

Draft Recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Newark & Sherwood in Nottinghamshire

December 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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 Newark & Sherwood in Nottinghamshire.

© Crown Copyright 1999

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, ©Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	<i>v</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	<i>29</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Newark & Sherwood: Detailed Mapping	<i>31</i>
B Newark & Sherwood District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements	<i>39</i>
C The Statutory Provisions	<i>43</i>

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Newark-on-Trent is inserted inside the back cover of the report

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood 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 Newark & Sherwood:

- **in 22 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and nine 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 20 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 12 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 96 – 97) are that:

- **Newark & Sherwood District Council should have 46 councillors, eight fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections of the whole council should continue to take place every four years.**

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 22 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. However, the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 20 per cent from average in one ward.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 24 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004. However, the number of electors per councillor in one ward would continue to vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Balderton, Blidworth, Clipstone, Rainworth and Southwell, and Newark-on-Trent town;**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for ten 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:

**Review Manager
Newark & Sherwood 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

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bilsthorpe	2	Bilsthorpe ward (Bilsthorpe parish); Rufford ward (Rufford parish and Rainworth North parish ward of Rainworth parish as proposed)	Map 2 and Map A5
2	Balderton North	2	Balderton North parish ward as proposed of Balderton parish	Map 2 and A2
3	Balderton West	2	Balderton West parish ward as proposed of Balderton parish	Map 2 and A2
4	Beacon (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	Harcourt, Hilltop and Ransome town wards as proposed of Newark-on-Trent town	Large Map
5	Boughton	2	Boughton ward (parishes of Kirton and Walesby, and Boughton parish ward of Ollerton & Boughton parish)	Map 2
6	Blidworth	1	Blidworth ward (Blidworth South parish ward as proposed of Blidworth parish)	Map 2 and A3
7	Bridge (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	Bishop Alexander, Fosse and Gilstrap town wards as proposed of Newark-on-Trent town	Large Map
8	Castle (in Newark-on-Trent)	3	Lilley & Stone, Ossington, Sconce and Windsor town wards as proposed of Newark-on-Trent town	Large Map
9	Caunton	1	Caunton ward (part – the parishes of Caunton, Kersall, Kneesall, Laxton, Maplebeck, Ompton and Winkburn); Boughton ward (part – Wellow parish); Muskham ward (part – Bathley parish); Sutton-on-Trent ward (part – the parishes of Egmanon and Ossington)	Map 2
10	Clipstone	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Clipstone parish)	Map 2 and A4
11	Collingham	2	Collingham ward (Collingham parish); Meering ward (the parishes of Besthorpe, Girton, Harby, Meering, North Clifton, South Clifton, South Scarle, Spalford, Thorney and Wigsley)	Map 2
12	Devon (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	Cardinal Hinsley, St Mary's and Sconce town wards as proposed of Newark-on-Trent town	Large Map
13	Edwinstowe	2	Edwinstowe ward (part – Edwinstowe parish)	Map 2
14	Farndon	2	Farndon ward (Farndon parish); Elston ward (the parishes of Alverton, Cotham, East Stoke, Elston, Hawton, Kilvington, Staunton, Syerston and Thorpe); Milton Lowfield ward (part – Balderton South parish ward as proposed of Balderton parish)	Map 2 and A2
15	Farnsfield	2	Farnsfield ward (the parishes of Edingley, Farnsfield, Halam, Kirklington and Oxton); Bilsthorpe ward (part – Eakring parish)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16	Lowdham	2	Dover Beck ward (the parishes of Bulcote, Caythorpe, Epperstone, Gonalston, Gunthorpe and Hoveringham); Lowdham ward (Lowdham parish)	Map 2
17	Magnus (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	Bowbridge, Byron, Clumber and Gopher town wards as proposed of Newark-on-Trent town	Large Map
18	Muskham	1	Muskham ward (part – the parishes of Averham, Kelham, North Muskham, South Muskham and Staythorpe); Caunton ward (part – Hockerton parish); Southwell East ward (part – Upton parish)	Map 2
19	Ollerton	3	Ollerton North ward; Ollerton South ward; Edwinstowe ward (part – Perlethorpe-cum-Budby parish)	Map 2
20	Rainworth	3	Rainworth ward (Lyndhurst parish and Rainworth South parish ward as proposed of Rainworth parish); Blidworth ward (Blidworth North parish ward as proposed of Blidworth parish)	Map 2 and A5
21	Southwell East	1	Southwell East parish ward as proposed of Southwell parish	Map 2, Map A6 and Map A7
22	Southwell North	1	Southwell North parish ward as proposed of Southwell parish	Map 2, Map A6 and Map A7
23	Southwell West	1	Southwell West parish ward as proposed of Southwell parish; Halloughton parish	Map 2, Map A6 and Map A7
24	Sutton-on-Trent	1	Sutton-on-Trent ward (part – the parishes of Grassthorpe, Sutton-on-Trent and Weston); Caunton ward (part – the parishes of Carlton-on-Trent and Norwell); Muskham ward (part – Cromwell parish)	Map 2
25	Trent	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Bleasby, Fiskerton cum Morton, Rolleston and Thurgarton)	Map 2
26	Winthorpe	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Barnby in the Willows, Coddington, Holme, Langford and Winthorpe)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Newark & Sherwood

