

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Luton

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Luton on 5 September 2000.

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

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

- **in eight of the 16 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average, both initially and by 2005.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 89-90) are that:

- **Luton Borough Council should have 48 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 19 wards, instead of 16 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 19 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 6 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 8 May 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is**

therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.

- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 2 July 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Barnfield	2	Icknield ward (part); Saints ward (part); Stopsley ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
2	Biscot	3	Biscot ward (part); High Town ward (part); Saints ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
3	Bramingham	2	Bramingham ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
4	Challney	3	Challney ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
5	Crawley	2	Crawley ward (part); High Town ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
6	Dallow	3	Dallow ward; Biscot ward (part); South ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
7	Farley	3	Farley ward; South ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
8	High Town	2	High Town ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
9	Icknield	2	Icknield ward (part); Saints ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
10	Leagrave	3	Leagrave ward; Challney ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
11	Lewsey	3	<i>unchanged</i>	Map 2 and Large map
12	Limbury	2	Limbury ward (part); Sundon Park ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
13	Marsh Farm	2	Bramingham ward (part); Sundon Park ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
14	Round Green	3	High Town ward (part); Stopsley ward (part); Crawley ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
15	Saints	3	Biscot ward (part); Saints ward (part); Limbury ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
16	South	3	South ward (part); Biscot ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
17	Stopsley	2	Stopsley ward (part); Putteridge ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18	Sundon Park	2	Sundon Park ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
19	Wigmore	3	Putteridge ward (part); Crawley ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map

Note: Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Luton

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Barnfield	2	5,596	2,798	1	5,772	2,886	1
2	Biscot	3	8,708	2,903	5	8,967	2,989	5
3	Bramingham	2	5,720	2,860	3	5,829	2,915	2
4	Challney	3	8,094	2,698	-2	8,574	2,858	0
5	Crawley	2	5,626	2,813	2	5,648	2,824	-1
6	Dallow	3	8,141	2,714	-2	8,567	2,856	0
7	Farley	3	8,318	2,773	0	8,534	2,845	0
8	High Town	2	5,486	2,743	-1	5,644	2,822	-1
9	Icknield	2	5,611	2,806	2	5,747	2,874	1
10	Leagrave	3	8,142	2,714	-2	8,366	2,789	-2
11	Lewsey	3	8,798	2,933	6	8,952	2,984	5
12	Limbury	2	5,370	2,685	-3	5,449	2,725	-4
13	Marsh Farm	2	5,693	2,847	3	5,862	2,931	3
14	Round Green	3	8,077	2,692	-3	8,250	2,750	-3
15	Saints	3	8,530	2,843	3	8,852	2,951	4
16	South	3	7,503	2,501	-10	7,999	2,666	-6
17	Stopsley	2	5,425	2,713	-2	5,511	2,756	-3
18	Sundon Park	2	5,616	2,808	2	5,684	2,842	0
19	Wigmore	3	8,218	2,739	-1	8,349	2,783	-2
	Totals	48	132,672	-	-	136,556	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,764	-	-	2,845	-

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

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 The total number of electors in 2000 and 2005 are marginally different from those in Figure 4 (by 23 electors and 5 electors respectively). This has a negligible effect on electoral variances and the average number of electors per councillor.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Luton on which we are now consulting. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Luton. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1975 (Report No. 54). Since undertaking the review Luton has become a unitary authority (1997).

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

11 Stage One began on 5 September 2000, when we wrote to Luton Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Bedfordshire Police Authority, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 27 November 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 8 May 2001 and will end on 2 July 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Luton has a population of some 183,300 and covers an area of 4,336 hectares, with a population density of 41.8 persons per hectare. Its population has grown dramatically over the last century, with the expansion of the engineering industry. However, further expansion is limited due to the green belt areas on its borders. Luton is linked to the motorway system by the M1 and is 30 miles north of London. It is also served by London Luton Airport, and the Luton Airport Parkway railway station provides a dedicated rail link. Luton became a Unitary Authority in 1997 and is unparished.

