LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE
FUTURE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF
BERKSHIRE

A REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

London : HMSO

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the draft recommendations for the structure of local government in Berkshire agreed by the Commission:

Sir John Banham (Chairman)
David Ansbro
Professor Michael Chisholm
Christopher Chope OBE
Sir Kenneth Couzens KCB
Kenneth Ennals CB
Professor Malcolm Grant
Brian Hill CBE DL
Miss Mary Leigh
Mrs Ann Levick
Robert Scruton
David Thomas
Lady Judith Wilcox
Clive Wilkinson

Martin Easteal (Chief Executive)

The Local Government Commission for England

Sir John Banham
Chairman

Dear Secretary of State

THE FUTURE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BERKSHIRE

With this letter the Local Government Commission is submitting its final recommendations for the structure of local government in Berkshire.

You will be aware that the Commission originally put forward two possible structures on which we sought the views of all those with a stake in local government in the area. These possibilities were both for four unitary authorities, involving differing expansions of Reading, and an adjustment to the existing county boundaries of Hampshire and Oxfordshire. The four unitary authorities proposed by the Commission were Newbury, Reading, Slough, and Royal East Berkshire.

Since our draft recommendations were published on 14 June 1994, the Commission has heard directly from over 55,700 respondents, including many voluntary organisations, businesses, parish and town councils and other local and national organisations, along with each of the local authorities. We have also commissioned a survey of a representative sample of local residents.

The Commission did not set out to conduct a referendum and it is aware that there have been vigorous local campaigns, particularly in the east of the county. The Commission appreciates that these may have influenced people's views. Nevertheless the Commission is satisfied that it has obtained a fair reflection of local opinion.

This consultation has caused the Commission to reconsider its draft recommendations. In place of the four unitary authorities, we are now proposing a structure of five unitary authorities, with no changes to the boundaries of Hampshire or Oxfordshire. In East Berkshire, there would be two unitary authorities: Wokingham and a merger of the Boroughs of Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead. Newbury, Reading and Slough would become unitary authorities on their existing boundaries. The new pattern is similar to that we have recommended in two neighbouring counties of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. We estimate that the cost of setting up the new structure will be of the order of £10—£14 million; there will be continuing additional administrative costs compared with the present arrangements of the order of £3—£7 million a year, but it must be remembered that administrative costs account for only 10% of the total local government expenditure in Berkshire. Our consultation shows support for the principle of

unitary local government, as well as for the number of authorities we have finally recommended.

The review process has brought to the surface a number of useful proposals for enhancing the management and effectiveness of local government, whether in a two-tier or unitary structure. Indeed, the Commission has been mindful of the fact that the manner in which any given structure is managed is probably as important as the structure itself and in any case there is a constant need to revise and update practices. We hope that such improvements will be pursued with appropriate vigour now that the distractions of reorganisation can be put behind local authority members and officers alike. In particular, we would like to see more management authority and responsibility devolved to local communities, and a more meaningful consultative role for parish and town councils.
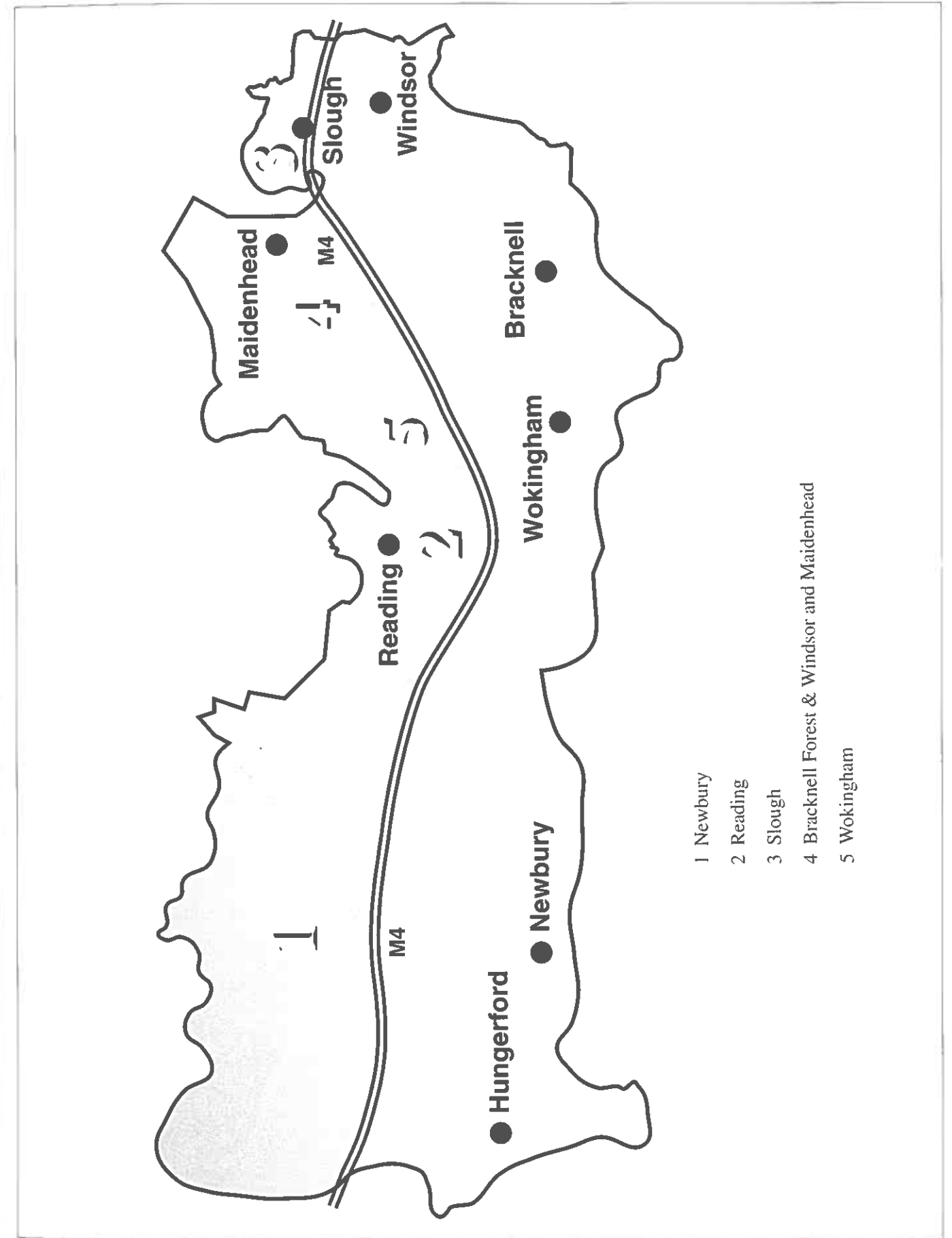
In a further general report to be published when its structural review programme has been completed, the Commission will discuss the establishment of unitary authorities where these come into existence, and their on-going evolution; the same report will consider the improvements that can and need to be made in two-tier structures where they continue.

Yours sincerely,

Sir John Banham
Chairman
15 December 1994

Map 1: THE RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BERKSHIRE

1 Newbury
2 Reading
3 Slough
4 Bracknell Forest & Windsor and Maidenhead
5 Wokingham

v

CONTENTS

APPENDICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1   This report contains the Commission's final recommendations for changes to the structure of local government in the Royal County of Berkshire. It represents the culmination of 12 months work by the Commission, during which time it received the views of almost 57,000 individuals and organisations.

2   The report is in four main parts:

   (i)   Chapter 2 describes the Commission's draft recommendations;

   (ii)   Chapter 3 details the responses to consultation over the draft recommendations;

   (iii)   Chapter 4 sets out the Commission's conclusions;

   (iv)   Chapter 5 contains the Commission's final recommendations.

3   The review commenced on 13 December 1993 and was conducted under the provisions of Part II of the Local Government Act 1992, having regard to the Secretary of State's November 1993 Policy and Procedure Guidance as amended by the courts. In accordance with the Procedure Guidance, the Commission wrote to all the principal authorities in Berkshire, informing them of the review's commencement. Copies were also sent to the other organisations and individuals listed in Annex A to the Guidance.

4   A period of some 16 weeks until 8 April 1994, was given for all local authorities and any other body or person interested in the review to put their views to the Commission on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government in the county, or for any boundary and/or electoral arrangements and, if so, what those changes should be.

5   The Commission's draft recommendations were published in its report *The Future Local Government of Berkshire*, on 14 June 1994. Copies were sent to all who had been informed of the commencement of the review, to organisations which wrote to the Commission during the initial consultation stage, to appropriate representative organisations, and to the organisations and individuals listed in Annex A of the Secretary of State's Procedure Guidance. Copies were also made available to local residents on request.

6   In addition, principally through the Royal Mail, the Commission distributed approximately 331,000 leaflets with a questionnaire to households in the county. A further 5,000 were distributed by other means. The leaflets summarised the Commission's draft recommendations and other structural options. The Commission also advertised extensively in the local press, drawing residents' attention to the review and to its draft recommendations and other structural options.

2 THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

7   At the start of the review, local authorities, members of the public and all other interested parties were invited to write to the Commission giving their views on the future local government of Berkshire. Christopher Chope OBE, the Commissioner with particular responsibility for the review, visited the county and met numerous local authority members and officers, interest groups, business organisations and individuals.

8   Before considering the options for local government in Berkshire, the Commission endeavoured to learn about local perceptions of community identity, and to determine how much local people knew both about the Commission's work and the principle of unitary local government. As part of the review, a county-wide survey among a representative cross-section of the population was undertaken by Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) on behalf of the Berkshire local authorities. The survey, similar to those carried out in other review areas, covered interviews with 2,807 residents aged 18 and over. The results were published by MORI in January 1994. A summary is given in Appendix A.

9   The Commission received some 620 representations at this stage; over 50 per cent of these were from individuals with the balance coming from a mixture of interest groups, the voluntary sector, parish councils and the business community. The Commission also received a number of proformas and petitions. More than 250 of the representations supported unitary districts or sub county options and about 100 expressed a preference for retention of the existing arrangements. Of the remainder, a considerable number expressed an interest in a particular local authority service such as education or archive services. Some also referred to various parish and boundary issues.

10 The Commission also received a wide spectrum of views from national organisations with a particular interest in the issues raised by local government reorganisation. Almost unanimously, those advocating change recommended unitary authorities larger than the existing districts. However, there was also support for the existing two-tier structure. Each of the principal local authorities in Berkshire also made their views known to the Commission. Notably the unanimous preference was for the abolition of the county and district councils and the establishment of a unitary structure.

THE STRUCTURAL OPTIONS FOR BERKSHIRE

11 The Commission is required by Section 13 (5) (a) and (b) of the Local Government Act, 1992, to have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local

communities and to secure effective and convenient local government. The Secretary of State's Policy Guidance to the Commission states that proposals put forward by groups of authorities should be an important starting point for the Commission. The Policy Guidance also advises that, where such proposals demonstrate that a range of options have been considered, along with the implications for individual services, the Commission should give them particular weight. Accordingly, the Commission evaluated carefully the main options suggested by the existing local authorities. In doing so, however, it was mindful of the need to arrive at draft recommendations or alternative options which were viable, which had been assessed against the existing two-tier structure, and which met the statutory criteria set out in Section 13 (5) of the 1992 Act.

12 The existing local authorities in Berkshire submitted a number of options. The existing district councils (less Wokingham District) and the county council submitted four main options as part of their joint submission. These were:

(i) **Three unitary authorities** based on the present local authority areas of Newbury; Reading; and the "Eastern Thames Valley" (Bracknell Forest, Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, and Wokingham combined).

(ii) **Four unitary authorities** based on the present local authority areas of Newbury; Reading; Slough; and "Eastern Berkshire" (Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham combined). This was one of the two options preferred by the county council. Reading and Slough borough councils also supported this option as a second preference – should the Commission promote a four unitary authority option.

(iii) **Four unitary authorities** based on the present local authority areas of Newbury; Reading; Slough combined with Windsor & Maidenhead and north Wokingham, and; Bracknell Forest combined with south Wokingham. The county council also supported this option.

(iv) **Five unitary authorities** based on the present local authority areas of Newbury; Reading; Slough; Bracknell Forest combined with south Wokingham; and Windsor & Maidenhead combined with north Wokingham. This option was the preferred choice of Bracknell Forest, Reading, and Slough borough councils, as well as the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.

Wokingham District Council submitted one main option. This was:

(v) **Five unitary authorities** based on the present local authority areas of Newbury; Reading; Slough; "Central Berkshire" (Wokingham including Sandhurst and Crowthorne parishes transferred from Bracknell Forest), and; "East Berkshire" (the remainder of Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead combined).

13 The Commission's draft recommendations report provided full details of its consideration of these structures.

14 Having considered all the evidence which had been submitted by others and collected by itself, the Commission concluded that the statutory criteria would best be satisfied by replacing the existing structure of local government in Berkshire. It consulted on the following draft recommendation.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION (OPTION 1)

The existing two-tier structure of seven councils should be replaced by four new unitary authorities, each responsible for the broad range of services now provided by the county and district councils.

(i) 'Expanded' Reading (the present borough area extended to include Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Theale (part), Burghfield (part), Shinfield (part), Earley, together with the South Oxfordshire parish of Eye & Dunsden (part)).

(ii) 'Modified' Newbury (the present district area including the Hampshire parishes of East Woodhay, Highclere, Burghclere, Ecchinswell & Sydmonton, Kingsclere, Ashford Hill with Headley, and Newtown but excluding Purley on Thames, Tilehurst, Theale (part) and Burghfield (part) which become part of 'expanded' Reading).

(iii) Slough on April 1995 district boundaries.

(iv) Royal East Berkshire (the present districts of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham District excluding Earley and Shinfield (part) which become part of the new expanded Reading unitary authority).

15 Map 2 illustrates the Commission's draft recommendation for structural change.

Map 2: FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES (OPTION ONE)

A Royal East Berkshire

B Modified Newbury

C Expanded Reading

D Slough
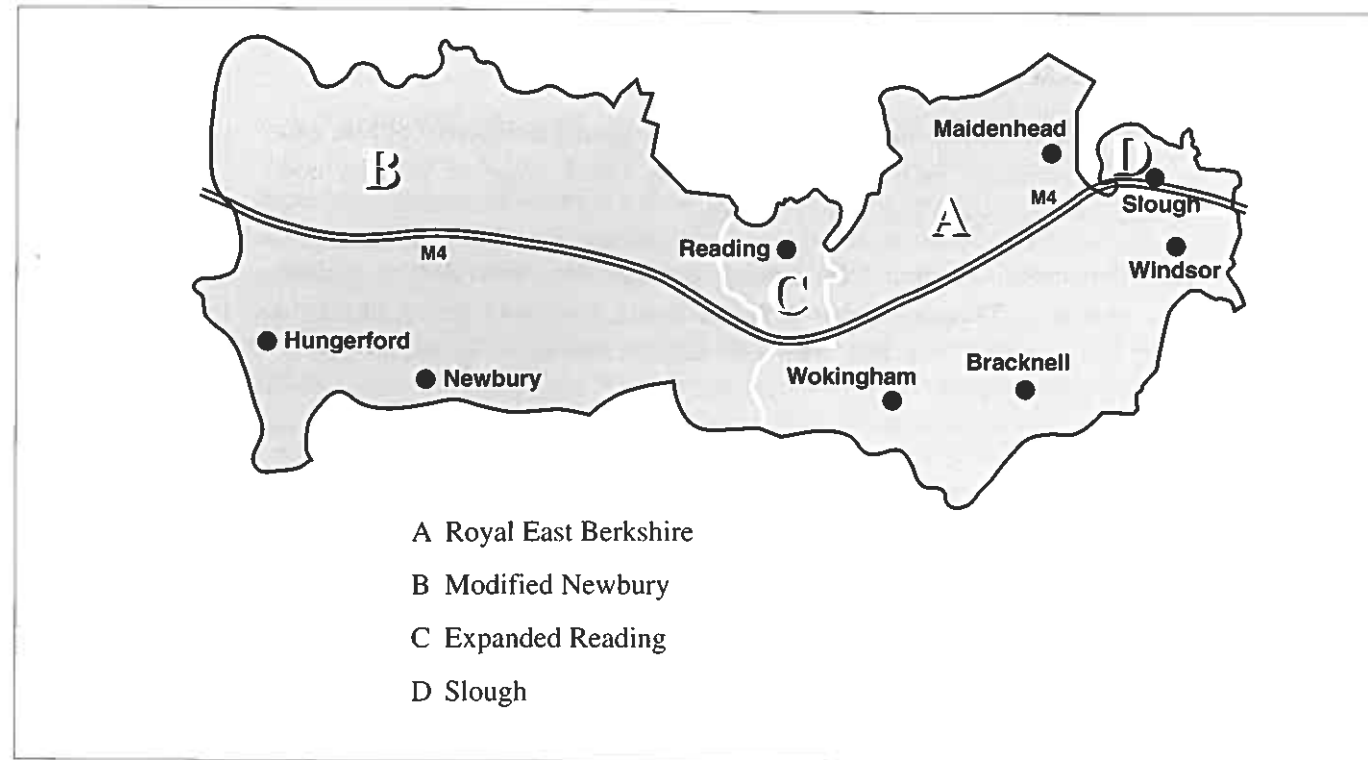
16 However, the Commission believed that there was at least one other alternative structure which might also meet the statutory criteria, and it would be prepared to recommend to the Secretary of State, if new evidence justified this, including evidence about the level of local support. Accordingly, in addition to its draft recommendation, the Commission decided to consult the people of Berkshire on the alternative structure which is illustrated in map 3.