	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	Balderton North	2	3,545	1,773	-1	3,824	1,912	-2
2	Balderton West	2	4,259	2,130	18	4,227	2,114	9
3	Beacon (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	3,430	1,715	-5	4,222	2,111	8
4	Bilsthorpe	2	3,867	1,934	8	4,187	2,094	8
5	Blidworth	1	1,830	1,830	2	1,887	1,887	-3
6	Boughton	2	3,866	1,933	8	3,920	1,960	1
7	Bridge (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	3,510	1,755	-2	4,025	2,013	3
8	Castle (in Newark-on-Trent)	3	4,919	1,640	-9	5,520	1,840	-5
9	Caunton	1	1,840	1,840	2	1,973	1,973	1
10	Clipstone	2	2,645	1,323	-26	3,074	1,537	-21
11	Collingham	2	3,684	1,842	2	3,860	1,930	-1
12	Devon (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	3,740	1,870	4	3,709	1,855	-5
13	Edwinstowe	2	3,907	1,954	9	4,139	2,070	6
14	Farndon	2	3,082	1,541	-14	4,400	2,200	13
15	Farnsfield	2	3,681	1,841	2	3,910	1,955	0
16	Lowdham	2	3,613	1,807	0	3,782	1,891	-3
17	Magnus (in Newark-on-Trent)	2	3,726	1,863	4	3,718	1,859	-4
18	Muskham	1	1,821	1,821	1	2,090	2,090	7
19	Ollerton	3	5,320	1,773	-1	5,525	1,842	-5
20	Rainworth	3	5,382	1,794	0	5,605	1,868	-4
21	Southwell East	1	1,765	1,765	-2	1,873	1,873	-4
22	Southwell North	1	1,826	1,826	2	1,930	1,930	-1
23	Southwell West	1	1,808	1,808	1	2,027	2,027	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 (%)
24	Sutton-on-Trent	1	2,013	2,013	12	2,099	2,099	8
25	Trent	1	1,770	1,770	-2	1,934	1,934	-1
26	Winthorpe	1	1,855	1,855	3	2,056	2,056	6
	Totals	46	82,704	-	-	89,516	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,798	-	-	1,946	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newark & Sherwood District Council.

Note: 1 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.

2 There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data shown in Figures 2 and 4.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Newark & Sherwood 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 Newark & Sherwood. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1976 (Report No. 126). 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 C).

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 and town 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, 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 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 Newark & Sherwood 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 and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament 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. At the request of the District Council,

the closing date for receipt of representations was extended by three weeks to 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 Newark & Sherwood district, which includes 83 parishes, is geographically the largest district in Nottinghamshire, covering nearly one third of the county. The district is one of contrasts, with the parishes in the east sharing an agricultural heritage, and parishes in the west and north linked by a mining tradition. It is predominantly rural and contains Sherwood Pines Forest Park. However, the majority of residents live in Newark-on-Trent, Southwell and colliery towns in the west of the district. The district is bisected by the River Trent.

17 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'.

18 The electorate of the district is 82,694 (February 1999). The Council currently has 54 members who are elected from 30 wards, six of which are represented by three councillors, 12 by two members, while the remaining twelve wards are single-member wards. The Council holds whole-council elections every four years.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate of Newark & Sherwood district, with around 11 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in the wards covering Balderton and Newark-on-Trent, with approximately 2,000 and 3,000 more electors respectively than 20 years ago.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,531 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,664 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 22 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in nine wards by more than 20 per cent and in three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Collingham ward where the councillor represents 52 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Newark & Sherwood

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 Beacon	2	3,648	1,824	19	4,448	2,224	34
2 Bilsthorpe	2	2,680	1,340	-12	2,999	1,500	-10
3 Blidworth	3	3,304	1,101	-28	3,383	1,128	-32
4 Boughton	3	4,254	1,418	-7	4,346	1,449	-13
5 Bridge	3	4,267	1,422	-7	4,924	1,641	-1
6 Bullpit Pinfold	2	3,724	1,862	22	5,285	2,643	59
7 Castle	3	4,959	1,653	8	5,402	1,801	8
8 Caunton	1	1,630	1,630	6	1,686	1,686	1
9 Clipstone	2	2,645	1,323	-14	3,074	1,537	-8
10 Collingham	1	2,325	2,325	52	2,389	2,389	44
11 Devon	3	3,845	1,282	-16	3,813	1,271	-24
12 Dover Beck	1	1,752	1,752	14	1,805	1,805	8
13 Edwinstowe	3	4,047	1,349	-12	4,281	1,427	-14
14 Elston	1	1,045	1,045	-32	1,099	1,099	-34
15 Farndon	1	1,954	1,954	28	2,019	2,019	21
16 Farnsfield	2	3,356	1,678	10	3,576	1,788	7
17 Lowdham	1	1,861	1,861	22	1,977	1,977	19
18 Magnus	2	2,596	1,298	-15	2,607	1,304	-22
19 Meering	1	1,359	1,359	-11	1,471	1,471	-12
20 Milton Lowfield	2	4,163	2,082	36	4,448	2,224	34
21 Muskham	1	1,741	1,741	14	1,973	1,973	19
22 Ollerton North	2	2,516	1,258	-18	2,512	1,256	-25
23 Ollerton South	2	2,664	1,332	-13	2,871	1,436	-14
24 Rainworth	2	3,908	1,954	28	4,037	2,019	21
25 Rufford	1	1,512	1,512	-1	1,522	1,522	-9
26 Southwell East	2	3,206	1,603	5	3,332	1,666	0
27 Southwell West	2	2,524	1,262	-18	2,875	1,438	-14
28 Sutton-on-Trent	1	1,584	1,584	3	1,700	1,700	2

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 (%)
29 Trent	1	1,770	1,770	16	1,934	1,934	16
30 Winthorpe	1	1,855	1,855	21	2,056	2,056	24
Totals	54	82,694	–	–	89,844	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,531	–	–	1,664	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newark & Sherwood 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, electors in Ollerton North ward are relatively over-represented by 18 per cent, while electors in Bullpit Pinfold ward are relatively under-represented by 22 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data shown in Figures 2 and 4.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 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 Newark & Sherwood District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 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 two direct representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council. The District Council also forwarded the representations that it had received as part of its consultation process, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

Newark & Sherwood District Council

23 The District Council proposed a council of 45 members, nine fewer than at present, serving 26 wards, four fewer than at present. It proposed that there should be two three-member wards, 15 two-member wards and nine single-member wards. The District Council published a consultation document and widely consulted local interests. It modified a number of its initial proposals in response to representations it received, before making its submission to the Commission.

