proposal. We consider that the use of the canal as the boundary is as they say, strong and recognisable. We also considered that the small boundary amendment to address the 'anomaly' on Chesham Road was a sensible adjustment. We also noted the comments of Northchurch Parish Council. Its argument for not combining Northchurch and Berkhamsted was not very strong. However, we do not propose to combine these areas as both have more electors than the borough average and combining parts of these areas would not result in better electoral equality. We were also not convinced by the merits of additional parish warding.

110 We are therefore proposing to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals in full for Berkhamsted. Our proposed Berkhamsted wards are expected to have electoral variances within 7% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

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

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

Table 5: Existing arrangements

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

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

113 The Liberal Democrats proposed to combine part of Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards to create a two-member Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton ward. It considered that this proposal 'seeks to satisfy the need to provide equality of representation whilst maintaining the sincere communities of Aldbury village and

Wigginton village'. It considered that this proposal was justified because 'the parish boundaries of both Aldbury and Wigginton are currently intertwined with Tring East' it continued, 'Tring station falls within Aldbury parish, children from Aldbury and Wigginton generally attend Tring School.' It also noted that Tring East ward already houses the 'rural area of Hastoe within its ward and [it] would not therefore be an unnatural marriage' and that 'Tring West ward is made up similarly to that which we propose [...] insofar as it has a large part of the town of Tring together with the two villages of Wilstone and Long Marston'.

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

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

116 We have carefully considered all the submissions we received in relation to the three Tring and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. We note the opposition to the Liberal Democrats' and Tring Town Council's proposal for the area, in particular the opposition to combining Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards. We also note Councillor Jameson's petition regarding this union. However, it is quality of argument rather than quantity of submissions that we are concerned with, and despite this opposition we do not feel that the reasons given as to why these areas should not be combined have been fully justified. We note the argument put forward that the Local Government Commission for England did not combine these wards in the last review of Dacorum, however, whilst we are mindful of decisions made previously we cannot

assume that what was the case eight years ago is still the case now without a full argument. We require evidence as to why these two areas cannot be combined and why an electoral variance of 12% by 2009 (Aldbury & Wigginton ward) is justified. We consider that the argument put forward by the Liberal Democrats gives better reasoning as to why combining these areas would not detract from the identity of either area. Given the similar nature of the existing Tring West ward and also that a large part of Tring East ward is already rural in nature, we do not consider this is a totally inappropriate union. However, we would welcome comments on this during Stage Three.

117 We note Councillor Jameson's opposition to the Fantail Road amendment between Tring West and Tring Central wards, and also to the amendment between Tring East and West wards, however we do not consider the argument we have at this stage against such moves outweighs the better level of electoral equality achieved by transferring these electors.

118 We are therefore proposing to adopt the Liberal Democrats' and Tring Town Council's proposals in full for this area. Our proposed Tring Central, Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton and Tring West & Rural wards are expected to have electoral variances within 6% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Tring Central, Tring East, Aldbury & Wigginton and Tring West & Rural wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

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

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

120 We received four submissions in relation to the rural areas of Dacorum borough during Stage One from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and Northchurch Parish Council and Councillor Anderson. The Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing arrangements in these wards. Neither submission gave any justification for doing so. Northchurch Parish Council considered that Northchurch ward should remain unchanged and that it should not be combined in a ward with Berkhamsted town. Councillor Anderson considered that the existing Kings Langley ward should be retained. We have carefully considered the proposals, and we note that there has been very little argument in favour of retaining the existing arrangements. We therefore looked at alternatives to improve electoral equality in the rural areas, however, we did not consider that it is possible to create more suitable wards with good levels of electoral equality that reflect community identities and avoid parish warding. We are therefore proposing to retain the existing electoral arrangements for these wards as proposed by the Borough Council, Liberal Democrats, Northchurch and Kings Langley parish councils.

121 Our proposed Ashridge, Bovington, Flaunden & Chipperfield, Kings Langley, Northchurch and Watling wards are expected to have electoral variances within 7% of the borough average by 2009. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for these wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

122 Table 6 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2004 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2009.

Table 6: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

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

123 As shown in Table 6, our draft recommendations for Dacorum Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from four to none. By 2009 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to decrease council size and are recommending a council size of 51 members.

Draft recommendation:

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

Parish electoral arrangements

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

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

126 During Stage One we received proposals for revised parish council electoral arrangements in relation to Tring Town Council and Kings Langley Parish Council, these will be discussed in this section of our draft recommendations.

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

128 The parish of Berkhamsted is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Berkhamsted Castle, Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West. We do not propose changing the number of councillors but are making amendments to the parish ward boundaries to reflect our proposed borough wards.

Draft recommendation:

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

129 The parish of Tring is currently served by 12 councillors representing three wards: Tring Bunstrux, Tring Dunsley and Tring Miswell. We received two submissions in relation to Tring town council, from Tring Town Council and Councillor Jameson during Stage One. Tring Town Council considered that the parish wards should be coterminous with the borough wards for Tring. Councillor Jameson proposed creating a new parish ward from Tring Bunstrux

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

parish ward. He considered that the New Mill area, including Bulbourne, within Tring Bunstrux parish ward should become a single-member parish ward. He said that Mill Hill ‘has historically been separate from Tring. It has its own community centre, polling station and community association’. He went on to say that the area has issues that are ‘distinct from those of the rest of [Tring] Bunstrux’. His proposed New Mill ward would comprise the area north of New Road from the existing Tring Bunstrux parish ward. His proposal is outlined in Table 7 below. This has been amended slightly to take into account our proposed borough wards of Tring in this report.

