

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes Council

Electoral review

January 2013

Translations and other formats

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Milton Keynes Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in February 2012. This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
8 May 2012	Consultation on council size
24 July 2012	Submission of proposals of ward arrangements to the LGBCE
16 October 2012	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
22 January 2013	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
19 March 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Electorate figures

Milton Keynes Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 11.5% over this period.

The Commission had concerns that the Council's figures did not fully account for the possibility of larger developments in future years completing less than the planned growth. Therefore, during consultation on council size, the Commission requested more information regarding developments across the borough. In response, after discussions, the Council submitted revised growth of 6.8% across this period. This took account of the Commission's concerns. The Commission agreed to the Council's methodology for constraining the forecasted growth across the largest development areas.

During consultation on the draft recommendations the Commission toured the area to assess the development sites. The Council also provided an update on the latest information available. Based on this latest information, the Commission and the Council agreed to the revised projected electorate figure of 6.7% growth across the borough by 2018.

Council size

During the preliminary stage of the review, the Commission met with the Council's Group Leaders. The Council subsequently provided a proposal for a council size of 57, an increase of six members. The Commission decided that there was not enough evidence in the Council's argument to recommend a council size of 57 members, and therefore recommended the existing council size of 51 members as a basis for a public consultation on council size. During consultation on council size 44 submissions were received, although no further submission was received from the Council.

The Commission considered that the case for an increase to 57 was finely balanced, but was persuaded by the arguments from the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Party and from Councillor Bint and Councillor Brackenbury. The Council will face additional responsibilities over the next 10 years and will require further resources to develop its infrastructure and strategies to manage an expanding city. Therefore, the Commission invited representations on warding arrangements based on a 57-member council.

General analysis

Our draft recommendations provide for a 57-member council with a uniform pattern of 19 three-member wards. No ward is forecast to have a variance of more than 10% from the borough average by 2018. The draft recommendations are broadly based on a combination of proposals by the Council and the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. Where we have proposed modifications, it has been in order to better reflect our statutory criteria. Our draft recommendations provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and transport links in Milton Keynes.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which time we encourage comments on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes Council contained in the report. **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.** We will take into account all submissions received by 18 March 2013. Any received after this date may not be taken into account. We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
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London EC1M 5LG
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The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

You can also view our draft recommendations for Milton Keynes Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review the electoral arrangements of Milton Keynes Council, to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Milton Keynes Council inviting the submission of proposals on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for the Council in summer 2013.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Milton Keynes?

6 We decided to conduct this review because based on the January 2011 electorate figures, 39% of its wards currently exceed the 10% variance threshold and one ward has an electoral variance of more than 30% from the average. The largest outlier is the two-member Middleton ward which has 40% more electors than the borough average.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve in the borough. They will also decide which ward you vote in and which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we therefore stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will accept comments and views until 18 March 2013. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in summer 2013. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 29 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

1 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between borough wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single borough ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Milton Keynes Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

16 Under the 2009 Act, where a council elects by thirds or halves (as opposed to the whole council being elected every four years), there is a presumption that the authority should have a uniform pattern of three-member and two-member wards respectively. We will only move away from this presumption where we receive compelling evidence to do so and where it can be demonstrated that an alternative warding pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria. Consequently, our starting point for this review was that Milton Keynes should have a uniform pattern of three-member wards given its electoral cycle at this time.

Submissions received

17 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited Milton Keynes Council ('the Council') and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 45 submissions during our consultation on council size. These submissions proposed different council sizes ranging from 51 up to 70. Subsequently, we received 120 submissions on warding patterns including borough-wide schemes from the Council, the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Group and a local resident. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

18 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 11.5% over this period.

19 We had concerns over the Council's projected electorate estimations. During consultation on council size, we requested more information regarding developments across the borough in relation to the Council's methodology, especially the methodology constraining the forecasted growth across the largest development areas. During consultation on the draft recommendations, we toured the area and noted that some developments appeared to be progressing faster than the Council had calculated in its forecasts. The Council agreed that some development had progressed at a quicker than anticipated rate, and also provided updates on other developments which were now unlikely to take place. Based on this latest information, we agreed with the Council's projections for electorate growth of 6.7% across the borough by 2018.

Council size

20 During the preliminary stage of the review, we met with the Council's Group Leaders. The Council subsequently provided a cross-party draft proposal for a council size of 57, an increase of six members on the current 51. We requested further information relating to this proposal. Subsequently, the Council provided a finalised submission on 24 February 2012.

21 Based on the representations received during the preliminary stage, we decided that there was insufficient evidence to recommend a council size of 57 members.

We therefore undertook a public consultation on the existing council size of 51 members.

22 During the public consultation on council size, 44 submissions were received. These were from 10 parish and town councils, four borough councillors, two local organisations, one political group, one MP, and 26 local residents. No further submission was received from the Council.

23 We considered that the case for an increase to 57 was finely balanced, but were persuaded by the arguments from the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Party and from Councillor Bint (Middleton ward) and Councillor Brackenbury (Linford South ward). The Council will face additional responsibilities over the next 10 years and will require further resources to develop its infrastructure and strategies to manage an expanding city. We therefore invited representations on warding arrangements based on a 57-member council.

Electoral fairness

24 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

25 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we calculate the average number of electors per councillor. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (178,504 in 2012 and 190,468 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council – 57 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 3,132 in 2012 and 3,342 by 2018.

26 Under our draft recommendations, none of our proposed 19 wards will have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the borough by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Milton Keynes.

General analysis

27 We received 122 submissions during the initial warding consultation stage. Milton Keynes Council, Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Group and a local resident proposed borough-wide warding patterns. These were all based on a uniform pattern of 19 three-member wards.

28 Councillor Ferrans (Furzton ward) and Councillor Brackenbury (Linford South ward) provided borough-wide submissions which focused on community identity without explicitly detailing proposed warding arrangements. A submission from the Milton Keynes Labour Party commented on areas across the borough and supported the Council's proposals. A local resident submitted a warding pattern based on the Council's proposals, but with significant modifications to the central area of Milton Keynes. The proposals from the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrat Group shared some similarities with the Council scheme, but few of the proposed wards were identical.

We also received localised submissions from parish and town councils, several borough councillors, a residents' association and local residents.