24 The District Council's scheme would provide a much improved standard of electoral representation for the district as a whole, resulting in the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in 20 wards. This level of electoral equality would improve marginally, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in 23 wards by 2004. However, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone ward would vary by more than 20 per cent in both 1999 and 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

Parish Councils

25 Thorney Parish Council wrote to us directly, arguing that the existing Meering ward be retained.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood 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”.

27 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.

28 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.

29 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, 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 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

30 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of around 8 per cent from 82,694 to 89,844 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to occur in Bullpit Pinfold ward, as a result of residential development on the site of Balderton Hospital. 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.

31 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

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

33 Newark & Sherwood District Council currently has 54 members. The District Council proposed a council of 45 members, arguing that the Council is "currently undergoing major change" in response to the Government's *Modernising Local Government* White Paper. It stated that it has reduced the cycle of meetings each year from seven to four, and that this has resulted in a large reduction in the number of meetings that members attend, and it stated that it intended to implement further management changes in the light of new legislation. Given the apparent consensus on the District Council for a reduction in council size, and the significant public consultation which it has undertaken, we are content to accept the Council's general view.

34 However, under a council of 45 members Newark-on-Trent merits representation by 10.6 members, as opposed to the 10 members allocated to the town by the District Council. We have not been persuaded that the high levels of electoral imbalance resulting from this under-representation is merited and, as discussed later in the report, propose that Newark-on-Trent be represented by 11 members.

35 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 46 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 After careful consideration of the evidence received at Stage One, we consider that there is merit in the scheme submitted by the District Council, as it would represent a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. In particular, we note that these proposals would significantly improve electoral equality, with the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average being reduced from 22 to six. This level of electoral equality would marginally improve by 2004, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in three wards. However, the Council's proposals would result in a high level of electoral imbalance in Clipstone ward.

37 In view of this improved level of electoral equality, and the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. However, to improve electoral equality further, while having regard to the interests and identities of local communities, 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) Clipstone, Edwinstowe, Ollerton North and Ollerton South wards;
- (b) Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield, Rainworth and Rufford wards;
- (c) Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards;

- (d) Collingham, Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards;
- (e) Newark-on-Trent (five wards);
- (f) Southwell East and Southwell West wards;
- (g) Dover Beck, Lowdham and Trent wards;
- (h) Bullpit Pinfold, Elston, Farndon and Milton Lowfield wards.

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

Clipstone, Edwinstowe, Ollerton North and Ollerton South wards

39 The wards of Clipstone, Edwinstowe, Ollerton North and Ollerton South are situated in the north-west of the district. Clipstone, Ollerton North and Ollerton South wards are each represented by two-members, while Edwinstowe ward is represented by three members. Under current arrangements for a council size of 54, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone, Edwinstowe, Ollerton North and Ollerton South wards vary by 14 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 13 per cent from the district average respectively, under a council size of 54.

40 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Ollerton North and Ollerton South wards should be combined to form a new three-member Ollerton ward. It also proposed retaining the existing ward boundaries of Edwinstowe and Clipstone, each to be represented by two-members. It noted that its proposal for these wards would result in a high level of electoral imbalance, but argued that its proposal set out in its initial consultation document to include part of Edwinstowe parish in Clipstone ward would not reflect the interests and identities of communities in the area, or provide a significantly lower level of electoral inequality.

41 Under the District Council's proposal for a council size of 45, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards would vary by 28 per cent, 10 per cent and 6 per cent from the district average respectively. By 2004, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards projected to vary by 23 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent from the average respectively.

42 A number of representations were received by the District Council regarding this area. We understand that Edwinstowe Parish Council and a local resident objected to a proposal put forward in the District Council's initial consultation document that would combine the southern part of Edwinstowe with Clipstone ward. Another resident organised a 903-signature petition also opposing the District Council's preliminary proposals for Clipstone and Edwinstowe wards. Ollerton & Boughton Town Council accepted the District Council's proposals for a new Ollerton ward.

43 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposal that the towns of Clipstone and Edwinstowe be represented in separate wards has achieved a high degree of local support. While this proposal would result in a high degree of electoral imbalance, we consider that it has merit and we are content to substantially endorse it as our draft recommendation.

44 We consider that Clipstone and Edwinstowe are separate, cohesive communities, some three miles apart and that Clipstone is bounded to the west by the district boundary with Mansfield and to the south by Rufford parish, which is sparsely populated and contains Sherwood Pines Forest Park. In addition, we note that our proposals to allocate an additional councillor to Newark-on-Trent, as detailed below, would result in an improved councillor:elector ratio for wards in this area.

45 In view of the exceptionally high levels of electoral inequality in Clipstone ward under these proposals, we have examined alternative electoral arrangements in this area. However, we have not been persuaded that a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria could be achieved. We have examined the District Council's initial proposal in its consultation document that the southern part of Edwinstowe parish should be combined with Clipstone ward, but note that this proposal would also result in a degree of electoral imbalance, with the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone and Edwinstowe wards varying by 1 per cent and 16 per cent from the average respectively, and would not reflect the interests and identities of communities.