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE (OPTION 2)

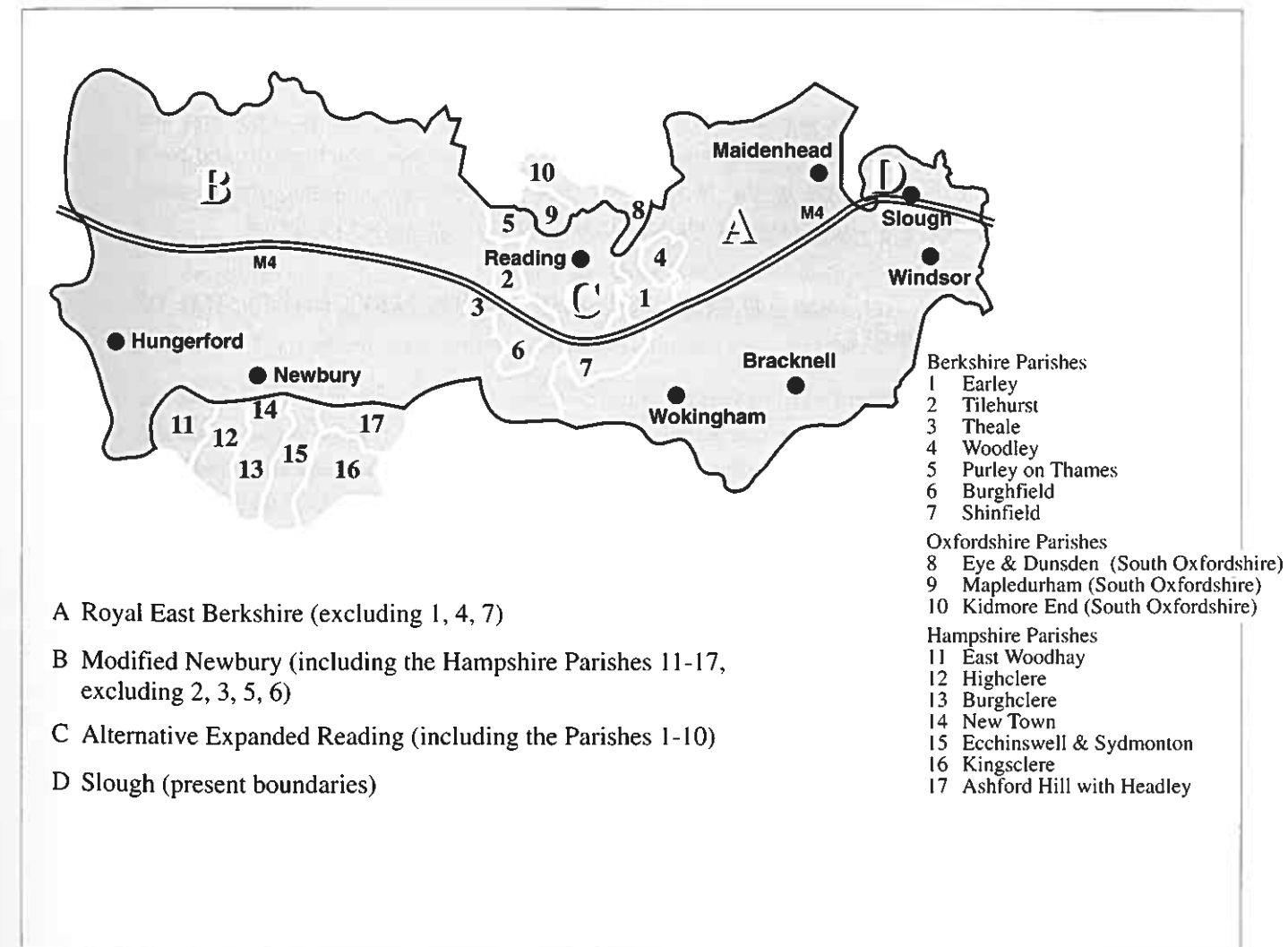The existing two-tier structure of seven councils should be replaced by an alternative four unitary authority structure which differs from the above by including within the new unitary Reading authority the whole of Theale, Burghfield, Shinfield, and Eye & Dunsden (South Oxfordshire) parishes together with Woodley (Wokingham District), Mapledurham and Kidmore End parishes from South Oxfordshire.

Map 3: FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES (OPTION TWO)

Berkshire Parishes
1 Earley
2 Tilehurst
3 Theale
4 Woodley
5 Purley on Thames
6 Burghfield
7 Shinfield

Oxfordshire Parishes
8 Eye & Dunsden (South Oxfordshire)
9 Mapledurham (South Oxfordshire)
10 Kidmore End (South Oxfordshire)

Hampshire Parishes
11 East Woodhay
12 Highclere
13 Burghclere
14 New Town
15 Ecchinswell & Sydmonton
16 Kingsclere
17 Ashford Hill with Headley

A Royal East Berkshire (excluding 1, 4, 7)

B Modified Newbury (including the Hampshire Parishes 11-17, excluding 2, 3, 5, 6)

C Alternative Expanded Reading (including the Parishes 1-10)

D Slough (present boundaries)

17 The Commission also believed that the names of any new authorities should be decided by local people, and invited suggestions.

18 While the Commission's draft recommendation and its alternative structure involved the abolition of the county council, the Commission wished to make clear that it was not advocating the abolition of the 'County of Berkshire'. The Commission recognised that many people have strongly held loyalties to their county and that, should the county council be abolished, the county would continue as a focus for loyalty and identity as well as for historic, ceremonial, sporting and other purposes. Accordingly, for the avoidance of doubt, it consulted over the following draft recommendation.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

The existing county of Berkshire should be retained for ceremonial and related purposes.

OTHER MATTERS

19 In addition to reviewing the structure of local authorities in Berkshire, the Commission is also required to consider the delivery of certain local authority services, to make recommendations about future electoral arrangements and any proposed boundary changes, and to take account of the role which parish and town councils could play in the review area. The Commission's consideration of these issues, and its draft recommendations in respect of them, are set out below.

PUBLIC PROTECTION (POLICE, FIRE AND OTHER SERVICES RELATED TO LAW AND ORDER)

20 The Government's Policy Guidance to the Commission is explicit in requiring police and fire services to be carried out over an area no smaller than at present. Indeed, the Commission received no proposals suggesting that these services should cover a smaller area. Accordingly, the Commission concluded that the fire service should continue to cover the present county area of Berkshire and that a combined authority should be established for this service on which representatives of the new unitary councils should serve. It also concluded that representatives of the new unitary authorities should serve on the Thames Valley Police Authority, and consulted over the following draft recommendation.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

There should be a combined authority established in the present county area for the fire service, on which representatives of the new councils should serve. Representatives of the new unitary authorities should also serve on the Thames Valley Police Authority. No changes are proposed to the probation and magistrates' courts services.

---

21 The Commission considered that this same recommendation would be appropriate for the alternative unitary structure consulted on by the Commission.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

22 The Commission is invited by section 14 of the 1992 Act to consider whether unitary authorities should be empowered to prepare unitary development plans rather than, as at present, structure plans and local plans.

23 The Commission was concerned that strategic land use planning for Berkshire should not be undermined by changes to the structure of local government in the county. This matter is fully discussed in the Commission's report *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires*.

24 In its draft recommendations the Commission considered that the widely contrasting nature of Berkshire raised the question of whether unitary development plans should be prepared for the proposed new unitary authorities. The Commission invited further evidence on this issue from interested parties during consultations on its draft recommendations.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

For strategic planning the four new authorities should prepare unitary development plans for their area. Each authority should have individual responsibility for formulating detailed minerals and waste policies for their area in general conformity with a policy framework established jointly with neighbouring authorities in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire and they should be authorised to include such policies in their unitary development plans. Each of the new unitary authorities should also exercise development control functions for their areas for all purposes.

---

25 The Commission considered that this same recommendation would be appropriate for the alternative four unitary authority structure consulted on by the Commission.

OTHER SERVICES

26 The Secretary of State's Policy Guidance advises the Commission that, where it recommends unitary authorities, the aim should be to make the individual authorities responsible for all local government services. The exception is law and order services where necessary. The Guidance further advises the Commission that it should recommend shared arrangements for particular functions where a satisfactory structure is unlikely to be achieved without them. The Commission has had regard to these aspects of the Guidance in the conduct of its review of Berkshire.

27 From the information submitted during the initial stage of the review, the Commission was satisfied that the new unitary authorities described in its draft recommendation and the alternative structure canvassed, would command sufficient

resources to carry out the other main local government services, whether directly or by 'contracting out' to other local authorities or to the private sector.

28 The Commission was also satisfied that the local authorities in the area would be in a position to put in place adequate structures for any shared arrangements necessary to function effectively. It therefore made no draft recommendations in this respect. However, the Commission expressed its expectation that the new authorities should work closely together to ensure that specialist expertise would not be unnecessarily broken up. In particular, it was concerned that the existing levels of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of relatively small-scale but important functions, such as trading standards, archive provision and emergency planning, should not be reduced by reorganisation.

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

29 The Commission examined alternative means by which local democratic control and accountability could be made secure within the new structure. The present electoral arrangements in Berkshire create an element of confusion in that three of the councils, Reading Borough, Slough Borough and Wokingham District, hold elections by thirds, whereas the others have elections for the whole council every four years. In addition, accountability is blurred by the fact that some wards return either two or three councillors. The Commission generally supports the view of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business 1986 that there should be one councillor for every electoral ward, and that the whole council should be elected together once every four years.

30 The Commission's report *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires* set out the Commission's view that the ratio of councillors to local residents should generally be around 1 to 4,000. This ratio is midway between the existing ratios for district and for county councils. It is not a hard and fast rule and the Commission applied it sensitively, taking into account local custom and practice and any special local needs, especially in very rural areas. Nevertheless, it reflects the Commission's wish to see a different role for councillors with more back-up made available to assist them in carrying out their demanding task.

31 The Secretary of State's Policy Guidance states that the Commission should take account of local practice and that 'where a new authority covers the area of an existing county or district...the Commission should recommend that the wards or electoral divisions should be transferred to the new authority'. With the exception of the Newbury area, where the Secretary of State had asked the Commission to pay particular regard to the level of electoral imbalance, the Commission adopted this approach in determining the electoral arrangements associated with its draft recommendation and alternative structural option.

32 The Commission's draft recommendations for electoral changes, set out in detail in its consultation report, are summarised below.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

(i)   'Royal East Berkshire' unitary authority should comprise 81 councillors. They would be based on the 35 existing county electoral divisions for the area. There would be 11 divisions returning three councillors and 24 divisions returning two councillors.

(ii) 'Expanded' Reading unitary authority should comprise 59 councillors. They would be based on the existing 22 district electoral wards for the area. There would be 18 wards returning three councillors, one ward returning two councillors and three wards returning one councillor.

(iii) 'Modified' Newbury unitary authority should comprise 48 councillors. They would be based on the revised district electoral wards as proposed by Newbury District in their electoral scheme. There would be three wards returning three councillors, 12 wards returning two councillors and 15 wards returning one councillor.

(iv) Slough unitary authority should comprise 41 councillors. They would be based on the existing 14 district electoral wards for the area. There would be 13 wards returning three councillors and one ward (Colnbrook/Poyle) returning two councillors.

(v)   Elections to the new unitary authorities should be held every four years with all councillors being elected at the same time. The number of councillors should be subject to review in due course.
(Note: these figures have been marginally revised since publication of the Commission's draft recommendations and were the subject of an errata sheet.)

---

33 The Commission received, as part of Newbury District's electoral scheme, a proposal to re-ward the towns of Newbury and Thatcham. In its draft recommendations the Commission commented that it was minded to recommend the re-warding of Newbury and Thatcham towns, and would welcome comments from residents in Berkshire on this subject.

34 The Commission proposes to review electoral arrangements generally throughout England during the next five years as part of a periodic electoral review it is required to undertake. In Berkshire, as elsewhere, this review will look further at the electoral arrangements proposed in this report.

LOCAL COUNCILS

35 The Commission considered that the structure of local government in Berkshire should build on the strong sense of identity with immediate neighbourhoods, as found by the MORI survey. It received a number of submissions suggesting how this might be achieved.

36 Since parish and town councils can be an important reflection of people's sense of identity with their community, the Commission believes that their role should be enhanced. This should include regular meetings with the principal local authorities, improved consultation on planning and highways issues and, where there is a demand from a local council, devolved management of local facilities, such as sports grounds and libraries. Members of parish and town councils would also be well placed to help residents secure assistance or redress when faced with problems about local services. These proposals enlarge on existing practice, and reflect suggestions in many of the submissions to the Commission both nationally and locally.

37 The Commission does not envisage an increase in the statutory powers of parish and town councils, nor the establishment of another tier of local government. However, the Commission does see an important role for parish and town councils in empowering local communities. The Commission agreed with many of its respondents that a clear consultative framework should be established between principal local authorities and parish and town councils. This framework, or 'local charter', could ensure that parish and town councils have rights to the following:

(i) a clear statement of matters affecting the local community upon which they will be consulted, with the areas for consultation being widely drawn;

(ii) sufficient information from principal authorities about local matters on which local councils' views have been requested;

(iii) the right to a written explanation from a principal authority if it does not accede to the views of the parish or town council, as it may legitimately decide;

(iv) regular meetings between representatives of the principal authorities and the parish and town councils to discuss matters of common interest.

38 The Commission recognised that the enhanced role it proposes would require the creation of parish or, in the case of large towns or cities, neighbourhood councils for areas of the county that are currently unparished. At present, Berkshire has a total of 101 parishes covering some 57 per cent of the population, and over 67 per cent of the land area. However, at the time that the Commission published its draft recommendations, this had not been translated into a direct and widespread demand for local councils in the unparished areas of the county, in spite of the evidence of strong local identity.

39 The Commission did, however, receive a proposal for the creation of a parish in the district of Newbury (Newbury town). The promoters, the Charter Trustees, sought the establishment of a town council. However, this is a matter which any local council established for this area would be able to determine for itself.

40 The Commission noted that, with an electorate of 27,770, the population of Newbury town would be beyond the maximum population mentioned in Department of the Environment Circular 121/77. Nevertheless, in view of the level of local support expressed for the proposals at the first stage of the review, the Commission considered that it should consult on the creation of a parish for this area, indicating that positive evidence from local people on whether a parish should be established for this area would determine its final recommendations.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

A parish should be created for the area of Newbury town.

41 The Commission has no formal power to recommend the establishment of a new parish or town council; that is the prerogative of the Secretary of State or the appropriate district council. Nor may it make recommendations as to the electoral arrangements within any parished area for which a parish council has yet to be created. Nevertheless, the Commission felt it appropriate to indicate in its draft recommendations report what had been suggested to it in respect of such matters, and to seek the views of the public.

42 It seems to the Commission that, if the Secretary of State, were to accept its views about parishing, the warding arrangements could be based on the district council's proposed scheme of four electoral wards, each returning six members. This would provide for a council size of 24 members.

43 With no evidence of strong local demand for the parishing of any other areas of Berkshire, the Commission did not undertake any further consultations on the subject. Nevertheless, it indicated that it would welcome comments about parishing from residents. Should it become evident that there was a demand for parishing generally, the Commission indicated that it would recommend to the Secretary of State that it should be directed to undertake an area electoral and/or boundary review, with a view to considering the parishing arrangements in the county.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

(i) If there is clear local support for parishing areas in Berkshire which are not currently parished, the Secretary of State should be invited to direct the Commission to undertake a review in which the scope for further parishing can be considered. In addition, there should be an enhanced consultative role for all town and parish councils.