29 In the northern rural areas of the borough, the Council, the Liberal Democrat Group and the local resident all proposed a large three-member rural ward. The Council proposed that Newport Pagnell be divided between two wards, while the Liberal Democrat Group suggested a ward coterminous with the parish boundary. The knock-on effect of these different proposals for Newport Pagnell is that the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group suggested different proposals across the rest of the borough.

30 A large number of residents in the existing Middleton ward expressed opposition to the Council's proposal to place the newly created parish of Old Woughton in a ward with Woughton Community Council. We also received a large number of submissions from residents in the existing Danesborough ward opposing the Council's proposal to include this area with the new housing estate in Broughton. We have taken into account all the submissions received in formulating our draft recommendations.

31 Our draft recommendations would result in 57 councillors representing 19 three-member wards. A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 32-33) and the map accompanying this report.

32 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly in relation to the parishes that we propose to divide between borough wards. We also particularly welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

33 This section of the report details the submissions received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Milton Keynes. The following areas are considered in turn:

- North Milton Keynes (page 8)
- West Milton Keynes (page 11)
- Bletchley (page 15)
- East Milton Keynes (page 16)
- Central Milton Keynes (page 19)

North Milton Keynes

34 The urban north is centred on Newport Pagnell, a historic market town located to the east of the M1 motorway. The current arrangements for Newport Pagnell are a two-member Newport Pagnell North ward and a two-member Newport Pagnell South ward. Together, these wards are coterminous with the parish boundary.

35 The rural north comprises the current wards of Olney (two-member), Sherington (single-member) and Hanslope Park (single-member). These wards are situated north of the M1, with the exception of the current Hanslope Park ward which crosses

the motorway. The M1 runs diagonally through the borough, in a north-west to south-east direction, and acts as a strong boundary between the rural north and the urban new town of Milton Keynes.

36 The Council and the Liberal Democrat Group proposed different arrangements for Newport Pagnell. The Council proposed a three-member Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward and a three-member Newport Pagnell South & Giffard Park ward, both of which would contain 7% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Council argued that its Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward 'brings the town and rural west together as there are strong shared interests between these areas'. It also argued that its Newport Pagnell South & Giffard Park ward had 'strong geographical and historical links' and that the M1 does not prevent community and transport links between Newport Pagnell and Great Linford.

37 The Council's proposed Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward included the new developments of Oakridge Park (in Stantonbury parish) and Redhouse Park (in Great Linford parish). We noted that whilst Redhouse Park is geographically near to Newport Pagnell and has good road connections into Hanslope, Oakridge Park does not have any direct connections to the Hanslope area and is geographically further from Newport Pagnell.

38 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that the area has a 'very active Town Council that runs a number of devolved services'. It proposed a three-member Newport Pagnell ward coterminous with the parish boundary. This ward would contain 14% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. Support for this proposal was received from Newport Pagnell Town Council, which argued that the parish is a discrete community. Councillor Ferrans (Furzton ward) also supported this proposal, stating that it has a 'very strong sense of identity... as a long established rural town with a notable history'.

39 The Liberal Democrat Group recognised that a variance of 14% did not provide for good electoral equality, and therefore also suggested two possible amendments to its proposals for Newport Pagnell. Each amendment would result in a three-member Newport Pagnell ward with improved electoral equality. The first amendment was to transfer approximately 475 electors from the Penny Royal estate in the west of Newport Pagnell into its proposed Wolverton & Hanslope ward. The second amendment (taken separately from the first amendment as described above) was to transfer approximately 340 electors in the south-eastern part of Tickford in Newport Pagnell. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that this latter area is 'disconnected by industrial areas and the swimming pool', and proposed to transfer it into its proposed Olney ward.

40 Councillor McCall (Newport Pagnell South ward) expressed a preference for a three-member Newport Pagnell ward, but also provided some evidence of links to the south. Alderman and Alderwoman Henderson of Milton Keynes, a town councillor for Newport Pagnell and several local residents also supported the Liberal Democrat proposals for Newport Pagnell. Councillor Eastman (Newport Pagnell North ward) suggested parishes should not be divided between more than two wards.

41 While there is clearly considerable support for retaining Newport Pagnell in a single ward, to do so would result in poor electoral equality. The Liberal Democrat

suggested modifications would address this issue. However, we considered that removing either area would be unlikely to reflect community identity. We have therefore looked at warding arrangements for Newport Pagnell in the context of our wider consideration of the northern part of the borough.

42 In the rural north, the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group both proposed a similar three-member rural ward. The Council's Olney & Sherington ward comprises 18 parishes and would contain 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Liberal Democrat Group's proposal differed from the Council only by including the rural Gayhurst parish and naming the ward Olney, resulting in a ward which would contain equal to the number of electors per councillor for the borough by 2018.

43 Olney Town Council requested that the current two-member ward be retained, arguing that it would provide for good electoral equality. Sherington Parish Council expressed a preference to retain its single-member ward. However, it added that if it was to form part of a multi-member ward, it would prefer to be warded with Olney and not Newport Pagnell.

44 The Council and Liberal Democrat Group schemes proposed different configurations for the Hanslope rural area. The Council had proposed to combine this area with part of Newport Pagnell, as described above. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed to ward Hanslope with Wolverton, part of the Milton Keynes conurbation. The Liberal Democrat Group accepted that this ward would combine the urban area of Wolverton with the rural Hanslope area. It argued that these areas have long established links and many of the parishes around Hanslope look towards Wolverton, particularly for facilities.

45 Having considered the evidence received, we have decided to broadly adopt the Council's scheme in the north of the borough, subject to several minor amendments. We propose to adopt the Council's Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward with the amendment that the Oakridge Park development is not included. We consider that Oakridge Park has much stronger ties to Stantonbury parish (paragraph 113). We also propose to include the parish of Stoke Goldington in the Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward to provide a better balance of electoral equality between the wards. The B526 provides a direct road connection between Stoke Goldington and Gayhurst parishes, which comprises part of the Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward.

46 As a result of our proposal to include Stoke Goldington and Gayhurst parishes in Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope ward, we recommend a three-member Olney ward, comprising 17 rural parishes. As stated above (paragraph 16), under the 2009 Act, for authorities that elect by thirds, there is a presumption in favour of three-member wards. We will only move away from this if there is a compelling argument to do so that better meets our statutory criteria. Although some representations received expressed opposition to a three-member rural ward in the north, in light of the evidence so far received we consider that our three-member Olney ward provides the best balance between the statutory criteria.