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

17 The population of the borough is 183,300 (February 2000). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 16 three-member wards, all of which are urban. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Luton Borough, with around 5 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,764 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,845 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in eight of the 16 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Putteridge ward where the councillor represents 36 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Luton

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Biscot	3	8,989	2,996	8	9,270	3,090	9
2	Bramingham	3	9,748	3,249	18	9,990	3,330	17
3	Challney	3	8,412	2,804	1	8,892	2,964	4
4	Crawley	3	7,832	2,611	-6	7,964	2,655	-7
5	Dallow	3	7,383	2,461	-11	7,786	2,595	-9
6	Farley	3	6,899	2,300	-17	7,115	2,372	-17
7	High Town	3	7,451	2,484	-10	7,614	2,538	-11
8	Icknield	3	9,524	3,175	15	9,759	3,253	14
9	Leagrave	3	7,824	2,608	-6	8,048	2,683	-6
10	Lewsey	3	8,798	2,933	6	8,952	2,984	5
11	Limbury	3	7,151	2,384	-14	7,317	2,439	-14
12	Putteridge	3	11,239	3,746	36	11,436	3,812	34
13	Saints	3	8,218	2,739	-1	8,470	2,823	-1
14	South	3	8,881	2,960	7	9,356	3,119	10
15	Stopsley	3	7,065	2,355	-15	7,208	2,403	-16
16	Sundon Park	3	7,281	2,427	-12	7,384	2,461	-13
	Totals	48	132,695	–	–	136,561	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,764	–	–	2,845	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Farley ward were relatively over-represented by 17 per cent, while electors in Putteridge ward were relatively under-represented by 36 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS 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 Luton Borough Council.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, Conservative Group, Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Luton Independent Residents' Federation, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Luton Borough Council

22 The Borough Council proposed a council of 54 members, six more than at present, serving a pattern of 18 three-member wards. The Borough Council argued that the increase was justified due to a number of factors including population growth, the increased workload of members as a result of the modernising agenda for local government and its transition to unitary status.

23 The Council proposed that all of the existing 16 wards be modified, to provide improved levels of electoral equality and to reflect community identities. Its proposals provided for good electoral equality with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average number of electors per councillor by 2005.

Luton Borough Council Conservative Group

24 Luton Borough Council Conservative Group (The Conservatives) proposed a borough-wide scheme, based on a council size of 48, serving a pattern of 24 two-member wards. The Conservative Group stated that the current council size facilitated effective and convenient local government, arguing that there has been no significant increase in workload since becoming a unitary authority. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 9 per cent by 2005.

Luton Liberal Democrats

25 Luton Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a 48-member council size, representing a mixed pattern of 12 three-member wards and six two-member wards. The Liberal Democrats argued that an increase in council size was not justified as since the transition to unitary status three years ago, the current council size has facilitated effective and convenient local government. They argued that a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards avoided the need "to weld two or more neighbourhoods together", thus

preserving community identity. They proposed a change in the electoral cycle to elections by thirds. Under their scheme no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 6 per cent by 2005.

Luton Green Party

26 Luton Green Party (The Greens) proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a 52-member council size, an increase of four, representing 13 four-member wards. The Green Party argued that the increase in councillors “would help cover the increased responsibilities now covered by Luton as a Unitary Council.” Under its scheme, no ward would vary by more than 3 per cent by 2005.

Luton Independent Residents’ Federation

27 The Residents’ Federation proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a 53-member scheme, an increase of five, representing 53 one-member wards. They argued that their scheme would create “a direct relationship between individual councillors and those they represent”. They proposed elections by thirds, and under their proposals, no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 14 per cent by 2005.

Other Representations

28 We received a further two representations. One local resident proposed that the whole of the Beechwood Community Partnership’s identified neighbourhood be included in the Legrave ward. Another local resident alerted the Commission’s attention to the fact that there may be discrepancies on the Electoral Register, whilst making no specific comments on the review.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

32 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

33 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 132,695 to 136,561 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

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

Council Size

35 As already explained, the Commission’s starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

36 Luton Borough Council currently has 48 members. The Borough Council proposed an increase in council size to 54, arguing that a number of factors had contributed to a significantly increased workload for councillors. These factors were an increased electorate, loss of county councillors, the modernising agenda, extra meetings generated by the scrutiny function and the introduction of area committees, Best Value and the introduction of advocates for specific groups.

37 Luton Independent Residents’ Federation also proposed an increase in council size, but proposed a 53-member scheme, arguing that under a system of single-member wards the increased council size would “enable more of the communities which exist within Luton to have their own representation”. The Luton Green Party proposed an increase in council size to 52, based on 13 four-member wards, arguing that the increase in councillors would help to cover the extra responsibilities arising from Luton’s transition to a unitary authority.

38 The Conservatives proposed retaining a council size of 48, arguing that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government. The Conservatives argued that there has been no significant increase in workload since becoming a unitary authority, and that furthermore, the introduction of the Cabinet System has led to a reduction in the work load of non-executive councillors. Similarly, the Liberal Democrats argued that since becoming a unitary authority three years ago the current council size has facilitated effective and convenient local government.

39 In the light of the lack of consensus between political groups on this issue, the apparent lack of widespread consultation specifically on the issue of council size and any supporting evidence, we do not consider that the case for a increase in council size has been made. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members. Stage Three provides an opportunity for further evidence to be submitted with regard to this issue.