(ii) Elections for parish and town councils should, wherever possible, be held at the same time as elections for the principal authorities.

BOUNDARIES

44 As part of its draft recommendation for structural change in Berkshire, the Commission consulted on three possible boundary changes:

(i) an expansion of Reading to include parts of Newbury and Wokingham Districts and a small part of South Oxfordshire;

or

(ii) an expansion of Reading to include a larger area of Newbury, Wokingham and South Oxfordshire;

and

(iii) the inclusion of seven north Hampshire parishes within Newbury.

The Commission invited further evidence on this matter from local people during consultations on its draft recommendations.

3 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

45 In response to its draft recommendations report, the Commission received over 55,700 written representations from residents, local authorities, Members of Parliament and public and private sector organisations. These included individual letters, proforma letters, petitions and returns of questionnaires. The Commission is most grateful to all who took the trouble to let it have their views on the future structure of local government in Berkshire.

46 All these representations, irrespective of their source or nature, have been carefully considered by the Commission and have been taken into account in its final recommendations. As required by the Secretary of State, a list of all those who made written representations is available on request from the Commission and all representations may be inspected at the Commission's offices.

47 Of the 55,700 responses received during the consultation period, 40,600 were individual letters or returned questionnaires from residents and some 300 representations were received from the business community, parish and town councils, local groups, and national and regional bodies. Approximately 7,300 proforma letters were received, as well as a number of petitions containing some 7,500 signatures.

LOCAL RESIDENTS

48 Residents of Berkshire expressed their views on the Commission's draft recommendations either directly to the Commission, or through local authorities, Members of Parliament or others. They also made their views known through a survey of public opinion conducted on the Commission's behalf by Market & Opinion Research International (MORI).

49 The Commission's public consultation was unprecedented in local government terms. To ensure that the Commission received as wide a variety of views as possible, it sought the views of residents by means of a leaflet with detachable questionnaire delivered principally by the Royal Mail to households throughout the county. This was an ambitious task and some difficulties were experienced in ensuring that each household received a copy of the leaflet. These were remedied by using a variety of methods to ensure that the residents of Berkshire were aware of the Commission's draft recommendations and how to comment on them. The Commission is satisfied that all residents of Berkshire have had the opportunity to make their views known.

50 Nevertheless, the Commission recognises that the response to the leaflets can give only a broad indication of the views of the public, some of whom may have been influenced by publicity from existing authorities.

RESPONSES DIRECT TO THE COMMISSION

51 Over 336,000 leaflet questionnaires outlining the Commission's draft recommendations and alternative structural option were distributed to residents of the county. Over 22,200 of the leaflet questionnaires were completed and returned to

the Commission, representing 7 per cent of those distributed. In addition, some 4,500 individually written letters were received. Together these accounted for over 40,960 individual responses. The level of response varied between districts, with a low response rate in Slough and Reading and a much higher rate in Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham.

52 NOP was commissioned to tabulate the responses on behalf of the Commission, and these tabulations were published shortly after the conclusion of the consultation period. Copies may be obtained from NOP, Tower House, Southampton Street, London, WC2E 7HN, price £5.

53 Figures 1 and 2 summarise the views expressed direct to the Commission either in individual letters or through the household questionnaires. They do not include the views of those who submitted proforma letters or who signed or submitted petitions; these are summarised separately.

54 Three local authorities in the east of the county decided to promote options other than those put forward by the Commission and, because of the size of the write-in response, these are identified under separate headings in figures 1 and 2. They are outlined initially below.

55 Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest councils promoted what was known locally as 'Option D' – a structure which would involve five authorities, including the creation of a unitary authority based upon an amalgamation of Windsor & Maidenhead with north Wokingham; and a second unitary authority amalgamating Bracknell Forest and south Wokingham. This is shown in map 4.

Map 4: FIVE UNITARY AUTHORITIES BASED ON 'OPTION D'

A Bracknell Forest & South Wokingham

B Newbury

C Reading

D Slough

E Windsor & Maidenhead and North Wokingham
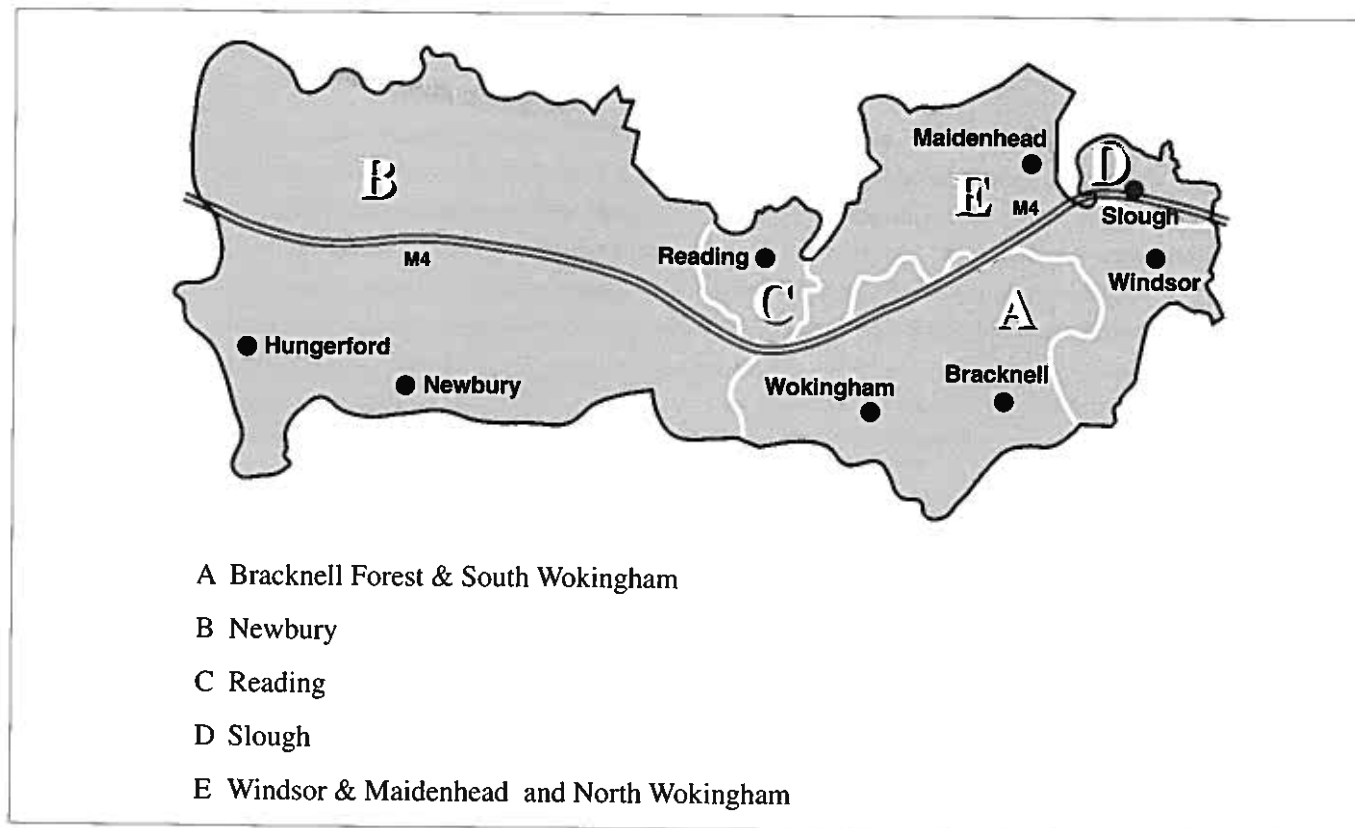
56 Wokingham District Council also promoted a structure of five unitary authorities for the county referred to as the 'Central Berkshire' option, which would involve the creation of a unitary authority based on Wokingham district (including Crowthorne and Sandhurst parishes) and a second unitary authority based on an amalgamation of Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead. The substance of this option (excluding the proposed transfer of the two parishes into Wokingham) is shown in map 5.

Map 5: FIVE UNITARY AUTHORITIES BASED ON 'CENTRAL BERKSHIRE'

1 Newbury

2 Reading

3 Slough

4 Bracknell Forest & Windsor and Maidenhead

5 Wokingham
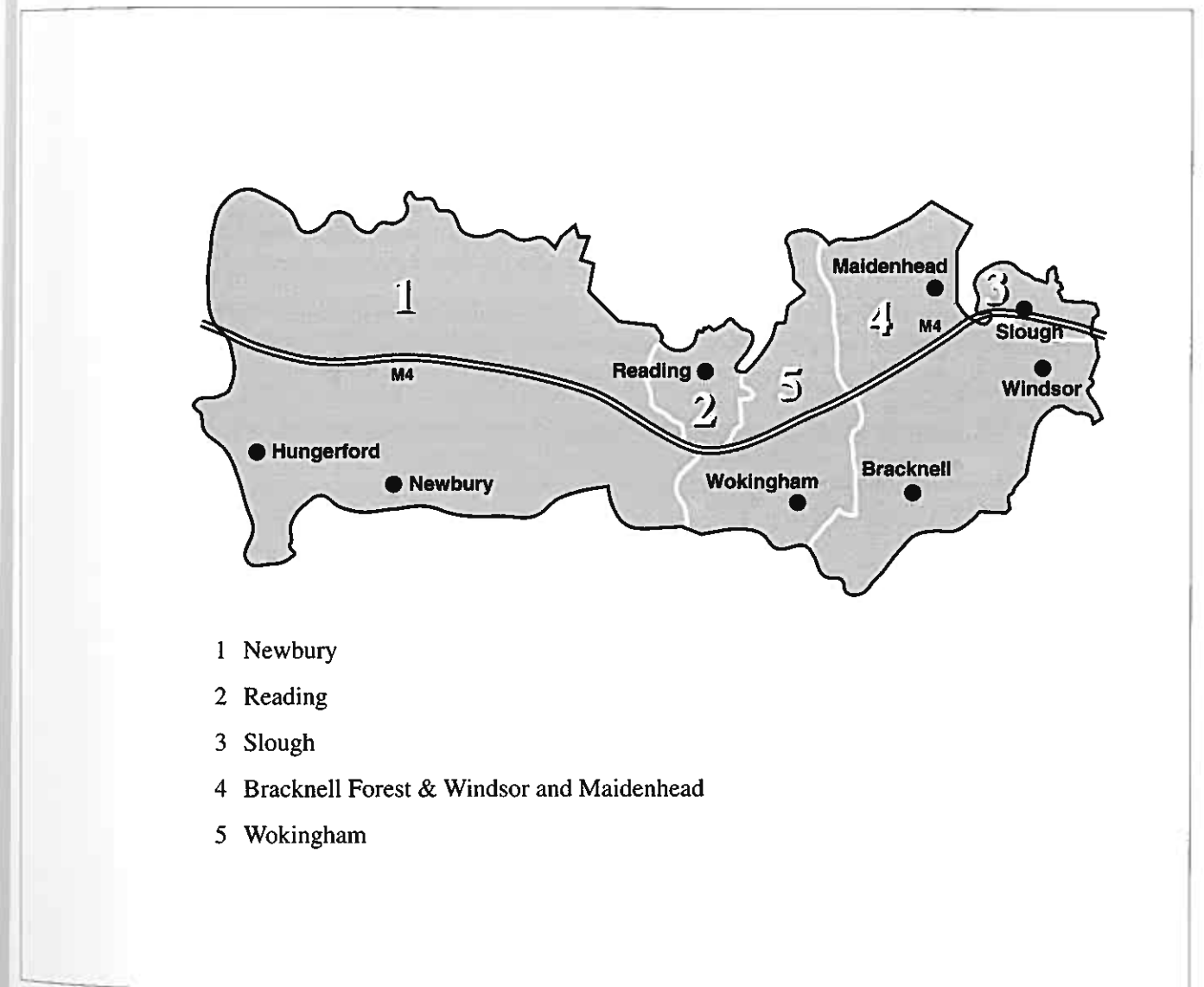
57 Figure 1 provides an overview of the direct responses. This suggests that there is strong support for change, with an overall preference for a structure of five rather than four unitary authorities in the county.

Figure 1

VIEWS ON STRUCTURAL CHANGE: AN OVERVIEW

Structure	Responses	%
Five unitary authorities (Option D or Central Berkshire)	19,156	47
Four unitary authorities (the Commission's two options)	10,345	25
No change	5,079	13
Other	2,997	7
No preference	2,507	6
Unitary districts	880	2
Total (number)	40,964	100

Source: NOP tabulations, September 1994

Notes:1 This table includes both letters and leaflets from individuals, businesses, interest groups and other consultees. It also includes 2,825 respondents from outside the county area.

2 In a number of responses, particularly questionnaires, respondents did not express a preference for a single structural option: these the Commission classified as multiple choice returns and are included under the "Other" heading.

3 A number of respondents, including 1,554 from outside the county area, did not express a preference for a structural option but commented on other matters – particularly the proposed boundary extensions.

Figure 2

VIEWS ON STRUCTURAL CHANGE: DISTRICT LEVEL ANALYSIS

	Option 1	Option 2	Option D	Central Berkshire	No change	Other	Total
Bracknell Forest	373 (6%)	345 (5%)	5,244 (78%)	45 (1%)	423 (6%)	261 (4%)	6,691 (100%)
Newbury	2,711 (42%)	658 (10%)	11 (*)	7 (*)	1,322 (20%)	1,784 (28%)	6,493 (100%)
Reading	1,168 (35%)	760 (23%)	22 (1%)	21 (1%)	601 (18%)	755 (22%)	3,327 (100%)
Slough	1,122 (77%)	89 (6%)	36 (2%)	– (*)	112 (8%)	105 (7%)	1,464 (100%)
Windsor & Maidenhead	610 (6%)	350 (4%)	7,335 (74%)	30 (*)	871 (9%)	742 (7%)	9,938 (100%)
Wokingham	884 (9%)	699 (7%)	249 (2%)	6,114 (60%)	1,181 (12%)	1,099 (10%)	10,226 (100%)
County total	6,868 (18%)	2,901 (8%)	12,897 (34%)	6,217 (16%)	4,510 (12%)	4,746 (12%)	38,139 (100%)
Out of county total	242 (9%)	334 (12%)	37 (1%)	5 (*)	569 (20%)	1,638 (58%)	2,825 (100%)

Source: NOP tabulations, September 1994

Notes:1 This table includes both letters and leaflets from individuals, businesses, interest groups and other consultees.

2 Multiple choice returns have been categorised under 'other'.

3 Where the number of respondents is less than 1% of the total this is shown by an asterisk*.

The key factors to emerge from figure 2 were:

(i) the residents of Slough, Reading and Newbury districts tended to prefer a structure of four unitary authorities as recommended by the Commission;

(ii) the response rates in Reading and Slough were lower than in some other areas but, of those who wrote some 58 per cent in Reading and 83 per cent in Slough supported either one or other of the Commission's options; 18 per cent in Reading and only 8 per cent in Slough supported the existing arrangements;

(iii) in Newbury there was ten per cent support for a unitary authority based on existing boundaries in addition to the 52 per cent support for Commission's two options; retention of the existing structure was favoured by one in five respondents, the highest level of any Berkshire authority;

(iv) the residents of east Berkshire preferred a structure of five unitary authorities with two rather than one unitary authority serving that part of the county, and;

(v) not surprisingly, the respondents from Wokingham preferred the structure promoted by their district council, while those from Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead took the opposite view.

58 Although not put forward by the Commission for consultation, 'Option D' received strong local backing, with the support of some 76 per cent of residents in the two council areas. In the county overall, it was the best supported option with 34 per cent of all representations (figure 2) though over 95 per cent of responses came from within the two boroughs promoting the option.

59 The two borough councils also produced their own tear-off leaflet and proforma letter. The Commission received almost 4,500 of these in support of 'Option D'. Some 2,258 proforma letters supporting 'Option D' were also returned.

60 Conversely, the 'Central Berkshire' option was favoured by some 60 per cent of respondents in Wokingham district and, as shown in figure 2, it received 16 per cent of support in the county overall. The Commission also received a petition organised by the district council bearing 6,100 signatures, as well as 275 proforma letters, in support of this option.

61 The Commission considered whether the high level of support for the Wokingham option could be considered as a 'protest vote' against the expansion of Reading's boundary. However, the level of support among the three parishes affected by the potential Reading boundary changes (Woodley, Earley and Shinfield), when measured as a proportion of the population of these areas, differs little from the district as a whole (figure 3).