47 We also propose to amend the boundary of the Council's proposed division of Newport Pagnell between wards. The Council proposed a boundary partly along

Wolverton Road and partly following the backs of houses adjacent to the area along Ousedale School. We were concerned that this was not easily identifiable and sought to find a stronger boundary. We propose that the boundary run along Wolverton Road, before following the High Street as far as Lathbury Bridge.

48 As a result of this amendment, we propose one further modification to the Council's Newport Pagnell South & Giffard Park ward. In order to improve the balance of electoral equality between wards, we propose to use the Grand Union Canal as the south-western boundary for the ward, this forms a strong boundary and results in our proposed ward being projected to have 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. Finally, we also propose a shortened ward name of Newport Pagnell South.

49 Overall, our draft recommendations for the north of Milton Keynes are for three three-member wards of Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope, Newport Pagnell South, and Olney. These are projected to have 9% fewer, 8% fewer and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

50 These proposals can be seen on the large map accompanying this report.

West Milton Keynes

51 The west of Milton Keynes comprises the historic town of Stony Stratford, the Victorian railway community of Wolverton, and rural parishes (which are anticipated to eventually accommodate the development of the Western Expansion Area). Slightly further to the south-east lie the urban Milton Keynes parishes of Abbey Hill, Shenley Church End, Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe, and Loughton.

52 The existing arrangements in west Milton Keynes are for a two-member Furzton ward and four three-member wards of Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Loughton Park and Emerson Valley. Standing Way (H8)³ provides the boundary to the east, beyond which lies the town of Bletchley. The railway line and the A5 provide significant boundaries between this area and central Milton Keynes.

Wolverton

53 The Council proposed a Wolverton ward which comprised Wolverton & Greenleys parish with New Bradwell parish. It stated that the two areas have a shared identity and residents of New Bradwell use shopping facilities in Wolverton. The Milton Keynes Labour Party described Wolverton and New Bradwell as 'sister communities'.

54 Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council supported retaining the existing ward boundary, arguing that Wolverton has strong historical links with New Bradwell and social and geographical links with Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea. However, retaining these areas together would result in a Wolverton ward being projected to have 13% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The

³ The Milton Keynes grid system is made up of 11 roads aligned roughly north to south and 10 aligned roughly east to west. Initially, these were designated as 'V roads' and 'H roads' respectively (for 'vertical' and 'horizontal'). In our report, we use these designations alongside conventional road names.

Council acknowledged that it did not include Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea in its proposed Wolverton ward as a result of balancing the statutory criteria and, instead, proposed to transfer both into Stantonbury ward (paragraphs 111-112).

55 Councillor Ferrans (Furzton ward) argued that Greenleys, Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea differ from the communities around them and therefore 'could be placed in either Wolverton or Stony Stratford ward'.

56 We propose a Wolverton ward containing Wolverton and Greenleys parish, using the A5 and Millers Way as the ward's southern boundary. We also propose that this ward contain New Bradwell parish and, in order to provide good electoral equality, the Bancroft and Blue Bridge area. Although Bancroft and Blue Bridge is part of Stantonbury parish, we note that it appears to have equally good access into Wolverton, and consider that the watercourse to the east of the settlement provides a reasonably strong and identifiable boundary. Our draft recommendations would require creating a parish ward for Stantonbury.

57 We do not propose to include Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes in our Wolverton ward as this would result in the ward having 20% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. We consider that our proposed Wolverton ward provides the best balance of the statutory criteria. This ward would be projected to have 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

Stony Stratford

58 The historic town of Stony Stratford is situated in the south-west of the borough. The Council proposed a Stony Stratford ward comprising Stony Stratford, Calverton and Abbey Hill parishes, which is forecast to have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Council did not include the Fairfields and Whitehouse parishes in this ward, both of which are anticipated to accommodate future housing development as part of the Western Expansion Area.

59 The Liberal Democrat Group submission recommended a Stony Stratford ward broadly similar to the Council's scheme. However, it did not include Abbey Hill parish, instead comprising the new city estates of Greenleys, Stacey Hill and Hodge Lea. This proposed ward would have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

60 Several submissions were also received which expressed concern over the traffic congestion issues along Watling Street, particularly with regard to the impact of the Western Expansion Area. A local resident argued that Stony Stratford residents and future Western Expansion Area residents will have a shared concern over the traffic issues along Watling Street

61 Our proposal for the south-west of Milton Keynes is for a Stony Stratford ward comprising Stony Stratford, Calverton, Fairfields and Whitehouse parishes. The proposed ward would also include the Crownhill estate in Shenley Church End parish to ensure good electoral equality. This estate is connected to the rest of the parish through Watling Street, which also connects the anticipated new developments with the historic town of Stony Stratford. We consider that our proposed Stony Stratford ward has good internal communication links, provides good electoral equality and comprises communities which have expressed shared community interests. Our

proposed Stony Stratford ward would contain 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

Shenley, Loughton and Tattenhoe

62 Further to the south of the borough, Shenley Church End, Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe and Loughton parishes contain new city estates. The railway line and the A5 run parallel to each other to the north-west of this area and form a strong boundary.

63 The Council proposed an Oxley ward, comprising Fairfield and Whitehouse parishes. The ward also included the majority of the Shenley Church End parish, although not the Shenley Church End estate in the north-east of the parish. This ward would contain 10% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

64 The Council also proposed a Loughton ward which comprised the entire parish of Loughton, the remainder of Shenley Church End parish and the Shenley Lodge estate in Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe parish. This ward would contain 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. It also proposed an Emerson ward based largely on the Tattenhoe and Shenley Brook End estates which are connected through Westcroft. This ward would contain 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Council provided evidence of shared community links for these wards.

65 Finally, the Council proposed a Furzton ward which would contain 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. This ward comprised the Emerson Valley and Furzton communities. It also included an area from West Bletchley to achieve 'electoral parity'. The Council stated that the common A421 boundary and 'some school links' provide some shared community identity for this ward. The borough-wide scheme from the local resident supported the Council's proposals in this area.

66 The Liberal Democrat Group provided a scheme for this area which used strong boundaries and provided for good electoral equality. Its Loughton Lodge ward comprised the parishes of Loughton, Abbey Hill, Fairfield and Whitehouse, and would contain 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. Its Shenley Church End ward proposal was coterminous with the Shenley Church End parish boundary, and would contain 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. This ward also mirrored a submission from Shenley Church End parish which argued for a ward coterminous with the parish boundary.

