

Draft recommendations

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England



New electoral arrangements for Bedford Borough Council

May 2010

Translations and other formats

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The 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 Bedford Borough Council to ensure that the new unitary authority has appropriate electoral arrangements that reflect its functions and political management structure.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Boundary Committee for England commenced the review in 2009. However, on 1 April 2010 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee and is now conducting the review. It therefore falls to us to complete the work of the Boundary Committee.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council size	4 August 2009	Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee on council size for the authority and its analysis and deliberation
One	27 October 2009	Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee
Two	12 January 2010	Boundary Committee's analysis and deliberation
Three	17 May 2010	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 July 2010	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

The Boundary Committee received 10 representations during its initial consultation on council size. During Stage One it received 21 representations on warding arrangements, including a borough-wide scheme from Bedford Borough Council. The Council also submitted copies of the representations it had received as part of the consultation process undertaken when developing its proposals. The Committee also received an alternative warding proposal for the Bedford urban area from the Bedford & Kempston Conservative Association. Additionally, the Committee received evidence of community identity from parish and town councils and local residents in the borough. All these submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Bedford Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for December 2013, a period five years on from the December 2008 electoral roll which is the basis for this

review. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 6% over this period. Although we consider that this level of growth to be high, we note that there are specific development areas within the borough highlighted by the Council supporting the projections. On balance, therefore, we are satisfied that they are the most appropriate electorate figures that can be provided at this time.

Council size

Currently, Bedford Borough Council has 36 councillors. The Boundary Committee received proposals for a council size ranging from 40 to 54 members. Bedford Borough Council proposed a council size of 40 members and took an evidenced-based approach in its consideration. The Bedford Borough Conservative Group proposed a council size of 41 members, whilst a local resident argued for a return to 54 councillors as was the case under the former two-tier structure. Overall, the Boundary Committee considered that the Council had provided the most thorough justification in support of its proposals and, therefore, invited representations on warding arrangements based on a 40-member council.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage One, we have developed proposals that are based broadly on those of the Council. We noted some similarities between the Council's proposals and some of the other proposals received. Where we have moved away from the Council's proposals, we have sought to reflect communication links, geographic factors and evidence of community identity received during Stage One.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations for electoral arrangements for Bedford Borough 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 **12 July 2010**. 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:

**Review Officer
Bedford Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk**

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk.

1 Introduction

1 The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for the new Bedford unitary authority which commenced on 4 August 2009. Subsequently, the Boundary Committee wrote to Bedford Borough Council, as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals on the council size for the new council. Following the Committee's decision on the appropriate council size, it invited the submission of proposals on the warding arrangements for the new council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed the Commission's draft recommendations.

2 On 1 April 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee. The Commission is now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Bedford Borough Council in autumn 2010.

What is an electoral review?

3 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.

4 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identities and interests; 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.

5 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 Bedford?

6 In December 2007, the Government approved a bid from Bedford Borough Council for a unitary authority to take over the responsibility for all local government services in the area which were formerly provided by Bedfordshire County Council and the Borough Council. A Statutory Instrument was subsequently approved by Parliament on 25 February 2008, establishing a new Bedford unitary authority from 1 April 2009. The Electoral Commission was obliged, by law, to consider whether an electoral review was needed following such a change in local government. Its view was that an electoral review of Bedford was appropriate at the earliest opportunity.

7 As discussed in paragraphs 1 and 2, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to conduct an electoral review. However, following the Local

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

Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) assuming the functions of the Boundary Committee, the LGBCE is now conducting the review. It therefore falls to us to complete the work of the Boundary Committee.

How will the recommendations affect you?

8 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also determine which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. However, if you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

9 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 would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will accept comments and views until 12 July 2010. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we intend to publish in autumn 2010. Details about how to submit proposals can be found on page 21 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

10 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)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL (Deputy Chair)
Jane Earl
Joan Jones CBE
Professor Colin Mellors

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

11 Before finalising our recommendations about the new electoral arrangements for Bedford Borough 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.

12 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Bedford 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 easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

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

14 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 to be considered, 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.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Bedford Borough Council nor the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, 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.