Figure 3

ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT FOR THE 'CENTRAL BERKSHIRE' OPTION IN THE THREE PARISHES AFFECTED BY THE READING EXPANSION

Parish	Number of Households	% Households Responding	Number of Responses from Parish	Number supporting "Central Berkshire" option	% Support for "Central Berkshire option
Earley	10,621	11.7	2,277	1,247	55
Shinfield	2,759	9.7	537	268	50
Woodley	9,174	7.6	1,516	700	46
Wokingham District	50,904	12.0	10,226	6,114	60

Source: NOP Tabulations, September 1994

62 The Commission has paid close attention to all views expressed during the consultation. However, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about the attitudes of local residents from this part of the programme alone as respondents may not be representative of residents as a whole. The same issue of representativeness also applies to local authorities' and interest groups' consultation programmes.

MORI SURVEY

63 In order to obtain a representative view of residents' attitudes towards change, the Commission engaged MORI to undertake an independent survey.

64 Those interviewed were shown a copy of the Commission's household leaflet (with text indicating the Commission's recommendations being deleted) and were asked about each of the options for structural change. They were also given the opportunity to suggest other options. All respondents were therefore asked two questions about their preferences: first they were asked to select one of the Commission's options; second they were asked if there were any other options that they would have preferred. By taking account of responses to both questions, a clear idea of views and preferences can be developed.

65 The methodology used was as follows:

(i) those selecting one of the Commission's options as their first preference with the prompted list, and who then went on to say that they did not have any other preference when offered an open choice are described as 'firm' supporters of that option;

(ii) those who, having given their preference for one of the Commission's options, then went on to say there was actually another structure that they would prefer (which might, for example, have been the retention of the existing structure) are re-allocated to take account of this information;

(iii) there were also those who expressed no view or preference on the Commission's prompted list of options or to the unprompted open choice question. Those remain categorised as 'don't know'.

66 Figure 4 sets out the results of this analysis across the county and within individual districts.

Figure 4

RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON STRUCTURAL OPTIONS – 'FIRM SUPPORT'

Percentage of respondents

	4 UAs Option 1 %	4 UAs Option 2 %	No need to change %	Other %	Don't know %
Bracknell Forest	12	11	29	12	36
Newbury	13	15	35	14	23
Reading	19	18	31	5	27
Slough	10	8	32	8	42
Windsor & Maidenhead	10	5	42	18	25
Wokingham	8	9	52	12	19
Overall	12	11	38	12	27

Source: MORI, September 1994

67 There are some differences between the results of the MORI survey of a representative sample of local people and the views expressed by those who wrote to the Commission, either by completing questionnaires in the Commission's household leaflets or by letter. The main reason for this is that those who wrote to the Commission were a self-selecting group. In other words, those who submitted representations to the Commission were not necessarily representative of the population of the county area as a whole. In contrast the research undertaken by MORI was designed to ensure that views were obtained from a representative cross-section of the population of Berkshire.

68 While both sources of information have been taken into account by the Commission in reaching its final conclusions, the Commission places more weight on the findings from the MORI survey given its representative nature.

69 The key factors which emerged from the MORI survey were:

(i) there was relatively low support for either of the two unitary authority options put forward by the Commission; 12 per cent of respondents supported Option one and 11 per cent of respondents supported Option two;

(ii) 38 per cent of those surveyed spontaneously expressed support for 'no change'. This was particularly noticeable in Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham, and may reflect opposition to the size of the proposed Royal East Berkshire authority;

(iii) the two most popular options as measured by NOP analysis were not canvassed by MORI so these do not feature in the results.

70 A summary of the MORI survey findings is given in Appendix B. A copy of the full tabulations may be obtained direct from MORI, 32 Old Queen Street, London, SW1H 9HP, price £10.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

71 Figure 5 summarises the views of the Berkshire local authorities at the end of the consultation, as the Commission understands them.

Figure 5

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' PREFERENCES

Authority	Preference
Royal County of Berkshire	"Notes that the Council's original submission ... favoured the establishment of four unitary authorities in Berkshire...and confirms the view expressed in its submission that such authorities could only function effectively within the framework of an elected regional government with delegated powers from Westminster." Also that "without the formal establishment of a joint strategic board for the planning of land use, transportation, minerals and waste, the County Council would not be able to continue to support the Commission's recommendations."
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Expressed opposition to a 'Royal East Berkshire' unitary authority and reaffirmed support for 'Option D'.
Newbury District Council	Welcomed the proposal for a unitary authority based on Newbury but did not support alterations to the Reading/Newbury boundary. No explicit mention of a preference for the county as a whole.
Reading Borough Council	Welcomed the proposal for a Reading-based unitary authority and supported the boundary adjustments in the Commission's preferred option. Expressed regret that no option for a structure of five unitary authorities had been offered for consultation.
Slough Borough Council	Welcomed the proposal for Slough to become a unitary authority. Noted that while the concept of an East Berkshire unitary authority was one of the options set out in the Joint Submission, 'Option D' would have been preferred.
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	Stated that a 'Royal East Berkshire' authority would be entirely unacceptable, and urged the Commission to support 'Option D'.
Wokingham District Council	Expressed strong opposition to the Commission's four unitary authority options and remained committed to a 'Central Berkshire' option.

72 Comparison with the views of local authorities at the end of stage 1 of the review, shows that none of the authorities have changed their position over the appropriate structure for east Berkshire, although there remains substantial agreement on the structure for the other half of the county. The county council has expressed support for a single unitary authority in the east as one of its preferred options, and while all the districts support unitary authorities there is disagreement on the appropriate structure between Wokingham on the one hand and Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest on the other.

OTHER CONSULTEES

73 Six of the seven Berkshire Members of Parliament wrote jointly to express strong opposition to both of the Commission's draft recommendations, and proposed that each of the present district councils in Berkshire should become a unitary authority on existing boundaries. They felt that each district council was large enough to provide the necessary services to their communities.

74 The Commission was also interested in the views of local businesses and business groups. However, only a limited number of responses were received from the business sector. Over half of these supported 'Option D'. By far the largest proportion of such responses was from Windsor and Maidenhead District; with the Chamber of Commerce and 13 of its members supporting this option. They were opposed to an 'East Berkshire' authority considering it to be too large and unaccountable. Windsor District Chamber of Commerce also supported 'Option D' and opposed an 'East Berkshire' unitary authority. Wokingham Chamber of Trade and Commerce opposed an 'East Berkshire' unitary authority arguing the case for no change. Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce remained unconvinced that a number of relatively small authorities would lead to a more efficient delivery of services. The only other option to carry any weight among businesses in the county was for the retention of the existing arrangements. This included the CBI which had severe reservations over the case for any change. There was, however, some support in principle among its members for the creation of four unitary authorities.

75 The Commission heard from 57 of the 93 parish and town councils in the county. Retention of existing arrangements was preferred by 13, while a range of preferences was offered by 44 parish and town councils with no clear pattern emerging.

76 There were a number of representations from professional bodies. The majority of those expressed concern about the fragmentation of county-wide services, and felt that there were insufficient arguments put forward to show how these services would be safeguarded, helped or improved.

77 There was a limited response from voluntary organisations. Bracknell Forest Voluntary Service were concerned over the dilution of the resourcing of the voluntary sector. The Berkshire County Blind Society felt that voluntary sector funding should be protected during any changeover period.

78 There were few responses from statutory consultees, and of those only a small number expressed support for a particular structural option. Some spoke of the need to protect existing services. Berkshire Health Authority indicated that it would prefer to see the number of unitary authorities limited as far as possible.

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF READING

79 The MORI survey of residents' attitudes to local government structure in Berkshire included booster samples in those areas of Newbury and Wokingham districts affected by the potential expansions of Reading. The results showed limited support for either of the Commission's proposals and a considerable degree of opposition (figure 6).

Figure 6
RESULTS OF MORI BOOSTER SURVEY IN AREAS OF BERKSHIRE INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF READING

Question 5— "Please tell me which of these [the Commission's two] options, if any do you prefer?"

Question 8—"Which, if any, of the [the Commission's two] options shown here would you least prefer?"

	Booster Area A – those areas affected by the Commission's Option 1		Booster Area B – those areas affected only by the Commission's Option 2	
	Responses to Question "5"	Responses to Question "8"	Responses to Question "5"	Responses to Question "8"
Newbury				
"Option 1"	16%	8%	46%	7%
"Option 2"	16%	37%	7%	67%
None of these	47%	26%	33%	10%
Don't Know	21%	29%	14%	16%
Wokingham				
"Option 1"	16%	11%	30%	14%
"Option 2"	22%	20%	14%	50%
None of these	47%	27%	36%	14%
Don't Know	15%	42%	20%	22%

Source: MORI, September 1994

80 In southern Oxfordshire MORI asked two specific questions to a representative sample of residents in the three parishes affected by the Reading enlargements. The strength of opposition to the Commission's proposals in these areas was even more marked than within Berkshire as shown in figure 7, although in the case of option 1 the expansion would have only involved the transfer of very few people.

Figure 7

RESULTS OF MORI BOOSTER SURVEY IN AREAS OF SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF READING

Question 1 – asked in the parishes of Eye & Dunsden, Kidmore End and Mapledurham (booster area B).

"The Commission is looking at options in Berkshire. One proposal is for a new Reading authority, which would include this area. To what extent would you support or oppose this proposal?'

Question 2 – asked only in Eye & Dunsden parish (booster area A).

"The other proposal is for a new Reading authority, which would include part of this parish only, as indicated by the red area on this map. To what extent would you support or oppose this proposal?"

	Booster area A (Option 1)	Booster area B (Option 2)
Support	10%	7%
Oppose	83%	86%
Neither support nor oppose/ Don't Know	7%	7%

Source: MORI (Oxfordshire Review), 1994

81 The Commission also received a number of views directly from residents in the areas affected by the Reading expansion. These are summarised in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

VIEWS ON THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSED EXPANSION OF READING

Area	Parish	Number of respondents	Support expansion of Reading	Oppose expansion of Reading	Other/no comment
Newbury	Purley	785	-	154	631
	Tilehurst	1,144	6	76	1,064
	Theale	653	1	40	612
	Burghfield	712	3	49	660
Wokingham	Earley	2,277	9	139	2,131
	Shinfield	537	1	15	521
	Sonning	177	2	6	169
	Woodley	1,516	8	45	1,463
South Oxfordshire	Kidmore End	331	1	171	159
	Goring Heath	136	-	79	57

Source: NOP Tabulations, September 1994

82 Reading Borough Council supported the lesser expansion proposed in the Commission's preferred structure. Berkshire County Council, while acknowledging

that there was a case for reviewing Reading's boundaries, did not expressly support either of the Commission's boundary proposals. Newbury and Wokingham District Councils were both opposed to any transfer of parishes or parts of parishes from their areas to Reading. Newbury District Council conducted a survey in the areas affected and, overall, some 85 per cent of those responding (27 per cent) wished to remain in Newbury district. South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council were also opposed to any transfers.

83 A number of public meetings were held in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, in which the local authorities participated. Additionally, the Commission held a public meeting in South Oxfordshire, at which all four local authorities were invited to speak. Over 800 people attended the meeting with an overwhelming number expressing opposition to the Commission's proposals.

84 This view was also reflected in other correspondence and petitions sent to the Commission. In particular, the "Save Oxfordshire's Southern Borders" group carried out a campaign opposing the proposed extension of Reading into South Oxfordshire. Their survey of some 80 per cent of the electorate of the three parishes showed 90 per cent opposition to the Commission's proposals.

85 However, there was support for the transfer of the three South Oxfordshire parishes into Reading in a petition forwarded by the Caversham Residents Association, bearing some 1,200 signatures.

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF NEWBURY

86 In its report *The Future Local Government of Berkshire*, the Commission also proposed the transfer of seven parishes from Hampshire to Newbury. As in the case of southern Oxfordshire, MORI asked a specific question about the boundary issue in the seven north Hampshire parishes affected by the proposal. The strength of opposition to the Commission's proposals in these areas was clear (figure 9).

Figure 9

VIEWS OF NORTH HAMPSHIRE RESIDENTS ON THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF NEWBURY

Question: **"The Commission is also looking at options in Berkshire, and is proposing a new Newbury authority which would include this area. To what extent would you support or oppose this proposal?"**

	North Hampshire Parishes
Support	3%
Oppose	92%
No opinion / Don't know	5%

Source: MORI (Hampshire Review) 1994

87 Newbury District Council remained supportive (subject to local views) of the seven Hampshire parishes being transferred to its area, as did Berkshire County Council

(but with the extra parish of Mortimer West End). Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council were both strongly opposed to the proposition. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council distributed a leaflet to all households in the seven parishes. Over half of the 8,000 leaflets were returned, with almost 99 per cent of respondents arguing against the proposal. The borough council also participated in public meetings in each parish, which were attended by some 1,100 residents in total, with virtually unanimous opposition.

88 Additionally, the Commission held a public meeting in the area, in which all four local authorities from both counties participated, and Newbury District Council spoke in support of the proposal. Over 550 people attended (some 5 per cent of the population of the parishes affected). Opposition to the proposal was virtually unanimous. The same view emerged in letters, proforma letters and petitions which were sent direct to the Commission.

4 THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS

89 The Commission has reassessed its draft recommendations in the light of its consultations and the results of the MORI opinion survey undertaken during the consultation period.

90 Any recommendations for change the Commission makes must satisfy the statutory criteria given in section 13(5)(a) and (b) of the 1992 Act. This stipulates that its recommendations must have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to secure effective and convenient local government. On occasion, this means striking a balance between the two criteria to ensure that one is not satisfied at the expense of the other.

91 Accordingly, in reaching its final conclusions on the future structure of local government in Berkshire, the Commission has had to exercise a degree of judgement in order to conform to the statutory criteria and to the Secretary of State's Policy Guidance (in particular the issues of identity, accessibility, responsiveness and democracy). In doing so, it has considered and weighed both the evidence which has been submitted, much of it conflicting, and that it has itself collected.

92 In order to determine whether there was still a case for structural change in Berkshire, the Commission reviewed the responses received during the consultation period in the light of the criteria set out in the Act.

THE IDENTITIES AND INTERESTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

93 A MORI survey was carried out on behalf of the local authorities in Berkshire during the initial stage of the review. It helped the Commission to assess patterns of community identity and interests, and indicated the strength of personal affiliation with various divisions of local government.

94 Throughout Berkshire, community identity is generally strongest in respect of the local neighbourhood or village, followed by the home town or nearest town. Attachment to local government areas, whether county or district, is less pronounced. The key points which emerged are summarised in appendix A.

95 While the Commission has clear evidence of community identity and interests in the review area, it is not possible to create a local government structure which reflects all of the indicators of such identity and interests. They have had to be weighed in the balance with a number of other factors.

EFFECTIVE AND CONVENIENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

96 The Commission received a number of representations on its draft recommendations in relation to particular services. To take one example, the Commission shares the views put to it about the importance of local government's responsibilities for care in the community. The Commission believes that any new structure should facilitate effective working relationships between social services departments, housing departments and health authorities. Care in the Community and the Government's Health of the Nation initiatives, as well as crime prevention and measures to overcome social alienation, require active co-operation between district services (housing, environmental health, leisure, recreation, local planning, for example) and county services (social services, education, strategic planning, police, highways and transportation, for example). The co-operation and active involvement of other public bodies such as the health trusts and health authorities, the training and enterprise councils, the churches, voluntary organisations and the business community is crucial and must also be realised. The integration of such a wide range of interests within a single organisation is impracticable, nor is it likely that each interest could be organised on common boundaries. Nevertheless, the integration of local county and district services into a single authority serving areas of reasonable cohesion and community would make it easier for non-local government interests to co-operate. In the Commission's view, this offers the prospect of major benefits.

97 In relation to statutory land-use planning, this is an important issue which the Commission considered in detail in *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires*. As for Berkshire, the Commission recommended that, having regard to the widely contrasting nature of the county, the four new unitary authorities should be responsible for the preparation of individual unitary development plans.

98 Many of the respondents' comments on planning issues stressed the advantages of retaining a two-tier planning system across the county as a whole. They argued that county-wide problems would not be adequately addressed if the proposed unitary development plans were introduced.

99 In relation to other services, for example, libraries, archives, museums and other heritage facilities, representations have pointed to the need to retain county-wide services, without joint arrangements if possible, and to maintain the integrity of records and collections. Respondents have also stressed the need for effective joint arrangements for specialist or strategic services, at present run on a county-wide basis, if they are to be split among smaller authorities. The Commission recognises the merit of these representations. The Commission is satisfied from the information before it that the existing authorities are aware of the need to make appropriate provision for the effective management of such services, and that they will co-operate in establishing the necessary mechanisms without the need for a formal recommendation by the Commission. These could take the form of lead authority arrangements or consortia agreements.