67 The Liberal Democrat proposal also formed two wards from the Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe parish, arguing that the H6 to the north and the A421 (H8) to the south form strong boundaries. Its Furzton ward proposal would contain 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018 and comprised the areas of Shenley Lodge, Emerson Valley and Furzton. Its Howe Park ward comprised the areas of Shenley Brook End, Tattenhoe, Westcroft and Kingsmead, and would contain 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

68 A submission from two West Bletchley parish councillors, writing in a personal capacity, opposed the Council's proposal for the Scots estate to be included in

Furzton ward. The parish councillors argued that the Scots estate, which is part of West Bletchley parish, shares local churches, shops, medical practices and social facilities with the wider West Bletchley community.

69 A submission was also received from West Bletchley Town Council. It opposed the Council's proposal to include the Scots estate, which includes Denbigh Hall and Cold Harbour Primary School, in its Furzton ward. It argued that Bletchley has a 'distinct social and political identity'.

70 As a result of our Stony Stratford ward proposal, we have had to consider alternative warding arrangements to those proposed by the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group. This also meant it would not be possible to provide a ward that is coterminous with Shenley Church End parish, as the parish of that name had requested.

71 We propose a Loughton & Shenley ward that contains the parish of Loughton and the majority of Shenley Church End parish. The Crownhill estate, part of Shenley Church End parish, would be in our Stony Stratford ward (see paragraph 62). We also propose that, in addition to the community of Tattenhoe, the Oxley Park estate be included in our Tattenhoe ward, to which it has strong transport links and close geographical proximity. Tattenhoe Street forms the northern boundary of this ward.

72 Our Loughton & Shenley and Tattenhoe wards are projected to have 2% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

73 We looked at whether we could propose a Shenley Brook End ward with the remainder of the parish, which includes the new city estates of Shenley Brook End, Shenley Lodge, Emerson Valley and Furzton. However, combining these communities together would result in a ward being projected to have 27% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

74 As a result, we explored alternative ward patterns to provide improved electoral equality. We considered that the watercourse running in a south-west direction from Furzton Lake provides a natural, identifiable boundary between the communities within Furzton and Emerson Valley.

75 Using the watercourse as a boundary results in a Shenley Brook End ward that would contain 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. Although Bletchley is an established town in its own right, and we recognise that the A421 is a strong boundary contiguous with the parish boundary, we toured the area and noted that several subways run beneath the A421. We considered that these subways, intended for pedestrian and cyclist access, as evidence of some links between these two areas. We therefore propose a Shenley Brook End ward with its eastern boundary being the watercourse running in the south-west direction from Furzton Lake.

76 Overall, our draft recommendations for west Milton Keynes are for five three-member wards of Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Loughton & Shenley, Tattenhoe and Shenley Brook End. These are projected to have 4% more, 3% more, 2% fewer, 4% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

77 These proposals can be seen on the large map accompanying this report.

Bletchley

78 The town of Bletchley grew rapidly during the Victorian period. The growth resulted in the town merging with nearby Fenny Stratford. The new town development of Water Eaton began in the 1960s and saw a significant rise in population. Bletchley is served by West Bletchley and Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parishes. The A5 to its north and east and the A421 to its west provide strong boundaries. Bletchley's southern boundary is contiguous with the borough boundary.

79 The existing arrangements for Bletchley are a three-member Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward and three two-member wards of Denbigh, Eaton Manor and Whaddon. The Bletchley & Fenny Stratford ward crosses the strong A5 boundary and includes the parish of Simpson & Ashland.

80 The Council and Liberal Democrat Group proposed different warding patterns for Bletchley. As explained in the section above, the Council included part of West Bletchley parish (the Scots estate) in its proposed Furzton ward. It also proposed to include Simpson & Ashland parish in its Bletchley North & Fenny Stratford ward, although little evidence was provided with regards to shared community identity between these two areas. The Council also proposed a Bletchley South & Eaton ward and a Bletchley West & Whaddon ward. None of its proposed Bletchley wards were projected to have more than 10% variance from the average by 2018.

81 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed three Bletchley wards based solely on West Bletchley and Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parishes. Its Bletchley West ward combined part of West Bletchley parish with the town centre. It proposed a Bletchley North ward based on the remainder of West Bletchley parish. It further proposed a Fenny Stratford & Eaton Manor ward, comprising Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish, minus the town centre, in its Bletchley West ward. These wards all provided for good levels of electoral equality.

82 The submission received from the two West Bletchley parish councillors expressed concern over the Council's scheme, which had proposed not to include the Scots estate with Bletchley wards. They provided two alternative ward patterns in this area for three three-member wards. Each pattern involved a different mixture of parishes in each ward. We considered the proposals, however, due to knock-on effects we were not able to recommend either of their proposals in our draft recommendations.

83 Councillor Ferrans (Furzton ward) commented that Bletchley and Danesborough 'have little in common' and that the railway forms a barrier between the two communities.

84 Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council argued that a ward should be coterminous with its parish boundary, providing evidence of community identity and strong boundaries. A local resident had also supported this argument. This would, however, be projected to have 12% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

85 Having considered all proposals received for this area, our draft recommendations for Bletchley are for three three-member wards. Our proposals differ from the schemes received as a result of the knock-on effect of our proposals for other parts of the borough.

86 We propose a Bletchley West ward comprising part of West Bletchley parish and part of Shenley Brook End parish. This ward combines communities from Bletchley, Emerson Valley and Furzton which are situated alongside the A421. Combining these areas in one ward recognises the community evidence which the Council provided, albeit for a slightly different warding arrangement.

87 We also propose a Bletchley Park ward which combines the remainder of West Bletchley parish with Bletchley town centre (which is part of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish). In the east of West Bletchley parish, the V7 (Saxon Street) provides road access across the railway into Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish. Having noted that the Liberal Democrat Group argued that the town centre services the whole of Bletchley, we have included it in our proposed Bletchley Park ward in order to provide good electoral equality. Our Bletchley Park ward would also include the adjoining communities to the north and south of Queensway, which is connected to West Bletchley parish via the V7 road.

88 We propose a Bletchley East ward which comprises the remainder of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish, largely formed by Fenny Stratford and Water Eaton communities. There are strong road links throughout the ward and it is bound to the south by the borough boundary and the north and east by the A5.