46 However, we propose modifying the District Council's proposed Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards, by combining Perlethorpe-cum-Budby parish with the proposed Ollerton ward, in order to achieve a better level of electoral equality in both the proposed Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards. We note that the A616 Worksop Road links Perlethorpe-cum-Budby parish and Ollerton, and do not consider that this proposal would not have an adverse impact on the representation of communities in the area.

47 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards would initially vary by 26 per cent, 9 per cent and 1 per cent from the district average respectively. By 2004, the number of electors per councillor in Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards is projected to vary by 21 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent from the average respectively.

Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield, Rainworth and Rufford wards

48 The wards of Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield, Rainworth and Rufford lie in the west of the district. Bilsthorpe, Farnsfield and Rainworth are each represented by two members, while Blidworth is represented by three members, and Rufford is a single-member ward. Under current arrangements for a council size of 54, the number of electors per councillor in Bilsthorpe, Blidworth and Rufford wards would vary by 12 per cent, 28 per cent and 1 per cent below the district average, while Farnsfield and Rainworth wards would vary by 10 per cent and 28 per cent above the average.

49 At Stage One, the District Council suggested warding Rainworth parish, with the proposed Rainworth North parish ward being combined with the parishes of Bilsthorpe and Rufford to form a revised Bilsthorpe ward, and the proposed Rainworth South parish ward being included with Lyndhurst parish in Rainworth ward. It also suggested retaining Blidworth's existing ward boundary. In addition, the District Council proposed combining Eakring parish in a revised Farnsfield ward. It proposed that all four wards should each be represented by two members.

50 The District Council forwarded submissions it had received relating to this area. Blidworth Parish Council opposed a proposal in the District Council’s preliminary consultation document to include part of Blidworth in the proposed Rainworth ward, while Blidworth Tenant’s Association forwarded a petition of 293 signatures objecting to any proposal to “merge” the parishes of Blidworth and Rainworth. Blidworth Parish Council also requested that the Commission consider including the parish in Mansfield district. Rufford Parish Council opposed the District Council’s proposal to include the parish in a district ward with Bilsthorpe parish, and expressed concern that this proposal would affect the external boundary of the parish during any subsequent review of parish boundaries, to be undertaken by the District Council.

51 Having carefully considered the representations at Stage One, we judge that the District Council’s proposals for Bilsthorpe ward would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and we propose endorsing it as our draft recommendation. While we note that Rufford Parish Council opposed the District Council’s proposed Bilsthorpe ward, it did not propose alternative arrangements. We have considered alternative electoral arrangements combining Rufford with parishes to its east, but note that the parish does not appear to share good communication links with adjoining rural parishes, and that any alternative proposal for this area would result in higher levels of electoral inequality in neighbouring wards.

52 However, we have not been persuaded on the evidence received at Stage One, that the District Council’s proposals for Blidworth and Rainworth wards would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore considered alternative electoral arrangements for the two wards and, on balance, are persuaded that the proposal which the District Council initially consulted on would provide a better warding arrangement. In particular, we note that the two communities are less than one mile apart and are linked by the B6020 Warsop Lane, and we therefore have not been persuaded that this proposal would significantly impact upon the identities and interests of communities in this area. Accordingly, we are endorsing this proposals as our draft recommendation. Nevertheless, we would welcome further views and evidence on this matter during Stage Three.

53 While a number of respondents opposed the proposals contained in the District Council’s consultation document for Blidworth and Rainworth wards on the grounds that district warding would result in Blidworth parish “getting smaller”, warding a parish to facilitate proposed district wards does not necessarily impact on a review of the external boundaries of parishes, and such a consideration is not within the remit of a periodic electoral review. In any event, we do not have the power to modify the external boundaries of parishes as part of a periodic electoral review, as that power was transferred to district councils under the Local Government & Rating Act 1997. Also, the Commission can only consider a district’s external boundaries under direction from the Secretary of State, and we are therefore unable to modify the district boundary between Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield, to include Blidworth parish in Mansfield, as proposed by Blidworth Parish Council.

54 Under our draft recommendations for a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in Bilsthorpe and Blidworth wards would initially vary by 7 per cent and 2 per cent from the district average respectively, while the number of electors per councillor in Rainworth ward would be equal to the average. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Maps 2, A3 and A5.

Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards

55 Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent are each single-member wards, while Boughton ward is represented by three members. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards would vary by 7 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent from the district average, based on a council size of 54.

56 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Boughton ward should comprise the parishes of Boughton, Kirton and Walesby, and be represented by two members. It proposed that the parishes of Bathley, Egmanon, Ossington and Wellow should be combined with the majority of Caunton ward to form a revised single-member Caunton ward. The District Council also proposed that the parishes of Carlton-on-Trent and Norwell should be included with Cromwell parish and the majority of the existing Sutton-on-Trent ward to form a revised single-member Sutton-on-Trent ward. In addition, it proposed that Hockerton parish should be combined with parishes to its east in a revised Muskham ward, as described below.

57 Under the District Council's proposals for a council size of 45, the number of electors per councillor in Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards would vary by 5 per cent, 1 per cent and 10 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 6 per cent in all three wards by 2004.

58 We understand from the District Council that Bathley Parish Council and Newark & Retford Conservative Association opposed the District Council's proposal to include Bathley parish in the revised Caunton ward, while North Muskham and South Muskham parish councils proposed that Bathley and Hockerton parishes be retained in Muskham and Caunton wards respectively.