100 The development of public transport also demands increasing co-operation between public, commercial and voluntary organisations to meet the interests of the environment, the general economy and the need to overcome individual community isolation. The creation of well-resourced unitary authorities, operating over areas that are clearly interdependent, will facilitate that co-operation.

101 The urgency now attending environmental issues reinforces the potential advantages to be gained by increasing co-operation among the planning, environmental health, education, recreation, and highways and transportation services of local government. The creation of unitary authorities of sufficient size offers the prospect that local government will be able to command adequate resources to accomplish effective liaison with other organisations such as the National Rivers Authority and the new Environmental Protection and Highways Agencies.

102 Education remains a key concern of the public and of local government. The successful local development of the economy will require close working relationships between local government, the major education institutions, the business community and, most notably, the training and enterprise councils. Again, the more these organisations are able to co-operate with one another, the greater is the prospect of success for the community's young people, including those with special educational needs.

103 The Commission believes that the structure should allow voluntary organisations to continue to play a full part in providing local services. Voluntary organisations are not only important service providers, but also help develop strong, active and involved communities.

104 Many respondents expressed the view that structural change would lead to larger and more remote unitary authorities. The Commission is of the firm opinion that convenient services do not necessarily depend on small-scale local government structures. Of more importance is their organisation and access to them. With the effective devolution of management responsibilities to the community level, and an enhanced representational and consultative role for parish and town councils, unitary authorities should ensure improved access to, and efficiency of services to the public.

105 Concerns have also been expressed that a restructuring would reduce the number of councillors, therefore placing a greater workload on them and reducing their capacity to fulfil their role effectively. However, it is worth noting that, where unitary authorities replace a two-tier structure, there will be more, not fewer, councillors available to the public for the present county services, which represent 85 per cent of local government expenditure and include major services like education. The Commission believes that more streamlined management and better support services can contribute to easing councillors' workload. A ratio of 1 councillor to around 4,000 residents, equivalent to rather less than 3,000 electors, is now in operation in metropolitan areas. In its recommendations, the Commission has

applied that ratio, but not as a strict rule. There are variations round an average of this order, with a lower ratio in many of the more rural areas.

COSTS AND SAVINGS

106 The Commission is required to consider the change in overhead costs which may result from changes in the structure of local government. This is not a straightforward matter and the issues concerned are discussed more fully in the Commission's report *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires*. Figure 10 shows existing local government indirect expenditure (administrative overheads), based upon the financial material provided by the local authorities in Berkshire.

Figure 10
ESTIMATE OF EXISTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDIRECT EXPENDITURE

	£ million
Staff costs (including associated overheads)	60
Accommodation	4
Information technology	15
Costs of democracy (members allowances etc)	1
Total of existing indirect expenditure	80

Source: Local Government Commission

107 The Secretary of State's Policy Guidance requires the Commission to look at only indirect expenditure, since the level of direct service provision is largely independent of local government structure. Indirect expenditure usually represents only some 10 per cent of total local government spending.

108 The county and district councils in Berkshire provided the Commission with their own estimates of the financial consequences of a range of structural alternatives. However, in order to secure a consistent approach, the Commission has independently applied the financial methodology developed by Ernst & Young and the Commission, as published in December 1993, to produce the estimates in figure 11. The figures are expressed as a range in order to reflect the broad nature of the estimates and assumptions involved.

Figure 11
COMPARISON OF THE INDIRECT COSTS OF EACH STRUCTURAL OPTION AGAINST EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS

Option	Annual Savings/ costs £million	Transitional costs £million	Payback period Years
Four unitary authorities: (either of the Commission's two options)	From £1m cost to £3m saving	From £11m to £15m	4 years—never
Five unitary authorities: ("Option D" or "Central Berkshire")	£3m – £7m cost	From £10m to £14m	Never
Six unitary authorities	£6m—£10m cost	From £9m to £13m	Never

Source: Local Government Commission

Note: The original costs for Berkshire have been amended to make allowance for relocation costs which were not provided in the original estimates. The amendment does not however, impact on the overall position regarding payback periods.

109 The detailed figures on which the Commission's estimates are based have been published separately. They contain the costings for the Commission's final recommendation and for the other options put forward for consultation. Copies have been sent to the Secretary of State and to the principal authorities in the review area. Additional copies are available from the Commission on request.

CONCLUSIONS

110 In its draft recommendations, *The Future Local Government of Berkshire*, the Commission published for public consultation a proposal for four unitary authorities based on a substantial expansion of Reading, including a small part of the parish of Eye & Dunsden from South Oxfordshire, and the transfer of seven parishes from Hampshire. The other option was again also based on four unitary authorities but with an even greater expansion of Reading including three parishes from South Oxfordshire (Eye & Dunsden, Kidmore End and Mapledurham), and once again, it included the transfer of the seven parishes from north Hampshire to Newbury.

111 The Commission did not pursue an option to retain the two-tier structure in the county. This was in the light of the representations received during stage 1 of the review and the firm support for unitary structures shown by all the existing local authorities.

112 Evidence from MORI during stage 3 has shown that some 38 per cent of residents surveyed spontaneously expressed support for 'no change' in the county. In view of this, and the fact that the three authorities in the east of the county could not agree on

a specific single unitary option, the Commission has had to consider very carefully whether to recommend to the Secretary of State a new structure of unitary authorities for Berkshire or to recommend that there should be no change.

113 The degree of support for the existing arrangements as measured by MORI varied across the county, with the highest figures being recorded in Wokingham (52 per cent) and Windsor & Maidenhead (42 per cent). This may have been an expression of resistance to the size of the 'Royal East Berkshire' authority since the residents who responded directly to the Commission from those two areas were 81 per cent and 85 per cent respectively in favour of a change to unitary structures.

114 Across the county as a whole, 79 per cent of those making written representations to the Commission in stage 3 supported unitary structures, with only 12 per cent in favour of retaining the existing arrangements. In their formal responses to the Commission's draft recommendations all the local authorities, including the county council (albeit with some important caveats), also re-affirmed their commitment to unitary local government. Thus the Commission still considers that there is a case for change in the structure of local government in Berkshire.

READING

115 The Commission recognised in its draft recommendations that there was a clear case for a unitary authority for Reading. It featured as the basis for a unitary authority in all the options shortlisted by the existing local authorities in Berkshire. With a population of 137,000 in a densely populated area, Reading has distinct social and economic characteristics and the highest community identity in the county, as shown by MORI research during stage 1 of the review.

116 This view has been confirmed by the results of the consultation exercise. Over 60 per cent of direct respondents in Reading supported either option 1 or 2 put forward by the Commission, or they supported another Reading-based unitary structure. Evidence from MORI showed a total of 37 per cent 'firm support' for the Commission's two options; this was the highest combined level of support for the draft recommendations for the county.

117 In its draft recommendations, the Commission made clear its view that there was a need to re-examine the boundaries of Reading, and the expansion of the borough was a key element in the two options put forward by the Commission for public consultation.

118 However, the Commission also recognised that the expansion of any urban area would be contentious and it invited the views of local residents on its draft recommendations. As shown earlier in this report, the residents in the affected areas expressed overwhelming opposition to being part of any new authority based on Reading. Against this background, the Commission has therefore concluded that there should be no change to the administrative boundary of Reading.

NEWBURY

119 In its draft recommendations, the Commission recognised the view expressed by all the existing authorities that there was a case for creating a unitary authority for Newbury. Although Newbury's population is relatively small, the Commission felt that there was no satisfactory structure for amalgamation with its neighbours in Berkshire, namely Reading or Wokingham. Newbury District is predominantly rural and differs in culture from the remainder of the county, which becomes progressively more urban towards the east. Other than those living close to Reading, the residents of the district generally relate more to areas in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire.

120 The case for a unitary authority for Newbury has been reinforced by the results of the consultation exercise. Some 62 per cent of all respondents who wrote to the Commission (excluding proforma letters or petitions), supported options based on a unitary authority. The evidence from MORI is not quite so clear, with some 28 per cent 'firm support' for one or other of the Commission's two options and support for the existing arrangements marginally higher at 35 per cent. Nevertheless, Newbury featured as the basis for a unitary authority in all the options shortlisted by the existing local authorities in Berkshire, and the Commission feels justified in endorsing their view.

121 In its draft recommendations, the Commission also put forward a proposal that the new unitary authority for Newbury should be expanded to include seven parishes in northern Hampshire.

122 The residents in the areas affected overwhelmingly rejected the proposal, as shown in direct representations, MORI evidence, and through the results of the public meeting held by the Commission. Against this background, the Commission has decided to make no recommendation to alter the current district or county administrative boundaries.

SLOUGH

123 In its draft recommendations, the Commission stated the case for a unitary authority for Slough based on April 1995 boundaries. This was in recognition of its distinctive character, and the fact that a unitary authority for Slough was the first preference of all the districts in Berkshire and a preference of the county council. Although the present borough is the smallest of the districts in Berkshire, it is densely populated with 32 persons per hectare and, as shown by MORI research during stage 1, the borough area has an above-average level of community identity.

124 Both of the Commission's options involved a Slough-based unitary authority. The results of the MORI survey did not give a clear indication of support from the residents of Slough with only 18 per cent 'firm support' for these two options, 32 per cent favouring no change and a further 42 per cent who did not have a view. However, the case for a unitary Slough was strengthened by the results of the consultation exercise, with some 83 per cent of direct respondents in the borough supporting one or other of the Commission's two options, both of which promoted a Slough-based unitary authority.

EAST BERKSHIRE

125 While there was considerable evidence in favour of unitary structures among those who responded to the Commission's consultation, there has been a clear lack of public support for both the Commission's options in east Berkshire.

126 The Commission is confident that either structure would have met the requirement for effective and convenient local government. However, the evidence from the stage 3 consultation suggests that neither structure would sufficiently reflect local identity in the east of the county. As a consequence, the Commission has found it necessary to examine the other options presented to it for this area of the county.

127 Against the background of the strong local support shown in stage 3 for two different and conflicting unitary options for this area – one involving a north/south division and one an east/west division – and the clear lack of agreement on mergers in east Berkshire, the Commission is aware of an alternative preference among some district councils for unitary authorities based on existing district/borough council areas. This six-authority option also has the support of six of the seven Berkshire Members of Parliament.

128 The Commission has considered this option and recognises that it could be expected to command wide public support. For example, evidence from MORI research into community identity during stage 1 of the review showed that 49 per cent of residents surveyed in Berkshire supported the idea of unitary authorities based on existing districts.

129 In the Commission's judgement, this option would not meet the requirement for effective local government. County Council services would be subdivided to an unnecessary degree, requiring an unacceptable number of participants in joint arrangements and on-going costs associated with this option would be excessive at between £6–£10 million (although the transitional costs would be lower than for structures involving either four or five unitary authorities.)

130 The two five-unitary authority options put forward by the three local authorities would each divide eastern Berkshire into two new unitary authorities. The 'Central Berkshire' option was strongly promoted by Wokingham District Council, and received 16 per cent of support in the county overall. Public feeling against an expansion of Reading into Wokingham and the Commission's decision not to proceed with this, means there is now less of a case for dividing the existing district. It is the largest district in Berkshire, and also has a relatively high population density (8.0 people per hectare).

131 In its earlier submission Wokingham District Council argued that the Wokingham area, situated in the Loddon Valley, is distinct from surrounding areas and MORI research into community identity during stage 1 showed clear opposition in Wokingham to closer links with either Bracknell Forest or Windsor & Maidenhead.

132 'Option D' on the other hand received strong local backing from Windsor & Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest areas. In the county overall, it was the best supported option, receiving the support of 34 per cent of all representations. It was also one of the options shortlisted in the joint submission of six of the seven local authorities.

133 It broadly corresponds with lines of communication and with the green belt. This option, however, would result in all three existing local authorities being significantly re-structured, causing major disruption to present county and district services.

134 The options for two unitary authorities promoted by the districts in the east of Berkshire therefore have a number of strengths and weaknesses. Both have apparently strong local support. Financially they are similar, showing on-going costs in the range £3–£7 million per annum and transitional costs of £10–£14 million. However, they are not reconcilable with each other insofar as they are based on different configurations of authorities.

135 It is clear from the evidence from the public consultation that there is wide support for some form of unitary local government in Berkshire. While several authorities have differing views about the most appropriate unitary structure, the Commission endorses the conclusions reached earlier this year by *all* the existing authorities, either collectively or separately, that unitary local government is appropriate for the county.

136 The Commission's two options for consultation did not find favour in the east of the county and while they meet the requirement for effective and convenient local government, both would result in populations for east Berkshire well in excess of 300,000 and would not sufficiently reflect local identity as evidence from the public consultation shows. This, together with the degree of public support shown for other structures has prompted the Commission to re-appraise the two five-unitary authority proposals.

137 The Commission believes that both 'Option D' and the 'Central Berkshire' option have considerable evidence in their favour. On balance, however, the Commission prefers the 'Central Berkshire' option, but without the inclusion of Sandhurst and Crowthorne Parishes. This option preserves the largest existing district and involves less disruption to services in the east of the county by only altering the boundaries of two districts rather than three. Although 'Option D' received twice the level of support of the 'Central Berkshire' option, this may in the Commission's view, reflect the fact that the option had the support of two local authority areas rather than one.

138 In the Commission's judgement, a structure of five unitary authorities based on 'Central Berkshire' would meet the requirement of local identity. For the major local government functions—currently provided by the county council—the new authorities would provide services to fewer people and cover smaller geographical areas—raising the potential for greater accessibility and responsiveness.

139 While the overall number of councillors in the county will reduce the Commission considers that the ratio of local residents to councillors will ensure reasonable democratic representation. Details of the electoral arrangements the Commission recommends for this structure are detailed in appendix C.

140 In the light of the representations made during the public consultation exercise, and the evidence relating to the identities and interests of local communities and the securing of effective and convenient local government, the Commission has concluded, notwithstanding the fact that the structure will not recover the transitional costs of its establishment, that five unitary authorities for the county, based on the 'Central Berkshire' option in the east would best meet the statutory criteria.

5 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

141 The final recommendations below reflect the Commission's consideration of all the evidence which it has received, including the responses to its consultation report *The Future Local Government of Berkshire*. The first section addresses the structure of local government in Berkshire; the second relates to the other matters on which the Commission consulted.

THE STRUCTURE

FINAL RECOMMENDATION 1

The existing two-tier structure of seven councils should be replaced by five new unitary authorities, each responsible for the broad range of services now provided by the county and the district/borough councils. These authorities should be:

(i)   a new unitary authority for Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead combined, based on existing boundaries;

(ii) a new unitary authority for Newbury based on existing boundaries;

(iii) a new unitary authority for Reading based on existing boundaries;

(iv) a new unitary authority for Slough based on April 1995 boundaries;

(v)   a new unitary authority for Wokingham based on existing boundaries.

CEREMONIAL ISSUES

142 Although the structure of new principal authorities proposed by the Commission would result in the abolition of the county council, the Commission is not recommending the abolition of the county of Berkshire. The Royal County of Berkshire will continue as a focus for loyalty and identity, as well as for historic, ceremonial, sporting and other purposes.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION 2

The Royal County of Berkshire should be retained for ceremonial and related purposes and the unitary authorities of Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead, Newbury, Reading, Slough, and Wokingham should be associated with the county for such purposes.

143 In its progress report, *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires*, the Commission expressed the view 'that all unitary authorities must be perceived to be

new unitary authorities so as to emphasise the fresh start which reorganisation offers to local government'. This remains the Commission's view, but it is ultimately for the Secretary of State to determine whether the unitary authorities the Commission recommends should be new or continuing authorities.

Other Matters

Public Protection

144 The Government's guidance to the Commission on police and fire services is explicit in requiring them to be carried out over an area no smaller than at present. As a separate exercise, in which the Commission is not involved, the government is reviewing proposals for police authorities, the probation service and magistrates' courts. In the meantime, the Commission recommended that the fire service should continue to cover the present county area of Berkshire and that a combined authority should be established for this service on which representatives of the new unitary councils should serve. Representatives of the new unitary authorities should also serve on the Thames Valley Police Authority. The views that the Commission received during the consultation have confirmed its opinion on this matter.

Final Recommendation 3

There should be a combined authority established in the present county area for the fire service, on which representatives of the new councils should serve. Representatives of the new unitary authorities should also serve on the Thames Valley Police Authority. No changes are proposed for the probation and magistrates' courts services.