89 Overall, our draft recommendations for Bletchley are for three three-member wards of Bletchley East, Bletchley Park and Bletchley West. These are projected to have 5% more, 8% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

90 These proposals can be seen on the large map accompanying this report.

East Milton Keynes

91 The eastern flank of Milton Keynes comprises a mixture of rural parishes, which include the market town of Woburn Sands, and higher density new town developments, including the ongoing development in the Eastern Expansion Area.

92 The existing ward arrangements for east Milton Keynes are a single-member Danesborough ward, a two-member Middleton ward and a three-member Walton Park ward. The single-member Danesborough ward is the least urbanised of these wards.

93 The Council proposed a three-member Woburn Sands & Broughton ward, which would comprise the four non-urban parishes of Woburn Sands, Wavendon, Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill and new development areas of Broughton parish and Caldecotte (part of Walton Community Council).

94 The Council, acknowledging the presumption in favour of three-member wards, had sought to provide good electoral equality by combining these areas. It argued

that Caldecotte Lake forms 'a strong natural barrier between the east of Milton Keynes and the traditionally separate area of Bletchley'. Although the Council conceded that Broughton had been included in this ward for 'quota parity', it also argued that 'it shares good geographical links with the Woburn Sands area'. It further argued that since Broughton is not built in the traditional Milton Keynes grid pattern, it could potentially 'develop strong community ties with its older, more established neighbour'.

95 The Council also proposed a Walton Park ward, based on the existing arrangements, but with the inclusion of Monkston Park instead of Caldecotte. The Council considered that this ward was based on 'relatively similar newer estates'.

96 Finally, the Council proposed a Middleton & Willen ward, which broadly comprised the communities around Willen Lake: Middleton, Willen, Woolstone and Willen Park. It also includes Downhead Park and Milton Keynes Village, both slightly further from Willen Lake. Although no specific examples were provided by the Council, it argued that the ward has shared geographical and transport links and community services. All three of the Council's eastern wards provided good levels of electoral equality.

97 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a Danesborough ward based on the four rural parishes that comprise the existing ward, but also included the Caldecotte, Browns Wood and Wavendon Gate communities (all from Walton Community Council). It argued that the 'suburban nature of the fringe estates and the inclusion of the leisure facilities at Caldecotte Lake do not make it as hybrid as it may first seem'.

98 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a Kents Hill & Monkston ward comprising of the remainder of Walton Community Council and the entirety of Kents Hill, Monkston & Brinklow parish. This proposed ward would have strong boundaries, with the River Ouzel to the west, Brinklow and Kingston industrial estate to its east, and the H10 (Bletcham Way) forming the southern boundary.

99 The Liberal Democrat Group further proposed a Willen Lake ward. This included the entirety of Broughton and Milton Keynes parishes. It also included the communities of Willen and Willen Park from Campbell Park and Great Linford parishes, respectively. The Liberal Democrats said that Willen Lake is a major leisure facility and landmark in east Milton Keynes. This ward is forecast to have 11% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Liberal Democrats argued that the current electorate for the ward should also be taken into consideration as it would, under the Liberal Democrat proposals, have fewer electors per councillor than any ward in the borough.

100 Councillor Ferrans (Furzton ward) made some general comments regarding the eastern area, supporting the Liberal Democrat proposal. She considered that the transport connections between the residential area of Broughton and Danesborough are poor and are separated by commercial and farmland areas. The Councillor argued that the two communities are very different to each other. Councillor Ferrans also commented that Walton Park has good road links into the Danesborough area, 'and many people visit the villages for shopping, social events, leisure'. She further argued that the River Ouzel has resulted in north to south connections between communities. The Councillor provided several examples of shared community

identity between the areas of Monkston, Monkston Park, Kents Hill and Walnut Tree.

101 Councillor Brackenbury (Linford South ward) supported a Willen ward with Broughton, opposing the Council's proposals. He commented that Willen has 'a much more common character with Broughton than with Milton Keynes Village in terms of character of estate and relation to the M1'. Councillor Brackenbury concluded that Broughton has a 'completely different character to the rest of the ward [proposed by the Council], and has no physical connection with the other areas, only through substantial countryside/industrial areas'.

102 A submission from Woburn Sands Town Council expressed a preference to retain a single-member Danesborough ward, opposing Danesborough being in any ward which included Broughton. Walton Community Council proposed a ward coterminous with the Walton Community Council boundary, which would result in a ward projected to contain 11% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. Kents Hill & Monkston Parish Council proposed that the communities of Walton and Walnut Tree form a ward with its parish as 'these areas are linked geographically, by facilities and through school catchments, and the boundaries would reflect the interests of our local communities'.

103 We also received 28 submissions from local residents which generally opposed a ward which would include new town developments, particularly Broughton and Brooklands, with the more established communities in the existing Danesborough ward. Many of these submissions argued in favour of retaining the current Danesborough ward. This would, however, result in a single-member Danesborough ward that would be projected to have 36% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

104 Having considered all proposals received for this area, our draft recommendations are for three three-member wards. We consider that a single-member Danesborough ward does not provide good electoral equality, and are therefore proposing to adopt the Liberal Democrat scheme for a three-member Danesborough ward. We do, however, propose a slight amendment, which is to change the name to Danesborough & Walton ward.

105 Consequently, we also propose to adopt, as part of our draft recommendations, the Liberal Democrat Group's Kents Hill & Monkston ward, with the minor amendment that it be called Monkston ward.

106 Our final proposal for the eastern area is a Broughton ward. This is based on the Willen Lake ward proposals by the Liberal Democrat Group, but with two minor amendments. The ward proposed by the Liberal Democrats would contain 11% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. In order to improve electoral equality, we propose not to include the community around Willen Park Avenue in our Broughton ward. We consider that this area has equally good access to its north, into Bolbeck Park, as it does to its east, into Willen. As a result of this proposal, we also propose that the ward be named Broughton, which we consider to be more reflective of this ward.

107 Overall, our draft recommendations for the east flank of Milton Keynes are for three-member wards of Danesborough & Walton, Monkston and Broughton. These

are projected to have 3% fewer, 4% fewer and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

108 These proposals can be seen on the large map accompanying this report.

Central Milton Keynes

109 The Council has referred to this area as ‘the Central Spine’. It consists largely of new town developments surrounding the offices and commercial enterprises located in Central Milton Keynes parish.

110 The existing ward arrangements in central Milton Keynes are four two-member wards of Linford North, Linford South, Stantonbury and Woughton, and two three-member wards of Bradwell and Campbell Park. The A5 and railway line to the south and M1 motorway to the north form significant boundaries in central Milton Keynes.