Electoral Arrangements

40 As mentioned earlier, in the light of the available evidence we are proposing a council size of 48 and as the schemes from the Borough Council, Luton Green Party and Luton Independent Residents’ Federation are based on significantly different council sizes, these proposals will generally be incompatible with a 48-member scheme.

41 The Greens proposed a uniform pattern of four-member wards and, as stated in our *Guidance*, we consider four-member wards can lead to a dilution in accountability and that normally the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three. We do not consider, therefore, that the Greens' proposals provide for effective and convenient local government and do not propose considering their proposals in further detail.

42 Similarly, we consider that a uniform pattern of single-member wards, as proposed by Luton Independent Residents' Federation, may lead to the arbitrary division of existing communities. We note that the Borough Council, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have all proposed multi-member wards throughout the borough, and are persuaded that, given the urban nature of Luton, this approach provides for a more appropriate reflection of the statutory criteria. We therefore do not propose to give further detailed consideration to the Luton Independent Residents' Association's scheme.

43 Although the Borough Council's proposals provide for good levels of electoral equality under a 54-member scheme, under a 48-member scheme its proposals will generally be incompatible and we are therefore unable to give them further consideration except for where they inform us of general consensus amongst the groups on the Borough Council in particular areas of the borough.

44 Both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives submitted 48-member schemes and we note that both schemes provide for good electoral equality. We consider that the Conservatives' uniform pattern of two-member wards does not facilitate as effectively a reflection of the statutory criteria as a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards, which as the Liberal Democrats argue, "enables communities to be welded together". We note that in some areas of the borough there is consensus between the two schemes and as we consider that both schemes achieve an appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in these areas, we are content to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. In the centre of the borough we feel that community identity is best reflected by the Conservatives' proposals for smaller two-member wards, while elsewhere in the borough we propose adopting a mixture of the Liberal Democrats' and our own proposals.

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

- (a) Bramingham, Lewsey, Legrave and Sundon Park wards;
- (b) Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints wards;
- (c) Biscot, Dallow and High Town wards;
- (d) Farley and South wards;
- (e) Crawley, Putteridge and Stopsley wards

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

Bramingham, Lewsey, Leagrave and Sundon Park wards

47 The four three-member wards of Bramingham, Lewsey, Leagrave and Sundon Park currently have 18 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (17 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 13 per cent fewer by 2005).

48 The Conservatives proposed dividing the existing Lewsey ward between two two-member wards. Properties to the north of Leagrave High Street, Hereford Road and the recreation ground would form a revised two-member Lewsey ward. The remainder of the existing Lewsey ward would be combined with the area of Challney ward to the west of the M1 and north of Dunstable Road and also the area of Challney ward west of Stanton Road to form a new two-member Poets ward. The existing Leagrave ward would also be divided between two two-member wards. Properties to the east of Vincent Road, north of the High Street and on Manor Farm Close would form a revised two-member Leagrave ward. The remainder of Leagrave ward would be combined with part of the existing Challney ward (properties to the north of Stoneygate Road and Roman Road, and to the east of the M1) and these areas would be combined with part of the existing Limbury ward (properties to the South of, and on either side of, Limbury Road and properties to the west of Marsh Road) to form a new two-member Beechwood ward.

49 The Conservatives also proposed retaining the existing Sundon Park ward as a two-member ward less those properties to the east of Wauluds Bank Drive and all properties on Waleys Close, Fitzwarin Close and Sylam Close (currently in Bramingham ward). The remainder of Bramingham ward would be divided east-west into two two-member wards, the boundary running along the west side of Great Bramingham Wood and Little Bramingham Wood. Thus, the eastern side of the existing Bramingham ward would form a two-member Marsh Farm ward while the western side would form a revised two-member Bramingham Park ward.

50 Under the Conservatives' proposals Beechwood, Bramingham Park, Leagrave, Lewsey, Marsh Farm, Poets and Sundon Park wards would have 3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively by 2005).

51 The Liberal Democrats' proposals built on existing arrangements in this area. They proposed no change to the existing Lewsey ward. The existing Leagrave ward would be combined with a small area of the existing Challney ward (properties to the north of Vincent Gardens including those properties on Addington Way, Eynsford Road, Ousley Close and Platt Close) to form a two-member ward. They proposed retaining the existing Sundon Park ward, less those properties to the east of Wauluds Bank Drive and less those properties on Copenhagen Close and Brussels Way as a two-member ward. The remainder of Bramingham ward would be divided east-west into two two-member wards, the boundary running along the west side of Great Bramingham Wood and Little Bramingham Wood, as proposed by the Conservatives. The eastern section

would form a new two-member Marsh Farm ward, while the western section would form a revised two-member Bramingham ward.