Strategic Planning

145 The Commission is concerned that strategic land-use planning for Berkshire should not be undermined by changes in the structure of local authorities. This matter is fully discussed in the Commission's report *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires*. As the present authorities recognise, there is a high level of interdependence between different parts of the county and this needs to be reflected in an appropriate planning structure. The Commission is invited by the legislation to consider whether unitary authorities should be empowered to prepare unitary development plans, rather than the present structure and local plans.

146 In its report *The Future Local Government of Berkshire* the Commission argued that it believed that the widely contrasting nature of Berkshire would be better suited to the preparation of individual unitary development plans by the proposed new unitary authorities. The Commission further felt that minerals and waste planning should be dealt with as joint arrangements within Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire. However, there has been considerable opposition to the Commission's

draft recommendation on this issue. Berkshire County Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham District Council were all opposed to UDPs being introduced in their respective areas. In light of consultations, the Commission is persuaded that unitary development plans should not be recommended as part of the current review.

Final Recommendation 4

For strategic planning the five new unitary authorities should assume joint responsibility for structure planning for the whole of their combined area. The new unitary authorities should also be the mineral and waste planning authorities with strategic minerals and waste policies being included in the joint structure plan. Each authority should individually have responsibility for formulating detailed minerals and waste policies for their areas in general conformity with the policy framework established by the structure plan, and should be authorised to include such policies in their local plans. Responsibility for local plans should rest with each of the new unitary authorities in their respective areas and they should also exercise development control functions for their areas for all purposes.

Electoral Arrangements

147 The Commission proposes that, with the exception of Newbury district, existing district electoral wards should be adopted for new unitary authorities where boundaries are coterminous with the existing district boundary. Where the proposed new unitary authority covers a wider area, the Commission proposes that the electoral arrangements should be based upon the county electoral divisions in the area in question.

148 The Secretary of State asked the Commission to have particular regard to the ratio of councillors to electors in Newbury District, where there are currently wide variations from the district average in a number of wards. In its draft recommendations, the Commission proposed a unitary council for Newbury based partly on the present district council's electoral scheme. In light of the public consultation – and the decision not to proceed with boundary changes to Newbury – the Commission has based its final recommendations for electoral arrangements broadly on the district council's scheme. In the case of the present electoral ward of Theale, however, the Commission considers that the creation of Theale East, with a percentage variance of 42 per cent, would result in an unacceptable level of electoral representation. As a consequence, the Commission has decided that Theale should continue to be served by one electoral ward returning three councillors.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION 5

The new council for Newbury should comprise 54 councillors being elected from 31 wards. There would be 6 wards returning three councillors, 11 wards returning two councillors and 14 wards returning one councillor.

The new council for Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead should comprise 61 councillors based principally on existing county electoral divisions. There would be one ward returning four councillors, ten wards returning three councillors, thirteen wards returning two councillors and one ward returning one councillor.

The new council for Reading should comprise 45 councillors covering the existing 15 district electoral wards, as at present. There would be three councillors per ward.

The new council for Slough should comprise 41 councillors. There would be three councillors per ward over the existing 13 district electoral wards and two councillors for the new Colnbrook/Poyle ward. These arrangements reflect the revised boundary of Slough due to take effect in April 1995.

The new council for Wokingham should comprise 54 councillors covering the existing 24 district electoral wards. There would be 12 wards returning three councillors, 6 wards returning two councillors and 6 wards returning one councillor.

In Newbury, Reading, Slough and Wokingham District and Borough Councils the electoral cycle should follow existing practice. In the Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead authority there should be whole council elections.

The electoral arrangements in each unitary authority should be reviewed during the next five years as part of a general review of electoral arrangements across the country.

149 The details of the Commission's recommendations are given in Appendix C.

LOCAL COUNCILS

150 The Commission's consultation report proposed the creation of a parish for Newbury town. The Commission sought views on this proposal and, together with evidence received following the announcement of the review it has established that there is sufficient local demand to warrant making a final recommendation that Newbury town be parished. Full details of the response to consultation is given in Appendix D.

151 As indicated in paragraph 41, the Commission has no power to make recommendations in relation to the electoral arrangements for any new parish councils which may be established as a consequence of its final recommendation for the parishing of any area. Nevertheless, the Commission's consultation report provided details of the electoral arrangements suggested to it by respondents. Given their powers in respect of electoral arrangements in parish areas, the Commission's conclusions may be of assistance to the Secretary of State and to the appropriate district councils in the review area.

152 The Commission is satisfied that the electoral arrangements set out in Appendix D would provide an equitable level of electoral representation in Newbury town, and commends these arrangements to the Secretary of State including the provision of six councillors for each ward. The Commission is also strongly of the view that any parish council elections for these areas should be held on the same cycle as elections to the principal authorities.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION 7

A parish should be created for the area of Newbury town based on the existing Charter Trustee area.

153 Since parish and town councils can be an important vehicle for the expression of local community identity, the Commission believes that their role should be enhanced, whether or not there is a change to unitary structures. This should include regular meetings with the principal authorities, improved consultation on planning and highways issues and, where appropriate, devolved management of local facilities. Members of parish and town councils would be well placed to help residents secure assistance or redress when faced with problems about local services. These proposals enlarge on existing practice, and reflect suggestions in many of the submissions to the Commission, both nationally and locally.

154 No increase in the statutory powers of parish and town councils, nor the establishment of another tier of local government is envisaged. However, the Commission agreed with many of its respondents that a clear consultative framework should be established between principal local authorities and parish and town councils. This framework is set out in paragraph 37 of this report.

155 The Commission recognises that the enhanced role it proposes would require the creation of either parish or town councils for the areas of the county that are unparished (33 per cent of the land area and 43 per cent of the population). The MORI survey undertaken on behalf of the Commission found that 74 per cent of respondents agreed that town and parish councils should be set up, where they do not exist, if local people want them.

156 In its consultation report, the Commission invited views on whether parishes should be created for any other unparished areas of the county, and undertook to reflect the response in its final report.

157 In the absence of any significant demand for the parishing of further areas of the county, or for changes to parishing arrangements generally, the Commission does not

consider that an early area boundary review and/or an electoral review would be productive. It is open to any interested party to make representations to the Secretary of State asking him to direct the Commission to undertake such a review.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION 8

There should be an enhanced consultative role for all town and parish councils

* * *

NEXT STEPS

158 Having completed its review of Berkshire and submitted its final recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Commission has fulfilled its statutory role under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1992.

159 It now falls to the Secretary of State, if he thinks fit, to give effect to the Commission's recommendations with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order which will be subject to debate in both Houses of Parliament. Such an Order will not be made earlier than a period of six weeks from the date on which the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

160 All further representations and correspondence concerning the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State, who will take them into account before reaching a conclusion on the Commission's recommendations. Representations should be addressed to:

The Secretary of State for the Environment
Local Government 1 Division
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 3EB

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF MORI FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Extract from the Commission's draft recommendations report

RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TO CHANGE

Local attitudes to change are important. It has generally been the Commission's experience that residents favour a single-tier system of local government, although there are some review areas where support for this principle has proved to be weak. When residents are given realistic choices for unitary structures it can be difficult to translate support for the unitary principle into support for actual unitary structures.

As part of their preparation for the review the local authorities commissioned MORI to carry out market research on community identity in Berkshire, and to seek the views of local residents on the type of unitary authorities preferred. Almost half of the residents (49 per cent) support the proposal for unitary authorities to be based on existing boroughs and districts. Only one in five (20 per cent) express a preference for services to be provided by a single county council across Berkshire, the same number as those supporting unitary authorities based on groups of districts or boroughs merged together (20 per cent).

THE IDENTITIES AND INTERESTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Commission considered it helpful to establish baseline information on the priorities people attach to the various factors that will influence local government structure and the MORI survey commissioned jointly by the Berkshire authorities also addressed this issue.

This survey enabled the Commission to gauge the relative importance the public gives to major factors that will influence government structure. Responses to the question "which three of these factors, if any, do you think should be most important in deciding the local government structure in your area?" are shown in figure A1. The survey reveals that quality of services and responsiveness to local people score most highly in people's concerns; conversely historic or traditional boundaries did not figure as a priority consideration.

Figure A1
FACTORS DETERMINING LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN BERKSHIRE

Percentage of respondents mentioning each factor

Quality of services	55
Responding to the needs of its people	52
Value for money	36
Local people able to influence decisions	35
Cost of services	27
Knowing who is making decisions	19
Ease of contacting the council	14
Sense of local community	11
Level of information about the council and its services	11
Access to local councillors	11
Size of population covered	9
Access to the council offices	4
Historical or traditional boundaries	4
Don't know/other	5

Source: MORI, January 1994

When asked what was the single most important factor, 29 per cent of the respondents identified responding to the needs of its people; 22 per cent identified quality of services; 14 per cent identified value for money and 12 per cent identified local people able to influence decisions. No other factor was identified by more than 6 per cent of respondents. In a separate MORI survey on a national basis, 82 per cent of residents said that they would not be prepared to pay extra for services to be locally based.

Figure A2 shows that throughout Berkshire, community affiliation is generally strongest in respect of the local neighbourhood or village and followed by the home town or nearest town. Attachment to local government areas, the county and the district, is much less pronounced.

Figure A2
COMMUNITY IDENTITY IN BERKSHIRE: AN OVERVIEW

Question: 'How strongly do you feel you belong to each of the following areas?'

Percentage of respondents

	Very strongly	Very/fairly strongly
This neighbourhood/village	31	72
Town/nearest town	19	58
District/Borough area	13	49
County council area	11	43

Source: MORI, January 1994

Figure A3 illustrates the variation, by district, of community affiliations. The key points to emerge are:

(i) Reading and Slough are the boroughs attracting strongest community affiliation;

(ii) Wokingham has a relatively weak district identity on a par with affiliation to the county area. Residents do, however, reveal a strong attachment to their neighbourhood/village;

(iii) in both Bracknell and Newbury there was little difference between the identity felt for the district and county;

(iv) Windsor and Maidenhead showed a stronger attachment to the district area than the county area.

Figure A3
COMMUNITY IDENTITY IN BERKSHIRE

Question: "How strongly do you feel you belong to each of the following areas?"

Percentage of respondents indicating belonging 'very or fairly' strongly to:

Authority	Neighbourhood/ village	Town/nearest town	District council area	County council area
Bracknell	69	54	45	42
Newbury	71	52	45	42
Reading	69	71	56	53
Slough	66	63	55	39
Windsor and Maidenhead	77	62	51	39
Wokingham	75	48	41	44
Overall county average	72	58	49	43

Source: MORI January 1994

Local Government Structure in Berkshire

RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED FOR

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

SEPTEMBER 1994

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Local Government Commission for England

FROM: MORI Local Government Research Unit

DATE: 9 September 1994

RE: Public attitudes to Local Government structure in Berkshire

TECHNICAL NOTE

MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,853 adults aged 18+ across Berkshire. All Census enumeration districts (EDs) in the county were sorted into districts and, within district, ranked by percentage professional/managerial households. At this stage, 24 EDs were selected in each district, with a probability of selection proportional to the size of the population of each. Quota controls were set for each sampling point, by gender, age and work status using 1991 Census data. Around 300 interviews were achieved in each district, and at the analysis stage the data were weighted to account for the population profiles of each district and the relative population sizes.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Fewer than one county residents in five selects Option One or Two as their first preference.

- Even in Reading, more (31%) say there is no need to change the structure than choose either option (19% and 18%).

- Across the county as a whole, neither of the two options stands out as being more unpopular (16% and 18% "least prefer" respectively).

DETAILS

- Two in three (65%) name Berkshire as their County Council.

- Between seven and nine out of ten can name their District Council, although this is lower in Slough:

Q What is the name of the Borough/District Council for this area?

	%
Bracknell Forest Borough	73
Newbury District	90
Reading Borough	81
Slough Borough	65
Windsor & Maidenhead Borough	75
Wokingham District	82

- Four in five (82%) claim to have heard of the Review, although just two per cent of residents say they know "a great deal" about it. A further 14% say they know "a fair amount".

- The options for change were presented as on the Commission leaflet, modified to remove the text indicating the Commission's recommendation.

In summary:

One: Four unitary Councils, namely Royal East Berkshire, a modified Newbury, an expanded Reading and Slough.

Two: Four unitary Councils as above, but with an "alternative" expanded Reading, and modifications to Newbury and Royal East Berkshire.

- There is no majority support for either of these options. There is little variation by district from the county average of 18% support for Option One and 16% for Option Two. The highest combined support for these Options (obtained by adding the percentage preferring Option One to the percentage preferring Option Two) is 41% in Reading, compared to a County average of 34%.

Q Please tell me which of these options, if any, you would most prefer?

		Option One	Option Two	None of These	Don't Know
BERKSHIRE	%	18	16	38	28
Bracknell Forest	%	16	16	37	31
Newbury	%	19	19	47	15
Reading	%	22	19	28	31
Slough	%	17	11	18	54
Windsor & Maidenhead	%	16	18	40	26
Wokingham	%	15	12	50	23

- Offered the opportunity to name "other" options that they preferred (but with no particular options prompted), half say either that there are none (28%) or that they do not know (22%). The proportions preferring another option are as follows:

Q What other options, if any, would you prefer to those I have shown you?

		No need to change	Some other preference
BERKSHIRE	%	38	12
Bracknell Forest	%	29	12
Newbury	%	35	14
Reading	%	31	5
Slough	%	32	8
Windsor & Maidenhead	%	42	18
Wokingham	%	52	12

Around a quarter of the people who selected Option One or Option Two as their first preference subsequently went on to say there is no need to change

- All respondents are, therefore, asked two questions about their prefences: first, they are asked to select one of the Commission's options; second, they are asked if there are any other options that they would prefer.

By taking account of people's responses to both questions we can prepare a succinct summary which best reflects people's views and preferences.

The methodology is as follows: those who select one of the Commission's options as their first preference with the prompted list, and then went on to say that they do not have any other preference when offered an open choice, are described as "firm" supporters of that option.

Those who, having given their preference for one of the Commission's options, then went on to say there was actually another structure that they would prefer (which might have been the status quo, for example) are re-allocated to take account of this information.

There are also those who express no view or preference at both the Commission's options question and the unprompted open choice question. These people remain categorised as "Don't know". The table below sets out the results of this analysis across the County and within individual districts.

Firm Support

		Option One	Option Two	No need to change	Other	Don't Know
BERKSHIRE	%	12	11	38	12	27
Bracknell Forest	%	12	11	29	12	36
Newbury	%	13	15	35	14	23
Reading	%	19	18	31	5	27
Slough	%	10	8	32	8	42
Windsor & Maidenhead	%	10	5	42	18	25
Wokingham	%	8	9	52	12	19

- Within each district, it is feasible to add figures horizontally where the outcome of more than one option is the same for the district concerned. For example, Options One and Two both entail a unitary Slough; therefore, the figures for firm preference of these options can be added together for Slough Borough residents. However, such combinations should always be treated with caution, as it may be that respondents' preferences are at least partly based on what would happen **outside** of the district in which they live.

- The two Commission options are equally likely to be selected as the least preferred option:

Q   Which, if any, of the options shown here would you least prefer?

		Option One	Option Two	None of These	Don't Know
BERKSHIRE	%	16	18	34	32
Bracknell Forest	%	19	16	26	39
Newbury	%	16	24	39	21
Reading	%	13	17	40	30
Slough	%	7	12	23	58
Windsor & Maidenhead	%	28	16	31	25
Wokingham	%	11	21	39	29

- Three quarters of residents (74%) support the principle of setting up town or parish councils where people want them. This is broadly consistent throughout the county.

STATISTICAL RELIABILITY

The respondents to the questionnaire are only samples of the total "population", so we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the "true" values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the "true" values from a knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95% confidence interval":

Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
100 interviews	6	9	10
300 interviews	3	5	6
1000 interviews	2	3	3
1,850 interviews	2	3	3

For example, with a sample size of 300 where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the "true" value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of +5 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real," or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - ie if it is "statistically significant", we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95% confidence interval", the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below:

Size of samples compared	Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels		
	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
300 and 300	5	7	8
1,000 and 1,000	3	4	4
1,000 and 300	4	6	7
1,850 and 300	4	6	7

MARKED-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

MORI/8197

OPTIONS RESEARCH (Berkshire)

Fieldwork: 18 July—15 August 1994

N = 1,853 respondents aged 18+

Sample stratified by district, data weighted to be representative of population profile

Gender	%
Male	49
Female	51

Age	%
18-24	14
25-34	22
35-44	19
45-54	17
55-64	14
65-74	9
75+	6

WRITE IN AGE ☐☐

Work Status	%
Full-time (30 hrs/wk+)	54
Part-time (8-29 hrs/wk)	10
Not working (under 8 hrs)	1
Looking after home/children	12
Retired	16
Registered unemployed	3
Unemployed but not registered	1
Student	3
Other	*

Occupation of Chief Income Earner (CIE)
Position/rank/grade

....

