

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

May 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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Report no: 152

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



Local Government Commission for England

16 May 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 18 May 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Bassetlaw under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in December 1999 and undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 127) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Bassetlaw.

We recommend that Bassetlaw District Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 25 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Bassetlaw on 18 May 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 14 December 1999, after which we undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 127-128) 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 and six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These 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 only one ward, Carlton, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 27 June 2000:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Figure 1: The Commission's Final 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 (the parishes of Blyth and Styrrup with Oldcotes); Ranskill ward (part – the parish of Scrooby)	Map 2
3 Carlton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Carlton in Lindrick and Wallingwells)	Map 2
4 Clayworth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Clarborough, Clayworth, Hayton and Wiseton)	Map 2
5 East Markham	1	East Markham ward (the parishes of Askham, 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> (the parishes of Everton, Gringley on the Hill, Misson and Scaftworth)	Map 2
11 Harworth	3	Harworth East ward (Harworth East parish ward of Harworth Bircotes parish); Harworth West ward (Harworth West parish ward of Harworth Bircotes parish)	Map 2
12 Langold	1	Hodsock ward (the parish of Hodsock)	Map 2
13 Misterton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Misterton and West Stockwith)	Map 2
14 Rampton	1	Rampton ward (the parishes of Cottam, Grove, Headon cum Upton, Rampton, Stokeham and Treswell); 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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
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 (the parishes of Darlton, Dunham-on-Trent, East Drayton, Fledborough, Laneham, Marnham, Normanton on Trent and Ragnall); Tuxford ward (the parish of Tuxford)	Map 2
19 Welbeck	1	Welbeck ward (the parishes of Carburton, Clumber & Hardwick, Cuckney, Holbeck, Nether Langwith, Norton and Welbeck); 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> (Worksop North ward)	Map 2 and large map
22 Worksop North East	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Worksop North East)	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 which comprise ten wards indicated above.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final 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	1,807	1,807	6	1,904	1,904	5
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	1,630	1,630	-4	1,707	1,707	-5
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
23 Worksop North West	3	5,011	1,670	-2	5,472	1,824	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 %
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 final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire. We have now reviewed 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 was 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 have had regard to:

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

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 have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Nottinghamshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *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.

11 This review was in four stages. 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. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 14 December 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire*, and ended on 21 February 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 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.

14 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 East 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.

15 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'.

16 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.

17 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.

18 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 seven wards vary by more than 20 per cent and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Hodsock ward, where the councillor represents 41 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Bassetlaw

Figure 3: 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

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 %
25 Worksop North West	3	4,664	1,555	-5	5,125	1,708	-1
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 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received seven representations, including a district-wide scheme from Bassetlaw District Council, and representations from the Conservative Group on the Council, four parish councils and a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire*.

20 Our draft recommendations were broadly based on the Council's Stage One proposals for a 47-member council, which secured improved electoral equality and provided a mixture of single and multi-member wards across the district. However, in order to secure a better balance of representation between the three areas in the district (Worksop, East Retford and the rural area), we proposed that the Council should comprise 48 councillors. We therefore moved away from the Council's proposals in three areas, affecting seven wards, using modifications proposed by a local resident, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Bassetlaw District Council should be served by 48 councillors, compared with the current 50, representing 25 wards, two less than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a decrease of two, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;

Draft Recommendation

Bassetlaw District Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 25 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 24 of the 25 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only Carlton ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

22 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 16 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Bassetlaw District Council and the Commission.

Bassetlaw District Council

23 The District Council supported our draft recommendations, which were largely based on its Stage One submission, with the exception of our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward. It reiterated its Stage One proposal that Askham parish should be included in a revised East Markham ward.

Nottinghamshire County Council

24 The County Council expressed concern regarding our proposals to reduce the number of councillors representing the district from 50 to 48. It argued that “the United Kingdom already has one of the lowest ratios of elected councillors per head of population in Europe”, contending that our draft recommendations for Bassetlaw would “worsen that position”.

25 The County Council welcomed our recommendation that there be no change to the electoral cycle of the district, contending that members of the County Council are “satisfied with existing arrangements”.

Newark & Retford Constituency Liberal Democrats

26 Newark & Retford Constituency Liberal Democrats opposed our proposal to transfer the parish of Askham from East Markham ward to Rampton ward. They proposed retaining Askham parish in East Markham ward, arguing that it “has very close links with the village of East Markham” and that it had “no links with Rampton, other than a few residents [who] work at Rampton Hospital”.

Retford Branch Liberal Democrats

27 Retford Branch Liberal Democrats expressed concern at our proposal to transfer the parish of Askham from East Markham ward to Rampton ward. They stated that “Askham’s community links with East Markham are far stronger than with any other community”, and supported the Council’s Stage One proposal to retain Askham parish in East Markham ward.

Parish Councils

28 We received representations from five parish councils. East Markham Parish Council opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward. It

argued that our recommendations for the area offered minimal improvement to electoral equality and that they ignored local opinion, stating that “on a purely social and economic level the two villages of Askham and East Markham are closely interlinked”.

29 Gamston with West Drayton & Eaton Parish Council opposed our proposal to transfer Askham Parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward. It contended that “Askham has much more affinity with the villages in this parish and with East Markham parish than it does with any of the parishes in Rampton ward”, supporting the Council’s Stage One proposal to retain Askham parish in East Markham ward.

30 East Drayton Parish Council opposed our proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward contending that the larger village of Tuxford has no affinity with the villages currently within the present Trent ward (of which East Drayton is one). It also cited that in our draft recommendations report for Newark & Sherwood district an electoral variance of 25 per cent was accepted given “the very different natures of Clipstone and Edwinstowe”. It further stated that it “would contend that exactly the same arguments apply to Trent and Tuxford”, and proposed that the existing boundaries for the wards remain unchanged.

31 The parish councils of Everton and Misterton both stated that they had “no observations to make”.

Other Representations

32 We received eight further representations in response to our draft recommendations, from a district councillor and seven local residents. All the representations opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish into a revised Rampton ward, arguing that the parishes of Askham and East Markham have close socio-economic ties, including the primary school, village shop and post office in East Markham (used by residents from Askham) and the bus service which links Askham village with East Markham village. A number of representations also contended that if Askham parish were retained in East Markham ward, the deterioration in electoral equality would be minimal.

33 A local resident also suggested that the hamlet of Little Gringley, currently in East Retford East ward, should be included in the proposed Clayworth ward, arguing that this proposal would improve electoral equality in Clayworth ward and have the benefit of including Little Gringley in a ward with which “it has more in common”.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

35 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

36 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.

37 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

38 At Stage One 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 expected most of the growth to be in Worksop North ward, although a significant amount is also expected in East Retford North ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

39 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

41 Bassetlaw District Council is at present served by 50 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a council of 47 members, suggesting 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.

42 In our draft recommendations report 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.

43 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 of 48 members (a reduction of only two from the existing council size), a better balance of representation across the district would be achieved.

44 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 concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

45 During Stage Three the Council supported our proposals for a council size of 48. However, Nottinghamshire County Council expressed concern regarding this reduction in council size, arguing that it is "undesirable" as the United Kingdom has "one of the lowest ratios of elected councillors per head of population in Europe". No further comments were received regarding this aspect of the review.

46 We have considered the representations received during Stage Three, and note that the County Council has not supported our proposed council size. However, no alternative proposals or other justification for a larger council size were put forward at either Stage One or Stage Three.

We do not accept the argument that, in determining council size for a given area, the number of elected members in other European countries is a significant consideration, as political systems and cultures vary across Europe.

47 We are therefore of the view that given the general support for a council size of 48 members, which would provide for a better balance of representation across the district and ensure that each area in the district would be represented by the appropriate number of councillors, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 48 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

48 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

49 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the District Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve a better balance of representation across the district, while having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we proposed allocating an additional councillor to the town of East Retford, resulting in a revised warding pattern for the town. We also proposed modifications in two other areas in order to improve electoral equality, while having regard to the identities and interests of local communities.

50 In response to our draft recommendations report, the majority of Stage Three respondents, including the Council, opposed our proposal to include the parish of Askham in a revised Rampton ward, expressing the view that it should be retained in a revised East Markham ward with which it shares closer community ties.

51 We have reviewed our draft recommendations, in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and are proposing one modification to our draft proposals in the rural area in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) The rural are
 - 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)

52 Details of our final 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

53 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 Habbleshorpe, North Wheatley, South Leverton, South Wheatley and Sturton le Steeple.

54 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).

55 At Stage One the District Council proposed combining the two existing single-member wards of Tuxford and Trent to create a new two-member Tuxford & Trent ward. It stated that it had considered retaining the existing Tuxford ward unchanged, but contended that the consequent effects of this would produce “unsatisfactory” arrangements and would not facilitate a good scheme overall. 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).

56 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).

57 The Conservative Group did not support the Council’s proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward, stating that it would prefer all the rural wards to be single-member. It suggested that the two existing wards of Tuxford and Trent should 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).

58 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”.

59 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 considered these inequalities to be unacceptable.

60 We decided that in order to address the over-representation in Trent ward it would be 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 were 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 adopted the Council's proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward as part of our draft recommendations.

61 As stated earlier, we generally based 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. We therefore proposed adopting the Council's proposed Rampton ward as part of our draft recommendations in this area. However, in order to improve electoral equality further, we also included the parish of Askham (currently in East Markham ward) in the revised ward. 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). We also adopted 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).

62 At Stage Three the Council opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward and reiterated its Stage One proposal that Askham parish should be included in East Markham ward. East Markham Parish Council argued that our draft recommendations for the area offered minimal improvement to electoral equality and that they ignored local opinion, stating that "on a purely social and economic level the two villages of Askham and East Markham are closely interlinked".

63 Retford Branch Liberal Democrats, Newark & Retford Constituency Liberal Democrats, Gamston with West Drayton and Eaton Parish Council, District Councillor Lewis and seven local residents also opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward, arguing that Askham village's community links with East Markham are far stronger. A number of examples of how the two villages share similar interests were cited, including the local primary school, village shop and post office in East Markham (which are used by villagers from Askham), the village newsletter and the bus service which links the village of Askham with East Markham, but not with the village of Rampton.

64 East Drayton Parish Council opposed our proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward contending that the villages currently within the present Trent ward (of which East Drayton is one) have no affinity with the larger village of Tuxford. It also cited that in our draft recommendations report for the neighbouring Newark & Sherwood District an electoral variance of 25 per cent was accepted given "the very different natures of Clipstone and Edwinstowe". It

further stated that it “would contend that exactly the same arguments apply to Trent and Tuxford”, and proposed that the existing boundaries for the wards remain unchanged.

65 We have considered carefully the representations received and have noted the strength of opposition to our proposal to include Askham parish in a revised Rampton ward, and the local support in favour of the Council’s proposal to retain Askham parish in East Markham ward. In the light of this local support, we have been persuaded that the Council’s proposed Rampton and East Markham wards would better reflect the identities and interests of local communities, although electoral equality would be slightly worse by 2004 than under our draft recommendations. We therefore propose modifying our draft recommendations and adopting the Council’s proposed Rampton and East Markham wards as part of our final recommendations, as shown on Map 2. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor in the revised Rampton ward would be 4 per cent below the district average initially (5 per cent below by 2004).

66 We have also considered East Drayton Parish Council’s comments regarding our proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward. We are of the view that proposals within a particular district should be considered on their merits, and that it is not valid to compare them to proposals in a different district. However, in this instance, given the basis of East Drayton Parish Council’s argumentation in favour of retaining the single-member wards of Tuxford and Trent unchanged, we have given some consideration to its reference to the argumentation behind one of our draft recommendations in the neighbouring district of Newark & Sherwood as a possible justification for modifying our draft recommendations for Bassetlaw.

67 However, we do not agree with East Drayton Parish Council’s assertion that the reasons supporting our proposal for a two-member Clipstone ward (in Newark & Sherwood District) could be equally applied to the retention of the existing single-member Trent ward. Clipstone is a distinct, cohesive community, separate from the neighbouring cohesive community of Edwinstowe, bounded to the west by the district boundary with Mansfield and to the south by a sparsely populated parish containing Sherwood Pines Forest, whereas the number of small villages comprising the existing single-member Trent ward make up the rural hinterland of the village of Tuxford (the single-member Tuxford ward).

68 Moreover, if further comparisons are made to our final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood District, it can be seen that, in order to secure the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, we are in fact proposing two two-member wards, Lowdham and Collingham, which comprise similar combinations of existing single-member wards as our proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward in Bassetlaw District (ie a main village combined with its rural hinterland). Furthermore, our proposal would avoid the need to ward any parish.

69 Therefore, given the broad support for our proposed two-member Tuxford & Trent ward, and as we remain of the view that our proposal would provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, we propose endorsing it as part of our final recommendations, as shown on Map 2.

Beckingham, Clayworth, Misterton and Everton wards

70 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 Scaforth.

71 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.

72 At Stage One, 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 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).

73 We considered the Council’s proposals in this part of the district and concluded that they would secure an improved level of electoral equality without having an adverse effect on local community ties. Under our 48-member council size a reasonable level of electoral equality would also 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.

74 We acknowledged that electoral equality in the proposed Misterton ward was forecast to be 10 per cent by 2004. However, we concluded that there was no viable alternative, given that the ward is constrained to the north and east by the district boundary, and that it would facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the northern and eastern parts of the district 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 adopted the Council’s proposals for the north-eastern part of the district as our draft recommendations.

75 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations and the parish councils of Everton and Misterton both stated that they had “no observations to make”. A local resident suggested that the hamlet of Little Gringley, currently in East Retford East ward, could be included in the proposed Clayworth ward, arguing that this proposal would improve electoral

equality in Clayworth ward and have the benefit of including Little Gringley in a ward with which “it has more in common”.

76 We have considered the representations received during the consultation period and have noted the local resident’s proposal to include Little Gringley in a revised Clayworth ward. However, as there is no evidence of other local support for such a proposal, and given the Council’s support for our draft recommendations in this area, which would achieve reasonable electoral equality and identifiable boundaries, we are confirming our proposed Beckingham, Clayworth, Misterton and Everton wards, as shown on Map 2, as final.

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

77 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 of 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).

78 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).

79 In its Stage One 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).

80 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.

81 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).

82 In our draft recommendations report we considered the proposals put forward by the Council and were persuaded that they would provide the most appropriate warding arrangements in this part of the district. We agreed 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 were of the view that this slightly higher electoral variance would be 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, provide for effective and convenient local government. We therefore adopted the Council's proposed Harworth ward as part of our draft recommendations.

83 We also supported the Council's desire to avoid retaining a detached ward in the district, and concluded that in order for both parts of Barnby Moor parish to be included in the same ward it would be necessary to transfer Babworth parish (the north-western corner of which divides Barnby Moor parish) into the revised Sutton ward. We were also persuaded that, as a consequence of this modification, the Council's modifications to the wards of Ranskill and Blyth would be 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.

84 We therefore adopted the Council's proposals in the 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).

85 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for these four wards and no other representations were received. In view of this support for our draft recommendations we are confirming our proposed Harworth, Sutton, Ranskill and Blyth wards, as shown on Map 2, as final.

Hodsock and Carlton wards

86 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).

87 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 centre 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).

88 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).

89 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).

90 As already stated, we generally based our draft recommendations on the Council’s Stage One submission. We concurred 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 agreed 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 adopted the Council’s proposed Langold ward as part of our draft recommendations.

91 We also considered the Council’s proposed Carlton ward. We noted that, under our proposed 48-member council, if the existing Carlton ward were retained unchanged it would vary initially by 9 per cent (12 per cent by 2004). In view of the 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 therefore proposed, as part of our draft recommendations, retaining the existing Carlton ward unchanged.

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

93 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for these two wards and no other representations were received. Given this support for our draft recommendations in this area, we are confirming our proposed Langold and Carlton wards, as shown on Map 2, as final.

Elkesley, Welbeck and East Markham wards

94 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.

95 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).

96 At Stage One 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).

97 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".

98 In formulating our draft recommendations, we considered all the representations received regarding this area and we were 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 agreed with the Council's proposal that the existing Welbeck ward should be expanded to address this over-representation.

99 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 agreed that the Council's proposal to include Elkesley parish in the revised Welbeck ward would be the best solution. We therefore adopted 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).

100 We also adopted the Council's revised East Markham ward as part of our draft recommendations, albeit with one slight modification, which would transfer the parish of Askham into the revised Rampton ward (as detailed earlier in paragraph 61). 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).

101 As detailed earlier in this chapter, during Stage Three the Council opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward and reiterated its Stage One proposal that Askham parish should be included in East Markham ward. Retford Branch Liberal Democrats, Newark & Retford Constituency Liberal Democrats, East Markham Parish Council, Gamston with West Drayton and Eaton Parish Council, District Councillor Lewis and seven local residents also opposed our proposal to transfer Askham parish from East Markham ward to Rampton ward, arguing that Askham village's community links are far stronger with East Markham.

102 We have considered carefully the representations received at Stage Three. As detailed earlier in this chapter, we have noted the strength of opposition to our proposal to include Askham parish in a revised Rampton ward and the local support in favour of the Council's proposal to retain Askham parish in East Markham ward. As outlined earlier, we have been persuaded that the Council's proposed East Markham ward would better reflect the identities and interests of local communities and in view of the local support we propose adopting the Council's proposed East Markham ward, as shown on Map 2, as part of our final recommendations. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor in the revised East Markham ward would be 6 per cent above the district average initially (5 per cent above by 2004).