59 Under Bathley Parish Council's and Newark & Retford Conservative Association's proposal to include Bathley parish in Muskham ward, the number of electors per councillor in Caunton and Muskham wards would vary by 9 per cent and 13 per cent from the district average respectively, under a 46 member council. Under North Muskham and South Muskham parish councils' proposal to include Bathley parish in Muskham ward and Hockerton parish in Caunton ward, the number of electors per councillor in Caunton and Muskham wards would vary by 3 per cent and 7 per cent from the average, assuming a council size of 46.

60 Caunton Parish Council proposed that Norwell parish should be retained in Caunton ward, while Norwell Parish Council indicated that it did not object to the District Council's proposal to include Norwell parish in Sutton-on-Trent ward. Carlton-on-Trent Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to include the parish in Sutton-on-Trent ward.

61 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposals for Sutton-on-Trent and Boughton wards have achieved a relatively high level of local support, and we are content to endorse them as our draft recommendations. We have considered Caunton Parish Council's concern regarding the inclusion of Norwell parish in the revised Sutton-on-Trent ward, but note that Norwell Parish Council does not object to the District Council's proposal, and we are not persuaded that Caunton Parish Council's proposal would necessarily better reflect the interests and identities of Norwell parish than our draft recommendation.

62 We also propose endorsing the District Council's proposals for Caunton ward as our draft recommendation. While we note the concerns expressed by the parish councils of Bathley, North Muskham and South Muskham and Newark & Retford Conservative Association regarding Bathley parish, we note that their proposals would result in a higher level of electoral imbalance than the District Council's proposals. We do not consider that this level of electoral imbalance is justified, as we note that Bathley parish would appear to have good communication links with Caunton parish. However, we would welcome further evidence from local people and groups during Stage Three.

63 Under our draft recommendations for a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards would initially vary by 8 per cent, 2 per cent and 12 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor in Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards projected to vary by 1 per cent, 1 per cent and 8 per cent from the average respectively.

Collingham, Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards

64 The wards of Collingham, Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe are situated in the east of the district, and are each represented by a single member. Under current arrangements for a 54-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Collingham, Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards varies by 52 per cent, 11 per cent, 14 per cent and 21 per cent respectively from the district average.

65 At Stage One the District Council proposed that Collingham and Meering wards should be combined to form a revised two-member Collingham ward. It proposed that the majority of Muskham ward should be combined with the parishes of Hockerton and Upton to form a revised single-member Muskham ward. The District Council proposed transferring Bathley parish to a revised Caunton ward, and Cromwell parish to a revised Sutton-on-Trent ward, as described previously. It also proposed retaining Winthorpe's existing ward boundaries and level of representation.

66 Under the District Council's proposals for a 45-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Muskham ward would vary by 1 per cent from the district average, while the number of electors per councillor in Collingham and Winthorpe wards would be equal to the average.

67 Thorney Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Meering ward. The District Council forwarded a submission it had received from Collingham Parish Council, supporting the District Council's proposal to combine the existing Collingham and Meering wards. As indicated previously, Bathley Parish Council and Newark & Retford Conservative Association opposed the District Council's proposal to include Bathley parish in the revised Caunton ward, while North Muskham and South Muskham parish councils proposed that Bathley and Hockerton parishes be retained in Muskham and Caunton wards respectively.

68 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposals would result in a good level of electoral equality for all three wards. We also note that retaining Winthorpe ward would utilise strong boundaries and reflect the

interests and identities of local communities, and we are content to endorse this as our draft recommendation. We are also content to endorse the District Council's proposed Collingham ward, as we consider that it would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, while utilising the River Trent as its western boundary. While we have considered Thorney Parish Council's proposals to retain the existing Collingham and Meering wards, we note that this would result in a high level of electoral inequality, with the number of electors per councillor in Collingham and Meering wards each varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. We have not been persuaded that this level of electoral imbalance is merited in this area.

69 We have also considered Bathley, North Muskham and South Muskham parish councils and Newark & Retford Conservative Association's proposals for Muskham ward. However, as previously indicated in relation to Caunton ward, we do not consider that these proposals would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the District Council's proposed Muskham ward. However, we would welcome further evidence from local people and groups during Stage Three.

70 Under our draft recommendations for a council of 46 members, the number of electors per councillor in Collingham, Muskham and Winthorpe wards would vary by 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent from the district average respectively.

Newark-on-Trent (five wards)

71 Bridge, Castle and Devon wards are each represented by three members, while Beacon and Magnus wards are each represented by two members. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards varies by 19 per cent, 7 per cent, 8 per cent, 16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively from the district average, based on a council size of 54.

72 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining five wards for the town, but proposed that it should be represented by 10 councillors, three fewer than at present. It proposed uniting the commercial centre in Castle ward, with the area bounded by Appleton Gate and the East Coast Main Line being transferred from Bridge ward to Castle ward. The District Council proposed modifying the boundary between Beacon and Bridge wards, including the part of Ransome town ward bounded by Barnby Gate and Cross Street together with the part of Harcourt town ward to the west of Whitfield Street in a revised two-member Bridge ward, while retaining the rest of Beacon's ward boundaries.

73 The District Council proposed Magnus ward should be represented by a single member, one less than at present, with the part of Byron town ward south of Carlton Road and west of Bowbridge Road being transferred from Magnus ward to Devon ward. It did not propose any further boundary modifications to Devon ward, but suggested that it should be represented by two members, one less than at present.

74 Under the District Council's proposal for a 45-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards would vary by 16 per cent, 5 per cent, 8 per cent, 15 per cent and 18 per cent from the district average respectively.