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, members and officers of the Boundary Committee visited Bedford Borough Council and met with the Mayor,

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

elected members, officers and parish and town councils. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. The Committee received 10 submissions during its initial consultation on council size for the new authority, and 21 representations during Stage One, together with copies of the representations the Council had received in response to its own local consultations on new electoral arrangements, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Bedford Borough Council (hereafter referred to as the Council) submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2013, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 6% over the five-year period from 2008 to 2013. The main areas of growth are expected to the south of Bedford town in Wilshamstead (the Wixams development) and new developments to the immediate north of the Bedford urban area. During Stage One, the Conservative group on the Council and a local resident suggested that the Council may have underestimated growth in certain areas of development. The local resident noted that the Wixams development may actually contain 1,800 new electors by 2013 rather than 1,387 as projected by the Council. However, they did not provide substantive evidence to support this.

18 Given any substantive evidence to contradict the Council's forecasts, we are therefore content to accept them as the basis of our draft recommendations. However, we would welcome any further comments and evidence on the electorate forecasts during this consultation period.

Council size

19 Bedford Borough Council currently has a council size of 36 members. The Council has new functions and responsibilities and it is therefore necessary to consider the number of members required for the authority to provide effective and convenient local government. It is important to consider this in isolation from the former number of county and district councillors for Bedford, and to consider how the new authority is managed, and how it intends to engage with and empower its local communities.

20 The Boundary Committee received 10 submissions during this stage of the review. It received proposals for three different council sizes. Bedford Borough Council proposed a council size of 40 members, while the Bedford Borough Conservative Group proposed a council size of 41 members. One proposal from a local resident argued for a return to 54 councillors, the same number of borough and county councillors that represented the area prior to it achieving unitary status.

21 The Council proposal was based on an analysis of the allocation of responsibility between the mayoral, executive and non-executive functions, councillors' workload for delivery of non-executive functions, scrutiny arrangements, and the community leadership role envisaged for councillors. The Council considered that significantly fewer than 40 councillors would damage the 'link between the community and the councillor' and that more than 40 councillors would damage

accountability and be in excess of the number required under the Council's political management structure.

22 The Council stated that 'a critical element of the ward councillor's role is to represent their community to the Council (not just the Council to their community)'. The Council was concerned that a councillor's ability to do this representational role would be compromised by attendances at Council committees and at external bodies if there were fewer than 40 councillors.

23 The Bedford Borough Conservative Group proposed an increase of five members to a council size of 41. They had approached the question of council size by assessing the strategic, decision-making and scrutiny roles of councillors in balance with the representational aspects of councillors' roles and how effectively they both engage with their constituents and represent their constituents' views. They also made broad comparisons of the population, electorate and future growth prospects of Bedford compared to other unitary authorities. They contended that each of these comparisons showed that electors in the Borough were under-represented.

24 Additionally, a local resident proposed a return to a council size of 54 as was the case under the former two-tier local government structure in Bedford. Eight further respondents declined to propose a specific council size and instead proposed a desired number of councillors for a respective ward or local area.

25 The Boundary Committee was not persuaded to revert to a council size of 54 since this figure did not reflect the new roles and responsibilities of the new authority. The Conservative proposal for an increase to 41 members relied, in the main, on broad comparisons of Bedford Borough's electorate and population to that in other unitary authorities.

26 Furthermore, we are of the view that each local authority should be considered individually and not compared with other authorities of similar geographic or population size, or those facing similar issues and concerns. In our opinion, council size proposals should be justified in the context of each local authority's individual characteristics and needs.

27 The Committee considered that, whilst additional evidence would have been welcome, there was sufficient evidence to justify an increase and that there was a broad consensus for either 40 or 41 members. The Council had provided evidence of the political management structure and the role envisaged for councillors as the authority accommodates its new responsibilities. On balance, therefore, the Committee endorsed the Council's proposal for a council of 40 members as the basis upon which to consult on warding arrangements for the Borough.

Electoral fairness

28 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

29 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.

30 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (116,246 in December 2008 and 123,307 by December 2013) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 40 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,906 in 2008 and 3,083 by 2013.

31 Under the draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in two of the 27 wards will vary by more than 10% from the average across the borough by 2013. However, overall, we are satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Bedford.

General analysis

32 During Stage One, the Boundary Committee received 21 submissions including an authority-wide scheme from Bedford Borough Council. The scheme was based on a mixed pattern of single- and two-member wards for the borough. The Council also submitted those responses it had received during consultation on its own proposals. The Bedford & Kempston Conservative Association (hereafter referred to as the Conservatives) submitted warding proposals for the urban Bedford, Kempston and Brickhill areas which would provide for a uniform pattern of single-member wards for this area.