Stantonbury and Bradwell

111 The Council proposed a Stantonbury ward which would comprise Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea areas (in Wolverton & Greenleys parish), Neath Hill, Pennyland and Bolbeck Park (in Great Linford parish) and, apart from the Oakridge Park development, the entirety of Stantonbury parish.

112 The Council argued that Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes have shared governance issues with Stantonbury because they have similar social housing. There are also frequent and direct public transport links between estates. The Council made a similar argument for the inclusion of part of Great Linford parish, which it argued has good public transport links, a shared secondary school (Stantonbury Campus) and similar regeneration needs.

113 As outlined earlier (paragraph 37), the Council did not include the new development of Oakridge Park in its Stantonbury ward. We considered that Oakridge Park will have few connections to any area apart from Stantonbury, but noted that including it in the Council’s proposed ward would result in a projected electorate of 19% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

114 The Council proposed a Bradwell ward, comprising Bradwell parish and Conniburrow and Downs Barn communities in the adjacent Great Linford parish. The Council’s rationale for including Downs Barn was based on ‘strong historical and geographical links’ with Conniburrow, although it did not provide specific examples.

115 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a Stantonbury ward comprising the entirety of Stantonbury and New Bradwell parishes. It also proposed a Linford ward based on the majority of Great Linford parish. The submission recommended including Willen Park in a Willen Lake ward as it considered that this area of Great Linford parish looks east and that the canal provides a strong boundary. It also proposed to include two other parts of Great Linford parish – the Conniburrow grid square⁴ and an area known as the Redhouse Park development – in its Bradwell and Wolverton & Hanslope wards, respectively.

⁴ The major road layout in Milton Keynes forms a grid pattern, running between communities, rather than through them. The spaces between the roads are known as grid squares.

116 The Liberal Democrat Group further proposed a Bradwell ward, which included the whole of Bradwell parish, the Conniburrow estate from Great Linford parish and two grid squares from Central Milton Keynes parish. It argued that Conniburrow is already in the existing Bradwell ward, is adjacent to the city centre and shares similar issues such as overspill parking.

117 Councillor Brackenbury was dissatisfied with the Council's proposals to divide Great Linford parish across five wards and considered that the core of the parish should form a ward. Councillor Brackenbury also expressed concerns over the Council's Stantonbury ward proposal. He considered that this ward would only be connected through 'Linford Wood, a leisure/industrial area' and therefore argued that the ward is not well connected as a result.

118 Stantonbury Parish Council argued in favour of Oakridge Park being included in Stantonbury parish, of which it forms a part. Stantonbury Parish Council argued that Oakridge Park should not form part of a Wolverton ward as the two communities have no shared identity.

119 We also received a submission from Bradwell Parish Council, arguing that the parish not be divided. The Parish Council recommended it form a ward with Central Milton Keynes parish, to which it argued the residents look for leisure and cultural activities. Alternatively, it suggested that Abbey Hill parish and Bradwell parish could form a ward, and suggested the name 'Bradwell & Abbey Hill'.

120 Having considered each of the representations received, we propose a Bradwell ward based on the remainder of Bradwell parish (Heelands and Bradwell estates), the entirety of Abbey Hill parish, and Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea estates (Wolverton & Greenleys parish). Bradwell Parish Council suggested a ward with Abbey Hill or Central Milton Keynes. Although it had not wished its parish to be split, we consider that these proposals facilitate the best warding pattern across the borough. The inclusion of Hodge Lea and Stacey Bushes estates in Bradwell ward unites the industrial estate either side of the A422. It also ensures that Stacey Bushes and Hodge Lea are kept together in a ward, as many of the submissions received had proposed. This ward would contain 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

121 We also propose a three-member Stantonbury ward, based largely on Stantonbury parish, to include Oakridge Park, but not the Bancroft Park and Blue Bridge estates. This ward would also include the communities of Great Linford and Neath Hill (both in Great Linford parish). The A422 provides a strong transport link through the ward and addresses Councillor Brackenbury's concern that the Council's Stantonbury ward would only be linked through Linford Wood and an industrial estate. Our Stantonbury ward would contain 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

Woughton, Central Milton Keynes, and Campbell Park

122 The Council proposed a Central Milton Keynes ward, comprising Central Milton Keynes parish and the Oldbrook and Fishermead grid squares from Campbell Park parish. It argued that 'there are clear and strong reasons for maintaining the City Centre as one ward in terms of governance and representation on major matters that are strategic to the whole of Milton Keynes Borough'.

123 The Council also proposed a Woughton & Netherfield ward. This would comprise Woughton Community Council, the newly created Old Woughton parish and the Springfield grid square from Campbell Park parish. The Council argued that Springfield has strong community connections with the Woughton area, especially Peartree Bridge, with which it shares churches, a school and leisure facilities. The Council argued that its ward 'restores the cohesion of the area' that is 'served by common shops, schools and churches'.

124 A Campbell Park ward was proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group. This proposal combined the 'four core estates' of Oldbrook, Fishermead, Springfield and Woolstone with the Campbell Park grid square in Central Milton Keynes parish. The submission argued that the west coast railway and River Ouzel provide strong boundaries to the ward's west and east, respectively.

125 The Liberal Democrats also proposed a Woughton ward, comprising the entirety of Woughton, Old Woughton and Simpson & Ashland parishes. It argued that Woughton and Old Woughton were 'until recently part of the same historic parish and it is logical that they go together'. It also argued that the A5 and River Ouzel are strong boundaries and therefore Simpson & Ashland parish should be part of its proposed Woughton ward.

126 During the consultation, we received 57 submissions which strongly opposed the Council and Liberal Democrat proposals to include Woughton parish with Old Woughton parish.

127 Until recently, Old Woughton parish formed part of Woughton parish. A resident from Old Woughton explained that 'local residents started a campaign to create a separate parish that would reflect the needs and interests of our community which we did not feel were being met by the existing parish'. This local resident stated that the area's primary school is in Simpson and the secondary school is in Milton Keynes Village, with pubs and restaurants in Simpson, Woughton on the Green, Woolstone and Milton Keynes Village, with local shops being in Monkston Park, and concluded that Old Woughton has no shared commonality with Woughton.