75 Having carefully considered the representation received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposals would result in a high level of electoral inequality. Under a council size of 45, Newark-on-Trent merits 10.6 members, whereas the District Council proposed that it should be represented by 10 members. We have not been persuaded that Newark-on-Trent should be represented by one fewer member than its entitlement, and we have therefore considered alternative electoral arrangements in this area, to facilitate representation by 11 councillors.

76 Our proposals for Newark-on-Trent are substantially based on the District Council's submission but utilise a number of alternative ward boundaries. We propose that a revised two-member Beacon ward should comprise Hilltop and Harcourt town wards together with the part of Ransome town ward to the east of Cross Street and south of Barnby Gate, while a revised two-member Bridge ward should include Bishop Alexander, Fosse and Gilstrap town wards together with the part of Lovers Lane town ward to the east of Appleton Gate and the rest of Ransome town ward. We propose that Castle ward should be represented by three members and comprise Lilley & Stone, Ossington and Windsor town wards, together with the part of Lovers Lane town ward west of Appleton Gate. We consider that a revised two-member Devon ward should include Cardinal Hinsley, St Mary's and Sconce town wards, together with the part of Grange town ward west of Lindsay Avenue, while the rest of Grange town ward would be included in a two-member Magnus ward which would include the town wards of Bowbridge, Byron, Clumber and Gopher.

77 We consider that these proposals would utilise a number of strong boundaries. In particular, we consider the B6326 London Road should be retained as the ward boundary between Beacon and Magnus wards, and that electors in the Riverside Road and Valley Prospect area should be represented in Devon ward, with which it appears closely linked. These proposed new ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report. Our proposals would have a consequential effect on parish warding, and this is detailed later in this report.

78 Under our draft recommendations for a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards would vary by 5 per cent, 2 per cent, 9 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain constant in Bridge, Devon and Magnus wards over the next five years, and is expected to improve in Castle ward, with an electoral imbalance of 5 per cent from the average by 2004. However, the number of electors per councillor in Beacon ward is projected to vary by 8 per cent by 2004, due to residential development.

Southwell East and Southwell West wards

79 Southwell is the most populous town in the west of the district, and is represented by two two-member wards. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Southwell East and Southwell West wards varies by 5 per cent and 18 per cent from the district average respectively, based on a council size of 54.

80 At Stage One the District Council proposed that Southwell should be represented by three single-member wards. It proposed that Southwell East ward should comprise "a substantial part" of the main commercial centre, together with the more rural area to the east of the parish, and be bounded by the Southwell Trail/Robin Hood Way, Station Road, Lower Kirklington Road and

The Ropewalk. It proposed that Southwell West ward should include the area bounded by Kirklington Road, Queen Street, Westgate and Church Street, while Southwell North ward would comprise the area north of the commercial centre. We understand that Southwell Town Council supports the District Council's proposals for the town, provided that other wards were "treated in exactly the same way".

81 Under the District Council's proposals for a 45 member council, the number of electors per councillor in Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West wards would vary by 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent from the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is not projected to alter significantly over the next five years.

82 Having carefully considered the representations received, we consider that the District Council's would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements, would utilise easily identifiable boundaries, and is supported by Southwell Town Council. We therefore propose endorsing the District Council's proposals for this area without modification.

83 Under our draft recommendation for a 46 member council, the number of electors per councillor in Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West wards would vary by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent from the district average respectively, while the number of electors per councillor in ward would be equal to the average. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

Dover Beck, Lowdham and Trent wards

84 Dover Beck, Lowdham and Trent wards form the district's southern boundary with Gedling and Rushcliffe boroughs. All three wards are each represented by a single member. Under current arrangements for a council size of 54, the number of electors per councillor in Dover Beck, Lowdham and Trent wards varies by 14 per cent, 22 per cent and 16 per cent respectively from the district average.

85 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Trent ward, and proposed combining Dover Beck and Lowdham wards to form a revised two-member Lowdham ward. Also, we understand that Lowdham Parish Council and a local resident opposed the District Council's proposed Lowdham ward. Fiskerton-cum-Morton and Thurgarton parish councils supported the District Council's proposed Trent ward.

86 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposal to retain Trent's ward boundaries has merit, as it achieves a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and enjoys a measure of local support. We also consider that the Council's proposal to combine Dover Beck and Lowdham wards would achieve a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We note that Lowdham Parish Council and a local resident propose retaining the existing Dover Beck and Lowdham wards. However, we concur with the District Council's view that, while it would be "feasible" to retain the two wards, the alternative proposals would result in higher levels of electoral inequality. In addition, we are persuaded that Dover Beck ward comprises a number of disparate parishes adjoining Lowdham, and we consider that the District Council's proposal would achieve the optimum balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

87 Under our draft recommendation for a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in Trent ward would vary by 2 per cent from the district average, while the number of electors per councillor in Lowdham ward would be equal to the district average. This improved level of electoral equality is projected to continue over the next five years.

Bullpit Pinfold, Elston, Farndon and Milton Lowfield wards

88 Bullpit Pinfold and Milton Lowfield are each two-member wards covering Balderton parish, while Elston and Farndon wards are each represented by a single-member. Bullpit Pinfold, Elston, Farndon and Milton Lowfield wards varies by 22 per cent, 32 per cent, 28 per cent and 36 per cent respectively from the district average.

89 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Balderton parish should be represented by three wards, with the area east of London Road together with the area north of Grove Street forming a new Balderton North ward, the area west of London Road and south of Grove Street forming a new Balderton West ward, and the area of the former Balderton Hospital site being combined with Elston and Farndon wards to form a revised two-member ward.