33 A former borough councillor put forward warding arrangements for the borough which were largely based on retaining the existing wards for the Bedford urban area and some alternative wards for the rural area. Another local resident put forward alternative warding arrangements for some of the rural areas of the borough.

34 In the Bedford town area, the Council proposed a largely two-member warding pattern with the exception of Kempston. The Conservatives put forward a wholly single-member warding pattern for Bedford and Kempston which, in places, we considered would result in insufficiently clear ward boundaries. Moreover, several of their proposed wards would have electoral variances of more 10% from the average for the borough by 2013.

35 For the rural area, we noted that there was more consensus between the proposals submitted at Stage One. The Council proposed a largely single-member warding pattern with a few of exceptions for more built-up areas surrounding Bedford town. The proposals submitted by the local residents for the rural area also proposed a similar numerical spread of wards which were broadly similar, with several exceptions to the Council's proposals.

36 The remainder of the submissions received were localised comments from parish councils and local residents, many of whom wished to retain the existing warding arrangements in their area.

37 While we would have wished to have seen more persuasive evidence for the warding proposals submitted at Stage One, we were persuaded that the Council had undertaken a thorough consultation process with local interested parties. We consider that the Council's scheme provided clear ward boundaries and, where not constrained by the geography of the area, provided a reasonably good reflection of communities in the borough. We have therefore based our proposals broadly on the Council's scheme, subject to a number of modifications outlined in this report.

38 Our proposals are for a pattern of 14 single-member wards and 13 two-member wards. We consider our proposals provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests, especially where we have received such evidence.

39 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table C1 (on pages 31–33) and Map 1.

40 During Stage Three, we welcome comments on these draft recommendations, particularly in relation to those areas where we did not receive representations, other than the borough-wide schemes, received during Stage One.

Electoral arrangements

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

- Bedford town, Brickhill and Kempston (pages 9–13)
- Bedford Borough rural (pages 13–17)

42 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 31–33, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Bedford town, Brickhill and Kempston

43 Bedford town is located towards the south of the borough and comprises approximately half of the borough's electorate. The area is largely unparished but does contain the urban Brickhill parish. The Council proposed a uniform pattern of two-member wards that provided for good levels of electoral equality by 2013. However, we noted that the Council had not proposed to transfer any overspill development to the north of the town to its proposed Bedford town wards.

44 The Bedford & Kempston Conservative Association put forward a uniform pattern of single-member wards. However, a number of their proposed wards had electoral variances of greater than 10%. Unlike the Council, the Conservatives had attempted to ward a number of the overspill areas with Bedford town wards.

45 As mentioned above, we have decided to base our draft recommendations broadly on the Council's proposals with modification to a number of its proposed wards in Bedford town to provide clearer ward boundaries. Where respondents provided evidence of community identity, we have sought to reflect this in the proposals.

Bedford town central and west

46 The Council put forward proposals for two-member Castle, Harpur and Queens Park wards. The proposed wards would have electoral variances of 4% fewer, 1% more and 9% fewer respectively than the borough average by 2013. The Conservatives proposed a pattern of six single-member wards in this area, one of which (Embankment) would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the borough by 2013.

47 Three local residents also commented on warding proposals for the Castle area. One objected to any proposal to split the Castle area between two wards while another considered that the Council's proposed Castle ward had boundaries that were insufficiently clear. A local resident and former councillor proposed that Castle and Harper wards remain unchanged and that Queens Park ward be represented by three councillors, rather than two as at present. She considered that a third councillor in the Queens Park area reflected the area's 'high social needs'.

48 There was lack of consensus with regard to warding arrangements in this area and the two substantive schemes that were received are significantly different, with the Conservative proposal based on the principle of single-member wards. Overall, we considered that the Conservative proposal would split communities arbitrarily in this area of the town and that their proposed ward boundaries were insufficiently clear.

49 We consider that the Council's proposals follow clearer ward boundaries and better reflect community identities in the area. The Council's proposed Castle ward encompasses the commercial centre of the town and adjoining residential areas whilst it's Harpur and Queens Park wards contain distinct communities. On balance, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposals for this area of Bedford town as part of our draft recommendations.

