This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the London borough of Merton.

Member of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)
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Robert Hughes
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Merton is inserted inside the back cover of the report.
WHY YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY IS UNDER REVIEW

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 to their electoral arrangements, such as the number of councillors representing residents in each area.

As a result of changes in the electorate, we are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England.

In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review of Merton is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names, and propose the creation or abolition of wards. We cannot recommend changes to the external administrative boundary of the borough as part of this review.

This report sets out our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Merton. Our conclusions are summarised at the front of the report, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover. Details of our draft recommendations, and how to comment on them, are set out in Chapters 4 and 5.

We have not yet decided on our final recommendations and wish to use this period to seek further evidence. We will be prepared to modify or change our draft recommendations in the light of views expressed if, in our judgement, the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would be better served. It is therefore important that all those interested in the review should give us their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.
SUMMARY


- 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 Merton:

- in five of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;
- by 2003 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 five wards, and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 93-94) are that:

- Merton Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors, three more than at present;
- there should be 20 wards, the same as at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all of the existing wards.

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

- In all of the 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 6 per cent from the borough average.
- This improved electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the wards expected to vary by no more than 3 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003.

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

- We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 26 January 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.

- The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 22 March 1999:

Director of Reviews
Merton Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphins Court
10/11 Great Turrstle
London WC1V 7JU
1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Merton.

2. In undertaking periodic electoral reviews, we must have regard to:

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

3. 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. We are not required to have regard to Parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of Parliamentary constituencies.

4. The review is in four stages (Figure 2).

   **The London Boroughs**

5. Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and are currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews of the London boroughs. (The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.)

6. Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Having discussed the appropriate timing of London borough reviews with local authority interests, we therefore decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis in June 1998 and the last group will begin in February 1999, with completion planned for June 1999 to February 2000.

7. We have sought to ensure that all concerned are aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our Guidance have been sent to all London boroughs, along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we have welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the great majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

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**Figure 1:** The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward name</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Constituent areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannon Hill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cannon Hill ward (part); Lower Morden ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St Helier ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colliers Wood</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbey ward (part); Colliers Wood (part); Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundonald</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dundonald ward; West Barnes ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Wimbledon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbey ward (part); Colliers Wood ward (part); Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillside</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hillside ward (part); Village ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longthornton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Figg's Marsh ward (part); Longthornton ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Morden</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lower Morden ward (part); St Helier ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merton Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbey ward (part); Merton Park ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcham Central</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Figg's Marsh ward (part); Lavender ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Longthornton ward (part); Phipps Bridge ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcham South</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Colliers Wood ward (part); Phipps Bridge ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potters Hill ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcham West</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbey ward (part); Colliers Wood (part); Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ward (part); Phipps Bridge ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Mitcham</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gravetye ward; Figg's Marsh ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollards Hill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pollards Hill ward (part); Longthornton ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravensbury</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ravensbury ward (part); St Helier ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raynes Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hillside ward (part); Raynes Park ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>West Barnes ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helier West</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Merton Park ward (part); Ravensbury ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St Helier ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wimbledon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbey ward (part); Trinity ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hillside ward (part); Raynes Park ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Village ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Barnes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cannon Hill ward (part); Lower Morden ward (part);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>West Barnes ward (part)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbledon Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Colliers Wood ward (part); Durnsford ward; Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ward (part); Village ward (part)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modem Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, Merton is in the first phase of reviews.

The Government’s subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council’s area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would have no doubt 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. Our general experience so far is that proposals for three-member ward patterns are emerging from most areas in London.

As a quite separate exercise to the PERs, the Commission was directed by the Secretary of State to review the electoral arrangements of the Greater London Authority. Our recommendations were put to the Secretary of State in November 1998.

Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

### The Review of Merton

13 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for Merton. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1977 (Report No. 247).

14 Stage One began on 23 June 1998, when we wrote to Merton Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 September 1998.

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

16 Stage Three began on 26 January 1999 and will end on 22 March 1999. This stage involves publication of 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.

17 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

18 The borough of Merton is an outer London borough situated in the south-west of Greater London, encompassing the three main settlements of Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. It is bounded to the north by the borough of Wandsworth, to the west by Kingston upon Thames, to the south by Sutton and to the east by the boroughs of Croydon and Lambeth. Merton, with a population of some 168,000 covering an area of 3,796 hectares, has a population density of just over 44 people per hectare.

19 The borough is mainly residential in character, although it has its fair share of commerce and industry. Nearly 30 per cent of the borough is devoted to parks, public open spaces and recreation grounds, including the world famous Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis Ground, Wimbledon Common (literary home to the Wombles), Mitcham Common and Morden Park, amongst others. The borough has good transport links, with the Wimbledon/Waterloo mainline railway, local rail services via the Wimbledon/Sutton/Streatham loop, London Underground connections with the Northern and District lines and many main roads including the A3 (Kingston by-pass) and the A24 London Road.

20 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 borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term ‘electoral variance’.

21 The electorate of the borough (February 1998) is 131,801. The Council currently has 57 councillors who are elected from 20 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Seventeen wards are each represented by three councillors and three wards elect two councillors each. As all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

22 Since the last electoral review (completed in 1977), there has been a slight decrease in electorate in the borough, with around 3 per cent less electors than at that time. However, the Borough Council forecasts that there will be an overall increase in the electorate of 2 per cent by the year 2003.

