

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
West Berkshire

*October 2001*

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



# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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



## SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for West Berkshire on 27 March 2001.

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

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

- **in 14 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 114-117) are that:

- **West Berkshire Council should have 52 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 28 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In four of the proposed 28 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue with the number of electors per councillor in one ward, Kintbury, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Cold Ash, Thatcham and Tilehurst;**
- **a reduction in the number of councillors serving Newbury Town Council.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 9 October 2001. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 3 December 2001:

**Review Manager  
West Berkshire Review  
LGCE  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
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**Fax: 020 7404 6142  
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Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Aldermaston	1	the parishes of Aldermaston, Brimpton, Midgham, Wasing and Woolhampton	Map 2
2	Ashampstead	1	the parishes of Aldworth, Ashampstead, Compton, Hampstead Norreys and Yattendon	Map 2
3	Beenham	1	the parishes of Beenham, Englefield and Sulhamstead	Map 2
4	Birch Copse	3	the proposed Birch Copse parish ward of Tilehurst	Map 2, Map A2 and Map A3
5	Bucklebury	2	the parishes of Bradfield, Bucklebury, Frilsham, Hermitage and Stanford Dingley	Map 2
6	Burghfield	2	<i>unchanged</i> ; the parish of Burghfield	Map 2
7	Chieveley	2	the parishes of Chieveley and the proposed Cold Ash parish ward of Cold Ash parish	Map 2
8	Downlands	1	the parishes of Beedon, Brightwalton, Catmore, Chaddleworth, East Ilsley, Farnborough, Fawley, Leckhampstead, Peasmore and West Ilsley	Map 2
9	Greenham	2	the parish of Greenham and the proposed Newbury South East parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map
10	Holybrook	3	the parish of Holybrook and the proposed Calcot parish ward of Tilehurst parish	Map 2 and Map A2
11	Hungerford	2	<i>unchanged</i> ; the parish of Hungerford	Map 2
12	Kintbury	2	the parishes of Combe, Enborne, Hampstead Marshall, Inkpen, Kintbury and Welford	Map 2
13	Lambourn	2	the parishes of East Garston, Great Shefford and Lambourn	Map 2
14	Mortimer	2	the parishes of Beech Hill, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer, Ufton Nervet and Wokefield	Map 2
15	Newbury Central	2	the proposed Newbury Central parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map
16	Newbury North West	2	the proposed Newbury North West parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map
17	Pangbourne	2	the parishes of Basildon, Pangbourne, Streatley, Sulham and Tidmarsh	Map 2
18	Purley-on-Thames	2	the parish of Purley-on-Thames and the proposed Denefield parish ward of Tilehurst parish	Map 2
19	St Barts	2	the proposed St Barts parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map
20	St Johns	2	the proposed St Johns parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
21	Speen	2	the parishes of Boxford, Shaw-cum-Donnington, Speen and Winterborne and the proposed Brummel Grove parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2
22	Thatcham Central	2	the proposed Thatcham Central parish ward of Thatcham parish	Map 2 and the large map
23	Thatcham North	2	the proposed Thatcham North parish ward of Thatcham parish	Map 2 and the large map
24	Thatcham South & Crookham	2	the proposed Thatcham South & Crookham parish ward of Thatcham parish	Map 2 and the large map
25	Thatcham West	2	the proposed Dunston Park North parish ward of Cold Ash parish and the proposed Thatcham West parish ward of Thatcham parish	Map 2 and the large map
26	Theale	1	the parish of Theale	Map 2
27	Turnpike	2	the proposed Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward of Cold Ash parish and the proposed Turnpike parish ward of Newbury parish	Map 2 and the large map
28	Westwood	1	the proposed Westwood parish ward of Tilehurst parish	Map 2 and Map A2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1-A3 in Appendix A.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for West Berkshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Aldermaston	1	2,105	2,105	-2	2,123	2,123	-6
2 Ashampstead	1	2,532	2,532	12	2,448	2,448	8
3 Beenham	1	2,174	2,174	2	2,193	2,193	-3
4 Birch Copse	3	3,532	2,187	-3	6,192	2,064	-9
5 Bucklebury	2	4,258	2,129	0	4,904	2,452	9
6 Burghfield	2	4,398	2,199	3	4,664	2,332	3
7 Chieveley	2	3,833	1,917	-10	4,182	2,091	-7
8 Downlands	1	2,320	2,320	8	2,382	2,382	6
9 Greenham	2	3,558	1,779	-17	4,383	2,192	-3
10 Holybrook	3	6,592	2,197	-2	6,593	2,198	-3
11 Hungerford	2	4,440	2,220	4	4,610	2,305	2
12 Kintbury	2	3,865	1,933	-10	3,951	1,976	-12
13 Lambourn	2	4,430	2,215	4	4,612	2,306	2
14 Mortimer	2	3,982	1,991	-7	4,537	2,269	1
15 Newbury Central	2	3,168	1,584	-26	4,704	2,352	4
16 Newbury North West	2	4,411	2,206	3	4,361	2,181	-3
17 Pangbourne	2	4,642	2,321	9	4,725	2,363	5
18 Purley	2	4,674	2,337	9	4,687	2,344	4
19 St Barts	2	4,698	2,349	4	4,603	2,302	2
20 St Johns	2	4,370	2,185	2	4,645	2,323	3
21 Speen	2	4,046	2,023	-5	4,693	2,347	4
22 Thatcham Central	2	4,612	2,306	8	4,575	2,288	1
23 Thatcham North	2	3,999	2,000	-7	4,746	2,373	5
24 Thatcham South & Crookham	2	3,938	1,969	-8	4,701	2,351	4
25 Thatcham West	2	4,835	2,418	13	4,385	2,193	-3
26 Theale	1	2,203	2,203	3	2,174	2,174	-4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
27 Turnpike	2	4,338	2,169	1	4,529	2,265	0
28 Westwood	1	2,251	2,251	5	2,068	2,068	-8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>111,234</b>	–	–	<b>117,370</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,139</b>	–	–	<b>2,257</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on West Berkshire Council's submission.

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of West Berkshire. This area, formerly Newbury district, was last reviewed by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1979 (Report no. 321). Since undertaking that review, West Berkshire has become a unitary authority (April 1998). The change to unitary status has led to the gain of nine district councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for West Berkshire from 45 to 54.

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

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

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations 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 parish and town councils in the district.