Worksop (six wards)

103 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.

104 As detailed earlier in this chapter, we based our draft recommendations on the Council's Stage One scheme. 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. It 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).

105 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. 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).

106 A local resident proposed that the Bracebridge area of Worksop should be included in a revised Worksop East ward as the 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.

107 As outlined earlier, we generally based our draft recommendations for the town of Worksop on the Council's proposals. We proposed retaining six three-member wards for the town, but proposed 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.

108 As a consequence of our proposed Carlton ward, and in order to improve electoral equality and secure identifiable ward boundaries, we proposed 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 proposed retaining 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).

109 We agreed with the Council's proposal that electors should be transferred out of Worksop South ward into adjacent wards in order to improve electoral equality, and adopted the Council's revised Worksop North West and Worksop South wards as part of our draft recommendations. 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).

110 However, we considered the Council's proposed Worksop East and Worksop South East wards in the light of the comments put forward by a local resident who suggested that the Bracebridge area (currently in Worksop South East ward) should be included in Worksop East ward. Officers from the Commission having visited the areas concerned, we adopted the local resident's modified Worksop East ward as part of our draft recommendations.

111 We agreed 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 a part of Worksop South ward, as proposed by the Council. 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 agreed 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 would vary from the district average by 4 per cent initially (1 per cent by 2004).

112 As a consequence of our proposed Worksop East ward, we proposed 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 to the south of Potter Street and to the north of Newgate Street. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we were 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 result in 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).

113 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for the town of Worksop and no other representations were received. Given the Council's support for our draft recommendations, which would achieve good electoral equality, secure identifiable boundaries and reflect the identities and interests of local communities, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Worksop as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

East Retford (three wards)

114 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.

115 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).

116 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”.

117 As detailed earlier in this chapter, we 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 therefore proposed 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.

118 However, given that the Council proposed nine councillors, whereas we proposed that the town be represented by 10 councillors, we were of the view that it was necessary to put forward a revised warding pattern in East Retford as part of our draft recommendations. We proposed retaining 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 sought to provide for minimal disruption to the existing arrangements, while securing reasonable electoral equality and providing for identifiable boundaries.

119 In order to reduce the under-representation that exists in the current East Retford North ward, we proposed 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 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.

120 We also modified 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 were 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 would be 5 per cent above the district average initially (equal to the average by 2004).

121 In the remainder of the town we proposed two new two-member wards. We proposed 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 would be initially 6 per cent below and 5 per cent below the district average respectively (2 per cent below and 5 per cent below by 2004).

122 In our draft recommendations report we acknowledged that our proposals for East Retford would differ from the existing arrangements (which the Council proposed retaining); however, as stated earlier, these modifications to the wards in East Retford were necessary in order to provide for a fair balance of representation across the district as a whole.

123 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for the town of East Retford. A local resident suggested that the hamlet of Little Gringley, currently in East Retford East ward, could be included in the proposed Clayworth ward, arguing that this proposal would improve electoral equality in Clayworth ward and have the benefit of including Little Gringley in a ward with which “it has more in common”.

124 We have considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have noted the local resident's proposal to include Little Gringley in a revised Clayworth ward; however, as there is no evidence of other local support for such a proposal, and given the Council's support for our draft recommendations in East Retford, we do not propose putting it forward as part of our final recommendations. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for East Retford as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

125 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.

126 At Stage Three, the Council and County Council supported our draft recommendation to retain the present system of elections by thirds, and no further comments were received to the contrary. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

127 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- in the rural area – we propose that Askham parish should be included in a revised East Markham ward.

128 We conclude that, in Bassetlaw:

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

129 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final 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

130 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 14 to one, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This improved level of electoral equality would continue in 2004, with only one ward, Carlton, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 12 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final 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

131 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bassetlaw

6 NEXT STEPS

132 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Bassetlaw and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

133 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 27 June 2000.

134 All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Bassetlaw

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

Figure A1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
East Markham	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)
Rampton	Rampton ward; Sturton ward (part – the parish of South Leverton); East Markham ward (part – the parish of Askham)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: 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 %
East Markham	1	1,649	1,649	-3	1,737	1,737	-4
Rampton	1	1,788	1,788	5	1,874	1,874	4

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.