23 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,313 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,363 by the year 2003 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 five of the 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Lavender ward where each of the two councillors represents on average 19 per cent more electors than the borough average.
### Existing Electoral Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward name</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Electorate (1998)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
<th>Electorate (2003)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Abbey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,365</td>
<td>2,455</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7,545</td>
<td>2,455</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cannon Hill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,755</td>
<td>2,252</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>6,759</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Colliers Wood</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,453</td>
<td>2,484</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7,705</td>
<td>2,568</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dundonald</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,356</td>
<td>2,119</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>6,497</td>
<td>2,166</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Durnford</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,391</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>4,416</td>
<td>2,208</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Figge's Marsh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,678</td>
<td>2,559</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7,846</td>
<td>2,615</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Gravency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,390</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>4,434</td>
<td>2,217</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Hillside</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,242</td>
<td>2,414</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7,462</td>
<td>2,487</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Lavender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5,509</td>
<td>2,755</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5,761</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Longthornton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,407</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7,702</td>
<td>2,567</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Lower Morden</td>
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<td>6,784</td>
<td>2,261</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>6,852</td>
<td>2,284</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Merton Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,874</td>
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<td>6,993</td>
<td>2,331</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Phipps Bridge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,768</td>
<td>2,589</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>2,699</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Pollards Hill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,170</td>
<td>2,057</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>6,055</td>
<td>2,018</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Ravensbury</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,561</td>
<td>2,187</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>6,724</td>
<td>2,241</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Raynes Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,254</td>
<td>2,418</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7,402</td>
<td>2,467</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 St Helier</td>
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<td>6,417</td>
<td>2,139</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>6,505</td>
<td>2,168</td>
<td>-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Trinity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,290</td>
<td>2,097</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>6,471</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Village</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,116</td>
<td>2,039</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>6,205</td>
<td>2,102</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 West Barnes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7,081</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7,144</td>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Totals

|              | 57            | 131,861 | 2,313 | 134,676 | 2,363 |

Source: Electorate figures are based on Merton Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (−) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Village ward were relatively over-represented by 12 per cent, while electors in Lavender ward were relatively under-represented by 19 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
3. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

24 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 Merton Borough Council.

25 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the Borough Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two representations during Stage One. The Borough Council and the Merton Borough Liberal Democrats both submitted borough-wide schemes. These, with accompanying mapping, may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission by appointment.

Merton Borough Council

26 The Borough Council submitted a borough-wide, three-member per ward scheme based on the existing 20 wards. In its submission, it proposed to increase council size from 57 to 60 members by allocating one additional councillor to each of the three existing two-member wards. It was of the view that greater local accountability could be achieved by increasing the number of councillors, and hence decreasing the average number of electors per councillor. The Council also emphasised the fact that it proposed to maintain an even number of wards within the Borough in order to facilitate the maintenance of two evenly proportionate parliamentary constituencies for the Merton area.

27 The Borough Council proposed modifications to all but one of the existing wards (Dundonald), in order to achieve better levels of electoral equality. The most significant boundary modifications that it proposed were in the Durnsford, Village, Hillside and Raynes Park wards in the north of the borough; in the Colliers Wood, Gravency, Lavender, Figge’s Marsh and Phipps Bridge wards in the east of the borough; and in the St Helier and Ravensbury wards in the south of the borough. Whilst the Council also put forward relatively minor boundary amendments elsewhere in the borough in order to “tidy up” some current anomalies, it proposed to maintain a number of existing boundaries, such as sections of the Wimbledon/Waterloo, Wimbledon/Tooting and Wimbledon/Mitcham railway lines. It also proposed new names for eight of the wards. The Council’s proposals are summarised in Appendix A.

Merton Borough Liberal Democrats

28 The Merton Borough Liberal Democrats also put forward a borough-wide scheme based on 20 three-member wards. Like the Council, they proposed to increase council size from 57 to 60 members by allocating one additional councillor to each of the three existing two-member wards. They stated that they had “endeavoured as much as is possible to use shopping areas as a focus of the individual wards ... whilst trying to maintain [ward] sizes which differ as little as possible”. The Liberal Democrats’ scheme was based predominantly on the 998 electorate and paid only limited regard to the forecast electorate in 2003.

29 While the Liberal Democrats recommended modifications to all current ward boundaries, the most noticeable changes were proposed in the Durnsford, Village, Hillside and Raynes Park wards in the north of the borough; in the Colliers Wood, Gravency, Lavender, Figge’s Marsh and Phipps Bridge wards in the east of the borough; and in the Dundonald, Merton Park, St Helier and Ravensbury wards in the central and southern parts of the borough. The Liberal Democrats also proposed to maintain a number of existing boundaries, such as sections of the Wimbledon/Waterloo, Wimbledon/Tooting and Wimbledon/Mitcham railway lines, and proposed new names for five of the wards. The Liberal Democrats’ proposals are summarised in Appendix A.
4. ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Merton is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough."

However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, 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. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

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.