50 Our draft recommendations would provide good levels of electoral equality as well as reflecting community identities in this area. Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Castle, Harpur and Queens Park wards would have electoral variances of 4% fewer, 1% more and 9% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Bedford town north and east

51 This area includes the parish of Brickhill, which forms part of the Bedford urban area. The Council put forward proposals for two-member Brickhill, Goldington, De Parys and Putnoe wards which would have electoral variances of 6% more, an equal number, 6% fewer and 5% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2013.

52 The Council recognised that a Brickhill ward that was coterminous with the parish would have too high an electoral variance and sought to address this by warding the Ellis Road area in the south east of the parish with its proposed De Parys ward of Bedford Town. It argued that this area was the most 'distinctly separate' area of Brickhill parish. The Council had decided not to incorporate overspill areas from the Bedford area in its proposed wards for the town. These

areas are the Woodlands Manor estate, the Spires estate to the north of Norse Road and the Thor Drive area to the east of Norse Road.

53 The Conservatives proposed a single-member warding pattern for this area. While the Conservatives warded the overspill areas with its urban wards, overall its proposals would result in higher electoral variances than the Council scheme with two of its eight proposed wards in this area having a councillor:elector ratio of equal to or greater than 10%. In particular, its proposed Church Lane and St Marks wards would have electoral variances of 12% more and 10% more electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2013.

54 Brickhill Parish Council stated its opposition to warding proposals that would ward any part of it with the Bedford urban area. While its preference was to include the Woodlands Manor estate in a Brickhill ward, the parish council recognised that this would not provide good electoral equality. The Parish Council stated its opposition to the Council's proposals to transfer the Ellis Road area to De Parys ward and suggested two minor amendments that would transfer St Thomas More School and four properties in the Mowsbury Park area into a two-member Brickhill ward.

55 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received. We consider that the Conservatives' proposals would result in somewhat arbitrary boundaries that would divide communities in this area of Bedford. In particular, their proposals would result in the division of Brickhill parish between three borough wards using, in our view, ward boundaries that would be insufficiently clear and not tied to ground detail. Furthermore, we considered that the Conservatives' proposals would not reflect the distinct sense of community identity that exists in the Brickhill area. We also note that the Conservatives' proposed Goldington Green ward would breach Goldington Road, which we consider provides a clear potential ward boundary in this area.

56 On balance, therefore, we consider that the Council's proposals provide the best reflection of community identity in this area while ensuring good levels of electoral equality by 2013. However, the Council's proposals did not address the issue of overspill development on the outskirts of Bedford town. We examined a number of alternative warding options, to ward systematically all the overspill development that is currently located in parished areas adjoining the town.

57 We looked at the creation of a three-member Goldington ward and a single-member Putnoe ward. However, without substantial revision to the Council's proposals, it would inevitably have a significant effect on the warding proposals for the adjoining rural areas of the borough. In effect, warding the overspill estates in Bedford town would require a substantial departure from any of the locally generated schemes for the rural area of the borough. On balance, we concluded that we did not have sufficient evidence to justify such a significant departure. Nevertheless, we noted that the Spires estate, while located in the parish of Renhold, can only be accessed via Bedford town. We therefore propose that the Spires estate be warded with the Council's proposed Goldington ward.

58 We propose that, to accommodate this modification to the Council's scheme, a number of smaller amendments be made to the Council's proposed wards in this area. We propose that the boundary between Goldington and Putnoe ward be amended to follow the rear of properties on the south side of Putnoe Street and that

properties to the east of Haylands Way adjacent to Goldington School be transferred to the Council's proposed De Parys ward. We also propose that the southern boundary of Goldington ward follow the centre of Goldington Road.

59 We also note Brickhill Parish Council's proposal to transfer four electors in the St Thomas More School area (located in Clapham parish) into the proposed Brickhill ward. Given the requirement that we must ward parishes where they are divided between borough wards, this would result in the creation of a parish ward of Clapham with only four electors. We are not persuaded that this would be a viable parish ward and have therefore decided not adopted this proposal as part of the draft recommendations.

60 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Brickhill, Goldington, De Parys and Putnoe wards would have electoral variances of 6% more, 5% more, 5% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillors that the average for the borough by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Bedford town south

61 The Council proposed three, two-member wards in this area. Its proposed wards (Caldwell, Kingsbrook, and Newnham) would have electoral variances of 7% more, 5% more and 7% fewer respectively by 2013). The Council used the A421 by-pass as the southern boundary of its proposed Kingsbrook ward. The Council also proposed warding an area in the north east of Eastcotts Parish (to the north by-pass) in its proposed Kingsbrook ward.