52 The Liberal Democrats argued that the Lewsey Farm estate and the neighbouring Poets area are bound by the M1 and main Dunstable Road and that communities on either side of these strong boundaries share no common interest. They argued that Leagrave is bounded by the M1 and the railway and that it shares no community identity with communities across these boundaries and that Sundon Park maintains a strong and distinct cultural identity while being naturally bounded from Marsh Farm by Bramingham Road, Leagrave Park and “the spinney”. They argued that the Marsh Farm area also maintains a strong sense of community identity and is naturally bounded from Bramingham by the Great Bramingham Wood.

53 Under the Liberal Democrats’ proposals Bramingham, Leagrave, Lewsey, Marsh Farm and Sundon Park wards would have 3 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more, 3 per cent more and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 3 per cent more, and equal to the average by 2005).

54 We received one further representation, from a local resident, who proposed amendments to the southern boundary of the Borough Council’s proposed Leagrave ward. However, in the light of our decision to adopt a council size substantially different to that proposed by the Council we are unable to consider this representation further.

55 We have carefully considered the representations received and note that there is significant consensus on the proposed Bramingham ward (Bramingham Park ward under the Conservative proposals), Marsh Farm and Sundon Park wards, with the exception of the precise location of the boundary between Sundon Park and Marsh Farm wards. With regards to this boundary, we consider that the Liberal Democrats’ proposal to transfer those properties on Copenhagen Close and Brussels Way into Marsh Farm ward provide a clearer boundary, as access to these properties is from the proposed Marsh Farm ward. Furthermore, we consider that their proposal to use Wauluds Bank Drive and Bramingham Way as the boundary in the south of the ward provides for more clearly defined boundaries. In the light of the relative consensus in this area, the strong boundaries and the good electoral equality achieved, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrats’ proposals for Sundon Park, Marsh Farm and Bramingham wards as part of our draft recommendations.

56 We consider that in Leagrave and Lewsey wards the Conservatives uniform pattern of two-member wards has necessitated the division of existing communities. We note that the Liberal Democrats have built upon existing arrangements in this area and are persuaded that these proposals provide for the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrats’ proposals for Leagrave and Lewsey wards as part of our draft recommendations.

57 Under our draft recommendations the wards of Bramingham, Leagrave, Lewsey, Marsh Farm and Sundon Park would have 3 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more, 3 per cent more and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints wards

58 The four three-member wards of Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints currently have 1 per cent more, 15 per cent more, 14 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent more, 14 per cent more, 14 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

59 The Conservatives proposed substantial modifications to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed dividing the existing Icknield ward between two two-member wards. The area to the south of Ringwood Road and east of New Bedford Road would be combined with that part of the existing Saints ward to the south of Austin Road and east of Culverhouse Road to form a new two-member Barnfield ward. The northern part of Icknield, less part of the area around Gooseberry Hill, would form a revised two-member Icknield ward. The remainder of the existing Saints ward, less Maidenhall Road, Newark Road, part of Selbourne Road and Sherwood Road (which would all be transferred to a revised Biscot ward), would form a revised two-member Saints ward. The existing Limbury ward (plus the area from Icknield ward around Gooseberry Hill) would be divided between two two-member wards. The area to the north of Trinity Road, Limbury Road and Marsh Farm Road would form a revised two-member Limbury ward. The remainder of the existing Limbury ward would be combined with that part of the existing Challney ward to the north of Stoneygate Road and that part of Leagrave ward to the east of Vincent Road and south of Vincent Road to form a new two-member Beechwood ward. The remainder of Challney ward, less properties to the west of Stanton Road (which would be transferred into a new Poets ward) would form a revised two-member Challney ward.

60 Under the Conservatives' proposals Barnfield, Beechwood, Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints wards would have 3 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more electors per councilor than the borough average respectively by 2005.

61 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing three-member Icknield ward, less the area to the south of Laburnum Grove and west of Birdsfoot Lane (which would be transferred into a revised Limbury ward), and less the area south of Riddy Lane and west of New Bedford Road (which would be transferred into a revised Saints ward). The modified Saints ward would also include all properties east of Bancroft Road, currently in Limbury ward, and would retain three members. The remainder of Limbury ward would be combined with the above mentioned area of Icknield ward to form a revised three-member Limbury ward. Challney ward would remain virtually unchanged, apart from a minor boundary amendment to its northern boundary.

62 The Liberal Democrats argued that in Challney the Luton-Dunstable trunk road actually connects the various constituent parts and that the Challney High Schools are at the centre of the ward. They argued that Limbury ward is naturally bounded by Bramingham Road, Marsh Road Shopping Centre, Waller Avenue, Blundell Road and Birdsfoot Lane.