Our Guidance states that, while 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 a minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly urban area such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

Electorate Forecasts

The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2 per cent from 131,861 to 134,676 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expected the growth to be fairly evenly distributed throughout the borough, although it expected there to be a decrease in electorate in the Pollard's Hill ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, the expected rate of building and demolition over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council Size

We indicated in our Guidance that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a London borough to be in the range of 40 to 80.

Merton Borough Council currently has 57 members. Over the past 20 years the borough has experienced a 3 per cent decrease in electorate, although it is forecast to increase by some 2 per cent over the next five years. The Borough Council and the Merton Borough Liberal Democrats both proposed to increase the council size by three members to 60.

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
Electoral Arrangements

We have carefully considered both the borough-wide schemes received from the Borough Council and the Merton Borough Liberal Democrats. For these representations, some consideration has emerged which, having informed us as we prepared our draft recommendations.

The current electoral arrangements provide for predominantly three-member wards in Merton, although there are also some two-member wards. Having regard to the Government's White Paper, Modern Local Government - In Touch with the People, both the Council and the Liberal Democrats submitted proposals based on a similar pattern of three-member wards for the borough. In addition, both representations also proposed to increase council size to 60 members. In the light of this consensus over the number of wards and the number of councillors that should represent each ward, and in view of the local support for an increase in council size (which is within the size range contained in our Green Paper), we are proposing a pattern of 20 three-member wards for the borough.

There is also general recognition that the existing arrangements provide for some good natural boundaries, such as sections of the Wimbledon/Waterloo, Wimbledon/Tooting and Wimbledon/Mitcham railway lines. We have noted this consensus of opinion and in light of the fact that these topographical features currently promote the recognition of good recognizable boundaries, we have strived to maintain them where possible within our proposals.

Both the borough-wide schemes would provide improved electoral equality; under both the Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough would reduce from five to zero. The Council's scheme would not have any ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in 2003 either. The Liberal Democrats' submission paid only limited regard to the projected electorate and the consequent effect that its scheme would have on electoral equality in the future.

We have noted the areas where there is consensus between the Council's and the Liberal Democrats' submissions, particularly with regard to council size and the number of wards. We were faced with a difficult choice in choosing between two submissions. However, in light of the generally better level of electoral equality that would be achieved under the Council's scheme (particularly on the five-year electorate projections) and the more identifiable boundaries that it would generally provide, we propose to base our scheme on the Council's proposals. In order to achieve an improved level of electoral equality across the borough and having regard to the statutory criteria, however, we propose to make some modifications to the Council's scheme. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- Durnford, Village, Hillside and Raynes Park wards;
- Trinity, Abbey and Colliers Wood wards;
- Dudsonald and Merton Park wards;
- West Barnes, Cannon Hill and Lower Morden wards;
- St Helier and Ravensbury wards;
- Graveney, Lavender, Fige's Marsh and Plipwell Bridge wards;
- Longthornton and Pollards Hill wards.

Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted as the back of the report.

Durnford, Village, Hillside and Raynes Park wards

These four wards are situated in the north and north-western part of the borough. The two-member Durnford ward and three-member Village ward are both currently over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 5 per cent and 12 per cent respectively (7 per cent and 11 per cent in 2005). The three-member wards of Hillside and Raynes Park are both slightly under-represented, by 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (5 per cent and 3 per cent in 2003).

The Borough Council proposed that the two-member Durnford ward should be enlarged so as to enable it to become a three-member ward. It suggested that the ward's southern boundary should follow along the Wimbledon/Tooting railway line, from Wimbledon Station as far as the borough boundary, thus bringing in 781 electors from Tooting. This proposal would mean that this northern area of the borough as a whole would be represented by 12 councillors, one more than at present.

The Council proposed amendments to other ward boundaries in the area in order to improve electoral equality and provide for effective boundaries. It contended that 1,582 electors in the eastern part of the current Village ward should be included in Durnford ward, as these residents regard the main street of Arthur Road and Wimbledon Park underground station as the focus of the area. As a result of this amendment, and in light of Village ward currently being over-represented by 12 per cent, the Council further proposed that 1,582 electors in the northern part of the current Raynes Park ward, and a net total of 348 electors from Hillside ward, should be transferred into a revised Village ward. To counterbalance the loss of the electors from Raynes Park ward into Village ward, and in order to provide for better boundaries, the Council proposed to transfer 358 electors from West Barnes ward and 562 electors from Hillside ward into Raynes Park ward. Finally in this area, the Council also proposed that the new three-member Durnford ward be renamed Wimbledon Park ward.

The Liberal Democrats proposed broadly similar arrangements for these four wards. Like the Council they proposed that the southern boundary of Durnford ward should follow the Wimbledon/Tooting railway and that the northern area as a whole should be represented by 12 councillors, one more than at present. In the eastern part of Village ward should be included in Durnford ward, stating that residents regard themselves as living in Wimbledon Park, use Wimbledon Park tube station and [use] the shopping area on Arthur Road. In relation to the north-west of the borough, they stated that "residents around the Cope Hill and Cotcham Park Road area do not regard themselves as living in Raynes Park but in West Wimbledon... they have a common outlook with the other residents who border [Wimbledon] Common" are consequently proposed that some electors currently in Raynes Park ward should be transferred into Village ward.