Industry/type of company

....

Qualifications/degrees/apprenticeship

....

No of Staff Responsible for

....

PROBE FOR CIE/PENSION	%
AB	22
C1	31
C2	21
D	16
E	10

Number in Household
Adults aged 18+ (inc. respondent)

16%	57%	17%	8%	2%
1	2	3	4	5+

Children (17 or under)

59%	14%	16%	7%	2%
0	1	2	3	4+

QA Are you or other members of your household employed by a council? IF YES: Is this a Borough/District/City Council or a County Council? CODE FOR BOTH RESPONDENT AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

	Respondent	Other
	%	%
Yes:		
Borough/District/City	1	2
County	4	3
Don't know which	*	*
No	94	87
Don't know	*	8

Tenure	%
Owned outright	21
Buying on mortgage	53
Rented from Council	13
Rented from Housing Association	4
Rented from private landlord	6
Other	1

QB Is this your main permanent home, or is it a second or holiday home?

	%
Main/permanent	98
Second/holiday	1

Car in Household
CIRCLE NUMBER

14%	43%	32%	10%
0	1	2	3+

NTERVIEWER DECLARATION: I confirm that I have conducted this interview face-to-face with the above named person and that I have asked all the relevant questions fully and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specification and the MRS Code of Conduct.

Interviewer Name... Signature ....

Interviewer Number/

Month   Date

DATE OF INTERVIEW

NB INTERVIEWER: ALL SHOWCARDS HAVE BEEN REVERSED. PLEASE BE CAREFUL TO CODE THE CORRECT RESPONSE.
Good morning/afternoon/evening. I'm from MORI, the market research and polling organisation. We are doing a survey about local issues, and I would like to ask you a few questions.

<u>ASK ALL</u>
Q1a **Firstly, how long have you lived in this town/village?**

Q1b **And how long have you lived in this county?**

	Q1a %	Q1b %
Less than 1 year	6	3
1-2 years	6	4
3-5 years	10	6
6-10 years	15	11
11-20 years	19	18
Over 20 years/all my life	42	58
Don't know/can't remember	*	*

Q2 **What is the name of the County Council for this area?** DO NOT PROMPT

	%
Berskhire County Council	65
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "2")	12
....	
Don't know	23

Q3 **What is the name of the Borough/District/City Council for this area?** DO NOT PROMPT

	% Correct
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	73
Newbury District Council	90
Reading Borough Council	81
Slough Borough Council	65
Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council	75
Wokingham District Council	82
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "7")	—
....	
....	
Don't know	—

IF INCORRECT ANSWER AT Q2 OR Q3, READ OUT: **In fact, this is the Berkshire County Council area and the . . . . Borough/District/City Council area.**

<u>ASK ALL</u>
Q4 SHOWCARD A (R) **As you may know, there is currently a review being undertaken by the Local Government Commission on the future of local government structure in this area. How much, if anything, would you say you know about this?**

	%
A great deal	2
A fair amount	14
Just a little	40
Heard of but know nothing about	26
Never heard of	18

HAND OVER COMMISSION LEAFLET
Two options have been put forward by the Local Government Commission for the future structure of local government in Berkshire. Could you please read through this leaflet, which outlines the options and includes maps which illustrate them.

<u>ASK ALL</u>
Q5 SHOWCARD (B) **Please tell me which of these options, if any, you would <u>most</u> prefer?**
SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%	
Option 1	18	ASK
Option 2	16	Q6
None of these	38	GO TO
Don't know	28	Q8

<u>ASK IF PREFER 1, 2 OR 3. (OTHERS GO TO Q8)</u>
Q6 **Why do you say you would <u>most</u> prefer option . . . . ?**
PROBE FULLY – DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Base: All expressing preference (625)   %

Cost/Efficiency
Will cost less/save money	7
More efficient/less duplication	9
Easier to manage	7

Size/Area
Smaller areas better/others too big	26
Bigger areas better/others too small/too many councils	10
More sensitive to local area/people	11
Each area different/local identity	4
Want to join/be part of ...(area/town)	6
Don't want to join/be part of ...(area/town)	7
Takes account of different levels of community	3
Maintains strategic services	1

General
No need to change/OK as it is	4
Like present Council/is good/satisfactory	2
Don't like present Council/is poor	1
Current services good/current councils provide good services	2
Would increase services/more services	9
Would improve services/services would be good quality	4
Need strong/influential council	2
Go back to how it was	*
Good idea generally	3
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "9")	26
Don't know	10

ASK ALL

Q8 SHOWCARD B (R) AGAIN **Which, if any, of the options shown here would you least prefer?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Least %	
Option 1	16	
Option 2	18	ASK Q9
None of these	34	GO TO
Don't know	32	Q10

ASK IF LEAST PREFER OPTION 1, 2 OR 3 (OTHERS GO TO Q10)

Q9 **And why do you say you would least prefer option . . . . ?**
PROBE FULLY – DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Base: All expressing least preference (626)   %

Cost/Efficiency
Cost of change	6
Would cost more to run/more expensive	7
Too much duplication	1
Too many joint arrangements	1
Too difficult to manage	4

Size/Area
Area too big/smaller areas better	36
Area too small/bigger areas better/too many councils	6
Would ignore us/our views/would be isolated	5
Too impersonal/less local	6
Don't want to join/be part of...(area/town)	13
No local identity	6
Authorities too small to cope	1
Too narrow/no strategic view	1

General
No need to change/OK as it is	8
Like/Don't like present Council/is good/poor	1
Poor services	2
Current services would be reduced/in danger	3
Bad idea generally	4
I prefer the others/like other options more	3
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "8")	19
Don't know	15

ASK ALL

Q10 **What other options, if any, would you prefer to those I have shown you?**

	%	
None	28	
Don't know	19	GO TO Q12
Go back to how it used to be/back to pre-1974 structure	3	ASK
No need to change/keep things as they are	30	Q11
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "5")	9	

ASK IF CODE "3", "4" OR "5" AT Q10 (OTHERS GO TO Q12)

Q11 **Why do you say that?**
PROBE FULLY – DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE OK

Base: All citing another preference (1,041)   %

Cost/Efficiency
Will cost less/save money	16
More efficient/less duplication	2
Easier to manage	4

Size/Area
Smaller areas better/others too big	18
Bigger areas better/others too small/too many councils	1
More sensitive to local area/people	10
Each area different/local identity	8
Want to join/be part of ...(area/town)	*
Don't want to join/be part of ...(area/town)	7
Takes account of different levels of community	2
Maintains strategic services	1

General
No need to change/OK as it is	49
Like present Council/is good/satisfactory	27
Don't like present Council/is poor	1
Current services good/current councils provide good services	9
Would increase services/more services	1
Would improve services/services would be good quality	2
Need strong/influential council	1
Go back to how it was	2
Good idea generally	1
Other (WRITE IN & CODE "9")	24
Don't know	6

ASK ALL

Q12 **Please tell me whether you support or oppose the following proposal . . . . .**
READ OUT

	Support %	Oppose %	Neither/ Don't know %
If local people want them, town and parish Councils should be set up, where they do not exist	74	11	14

THANK RESPONDENT
GO TO DEMOGRAPHICS, THEN COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

District Name: ....

COPY SAMPLE POINT FROM FRONT PAGE

APPENDIX C

RECOMMENDED ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Figure C1 gives the number of wards and number of councillors for each of the new unitary authorities.

Figure C1
PROPOSED ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FIVE UNITARY AUTHORITIES

Authority	Wards	Electorate	Number of councillors	Average councillor to elector ratio
Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead unitary authority	25	172,005	61	1:2,820
Newbury unitary authority	31	105,300	54	1:1,950
Reading unitary authority	15	104,600	45	1:2,324
Slough unitary authority	14	81,400	41	1:1,985
Wokingham unitary authority	24	111,000	54	1:2,056

Source: Berkshire local authorities' pre-submission material

District electoral wards would form the basis of the new wards for the Newbury unitary authority, Reading unitary authority, Slough unitary authority and Wokingham unitary authority. County electoral divisions would form the basis of the new wards for Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead unitary authority.

Reading unitary authority would provide three councillors per ward. Newbury unitary authority would provide for six wards returning three councillors, 11 wards returning two councillors, and 14 wards returning one councillor. The arrangements here are based largely on the District Council's proposed electoral scheme of 54 members and includes a rewarding of Newbury and Thatcham towns. Slough unitary authority would provide 13 wards with three councillors per ward with one ward (Colnbrook/Poyle) returning two councillors. Wokingham unitary authority would provide 12 wards returning three councillors, six wards returning two councillors, and six wards returning one councillor. Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead would provide one ward returning four councillors, ten wards returning three councillors, thirteen wards returning two councillors and one ward returning one councillor. The arrangements are summarised in figure C2.

Figure C2

PROPOSED ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS – Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead (based on county electoral divisions)

Ward	Electorate 1993	Number of Councillors
Bracknell (Binfield)	9,916	3
Bracknell (Bullbrook)	7,170	3
Bracknell (Crowthorne)	3,970	2
Bracknell (Easthampstead)	6,148	2
Bracknell (Great Hollands)	7,317	3
Bracknell (Hanworth)	5,951	2
Bracknell (Harmanswater)	6,270	2
Bracknell (Little Sandhurst)	3,100	1
Bracknell (Sandhurst)	10,648	4
Bracknell (Winkfield)	10,278	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Ascot and Sunningdale)	8,982	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Belmont)	6,069	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Boyn Hill)	7,415	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Bray)	7,475	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Clewer)	5,887	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Cookham, Bisham and Hurley)	6,951	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Cox Green)	7,104	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Datchet, Horton & Wraysbury)	7,105	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Eton & Castle)	6,365	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Furze Platt and Pinkneys Green)	7,450	3
Windsor & Maidenhead (Great Park)	6,182	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Oldfield)	5,868	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Old Windsor & Sunninghill)	6,710	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (St Mary's)	5,712	2
Windsor & Maidenhead (Trinity)	5,962	2
TOTAL	172,005	61

During the public consultation, the Commission received a representation from Sandhurst Town Council requesting that Little Sandhurst should continue to be represented separately as is the case with the existing district warding arrangements. Consequently, the Commission recommends that the existing district electoral ward of Little Sandhurst should be maintained for electoral purposes, returning 1 councillor, and the remainder of the county electoral division of Crowthorne should return 2 councillors.

In light of the large number of electors in the county division of Sandhurst, the Commission recommends that there should be 4 councillors to represent this area.

NEWBURY DISTRICT ELECTORAL REVIEW – PROPOSED WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

As indicated in the Commission's draft recommendations for Berkshire, the Commission is required, irrespective of the structural review, to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements in Newbury District. The variations in Newbury District are such that the Secretary of State has directed the Commission to undertake an electoral review in Newbury as part of the structural review in Berkshire. There are currently ten electoral wards within Newbury where the councillor to elector ratios vary by more than 25 per cent from the district average.

In preparing and submitting its proposals for changes to electoral arrangements, the Commission must have regard to Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act, 1972. The Commission must seek to ensure that, so far as possible, the ratio of the number of electors to the number of councillors is the same in each ward of the area concerned. In doing so, the Commission must allow for any expected increase or decrease in the electorate of any particular ward over the next five years.

Figure C3
ELECTORAL REVIEW OF NEWBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL – PROPOSED WARDS

Ward	No. of Councillors	Electorate	Current Ratio	Variance	Forecast 1998 Electorate	Ratio	Variance
Aldermaston							
Aldermaston		665			650		
Brimpton		473			480		
Wasing		51			50		
Woolhampton		628			657		
	1	1,817	1:1,817	-6.86%	1,837	1:1,837	-10.12%
Basildon							
Basildon		1,237			1,227		
Streatley		775			767		
	1	2,012	1:2,012	3.12%	1,994	1:1,994	-2.44%
Birch Copse							
Tilehurst Birch Copse		3,750			4,164		
	2	3,750	1:1,875	-3.89%	4,164	1:2,082	1.85%
Bradfield							
Beenham		719			726		
Bradfield		1,206			1,143		
Englefield		226			225		
Stanford Dingley		171			171		
	1	2,322	1:2,322	19.01%	2,265	1:2,265	10.81%
Bucklebury							
Bucklebury		1,606			1,602		
Midgham		261			263		
	1	1,867	1:1,867	-4.30%	1,865	1:1,865	-8.75%
Burghfield							
Burghfield		4,068			4,166		
	2	4,068	1:2,034	4.25%	4,166	1:2,083	1.90%
Calcot							
Tilehurst Calcot		2,430			2,497		
	1	2,430	1:2,430	24.55%	2,497	1:2,497	22.16%
Chieveley							
Boxford		372			376		
Chieveley		1,860			1,873		
Winterbourne		153			147		
	1	2,385	1:2,385	22.24%	2,396	1:2,396	17.22%
Cold Ash							
Cold Ash		2,187			2,714		
Shaw-cum-Donnington		1,304			1,341		
	2	3,491	1:1,746	-10.50%	4,055	1:2,028	-0.78%
Compton							
Aldworth		196			197		
Ashampstead		301			308		
Compton		1,036			1,041		
East Ilsley		341			363		
	1	1,874	1:1,874	-3.94%	1,909	1:1,909	-6.60%

Ward	No. of Councillors	Electorate	Current Ratio	Variance	Forecast 1998 Electorate	Ratio	Variance
Downlands							
Beedon		329			326		
Brightwalton		218			216		
Catmore		27			27		
Chaddleworth		320			319		
Farnborough		73			81		
Fawley		123			134		
Leckhampstead		250			286		
Peasemore		188			196		
West Ilsley		261			257		
	1	1,789	1:1,789	-8.30%	1,842	1:1,842	-9.88%
Falkland							
Newbury (N10)		1,366			1,477		
Newbury (N11) (part)		}1,655			1,788		
Newbury (N11) (part)		}					
Newbury (N8)		2,908			3,150		
	3	5,929	1:1,976	1.28%	6,415	1:1,925	-5.82%
Greenham							
Greenham		1,584			1,783		
	1	1,584	1:1,584	-18.81%	1,783	1:1,783	-12.76%
Hermitage							
Frilsham		246			241		
Hampstead Norreys		547			577		
Hermitage		890			899		
Yattendon		286			295		
	1	1,969	1:1,969	0.92%	2,012	1:2,012	-1.56%
Hungerford							
Hungerford		4,178			4,408		
	2	4,178	1:2,089	7.07%	4,408	1:2,204	7.82%
Kintbury							
Combe		23			23		
Enbourne		346			354		
Hamstead Marshall		210			240		
Inkpen		672			686		
Kintbury		2,089			2,104		
West Woodhay		80			81		
	2	3,420	1:1,710	-12.35%	3,488	1:1,744	-14.67%
Lambourne							
East Garston		440			437		
Great Shefford		739			764		
Lambourne		2,988			2,986		
Welford		426			433		
	2	4,593	1:2,297	17.73%	4,620	1:2,310	13.01%
Mortimer							
Beech Hill		241			252		
Stratfield Mortimer		2,738			2,835		
Wokefield		223			241		
	2	3,202	1:1,601	-17.93%	3,328	1:1,664	-18.59%
Northcroft							
Newbury (N2)		1,038			1,104		
Newbury (N4)		2,019			2,236		
Newbury (N9)		2,095			2,266		

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Ward	No. of Councillors	Electorate	Current Ratio	Variance	Forecast 1998 Electorate	Ratio	Variance
Pangbourne							
Pangbourne		2,265			2,353		
	1	2,265	1:2,265	16.09%	2,353	1:2,353	15.11%
Purley on Thames							
Purley on Thames		3,067			3,299		
Sulham/ Tidmarsh		336			348		
	2	3,403	1:1,702	-12.76%	3,647	1:1,824	-10.76%
St. Johns							
Newbury (N5)		401			433		
Newbury (N6)		2,917			3,063		
Newbury (N7) (part)		}2,421					
Newbury (N7) (part)		}			2,481		
	3	5,739	1:1,913	-1.94%	5,977	1:1,992	-2.54%
Speen							
Speen		2,159			2,231		
	1	2,159	1:2,159	10.66%	2,231	1:2,231	9.14%
Sulhamstead							
Padworth		399			409		
Sulhamstead		1,047			1,046		
Ufton Nervet		262			274		
	1	1,708	1:1,708	-12.45%	1,729	1:1,729	-15.41%
Thatcham (East)							
Thatcham East (TA7)		1,587			1,606		
Thatcham East (TA8)		2,144			2,170		
Thatcham East (TA9)		472			478		
	2	4,203	1:2,102	7.73%	4,254	1:2,127	4.06%
Thatcham North							
Thatcham North (TA3)		1,857			2,797		
Thatcham North (TA4)		1,667			2,796		
	3	3,564	1:1,175	-39.10%	5,593	1:1,864	-8.80%
Thatcham South							
Thatcham South (TA2)		2,002			1,955		
Thatcham South (TA5)		372			377		
Thatcham South (TA6)		2,698			2,369		
	2	5,072	1:2,536	29.98%	4,701	1:2,351	15.01%
Thatcham West							
Thatcham West (TA1)		2,340			2,285		
	1	2,340	1:2,340	19.93%	2,285	1:2,285	11.79%
Theale							
Theale		7,423			7,265		
	3	7,423	1:2,474	-26.80%	7,265	1:2,422	-18.49%

Ward	No. of Councillors	Electorate	Current Ratio	Variance	Forecast 1998 Electorate	Ratio	Variance
Turnpike							
Newbury (N1)		2,555			2,836		
Newbury (N3) (part)		}2,092			2,225		
Newbury (N3) (part)		}					
Newbury (N5) (part)		538			582		
	3	5,185	1:1,728	-11.43%	5,643	1:1,881	-7.97%
Westwood							
Tilehurst		4,493			4,030		
	2	4,493	1:2,247	15.17%	4,030	1:2,015	-1.41%
TOTAL	54	105,386	1:1,951	3.14%	110,358	1:2,044	1.96%

RE-WARDING OF NEWBURY AND THATCHAM TOWNS

The Commission received as part of Newbury District's electoral scheme, a proposal to re-ward the towns of Newbury and Thatcham. The Commission indicated in its draft recommendations that it was minded to recommend that the towns of Newbury and Thatcham be re-warded, but that it would wish to hear the views of residents in Berkshire on this matter.