63 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints wards would have 2 per cent fewer, equal to, 3 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, equal to, 3 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more by 2005).

64 We recognise that the Liberal Democrats' proposals build on existing arrangements whilst providing for good electoral equality, but we consider that the Conservatives' proposed two-member Barnfield and Icknield wards provide for a better reflection of community identity in this area. However, we consider that the Conservatives' proposed boundary between Icknield and Limbury ward would split an existing community and therefore propose amending it, to follow the existing boundary along Catsbrook Road and Icknield Way. Similarly we consider that the boundary between the proposed Icknield and Barnfield wards that runs east-west from New Bedford Road to Old Bedford Road can be improved by moving it south to run along Barnfield Avenue. We consider that this amendment provides for a stronger boundary and a more logical division of electors within the existing Icknield ward.

65 However, elsewhere in this area we are not convinced that a pattern of two-member wards will provide an effective reflection of community identity. We note that the Conservatives' proposed division of Challney ward into three new wards abandons the railway as a strong existing boundary and we consider that these proposals split existing communities. We note that the Liberal Democrats' proposals retain Challney ward virtually unchanged and preserve the strong existing boundary along the railway line whilst providing for good electoral equality. We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Challney ward as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. In the light of the loss of electors to the proposed Barnfield ward, we propose amending the Liberal Democrats' proposed Saints ward to include all properties east of Limbury Road, Trinity Road and Archway Road, while we propose transferring Britannia Avenue, Ellerdine Close and Nunnery Lane back into a revised two-member Limbury ward. We consider that this revised Limbury ward, which is roughly based on the Conservatives' proposed two-member Limbury ward, and the amended Saints ward, provides for the best available balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

66 In summary, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Icknield and Barnfield wards subject to the amendments detailed above. In Challney ward we propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals unamended, while our proposals for a two-member Limbury and three-member Saints wards are based on a combination of the Liberal Democrats' and Conservatives' proposals. Under our draft recommendations Barnfield, Challney, Icknield, Limbury and Saints wards would have 1 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, equal

to, 1 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more than the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Biscot, Dallow and High Town wards

67 The three three-member wards of Biscot, Dallow and High Town currently have 8 per cent more, 11 per cent fewer, and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (9 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer and 11 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

68 The Conservatives proposed retaining the Dallow ward as a two-member ward less those properties to the north of Portland Road. The remainder of Dallow ward would be combined with that area of the existing Saints ward which lies south of the railway line and east of Maidenhall Road, along with that area of Biscot ward which lies west of Francis Street and south of the railway, to form a new two-member Bury ward. The remainder of Biscot ward would form a revised two-member ward. High Town ward would be retained as a two-member ward, less those properties to the west of New Bedford Road, and less those properties to the south of High Town Road (which would be transferred into a two-member Hart Hill ward).

69 Under the Conservatives' proposals Biscot, Bury Park, Dallow and High Town wards would have 5 per cent more, equal to, 4 per cent fewer and two per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively by 2005.

70 The Liberal Democrats proposed only minimal change to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed retaining Dallow ward virtually unchanged, amending the northern boundary so that it follows the length of Dunstable Road, rather than Beech Road and the A5065, arguing that the borough boundary and Dunstable Road form natural boundaries on either side of Dallow ward. That area in Biscot ward south of Dunstable Road would be transferred into the revised Dallow ward. The remainder of Biscot ward would be combined with that area of High Town ward west of New Bedford Road to form a three-member Biscot ward. The remainder of High Town ward, less the area to the east of Pomfret Avenue and Haddon Road, and less the area north of Kingston Road and Ridgeway Road, would form a revised two-member High Town ward.

71 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Biscot, Dallow and High Town wards would have 5 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent more, equal to and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

72 Having carefully considered the representations received we consider that both the Conservatives' and the Liberal Democrats proposals' generally provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we do not consider that Conservatives' proposals to transfer a residential part of the existing Biscot ward into their proposed Central ward are an accurate reflection of community identity. Neither are we convinced that the Conservatives' proposals to transfer all properties east of High Town Road into a Hart Hill ward are a good reflection of community identity. Furthermore, the Conservatives' proposals are

incompatible with our proposed warding arrangements elsewhere in the borough. We therefore consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals provide for the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and in order to facilitate a good scheme throughout the borough we propose adopting their proposals for this area without amendment as part of our draft recommendations.

73 Under our draft recommendations Biscot, Dallow and High Town wards will have 5 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent more, equal to and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Farley and South wards

74 Farley and South wards are each represented by three councillors and currently have 17 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (17 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more by 2005).