The Liberal Democrats were of the view that the current boundary between Village and Hillside wards (which runs predominantly along Ridgeway and Cope Hill) is not a natural division and believed that those roads actually form a "focus" for this area. In view of this, they proposed that the new three-member Durnford ward be re-named Wimbledon Park ward and that the new Village ward could be re-named Wimbledon Common ward.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, we have noted that both sets of proposals submitted for this area are broadly similar. We agree with the view put forward by both the Council and the Liberal Democrats that the Wimbledon/Tooting railway line is a natural and identifiable boundary, and that it should form the southern boundary of the proposed Durnford ward. If this modification were made, the four new wards in the northern area would merit very nearly 12 councillors; we therefore concur with the proposal that the area should be represented by four three-member wards.

Notwithstanding the good levels of electoral equality achieved by the Liberal Democrats' proposals under the 1998 electorate figures, we have noted that the Council's proposals take account of the forecast electorate for 2003 and indeed that their proposals would provide for an improved level of electoral equality by 2003. Additionally, we are of the view that the boundaries proposed by the Council in this area are generally more identifiable than those put forward by the Liberal Democrats. We have concluded that the Council's proposals would provide for a better balance between the need for electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on the Council's configuration, subject to two minor boundary modifications. Additionally, in light of the support that has been received from both the Council and the Liberal Democrats, we also recommend that the new Durnford ward be named Wimbledon Park ward.

In order to improve electoral equality further in both the proposed Village and Raynes Park wards, we are putting forward two slight amendments to the Council's proposals. These modifications would involve transferring 94 electors (mostly on the northern side of Coombe Lane) from the proposed Raynes Park ward into the proposed...
Village ward and transferring 51 electors from the proposed Raynes Park ward into Dundonald ward. This second amendment would also improve electoral equality in Dundonald ward and is discussed later in this chapter.

51 Under our proposals the number of electors per council of the new Wimbledon Park and revised Hillside wards would be 2 per cent above and 4 per cent below the borough average respectively (1 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2003). The number of electors per councilor in the revised Village and Raynes Park wards would be 5 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average (improving to 2 per cent below and 1 per cent above by 2003). We therefore put forward these wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as our draft recommendations, and would welcome comments from all interested parties during Stage Three.

Trinity, Abbey and Colliers Wood wards

54 The three-member wards of Abbey and Colliers Wood are both under-represented at present, with the number of electors per councilor varying from the borough average by 5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (6 per cent and 9 per cent in 2003). The number of electors per councilor in the three-member Trinity ward is 9 per cent below the borough average (remaining at 9 per cent below in 2003).

58 The Council proposed modifications to these three wards in order to accommodate the knock-on effect of using the Wimbledon/Tooting railway line as the northern boundary of Trinity ward (see section above) and in order to address anomalies which exist under the current arrangements. It proposed to transfer 436 electors from the Meadow Park Estate, currently in Colliers Wood ward, into Trinity ward. These residents currently have no direct vehicular access to the rest of Colliers Wood ward: the existing ward boundary effectively means that they are "cut-off" from the rest of the ward.

56 The Council also commented that the present boundary between Abbey and Trinity wards was not ideal as it "slices through All Saints Estate" at present. In view of this, the Council proposed a revised boundary which would place Wandle Park in Colliers Wood ward and which would transfer 1,153 electors to the north of Merton High Street and the east of Haydons Road from Abbey ward into Trinity ward. However, to balance electoral equality in these wards the Council also proposed to transfer 866 electors from the South Park Road area of Trinity ward into Abbey ward. The Council proposed to modify the southern boundary of Trinity ward, arguing that the present boundary, which follows a disused railway line, was a poor one as it divides Myrna Close and Singleton Close from the present Lavender ward. In light of this anomaly and in order to improve boundaries and electoral equality, the Council proposed to transfer 1,576 electors into a revised Colliers Wood ward from the north of Lavender ward, using Victoria Road as the new ward boundary. Finally, the Council proposed that Trinity ward should be re-named East Wimbledon ward and that Abbey ward should be re-named South Wimbledon ward.

58 Like the Council, the Liberal Democrats proposed that the northern boundary of Trinity ward should follow the Wimbledon/Tooting railway line. However, they proposed to maintain the eastern boundary of Trinity ward so that the Meadow Park Estate would remain in Colliers Wood ward. They proposed modifying the ward boundary between Trinity and Abbey wards so that it no longer divided the All Saints Estate, although the proposal would result in the new housing development in the east of this area being included in Colliers Wood ward and the proposed boundary would cut through the housing area to the east of Haydons Road. The Liberal Democrats proposed that The Broadway should be the focus of the new ward for this area and consequently that Trinity ward should be re-named Broadway ward.

60 They also proposed to maintain the south-western boundary of Abbey ward along the Wimbledon/Tooting railway, and to extend it along the railway so that it would form the western boundary of the new Broadway ward. This proposal would additionally transfer some electors currently in Dundonald ward into revised Abbey and Merton Park wards. Finally, they proposed to maintain the south-eastern boundary of Colliers Wood ward, although they suggested that the ward's south-western boundary be modified to include some of the housing in this area in a revised Phelps Bridge ward.

60 Having carefully considered both the representations, we are of the view that the Council's proposals demonstrate a greater regard for the local residential development which is affected parts of this area. We believe that the Council's proposals would provide for more convenient and identifiable boundaries, having regard to local community identities, as well as improve electoral equality. As our draft recommendations we wish to endorse in full the Council's proposals for this area, including ward names, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report. The number of electors per councilor in the proposed new wards of East Wimbledon, South Wimbledon and Colliers Wood would be 2 per cent below 1 per cent below and almost equal to the borough average initially (1 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 2 per cent below by 2003). We would welcome views on these draft recommendations, particularly in relation to ward names.

Dundonald and Merton Park wards

61 Situated towards the centre of the borough, the three-member Dundonald ward is currently over-represented 8 per cent (forecast to remain at 8 per cent in 2003), while the three-member Merton Park ward has a good level of electoral equality, the number of electors per councilor varying from the average by 1 per cent (1 per cent in 2003).

62 The Council proposed that Dundonald ward should remain unchanged. However, it did propose a minor modification to the Merton Park ward which would correct a boundary anomaly affecting 103 electors in the northern part of Arnold Wood Close which, it argued, should be included in St Helier ward.

63 The Liberal Democrats proposed a more significant boundary change to the eastern end of Dundonald ward which would effectively divide this area between four new wards. They also proposed amendments to the southern and western boundaries of Dundonald ward (affecting the northern part of Merton Park ward) in order to form a "focus" around the shops and railway station situated along Kingston Road. To accommodate the knock-on effect of these proposals, and to "form a focus around [Morden] town centre", the Liberal Democrats also proposed to modify the southern boundary of the current Merton Park ward to include some housing from the present St Helier ward.

64 While the Council proposed to retain the existing ward names for Dundonald and Merton Park wards, the Liberal Democrats proposed that Dundonald ward be known as the southern Nelson ward or Wimbledon Chase ward and that Merton Park be re-named Morden ward. For the purposes of consultation, we propose to retain the existing names for these wards, however we would welcome views on all aspects of our draft recommendations during Stage Three.

65 Having considered both proposals submitted to us, we have decided to endorse the Council's proposals for this area, subject to one minor modification which would improve electoral equality in Dundonald ward. While we acknowledge the Liberal Democrats' belief that Kingston Road is a focus for the local area, we see the present names for the existing southern boundary of Dundonald ward provides for an effective and convenient boundary in this area. Furthermore, as a result of deciding to adopt the Council's proposals for the new wards of East Wimbledon, South Wimbledon and Colliers Wood (see above), it is necessary that the existing southern boundary of Dundonald ward should remain unchanged.

66 In order to improve electoral equality and to create, in our view, a better boundary, we propose to modify the western boundary of the proposed Dundonald ward to run down the centre of Grand Drive, thus transferring 51 electors from the proposed Raynes Park ward into the proposed Dundonald ward. We agree with the Council's proposed ward boundaries for the Merton Park ward. The resultant electoral variances in the proposed Dundonald and Merton Park wards would be 3 per cent below and 3 per cent above the average initially (3 per cent below and 2 per cent above in 2003). We therefore put forward these proposals, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as our draft recommendations.

West Barnes, Cannon Hill and Lower Morden wards

67 These three wards are situated in the south-west of the borough. The three-member ward of West Barnes is slightly under-represented by 2 per cent (1 per cent in 2003), while the three-member wards of Cannon Hill and Lower Morden are both slightly over-represented by 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (5 per cent and 3 per cent in 2003).
The Council proposed some relatively minor amendments to the boundaries of all three wards, in order to address a number of current anomalies. It proposed amendments to the northern boundary of West Barnes ward and the southern-western boundary of Cannon Hill ward, as well as a more significant modification to the eastern boundary of Lower Morden ward which would bring in 625 electors from the southern-western part of the existing St Helier ward. Under the Council's scheme the modified wards of Cannon Hill, West Barnes and Lower Morden would all be under-represented, by 7 per cent, 5 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (4 per cent, 3 per cent and 4 per cent by 2003).

The Liberal Democrats suggested modifications broadly similar to those put forward by the Council for the northern boundary of West Barnes ward and the southern western boundary of Cannon Hill ward. They also proposed amendments to the northern and eastern boundaries of Cannon Hill ward, which were necessary as a result of the knock-on effect of their proposals for revised Dundonald and Merton Park wards but proposed no changes to the eastern boundary of Lower Morden ward. We have stated above that we are accepting the Council's scheme as the basis of our draft recommendations across Merton as a whole, although in this part of the borough, some of the Liberal Democrats' proposals have considerable merit.

Under the Council's proposals, electoral equality for this area would be worse than under the current arrangements, with all three proposed wards being somewhat under-represented. The Council's proposals elsewhere would result in a majority of wards covering the east and south-east of the borough being slightly over-represented. We need to correct this imbalance. In addition, we do not agree with the Council's assertion that the 625 electors living to the south and east of Epsom Road, currently in St Helier ward, should be included in Lower Morden ward. We are of the view that this area of housing shares closer ties with St Helier ward.

In light of the electoral imbalance (under the Council's proposals) between the south-west and the east of the borough, and in order to provide for better boundaries, we propose to modify the Council's scheme in this area. We are of the view that the boundary between the Council's proposed Lower Morden and West Barnes/Cannon Hill wards and the boundary between the proposed St Helier and Lower Morden wards should be as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report. Our modifications would transfer 56 electors from the Council's proposed St Helier ward and 159 electors from its proposed Cannon Hill ward into a revised Lower Morden ward. Our changes would also transfer 625 electors from the Council's proposed Lower Morden ward 'back into the St Helier ward.

Overall, these amendments would mean that electoral equality across Merton would be more closely balanced between the east and south-west of the borough. However, the knock-on effect of our boundary modifications in this area result in a number of the proposed boundaries of wards in the east and south-east of the borough needing to be modified. Proposals in these areas are detailed later in this chapter. Our proposed boundaries for the wards in the south-west of the borough would produce better levels of electoral equality than the Council's scheme. The number of electors per councillor in the revised West Barnes, Cannon Hill and Lower Morden wards would be 4 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 1 per cent below the borough average initially (4 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 2 per cent below in 2003). We would very much welcome views on our proposals for this area, including in relation to ward names.

St Helier and Ravensbury wards

These three-member wards, which are in the south of the borough, are both currently over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 8 per cent in St Helier ward and by 5 per cent in Ravensbury ward. These levels of electoral inequality are forecast to remain constant by 2003.

In addition to a transfer from St Helier ward of 103 electors into Merton Park ward and 625 electors into Lower Morden ward, the Council proposed to modify the boundary between St Helier and Ravensbury wards so that it would follow the whole way along the centre of St Helier Avenue to the borough boundary, thus eradicating a present anomaly. This would have the effect of transferring 795 electors into the revised St Helier ward, which the Council proposed to rename 'St Helier West'. To improve electoral equality, the Council also proposed to modify the north-eastern boundary of Ravensbury ward so that it would include an area containing 754 electors (to the south and east of London Road) and the north of the Wimbledon (Mitcham railway line) from the current Pippis Bridge ward.

The Liberal Democrats proposed no change to the western boundary of St Helier ward but proposed to transfer an area of housing centred around St Helier Avenue from Ravensbury ward into a revised St Helier ward. In order to form a focus around Morden town centre (as discussed above) they also proposed to transfer the northern part of St Helier ward into Merton Park ward. Finally in this area, the Liberal Democrats proposed to transfer a substantial part of the southern portion of Pippis Bridge ward into a modified Ravensbury ward. However, as we have already stated above, we are accepting the Council's scheme as the basis of our draft recommendations.

As a consequence of our modifications to the Council's proposed eastern boundary of Lower Morden ward (in order to improve electoral equality in the south-western area of the borough), electoral equality in the Council's proposed St Helier West ward would deteriorate to an unacceptable level without further modification. As we consider St Helier Avenue to be a strong and identifiable boundary, we agree with the Council's proposal to use this road as the ward boundary in this area. In order to improve electoral equality, therefore, we propose to modify the northern boundary of the Council's proposed St Helier West ward and transfer 718 electors into a modified Ravensbury ward. This modification would have a considerable side-effect: some electors from Pippis Bridge ward, which the Council proposed transferring to Ravensbury ward, would be able to remain in the former. We believe the present boundary in this area to be a strong and identifiable one are and therefore content that it remains in place.

We are content to accept the Council's contention that the modified St Helier ward should be renamed St Helier West and would welcome views on this during Stage Three. Under our proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the St Helier West and Ravensbury wards would be almost equal to 1 per cent below the borough average initially (1 per cent below the average in 2003). Given the good level of electoral equality and the improved boundaries we believe we would be securing, we are putting forward these proposals, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, to our draft recommendations.

Graveney, Lavender, Figgee's Marsh and Pippis Bridge wards

These four wards, covering broadly the Mitcham area, currently possess some of the highest levels of electoral inequality in the borough. The two-member Graveney ward is over-represented with the number of electors per councillor varying by 5 per cent from the borough average (6 per cent by 2003). The two-member Lavender ward is currently the most under-represented ward in the borough with an electoral variance of 19 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to worsen still to 22 per cent above the average in 2003. The three-member wards of Figgee's Marsh and Pippis Bridge are also considerably under-represented with electoral variances of 11 per cent and 22 per cent respectively (11 per cent and 14 per cent in 2003). It is clear, therefore, that this area, which is presently represented by 10 councillors, is entitled to additional representation.

In light of the fairly high level of under-representation in the existing Pippis Bridge ward, the Council proposed to create a new three-member Mitcham South ward by transferring 754 electors into Ravensbury ward and 1,131 electors into Lavender ward, although the new ward would gain 435 electors from Colliers Wood ward. The Council also proposed to create a new Mitcham Central ward, loosely based on the existing Figgee's Marsh ward, by transferring 2,340 electors currently in Figgee's Marsh ward into a new Pippis Bridge ward, and by bringing in 563 electors currently in Lavender ward and 488 electors currently in Longthornton ward. The Graveney ward, with the extra 2,340 electors, would become a three-member ward and, the Council argued, should be renamed North Mitcham.

Finally in this area, the Council proposed to modify substantially the boundaries of the current Lavender ward to create a new 'Mitcham West' ward which would be represented by three members. The boundary modifications would bring in a net total of 3,359 electors, currently in the Colliers Wood, Ashby and Pippis Bridge wards (from the area to the west of Western Road), and transfer 563 electors (as described above) into its proposed Mitcham Central ward.
The Liberal Democrats put forward different proposals for this area which would also result in five council wards. They proposed to maintain the majority of the present boundary between Ravensbourne and Phipps Bridge wards along the Wimbledon/ Mitcham railway, but proposed that the south-eastern boundary of the revised Phipps Bridge ward should follow along the centre of London Road. They also proposed to transfer two councillors from the southern part of Colliers Wood ward into a revised Phipps Bridge ward, and to transfer one councillor into a revised Lavender ward. In addition, the Liberal Democrats proposed that the southern part of Lavender ward be transferred to a revised Figge’s Marsh ward.

The Liberal Democrats’ proposed Gravency ward was similar to the Council’s proposal in that they also put forward that it should be represented by three councillors and that it should be extended in a southerly direction. However, they proposed to transfer the whole of Edgehill Road out of the ward into Figge’s Marsh ward. In addition to part of the present Lavender ward, the Liberal Democrats’ revised Figge’s Marsh ward would include an area to the north of Commonside East and the west of Manor Road (currently in Longthornton ward) and an area to the west of Commonside West and the east of London Road (currently in Figge’s Marsh ward). They also proposed to transfer an area to the east of the Mitcham/Footling railway line (currently in Figge’s Marsh ward) into Longthornton ward.

We have noted that both the Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed to modify the boundaries of all the wards in this area to create four-three-member wards. However, the Council’s proposals preserved higher levels of electoral equality than the Liberal Democrats’ proposals, and may also secure improved boundaries. The Liberal Democrats’ proposed Phipps Bridge and Figge’s Marsh wards, for example, would vary by 9 and 6 per cent from the average number of councillors per councillor respectively. We therefore propose to adopt the Council’s proposals for these four wards, subject to relatively minor modifications to accommodate the knock-on effect of our proposal to retain the western boundary of Phipps Bridge ward and in order to improve electoral equality overall.

We generally agree with the suggested boundaries of the Council’s proposed new three-member wards of Mitcham West (Lavender) and North Mitcham (Gravency) and confirm that we are putting these wards forward as our draft recommendations, including the Council’s proposed ward names. We make one modification to the boundary of the proposed North Mitcham ward (affecting no councillors) in order to secure a more identifiable boundary. However, in order to provide for a better boundary for Mitcham South (Phipps Bridge) ward, along the Wimbledon/ Mitcham railway, and in light of the knock-on effect of our modifications to the Ravensbourne ward, we propose a transfer of 70 electors (from an area to the east of London Road and the west of Commonside West) from the Council’s proposed Mitcham South (Phipps Bridge) ward into its proposed Mitcham Central (Figge’s Marsh) ward.

We also propose to modify the northern and eastern boundaries of the Council’s suggested Mitcham Central ward, in order to improve overall electoral equality and to provide for a better boundary in the Oakleigh Way area. Our modifications would involve a net transfer of 308 electors from the Council’s proposed Mitcham Central ward into its proposed Longthornton ward (see also later paragraphs).

Under our proposals, the number of councillors per councillor in the new Mitcham South and Mitcham Central wards would be 2 per cent below and almost equal to the borough average initially (2 per cent above and 3 per cent above in 2003). The number of councillors per councillor in the new Mitcham North and West Mitcham wards would be 2 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent below and 1 per cent above in 2003). We therefore put forward these wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as our draft recommendations.

We would be interested to receive the views of the Council and others on one relatively minor point. Three of its proposed ward names in this area begin with the prefix ‘Mitcham’, as in Mitcham South. However, the enlarged Gravency ward was proposed to be named ‘North Mitcham’. We are of the view that, for the sake of consistency, it may be more appropriate to rename this ward ‘Mitcham North’ but we are using the Council’s proposed ward name for the purposes of consultation.

Longthornton and Pollards Hill wards

The number of councillors per councillor in these three-member wards, which lie at the eastern extremity of the borough, is 7 per cent above the average in Longthornton ward, and 11 per cent below the average in Pollards Hill ward. These variations are expected to become 9 per cent above and 15 per cent below respectively by 2003. Pollards Hill is the only ward in the borough where a net decrease in the electorate is forecast by 2003. The ward is bounded to the east and south by the borough boundary, and hence there is only limited scope for amending its boundaries to address the high level of over-representation.

The Council proposed to maintain the majority of the boundary between Longthornton and Pollards Hill wards along the centre of Manor Road. We agree that this is an identifiable boundary which should be retained. The Council also proposed to modify part of the western boundary of Pollards Hill ward to include an area around Tamworth Lane, thereby improving electoral equality. In addition, it proposed to transfer part of the western area of Longthornton ward (around Oakleigh Way) into the proposed Mitcham Central ward in order to improve electoral equality in both wards.

The Liberal Democrats also proposed to modify the western boundary of Pollards Hill ward in order to reduce the level of over-representation, but proposed that additional electors be transferred into the ward from the western side of Northborough Road and Manor Road. They proposed to transfer the eastern part of Figge’s Marsh ward (the area around Clay Avenue) into Longthornton ward and to transfer larger area (the southern part of Longthornton ward) into Figge’s Marsh ward to improve electoral equality. Notwithstanding the good levels of electoral equality achieved by the Liberal Democrats’ proposals, we are basing our draft recommendations on the Council’s scheme.

Given our modifications (outlined above) to the Council’s proposed Mitcham Central ward, it is also necessary to modify its proposed wards of Longthornton and Pollards Hill. While we are aware that Pollards Hill ward is constrained by the borough boundary to the east and south, we are also aware that in order to address the over-representation in the existing ward we must modify its boundary with Longthornton ward. We agree with the Council that the present boundary along Manor Road is identifiable and therefore propose to retain the majority of this existing boundary. In order to improve electoral equality in this eastern part of the borough and, taking account of the changes to the Council’s scheme we have proposed in neighbouring wards, we propose to incorporate an area to the south of Tamworth Lane in a revised Pollards Hill ward. We also propose changes to the western boundary of Longthornton ward in order to take account of our modifications to the Council’s scheme in respect of Mitcham Central ward. Our proposed modifications to the Council’s proposals involve the act transfer of 308 electors into the new Mitcham Central ward from Longthornton ward, and a net transfer of 281 electors into a revised Pollards Hill ward from Longthornton ward.

The number of electors per councillor in the revised Longthornton and Pollards Hill wards would be 3 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent above and almost equal to the borough average in 2003). Given the good level of electoral equality forecast for 2003, we are putting forward these wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as our draft recommendations. We would very much welcome views on our proposals for these and all other wards.

Conclusions

We have considered carefully all the evidence and the representations received during the initial stage of the review. Overall the Council’s proposals would result in a significant improvement to the level of electoral equality although we believe the proposals are further improved with our modifications. We believe that our proposals strike a satisfactory balance of the criteria guiding our work. Consequently, we propose that:

(i) there should be an increase in council size of three, to 60 members;
(ii) there should be 20 wards, the same as at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all the existing wards.

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

(i) we propose to transfer a further 94 electors into the Council’s proposed Village ward, and 51 electors into its proposed Dunsfold ward from the existing Raynes Park ward;
(b) we propose to transfer 159 electors from the Council's proposed Cannon Hill ward, and 36 electors from its proposed West Barnes ward, into its proposed Lower Morden ward;

(c) we propose to transfer 625 electors from the Council's proposed Lower Morden ward into its proposed St Helier West ward;

(d) we propose to transfer 718 electors from the Council's proposed St Helier West ward into its proposed Ravensbury ward;

(e) we propose to transfer 754 electors from the Council's proposed Ravensbury ward into its proposed Mitcham South ward;

(f) we propose to transfer 507 electors from the Council's proposed Mitcham South ward, and 342 electors from its proposed Longthornton ward, into its proposed Mitcham Central ward;

(g) we propose to transfer a net total of 660 electors from the Council's proposed Mitcham Central ward, and 74 electors from its proposed Pollards Hill ward, into its proposed Longthornton ward; and

(h) we propose to transfer 385 electors from the Council's proposed Longthornton ward into its proposed Pollard's Hill ward.

Figure 4 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2003.

As shown in Figure 4, our draft recommendations for Merton Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from five to zero. This improved balance of representation is expected to continue by 2003, with no ward expected to vary by more than 3 per cent from the average number of electors per councillor by that time. Our draft recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 5, and are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

**Draft Recommendation**

Merton Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Merton and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others on the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.
### Figure 5: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for Merton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward name</th>
<th>Number of councillors (1998)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
<th>Electorate (2003)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Merton Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

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### 5. NEXT STEPS

The Commission is putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Merton. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 22 March 1999. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Director of Reviews
Merton Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphins Court
10/11 Great Terns
London WC1V 7JU

In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is 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

Proposed Electoral Arrangements

The following tables illustrate the levels of electoral equality that would be achieved under the schemes submitted by Merton Borough Council and the Merton Borough Liberal Democrats. The submissions, including accompanying mapping, may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Merton Borough Council's Proposal

Figure A1: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward name</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Electorate (1998)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
<th>Electorate (2003)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
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<td>-4</td>
<td>6,682</td>
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<td>-1</td>
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</table>

continued overleaf
### Merton Borough Liberal Democrats’ Proposal

#### Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward name</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Electorate (1998)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
<th>Electorate (2003)</th>
<th>Number of electors per councillor</th>
<th>Variance from average %</th>
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<td>6,967</td>
<td>2,322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wimbledon Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,754</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6,781</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>131,861</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>134,676</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,198</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,245</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Merton Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

The 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 is 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 as 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. 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 have been 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 (although current legislation provides for elections in London boroughs to be held every four years); and
- the name of any electoral area.

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

4 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:

5 In relation to London boroughs.

6 Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the borough 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 borough.

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

(c) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(c) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

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