62 The Conservatives proposed a uniform pattern of single-member wards in this area. While their proposals provided for reasonable electoral equality for some wards, their proposed Bedford Hospital and Newnham wards would have electoral variances of 12% fewer and 10% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2013. We considered that, in attempting to secure a uniform pattern of single-member wards in this area, some of their proposed ward boundaries were insufficiently clear and would not provide an accurate reflection of local communities in the south of Bedford town.

63 A local resident and former councillor proposed that the boundaries of these wards remain the same but that their representation be altered to ensure more effective representation for the more socially deprived areas in Kingsbrook and Caldwell. This would result in significant electoral variances.

64 We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on the Council's proposals with some modification. As noted above, the Council proposed using the A421 Bedford by-pass as the southern boundary of its proposed Kingsbrook ward. In doing so, three areas of the adjoining parished area would need to be incorporated in the proposed ward. Two of these three areas contain no electors and would therefore not provide for viable parish wards. We therefore propose that the southern boundary of the proposed Kingsbrook ward runs in a westerly direction to The High Road junction adhere to the existing parish boundary. The built-up area of Eastcotts parish to the west of this junction would be located in Kingsbrook ward, as proposed by the Council. As stated earlier, we have also

proposed a minor modification to the proposed boundary between Newnham and Goldington wards to ensure a more easily identifiable ward boundary.

65 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Cauldwell, Kingsbrook and Newnham wards would have electoral variances of 7% and 6% more and 7% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Kempston

66 The parish of Kempston lies to the south west of Bedford town and is contiguous with the Bedford urban area. The Council proposed three single-member wards (Kempston North, Kempston South and Kempston West) and a two-member Kempston Central & East ward. The Council's proposed wards would have electoral variances of 2% fewer, 5% more, 4% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013.

67 The Conservatives proposed five single-member wards for this area. While their proposed wards would provide for good electoral equality, again we considered that some of the proposed ward boundaries would be insufficiently clear and fail to reflect community identities in the area.

68 Kempston Town Council, in its submission as part of the Council's consultation process, favoured a three-ward split of the parish with a two-member Kempston North ward, a single-member Kempston West ward and a two-member Kempston South ward

69 Based on the evidence received at Stage One, we have decided to base our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals for this area, with one amendment. It is noted that the proposed southern and western ward boundaries of the Council's proposed wards adhere to the recently completed extension to the Bedford by-pass. As with the south of Bedford town, this would appear to require the creation of parish wards with no electors. We therefore propose that ward boundaries in this area follow the existing parish. We also propose a minor modification between the proposed Kempston Central & East and Kempston South wards to ensure the boundary adheres to the rear of properties in this area.

70 Our proposed Kempston Central & East, North, South and West wards would have electoral variances of 8% fewer, 2% fewer, 5% more and 4% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Bedford Borough rural

Rural south west

71 In this area, the Council proposed single-member wards of Wottoon and Wilshamstead which would be coterminous with the parishes of the same name, and a single-member Kempston Rural ward comprising the parishes of Turvey, Great Denham, Stagsden and Kempston Rural. These proposed wards would have

electoral variances of 9%, 13% and 2% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2013.

72 The Council noted that while the proposed Wilshamstead ward would currently have a high electoral variance (30% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough in 2008), the majority of the Wixams development, which straddles the borough boundary, will be located in the proposed ward and will ensure a much improved level of electoral equality by 2013. The Council also argued that its proposed Kempston Rural ward would unite communities that share good communication links, particularly with the recent completion of the Bedford western by-pass.

73 The Conservatives and two local residents proposed that the Great Denham area be warded with Biddenham to its north in a single-member ward which would have an electoral variance of 14% fewer electors per councillor by 2013. The Conservatives noted that their proposed ward would combine areas of similar quality housing stock that share good communication links. One of the local residents proposed a two-member Wilshamstead ward, which would incorporate Wilshamstead and Elstow parishes and have an electoral variance of 8% fewer electors per councillor by 2013. The local resident noted that the Wixams development may actually contain 1,800 electors by 2013 rather than 1,387 as projected by the Council.