The response to the re-warding exercise has been minimal. There have, however, been no strong views against any re-warding of Newbury and Thatcham. Furthermore, the district council still support revising the wards.

The Commission therefore recommends that the towns of Newbury and Thatcham be re-warded as detailed below.
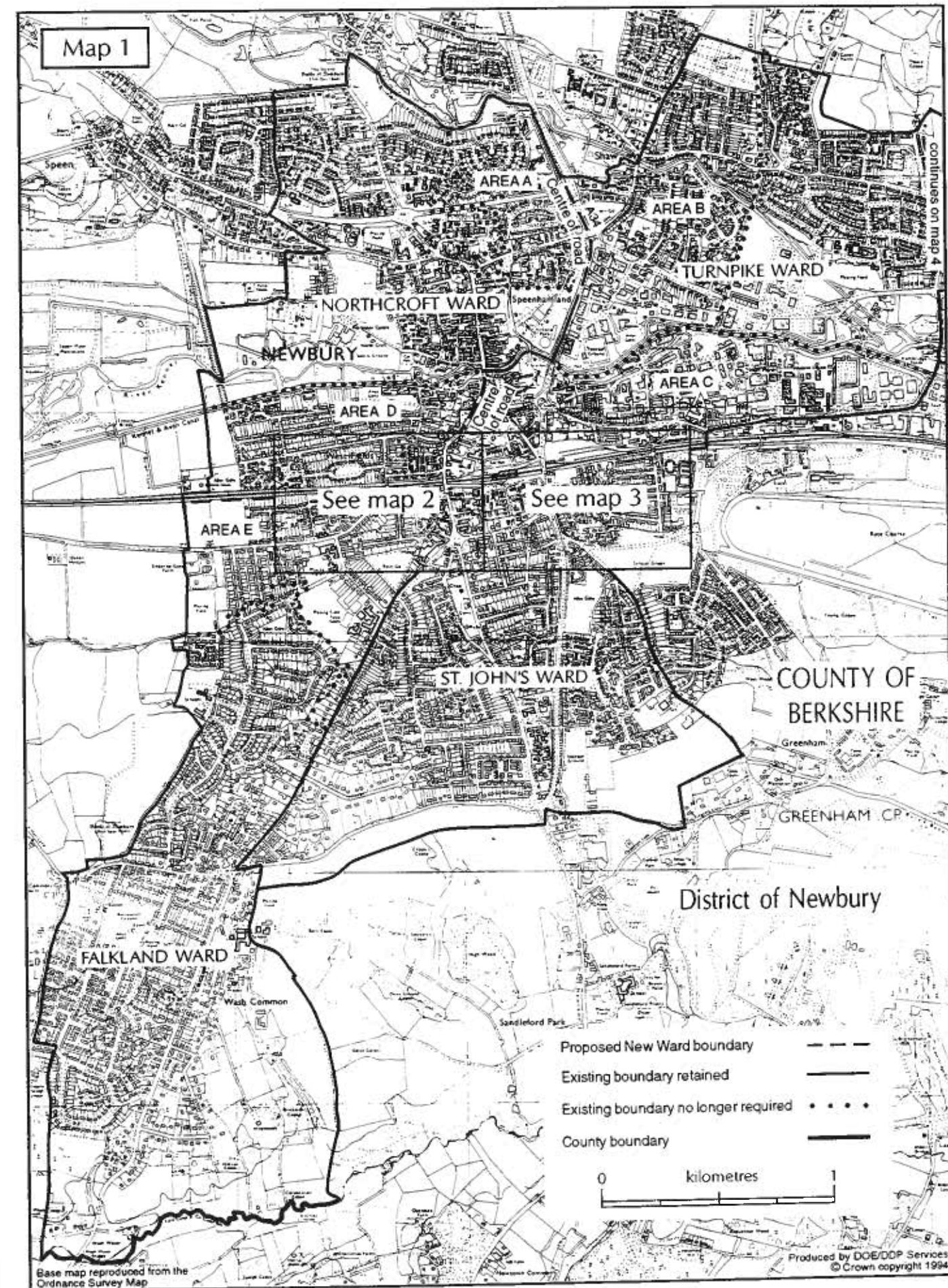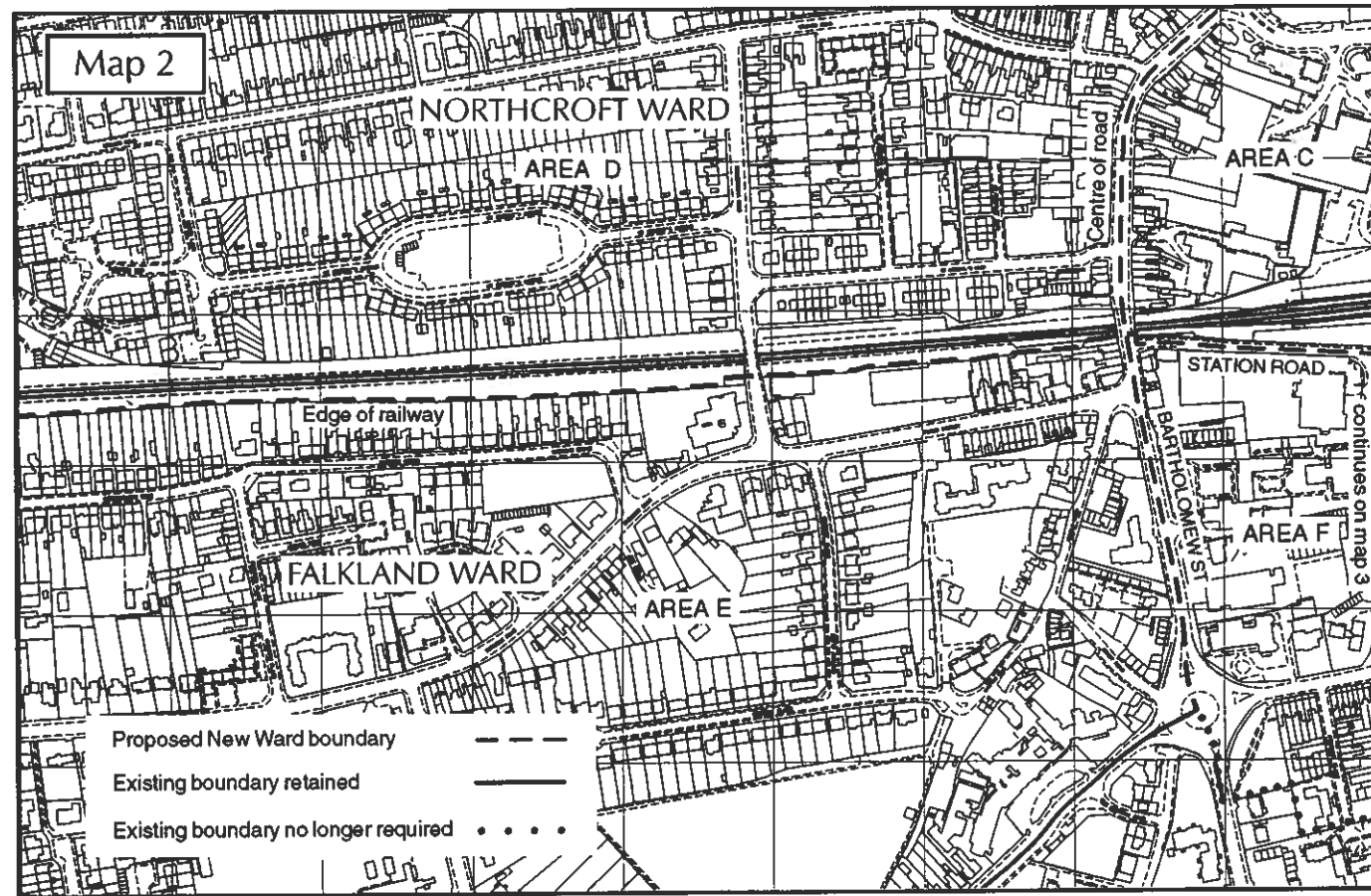
NEWBURY

Figure C3
SCHEDULE OF WARD TRANSFERS IN NEWBURY TOWN

Area	Map	From Ward	To Ward
A	1	Winchcombe	Northcroft
B	1	Winchcombe	Turnpike
C	1-3	Craven	Turnpike
D	1/2	Craven	Northcroft
E	1/2	Craven	Falkland
F	2/3	Craven	St. John's
G	3	St. John's	Turnpike

The boundary from North to South would come down the centre of the A34 following the line of the dual carriageway and ring road. At the point where the road meets with the river Kennet the boundary would then be aligned to the centre of the river until it meets with Bridge Street. At the centre line of Bridge Street the boundary would come down the centre of Bridge Street until it meets with Bartholomew Street. The boundary would then come down the centre of Bartholomew Street until it meets with the St Johns roundabout. It would then follow the centre of Andover Road, turning east onto Monks Lane and then turning south, following a field boundary, and would meet up with the current district boundary.

The boundary from West to East would run along the south side of the railway line, travelling west to east to the east side of Barthomolew Street. It would then turn south and follow the east side of Barthomolew Street until it meets Station Road. The boundary would then follow the centre line of Station Road to its junction with the A34 ring road. At this point the boundary would travel north until it meets with the railway line again. It would then travel east following the south side of the railway line until it meets with the existing boundary of Newbury town.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Map 2

NORTHCROFT WARD

AREA D

AREA C

Centre of road

continues on map 3

STATION ROAD

Edge of railway

BARTHOLOMEW ST

AREA F

FALKLAND WARD

AREA E

Proposed New Ward boundary — — —

Existing boundary retained ———

Existing boundary no longer required • • • •

Map 3

TURNPIKE WARD

AREA G

AREA C

continued from map 2

Edge of railway

Centre of road

Centre of road

STATION ROAD

AREA F

ST. JOHN'S WARD

0   metres   250

Base map reproduced from the
Ordnance Survey Map

Produced by DOE/DDP Services
© Crown copyright 1994

THATCHAM CP

Figure C4
SCHEDULE OF WARD TRANSFERS FOR THATCHAM TOWN

Area	Map	From Ward	To Ward
H	4	Thatcham West	Thatcham North
J	4	Thatcham West	Thatcham South
K	4/5	Thatcham South	Proposed new ward of Thatcham East

The new boundary between Thatcham West to Thatcham South Wards would run down the centre of Bath Road. The existing Thatcham South Ward would be split to allow for a new Thatcham East Ward. The boundary here would follow the road known as the Moors, to the point where the rear boundaries of properties fronting the Quantocks abut the rear boundaries of properties fronting Beancroft Road. At this point the boundary follows the line of the rear boundaries of properties specified travelling southwards between Wenlock Way, Rudland Close, Braemore Close and Spackman Close. At a point where the boundary meets the boundary of the ordnance depot it follows the western boundary southwards to the railway line. The boundary crosses the railway due south of the southern side of the railway line. The boundary then goes westwards along the southern side of the railway to a drainage ditch and then south eastwards to the Kennet and Avon Canal. At the centre line of the Kennet and Avon Canal the boundary goes westwards to the existing Greenham Parish Boundary.

Since the publication of its draft recommendations, the Commission has been advised that the current boundary running between Thatcham West and Thatcham North follows the line of the rear of properties in Northfield Road and does not run down the centre of Northfield Road, as suggested in the Commission's draft recommendations. The new boundary will therefore run down the centre of Northfield Road. This is reflected in Area J of Map 4.

Map 4

Produced by DOE/DDP Services
© Crown copyright 1994

PROPOSED THATCHAM EAST WARD

AREA K

THATCHAM NORTH WARD

Thatcham CP

THE MOORS

See map 5

Thatcham

COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE

AREA H

THATCHAM WEST WARD

BATH ROAD

BENHAM HILL

THATCHAM SOUTH WARD

AREA J

Centre of canal

District of Newbury

Newbury

continued from map 1

Remaining boundary of Proposed New ward coincident with existing boundary

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map

Proposed New Ward boundary
Existing boundary retained
Existing boundary no longer required

0   kilometres

0   kilometres

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Map 5

Centre of road

THE MOORS

THATCHAM SOUTH WARD

ORDNANCE DEPOT

AREA K

Edge of railway

PROPOSED THATCHAM EAST WARD

Centre of canal

Proposed New Ward boundary

Existing boundary retained

0   metres   250

Base map reproduced from the
Ordnance Survey Map

Produced by DOE/DDP Services
© Crown copyright 1994

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

APPENDIX D

RECOMMENDED PARISHING ARRANGEMENTS

This appendix details the information contained in the Commission's draft recommendations report and a summary of the evidence received during the consultation period in relation to the parishing proposal for Newbury Town.

THE CREATION OF A PARISH FOR THE NEWBURY TOWN AREA

During the initial stage of the review, the Commission received a proposal for the creation of a town council for the Newbury town area of Newbury district. In view of the level of local support expressed for this proposal at the first stage of the review, the Commission considered that it should consult on the creation of a parish for this area. The level of support at this stage of the review included:

(i) A Newbury District Council questionnaire showing very strong local support. This questionnaire was circulated to every household in the district on the council tax register and the response rate was approximately 25 per cent. To the question: 'In our submission we intend to recommend the establishment of a town council for Newbury (do you support or oppose?)', 89 per cent of the respondents in the Newbury town responded in favour.

(ii) A MORI Survey on community identity showed that 58 per cent of residents in Berkshire showed a strong attachment to their town and 49 per cent had an affinity to their district. Overall, throughout the county, 62 per cent of residents are in favour of a neighbourhood/parish council, rising to 76 per cent within Newbury District.

(iii) Newbury District Council also advocated the creation of a town council for the area of Newbury town 'in view of the strong local support'.

Following the Commission's draft recommendations, Newbury District Council sent out a further questionnaire to residents in all 11,760 residential properties in the Town. Some 2,200 forms were returned (an 18.8 per cent response) with replies from 3,618 individuals. This showed that 89.9 per cent of respondents were in favour of the creation of a town council.

The Commission therefore recommends that a parish should be created for the Charter Trustee area of Newbury. Its boundaries should be coterminous with the present district ward boundary.

Although the Commission has no formal powers to recommend the establishment of a new parish or town council for an area that it has recommended be parished, it seems to the Commission that, if the Secretary of State were to accept its view about parishing, the warding arrangements could be based on the district council's proposed scheme of four

electoral wards, each returning six members. This would provide for a council size of 24 members.

Figure D1

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PARISH OF NEWBURY TOWN

Electoral ward	Electorate	Councillors
Falkland	5,929	6
Northcroft	5,152	6
St. John's	5,739	6
Turnpike	5,185	6
Total	22,005	24

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND