

Draft Recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire

*December 1999*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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

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# 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>21</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Ashfield: Detailed Mapping	<i>23</i>
B Ashfield District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements	<i>25</i>
C The Statutory Provisions	<i>27</i>

Three large maps illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries in Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Selston, Sutton in Ashfield and Woodhouse are inserted inside the back cover of this report.



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Ashfield 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 Ashfield:

- **in seven of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and two 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 nine wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 58-59) are that:

- **Ashfield District Council should have 33 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections 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 all of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for Selston parish.**

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

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

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

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Local Government Commission for England  
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**Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Hucknall Central	2	Hucknall Central ward (part); Hucknall North ward (part); Hucknall West ward (part)
2	Hucknall East	2	<i>Unchanged</i>
3	Hucknall North	2	Hucknall North ward (part)
4	Hucknall West	3	Hucknall West ward (part); Hucknall Central ward (part); Hucknall North ward (part)
5	Jacksdale	1	Jacksdale ward (part)
6	Kirkby in Ashfield Central	2	Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward; Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (part); Woodhouse ward (part)
7	Kirkby in Ashfield East	2	Kirkby in Ashfield East ward; Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (part)
8	Kirkby in Ashfield West	2	Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield West ward (part)
9	Selston	2	Selston ward (part); Jacksdale ward (part); Woodhouse ward (part)
10	Sutton in Ashfield Central	3	Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield North ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield West ward (part)
11	Sutton in Ashfield East	3	Sutton in Ashfield East ward; Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield West ward (part)
12	Sutton in Ashfield North	3	Sutton in Ashfield North ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (part)
13	Sutton in Ashfield West	3	Sutton in Ashfield West ward (part); Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (part); Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (part)
14	Underwood	1	Underwood ward; Selston ward (part)
15	Woodhouse	2	Woodhouse ward (part)

Notes: 1 The wards of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood are wholly parished, while Woodhouse ward contains Annesley parish.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Ashfield

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 Hucknall Central	2	5,039	2,520	-3	5,593	2,797	3
2 Hucknall East	2	4,904	2,452	-6	5,657	2,829	4
3 Hucknall North	2	5,274	2,637	2	5,479	2,740	1
4 Hucknall West	3	7,936	2,645	2	7,893	2,631	-3
5 Jacksdale	1	2,534	2,534	-2	2,508	2,508	-8
6 Kirkby in Ashfield Central	2	4,960	2,480	-4	5,175	2,588	-5
7 Kirkby in Ashfield East	2	4,852	2,426	-7	5,183	2,592	-5
8 Kirkby in Ashfield West	2	5,263	2,632	1	5,255	2,628	-3
9 Selston	2	4,785	2,393	-8	4,928	2,464	-9
10 Sutton in Ashfield Central	3	8,534	2,845	10	8,599	2,866	5
11 Sutton in Ashfield East	3	8,136	2,712	5	8,393	2,798	3
12 Sutton in Ashfield North	3	8,250	2,750	6	8,426	2,809	3
13 Sutton in Ashfield West	3	7,213	2,404	-7	8,415	2,805	3
14 Underwood	1	2,456	2,456	-5	2,459	2,459	-10
15 Woodhouse	2	5,496	2,748	6	5,809	2,905	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>85,632</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>89,772</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,720</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Ashfield 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 Ashfield. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 81). The electoral arrangements of Nottinghamshire County Council were last reviewed in May 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 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 configurations 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*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
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, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half of 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 Ashfield 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 31 August 1999.

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

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

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Ashfield covers an area of approximately 11,000 hectares and has a population of 109,700. The district is bordered to the south by Broxtowe borough and Nottingham city, to the east by Gedling borough, Newark & Sherwood district and Mansfield district, to the north by South Yorkshire and to the west by Derbyshire. The district comprises three major towns, Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield and Sutton in Ashfield, together with a number of rural villages. In the west, the M1 motorway separates the rural villages of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood from the remainder of the district.

17 The district contains three parishes, but the towns of Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield and Sutton in Ashfield are unparished. Sutton in Ashfield comprises 37 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 85,632 (February 1999). The Council presently has 33 members who are elected from 15 wards, 12 of which are relatively urban, with the remaining wards of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood being predominantly rural. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors, eight are each represented by two councillors and two are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected together every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Ashfield district, with around 11 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,595 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,720 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 seven of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in two wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Hucknall West ward where the councillor represents 41 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Ashfield*

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 Hucknall Central	2	5,007	2,504	-4	5,414	2,707	0
2 Hucknall East	2	4,904	2,452	-6	5,657	2,829	4
3 Hucknall North	2	5,931	2,966	14	6,136	3,068	13
4 Hucknall West	2	7,311	3,656	41	7,415	3,708	36
5 Jacksdale	1	2,583	2,583	0	2,557	2,557	-6
6 Kirkby in Ashfield Central	2	4,494	2,247	-13	4,593	2,297	-16
7 Kirkby in Ashfield East	2	4,557	2,279	-12	4,749	2,375	-13
8 Kirkby in Ashfield West	2	5,832	2,916	12	6,084	3,042	12
9 Selston	2	4,694	2,347	-10	4,837	2,419	-11
10 Sutton in Ashfield Central	3	8,224	2,741	6	8,289	2,763	2
11 Sutton in Ashfield East	3	7,474	2,491	-4	7,731	2,577	-5
12 Sutton in Ashfield North	3	8,228	2,743	6	8,404	2,801	3
13 Sutton in Ashfield West	3	8,146	2,715	5	9,348	3,116	15
14 Underwood	1	2,304	2,304	-11	2,307	2,307	-15
15 Woodhouse	3	5,943	1,981	-24	6,251	2,084	-23
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>85,632</b>	-	-	<b>89,772</b>	-	-
<b>Averages</b>	-	-	<b>2,595</b>	-	-	<b>2,720</b>	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Ashfield 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 Woodhouse ward were relatively over-represented by 24 per cent, while electors in Hucknall West ward were relatively under-represented by 41 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

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

#### **Ashfield District Council**

24 The District Council proposed a council of 33 members representing 15 wards, the same as at present. The Council stated that its approach had been “that each of the district’s townships and villages should continue to be seen as distinct but within the broader community of Ashfield”. Accordingly it proposed that the number of councillors representing Woodhouse ward should be reduced from three to two, while the number of councillors representing Hucknall West ward should be increased from two to three and that modifications should be made to the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards. The Council proposed retaining elections of the whole council as at present.

25 Under the Council’s proposals, one ward, Underwood, would vary by more than 10 per cent from the average (15 per cent in 2004).

#### **Parish Councils**

26 We received a representation from Selston Parish Council which proposed a modification to the boundary to transfer the Jubilee area from Jacksdale ward to Selston ward. It also proposed redistributing its parish councillors to produce a fairer balance of representation.

#### **Other Representations**

27 Councillor Shaw, member for Sutton in Ashfield Central division, opposed any modification to the boundaries of Sutton in Ashfield Central ward.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Ashfield 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”.

29 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.

30 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.

31 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**

32 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 85,632 to 89,772 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects the growth to be relatively evenly distributed, with the most noticeable increases in Sutton in Ashfield West ward (1,202 electors) and Hucknall East ward (753 electors). 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.

33 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**

34 As already explained, our starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

35 Ashfield District Council presently has 33 members, which the District Council proposed should be retained. We received no other views regarding council size during Stage One.

36 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 33 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

37 We received one district-wide scheme from the District Council which provided substantial improvements to electoral equality while generally commanding local support. We also received two other representations from Selston Parish Council and Councillor Shaw, member for Sutton in Ashfield Central division, commenting on specific areas of the district, which we have evaluated against the statutory criteria for the district as a whole.

38 In view of the significant improvements to electoral equality which would result from the District Council's proposals, we have concluded that it should be used as a basis for our draft recommendations. We consider that this scheme would significantly improve electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria. However, we have moved away from the District Council's proposals where we judge that improvements to electoral equality may be achieved without having a detrimental impact on the other statutory criteria. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Hucknall (four wards);
- (b) Kirkby in Ashfield and Woodhouse (four wards);
- (c) Sutton in Ashfield (four wards);
- (d) Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood wards.

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

### **Hucknall (four wards)**

40 The town of Hucknall lies in the south-east corner of the district. The town is currently covered by four two-member wards and, as a whole, is relatively under-represented. At present, the average number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the district average in Hucknall Central ward (equal to the average in 2004), 6 per cent below in Hucknall East ward (4 per cent

above in 2004), 14 per cent above in Hucknall North ward (13 per cent above in 2004) and 41 per cent above in Hucknall West ward (36 per cent above in 2004).

41 At Stage One Ashfield District Council calculated that, under a council size of 33, Hucknall warranted an additional district councillor to provide the appropriate level of representation for the town. The Council therefore proposed increasing the number of councillors in Hucknall West ward from two to three, thereby increasing the total number of district councillors representing the town from eight to nine. It proposed modifying the boundaries of the wards of Hucknall Central, Hucknall North and Hucknall West to improve electoral equality, utilising the A611 bypass as a boundary where possible. Consequently, it proposed that the part of Hucknall Central ward lying to the south-west of the bypass should be transferred to Hucknall West ward, and that the area of the existing Hucknall West ward which lies both to the east of the A611 bypass and to the south of Wood Lane should form part of Hucknall Central ward. Furthermore, it proposed that Grasmere Close, Kendal Close and part of Coniston Road should be transferred from Hucknall North ward to Hucknall Central ward, while the remaining part of the existing Hucknall North ward, lying to the west of Annesley Road, would be transferred from Hucknall North ward to Hucknall West ward. The District Council stated that its proposals for Hucknall would secure improvements to electoral equality while utilising clear boundaries.

42 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the district average in Hucknall Central ward (3 per cent above in 2004), 6 per cent below in Hucknall East ward (4 per cent above in 2004), 2 per cent above in Hucknall North ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 2 per cent above in Hucknall West ward (3 per cent below in 2004). We received no other proposals relating to Hucknall during Stage One.

43 We have considered carefully the District Council's proposals for Hucknall town, noting in particular the good levels of electoral equality achieved, together with the clearly identifiable boundaries which are utilised. In the absence of alternative proposals, or other evidence, we judge that the District Council's scheme for the four Hucknall wards represents a good balance of the need to seek improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are therefore putting forward the District Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations without modification. The proposals for Hucknall are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

#### **Kirkby in Ashfield and Woodhouse (four wards)**

44 The four wards of Kirkby in Ashfield Central, Kirkby in Ashfield East, Kirkby in Ashfield West and Woodhouse are situated in the centre of the district. The three Kirkby town wards are each represented by two councillors. Woodhouse ward (which comprises Annesley parish together with an unparished area in the north of the ward) is represented by three councillors. The area as a whole is over-represented: the number of electors per councillor is 13 per cent below the district average in Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward (16 per cent in 2004), 12 per cent below in Kirkby in Ashfield East ward (13 per cent in 2004), 12 per cent above in Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (the same in 2004) and 24 per cent below in Woodhouse ward (23 per cent in 2004).

45 In considering proposals for the area, the District Council particularly noted that Woodhouse ward is significantly over-represented. The Council therefore proposed reducing the number of councillors representing the ward from three to two. In order to further improve electoral equality in the four wards concerned, it also proposed modifications to their boundaries. Under its proposals the unparished area of Woodhouse lying to the west of the M1 would form part of Selston ward, while the area to the north of Park Lane and the M1 would form part of Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward. It also proposed that an area in the vicinity of Mutton Hill should be transferred from Woodhouse ward to Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward, and that 334 electors in the Chapel Street area should be transferred from Kirkby in Ashfield West ward to Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward. It proposed that Kirkby in Ashfield West ward should be further modified, so that its eastern boundary would run along “the railway line at its junction with Urban Road/Victoria Road moving northwards to Southwell Lane and along Lindrick Road to Sutton Middle Lane to its boundary with the A38.” It also proposed that the northern boundary of Kirkby in Ashfield West ward should follow the centre of the A38 west to the district boundary, thereby transferring Oakfield Avenue and Garth Avenue to Sutton in Ashfield East ward.

46 Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the district average in Kirkby in Ashfield Central ward (5 per cent in 2004), 7 per cent below in Kirkby in Ashfield East ward (5 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above in Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (3 per cent below in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Woodhouse ward (7 per cent above in 2004). No further views were received during Stage One regarding the warding of this area.

47 We have considered carefully the District Council’s proposals in this area. We note the substantial improvements to electoral equality which would result from the Council’s scheme, and judge that the proposed boundary modifications would appear to be more readily identifiable than those currently existing. We consider that any further improvements in electoral equality could only be secured at the expense of local community identities. We are therefore putting forward the District Council’s proposals for the wards of Kirkby in Ashfield Central, Kirkby in Ashfield East, Kirkby in Ashfield West and Woodhouse as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposals are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Sutton in Ashfield (four wards)**

48 The four district wards of Sutton in Ashfield Central, Sutton in Ashfield East, Sutton in Ashfield North and Sutton in Ashfield West are situated in the north of the district, and each is represented by three members. Currently, the number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the district average in Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (2 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below in Sutton in Ashfield East ward (5 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above in Sutton in Ashfield North ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Sutton in Ashfield West ward (15 per cent in 2004).

49 In its Stage One submission the District Council identified that, due to proposed housing developments, the worst electoral inequality in this area was forecast to be in Sutton in Ashfield West ward. Consequently, it proposed a redistribution of the electors between these four wards which it stated would improve electoral equality while better reflecting local community

identities. In addition to the modifications to the boundary between Sutton in Ashfield East and Sutton in Ashfield West wards, and the proposed Kirkby in Ashfield West ward (described earlier), the Council proposed a boundary modification transferring the area around Hilsborough Avenue from Sutton in Ashfield West ward to Sutton in Ashfield East ward. It also proposed that the area of Sutton in Ashfield Central ward generally to the south and east of Brook Street, Low Street and Spring Road should be transferred to Sutton in Ashfield East ward. The Council further proposed that Sutton in Ashfield Central ward should be further modified to include an area bounded by Gill Street, Huthwaite Road and Alfreton Road (currently in Sutton in Ashfield West ward), the area around Willow Crescent (currently in Sutton in Ashfield West ward) and an area in the vicinity of Quarrydale School (currently in Sutton in Ashfield North ward), which it stated would provide well-defined boundaries while reflecting local community identities and interests. Finally, in this area, it also proposed that that part of Forest Road currently in Sutton in Ashfield Central ward, together with Ashfield Street, Leyton Avenue and part of Loundhouse Road, should be included in Sutton in Ashfield North ward, as “these properties ... have a community affinity to the other properties on Forest Road.”

50 Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the district average in Sutton in Ashfield Central ward (5 per cent above in 2004), 5 per cent above in Sutton in Ashfield East ward (3 per cent above in 2004), 6 per cent above in Sutton in Ashfield North ward (3 per cent above in 2004) and 7 per cent below in Sutton in Ashfield West ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

51 Councillor Shaw, member for Sutton in Ashfield Central division, opposed the proposal to modify the boundary of Sutton in Ashfield Central ward. He considered that if the boundaries of other wards needed to be adjusted then they could be modified without affecting Sutton in Ashfield Central ward.

52 In arriving at our draft recommendations we have considered carefully the representations which we have received. While we recognise Councillor Shaw’s opposition to any proposed modification to Sutton in Ashfield Central ward, we also note that he did not include any detailed proposals for alternative electoral arrangements in this area. Furthermore, we note that the District Council’s scheme in this area would secure substantial improvements to electoral equality in the four wards concerned while in our opinion reflecting local community ties and interests. We are therefore putting forward the Council’s proposals for the wards of Sutton in Ashfield Central, Sutton in Ashfield East, Sutton in Ashfield North and Sutton in Ashfield West as our draft recommendations subject to two minor amendments. Following advice from Ordnance Survey we are proposing a minor amendment to the boundary between Sutton in Ashfield Central and Sutton in Ashfield West wards in the area to the north of Ashland Road West to follow recognisable ground features. We are also proposing a minor modification to the boundary between Sutton in Ashfield Central and Sutton in Ashfield North wards for the same reason. Neither of these two amendments would effect any electors. Our proposals for these wards are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood wards**

53 The three district wards of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood are situated in the west of the district and are largely separated from the remainder of the district by the M1 motorway. The three wards are wholly parished, with Jacksdale and Selston wards covering parts of Selston parish alone, while Underwood ward contains part of Selston parish and the whole of Felley parish. At present, the number of electors per councillor is equal to the district average in Jacksdale ward (6 per cent below in 2004), 10 per cent below the average in Selston ward (11 per cent below in 2004) and 11 per cent below in Underwood ward (15 per cent below in 2004).

54 In its Stage One submission, the District Council stated that “the Underwood area together with Jacksdale and Selston are three distinct communities situated at the western edge of the district boundary and each is separated from the remaining parts of Ashfield by the M1 motorway and open countryside”. Consequently, it stated that it was not proposing any substantial changes to the area. However, in addition to the modification to the boundary between Woodhouse and Selston wards, detailed earlier, the District Council proposed one further amendment in this area: transferring the Pye Hill area, currently in Jacksdale ward, to Selston ward, including both sides of Alfreton Road in the same ward. This proposal was supported by Selston Parish Council.

55 Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average in Jacksdale ward (8 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent below in Selston ward (7 per cent in 2004) and 11 per cent below in Underwood ward (15 per cent in 2004). While the Council recognised the electoral imbalance which would result in this area under its proposals, it considered that such an inequality was unavoidable because of the geography and community identity of the area concerned.

56 We have given careful consideration to the views received concerning this area. While we consider that the District Council’s proposals to amend the boundaries of Jacksdale and Selston wards represent a satisfactory balance of the statutory criteria, we remain concerned at the levels of electoral inequality which would persist, particularly in Underwood ward, under its proposals. We accept the District Council’s argument that these three wards constitute a distinct area of the district and do not consider that there is any merit in looking beyond the external boundaries of the three proposed wards concerned for alternative warding arrangements. However, we consider that improvements to electoral equality in this area can be secured while continuing to have regard to the other statutory criteria. Consequently, we are proposing to modify the boundary between Selston and Underwood wards to follow the centre of Annesley Lane, turning south to the west of Nottingham Road until it meets the existing boundary, thus transferring an area from Selston ward to Underwood ward. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the average in Selston ward (9 per cent in 2004) and 5 per cent below the average in Underwood ward (10 per cent in 2004). Following advice from Ordnance Survey we are also proposing that the boundary between Jacksdale and Selston wards should be modified so that it follows recognisable existing ground features; this modification would not involve any further transfer of electors. Subject to these amendments we are adopting the District Council’s proposals for the wards of Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

57 At Stage One the District Council stated that it wished to continue to be elected together every four years. We received no other 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**

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

- (a) a council of 33 members should be retained;
- (b) there should be 15 wards, as at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

59 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them substantially in one area to modify the boundary between Selston and Underwood wards. Following advice from Ordnance Survey, we have also proposed modifications to the boundaries between Jacksdale and Selston wards, Sutton in Ashfield Central and Sutton in Ashfield West wards and Sutton in Ashfield Central and Sutton in Ashfield North wards so that they follow recognisable ground features; these amendments would not affect any electors.

60 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	33	33	33	33
Number of wards	15	15	15	15
Average number of electors per councillor	2,595	2,720	2,595	2,720
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	0	9	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	0	2	0

61 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Ashfield District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from seven to none. This level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with no wards forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Ashfield District Council should comprise 33 councillors serving 15 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

### **Parish Council Electoral Arrangements**

62 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 Selston parish to reflect the proposed district wards.

63 The parish of Selston is currently served by 21 councillors representing three wards, Jacksdale, Selston and Underwood, which are represented by seven, nine and five councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Selston parish, which generally reflects the District Council's proposal although modified to follow ground features and subject to our additional amendment to the boundary between Selston and

Underwood wards, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish. Selston Parish Council also requested that the number of councillors representing Selston parish ward should be increased by one, and that the number of parish councillors representing Jacksdale parish should be reduced by one, which they stated would offer a fairer level of representation than the current arrangements. We have calculated that this is currently the case and are therefore proposing to adopt the Parish Council’s proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Selston Parish Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Jacksdale (returning six councillors), Selston (10) and Underwood (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

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

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

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Ashfield*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

66 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Ashfield. 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.

67 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Ashfield 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](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

68 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 Ashfield: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Ashfield 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 the large map at the back of this report.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Selston parish, Sutton in Ashfield and Woodhouse.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Ashfield: Key Map*

# APPENDIX B

## Ashfield 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 two wards, where the Council’s proposals were as follows:

*Figure B1: Ashfield District Council’s Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Selston	Selston ward; Jacksdale ward (part); Woodhouse ward (part)
Underwood	<i>Unchanged</i>

*Figure B2: Ashfield 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 %
Selston	2	4,937	2,469	-5	5,080	2,540	-7
Underwood	1	2,304	2,304	-11	2,307	2,307	-15

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Ashfield District Council’s submission.*

*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 Wear<sup>1</sup>. 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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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