

Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council

Electoral review

October 2013

Translations and other formats

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Summary

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

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in July 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
24 July 2012	Consultation on council size
23 October 2012	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
15 January 2013	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
16 April 2013	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
9 July 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed a council size of 39 members, comprising a pattern of 13 three-member wards. The recommendations were based on a combination of the Council's and Conservative Group's schemes, amended to reflect our statutory criteria. Our draft recommendations for Three Rivers District Council sought to reflect the evidence of community identities received while ensuring good electoral equality and providing for effective and convenient local government. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Submissions received

During the consultation on our draft recommendations, the Commission received 312 submissions, including submissions from the Council, Conservative Group and Labour Group. We also received 12 submissions from local councillors, four from parish councils, eight from local organisations and 285 from members of the public. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

Three Rivers District Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in

2013. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 3.4% over this period. This represents a moderate level of growth, mostly spread across the district with one large-scale development in the Leavesden area. We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our final recommendations.

General analysis

Throughout the review process, the primary consideration has been to achieve good electoral equality, while seeking to reflect community identities and securing effective and convenient local government. Having considered the submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our final recommendations take account of submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations. As a result, we have proposed amendments to ward boundaries in Abbots Langley and Rickmansworth.

Our final recommendations for Three Rivers are that the Council should have 39 members, with 13 three-member wards. One of the wards would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2018.

What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament and will be implemented subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements which will come into force at the next elections for Three Rivers District Council, in 2014.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

You can also view our final recommendations for Three Rivers District Council on our interactive maps at consultation.lgbce.org.uk

1 Introduction

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

2 The submissions received from the Council and the Conservative Group during the initial stage of consultation of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council*, which were published on 16 April 2013. We then undertook a further period of consultation which ended on 8 July 2013.

What is an electoral review?

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

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

Why are we conducting a review in Three Rivers?

5 We decided to conduct this review because a formal request was made by Three Rivers District Council for an electoral review of Three Rivers.

How will the recommendations affect you?

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

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

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and final recommendations

8 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Three Rivers.

9 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009² with the need to:

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

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

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

12 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Three Rivers District Council or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Submissions received

13 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited Three Rivers District Council (‘the Council’) and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 54 submissions during the consultation on warding patterns, including district-wide schemes from the Council, the Conservative Group and Councillor Sansom (Rickmansworth Town ward). All of the submissions may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

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

Electorate figures

14 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 3.4% to 2018. The forecasts provided by the Council took into account planned developments across the borough, as well as population forecasts made by the Office for National Statistics. Having considered the information provided by the Council, we are content that the Council's projected figures remain the best available at the present time. They therefore form the basis for our final recommendations.

Council size

15 Three Rivers District Council currently has 48 councillors elected from 20 district wards. During the preliminary stage of the review, we met with group leaders and Full Council.

16 Following initial discussions with group leaders, we received submissions on council size from the Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group.

17 The Council argued that a reduction to a council size of 39 would not adversely affect the governance of the authority. The Council had recently agreed to implement a new committee structure and this could be accommodated under a council size of 39. The Council also argued that a reduction was necessary as councillors were creating work for themselves. However, they argued that a reduction beyond 39 would place too onerous a burden on councillors in respect of their community representational role.

18 The Conservative Group argued that a council size of 30 could still be accommodated in the revised committee structure. In terms of the representative role of councillors, they posited that parish councils and community organisations could expand to pick up the extra workload that would be generated by fewer councillors. However, no evidence regarding the capacity of parish councils to do this was provided.

19 The Labour Group echoed the Council's submission; however, they argued that with a council size of 42, a single-member Sarratt ward could be accommodated without compromising electoral equality.

20 Having considered the evidence received, we were of the view that the Council's proposal for 39 members better enabled councillors to carry out their representational duties, without leaving council governance over-encumbered with members. We therefore decided to consult publicly on this council size. This consultation ended on 3 September 2012.

21 During the consultation on council size we received 62 submissions, of which four were from parish councils, five were from local organisations, one was from a political party, three were from district councillors, and the remaining 49 were from members of the public. Of the submissions, 36 supported a council size of 39, 16

supported a council size of 30, and the remainder either did not specify a council size or supported an alternative number.