74 While we note that the local resident's proposed Wilshamstead ward would have better electoral equality than the Council's proposals, it is considered that Wilshamstead parish is a cohesive community and is to be the subject of development in the Wixams area of the parish. Furthermore, accommodating this proposal would have a significant knock-on effect on adjoining wards, for which we do not consider there is sufficient evidence to support.

75 The Conservatives proposed Biddenham ward would unite two similar and adjoining communities. However, we do not consider that this in itself is sufficient evidence to warrant the electoral variance that would result. Furthermore, accommodating this proposal would have a significant consequential effect on adjoining wards. We are not persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to justify this level of departure from locally generated proposals. Therefore, on balance, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposed warding arrangements for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

76 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed of Wootton, Wilshamstead and Kempston Rural wards would have electoral variances of 9%, 13% and 2% more electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Rural south and east

77 The Council proposed a single-member Eastcotts ward. As noted above, the Council proposed that an unpopulated area of the parish be transferred to its proposed Kingsbrook ward in Bedford town. The Council proposed a single-member Elstow ward, comprising Elstow and Stewartby parishes, a single-member Great Barford ward, comprising the parishes of Cardington, Cople, Willington and Great

Barford. The Council also proposed a single-member Renhold ward comprising the parishes of Ravensden and Renhold.

78 Under the Council's proposals Eastcotts, Elstow, Great Barford and Renhold wards would have electoral variances of 5%, 5%, 1% and 5% more electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013.

79 As mentioned above, a local resident suggested that Elstow parish be incorporated with Wilshamstead parish in a two-member ward. On balance, we consider that while this proposal would provide for good electoral equality, it would not reflect community identities in this area as accurately as the Council's proposal. In particular, it is noted that the main population centres of Elstow and Wilshamstead are divided by the A421 by-pass and that the urban area of Elstow adjoins the Bedford town unparished area.

80 Ravensden Parish Council objected to the parish being warded with areas to its south and preferred to be located in a ward with Renhold parish to its north. It also wished to see the Woodlands Park area of the parish warded with the Brickhill parished area of Bedford town. Renhold Parish Council supported similar warding arrangements to those put forward by Ravensden with the parish being warded with communities to its north.

81 We have given careful consideration to the Council's proposed Great Barford and Renhold wards. As noted above, we propose that the Spires area of Renhold, which is effectively overspill from Bedford town, be included in the proposed Goldington ward of the town. Furthermore, we note that the Council proposed that Great Barford form a single-member ward with Cardington, Cople and Willington parishes. We are not persuaded that this proposed ward would unite communities with a shared sense of identity and interest. In particular, it is noted that Great Barford does not have a direct road link with any of the other communities in the proposed ward and would only be linked with communities to its south by a very narrow strip of land.

82 On balance, therefore, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposed Elstow and Eastcotts wards as part of our draft recommendations subject to one amendment. As noted earlier, the Council proposed that an unpopulated area of Eastcotts parish be warded with the Bedford town area. It is proposed that ward boundaries reflect the parish boundary in this area.

83 We have noted the views of Ravensden and Renhold parishes. However, to accommodate their preferences in the draft recommendations would require the substantial re-warding of areas in the north of the borough for which we consider there is insufficient evidence.

84 In order to take account of the transfer of the Spires area of Renhold parish into the wards of Bedford town, we propose that the Council's proposed Renhold ward (less the Spires estate) be united with the Council's proposed Great Barford ward to form a two-member ward. This is similar to a two-member Great Barford ward proposed by a local resident at Stage One.

85 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Eastcotts, Elstow, and Great Barford wards would have electoral variances of 4% more, 5% more, and 5% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Rural North

86 The Council proposed a single-member Harrold ward which would comprise the parishes of Carlton & Chellington, Harrold, Odell, Podington and Wymington. The Council also proposed a single-member Riseley ward comprising the parishes of Thurleigh, Bletsoe, Riseley, Melchbourne & Yelden, Dean & Shelton, Swineshead and Pertenhall. These proposed wards would have electoral variances of 8% more and 11% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013.

87 The Council also proposed a single-member Sharnbrook ward comprising the parishes of Milton Earnest, Felmersham, Sharnbrook and Knotting & Souldrop and a single-member Wyboston ward which would comprise the parishes of Bolnhurst & Keysoe, Little Staughton, Wilden, Colmworth, Staploe, Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden, Roxton and Little Barford. These proposed wards would have electoral variances of 7% more and 3% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013. While it was acknowledged that the electoral variance for the proposed Riseley ward was relatively high, the Council said that it contains a number of sparsely populated and rural communities near the northern boundary of the borough.