75 The Conservatives proposed substantial modifications to warding arrangements in this area, dividing the existing South and Farley wards into three two-member wards. They proposed retaining the existing Farley ward, less a small area north of Wilsden Avenue in the east of the ward (comprising Anthony Gardens, Corncastle Road, Chiltern Rise, Hillborough Road, Russell Rise, Russell Street, St Saviours Crescent, Salisbury Road and Stanley Street), as a two-member ward. The remainder of Farley ward would be combined with the town area of South ward (properties to the west of Albert Road and Park Viaduct and north of Stockwood Crescent, Cowper Street and Baker Street). This area would be combined with properties to the west of New Bedford Road (currently in High Town ward) and properties to the south of Francis Street (currently in Biscot ward) to form a new two-member Central ward. The remainder of South ward would form a revised two-member ward.

76 Under the Conservatives' proposals Central, South and Farley wards would have 4 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively by 2005.

77 The Liberal Democrats proposed only minor modifications to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed transferring those properties to the west of London Road and Castle Street, currently in South ward, along with Tennyson Road and part of West Hill Drive into a revised three-member Farley ward. The remainder of South ward would be combined with those properties to the east of New Bedford Road that are currently in Biscot ward to form a revised three-member South ward.

78 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Farley and South wards would have 1 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent and 5 per cent fewer by 2005).

79 We recognise that the Conservatives' proposals create a separate Central ward for the town area, but note that this necessitates the division of the existing Farley community and the inclusion of a residential area from Biscot ward in the proposed Central ward. The Liberal Democrats' proposals build on existing arrangements and consider that London Road provides a strong, clearly defined boundary. However, we regard the inclusion of Tennyson Road and part of West Hill Drive in Farley ward as anomalous and a poor reflection of community identity. Therefore, we consider that retaining Tennyson Road and West Hill Drive in South ward and using the length of London Road as a boundary would provide for a better reflection of community identity. We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations subject to the above boundary modification.

80 Under our draft recommendations Farley and South wards would have equal to and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to and 6 per cent fewer by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Crawley, Putteridge and Stopsley wards

81 Crawley, Putteridge and Stopsley wards are each represented by three members and currently have 6 per cent fewer, 36 per cent more and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7 per cent fewer, 34 per cent more and 16 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

82 The Conservatives proposed dividing Putteridge ward along Hayling Drive and along the northern edge of the Someries Junior School sports ground and the northern edge of Ashcroft High School. The southern part of Putteridge ward would be combined with the area of Crawley ward to the south of Eaton Green Road. This combined area would be united with the area of Crawley ward to the north of Eaton Green Road and east of Holtsmere Close, Newnham Close and Barrowby Close to form a new two-member Wigmore ward. The northern part of Putteridge ward, less the area to the west of Stapleford Road and the area to the west of Wood Green Lane, (both of which would be transferred to a revised Stopsley ward), would form a revised two-member Putteridge ward. Those properties which lie to the west of Vauxhall Way and south of Hitchin Road, less those properties to the south of Turners Road North, would be combined with the above mentioned area from Putteridge ward to form a revised two-member Stopsley ward. The area of Crawley ward to the north of Eaton Green Road and south of Crawley Green Road would be combined with that area of Stopsley ward to the south of Turners Road North to form a revised two-member Crawley ward. The remainder of Stopsley ward would be combined with the remainder of Crawley ward and that part of High Town ward to the south of High Town Road to form a new two-member Hart Hill ward.

83 Under the Conservatives' proposals Crawley, Hart Hill, Putteridge, Stopsley and Wigmore wards would have 1 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively by 2005.

84 The Liberal Democrats also proposed significant modifications to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed transferring properties on Brays Road, Hallwick Road, Littlechurch Road, Mobley Green and Hallwick Road that are currently in Stopsley ward into a new two-member Wigmore ward. The new Wigmore ward would comprise all properties to the south of Chesford Road and Eastfield Close that are currently in Putteridge ward and the area to the south of Eaton Green Road and east of Vauxhall Way, currently in Crawley ward. This combined area would be united with the area of Crawley ward to the north of Eaton Green Road and east of Holtsmere Close, Newnham Close and Barrowby Close. The remainder of the existing Putteridge ward would be combined with the remaining properties in Stopsley ward that lie to the east of Vauxhall Way and Sunningdale to form a revised three-member Stopsley ward. Those properties to the west of Hart Lane and south of Crawley Green Road, currently in Crawley ward, would form a revised two-member Crawley ward. The remainder of the existing Crawley ward would be combined with the remainder of the existing Stopsley ward and the properties north of Kingston Road and Ridgeway Road that are currently in High Town ward to form a new two-member Round Green ward.