22 Submissions supporting a council size of 39 expressed concern that a smaller number would damage the relationship between councillors and electors, leading to less effective local representation. Some respondents also argued that a lower council size would lead to a less diverse selection of representatives. Submissions supporting a council size of 30 argued that this smaller council size could allow the extra workload to be picked up by parish councils and officers. However, no parish councils supported a council size of 30.

23 We noted that the majority of representations supported a council size of 39, and echoed the Council's argument. We had concerns that the submissions supporting a council size of 30 were based on an assumption that parish councils would provide the local representation that councillors would no longer have time to undertake. We were not persuaded that this assumption was borne out in the evidence received, particularly those representations received from parish councils who did not support a council size of 30.

24 We were therefore minded to adopt a council size of 39 elected members as the basis of this electoral review. Consultation on warding arrangements began on 23 October 2012 and ended on 14 January 2013.

Electoral fairness

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

26 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (68,222 in 2012 and 70,574 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 39 under our final recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 1,749 in 2012 and 1,810 by 2018.

27 Under our final recommendations, one of our proposed wards will have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral equality for Three Rivers.

General analysis

28 During the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received 312 submissions.

29 In Watford Rural, we received submissions objecting to our proposal to create three three-member wards that placed parts of South Oxhey with Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park.

30 In Abbots Langley, we received submissions objecting to our proposed Bedmond and Langleybury wards, specifically to the ward boundary running through the centre of Abbots Langley village.

31 In Chorleywood, we received submissions objecting to our proposed boundary between Chorleywood North and South, and suggesting alternative boundaries.

32 In Croxley Green, we received submissions suggesting alternative names for our proposed Croxleyhall Wood ward.

33 Our final recommendations adopt the Council's scheme in Abbots Langley parish. In Rickmansworth, we are amending the boundary between Rickmansworth Town and Moor Park & Eastbury. We have also made some minor changes to the boundary between Rickmansworth Town and Penn & Mill End. In Croxley Green, we are renaming our proposed Croxleyhall Wood ward to Dickinsons, to better reflect community identity.

34 Our final recommendations would result in 13 three-member wards. We consider our proposals provide for good levels of electoral equality while reflecting our understanding of community identities and interests in Three Rivers.

35 Details of the final recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 21–22 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Electoral Arrangements

36 This section of the report details the proposals we have received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of Three Rivers. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Abbots Langley (page 8–9)
- Watford Rural (page 10–13)
- Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt (page 13–16)
- Croxley Green (page 16)

Abbots Langley

37 Abbots Langley parish covers the north-eastern part of Three Rivers district. It includes the large village of Abbots Langley, the smaller communities of Bedmond, Primrose Hill, Hunton Bridge and Langleybury, and the overspill settlement of Leavesden from Watford Borough.

38 Our draft recommendations for Abbots Langley were for three three-member wards. We adopted the Council's proposed Leavesden ward, and in the rest of the parish used elements of the three warding proposals received which we amended to better reflect our statutory criteria.

39 During our consultation, we received 47 submissions relating to this area. All submissions received objected to our draft recommendations for Abbots Langley.

40 The main focus of objection to our draft recommendations was our proposed Abbots Langley and Langleybury wards. Councillor Sara Bedford (Abbots Langley

ward) argued that our draft recommendations served to divide the village of Abbots Langley arbitrarily. She argued that the village currently has a number of community links, with residents using the same shops, doctors and dentists, village halls and church, as well as a number of community groups. Our draft recommendations, she asserted, would divide people who share these facilities between wards.

41 A number of representations, including that from Abbots Langley Parish Council, highlighted that transport links run north to south across the parish, rather than east to west. As an example of this, the bus that ran between Bedmond and Primrose Hill, along Tom's Lane, was withdrawn due to lack of demand. They argued that this means there is limited interaction between the two communities.

42 Councillor Matthew Bedford (Abbots Langley ward) provided similar evidence for the entirety of Abbots Langley parish. He highlighted which local facilities people use in different parts of the parish, and argued for Abbots Langley and Bedmond to be in a ward together, and Primrose Hill, Hunton Bridge and Langleybury to comprise a separate ward.