88 Colmworth, Wilden and Podington parish councils proposed that the existing warding arrangements in this area be retained. A local resident proposed alternative arrangements but did not justify the proposals with supporting evidence. Another local resident put forward warding arrangements for this area which included a single-member Riseley ward. This ward would include Milton Earnest parish (which is located in the Council's proposed Sharnbrook ward) and have an electoral variance of 11% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2013.

89 We did not consider that the proposals for this area were particularly well evidenced, although we noted that the Council's proposals had been consulted on locally and have a measure of support. Given our draft recommendations for adjoining areas, it is not possible to retain the current warding arrangements for this area, as requested by some parish councils.

90 On balance, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. While the proposed Riseley ward will have a relatively high electoral variance, this reflects the fact that it is on the edge of the borough with little scope for adjustment. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report.

Rural west

91 The Council proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Bromham and Biddenham, a single-member Clapham ward comprising Clapham parish and an unparished area to the north of Bedford town, and a single-member Oakley ward comprising the parishes of Oakley, Pavenham and Stevington. The

proposed wards would have electoral variances of 7% fewer, 9% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the borough by 2013.

92 The Council noted that the existing Clapham ward, which is coterminous with the parish of the same name, has an unacceptably high electoral variance which is not projected to improve over the next five years. While the Council appeared to acknowledge the potential opposition of Pavenham and Stevington parishes to its proposed Oakley ward, it noted that these two communities would constitute a significant part of the total electorate of the new ward, and would therefore be 'appropriately and adequately represented'.

93 Both Pavenham and Stevington parish councils objected strongly to the Council's proposed Oakley ward, which would comprise both parishes as well as Oakley parish. Both asserted that Oakley was more urban in nature and should be warded with the neighbouring settlement of Clapham to its south east. Both parish councils felt that they would not be effectively represented under the Council's proposal and suggested revised warding arrangements that would see both parishes warded with Felmersham & Radwell and Carlton parishes.

94 One local resident put forward an identical warding arrangement for Oakley to that of the Council. Another local resident opposed the Council's proposals in this area. Specifically, he proposed that Pavenham and Stevington parishes be warded with more rural communities to their north and west and that Oakley should be included in a ward with either Clapham or Bromham.

95 We acknowledge that the Council's proposals, particularly for its proposed Oakley ward, are contentious and have met with local opposition. As a consequence we sought to examine any alternative warding arrangements that could be accommodated within the draft recommendations. The alternative proposal put forward by Pavenham and Stevington parish councils would result in a ward with an electoral variance of 22% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2013. We consider that such an electoral variance to be unacceptably high, given that there appear to be no specific local factors or outstanding evidence that would justify it.

96 Furthermore, warding Oakley with Clapham would produce an electoral variance of 14% fewer electors per councillor by 2013. On balance, we are of the view that it is not possible to reward the Oakley area without a wider re-warding of the rural west and north. This would result in a significant departure from any proposals put forward for adjoining areas at Stage One. We do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to justify this.

97 We are not persuaded that Pavenham or Stevington parishes would be inadequately represented on the borough council under the authority's proposals and, on balance, have decided to adopt the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. The draft recommendations for this area are shown on the large maps accompanying this report. We acknowledge that the proposals for this area depart from the views of parishes in this area and would particularly welcome further comments on our draft recommendations at Stage Three.

Conclusions

98 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2008 and 2013 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2008	2013
Number of councillors	40	40
Number of electoral wards	27	27
Average number of electors per councillor	2,906	3,083
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	10	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Draft recommendation

Bedford Borough Council should comprise 40 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

99 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 different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

100 During Stage One, some parishes requested changes to parish electoral arrangements where these were not as a consequence of our proposed district warding arrangements. Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Bedford Borough Council 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.

101 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Brickhill, Kempston and Renhold. We would particularly welcome comments on these proposals from the parish councils concerned and local residents during this consultation stage.

102 The parish of Brickhill is currently served by 13 councillors and is divided into three parish wards: North, South & South West and East.

103 As a result of our proposed electoral 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 Brickhill parish.

Draft recommendations

Brickhill Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, representing four wards: North ward (returning 4 members), South & West ward (returning 4 members), East ward (returning 4 members) and Ellis Road ward (returning 1 member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on large maps accompanying this report.