Table 7: Councillor Jameson’s proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2004 electorate	2009 electorate	Proposed no. of cllrs
Bunstrux	3,287	3,275	4
Dunsley	2,179	2,180	3
Miswell	2,930	2,950	4
New Mill	691	699	1

130 We acknowledge Councillor Jameson’s proposal, however, we do not consider that it was supported by compelling evidence. However, we would request that local people, including the Borough Council, write to us at Stage Three regarding this proposal with supporting evidence. Councillor Jameson’s proposal is summarised below.

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

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

Draft recommendation:

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

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

133 Kings Langley Parish Council proposed to create three new wards for the parish. It proposed a Gade parish ward for the area east of Watford Road, High Street and Hempstead Road from the existing Central and South parish wards. It

proposed that the remainder of Central parish ward and Barnes Farm should be combined with North parish ward to create a rural parish ward. It also proposed that the remainder of South parish ward form a new Palace parish ward. Its proposal is outlined in Table 8, below. Kings Langley Parish Council considered that the existing central parish ward is over-represented and considered that its proposals would go some way to addressing this imbalance. Councillor Anderson also proposed the same parish wards as Kings Langley Parish Council.

Table 8: Kings Langley Parish Councils proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2004 electorate	2009 electorate	Proposed no. of cllrs
Gade	1,269	1,271	3
Palace	1,824	1,835	5
Rural	795	797	2

134 Kings Langley Labour Party considered that the existing arrangements should be retained for Kings Langley parish, and highlighted that there is no legal requirement to balance the councillor elector ratio for parish wards. It also considered that the existing wards are well established and have been in place for ‘over 30 years.’ However, it considered that if the existing arrangements should be changed then it proposed an alternative arrangement for Kings Langley Parish Council. It proposed to increase the council size by two from 10 to 12. It proposed to create four parish wards. It considered that the existing South parish ward should be divided into two parish wards along the Watford Road and High Street to create South East and South West parish wards. It also proposed that 119 Hempstead Road be transferred from North ward into the existing Central parish ward, and the remaining area become a new North ward. Its proposal is outlined in Table 9, below. It considered that an increase in council size was appropriate as ‘the village population has increased over time.’ It considered that these wards better reflect existing communities.

Table 9: Kings Langley Labour Party’s proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2004 electorate	2009 electorate	Proposed no. of cllrs
Central	535	537	2
North	761	763	2
South West	1,367	1,372	4
South East	1,226	1,231	4

135 Local resident Mrs Taylor put forward two options for the rewording of Kings Langley parish, both based on a council size of 10 members. She proposed to retain North parish ward in both options. In the first option she proposed to transfer that area between Common Lane, the Nap, Blackwell Road and Church Lane from South parish ward into the existing Central parish ward. In the second option she proposed only to transfer the area of South parish ward between Common Lane, the Nap and Mill Lane into Central parish ward, leaving a slightly larger South parish ward. Her proposals are outlined in Table 10, below. She considered that Central parish ward cannot grow any further, but that South parish ward has developed considerably in

the recent years and therefore said it was time to address the imbalance of councillor elector ratios between these wards.

Table 10: Mrs Taylor’s proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2004 electorate	2009 electorate	Proposed no. of cllrs
Option 1			
Central	1,237	1,239	3
North	763	765	2
South	1,889	1,899	5
Option 2			
Central	948	950	2
North	763	765	2
South	2,178	2,188	6

136 It is evident from the varied submissions we received at Stage One, regarding the electoral arrangements of Kings Langley parish, that there are a number of local groups who wish to see revised arrangements for the parish council. While we acknowledge that the existing arrangements could be improved we do not consider that the proposals we received were supported by compelling evidence. Therefore as part of our draft recommendations we are proposing no change to the existing arrangements. However, we would request that local people, including the Borough Council, write to us at Stage Three outlining their preferred option with supporting evidence. The four proposals for Kings Langley are summarised below.

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

137 Our proposed borough warding arrangements would result in no change to this area. We are recommending retaining the existing arrangements for Kings Langley parish.

Draft recommendation:

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

5 What happens next?

138 There will now be a consultation period of 14 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Dacorum contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 6 March 2006. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

139 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Dacorum and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards to be a difficult judgement between the statutory criteria. This was due to conflicting evidence received from local interested parties during Stage One. In this case, we have sought to achieve the best levels of electoral equality in the absence of strong evidence reflecting the other two criteria, and would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

140 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Manager
Dacorum Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

Submissions can also be made online at
www.boundarycommittee.org.uk/our-work/ferfeedback.cfm

141 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Committee now makes available for public inspection full copies of all representations it takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Dacorum Borough Council, at the Committee's offices in Trevelyan House and on its website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

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

6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Dacorum borough:

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

Sheet 1, Map 1 illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Dacorum Borough, including constituent parishes.

Sheet 2, Map 2 illustrates the proposed boundaries in Hemel Hempstead.

Sheet 3, Map 3 illustrates the proposed wards in Berkhamsted.

Erratum: this map does not show the proposed boundary between Berkhamsted East and Berkhamsted West wards correctly. Field Cottage and Holly Bank properties from Berkhamsted West should be in the proposed Berkhamsted East ward.

Sheet 4, Map 4 illustrates the proposed wards in Tring.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
The Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
The Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the borough
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or Further Electoral Review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last Periodic Electoral Review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the

	<p>Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>"an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; - access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; - wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; - established farming use is effectively maintained"
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined the area of land within a single borough enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or Periodic Electoral Review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004

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

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

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

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