43 These respondents argued therefore that Abbots Langley and Bedmond were more natural neighbours, and that Primrose Hill and Langleybury shared a greater sense of community identity with each other. This echoes the original submission made by the Council during the first stage of consultation on warding arrangements. The Council reiterated its original proposals during consultation on our draft recommendations.

44 Originally, we had considered that there was insufficient evidence to justify adopting the Council's scheme for Abbots Langley. Having toured the area, we felt in particular that the proposed boundary between its proposed Abbots Langley & Bedmond and Gade Valley wards, which divided houses on Tom's Lane between wards, was arbitrary. We also had doubts as to whether Primrose Hill and Langleybury shared community identities and interests.

45 However, as a result of the evidence received during consultation, we are persuaded that our draft recommendations would divide the core of Abbots Langley. We therefore explored alternative warding arrangements.

46 We now consider that the evidence supports placing Primrose Hill in a ward with Langleybury and Hunton Bridge. Similarly, we agree that Bedmond has stronger ties with the whole of Abbots Langley village. We note that respondents did not share our concerns that the Council's proposed boundary between Bedmond and Primrose Hill arbitrarily divided houses on Tom's Lane between wards.

47 The evidence we have received during consultation presents a persuasive argument that the Council's scheme for Abbots Langley represents the best balance of our statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to adopt the Council's scheme for Abbots Langley as part of our final recommendations.

48 Our final recommendations in Abbots Langley are for the three-member wards of Abbots Langley & Bedmond, Gade Valley and Leavesden. These wards are forecast to have 3% fewer, 6% fewer and 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Watford Rural

49 Watford Rural parish covers the south-eastern part of Three Rivers district. It comprises the three communities of South Oxhey, Carpenders Park and Oxhey Hall.

50 Our draft recommendations for Watford Rural were for three three-member wards, based on the Conservative Group's scheme. We considered that this scheme provided the best balance between the three statutory criteria.

51 During our consultation, we received 203 submissions relating to our proposals for Watford Rural.

52 We received 107 submissions concerning our proposed Carpenders Park ward, of which 26 were in favour of the new ward and 81 against.

53 Of the respondents supporting our proposed Carpenders Park ward, most focused on the fact it did not divide the community of Carpenders Park, as had been proposed in the Council's original submission. These submissions stressed the strong sense of community within Carpenders Park. One argument made by a local resident was that ensuring the entirety of Carpenders Park was in one ward also made it easier for councillors to represent the community effectively.

54 Submissions also specifically supported our proposal to include part of the existing Ashridge ward in our proposed Carpenders Park ward. One local resident stated that residents of the two areas 'use the same shops and have similar problems'. She also argued that the railway line presented a strong barrier that separated Carpenders Park from Oxhey Hall, rather than Ashridge. This argument was also made by Carpenders Park Residents' Association.

55 The submissions we received that objected to our proposed Carpenders Park ward primarily focused on the inclusion of part of Ashridge. Respondents argued that people living on opposite sides of the London Overground line had different needs and priorities. The Labour Group included photographs demonstrating the differences in residential property stock between Carpenders Park and South Oxhey. It was also argued that our proposed wards would damage community identity. A local resident argued that including a key community facility like the Oxhey Jets' football ground in Carpenders Park ward would sever community ties.

56 Respondents also objected to our proposed Carpenders Park ward because of the difference in properties and property ownership between Carpenders Park and South Oxhey. Several local residents noted that Carpenders Park comprises bungalows and small privately owned properties. In comparison, submissions stated that Ashridge is mainly ex-council and housing association properties. They argued that these differences in housing meant that councillors would be unable to represent both communities.

57 We received 88 submissions opposing our proposed Oxhey Hall & Hayling ward.

58 Respondents argued that Oxhey Hall was a unique community with different needs to South Oxhey. Several submissions cited the conservation area as evidence of unique identity. Local residents also argued that local societies, particularly the

local horticultural society, demonstrated the difference between Oxhey Hall and Hayling, suggesting the two were not compatible.

59 Councillor Bakshi (Northwick ward) argued that the geography of Oxhey Hall and Hayling – essentially that they are separated by playing fields – meant that the two communities did not belong in a ward with each other. She also argued that the difference in housing between the two areas was evidence of different character. She argued that this different character meant that they must be kept in separate wards.

60 The Council, supported by Councillor Scarth (Oxhey Hall ward) proposed alternative warding arrangements for Watford Rural. They proposed first that South Oxhey be represented by a three- and a two-member ward. In Carpenders Park, they proposed that instead of including part of Ashridge in the proposed ward, the areas around Anthony Close and Silk Mill Road in Oxhey Hall be placed with Carpenders Park. To avoid creating a detached ward, the Council suggested that the back gardens of odd-numbered houses on Brookdene Avenue could also be placed in a ward with Carpenders Park. Their final proposal was for a single-member Oxhey Hall ward, containing the core of the Oxhey Hall estate.

61 Watford Rural is made up of three distinct communities. Submissions we have received during consultation have stressed their individual identities. To support these identities, common themes have included different housing stock, different political allegiances and the fact that residents use different local facilities for each community.

62 Our draft recommendations for Watford Rural were balanced between all our statutory criteria. As Three Rivers District Council elects by thirds, we have a presumption in favour of three-member wards. Similarly, our draft recommendations created wards with good electoral equality. By reflecting internal road access within wards, we ensured convenient and effective local government. Finally, where possible, we strived to ensure communities were only divided between wards where no other alternative was possible.

63 We note that the consultation on our draft recommendations has produced strong responses from members of communities that have different socio-economic characteristics. A recurrent argument was that the different housing stock in Carpenders Park, South Oxhey and Oxhey Hall marked the communities out as different to the point of requiring they be placed in separate wards.

64 We also received several submissions based on strong concerns that we do not consider material factors. Several submissions argued that different political voting patterns in different communities meant that our warding arrangements would disenfranchise electors. We do not consider what effect our recommendations may have on the political make-up of councils but seek to provide for electoral arrangements that secure the best balance between our statutory criteria.

65 Similarly, we received submissions expressing that our draft recommendations may affect house prices or school catchment areas. We do not consider that there exists a body of evidence relating changes in warding arrangements to changes in house prices. Similarly, although schools may provide a focal point for communities, school catchment areas are set by local authorities by their own criteria and we do not consider this relevant in determining new warding arrangements.

66 Several submissions argued that creating wards representing electors of different socio-economic groups would make it impossible for councillors to represent both groups. However, we do not consider this to be an issue. We consider that councillors should be able to represent electors with different socio-economic circumstances.

67 We have serious misgivings about the alternative proposals for Watford Rural that came out of consultation. First among them is the proposed single-member Oxhey Hall and three-member Carpenders Park wards. Were we to follow the Council's proposals in this area, it would, in our view, create a number of serious issues.

68 The first issue would be that 59 properties on Brookdene Avenue would be split between wards, with parts of the properties in both Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park wards. We do not consider there is a rationale that justifies splitting these properties between wards. We consider that such a split would not provide for effective and convenient local government in that it would place back gardens in a different ward to the property to which they belong.

69 Secondly, the proposed Carpenders Park ward would itself be a ward without internal connections, which we also consider impedes effective and convenient local government. Under the Council's proposals, access between the Carpenders Park community and the Silk Mill Road area would only be via Oxhey Road and Eastbury Road, both of which are in the neighbouring borough of Watford.

70 A third issue is that we have not received sufficient evidence to suggest that the Silk Mill Road and Anthony Close areas identify specifically with Carpenders Park. Having toured the area, we consider that the only links these areas have within Three Rivers district are with Oxhey Hall.

71 This proposal for Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park would require us to deviate from a uniform pattern of three-member wards. As Three Rivers District Council currently elects by thirds, we are bound by legislation to have a presumption towards creating three-member wards. This does not mean that we may only create three-member wards. However, where we propose to create single- or two-member wards, there must be strong evidence regarding community identity, electoral equality and effective and convenient local government to support it.

72 While the proposed single-member Oxhey Hall ward would provide good levels of electoral equality, the exclusion of the Anthony Close and Silk Mill Road areas mean that a portion of the Oxhey Hall community would be excluded from Oxhey Hall ward. As such, it would not completely reflect the Oxhey Hall community in Three Rivers district.

73 For these reasons, we are not proposing to adopt the Council's proposals for the Oxhey Hall and Carpenders Park area.

74 As detailed in paragraphs 67–71, we do not consider it feasible to group Carpenders Park with any small sections of the Oxhey Hall community. We still consider that the only feasible warding arrangement that reflects our statutory criteria for the Carpenders Park area is with the section of South Oxhey immediately over the railway line, linked by Little Oxhey Lane.

75 We accept that the majority of respondents were not in favour of including any of South Oxhey in a ward with Carpenders Park. However, we have concluded that there is no acceptable alternative that would reflect our statutory criteria. In particular, a three-member ward containing Carpenders Park alone would have 23% fewer electors per councillor than the district average – we consider this to be an unacceptably high electoral variance. A two-member ward containing the same area would have 16% more electors per councillor than the district average. This would also require either creating a single-member Ashridge ward with 31% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, or including it with South Oxhey, reducing council size to 38 and still having a ward with 16% more electors per councillor than the district average. We consider these to be unacceptable levels of electoral inequality.

76 The proposed alternative warding arrangements for the community of South Oxhey presented a reasonable balance of the statutory criteria. However, in order to implement these warding arrangements, the knock-on effects to the electoral arrangements for the wider area would require creating wards which would not meet our statutory criteria.

77 We therefore do not consider that there are any feasible alternative warding arrangements for Watford Rural parish that reflect our statutory criteria. We accept that our draft recommendations have proved contentious locally. However, each alternative that was suggested provided either for poor electoral equality or incoherent warding arrangements that in our view, mitigated against effective and convenient local government.

78 We are therefore confirming as final our draft recommendations for Watford Rural.

79 Our final recommendations for Watford Rural are for three three-member Carpenders Park, Oxhey Hall & Hayling and South Oxhey wards. These wards are forecast to have a number equal to, 1% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt

80 Our draft recommendations for Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt were for five three-member wards. This was based on the Council's proposals, with some minor amendments to better reflect our statutory criteria.

81 During our consultation, we received 43 submissions relating to this area. Of these, 10 respondents supported our draft recommendations, while the remainder objected to elements of them.

82 We received 27 submissions relating to our proposed Chorleywood wards.

83 Those arguing in favour of our draft recommendations made particular reference to our proposed Chorleywood South & Maple Cross ward. One local resident argued that there is no harm in councillors representing a cross-section of communities.

84 However, those arguing against our proposed Chorleywood South & Maple Cross ward argued that the socio-economic differences between the two communities may lead to a loss of representation for Maple Cross, being dwarfed by the larger Chorleywood community.

85 In respect of our proposed Chorleywood North & Sarratt ward, the Chorleywood Residents' Association also expressed concern that Sarratt is a rural area with a different character to Chorleywood. It argued that residents of Sarratt considered being in a ward with part of Chorleywood would leave them under-represented and again overlooked in favour of the larger Chorleywood community.

86 Local residents also objected to the proposed boundary between Chorleywood North & Sarratt and Chorleywood South & Maple Cross. They argued that our proposal to use the Metropolitan Line as a ward boundary would divide the community in half. They also objected to Chorleywood Common being split between the two Chorleywood wards.

87 Sarratt Parish Council argued for a single-member ward to represent only the parish of Sarratt. It argued that the poor broadband and mobile phone coverage in Sarratt is not a problem in Chorleywood, and thus the two communities have different priorities.

88 Three Rivers' Conservative Group made alternative proposals for the Chorleywood area. They agreed with several local residents that the M25 made for a stronger ward boundary than the Metropolitan Line. They argued that Chorleywood had a distinctive community which meant that it was 'deserving of a single ward encompassing as great an area as possible'.

89 The Conservative Group proposed a three-member Chorleywood ward, taking in all of Chorleywood west of the M25 plus the settlement of Heronsgate; a two-member Chorleywood East & Sarratt ward, taking in the remainder of Chorleywood and Sarratt; and a single-member Maple Cross ward, comprising Maple Cross and West Hyde. The Conservative Group argued that this would 'overcome the strong feeling in Chorleywood that it has been geographically twinned with an inappropriate partner in Maple Cross'.

90 We consider that there is evidence supporting the argument that Chorleywood is a strong community with the Metropolitan Line at its centre. The High Street, just to the south of the railway line, acts as a focal point for the village. Chorleywood itself comprises a larger area than that which would be covered by the Conservative Group's proposed Chorleywood ward, also encompassing areas east of the M25 and north of the Metropolitan Line. Under a council size of 39, Chorleywood as a whole would be allocated four councillors.

91 Our draft recommendations proposed to include Maple Cross in a ward with Chorleywood South as it facilitated a stronger pattern of wards across the district. Evidence received during consultation has supported our view that Maple Cross does not have close ties with anywhere else in Three Rivers. However, the arguments made by the Conservative Group for a single-member Maple Cross ward were more focused on facilitating a three-member Chorleywood ward. There was limited evidence provided that a single-member Maple Cross ward would better meet our statutory criteria

92 We explored the possibility of including Maple Cross with our proposed Penn & Mill End ward. However, this would require extensive re-warding across Rickmansworth, and for wards to be drawn along boundaries which have not been proposed during consultation. We are therefore not persuaded we have sufficient evidence to recommend a significantly different warding pattern in Rickmansworth in order to facilitate alternative proposals in Chorleywood.

93 In the case of Sarratt, the evidence received also does not persuade us that a single-member ward with 11% fewer electors per councillor would better meet our statutory criteria. Were Sarratt to be separated from Chorleywood for the purposes of warding arrangements it would require creating Chorleywood wards with unacceptably high electoral variances. We do not consider that the Conservative Group's proposed Chorleywood East & Sarratt ward represents a coherent community or that the evidence justifies a departure from a uniform pattern of three-member wards.

94 We consider that our draft recommendations for Chorleywood, Maple Cross and Sarratt represent the best available warding patterns given the need to secure good electoral equality. Due to the size of Chorleywood town, it would require being divided between two three-member wards. We consider that placing Chorleywood North with Sarratt and Chorleywood South with Maple Cross still provides the best balance of our statutory criteria.

95 We received 15 submissions relating to our proposed Rickmansworth, Penn & Mill End and Moor Park & Eastbury wards.

96 The main focus of consultation responses related to our proposed ward boundary between Rickmansworth Town and Moor Park & Eastbury. We received submissions from residents in both Batchworth Heath and Moor Lane, stating that they looked much more to Rickmansworth for facilities than Moor Park and Eastbury. Residents on Moor Lane also argued that the junction between Moor Lane and the Moor Park private estate is blocked by bollards, meaning there is no direct access between the two roads. We received a submission from the Batchworth Heath Residents' Association arguing that they had no shared interests with Moor Park & Eastbury, and including them in the same ward would endanger the preservation of the heath.

97 Having toured the area, we noted that, as suggested in several submissions, access from Moor Lane to Moor Park is blocked off by bollards, requiring access either through Batchworth Heath or through Watford.

98 To include both the Moor Lane and Batchworth Heath areas in Rickmansworth Town would leave Rickmansworth Town with 13% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, and Moor Park & Eastbury with 13% fewer. We do not consider that there is sufficient community evidence to justify such a high level of electoral inequality.

99 We consider that the lack of access between Moor Lane and Moor Park ensures that, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, it should be placed in Rickmansworth Town ward.

100 Elsewhere in Rickmansworth, we received a submission from a local resident arguing for minor amendments between our proposed Rickmansworth Town and

Penn & Mill End wards. The resident argued that all properties facing onto Berry Lane in the north of the proposed wards, and all properties facing onto Field Way in the south, should be in the proposed Penn & Mill End ward. We agree that this would provide a more coherent warding pattern that would use more clearly defined boundaries, and have incorporated this into our final recommendations.

101 We also received two submissions proposing alternative ward names for Penn & Mill End ward. One local resident suggested 'Mill End & Berry Lane' as an alternative, another suggested 'Rickmansworth West & Berry Lane'. Both submissions argued that Penn was a meaningless name locally. However, we note that our proposed Penn & Mill End ward contains both William Penn Leisure Centre and Penn Road. Furthermore, that there was no consensus on an alternative ward name suggests that there is no strong evidence to justify an alternative name. Therefore, we confirm the ward name Penn & Mill End as part of our final recommendations.

102 Our final recommendations for Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Sarratt are for the five three-member wards of Chorleywood North & Sarratt, Chorleywood South & Maple Cross, Moor Park & Eastbury, Penn & Mill End, and Rickmansworth Town. These wards would have 9% more, 11% more, 7% fewer, 3% fewer and 7% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018 respectively.

Croxley Green

103 Our draft recommendations for Croxley Green were for two three-member wards based on the Council's scheme, with amended ward names.

104 During our consultation, we received four submissions specifically relating to Croxley Green, as well as comments made by the Council in its submission. All supported our proposed ward boundaries, but suggested alternative ward names.

105 One respondent suggested the wards should be named Croxley Green North and South, as these are more accurate representations of the area. The other four respondents argued that our proposed Croxleyhall Wood ward should be renamed Dickinson or Dickinsons.

106 The evidence for the renaming of Croxleyhall Wood, most notably from Croxley Green Parish Council cited the historical links the area had with the Dickinson Paper Mill. It was argued that much of the housing in the area was built for the former mill's workers, and the land adjacent to the village green was used by those workers for recreation. It was also stated that Croxleyhall Wood only has relevance to those few houses in the south of the proposed ward living near the wood.

107 On the basis of the evidence received, we consider that Dickinsons is a more appropriate ward name than Croxleyhall Wood. Aside from that, we are confirming as final our draft recommendations for Croxley Green.

108 Our final recommendations for Croxley Green are for the three-member wards of Dickinsons and Durrants. These wards are forecast to have 3% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

Conclusions

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

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2012	2018
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,749	1,810
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

Three Rivers District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 13 wards as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map(s) accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

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

111 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Three Rivers District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

112 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Abbots Langley, Chorleywood, Croxley Green and Watford Rural.

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

Final recommendation

Abbots Langley Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Abbots Langley & Bedmond (returning five members), Abbots Langley West (returning two members), Hunton Bridge & Langleybury (returning one member), Leavesden (returning five members) and Primrose Hill (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

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

Final recommendations

Chorleywood Parish Council should return 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Chorleywood Cedars (returning two members), Chorleywood North (returning seven members), Chorleywood Quickwood (returning one member) and Chorleywood South (returning seven members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

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

Final recommendations

Croxley Green Parish Council should return 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Dickinsons (returning eight members) and Durrants (returning eight members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

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

Final recommendations

Watford Rural Parish Council should return 14 parish councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Ashridge (returning one member), Carpenders Park (returning four members), Hayling (returning two members), Oxhey Hall (returning two members) and South Oxhey (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

117 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Three Rivers District Council. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements which will come into force at the next elections for Three Rivers District Council in 2014.

Equalities

118 This report has been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis 108 is not required.

4 Mapping

Final recommendations for Three Rivers

119 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Three Rivers District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Three Rivers District Council.

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

Appendix A

Table A1: Final recommendations for Three Rivers

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Abbots Langley & Bedmond	3	5,245	1,748	0%	5,257	1,752	-3%
2	Carpenders Park	3	5,397	1,799	3%	5,455	1,818	0%
3	Chorleywood North & Sarratt	3	5,834	1,945	11%	5,929	1,976	9%
4	Chorleywood South & Maple Cross	3	5,942	1,981	13%	6,032	2,011	11%
5	Croxleyhall Wood	3	5,138	1,713	-2%	5,267	1,756	-3%
6	Durrants	3	4,948	1,649	-6%	5,218	1,739	-4%
7	Gade Valley	3	4,965	1,655	-5%	5,123	1,708	-6%
8	Leavesden	3	4,851	1,617	-8%	5,626	1,875	4%
9	Moor Park & Eastbury	3	4,968	1,656	-5%	5,024	1,675	-7%
10	Oxhey Hall & Hayling	3	5,308	1,769	1%	5,385	1,795	-1%

Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Three Rivers

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Penn & Mill End	3	5,226	1,742	0%	5,255	1,752	-3%
12	Rickmansworth Town	3	5,408	1,803	3%	5,782	1,927	7%
13	South Oxhey	3	4,992	1,664	-5%	5,222	1,741	-4%
	Totals	39	68,222	-	-	70,574	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,749	-	-	1,810	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Three Rivers District Council.

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

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

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

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

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