128 Another local resident described the recent acrimonious relationship between councillors from Old Woughton Parish Council and Woughton Community Council. Another local resident articulated the shared interests Old Woughton parish residents have with the existing Middleton ward, of which it currently forms a part. The resident also described the Woughton Community Council area as suffering high deprivation levels and that the residents who eventually formed Old Woughton parish, had different governance requirements from those in Woughton Community Council's area.

129 Old Woughton Parish Council provided a submission which, in common with many local residents, requested that the existing Middleton ward remain unchanged. However, this would result in Middleton ward being projected to have 43% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. The Passmore Association, representing an estate in Old Woughton parish, also opposed being in a ward with Woughton Community Council, instead supporting proposals to remain in the existing Middleton ward.

130 We received a borough-wide proposal from a resident of Old Woughton parish. The local resident's proposal was based largely on the Council's scheme, but with amendments to provide a different warding pattern for Old Woughton. The representation also includes evidence linking Old Woughton with neighbouring parishes to its north, east and south. It argued that there is a marked contrast between the Old Woughton area and Woughton Community Council to its west. The local resident proposed a Middleton & Willen ward which comprised Old Woughton parish with estates from the parishes of Campbell Park, Milton Keynes, and Kents Hill & Monkston. Her proposals place the areas of Broughton and Brooklands in a Woburn & Broughton ward.

131 Woughton Community Council provided a submission which described the area as the 'most deprived area of Milton Keynes'. The submission supported a uniform pattern of three-member wards. It also argued that Woughton Community Council and Old Woughton have a 'significant shared history, shared retail, health and educational facilities and even a shared allotment facility'. The submission also recommended a Woughton ward which could include Simpson & Ashland parish, Monkston Park and gave some support to the Council's recommendations for this area.

132 Campbell Park Parish Council requested that its parish not be split between more than two wards.

133 Although the Council and Liberal Democrat schemes both included Old Woughton with Woughton Community Council, the majority of evidence we received strongly opposed these two parishes being together in a ward. We also considered the warding arrangements submitted by the local resident, noting that although good examples of community identity had been provided, her proposals had significant knock-on effects across the borough. We therefore explored alternative warding patterns.

134 In arriving at our draft recommendations for this area of central Milton Keynes, we took each of the submissions into consideration, noting that many argued for significantly different outcomes. We also considered the scheme's borough-wide impact when developing the draft recommendations along with the many submissions which requested we avoid splitting parishes between wards.

135 We propose a Woughton & Fishermead ward. We considered that Woughton Community Council has good transport links into the adjacent parish of Campbell Park, to its north. Including the Fishermead grid square (Campbell Park parish) with Woughton Community Council would result in a three-member Woughton & Fishermead ward that would contain 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018.

136 We also propose a three-member Central Milton Keynes ward. This is based around the established town centre, but would not include the Campbell Park grid square. The Council had argued that, for effective governance, Central Milton Keynes parish should not be divided between wards. However, having toured the area, we considered that the Campbell Park grid square, consisting of a mixture of parkland, housing (with more development forecast) and businesses was different to

the remainder of the parish which largely contains offices, shopping and leisure facilities.

137 Our Central Milton Keynes ward would include Oldbrook (Campbell Park parish), which the Council stated had good connections with Central Milton Keynes. The proposed ward would also include the estates of Bradwell Common (Bradwell parish) and Conniburrow (Great Linford parish). Both estates have a shared boundary with Central Milton Keynes parish. The Liberal Democrat proposal also stated that these areas share a similar governance issues, such as overspill parking. This Central Milton Keynes ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough by 2018.

138 This warding pattern results in our final ward for this area, which we propose be called Campbell Park & Old Woughton, and which has a north to south orientation. The Council had suggested in its submission that the borough has 'a number of clearly identifiable boundaries running in a general north/south direction', which include the Grand Union Canal and River Ouzel. Our proposed Campbell Park & Old Woughton ward therefore reflects these.

139 Our proposed Campbell Park & Old Woughton ward links the entirety of Simpson & Ashland and Old Woughton parishes. The ward would also comprise Woolstone and Springfield (both in Campbell Park parish). Local residents from Old Woughton parish had provided evidence of shared community identity between these areas. We also propose that this ward comprise the Campbell Park grid square (Central Milton Keynes parish) and five estates from Great Linford parish (Downs Barn, Downhead Park, Willen Park, Bolbeck Park and Pennyland).

140 We toured the area to ensure the internal road links for the ward were satisfactory. We concluded that where the ward crosses the Grand Union Canal, the H5 and H6 roads along with Danstead Way and Chaffron Way provide good internal communication links.

141 We were concerned that a three-member ward that links residents in Great Linford with residents in Simpson & Ashland would have little shared identity, and we therefore explored the possibility of recommending a single-member and a two-member ward. However, this could only achieve good electoral equality if the Springfield grid square is split and would clearly divide a community between wards. We concluded that one ward which combined communities, rather than two which divided the Springfield community, should form our draft recommendation for this area.

142 We therefore propose a three-member Campbell Park & Old Woughton ward which would contain 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018. This ward keeps Old Woughton with communities to its north and south as many of the local residents had requested. It also ensures the borough has a uniform pattern of three-member wards.

143 As a result of the concerns which we have commented on for our warding proposals in central Milton Keynes, we had also considered an alternative warding pattern for this area.

144 The alternative proposals consist of a three-member Woughton ward comprising Simpson & Ashland parish, Woughton Community Council, Old Woughton parish and Woolstone (Campbell Park parish).

145 Our alternative proposals would also include a three-member Milton Keynes Central ward. This ward would comprise Oldbrook, Fishermead and Springfield grid squares (all Campbell Park parish) and all of Central Milton Keynes parish apart from the Campbell Park grid square (which forms part of Milton Keynes parish).

146 Our final ward which we considered, as part of our alternative proposals, was for a three-member South Great Linford ward. This ward would comprise Campbell Park grid square (Central Milton Keynes parish), Bradwell Common (Bradwell parish), Conniburrow, Downs Barn, Downhead Park, Pennyland, Bolbeck Park and Willen Park Avenue estates (Great Linford parish).

147 These alternative proposals would result in three three-member wards of Woughton, Milton Keynes Central and South Great Linford. These are projected to have 4% more, 2% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

148 We consider that the alternative warding arrangements have strong, identifiable boundaries with good internal communication links. However, we are not proposing this pattern, due to the community identity evidence received during the initial warding consultation stage. We particularly welcome comments on warding arrangements in this area.