85 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Crawley, Round Green, Stopsley and Wigmore wards would have 2 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and equal to the borough average number of electors per councillor respectively (1 per cent fewer, three per cent fewer, four per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

86 Having carefully considered the representations received we are not convinced that the Conservatives' proposals provide for an accurate reflection of the statutory criteria. We regard the proposed division of the existing Putteridge ward between Stopsley and Crawley wards as arbitrary and a poor reflection of community identity. Furthermore, we consider that the area south of Turners Road North and east of Vauxhall Way that is currently in Stopsley ward shares little community interest with the area of Crawley ward with which it would be combined. Similarly, we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to retain a three-member Stopsley ward which includes the area south of Turners Road North is also a poor representation of community identity. We therefore propose amending the Liberal Democrats' proposals in this area by transferring all properties to the south of Stopsley Road, currently in Stopsley ward, into the Liberal Democrats' proposed Round Green ward to form a new three-member ward. The remaining area of the proposed Stopsley ward would form a two-member ward. We consider that this proposal unites areas of similar profile whilst continuing to provide for a good level of electoral equality. Elsewhere in this area we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals provide for a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations subject to some minor amendments to the boundary between Wigmore and Stopsley ward in order to improve electoral equality in the light of our proposed modifications to the Liberal Democrats' proposals.

87 Under our draft recommendations Crawley, Round Green, Stopsley and Wigmore wards would have 2 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent

fewer and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

88 We received five representations regarding the Borough Council's electoral cycle. The Borough Council stated that there should be no change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years. The Conservatives also supported elections of the whole council every four years. The Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Independent Residents' Federation all supported elections by thirds. The Liberal Democrats argued that this would produce more gradual change, provide the electorate with a regular opportunity to express their opinion, maintain higher levels of interest amongst the electorate and ensure a more regular contact between elector and elected. However, there appears to be some support for the current electoral cycle and we are not persuaded by the arguments for change. Therefore, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years, but welcome further comment during Stage Three.

Conclusions

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

- there should 48 councillors, as at present;
- there should be 19 wards;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three wards, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

90 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- in the east of the borough we propose a revised two-member Stopsley ward and a new three-member Round Green ward;
- in the centre of the borough we propose a new two-member Barnfield ward and revised two-member Icknield ward based on a combination of the Conservatives' proposals and our own;

- we propose making amendments to the Liberal Democrats' proposed Limbury and Saints wards;
- we propose making a minor amendment to the Liberal Democrats' proposed South ward.

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

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	48	48	48	48
Number of wards	16	19	16	19
Average number of electors per councillor	2,764	2,764	2,845	2,845
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	8	0	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	1	0

92 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Luton Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from eight to none. By 2005 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 6 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Luton Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

93 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Luton and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward

boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Luton

5 NEXT STEPS

94 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 2 July 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

95 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Luton 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

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96 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Luton Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Challney	3	7,287	2,429	0	7,856	2,619	4
2	Dallow	3	7,232	2,411	-1	7,458	2,486	-1
3	Eaton Valley	3	7,539	2,513	3	7,694	2,565	2
4	Farley	3	7,249	2,416	-1	7,531	2,510	0
5	High Town	3	7,136	2,379	-2	7,346	2,449	-3
6	Icknield	3	6,702	2,234	-8	6,842	2,281	-10
7	Leagrave	3	7,385	2,462	1	7,588	2,529	0
8	Lewsey	3	7,540	2,513	3	7,686	2,562	2
9	Limbury	3	7,351	2,450	1	7,539	2,513	0
10	Maidenhall	3	6,967	2,322	-5	7,591	2,530	0
11	Marsh Farm	3	7,460	2,487	2	7,680	2,560	1
12	Saints	3	7,299	2,433	0	7,640	2,547	1
13	South	3	7,480	2,493	2	7,817	2,606	3
14	Stopsley	3	7,731	2,577	6	7,907	2,636	4
15	Sundon Park	3	7,321	2,440	0	7,485	2,495	-1
16	Warden Hill	3	7,401	2,467	1	7,559	2,520	0
17	Wardown	3	7,041	2,347	-4	7,387	2,462	-2
18	Wigmore	3	7,389	2,463	1	7,602	2,534	0
	Totals	54	131, 510	-	-	136,208	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,435	-	-	2,844	-