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against

upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

*Table 3: Stages of the Review*

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

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

11 Stage One began on 27 March 2001, when we wrote to West Berkshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Thames Valley Police Authority, the local authority associations, Berkshire Association of local councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited West Berkshire Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 July 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 9 October 2001 and will end on 3 December 2001, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in**

**the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of West Berkshire lies between the counties of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. It achieved unitary status on 1 April 1998. The district is a blend of open countryside and hi-tech industry and contains the main towns of Hungerford in the west, Thatcham in the centre, and Theale and Tilehurst in the east, with the remainder of the district being predominantly rural. The main urban area is Newbury, famed for its race course. The district possesses excellent transport links, with the M4 motorway bisecting the district from east to west. West Berkshire is wholly parished, containing some 60 parishes, with Newbury town comprising 19 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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

18 The electorate of the district is 111,234 (February 2001). The Council presently has 54 members who are elected from 31 wards, 12 of which are relatively urban and the remainder being predominantly rural. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,060 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,174 by the year 2006 if the current number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, four wards by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Thatcham South ward, where the councillor represents 31 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in West Berkshire*

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements in West Berkshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Aldermaston	1	1,853	1,853	-10	1,842	1,842	-15
2 Basildon	1	2,008	2,008	-2	2,024	2,024	-7
3 Birch Copse	2	4,601	2,301	13	4,407	2,204	1
4 Bradfield	1	2,625	2,625	27	2,491	2,491	15
5 Bucklebury	1	1,901	1,901	-8	2,106	2,106	-3
6 Burghfield	2	4,398	2,199	7	4,664	2,332	7
7 Calcot	1	2,660	2,660	29	2,548	2,548	17
8 Chieveley	1	2,410	2,410	17	2,753	2,753	27
9 Cold Ash	2	3,959	1,980	-4	4,000	2,000	-8
10 Compton	1	2,054	2,054	0	2,001	2,001	-8
11 Downlands	1	1,935	1,935	-6	1,964	1,964	-10
12 Falkland	3	5,876	1,959	-4	6,294	2,098	-3
13 Greenham	1	1,940	1,940	-6	2,783	2,783	28
14 Hermitage	1	2,015	2,015	-1	2,454	2,454	13
15 Hungerford	2	4,440	2,220	8	4,610	2,305	6
16 Kintbury	2	3,428	1,714	-17	3,466	1,733	-20
17 Lambourn	2	4,867	2,434	18	5,097	2,549	17
18 Mortimer	2	3,303	1,652	-20	3,579	1,790	-18
19 Northcroft	3	5,231	1,744	-15	5,658	1,886	-13
20 Pangbourne	1	2,251	2,251	9	2,344	2,344	8
21 Purley on Thames	2	3,657	1,829	-11	3,598	1,799	-17
22 St Johns	3	5,917	1,972	-4	6,433	2,144	-1
23 Speen	1	2,157	2,157	5	2,273	2,273	5
24 Sulhamstead	1	1,685	1,685	-18	2,150	2,150	-1
25 Thatcham East	2	4,312	2,156	5	5,019	2,510	15
26 Thatcham North	3	5,047	1,682	-18	5,209	1,736	-20
27 Thatcham South	2	5,385	2,693	31	5,527	2,764	27
28 Thatcham West	1	2,274	2,274	10	2,307	2,307	6
29 Theale	3	7,664	2,555	24	7,605	2,535	17

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
30 Turnpike	3	5,299	1,766	-14	6,252	2,084	-4
31 Westwood	2	4,082	2,041	-1	3,912	1,956	-10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>111,234</b>	–	–	<b>117,370</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,060</b>	–	–	<b>2,174</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by West Berkshire District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Mortimer ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in Thatcham South ward were relatively under-represented by 31 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

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

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and West Berkshire Conservative Group, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

#### **West Berkshire District Council**

22 The District Council proposed a council of 58 members, four more than at present, serving 33 wards, compared to the existing 31. It proposed four three-member wards, 17 two-member wards, and 12 single-member wards. Alternative warding arrangements were put forward for the urban areas of Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst. New parish warding arrangements were proposed for Bradfield, Chieveley, Cold Ash, Holybrook, Hungerford, Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst.

23 The Council's scheme provided reasonable electoral equality across the district, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by more than 10 per cent in 12 wards in 2001, and by more than 20 per cent in three wards, but resulted in a significant amount of parish warding. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in all wards by 2006.

24 The District Council also included summaries of two other options on which it had locally consulted, for 47 members and 54 members. It included submissions received in relation to this consultation and finalised its submission on the 58-member model.

#### **West Berkshire Conservative Group**

25 The Conservative Group (hereafter referred to as the Conservatives) also submitted a district-wide scheme, proposing a council size of 52 members, two fewer than at present, serving 30 wards, one less than at present. It proposed 22 two-member wards, and eight single-member wards. Overall there would be change to all but three of the existing wards. The Conservatives put forward alternative warding arrangements for the urban areas of Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst, while also proposing new parish warding arrangements for Cold Ash, Holybrook, Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst.

26 Under the Conservatives' proposals there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by more than 10 per cent in six wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by more than 10 per cent in only one ward and no wards over 20 per cent by 2006.

27 The Conservatives also included a separate document commenting on the District Council's submission in relation to council size, "the democratic deficit" and the creation of new parish wards.

### **West Berkshire Liberal Democrat Group**

28 West Berkshire Liberal Democrat Group (hereafter referred to as the Liberal Democrats) expressed grave reservations about the Conservatives' proposals. They objected to the Conservatives' proposed 52-member council. They opposed the Conservatives' proposals for Kintbury ward and Cold Ash parish. Further to this the Liberal Democrats highlighted the fact that no consultation was taken by the Conservatives on a 52-member council.

29 We also received a submission from Thatcham Town Council Liberal Democrat Group, who supported the District Council's 58-member option, in view of the increasing population expected in West Berkshire over the next few years.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

30 We received representations from three parish councils. Basildon Parish Council supported the District Council's 58-member option as they considered that any other option might see this parish divorced from the West Berkshire Unitary Authority at some time in the future. Enborne Parish Council were of the view that the District Council had failed to justify any increase in the number of councillors, and it was also of the opinion that there may be justification for realigning ward boundaries in urban areas, but saw no justification for any dramatic change in rural wards. It objected to the District Council's proposal to separate it from Hampstead Marshall parish. Midgham Parish Council preferred the District Council's proposal linking the parish with Beenham, Englefield and Woolhampton parishes.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

36 Since 1975 there has been an 30 per cent increase in the electorate of West Berkshire district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 111,234 to 117,370 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Newbury, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Hermitage ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

37 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## Council Size

38 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

39 West Berkshire District Council at present has 54 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed an increase in council size to 58 members, arguing that an increase will alleviate the “significant extra workload” undertaken by councillors. Further to this the District Council argued that an increase in council size would avoid under-representation in urban areas. The District Council’s proposal was supported by Thatcham Town Council Liberal Democrat Group and Basildon Parish Council.

40 The Conservatives proposed a reduction in council size to 52 members. They argued that any increase in council size invites the creation of artificial divisions within natural communities and must be seen as unnecessary and unjustifiable, stating that natural communities should be maintained wherever possible. They also believed that a reduction in numbers would enable a greater proportion of councillors to participate in the executive and scrutiny process. The Conservatives considered their proposal to be the “most equitable, appropriate and prudent solution for West Berkshire”. They stated that they would view any increase in number of councillors as “wholly irresponsible”.

41 The Liberal Democrats expressed grave reservations at the Conservatives’ proposals for a 52-member scheme. They felt that the council size should not be reduced when population is projected to increase by six per cent by 2006. The Liberal Democrats also opposed basing the size of the council on the Conservative assertion that “a member is a significant cost burden to run administratively”. They stated that a reduction in the number of councillors would not be in the best interests of the residents of West Berkshire.

42 We considered both council sizes. We noted that the District Council did not submit any detailed analysis or evidence demonstrating how a council size of 58, an increase of four, would impact on its operation. As stated in our guidance, we do not accept that an increase in electorate is itself justification for an increase in council size. In addition, we noted that adoption of a 58-member council would necessitate a significant amount of parish warding.

43 We considered retaining the current council size of 54 members but found it extremely difficult to achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality and a balance with the statutory criteria. For a 54-member council to provide acceptable levels of electoral equality either involved a high degree of parish warding thereby splitting natural communities, or alternatively not warding the overspill of the urban areas with the adjacent town areas, as detailed below.

44 Having considered the representations received we have concluded that there is little justification or local support for an increase in council size. Under the Conservatives’ 52-member council it is possible to secure good electoral equality with minimal parish warding. With these considerations in mind we are of the opinion that a council size of 52 members would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

45 Having adopted a 52-member council size, our capacity to endorse the Council's proposals is very limited. While we recognised that the Council's scheme did achieve reasonable electoral equality across the district under a 58-member council, we were concerned that the identities and interests of local communities were not well reflected. In contrast, we noted that the Conservatives' proposed council size of 52 members facilitates a scheme which combines groups of parishes with similar interests and better recognises the importance of achieving a balance between electoral equality and the reflection of community identity, with minimal parish warding.

46 Having considered the representations received and in order to secure the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Conservatives' scheme. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Conservatives' proposals in relation to the proposed wards of Chieveley, Cold Ash and Speen and made some changes in the urban areas of Newbury and Tilehurst. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards;
- (b) Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen wards;
- (c) Bradfield, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards;
- (d) Falkland, Greenham, Northcroft, St Johns and Turnpike wards;
- (e) Thatcham East, Thatcham North, Thatcham South and Thatcham West wards;
- (f) Aldermaston, Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead wards;
- (g) Basildon, Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards;
- (h) Birch Copse, Calcot, Theale and Westwood wards;

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

### **Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards**

48 The existing wards of Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn cover the western area of the district. Hungerford (comprising the parish of Hungerford), Kintbury (comprising the parishes of Combe, Enborne, Hampstead Marshall, Inkpen, Kintbury and West Woodhay) and Lambourn (comprising the parishes of East Garston, Great Shefford, Lambourn and Welford) wards are each represented by two councillors. Under the current arrangements of a 54-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the district average by 8 per cent, 17 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve marginally in Hungerford and Lambourn wards, but is projected to deteriorate slightly over the next five years in Kintbury ward to 6 per cent, 17 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

49 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by three wards, with the modified Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards each being represented by two councillors. It proposed that Lambourn district ward remain as it is less Great Shefford and Welford parishes which would be included in the existing Kintbury ward. It also proposed that a new parish ward, Hungerford Newtown, be created in the northern part of Hungerford ward and be included in the existing Kintbury ward. The remainder of Hungerford would constitute a district ward on its own.

Enborne parish, in the east of Kintbury ward, would be removed from the existing ward in the District Council's proposal and placed in a newly created Speen ward, detailed below.

50 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member council the number of electors per councillor in Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards would vary from the district average by 10 per cent, 15 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Hungerford and Kintbury wards, and projected to deteriorate in Lambourn ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 9 per cent, 9 per cent and 5 per cent from the district average by 2006.

51 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be represented by three wards, with the proposed Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards each being represented by two councillors. They proposed retaining Lambourn ward less Welford parish, which they proposed including in the amended Kintbury ward. They proposed that Hungerford ward should retain its existing boundaries.

52 Under the Conservatives' proposal for a 52-member council the number of electors per councillor in Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent, 10 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Hungerford and Lambourn wards, and deteriorate slightly in Kintbury ward, over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 12 per cent respectively by 2006. The Conservatives have noted the high electoral variance for the Kintbury ward but considered that this was justified due to the "disparate nature" of the settlements in the area and also that "consultations showed a strong desire to keep these settlements together".

53 Enborne Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposal to separate it from Hampstead Marshall to which it "has been aligned for over 1000 years".

54 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Conservatives' proposed Kintbury ward on the basis of high electoral variance. They also pointed out that the Conservatives' claim that they had support for their proposed Kintbury ward was unfounded.

55 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we noted that both the District Council and the Conservatives proposed minimal change in this area, and we concur with this view. We propose adopting the Conservatives' proposals, creating a new Kintbury ward (comprising the parishes of Combe, Enborne, Hampstead Marshall, Inkpen, Kintbury, Welford and West Woodhay) and Lambourn ward (comprising the parishes of East Garston, Great Shefford and Lambourn) while retaining the existing Hungerford ward. We considered that the Conservatives' proposal results in good levels of electoral equality and retains community identity within the proposed wards. It has been noted that Kintbury ward has a high electoral variance but we have been persuaded this is justified in that natural communities are contained within wards and this ward does not require any unnecessary parish warding.

56 We have noted the Liberal Democrats' opposition to the Conservatives' proposed Kintbury ward but feel on balance that our proposed draft recommendations are the best option for the western part of the district as a whole. Our draft recommendations also reflect Enborne Parish Council's desire to remain with Hampstead Marshall parish. Under the District Council's proposal these parishes would be separated.

57 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Hungerford, Kintbury and Lambourn wards would be as detailed in the Conservatives' proposal above. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2.

### **Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen wards**

58 The existing wards of Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen run from the north of the district to the north of Newbury and Thatcham. Chieveley (comprising the parishes of Boxford, Chieveley and Winterbourne), Downlands (comprising the parishes of Beedon, Brightwalton, Catmore, Chaddlesworth, Farnborough, Fawley, Leckhampstead, Peasmore and West Ilsley) and Speen wards (comprising the parish of Speen) are each represented by one councillor, while Cold Ash ward (comprising parishes of Cold Ash and Shaw-cum-Donnington) is represented by two councillors. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen wards varies by 17 per cent, 4 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in Chieveley, Cold Ash and Downlands wards to 27 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, while remaining constant in Speen ward.

59 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by four wards with the modified Chieveley (comprising the parishes of Boxford, Winterbourne and the Chieveley parish ward of Chieveley parish), Cold Ash (comprising the Cold Ash parish ward of Cold Ash parish) and Downlands wards (comprising the parishes of Beedon, Brightwalton, Catmore, Chaddlesworth, Farnborough, Fawley, Leckhampstead, Peasmore and West Ilsley) being represented by one councillor and the modified Speen ward (comprising the parishes of Enborne, Shaw-cum-Donnington and Speen) being represented by two councillors. It supported retaining the existing boundaries of the Downlands ward but proposed warding Chieveley parish, with the creation of a new Curridge parish ward in the south east of the parish. The new Curridge parish ward would then be placed in a new Hermitage ward with the parish of Hermitage from Hermitage ward. It also proposed separating Cold Ash and Shaw-cum-Donnington parishes with the majority of Cold Ash parish becoming a single member ward on its own and Shaw-cum-Donnington joining Enborne parish and Speen parish in a single-member Speen ward. The District Council proposed the creation of two new parish wards in southern Cold Ash, to accommodate the urban overspill from the Newbury and Thatcham urban areas. It proposed that these new parish wards should be named Manor Park & Manor Fields and Dunston Park North respectively.

60 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member council the number of electors per councillor in Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent, 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Chieveley ward, deteriorate in Cold Ash and Downlands wards, and remain constant in Speen ward over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent from the district average, respectively, by 2006.

61 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be represented by four wards, with the modified Cold Ash ward being represented by two councillors, and the proposed Chieveley, Downlands and Speen wards being represented by one councillor each. They proposed including East Ilsley parish in the existing Downlands ward while also proposing that Chieveley parish comprise a district ward on its own. They proposed combining the existing Cold Ash ward with Boxford and Winterbourne parishes, formerly in Chieveley ward. The Conservatives also proposed creating a new parish ward for Manor Park & Manor Fields, in southern Cold Ash parish, as they argued that this area relates more

closely to the more urban Turnpike ward in north east Newbury. They also proposed that Speen ward should retain its existing boundaries.

62 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 52-member council the number of electors per councillor in Chieveley, Cold Ash, Downlands and Speen wards would vary from the district average by 12 per cent, 2 per cent, 8 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Chieveley and Downlands wards, deteriorate in Cold Ash ward, while remaining constant in Speen ward over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 2 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent and 1 per cent from the district average by 2006.

63 The Liberal Democrats objected to the Conservatives' proposed Cold Ash ward proposal which retained the link between Cold Ash and Shaw-cum-Donnington parishes; they stated that all members of the cross party Task Group, including the Conservatives, agreed that this was totally illogical. It stated that the three options considered for consultation recognised the benefits of dividing these two communities.

64 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that significant boundary modifications in this area are unavoidable given the high level of electoral imbalance in the existing Chieveley ward. Further to this we note the comments made by the Liberal Democrats in relation to the sentiments of the Task Group regarding separating Cold Ash and Shaw-cum-Donnington parishes. We do not consider that the District Council's proposals for this area promote community identity and we consider that the large degree of parish warding entailed would unnecessarily split communities. Although Chieveley parish is dissected by the M4 motorway we have been persuaded that the north and south are linked by the A34. In the light of this we propose adopting our own set of proposals for much of this area while retaining the Conservatives' proposed Downlands ward.

65 In relation to Cold Ash parish, we propose creating two new parish wards in the southern area of the parish, as previously mentioned in the District Council's and Conservatives' proposals. We propose that these two parish wards be named Manor Park & Manor Fields, and Dunston Park North, with the remainder of the parish to be named Cold Ash parish ward. The Conservatives only proposed the creation of one new parish ward, Manor Park & Manor Fields for the south eastern area, but suggested we investigate further the possibility of a parish ward for the south western area of the parish. Their main reason for not creating a new Dunston Park North parish ward was that it would affect representation in their proposed Cold Ash ward, giving it an electoral variance of 10 per cent from the district average (15 per cent by 2006). We are of the opinion that both these new parish wards are justifiable in their creation, as they would contain the urban overspill in the Manor Park & Manor Fields area which would then be included in Turnpike ward, while the urban overspill in Dunston Park North area would then be included in Thatcham North ward. We believe these two areas have greater links with the town than with the more rural remainder of Cold Ash parish. Therefore, by virtue of their creation and its consequential effect on levels of electoral equality, we are proposing alternative warding arrangements in the remainder of the area.

66 We propose creating a new Chieveley ward (comprising the parishes of Chieveley and the Cold Ash parish ward of Cold Ash) and a new Speen district ward (comprising the parishes of Boxford, Speen, Shaw-cum-Donnington, Winterbourne and the proposed Brummel Grove parish ward of Newbury North West parish). The proposed Brummel Grove parish ward is situated in the north western corner of the proposed Newbury North West ward, it facilitates good electoral equality and promotes community identity and is bordered by Western Avenue, Brummel and Grove Roads and also

follows the rear of properties on Chaucer Crescent and Digby Road. We are of the opinion that these wards provide the best balance available between the statutory criteria and electoral equality. These new warding arrangements allow for the new parish wards of Dunston Park North and Manor Park & Manor Fields to be created, and facilitate the separation of Cold Ash and Shaw-cum-Donnington parishes.

67 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Chieveley, Downlands and Speen wards would vary from the district average by 10 per cent, 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Chieveley, Downlands and Speen wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 7 per cent, 6 per cent and 4 per cent from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 & 2, on Map 2 and the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Bradfield, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards**

68 The existing wards of Bradfield, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage largely cover the east central area of the district with Compton in the north of the district. Bradfield ward comprises the parishes of Beenham, Bradfield, Englefield and Stanford Dingley; Bucklebury ward comprises the parishes of Bucklebury and Midgham; Compton ward comprises the parishes of Aldworth, Ashampstead, Compton and East Ilsley; and Hermitage ward comprises the parishes of Frilsham, Hampstead Norreys, Hermitage and Yattendon. Each existing ward is represented by a single councillor. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Bradfield, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards varies from the district average by 27 per cent, 8 per cent, 0 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Bradfield and Bucklebury wards over the next five years, but is expected to deteriorate in Compton and Hermitage wards, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 15 per cent, 3 per cent, 8 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively, from the district average by 2006.

69 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by five wards with the proposed Ashampstead, Beenham, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards being represented by a single councillor each. It proposed a new Compton ward, comprising the parishes of Compton, East Ilsley and Hampstead Norreys and a new Ashampstead ward, comprising the parishes of Aldworth, Ashampstead, Bradfield and Frilsham. Further to this the District Council proposed creating a new parish ward in the south-west corner of Bradfield parish, named Bradfield Southend, and including this in the new Beenham ward. This new Beenham ward would include the parishes of Beenham, Englefield, Midgham and Woolhampton and the new parish ward of Bradfield Southend. It proposed reducing the existing Bucklebury ward by transferring Midgham parish to the proposed Beenham ward, and Stanford Dingley parish to the proposed Bucklebury ward. Due to the high level of growth in Hermitage parish, the District Council proposed an amended single-member Hermitage ward, comprising Hermitage parish and the newly created Curridge parish ward of Chieveley parish, as previously mentioned.

70 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Ashampstead, Beenham, Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards would vary from the district average by 3 per cent, 5 per cent, 5 per cent, 9 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Bucklebury, Compton and Hermitage wards over the next five years, but is expected to deteriorate slightly in Ashampstead and Beenham wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 1 per cent, 4 per cent and 9 per cent from the district average, respectively, by 2006.

71 Midgham Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal linking the parish with Beenham, Englefield and Woolhampton parishes. It considered that this would group Midgham parish in a ward with other small rural parishes.

72 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be represented by three wards, with their proposed Bucklebury ward being represented by two councillors, and the proposed Ashampstead and Beenham wards being represented by a single councillor each. They proposed a new Ashampstead ward, comprising the parishes of Aldworth, Ashampstead and Compton, all formerly in Compton ward, and also including Hampstead Norreys and Yattendon parishes, formerly contained in Hermitage ward. They also proposed an enlarged Bucklebury ward, comprising Bradfield, Bucklebury, Frilsham, Hermitage, Stanford Dingley and Yattendon parishes. A new Beenham ward was proposed, comprising Beenham and Englefield parishes, while also including Sulhamstead parish, formerly contained in Sulhamstead district ward, as described below.

73 Under the Conservatives' proposal for a 52-member council the number of electors per councillor in Ashampstead, Beenham and Bucklebury wards would vary from the district average by 12 per cent, 2 per cent and 0 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Ashampstead ward, but is expected to slightly deteriorate in Beenham and Bucklebury wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 8 per cent, 3 per cent and 9 per cent from the district average by 2006. The increase in electoral variance in the proposed Bucklebury ward is due to the increase in forecast electorate, particularly in Hermitage parish.

74 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that significant change has been proposed by both the District Council and the Conservatives. While we recognise that the District Council's proposal offers slightly better electoral equality we feel that the Conservatives' proposals obtain acceptable levels of electoral equality and provide for the best balance between this and the reflection of community identity. Within the Conservatives' proposal, the M4 motorway provides a natural ward boundary between the Ashampstead and Bucklebury wards, with the areas to the north of the motorway in the proposed Bucklebury ward being connected by good road links to the rest of Bucklebury ward. We are also of the opinion that the Conservatives' proposal groups together natural communities and avoids the unnecessary warding of parishes.

75 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Ashampstead, Beenham and Bucklebury wards would vary from the district average by 12 per cent, 2 per cent and 0 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Ashampstead ward, but is expected to slightly deteriorate in Beenham and Bucklebury wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 8 per cent, 3 per cent and 9 per cent from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2.

### **Falkland, Greenham, Northcroft, St Johns and Turnpike wards**

76 The existing wards of Falkland, Northcroft, St Johns and Turnpike wards, comprising the parish wards of the same names, cover the Newbury town area of the district, with Greenham ward, comprising Greenham parish, situated on the eastern side of the town. Each ward covering the town is represented by three councillors, with the more rural Greenham ward being represented by two councillors. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in the four urban wards varies from the district average by 4 per cent, 15 per cent, 4 per cent and 14 per cent, with Greenham

ward varying by 6 per cent. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve slightly in all the urban wards, with Greenham ward deteriorating significantly to vary by 28 per cent from the district average by 2006.

77 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by seven wards, with the proposed Newbury Central ward being represented by three councillors, and Greenham, Newbury North West, St. Barts, St. Johns and Turnpike wards being represented by two councillors each. The proposed Wash Common ward would be represented by a single councillor. It proposed that the new Turnpike ward should cover a significantly smaller area than at present, comprising the north east area of the town to the north of Ham Marsh and to the east of the London Road Business Park and north of the River Lambourn, together with the proposed Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward of Cold Ash parish. The proposed Newbury North West ward would cover the area to the north of the Kennet & Avon Canal and London Road, including the area to the west of the London Road Business Park. The proposed Newbury Central ward would span the town centre, to the north of the railway in the west and north of East Fields in the east. The southern area of the town would be covered by three wards; St Barts ward containing the area to the south of the railway and west of the Andover Road; St Johns ward containing properties to the east of Andover Road and south of the railway; and Wash Common ward containing the area to the south of Essex Street, Falkland Road and Warren Road. The Council also proposed that a new parish ward be created to the east of the A339. It proposed naming this new parish ward Newbury South East and including it with Greenham parish to form a new Greenham district ward.

78 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Greenham, Newbury Central, Newbury North West, St Barts, St Johns, Turnpike and Wash Common wards would vary by 15 per cent, 23 per cent, 4 per cent, 10 per cent, 9 per cent, 1 per cent and 27 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve significantly in Greenham, Newbury Central and Wash Common wards, improve slightly in Newbury North West, St Barts and St Johns wards with Turnpike ward deteriorating, to vary by 8 per cent, 5 per cent, 1 per cent, 1 per cent, 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent respectively from the district average by 2006.

79 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be divided into six wards, with the proposed wards of Greenham, Newbury Central, Newbury North West, St. Barts, St. Johns and Turnpike being represented by two councillors each. They also proposed that the new Turnpike ward be reduced in size and that its boundary should run along the River Lambourn, along the centre of Newport Road and continue along the centre of London Road, finally following the eastern side of the Ham Marsh depot to the Kennet and Avon Canal. Turnpike ward would also contain the proposed Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward of Cold Ash parish. The proposed Newbury North West ward would contain the properties north of the London Road from the A34 roundabout and north of the railway line while covering the area west of Strawberry Hill and West Street, with the boundary running along the centre of Northcroft Road and also running along the eastern side of the leisure centre and joining the Kennet and Avon Canal to Kennet Road. It would continue along the centre of Craven Road and finally Bartholomew Street. They proposed that Newbury Central ward cover the main commercial and industrial areas in Newbury including Ham Marsh and Speenhamland, running south to the A343 and Eastfields (north of St Johns Road) below the railway line. The proposed St Johns ward would have the centre of the A339 as its easterly boundary and the centre of Andover Road as its western boundary, also covering the City area of Newbury. The northwestern boundary of St Johns ward would follow the centre of Buckingham Road, Fifth Road and north to Enborne Road along Salcombe Road, finally

reaching the railway line by running along the western side of properties at the end of Westgate Road. St Barts ward would consist of the existing Falkland ward less those properties north of Buckingham Road, Fifth Road and west of Salcombe Road, this ward will stretch to the south of the town. A new parish ward of Newbury South East would be created east of the A339, with this new parish ward being combined with Greenham parish to form a new Greenham district ward.

80 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Greenham, Newbury Central, Newbury North West, St Barts, St Johns and Turnpike wards would vary by 17 per cent, 26 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Greenham, Newbury Central, St Barts and Turnpike wards while deteriorating slightly in Newbury North West and St Johns ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent, 0 per cent, 8 per cent and 3 per cent from the district average respectively in 2006.

81 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One it has been decided to adopt the Conservatives' scheme in this area, subject to minor boundary modifications and the creation of a new parish ward in north west Newbury in the interest of electoral equality and community identity. We considered that the District Council's proposals have merit but having adopted a 52-member council size, have concluded that the Conservatives' proposal offers the better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. As both the Conservatives and District Council proposed the creation of new Manor Park & Manor Fields and Newbury South East parish wards, we are of the opinion that both these new parish wards are justified in their creation, including them in Turnpike and Greenham district wards respectively, as this results in good electoral equality and recognises the community identity and ties that currently exist. We propose to follow the District Council's proposed boundary for the new Newbury South East parish ward as this provides for better community identity. Under this same principle we also propose creating a new parish ward in the north west of the town. We propose that the boundary of this parish ward should run east along the centre of Western Avenue in the south, to Grove Road in the north, following the rear of properties on the east of Digby Road and Chaucer Crescent. We propose naming this Brummel Grove parish ward and including it in Speen ward, giving a much improved level of electoral equality in this area. We welcome views on the proposed parish ward name of Brummel Grove during Stage Three.

82 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Greenham, Newbury Central, Newbury North West, St Barts, St Johns and Turnpike wards would vary from the district average by 17 per cent, 26 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Greenham, Newbury Central, St Barts and Turnpike wards, slightly deteriorate in St Johns ward while remaining constant in Newbury North West ward over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent, 0 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively, from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2, and the large map at the back of the report.

### **Thatcham East, Thatcham North, Thatcham South and Thatcham West wards**

83 The existing wards of Thatcham East, Thatcham North, Thatcham South and Thatcham West cover the urban Thatcham town area. Thatcham West ward (comprising the Thatcham West ward of Thatcham parish) is represented by one councillor, Thatcham East ward (comprising the Thatcham East ward of Thatcham parish) and Thatcham South ward (comprising the Thatcham South ward of

Thatcham parish) are represented by two councillors each, and Thatcham North ward (comprising the Thatcham North ward of Thatcham parish) is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements for a council size of 54, the number of electors per councillor in Thatcham East, Thatcham North, Thatcham South and Thatcham West wards varies from the district average by 5 per cent, 18 per cent, 31 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve slightly in Thatcham South and Thatcham West wards while it is projected to deteriorate in both Thatcham East and Thatcham North wards varying from the district average by 27 per cent, 6 per cent, 15 per cent and 20 per cent respectively by 2006.

84 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be covered by four wards. It proposed that Thatcham South West ward should be represented by three councillors and that Thatcham East & Crookham, Thatcham North and Thatcham West wards should each be represented by two councillors. It proposed that the Bath Road be used to divide Thatcham east/west. It proposed that Thatcham West ward contain all the properties to the west of Park Lane while Thatcham North ward would contain those to the east, including the newly proposed Dunston Park North parish ward of Cold Ash parish. The proposed Thatcham South West ward would contain the area to the east of The Moors as far as Broadway, Broadway as far as Station Road and Station Road to north of the Horne Road depot to the railway line. Thatcham East & Crookham ward would contain the remainder of the parish. It also proposed the creation of a new parish ward in Cold Ash parish, named Dunston Park North parish ward and including it in Thatcham North ward.

85 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member ward, the number of electors per councillor in Thatcham East & Crookham, Thatcham North, Thatcham South West and Thatcham West wards would vary from the district average by 14 per cent, 15 per cent, 12 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve significantly in all wards by 2006, varying by 2 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent from the district average respectively.

86 The Conservatives proposed that this area should also be covered by four wards, and that the proposed Thatcham Central, Thatcham North, Thatcham South & Crookham and Thatcham West wards should each be represented by two councillors. They proposed that Thatcham West ward cover the area to the west of Northfield Road, St Johns Road and St Marks Close, the area west of, and including, Jubilee and Long Lakes and to the north of Widmead Lock. They proposed that Thatcham North ward comprise the area north of the Bath Road from the east and the area east of Park Lane, the area north of Chesterton Road, Lamb Close and Sagecroft Road, while being bordered by Northfields Road in the west. Their proposed Thatcham South & Crookham ward would consist of the existing Thatcham South ward less those properties west of Spurcroft Road and west of Spurcroft Primary School to the railway. Their proposed Thatcham Central ward would encompass the remaining central area of the parish spanning the Bath Road from the railway line in the south to the Sagecroft Road in the north. The Conservatives did not propose a new Dunston Park North parish ward but suggested that we investigate the possibility of doing so.

87 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Thatcham Central, Thatcham North, Thatcham South & Crookham and Thatcham West wards would vary from the district average by 8 per cent, 15 per cent, 8 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve significantly by 2006, with the four wards varying by 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent from the district average respectively.

88 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage One we propose adopting the majority of the Conservatives' proposals for this area as we consider that they use easily identifiable boundaries and offer a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we propose minor boundary modifications to tie them to better ground detail, which do not affect any electors. We considered that the Conservatives' proposal offers good levels of electoral equality. We considered retaining the Bath Road as a boundary in its entirety; however, this did not result in the correct allocation of councillors for the parish, and this resulted in poor levels of electoral equality. We propose adopting the District Council's proposal to create a new Dunston Park North parish ward as this allows for the Thatcham urban overspill to be included in Thatcham North ward with which it has more affiliation and common community identity.

89 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Thatcham Central, Thatcham North, Thatcham South & Crookham and Thatcham West wards would vary from the district average by 8 per cent, 7 per cent, 8 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in all wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 1 per cent, 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively, from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

### **Aldermaston, Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead wards**

90 The existing wards of Aldermaston, Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead cover the south-eastern part of the district. Aldermaston ward (comprising the parishes of Aldermaston, Brimpton, Wasing and Woolhampton) and Sulhamstead ward (comprising the parishes of Padworth, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet) are each represented by one councillor, with Burghfield ward (comprising the parish of Burghfield) and Mortimer ward (comprising the parishes of Beech Hill, Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield) being represented by two councillors each.

91 Under the current arrangements for a 54-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Aldermaston, Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead wards varies from the district average by 10 per cent, 7 per cent, 20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Mortimer and Sulhamstead ward over the next five years and deteriorate in Aldermaston ward varying from the district average by 18 per cent, 1 per cent and 15 per cent respectively by 2006. The level of electoral equality will remain constant in Burghfield ward.

92 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by three wards, with the proposed Burghfield ward being represented by three councillors, the proposed Mortimer ward being represented by two councillors and the proposed Aldermaston ward being represented by a single councillor. Effectively the District Council proposed disbanding the existing Sulhamstead ward, proposing that the existing Burghfield ward should be enlarged to incorporate Sulhamstead parish, to create a new Burghfield ward. It proposed that the existing Mortimer ward be enlarged to incorporate Ufton Nervet parish creating a new Mortimer ward, while the remaining Sulhamstead parish be included in a new enlarged Burghfield ward. The parish of Padworth would be included in a new Aldermaston ward, less the parish of Woolhampton which would be included in the District Council's proposed Beenham ward, as detailed above.

93 Under the District Council's proposals for a 58-member council, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in Aldermaston,

Burghfield and Mortimer wards by 13 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent from the district average in Aldermaston, Burghfield and Mortimer wards respectively.

94 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be covered by three wards, with the proposed Burghfield and Mortimer wards being represented by two councillors and the proposed Aldermaston ward being represented by a single councillor. They proposed retaining the existing Burghfield ward while combining the existing Mortimer and Sulhamstead wards to create a new Mortimer ward. They further proposed a new Aldermaston ward which would combine the existing Aldermaston ward with Midgham parish, formerly in Bucklebury ward, as detailed above.

95 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Aldermaston, Burghfield and Mortimer wards would vary by 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 7 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Mortimer ward and deteriorate slightly in Aldermaston ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent and 6 per cent from the district average in 2006. The electoral variance for Burghfield ward is expected to remain constant over the next five years.

96 Having carefully considered the representations received, we note the similarity between the Conservatives' and District Council's proposals. We recognise that both provide similar levels of electoral equality but we are of the opinion that the Conservatives' proposal would offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are aware of the difficulty in trying to group parishes in this area together to obtain good electoral equality while retaining community identity. We feel the Conservatives' proposal best meets this need and have decided to adopt the Conservatives' scheme in this area, without modification.

97 We have noted Midgham Parish Council's support for the District Council's proposal to include the parish in its proposed Beenham ward as this would unite similar rural parishes within a district ward. However, we consider that Midgham Parish Council's inclusion in a proposed Aldermaston ward would also group it with similar parishes with which it would share community interests and are therefore proposing this as part of our draft recommendations.

98 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Aldermaston (comprising the parishes of Aldermaston, Brimpton, Midgham, Wasing and Woolhampton), Burghfield (comprising the parish of Burghfield) and Mortimer (comprising the parishes of Beech Hill, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer, Ufton Nervet and Wokefield) wards would vary from the district average by 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Mortimer ward, but is expected to slightly deteriorate in Aldermaston ward while remaining constant in Burghfield ward over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively, from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2.

### **Basildon, Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards**

99 The existing wards of Basildon, Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames cover the north eastern part of the district. Basildon ward (comprising the parishes of Basildon and Streatley) and Pangbourne ward (comprising the parish of Pangbourne) are represented by one councillor each, and Purley-on-Thames

ward (comprising the parishes of Purley-on-Thames, Sulham and Tidmarsh) is represented by two councillors. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Basildon, Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards varies by 2 per cent, 9 per cent and 11 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to deteriorate in Basildon and Purley-on-Thames wards, while improving slightly in Pangbourne ward to vary by 7 per cent, 17 per cent and 8 per cent from the district average respectively by 2006.

100 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area be represented by two wards, with the proposed Basildon ward being represented by a single councillor and the proposed Pangbourne ward being represented by three councillors. It proposed retaining the existing Basildon ward boundary while combining the existing Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards to create a new Pangbourne ward. Under the District Council's 58-member council scheme there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in Basildon and Pangbourne wards by 5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 0 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in 2006.

101 The Conservatives proposed that this area should be covered by two wards, with the proposed Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards being represented by two councillors each. They proposed combining the existing Basildon and Pangbourne wards together with Sulham and Tidmarsh parishes, currently in Purley-on-Thames ward, to create a new Pangbourne ward. They also proposed creating a new Purley-on-Thames ward, including the parish of Purley-on-Thames and also the proposed Denefield parish ward of Tilehurst parish. The new Denefield parish ward would consist of the properties north of Tidmarsh Lane, Long Lane and Dark Lane with the new district ward of Westwood bordering it to the east. Under the Conservatives' 52-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor in Pangbourne and Purley-on-Thames wards would be 9 per cent more than the district average for both wards. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve in both wards over the next five years to vary by 5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively from the district average in 2006.

102 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One. While we appreciate that the District Council's proposal offers the best electoral equality for the area under a 58-member council, under the 52-member scheme that we have adopted for the district as a whole, these variances increase. We consider that the Conservatives' proposals group together similar communities in the area and provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we propose endorsing the Conservatives' proposals for this area.

103 We note Basildon Parish Council's preference for the District Council's 58-member option as it considers that any other option may see the parish divorced from the West Berkshire Unitary Authority at some time in the future. However, this is not a matter we can consider under current periodic electoral review and we consider that placing the parish in Pangbourne ward would place it with other parishes with similar interests.

104 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council both Pangbourne (comprising the parishes of Basildon, Pangbourne, Streatley, Sulham and Tidmarsh) and Purley-on-Thames (comprising the parish of Purley-on-Thames and the proposed Denefield parish ward of Tilehurst parish) wards would each vary from the district average by 9 per cent. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in both wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to

vary by 5 per cent and 4 per cent from the district average by 2006, respectively. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2 and on Map 2 and Map A2.

### **Birch Copse, Calcot, Theale and Westwood wards**

105 The existing wards of Birch Copse, Calcot, Theale and Westwood cover the town of Tilehurst and the parishes of Theale and Holybrook, situated to the southwest and south of the urban area. Theale ward (comprising the parishes of Holybrook and Theale) is currently represented by three councillors, while Birch Copse ward (comprising the Birch Copse parish ward of Tilehurst parish) and Westwood ward (comprising the Westwood parish ward of Tilehurst parish) are each represented by two councillors. Calcot ward (comprising the Calcot ward of Tilehurst parish) is represented by a single councillor. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Birch Copse, Calcot, Theale and Westwood wards varies from the district average by 13 per cent, 29 per cent, 24 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve significantly in Birch Copse, Calcot and Theale wards, while it is expected to deteriorate in Westwood ward over the next five years, to vary by 1 per cent, 17 per cent, 17 per cent and 10 per cent from the district average respectively.

106 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be covered by five wards, with the proposed Birch Copse, Calcot, Holybrook and Westwood wards being represented by two councillors each, with the proposed Theale ward represented by a single councillor. It proposed that Westwood ward retain its current boundary, while Birch Copse ward would be extended to include the golf course to the southwest and the Starlings Drive area to the west. Its proposed Calcot ward would incorporate the area to the north of Bath Road from the east and a newly proposed Holybrook West parish ward to the south of Bath Road, and the Fernhurst Road area. Its proposed Holybrook ward would contain the remainder of the area, comprising its proposed Holybrook Central and Holybrook East parish wards. Its proposed Theale ward would reflect the parish ward boundary of Theale parish ward.

107 Under the Council's proposals for a 58-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Birch Copse, Calcot, Holybrook, Theale and Westwood wards would vary by 9 per cent, 13 per cent, 9 per cent, 15 per cent and 7 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in all wards over the next five years to vary by 1 per cent, 6 per cent, 3 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent from the district average in 2006.

108 The Conservatives proposed that this area be represented by five wards, with the proposed Birch Copse, Calcot and Holybrook wards being represented by two councillors each and the proposed Theale and Westwood wards each being represented by a single councillor. Their proposed Westwood ward would comprise the parish of the same name. The proposed Westwood ward would retain the existing eastern boundary, but its western boundary would run to the rear of the properties on the eastern side of Talbot Way and Warbeck Drive with access onto Cotswold Way, and the Brooklands school area. The area to the west of this would comprise the new Denefield parish ward of Tilehurst parish, which would be included in the proposed Purley-on-Thames district ward. Their proposed Birch Copse ward would cover the area to the south of Dark Lane and Tidmarsh Lane, containing all properties west of Starlings Drive, including the recreation ground, Hypermarket and Industrial Park in its southern area. Their proposed Calcot ward would cover the area to the south of Birch Copse to the Bath Road also including properties west of Charrington Road and Sweet Briar Drive, the area south of Bath Road contained in Calcot ward would comprise of two new parish wards; Holybrook Central parish ward and

Holybrook West parish ward. Holybrook ward would contain the remainder of the area south of the Bath Road. Their proposed Theale ward would comprise the existing Theale parish ward.

109 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Birch Copse, Calcot, Holybrook, Theale and Westwood wards would vary from the district average by 0 per cent, 1 per cent, 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate slightly over the next five years in Birch Copse, Calcot Theale and Westwood wards to vary by 6 per cent, 7 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent from the district average, with the variance remaining constant in Holybrook ward.

110 Having carefully considered all the submissions received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Conservatives' proposals for Westwood ward as they provide good level of electoral equality and promote community identity, while we endeavour to propose our own scheme for the mid to lower area of Tilehurst in the interests of community identity. We are proposing that Theale parish should comprise a single-member ward as proposed by both the Conservatives and the District Council, as it is separated from the area to the west by the M4. We also propose adopting the Conservatives' new Denefield parish ward in Tilehurst parish and including it in the proposed Purley-on-Thames ward, this provides for good electoral equality in this area of the district and allows for the grouping of similar communities.

111 We propose creating two three-member wards covering the remainder of Tilehurst and Holybrook parishes, named Birch Copse and Holybrook wards. Birch Copse ward would comprise the existing Birch Copse ward, plus those properties to the south of Tidmarsh Lane, Long Lane and Dark Lane, until the latter reaches the district boundary. It would also contain the properties formerly in Calcot ward that are north of Garston Crescent and Conway Road. It would also contain Curtis' Wood and the northern area of the golf course to the north of West Drive and East Drive. While we recognise that this ward would have a higher electoral variance than either wards proposed by the District Council or the Conservatives, we consider that Holybrook parish should be retained within a single ward in order to retain community identity. However, in order to improve electoral equality in this ward, we propose that Holybrook ward contain all the properties to the south of Bath Road, in addition it will include all that to the south of Curtis' Wood except Broadlands Close, this will be a new Calcot parish ward. The properties in the extreme south east of the former Calcot ward will also form part of a new Calcot parish ward of Tilehurst parish and be included in the proposed Holybrook ward. This ward arrangement allows for good electoral equality and allows for preservation of community identity. The proposals made by both the Conservatives and the District Council divided the community south of the Bath Road. We are of the opinion that this does not satisfy the statutory criteria. Having tried to divide Holybrook ward using natural boundaries we found that this resulted in high levels of electoral equality. We welcome views on our draft proposals for this area during Stage Three.

112 Under our draft recommendations for a 52-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Birch Copse, Holybrook, Theale and Westwood wards would vary from the district average by 3 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate slightly in all wards over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by 9 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent from the district average by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 & 2, on Map 2, Map A2 and Map A3.

## **Electoral Cycle**

113 At Stage One, the District Council and the Conservatives supported maintaining the current electorate cycle of whole-council elections every four years. We are therefore content to propose no change to the existing cycle.

## **Conclusions**

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 54 to 52;
- there should be 28 wards;
- the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

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

- we propose that Cold Ash parish be divided into three parish wards and that Cold Ash parish ward be included in a new Chieveley ward, Dunston Park North parish ward be included in Thatcham North ward and Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward be included in Turnpike ward;
- we propose revised boundaries for Speen and Chieveley wards;
- we propose new arrangements for mid to southern Tilehurst, to include Holybrook parish, proposing two new three-member wards; Birch Copse ward and Holybrook ward;
- we propose minor boundary amendments to proposed wards in Newbury and Thatcham.

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

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	54	52	54	52
Number of wards	31	28	31	28
Average number of electors per councillor	2,060	2,139	2,174	2,257
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	4	15	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	1	3	0

117 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for West Berkshire District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 14 to four. By 2006 only one ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

West Berkshire District Council should comprise 52 councillors serving 28 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

### **Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

118 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 district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Cold Ash, Newbury, Thatcham and Tilehurst to reflect the proposed district wards.

119 The parish of Cold Ash is currently served by 11 councillors representing the whole parish. At Stage One the District Council proposed creating two new parish wards, Dunston Park North and Manor Park & Manor Fields, to contain urban overspill from Thatcham and Newbury. The Conservatives also proposed a new Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward. In the light of the scheme we have adopted for district warding in the area, we propose creating two new parish wards in southern Cold Ash. The remainder of Cold Ash parish (Cold Ash parish ward) should be represented by seven councillors, while Dunston Park North parish ward would be represented by two councillors and Manor Park & Manor Fields parish ward would be represented by two councillors.

**Draft Recommendation**

Cold Ash Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Cold Ash (returning seven councillors), Dunston Park North (returning two councillors) and Manor Park & Manor Fields (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

120 The parish of Tilehurst is currently served by 21 councillors representing three wards. At Stage One the District Council proposed that Tilehurst should have 20 councillors with Calcot parish ward being represented by four councillors, and Birch Copse and Westwood parish ward being represented by eight councillors each. The Conservatives also proposed reducing the council to 20 councillors, representing four wards, to reflect their new district warding arrangements. However, having adopted our own scheme at a district level in the south of this area, we propose adopting two of the parish wards proposed by the Conservatives, Denefield parish ward which is to be included in Purley-on-Thames ward and represented by three councillors and Westwood parish ward which will reflect the district ward of the same name and be represented by four councillors. The two alternative parish wards for Birch Copse and Calcot parishes are to reflect the district wards of the same name and be represented by 12 councillors and two councillors respectively.

**Draft Recommendation**

Tilehurst Parish Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Birch Copse returning 12 councillors, Westwood returning four councillors, Denefield parish ward returning three councillors and Calcot parish ward returning two councillors. The boundary between the parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 and Map A3 in Appendix A.

121 The Town Council of Thatcham is currently represented by 18 councillors and divided into four parish wards, Thatcham East, Thatcham North, Thatcham South and Thatcham West. The District Council proposed that Thatcham East & Crookham, Thatcham North and Thatcham West parish wards return four councillors each with Thatcham South West parish ward returning six councillors. However, we adopted the Conservatives' proposals for our draft recommendations at Stage One. Under the new warding arrangements as proposed by the Conservatives, Thatcham Central parish ward should be served by four councillors, Thatcham North parish ward served by four councillors, Thatcham South & Crookham parish ward served by six councillors and Thatcham West parish ward served by four councillors, totalling 18, as at present.

**Draft Recommendation**

Thatcham Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Thatcham Central, Thatcham North and Thatcham West parish wards, each returning four councillors with Thatcham South & Crookham parish ward returning six councillors. The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the rear of the report.

122 Newbury Town Council is currently served by 24 councillors representing four wards. At Stage One both the Conservatives and the District Council proposed new warding arrangements for Newbury, with both in agreement on the creation of a new Newbury South East parish ward to the east of the A339. We have based our proposals in this area on the Conservatives' scheme. However, in the interests of facilitating ward arrangements at a district level in order to provide better levels of electoral equality and a reflection of community identity, we are creating a new parish ward of our own in the north west of Newbury, named Brummel Grove parish ward. We propose that Newbury Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, a decrease of two, representing seven wards; Newbury Central, St Barts, St Johns and Turnpike parish wards each returning four councillors with Brummel Grove, Newbury North West and Newbury South East parish wards each returning two councillors.

**Draft Recommendation**

Newbury Town Council Council should comprise 22 parish councillors, instead of the current 24, representing seven wards: Brummel Grove (returning two councillors), Newbury Central (returning four councillors), Newbury North West (returning two councillors), Newbury South East (returning two councillors), St Barts (returning four councillors), St Johns (returning four councillors) and Turnpike (returning four councillors).

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

**Draft Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: Draft Recommendations for West Berkshire*



## **5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

124 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for West Berkshire contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 4 December 2001. Any received after this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

125 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

**Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

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



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Draft Recommendations for West Berkshire: Detailed Mapping**

**The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the West Berkshire area.**

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Tilehurst parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Tilehurst and Holybrook parishes.

The large map inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Newbury and Thatcham.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for West Berkshire: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed Warding of Tilehurst parish*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Tilehurst and Holybrook parishes*

## APPENDIX B

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 Code of Practice on Written Consultation, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission 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 D1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria**

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