104 The parish of Kempston is currently divided into three wards returning 12 members: East ward (returning four members), North ward (returning four members) and South ward (returning four members).

105 As a result of our proposed electoral 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 Kempston parish.

Draft recommendations

Kempston Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, representing four wards: Kempston Central & East ward (returning six members), Kempston North ward (returning two members), Kempston South ward (returning two members) and Kempston Central & East ward (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on large maps accompanying this report.

106 The parish of Renhold is currently divided into two parish wards and is served by nine parish councillors. As a result of our proposed electoral 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 Renhold parish.

Draft recommendations

Renhold Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, representing three wards: Renhold North ward (returning five members), South West ward (returning three members) and The Spires ward (returning one member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named large maps accompanying this report.

3 What happens next?

107 There will now be a consultation period of nine weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Bedford Borough Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 12 July 2010. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

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

109 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Bedford 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.lgbce.org.uk or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk.

110 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 Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Bedford Borough 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.

111 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, no matter who they are from.

112 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.

113 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for Bedford Borough Council in 2011.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Bedford Borough Council

114 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Bedford Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Bedford Borough Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in the west of Bedford town and Kempston area.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in the east of the Bedford town area.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England was a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Boundary Committee's functions were assumed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in April 2010
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 Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. It regulates party and election finance and sets standards for well-run elections

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 Committee 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

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (November 2000) (http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/servicefirst/2000/consult/code/_consultation.pdf) requires all government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.

Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.

We comply with this requirement.

Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.

We comply with this requirement.

Appendix C

Table C1: Draft recommendations for Bedford Borough Council

	Electoral ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Brickhill	2	6,521	3,261	12%	6,527	3,264	6%
2	Bromham & Biddenham	2	5,680	2,840	-2%	5,720	2,860	-7%
3	Castle	2	5,121	2,561	-12%	5,933	2,967	-4%
4	Cauldwell	2	6,262	3,131	8%	6,591	3,296	7%
5	Clapham	1	3,343	3,343	15%	3,366	3,366	9%
6	De Parys	2	5,639	2,820	-3%	5,877	2,939	-5%
7	Eastcotts	1	2,187	2,187	-25%	3,198	3,198	4%
8	Elstow	1	3,021	3,021	4%	3,228	3,228	5%
9	Goldington	2	6,003	3,002	3%	6,453	3,227	5%
10	Great Barford	2	5,179	2,590	-11%	5,846	2,923	-5%
11	Harpur	2	5,822	2,911	0%	6,199	3,100	1%
12	Harrold	1	3,246	3,246	12%	3,329	3,329	8%

Table C1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Bedford Borough Council

	Electoral ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13	Kempston Central & East	2	5,398	2,699	-7%	5,678	2,839	-8%
14	Kempston North	1	3,009	3,009	4%	3,009	3,009	-2%
15	Kempston Rural	1	2,723	2,723	-6%	3,160	3,160	2%
16	Kempston South	1	3,213	3,213	11%	3,250	3,250	5%
17	Kempston West	1	2,900	2,900	0%	3,218	3,218	4%
18	Kingsbrook	2	6,398	3,199	10%	6,511	3,256	6%
19	Newnham	2	5,715	2,858	-2%	5,729	2,865	-7%
20	Oakley	1	3,007	3,007	3%	3,021	3,021	-2%
21	Putnoe	2	5,990	2,995	3%	5,995	2,998	-3%
22	Queens Park	2	5,572	2,786	-4%	5,602	2,801	-9%
23	Riseley	1	2,704	2,704	-7%	2,737	2,737	-11%

Table C1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Bedford Borough Council

	Electoral ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24	Sharnbrook	1	3,281	3,281	13%	3,301	3,301	7%
25	Wilshamstead	1	2,032	2,032	-30%	3,470	3,470	13%
26	Wootton	1	3,328	3,328	15%	3,369	3,369	9%
27	Wyboston	1	2,952	2,952	2%	2,990	2,990	-3%
	Totals	40	116,246	–	–	123,307	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2906	–	–	3083	–

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

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

Appendix D

Additional legislation we have considered

Equal opportunities

In preparing this report we have had regard to the general duty set out in Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

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

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

We have also had regard to:

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

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010. It is independent of Government and political parties, and is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas.