

Draft Recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire

December 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw on 18 May 1999.

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

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

- **in 14 of the 27 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and seven wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 102-103) are that:

- **Bassetlaw District Council should have 48 councillors, two less than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, instead of 27 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 24 of the proposed 25 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all but one ward expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for 10 weeks from 14 December 1999. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 21 February 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Beckingham	1	Beckingham ward (part – the parishes of Beckingham, Saundby and Walkeringham)	Map 2
2	Blyth	1	Blyth ward; Ranskill ward (part – the parish of Scrooby)	Map 2
3	Carlton	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
4	Clayworth	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
5	East Markham	1	East Markham ward (part – the parishes of East Markham, Eaton, Gamston, West Drayton and West Markham); Elkesley ward (part – the parishes of Bevercotes, Bothamshall and Haughton)	Map 2
6	East Retford East	3	East Retford East ward (part); East Retford North ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
7	East Retford North	3	East Retford North ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
8	East Retford South	2	East Retford West ward (part); East Retford East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
9	East Retford West	2	East Retford West (part); East Retford North (part); East Retford East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10	Everton	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
11	Harworth	3	Harworth East ward; Harworth West ward	Map 2
12	Langold	1	Hodsock ward	Map 2
13	Misterton	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
14	Rampton	1	East Markham ward (part – the parish of Askham); Rampton ward; Sturton ward (part – the parish of South Leverton)	Map 2
15	Ranskill	1	Ranskill ward (part – the parishes of Ranskill and Torworth); Sutton ward (part – the parish of Mattersey)	Map 2
16	Sturton	1	Beckingham ward (part – the parishes of Bole and West Burton); Sturton ward (part – the parishes of North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe, North Wheatley, South Wheatley and Sturton le Steeple)	Map 2
17	Sutton	1	Sutton ward (part – the parishes of Barnby Moor, Lound and Sutton); Elkesley ward (part – the parish of Babworth)	Map 2
18	Tuxford & Trent	2	Trent ward; Tuxford ward	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
19	Welbeck	1	Welbeck ward; Elkesley ward (part – the parish of Elkesley)	Map 2
20	Worksop East	3	Worksop East ward; Worksop South East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Worksop North	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
22	Worksop North East	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
23	Worksop North West	3	Worksop North West ward; Worksop South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
24	Worksop South	3	Worksop South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
25	Worksop South East	3	Worksop South East ward (part); Worksop South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished except for the towns of Worksop and East Retford.

2 Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Bassetlaw

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Beckingham	1	1,760	1,760	3	1,915	1,915	6
2	Blyth	1	1,823	1,823	7	1,887	1,887	5
3	Carlton	3	4,632	1,544	-9	4,765	1,588	-12
4	Clayworth	1	1,604	1,604	-6	1,713	1,713	-5
5	East Markham	1	1,649	1,649	-3	1,737	1,737	-4
6	East Retford East	3	5,384	1,795	5	5,441	1,814	0
7	East Retford North	3	4,635	1,545	-9	5,365	1,788	-1
8	East Retford South	2	3,222	1,611	-6	3,547	1,774	-2
9	East Retford West	2	3,254	1,627	-5	3,421	1,711	-5
10	Everton	1	1,701	1,701	0	1,811	1,811	0
11	Harworth	3	5,612	1,871	10	5,883	1,961	9
12	Langold	1	1,927	1,927	13	1,932	1,932	7
13	Misterton	1	1,818	1,818	7	1,985	1,985	10
14	Rampton	1	1,788	1,788	5	1,874	1,874	4
15	Ranskill	1	1,721	1,721	1	1,888	1,888	5
16	Sturton	1	1,738	1,738	2	1,814	1,814	0
17	Sutton	1	1,628	1,628	-5	1,702	1,702	-6
18	Tuxford & Trent	2	3,169	1,585	-7	3,394	1,697	-6
19	Welbeck	1	1,752	1,752	3	1,845	1,845	2
20	Worksop East	3	5,325	1,775	4	5,341	1,780	-1
21	Worksop North	3	4,776	1,592	-7	5,560	1,853	3
22	Worksop North East	3	5,384	1,795	5	5,426	1,809	0

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Worksop North West	3	5,011	1,670	-2	5,472	1,824	1
24 Worksop South	3	5,037	1,679	-2	5,329	1,776	-2
25 Worksop South East	3	5,524	1,841	8	5,608	1,869	4
Totals	48	81,874	–	–	86,655	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,706	–	–	1,805	–

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the eight districts in Nottinghamshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Bassetlaw. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report No. 135). The electoral arrangements of Nottinghamshire County Council were last reviewed in 1980 (Report No. 383). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the district.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 Second, the broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 Third, we are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified; in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the Nottinghamshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

12 Stage One began on 18 May 1999, when we wrote to Bassetlaw District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Nottinghamshire Local Councils Association, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the

local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 20 September 1999.

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

14 Stage Three began on 14 December 1999 and will end on 21 February 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Bassetlaw is the most northerly in Nottinghamshire, bordering Lincolnshire to the east and north-east, South Yorkshire to the north and north-west and Derbyshire to the west. It is predominantly rural in nature, with the A1 trunk road bisecting the district roughly north-west to south-east, running between the two main centres of population – Worksop and East Retford. The new Robin Hood railway line connects Worksop to Nottingham via Mansfield, and East Retford has a station stop on the GNER East Coast mainline railway.

17 With a population of some 105,700, Bassetlaw comprises 10 per cent of Nottinghamshire's total population, although it covers around 30 per cent of the county's area (some 63,738 hectares). The district contains 68 parishes, but the towns of Worksop and Retford are unparished. Worksop comprises 38 per cent of the district's total electorate. Of the remainder, East Retford comprises 20 per cent, while the rest of the electorate is dispersed across the more rural areas of the district and in small former and existing colliery settlements.

18 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 The electorate of the district is 81,874 (February 1999). The Council presently has 50 members who are elected from 27 wards, nine of which are relatively urban, in Worksop and East Retford, and the remainder predominantly rural. Ten of the wards are each represented by three councillors, three are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Bassetlaw district, with around 23 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increase has been in Worksop North East ward, with approximately 63 per cent more electors than 20 years ago.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,637 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,733 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, of which in seven wards vary by more than 20 per cent and in three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Hodssock ward where the councillor represents 41 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Bassetlaw

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Beckingham	1	1,886	1,886	15	2,041	2,041	18
2	Blyth	1	1,557	1,557	-5	1,609	1,609	-7
3	Carlton	3	4,632	1,544	-6	4,765	1,588	-8
4	Clayworth	1	1,604	1,604	-2	1,713	1,713	-1
5	East Markham	1	1,605	1,605	-2	1,696	1,696	-2
6	East Retford East	3	5,756	1,919	17	5,900	1,967	13
7	East Retford North	3	5,343	1,781	9	6,073	2,024	17
8	East Retford West	3	5,396	1,799	10	5,801	1,934	12
9	Elkesley	1	1,290	1,290	-21	1,371	1,371	-21
10	Everton	1	1,701	1,701	4	1,811	1,811	4
11	Harworth East	2	2,758	1,379	-16	2,879	1,440	-17
12	Harworth West	2	2,854	1,427	-13	3,004	1,502	-13
13	Hodsock	2	1,927	964	-41	1,932	966	-44
14	Misterton	1	1,818	1,818	11	1,985	1,985	15
15	Rampton	1	1,261	1,261	-23	1,316	1,316	-24
16	Ranskill	1	1,463	1,463	-11	1,583	1,583	-9
17	Sturton	1	1,981	1,981	21	2,079	2,079	20
18	Sutton	1	1,700	1,700	4	1,826	1,826	5
19	Trent	1	1,268	1,268	-23	1,338	1,338	-23
20	Tuxford	1	1,901	1,901	16	2,056	2,056	19
21	Welbeck	1	1,116	1,116	-32	1,141	1,141	-34
22	Worksop East	3	4,694	1,565	-4	4,708	1,569	-9
23	Worksop North	3	4,776	1,592	-3	5,560	1,853	7
24	Worksop North East	3	5,384	1,795	10	5,426	1,809	4
25	Worksop North West	3	4,664	1,555	-5	5,125	1,708	-1

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26	Worksop South	3	6,583	2,194	34	6,875	2,292	32
27	Worksop South East	3	4,956	1,652	1	5,042	1,681	-3
	Totals	50	81,874	-	-	86,655	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,637	-	-	1,733	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Hodsock ward were relatively over-represented by 41 per cent, while electors in Worksop South ward were relatively under-represented by 34 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw District Council and its constituent parish councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission by appointment.

Bassetlaw District Council

24 The District Council submitted a district-wide scheme which would reduce overall council size by three, from 50 to 47 members. In the town of Worksop the Council proposed modifying the boundaries of five of the six existing three-member wards, retaining 18 councillors for the town overall. In East Retford it proposed retaining the three existing three-member wards unchanged. In the remaining rural area the Council proposed modifying the boundaries of all but three of the present wards and reducing the number of councillors representing the rural area overall by three to 20.

25 Under the Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in all but two of its proposed 24 wards would vary by 10 per cent or less from the district average initially, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix A.

The Conservative Group on the Council

26 The Conservative Group on the Council (the Conservatives) stated that it was not in favour of achieving electoral equality between urban and rural areas in such a district as Bassetlaw, arguing that "the workloads imposed on urban and rural councillors by the requirement that they should represent the same number of electors is very different and in our view it is unreasonable". The Conservative Group commented on the Council's proposed scheme, opposing the Council's proposed Welbeck and Tuxford & Trent wards, and suggesting a boundary modification between East Retford East and East Retford West wards. It did not support the Council's proposal to include part of Worksop in the proposed Carlton ward, as it opposed combining urban and rural areas within the same ward.

Parish Councils

27 We received representations from four parish councils. Nether Langwith Parish Council expressed its preference to remain as part of a rural ward and did not want to be combined with a Worksop ward. Headon-cum-Upton, Grove & Stokeham Parish Council stated that the villages currently comprising the existing Rampton ward "are physically close together and have a

common identity”. It suggested that if the ward was to be enlarged then it should be by the addition of Laneham or South Leverton parish, “both of which are similar villages to ours”.

28 Styrrup with Oldcotes Parish Council supported the status quo, stating that it still had “sufficient allegiance to Blyth”. Walkeringham Parish Council commented on its present parish council electoral arrangements, stating that it did not want to reduce the number of councillors representing the parish.

Other Representations

29 We received one further representation from a local resident. He proposed that the Bracebridge area of Worksop should be transferred into the proposed Worksop East ward, as this area “has a greater affinity to Kilton” than to the rest of Worksop South East ward, and suggested that the modified boundary could follow the Chesterfield Canal or Retford Road. He was of the view that the review “should not just fall to be settled on numbers but on communities and coterminous areas”.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

33 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, but we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

34 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 6 per cent from 81,874 to 86,655 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Worksop North ward, although a significant amount is also expected in East Retford North ward. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council Size

36 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

37 Bassetlaw District Council presently has 50 members. The District Council proposed a council of 47 members, proposing that the number of councillors representing the rural area, which is currently over-represented overall, be reduced by three. It proposed that the towns of Worksop and East Retford should be represented by the same number of councillors as at present; 18 and nine councillors respectively.

38 We considered the Council's submission and noted that while its proposed scheme had merit and would achieve reasonable electoral equality, its proposed allocation of councillors would not provide for a fair balance of representation between the three areas in the district: Worksop, East Retford and the remaining rural area.

39 Under the Council's proposed 47-member scheme, the rural area would be entitled to 19.7 councillors initially (19.6 by 2004), Worksop would be entitled to 17.8 councillors (17.75 by 2004) and East Retford would be entitled to 9.47 councillors, increasing to 9.64 by 2004. However, the Council proposed that East Retford should be represented by only 9 councillors, which would mean that it would be notably under-represented by 2004. In view of this imbalance of representation between the three areas in the district, and given that by 2004 East Retford would be entitled to additional representation, we considered alternative council sizes. We concluded that if an additional councillor were allocated to East Retford, providing for an overall council size of 48 members (a reduction of only two from the existing council size), a greater balance of representation across the district would be achieved.

40 Under a 48-member scheme the rural area would be entitled to almost exactly 20 councillors both initially and by 2004, Worksop would be entitled to almost exactly 18 councillors both initially and by 2004, and East Retford would be entitled to 9.67 councillors initially, although by 2004 it would be entitled to just under 10 councillors. Therefore, in view of the improvement to the balance of representation and the fact that each area in the district would be represented by the appropriate number of councillors, and having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

Electoral Arrangements

41 In view of the degree of consensus behind elements of the Council's proposals and given that our proposed increase to the proposed council size would not have too great an impact on the level of electoral equality that would be secured under its proposed wards, particularly in the rural area and Worksop, we have concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme. Even under a council size of 48 members we consider that this scheme would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, in order to improve electoral equality further, while having regard to

local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in three areas. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) The rural area
 - Tuxford, Trent, Rampton and Sturton wards
 - Beckingham, Clayworth, Misterton and Everton wards
 - Harworth East, Harworth West, Blyth, Ranskill and Sutton wards
 - Hodsock and Carlton wards
 - Elkesley, Welbeck and East Markham wards
- (b) Worksop (six wards)
- (c) East Retford (three wards)

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

The rural area

Tuxford, Trent, Rampton and Sturton wards

43 These four single-member wards are situated in the south-eastern and eastern parts of the district. Tuxford ward comprises solely the parish of that name, while Trent ward comprises the parishes of Darlton, Dunham on Trent, East Drayton, Fledborough, Laneham, Marnham, Normanton on Trent and Ragnall. Rampton ward comprises the parishes of Cottam, Grove, Headon cum Upton, Rampton, Stokeham and Treswell. Sturton ward comprises the parishes of North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe, North Wheatley, South Leverton, South Wheatley and Sturton le Steeple.

44 The wards of Tuxford and Sturton are both currently under-represented, by 16 per cent and 21 per cent respectively (19 per cent and 20 per cent by 2004), while the wards of Trent and Rampton are both over-represented by 23 per cent at present (23 per cent and 24 per cent respectively by 2004).

45 In its Stage One submission the Council stated that it had considered retaining the existing Tuxford ward unchanged. However, it contended that the consequent effects of this would produce “unsatisfactory” arrangements and would not facilitate a good scheme overall. It therefore proposed combining the two existing single-member wards of Tuxford and Trent to create a new two-member Tuxford & Trent ward. Under a 47-member council size the number of electors per councillor in the new ward would vary below the district average by 9 per cent initially (8 per cent by 2004).

46 The Council also proposed a revised Rampton ward (comprising the existing Rampton ward and the parish of South Leverton from the existing Sturton ward) and a revised Sturton ward (comprising the remainder of the existing Sturton ward and the parishes of Bole and West Burton from the current Beckingham ward). The number of electors per councillor in the revised Rampton and Sturton wards, under a 47-member council size, would be 6 per cent below and equal to the district average initially (7 per cent below and 2 per cent below by 2004).

47 The Conservatives did not support the Council's proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward, stating that they would prefer for all the rural wards to be single-member. They suggested that the two existing wards of Tuxford and Trent could be retained unchanged, which, under a council size of 47 members, would provide for electoral variances of 9 per cent above and 27 per cent below the district average respectively (11 per cent above and 27 per cent below by 2004).

48 Headon-cum-Upton, Grove & Stokeham Parish Council stated that the villages currently comprising the existing Rampton ward "are physically close together and have a common identity". It suggested that if the ward were to be enlarged then it should be by the addition of Laneham or South Leverton parish, "both of which are similar villages to ours".

49 We considered carefully all the representations submitted to us during Stage One, and noted that under our proposed 48-member council size the Council's proposed Tuxford & Trent ward would vary by 7 per cent initially (6 per cent by 2004). However, we also noted the concerns raised by the Conservatives over the combination of two existing single-member wards into a revised two-member ward in the rural area. We therefore considered the Conservatives' alternative suggestion that the two wards be retained as single-member wards, but noted that under a 48-member council size the existing Tuxford ward would be under-represented by 11 per cent initially (14 per cent by 2004) while the existing Trent ward would be over-represented by 26 per cent both initially and in 2004. We consider these inequalities to be unacceptable.

50 In order to address the over-representation in Trent ward it is therefore necessary to include more electors from adjoining areas. In view of Headon-cum-Upton, Grove & Stokeham Parish Council's comments in favour of retaining the existing Rampton ward as a single entity, we have been persuaded that the Council's proposal to combine the existing Tuxford ward with Trent ward would be the most appropriate proposal for this area. The constraints of the district boundary to the south and east of the two wards limit any alternative options; therefore we propose adopting the Council's proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward as part of our draft recommendations, as shown on Map 2.

51 As stated earlier, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council's Stage One proposals. We noted that Headon-cum-Upton, Grove & Stokeham Parish Council supported the inclusion of South Leverton parish in a revised Rampton ward, which was also proposed by the Council. In its submission, the Council had considered the separation of South Leverton and North Leverton parishes. However, it stated that it was felt that although the two parishes were "geographically close and with some cross-community activities, there was no great similarity or affinity between the two settlements", and that, "on balance, there seemed no overwhelming reason for keeping the two parishes in the same ward".

52 We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposed Rampton ward as part of our draft recommendations in this area. However, we also propose including the parish of Askham (currently in East Markham ward) in the revised ward in order to improve further electoral equality. Under our 48-member council size our revised Rampton ward would vary from the district average by 5 per cent initially (4 per cent by 2004).

53 We also propose adopting the Council's revised Sturton ward, as described earlier, as part of our draft recommendations. However, under our 48-member council size, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average initially (equal to the average by 2004). We would welcome views on all our proposals in this part of the district, as shown on Map 2, during Stage Three.

Beckingham, Clayworth, Misterton and Everton wards

54 The single-member wards of Beckingham and Misterton are situated in the north-eastern part of the district. Beckingham ward comprises the parishes of Beckingham, Bole, Saundby Walkeringham and West Burton. Misterton ward comprises the parishes of Misterton and West Stockwith. The single-member Clayworth ward, situated to the north of East Retford, comprises the parishes of Clarborough, Clayworth, Hayton and Wiseton. The single-member Everton ward is the northernmost ward in the district and comprises the parishes of Everton, Gringley on the Hill, Misson and Scafworth.

55 The wards of Beckingham and Misterton are currently over-represented by 15 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to deteriorate to 18 per cent and 15 per cent respectively by 2004. The number of electors per councillor in Clayworth ward is currently 2 per cent below the district average (1 per cent below by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in Everton ward is 4 per cent above the district average, both initially and in 2004.

56 As a consequence of its proposed Sturton ward, the Council proposed a revised single-member Beckingham ward, comprising the parishes of Beckingham, Saundby and Walkeringham. It further proposed retaining the existing single-member wards of Clayworth, Misterton and Everton unchanged, contending that "in each case their constituent parishes form a cohesive and well-established whole". Under the Council's 47-member council scheme its revised Beckingham ward would vary from the district average by 1 per cent initially (4 per cent by 2004), while the unchanged wards of Clayworth, Misterton and Everton wards would vary by 8 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent initially (7 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent by 2004).

57 We have considered the Council's proposals in this part of the district and have concluded that they would secure an improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can judge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Additionally, under our 48-member council size a reasonable level of electoral equality would be secured. The revised Beckingham ward and unchanged Clayworth and Misterton wards would vary from the district average by 3 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent initially (6 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent by 2004), while the unchanged Everton ward would be almost equal to the district average both initially and by 2004.

58 We acknowledge that electoral equality in the proposed Misterton ward is forecast to be 10 per cent by 2004. However, we have concluded that there is no viable alternative, given that the ward is constrained to the north and east by the district boundary, and as it would also facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the northern and eastern parts of the borough and would also avoid the need to ward any parish. In view of the good electoral equality that would be secured and given that they would also provide for identifiable boundaries, we are proposing to

adopt the Council's proposals for this north-eastern part of the district as our draft recommendations, as shown on Map 2.

Harworth East, Harworth West, Blyth, Ranskill and Sutton wards

59 The two-member wards of Harworth East and Harworth West are situated in the north-western corner of the district. Harworth East ward comprises the East ward of the parish of Harworth Bircotes, while Harworth West ward comprises the West ward of the parish. The three single-member wards of Blyth, Ranskill and Sutton are situated to the south of Harworth and to the north-west of the town East Retford. Blyth ward comprises the parishes of Blyth and Styrrup with Oldcotes; Ranskill ward comprises the parishes of Ranskill, Scrooby and Torworth; and Sutton ward comprises the parishes of Mattersey, Lound, Sutton and Barnby Moor (including the western part of the parish which is detached from the remainder of the parish).

60 Both the wards of Harworth East and Harworth West are currently over-represented by 16 per cent and 13 per cent respectively (17 per cent and 13 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Blyth, Ranskill and Sutton is 5 per cent below, 11 per cent below and 4 per cent above the district average respectively (7 per cent below, 9 per cent below and 5 per cent above by 2004).

61 In its submission, the Council proposed that the existing two-member wards of Harworth East and Harworth West be combined to form a new three-member Harworth ward. It contended that this new ward would comprise the whole of the parish of Harworth Bircotes and unite the settlements of Harworth and Bircotes "to form a joint community". The new ward would vary from the district average by 7 per cent initially (6 per cent by 2004).

62 The Council proposed a revised Blyth ward, comprising the existing Blyth ward together with Scrooby parish from the current Ranskill ward. It also proposed a revised Ranskill ward, comprising the remainder of that ward and Mattersey parish from the current Sutton ward. Under the Council's scheme these wards would vary initially from the district average by 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (both by 2 per cent in 2004). Styrrup with Oldcotes Parish Council was of the view that there was "sufficient allegiance to Blyth" for the two parishes to remain joined in the same district ward and stated that it did not want the parish to be warded.

63 The Council also proposed including Babworth parish (from the existing Elkesley ward) with the remainder of the Sutton ward to create a revised Sutton ward. It stated that it had put forward this configuration to avoid retaining a detached ward in the district. (The western part of Barnby Moor parish would be linked to the eastern part of Barnby Moor parish by the north-western tip of Babworth parish). The revised Sutton ward, under the Council's 47-member scheme, would vary from the district average by 7 per cent initially (8 per cent by 2004).

64 We have considered the proposals put forward by the Council and are persuaded that they would provide for the most appropriate warding arrangements in this part of the district. We agree with the Council's proposal to combine the two-member wards of Harworth East and Harworth West into a three-member ward, as this would reduce the over-representation that currently exists in both wards. Under our 48-member council size, the new Harworth ward would

vary from the district average by 10 per cent initially (9 per cent by 2004). However, we are of the view that this slightly higher electoral variance is acceptable, given that the revised ward would reflect the identities and interests of the local communities and, as it would comprise the whole of the parish of Harworth Bircotes, it would provide for effective and convenient local government. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposed Harworth ward, as shown on Map 2, as part of our draft recommendations.

65 We support the Council's desire to avoid retaining a detached ward in the district, and have concluded that in order for both parts of Barnby Moor parish to be included in the same ward it is necessary to transfer Babworth parish (the north-western corner of which divides Barnby Moor parish) into the revised Sutton ward. We are also persuaded that, as a consequence of this modification, the Council's modifications to the wards of Ranskill and Blyth are appropriate in order to secure reasonable electoral equality across the area as a whole. The Council's proposals would also provide for effective and convenient local government as each of the revised wards would comprise whole parishes.

66 We are therefore proposing to adopt the Council's proposals in this north-western part of the district as part of our draft recommendations. Under our 48-member council size the revised Sutton, Ranskill and Blyth wards would vary from the district average initially by 5 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (6 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent by 2004). We would welcome views on these proposals, as shown on Map 2, during Stage Three.

Hodsock and Carlton wards

67 The two-member Hodsock ward, situated in the western part of the district, comprises the whole of the parish of Hodsock and is currently the most over-represented ward in the district, with an electoral variance of 41 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to deteriorate further to 44 per cent by 2004. The three-member Carlton ward, situated to the north of the town of Worksop, comprises the parishes of Carlton in Lindrick and Wallingwells and is currently over-represented by 6 per cent (forecast to be over-represented by 8 per cent by 2004).

68 During Stage One the Council proposed that the existing Hodsock ward be retained unchanged, but that the ward should be represented by one district councillor, rather than the present two, in order to address the substantial over-representation that currently exists in the ward. It also proposed that the name of the ward be changed to Langold after the main population settlement in the parish. Under its 47-member scheme, this new Langold ward would vary from the district average by 11 per cent initially (5 per cent by 2004).

69 The Council also proposed a revised Carlton ward comprising the parishes of Carlton in Lindrick and Wallingwells together with 455 electors from the existing Worksop North ward. The Council argued that, although it believed Carlton ward to be a "substantial and well-established settlement with a clear identity" and that "every effort should be made to retain Carlton ward as an entity", it was necessary to include some electors from Worksop in the revised Carlton ward in order to secure an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent. If Carlton ward was retained unchanged under the Council's 47-member scheme it would vary by 11 per cent initially (14 per cent by 2004).

70 The Conservatives did not support the Council's proposal to transfer electors from Worksop North ward into Carlton ward as it opposed combining urban and rural areas. However, the Council stated that it had considered alternative options to address this electoral imbalance but concluded that the inclusion of part of Worksop North was the most appropriate solution. Under the Council's 47-member scheme the revised Carlton ward would vary from the district average by 3 per cent (6 per cent by 2004).

71 As we have already stated, we are proposing to base our draft recommendations on the Council's Stage One submission. We concur with the Council's proposal that Hodsock should become a single-member ward in order to address the over-representation that currently exists, and we agree that Langold would be a more appropriate name for the ward. Under our 48-member scheme, however, the new Langold ward would vary from the district average by 13 per cent initially, improving to 7 per cent by 2004. Given this forecast improvement in electoral equality by 2004 we are proposing to adopt the Council's proposed Langold ward as part of our draft recommendations.

72 We also considered the Council's proposed Carlton ward. We have noted that, under our proposed 48-member council, if the existing Carlton ward was retained unchanged it would vary initially by 9 per cent (12 per cent by 2004). In view of this slightly better level of electoral equality under our increased council size, the Conservatives' opposition to the Council's proposal to include part of urban, unparished Worksop in the more rural, parished Carlton ward, and given that the Council stated that as Carlton ward has a clear identity every effort should be made to retain the ward unchanged, we are therefore proposing, as part of our draft recommendations, to retain the existing Carlton ward unchanged.

73 We acknowledge that this proposal would result in an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent; however, we believe that this is justified in view of the better reflection of community identities and interests, and the identifiable boundaries that would be secured.

Elkesley, Welbeck and East Markham wards

74 The single-member ward of Elkesley is situated in the centre of the district and comprises the parishes of Babworth, Bevercotes, Bothamshall, Elkesley and Haughton. The single-member Welbeck ward is situated to the south of Worksop, in the south-western part of the district, and comprises the parishes of Carburton, Clumber & Hardwick, Cuckney, Holbeck, Nether Langwith, Norton and Welbeck. The single-member ward of East Markham, situated to the south of East Retford, comprises the parishes of Askham, East Markham, Eaton, Gamston, West Drayton and West Markham.

75 The wards of Elkesley and Welbeck are both substantially over-represented at present, with electoral variances of 21 per cent and 32 per cent respectively (21 per cent and 34 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in East Markham ward is currently 2 per cent below the district average (unchanged by 2004).

76 The Council proposed a revised Welbeck ward comprising the existing ward of that name and the parish of Elkesley (from the existing Elkesley ward). Under the Council's 47-member

scheme this revised ward would vary from the district average by 1 per cent initially, equalling the average by 2004. As a consequence of this modification and the proposal to include Babworth parish in a revised Sutton ward, the Council also proposed that the remainder of the existing Elkesley ward (the parishes of Bothamsall, Haughton and Bevercotes) be transferred into an enlarged East Markham ward. This revised ward would vary from the district average by 4 per cent initially (3 per cent by 2004).

77 The Conservatives were of the view that the Council's proposed Welbeck ward had been created "not because the Council believes it to be the most desirable structure but to comply with the Commission's numeric requirements". Nether Langwith Parish Council requested that any changes to wards which might affect the parish "should preserve the rural nature of the area". It did not consider that its inclusion in a larger Worksop ward "would be in the best interests of the parishioners".

78 Having considered all the representations received regarding this area, we have been persuaded that the Council's proposals would be the most appropriate. If the existing Welbeck ward were left unchanged, under the Council's 47-member council size the level of electoral equality would be unacceptable as the ward would vary from the district average by 36 per cent (38 per cent by 2004). Therefore we agree with the Council's proposal that the existing Welbeck ward should be expanded to address this over-representation.

79 However, the options for expanding the ward are limited as it is constrained to the south and west by the district boundary and is bounded to the north by Worksop. In view of the local opposition to including part of Worksop in the rural Welbeck ward, and given that the majority of the existing ward's eastern boundary adjoins Elkesley parish, we agree that the Council's proposal to include Elkesley parish in the revised Welbeck ward would be the best solution. We therefore propose adopting its revised Welbeck ward as part of our draft recommendations. Under our proposed 48-member council the ward would vary from the district average by 3 per cent initially (2 per cent by 2004).

80 We are also proposing to adopt the Council's revised East Markham ward as part of our draft recommendations. However, we are proposing one slight modification, which would transfer the parish of Askham into the revised Rampton ward (as detailed earlier in paragraph 52). Under a 48-member council our revised East Markham ward would vary from the district average by 3 per cent (4 per cent by 2004). We would welcome all views on our draft recommendations, as shown on Map 2, during Stage Three.

Worksop (six wards)

81 Worksop is situated in the west of the district and currently comprises six three-member wards. The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Worksop North and Worksop North West is 3 per cent below and 5 per cent below the district average respectively (7 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Worksop North East, Worksop East and Worksop South East is 10 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 1 per cent above the district average respectively (4 per cent above, 9 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2004). Worksop South is currently the most under-represented ward in the district

with an electoral variance of 34 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to improve very slightly to 32 per cent by 2004.

82 In its Stage One submission the Council proposed retaining six three-member wards in Worksop, but put forward modifications to some of the current ward boundaries in order to address the under-representation in Worksop South ward. As detailed earlier in this chapter, the Council proposed transferring 455 electors out of the existing Worksop North ward into Carlton ward. Consequently, under its scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Worksop North ward would be 17 per cent below the district average initially. However, due to proposed housing development in the ward, this level of electoral inequality would improve to 8 per cent below the district average by 2004. The Council also proposed retaining the existing Worksop North East ward unchanged. Under a 47-member council size, the number of electors per councillor in Worksop North East would be 3 per cent above the district average initially (2 per cent below by 2004).

83 In order to improve electoral equality in Worksop South ward, the Council proposed three modifications to its boundaries. It proposed transferring an area to the north of Eastgate and to the west of Albion Close into a revised Worksop North West ward and transferring an area to the south of Potter Street and to the north of Newgate Street into a revised Worksop South East ward. It further proposed that an area to the east of Watson Road and to the north of Potter Street/Cheapside be transferred into Worksop East.

84 Under the Council's proposals the revised Worksop North West ward would vary from the district average by 4 per cent initially (1 per cent by 2004). The revised Worksop East ward would vary from the district average by 5 per cent initially and would equal the district average by 2004. The revised Worksop South and Worksop South East wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (4 per cent and 2 per cent by 2004).

85 A local resident proposed that the Bracebridge area of Worksop should be included in a revised Worksop East ward, arguing that this area has "a greater affinity to Kilton [in the proposed East ward] than ... with the South-East ward". He suggested that the revised boundary between the East and South East ward could follow the Chesterfield Canal or the Retford Road.

86 As outlined earlier in this report, we are proposing to base our draft recommendations for the town of Worksop on the Council's proposals. We propose retaining six three-member wards for the town, but are proposing slight modifications to the Council's proposals in order to improve electoral equality further, secure identifiable boundaries and better reflect local community identities and interests.

87 As a consequence of our proposed Carlton ward, and in order to improve electoral equality and secure identifiable ward boundaries, we propose retaining the existing Worksop North ward unchanged. Similarly, given that the existing Worksop North East ward currently possesses good identifiable boundaries, and as reasonable electoral equality would be secured, we are proposing to retain the existing Worksop North East ward unchanged. Under our proposed 48-member council size the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Worksop North and Worksop North East wards would be 7 per cent below and 5 per cent above the district average initially (3

per cent above and equal to the district average by 2004). We would very much welcome views on our draft proposals (as shown on the large map at the back of this report) during Stage Three.

88 We agree with the Council's proposal that electors should be transferred out of Worksop South ward into adjacent wards in order to improve electoral equality. We therefore propose adopting the Council's revised Worksop North West and Worksop South wards as part of our draft recommendations, as shown on the large map at the back of this report. Under our proposed 48-member council size the number of electors per councillor in the revised North West and South wards would both be 2 per cent below the district average initially (1 per cent above and 2 per cent below respectively by 2004).

89 However, we have considered the Council's proposed Worksop East and Worksop South East wards in the light of the comments put forward by a local resident suggesting that the Bracebridge area (currently in Worksop South East ward) should be included in Worksop East ward. Officers from the Commission have visited the areas concerned, and we are proposing to adopt the local resident's modified Worksop East ward as part of our draft recommendations. We concur with his suggestion that the Bracebridge area has a greater affinity with the existing Worksop East ward and that it would be more appropriate to transfer this area into the ward rather than part of Worksop South ward, as proposed by the Council.

90 The Bracebridge area has two access points across the railway line (the existing boundary) at Rayton Spur and High Hoe Road, whereas the area that the Council proposed transferring only has one access point to Worksop East ward (at High Hoe Road). Furthermore, we agree that the Chesterfield Canal would provide an identifiable boundary between Worksop East and Worksop South East wards. Under our 48-member council size our proposed Worksop East ward (as shown on the large map at the back of this report) would vary from the district average by 4 per cent initially (1 per cent by 2004).

91 As a consequence of our proposed Worksop East ward, we are proposing that the area to the east of Watson Road and north of Potter Street/Cheapside (which the Council proposed transferring into Worksop East ward) should instead be transferred into Worksop South East ward, in addition to the area the south of Potter Street and to the north of Newgate Street. Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and we are of the view that this area would have adequate links and access to the rest of the proposed South East ward (via High Hoe Road, Priorswell Road and Watson Road), and that our proposal would be a more appropriate combination of local communities. The number of electors per councillor in our revised Worksop South East ward (under our 48-member scheme) would be 8 per cent above the district average initially (4 per cent above by 2004). We would welcome views on our all our draft recommendations in Worksop, as shown on the large map at the back of this report, during Stage Three.

East Retford (three wards)

92 East Retford is situated in the centre of the district and currently comprises three three-member wards. All three wards are currently under-represented – East Retford North by 9 per cent, East Retford East by 17 per cent and East Retford West by 10 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to deteriorate to 17 per cent, 13 per cent and 12 per cent respectively by 2004.

93 At Stage One the Council contended that the existing ward boundaries in East Retford “are well defined” and proposed retaining the three existing three-member wards in East Retford unchanged. Under its 47-member scheme the number of electors per councillor in the wards of East Retford North, East Retford East and East Retford West would be 2 per cent, 10 per cent and 3 per cent above the district average (10 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent above by 2004).

94 The Conservatives suggested that the area comprising Bridgegate, Churchgate, Chapelgate and Wellington Street could be transferred out of East Retford North into East Retford West ward. It contended that as “small changes are being made in Worksop there seems no reason not to make them in Retford”.

95 As detailed earlier in this chapter, we have noted that, under the Council’s 47-member council size, East Retford would be entitled to 9.64 councillors overall by 2004. Therefore if it were to be represented by only nine councillors, as proposed by the Council, it would be substantially under-represented by that time. We are therefore proposing that East Retford, as a whole, should be represented by 10 councillors, and, as detailed earlier in this chapter, overall council size should be increased to 48 members. As a consequence of this increase in council size, the balance of representation across the district as a whole would improve, with East Retford being entitled to just under 10 councillors by 2004.

96 However, given that the Council proposed nine councillors whereas we are proposing ten, it is necessary to put forward a revised warding pattern in East Retford as part of our draft recommendations for the town. We are proposing to retain a multi-member ward pattern in the town, based on two two-member wards and two three-member wards. In devising this new ward pattern we have tried to provide for minimal disruption to the existing arrangements, while securing reasonable electoral equality and providing for identifiable boundaries.

97 In order to reduce the under-representation that exists in the current East Retford North ward, we propose modifying its south-eastern boundary to follow the centre of Moorgate and Amcott Way. The area to the south of Moorgate and to the north of Chapelgate/Spital Hill would be transferred into a revised East Retford East ward, and the area to the south of Amcott Way would be transferred into a revised East Retford West ward, as partly suggested by the Conservatives. The number of electors per councillor in our modified three-member East Retford North ward (as shown on the large map at the back of this report) would be 9 per cent below the district average initially, improving to 1 per cent below by 2004 due to a forecast increase in the electorate as a result of housing development.

98 We are also proposing to modify the south-western boundary of East Retford East ward, transferring the area to the east of London Road and to the west of the River Idle into a revised East Retford West ward. We are of the view that this area has sufficient links to the rest of East Retford West ward via Whinney Moor Lane/Thrumpton Lane and Albert Road. The number of electors per councillor in our revised East Retford East ward (as shown on the large map at the back of this report) would be 5 per cent above the district average initially (equal to the average by 2004).

99 In the remainder of the town we are proposing two new two-member wards. We are proposing a new East Retford South ward comprising an area to the south of the railway line (which runs east/west across the town) currently in East Retford West ward, and a small area to the east of the River Idle currently in East Retford East ward. Our revised East Retford West ward would comprise the remainder of the existing East Retford West ward (to the north of the railway line), and the areas transferred from the existing East Retford East and East Retford North wards, as detailed earlier. The number of electors per councillor in the two new two-member wards of East Retford South and East Retford West, as shown on the large map at the back of this report, would be initially 6 per cent below and 5 per cent below respectively (2 per cent below and 5 per cent below by 2004).

100 We acknowledge that our draft recommendations for East Retford differ from the existing arrangements (which the Council proposed retaining); however, as we have stated earlier, these modifications to the wards in East Retford are necessary in order to provide for a fair balance of representation across the district as a whole. We would particularly welcome views on our proposed ward boundaries in East Retford during Stage Three.

Electoral Cycle

101 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 50 to 48;
- (b) there should be 25 wards, two fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards;
- (d) elections should continue to be held by thirds.

103 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council’s proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- (a) we propose that the council should comprise 48 councillors, rather than 47 as proposed by the Council;
- (b) Askham parish should be included in a revised Rampton ward;
- (c) there should be no change to the wards of Carlton and Worksop North;
- (d) the boundary between the revised Worksop East and Worksop South East should be modified to follow the Chesterfield Canal and High Hoe Road and the boundary between the revised Worksop South East and Worksop South wards should be modified to follow Newgate Street and Watson Road;
- (e) there should be a revised warding pattern for the town of East Retford, with East Retford West becoming a two-member ward and a new two-member ward of East Retford South being created.

104 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	50	48	50	48
Number of wards	27	25	27	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,637	1,706	1,733	1,805
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	1	15	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	7	0	6	0

105 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Bassetlaw District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 14 to one. By 2004 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

Bassetlaw District Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

106 Walkeringham Parish Council commented on its present parish council electoral arrangements, stating that it did not want to reduce the number of parish councillors representing the parish. We did not receive any proposals for changes to parish council electoral arrangements and we are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

107 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names and parish council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Bassetlaw

5 NEXT STEPS

108 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 13 December 1999. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

109 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Bassetlaw Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

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

APPENDIX A

Bassetlaw District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council. The Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure A1: Bassetlaw District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Beckingham	Beckingham ward (part – the parishes of Beckingham, Saundby and Walkeringham)
Blyth	Blyth ward; Ranskill ward (part – the parish of Scrooby)
Carlton	Carlton ward; Worksop North ward (part)
Clayworth	<i>Unchanged</i>
East Markham	East Markham ward; Elkesley ward (part – the parishes of Bevercotes, Bothamshall and Haughton)
East Retford East	<i>Unchanged</i>
East Retford North	<i>Unchanged</i>
East Retford West	<i>Unchanged</i>
Everton	<i>Unchanged</i>
Harworth	Harworth East ward; Harworth West ward
Langold	Hodsock ward
Misterton	<i>Unchanged</i>
Rampton	Rampton ward; Sturton ward (part – the parish of South Leverton)
Ranskill	Ranskill ward (part – the parishes of Ranskill and Torworth); Sutton ward (part - the parish of Mattersey)
Sturton	Beckingham ward (part – the parishes of Bole and West Burton); Sturton ward (part – the parishes of North Leverton with Habbleshthorpe, North Weatley, South Wheatley and Sturton le Steeple)
Sutton	Sutton ward (part – the parishes of Barnby Moor, Lound and Sutton); Elkesley ward (part – the parish of Babworth)
Tuxford & Trent	Trent ward; Tuxford ward
Welbeck	Welbeck ward; Elkesley ward (part – the parish of Elkesley)
Worksop East	Worksop East ward; Worksop South ward (part)

Ward name	Constituent areas
Worksop North	Worksop North ward (part)
Worksop North East	<i>Unchanged</i>
Worksop North West	Worksop North West ward; Worksop South ward (part)
Worksop South	Worksop South ward (part)
Worksop South East	Worksop South East ward (part); Worksop South ward (part)

Figure A2: Bassetlaw District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Beckingham	1	1,760	1,760	1	1,915	1,915	4
Blyth	1	1,823	1,823	5	1,887	1,887	2
Carlton	3	5,087	1,696	-3	5,220	1,740	-6
Clayworth	1	1,604	1,604	-8	1,713	1,713	-7
East Markham	1	1,807	1,807	4	1,904	1,904	3
East Retford East	3	5,756	1,919	10	5,900	1,967	7
East Retford North	3	5,343	1,781	2	6,073	2,024	10
East Retford West	3	5,396	1,799	3	5,801	1,934	5
Everton	1	1,701	1,701	-2	1,811	1,811	-2
Harworth	3	5,612	1,871	7	5,883	1,961	6
Langold	1	1,927	1,927	11	1,932	1,932	5
Misterton	1	1,818	1,818	4	1,985	1,985	8
Rampton	1	1,630	1,630	-6	1,707	1,707	-7
Ranskill	1	1,721	1,721	-1	1,888	1,888	2
Sturton	1	1,738	1,738	0	1,814	1,814	-2
Sutton	1	1,628	1,628	-7	1,702	1,702	-8
Tuxford & Trent	2	3,169	1,585	-9	3,394	1,697	-8
Welbeck	1	1,752	1,752	1	1,845	1,845	0

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Worksop East	3	5,491	1,830	5	5,505	1,835	0
Worksop North	3	4,321	1,440	-17	5,105	1,702	-8
Worksop North East	3	5,384	1,795	3	5,426	1,809	-2
Worksop North West	3	5,011	1,670	-4	5,472	1,824	-1
Worksop South	3	5,037	1,679	-4	5,329	1,776	-4
Worksop South East	3	5,358	1,786	3	5,444	1,815	-2
Totals	47	81,874	–	–	86,655	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,742	–	–	1,844	–

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

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

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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