90 Under the District Council's proposals for a council size of 45, the number of electors per councillor in Balderton North ward and the ward including Farndon parish would vary by 4 per cent and 16 per cent less than the district average, while Balderton West ward would be relatively under-represented by 16 per cent. The number of electors per councillor in Balderton North ward is projected to remain constant over the next five years, while electoral equality in Balderton West ward and the ward including Farndon parish is projected to vary by less than 11 per cent from the average in both wards by 2004.

91 We understand from the District Council that Balderton Parish Council opposes the District Council's proposal to include the Balderton Hospital site in a ward with the existing Elston and Farndon wards.

92 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we note that the District Council's proposals would result in a relatively high level of electoral imbalance. However, we consider that a degree of imbalance is unavoidable, given the development of the site of the former Balderton Hospital. Accordingly, on balance, and in the absence of viable warding arrangements, we are content to endorse the District Council's proposals for this area, which we consider would achieve the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We propose that the ward comprising Elston and Farndon wards, together with the proposed Balderton South parish ward, should be named Farndon.

93 We have noted Balderton Parish Council's concern regarding the Balderton Hospital site development, but we have not been persuaded that the development site shares strong links with the rest of Balderton parish, and note that no alternative electoral arrangements have been put forward.

94 Under our draft recommendation for a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards would vary by 1 per cent, 18 per cent and 14 per cent from the district average respectively. However, as indicated above, this level of electoral imbalance would improve over the next five years. By 2004, the number of

electors per councillor in Balderton North and Balderton West wards is each projected to vary by less than 10 per cent, while the number of electors per councillor in Farndon ward would vary by 13 per cent from the average, due to the high level of residential development within the ward.

Electoral Cycle

95 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 whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

96 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 54 to 46;
- (b) the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- (c) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

97 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) there should be 11 members representing five wards in Newark-on-Trent, with ward boundaries predominantly based on existing district and parish ward boundaries, as detailed and illustrated in Figure 1 and on the large map in the back of this report;
- (b) Blidworth North parish ward, as proposed, of Blidworth parish should form part of Rainworth ward;
- (c) Perlethorpe-cum-Budby parish should be included in the proposed Ollerton ward.

98 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	54	46	54	46
Number of wards	30	26	30	26
Average number of electors per councillor	1,531	1,798	1,664	1,946
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	22	4	20	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	1	12	1

99 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Newark & Sherwood District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 22 to four. By 2004 only two wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

Newark & Sherwood District Council should comprise 46 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and at Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

100 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Balderton, Blidworth, Newark-on-Trent, Rainworth and Southwell to reflect the proposed district wards. In addition, we propose warding Clipstone parish.

101 Balderton Parish Council is currently represented by 18 councillors and is divided into four parish council wards, Bullpit, Lowfield, Milton and Pinfold. In order to facilitate our proposed warding arrangements, we propose that Balderton parish should be divided into three parish wards, Balderton North, Balderton South and Balderton West. We propose that the parish should continue to be represented by 18 members.

Draft Recommendation

Balderton Parish Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Balderton North (returning seven councillors), Balderton South (returning three councillors) and Balderton West (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 at Appendix A.

102 The parish of Blidworth is currently served by 11 councillors, representing Blidworth and Haywood Oaks parish wards. We propose that a new Blidworth North parish ward should be represented by five members and that a new Blidworth South parish ward should be represented by six members, in order to facilitate our proposed district warding arrangements for the area.

Draft Recommendation

Blidworth Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Blidworth North (returning five councillors) and Blidworth South (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A3 at Appendix A.

103 The parish of Clipstone is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. The District Council requested that we take account of a proposal submitted by a group of residents, although it noted that it did not have “any strong views on this matter”, as this proposal does not affect district warding arrangements. The District Council proposed that Clipstone be represented by two wards, King Clipstone and New Clipstone or Greater Clipstone, although it did not propose a level of representation for the wards. We understand that Clipstone Parish Council supports this proposal. In the absence of any alternative views, we propose that Clipstone parish be represented by two wards, King Clipstone (to be represented by one member) and New Clipstone (to be represented by nine members).

104 Our proposed district warding arrangements would not result in change to this area and we are content to put forward this proposal for consultation.

Draft Recommendation

Clipstone Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: King Clipstone (returning one councillor) and New Clipstone (returning nine councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards is illustrated and named on Map A4 at Appendix A.

105 The town of Newark-on-Trent is currently served by 18 councillors, representing 18 wards: Bishop Alexander, Bowbridge, Byron, Cardinal Hinsley, Clumber, Fosse, Gilstrap, Gopher, Grange, Harcourt, Hilltop, Lilley & Stone, Lovers Lane, Ossington, Ransome, St Mary’s, Sconce

and Windsor. The District Council proposed that Newark-on-Trent be represented either by 17 single-member wards or 16 single-member wards and one two-member ward. However, it suggested town wards that facilitated its proposal that Newark-on-Trent be represented by 10 district councillors, rather than the 11 members we consider the town merits, as detailed above.

106 In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose modifying the boundaries of eight town wards. We propose that Lovers Lane town ward should be divided between Fosse and Ossington town wards, each to be represented by two members, while the part of Grange town ward to the west of Lindsay Avenue would be included in a revised Cardinal Hinsley town ward, with the rest of Grange town ward being included in Gopher town ward. In addition, we propose combining the part of Ransome town ward that would form part of a revised Bridge district ward in Fosse town ward, and the part of Ransome town ward to the south of Barnby Gate and west of Whitfield Street in Harcourt town ward.

107 We do not propose modifying the remaining 10 wards. Our proposals for town warding arrangements in Newark-on-Trent will result in 14 single-member wards and two two-member wards. We would welcome further views, or alternative town warding arrangements at Stage Three, particularly from Newark-on-Trent Town Council.

Draft Recommendation

Newark-on-Trent Town Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, as at present, representing 16 wards: Bishop Alexander, Bowbridge, Byron, Cardinal Hinsley, Clumber, Gilstrap, Gopher, Harcourt, Hilltop, Lilley & Stone, Ransome, St Mary’s, Sconce and Windsor (each returning one councillor), and Fosse and Ossington (each returning two councillors). The boundary between the town wards is illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

108 The parish of Rainworth is currently served by 12 members, and is divided between Rainworth and Rufford district wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Rainworth should be represented by two parish wards: Rainworth North (to be served by three members) and Rainworth South (to be served by nine members).

Draft Recommendation

Rainworth Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Rainworth North (returning three members) and Rainworth South (returning nine members). The boundary between the two parish wards is illustrated and named on Map A5 at Appendix A.

109 The parish of Southwell is currently served by 15 members, representing Southwell East and Southwell West parish wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Southwell should be represented by revised Southwell East and Southwell West parish wards and a new Southwell North parish ward, each to be served by five members.

Draft Recommendation

Southwell Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West (each to be represented by five members). The boundary between the three parish wards is illustrated and named on Maps A6 and A7 at Appendix A.

110 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

111 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town 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 Newark & Sherwood

5 NEXT STEPS

112 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 21 February 2000. 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.

113 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Newark & Sherwood 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

114 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

Draft Recommendations for Newark & Sherwood: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Newark & Sherwood area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A7, and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Balderton parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Blidworth parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Clipstone parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Rainworth parish.

Maps A6 and A7 illustrate the proposed warding of Southwell parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Newark-on-Trent.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Newark & Sherwood: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Balderton Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Blidworth Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Clipstone Parish

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Rainworth Parish

Map A6: Proposed Warding of Southwell Parish

Map A7: Proposed Warding of Southwell Parish

APPENDIX B

Newark & Sherwood District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council only in nine wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows. The only other change to the District Council's proposals, which is not included in figures B1 and B2, is that we propose that ward number 14 should be named Farndon.

Figure B1:

Newark & Sherwood District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Beacon	2	Beacon ward (part – Harcourt, Hilltop and Ransome (part) town wards of Newark-on-Trent town)
2 Blidworth	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Blidworth parish)
3 Bridge	2	Bridge ward (part – Bishop Alexander, Fosse, Gilstrap and Lovers Lane (part) town wards of Newark-on-Trent town); Beacon ward (part – Ransome town ward (part))
4 Castle	3	Castle ward (part – Lilley & Stone, Ossington, Sconce and Windsor town wards of Newark-on-Trent town); Bridge ward (part – Lovers Lane town ward (part) of Newark-on-Trent town); Magnus ward (part – Byron town ward (part) of Newark-on-Trent town)
5 Devon	2	Devon ward (part – Cardinal Hinsley, Gopher, Grange and St Mary's town wards of Newark-on-Trent town); Magnus ward (part – Byron town ward (part) of Newark-on-Trent town)
6 Edwinstowe	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Edwinstowe and Perlethorpe-cum-Budby)
7 Magnus	1	Magnus ward (Bowbridge, Byron (part) and Clumber town wards of Newark-on-Trent town)
8 Ollerton	3	Ollerton North ward; Ollerton South ward
9 Rainworth	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Lyndhurst parish and Rainworth South parish ward as proposed of Rainworth parish)

Figure B2: Newark & Sherwood 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 (%)
1	Balderton North	2	3,545	1,773	-4	3,824	1,912	-4
2	Balderton West	2	4,259	2,130	16	4,227	2,114	6
3	Beacon	2	3,088	1,544	-16	3,880	1,940	-2
4	Bilthorpe	2	3,867	1,934	5	4,187	2,094	5
5	Blidworth	2	3,304	1,652	-10	3,455	1,728	-13
6	Boughton	2	3,866	1,933	5	3,920	1,960	-1
7	Bridge	2	3,852	1,926	5	4,367	2,184	10
8	Castle	3	5,968	1,989	8	6,561	2,187	10
9	Caunton	1	1,840	1,840	-1	1,973	1,973	-4
10	Clipstone	2	2,645	1,323	-28	3,074	1,537	-23
11	Collingham	2	3,684	1,842	0	3,860	1,930	-3
12	Devon	2	4,245	2,123	15	4,223	2,112	6
13	Edwinstowe	2	4,047	2,024	10	4,281	2,141	8
14	[Name to be agreed]	2	3,082	1,541	-16	4,400	2,200	11
15	Farnsfield	2	3,681	1,841	0	3,910	1,955	-2
16	Lowdham	2	3,613	1,807	-2	3,782	1,891	-5
17	Magnus	1	2,172	2,172	18	2,163	2,163	9
18	Muskham	1	1,821	1,821	-1	2,090	2,090	5
19	Ollerton	3	5,180	1,727	-6	5,383	1,794	-10
20	Rainworth	2	3,908	1,954	6	4,037	2,019	1
21	Southwell East	1	1,765	1,765	-4	1,873	1,873	-6
22	Southwell North	1	1,826	1,826	-1	1,930	1,930	-3
23	Southwell West	1	1,808	1,808	-2	2,027	2,027	2
24	Sutton-on-Trent	1	2,013	2,013	10	2,099	2,099	6
25	Trent	1	1,770	1,770	-4	1,934	1,934	-3

	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	Winthorpe	1	1,855	1,855	0	2,056	2,056	0
	Totals	45	82,704	–	–	89,516	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,838	–	–	1,989	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newark & Sherwood 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 C

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 Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; 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:

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

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:

- (i) the number of councillors;

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

- (ii) the need for parish wards;
- (iii) the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- (iv) the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- (v) 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.