149 As a consequence of our warding arrangements in central Milton Keynes, Great Linford parish would be divided between six wards. While we have tried not to divide parish boundaries where possible, Great Linford is too large to form a ward that would comprise the entire parish. As with the Council's proposals to divide the parish between five wards, we have included its estates in surrounding wards, but have avoided dividing individual housing estates.

150 Overall, our proposals for central Milton Keynes are for five three-member wards of Bradwell, Stantonbury, Central Milton Keynes, Woughton & Fishermead and Campbell Park & Old Woughton. These are projected to have 8% fewer, 8% more, equal to the number, 3% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2018, respectively.

151 These proposals can be seen on the large map accompanying this report.

Conclusions

152 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2012 and 2018 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2012	2018
Number of councillors	57	57
Number of wards	19	19
Average number of electors per councillor	3,132	3,342
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Draft recommendation
 Milton Keynes Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

153 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

154 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority division arrangements. However, the respective principal authority (the district or borough council in the area) has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

155 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford, Bradwell, Campbell Park, Great Linford, Newport Pagnell, Shenley Brook End, Shenley Church End, Stantonbury and West Bletchley. We would particularly welcome comments on these proposals from the parish councils concerned and local residents during this consultation stage.

156 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Bletchley & Fenny Stratford parish.

Draft recommendation

Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards: Central Bletchley (returning one member), Eaton North (returning three members), Eaton South (returning three members), Fenny Stratford (returning three members), Granby (returning one member), Manor North (returning one member), Manor South (returning three members), Newton Leys (returning one member) and Queensway & Denbigh West (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

157 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Bradwell parish.

Draft recommendation

Bradwell Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Bradwell (returning three members), Bradwell Common (returning three members) and Heelands (returning four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

158 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Campbell Park parish.

Draft recommendation

Campbell Park Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Fishermead (returning five members), Oldbrook (returning seven members), Springfield (returning three members), Willen & Newlands (returning one member) and Woolstone (returning one member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

159 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Great Linford parish.

Draft recommendation

Great Linford Parish Council should comprise 20 councillors representing nine wards: Bolbeck Park & Pennyland (returning two members), Conniburrow (returning three members), Downhead Park (returning two members), Downs Barn (returning two members), Giffard Park & Blakelands (returning three members), Great Linford (returning four members), Neath Hill (returning two members), Redhouse Park (returning one member) and Willen Park (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

160 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Newport Pagnell parish.

Draft recommendation

Newport Pagnell Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Newport Pagnell North (returning six members) and Newport Pagnell South (returning 10 members).

The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

161 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Shenley Brook End parish.

Draft recommendation

Shenley Brook End Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards: Emerson Valley North (returning two members), Emerson Valley South (returning one member), Furzton North (returning two members), Furzton South (returning two members), Kingsmead (returning one member), Shenley Brook End (returning two members), Shenley Lodge (returning two members), Tattenhoe (returning two members) and Westcroft (returning one member).

The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

162 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Shenley Church End parish.

Draft recommendation

Shenley Church End Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Crownhill (returning three members), Grange Farm & Hazeley (returning two members), Oxley Park (returning four members), Shenley Church End (returning four members) and Shenley Wood (returning two members).

The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

163 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Stantonbury parish.

Draft recommendation

Stantonbury Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Bancroft (returning one member), Blue Bridge (returning one member), Bradville (returning four members), Oakridge Park (returning one member) and Stantonbury & Linford Wood (returning three members).

The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

164 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for West Bletchley parish.

Draft recommendation

West Bletchley Council should comprise 28 councillors, as at present, representing 10 wards: Abbeys (returning four members), Castles (returning three members), Church Green (returning three members), Counties (returning three members), Fairways (returning three members), Poets (returning two members), Racecourses (returning two members), Rivers (returning three members), Saints (returning two members) and Scots (returning three members).

The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

165 There will now be a consultation period of eight weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes Council contained in this report. We will fully take into account all submissions received by 18 March 2013. Any submissions received after this date may not be taken into account.

166 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Milton Keynes and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangement. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during our consultation on these draft recommendations. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

167 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Milton Keynes Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

168 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations made during consultation will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Milton Keynes Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

169 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, irrespective of whom they are from.

170 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

171 After the publication of our final recommendations, the review will be implemented by order subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. When made, the draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Milton Keynes Council in 2015.

172 These draft recommendations have been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Milton Keynes

173 The following map illustrates our proposed ward boundaries for Milton Keynes Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed ward boundaries for Milton Keynes.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Milton Keynes on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Milton Keynes Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bletchley East	3	9,274	3,091	-1%	10,487	3,496	5%
2	Bletchley Park	3	10,740	3,580	14%	10,807	3,602	8%
3	Bletchley West	3	11,028	3,676	17%	10,784	3,595	8%
4	Bradwell	3	9,502	3,167	1%	9,248	3,083	-8%
5	Broughton	3	7,145	2,382	-24%	10,493	3,498	5%
6	Campbell Park & Old Woughton	3	9,589	3,196	2%	10,332	3,444	3%
7	Central Milton Keynes	3	9,952	3,317	6%	10,063	3,354	0%
8	Danesborough & Walton	3	8,780	2,927	-7%	9,769	3,256	-3%
9	Loughton & Shenley	3	9,895	3,298	5%	9,858	3,286	-2%
10	Monkston	3	8,924	2,975	-5%	9,639	3,213	-4%
11	Newport Pagnell North & Hanslope	3	8,888	2,963	-5%	9,141	3,047	-9%

Table A1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Milton Keynes Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Newport Pagnell South	3	9,660	3,220	3%	9,239	3,080	-8%
13	Olney	3	9,527	3,176	1%	9,451	3,150	-6%
14	Shenley Brook End	3	9,558	3,186	2%	9,668	3,223	-4%
15	Stantonbury	3	10,735	3,578	14%	10,793	3,598	8%
16	Stony Stratford	3	7,945	2,648	-15%	10,290	3,430	3%
17	Tattenhoe	3	6,979	2,326	-26%	9,651	3,217	-4%
18	Wolverton	3	9,839	3,280	5%	10,394	3,465	4%
19	Woughton & Fishermead	3	10,544	3,515	12%	10,361	3,454	3%
	Totals	57	178,504	-	-	190,468	-	-
	Averages	-	-	3,132	-	-	3,342	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Milton Keynes Council.

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

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