Luton Conservative Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Barnfield	2	5,838	2,919	3
2	Beechwood	2	5,480	2,740	-3
3	Biscot	2	5,897	2,949	5
4	Bramingham Park	2	5,829	2,915	3
5	Bury Park	2	5,616	2,808	0
6	Central	2	5,844	2,922	4
7	Challney	2	5,359	2,680	-5
8	Crawley	2	5,694	2,847	1
9	Dallow	2	5,436	2,718	-4
10	Farley	2	5,900	2,950	5
11	Hart Hill	2	5,201	2,601	-8
12	High Town	2	5,538	2,769	-2
13	Icknield	2	5,178	2,589	-8
14	Leagrave	2	5,465	2,733	-3
15	Lewsey	2	5,976	2,988	6
16	Limbury	2	5,586	2,793	-1
17	Marsh Farm	2	5,938	2,969	5
18	Poets	2	5,523	2,762	-2
19	Putteridge	2	5,676	2,838	1
20	Saints	2	6,023	3,012	7
21	South	2	5,417	2,709	-4
22	Stopsley	2	5,553	2,777	-2
23	Sundon Park	2	5,608	2,804	-1
24	Wigmore	2	5,826	2,913	3
	Totals	48	135,401	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,821	–

Note: 2000 figures not supplied

Luton Green Party's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Biscot	4	10,768	2,692	3
2	Challney	4	10,395	2,599	-1
3	Crawley	4	10,620	2,655	1
4	Dallow Hills	4	10,425	2,606	-1
5	High Town	4	10,229	2,557	-3
6	Icknield	4	10,247	2,562	-2
7	Leagrave Sundon	4	10,537	2,634	0
8	Lewsey	4	10,591	2,648	1
9	Limbury	4	10,370	2,593	-1
10	North	4	10,772	2,693	3
11	Putteridge	4	10,467	2,617	0
12	Saints	4	10,570	2,643	1
13	South Central	4	10,571	2,643	1
	Totals	52	136,562	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,626	–

Note: 2000 figures not supplied

Luton Independent Residents' Federation's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Ashcroft	1	2,612	2,612	3
2	Barnfield	1	2,677	2,677	6
3	Beech Hill	1	2,538	2,538	0
4	Beechwood	1	2,522	2,522	0
5	Biscot	1	2,324	2,324	-8

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
6	Bishopscote	1	2,673	2,673	6
7	Bury Park	1	2,419	2,419	-4
8	Bushmead	1	2,644	2,644	4
9	Butterfield	1	2,522	2,522	0
10	Challney West	1	2,589	2,589	2
11	Challney West	1	2,657	2,657	5
12	Crawley	1	2,643	2,643	4
13	Cutenhoe	1	2,763	2,763	9
14	Dallow	1	2,600	2,600	3
15	Farley	1	2,318	2,318	-8
16	Farley Hill	1	2,652	2,652	5
17	Hart Hill	1	2,510	2,510	-1
18	High Town	1	2,590	2,590	2
19	Kingsway	1	2,349	2,349	-7
20	Leagrave	1	2,502	2,502	-1
21	Leagrave Marsh	1	2,671	2,671	6
22	Lewsey Farm	1	2,437	2,437	-4
23	Lewsey Park	1	2,334	2,334	-8
24	Limbury	1	2,507	2,507	-1
25	Limbury Meads	1	2,478	2,478	-2
26	Maidenhall	1	2,472	2,472	-2
27	Mangrove	1	2,560	2,560	1
28	Oakley	1	2,529	2,529	0
29	Park Town	1	2,707	2,707	7
30	Parkside	1	2,696	2,696	7
31	Poets	1	2,332	2,332	-8
32	Poynters	1	2,409	2,409	-5
33	Putteridge	1	2,573	2,573	2
34	Round Green	1	2,488	2,488	-2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
35	Runfold	1	2,501	2,501	-1
36	Runley	1	2,549	2,549	1
37	Saints	1	2,538	2,538	0
38	Slaughters Wood	1	2,575	2,575	2
39	Stopsley	1	2,582	2,582	2
40	Sundon	1	2,424	2,424	-4
41	Sundon Park	1	2,352	2,352	-7
42	Tophill	1	2,641	2,641	4
43	Town	1	2,700	2,700	7
44	Trinity	1	2,421	2,421	-4
45	Unnamed Ward 3	1	2,169	2,169	-14
46	Unnamed Ward 2	1	2,315	2,315	-9
47	Unnamed Ward 1	1	2,794	2,794	10
48	Warden Hill	1	2,565	2,565	1
49	Wardown	1	2,488	2,488	-2
50	Wauluds	1	2,625	2,625	4
51	Whipperley	1	2,583	2,583	2
52	Whitefield	1	2,644	2,644	4
53	Wigmore	1	2,347	2,347	-7
	Totals	53	134,110	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,530	-

Note: 2000 figures not supplied

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to boroughs within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London Boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

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

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

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

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

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire boroughs:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Commission compliance with Code criteria

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