

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
THE CITY OF
WESTMINSTER

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

September 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Westminster City Council.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

Pamela Gordon

Robin Gray

Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

© Crown Copyright 1999

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

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by The Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper. 

CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>25</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the City of Westminster is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

7 September 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 22 September 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of the City of Westminster under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations in their entirety (see paragraphs 133-134) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the City of Westminster.

We recommend that Westminster City Council should be served by 60 councillors representing 20 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the City of Westminster on 22 September 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 23 March 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in nine of the 23 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, while one ward, St George's, varies by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality shows no overall improvement, 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 133-134) are that:

- **Westminster City Council should be served by 60 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, three fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each city councillor 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 9 per cent from the borough average.**

- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 19 October 1999:

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

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
1 Abbey Road	3	Hamilton Terrace ward (part); Lords ward (part); Regent's Park ward (part)
2 Bayswater	3	Bayswater ward (part); Westbourne ward (part)
3 Bryanston & Dorset Square	3	Baker Street ward (part); Bryanston ward; Church Street ward (part); Regent's Park ward (part)
4 Churchill	3	Belgrave ward (part); Churchill ward (part)
5 Church Street	3	Church Street ward (part)
6 Harrow Road	3	Harrow Road ward (part); Westbourne ward (part)
7 Hyde Park	3	Hyde Park ward; Lancaster Gate ward (part)
8 Knightsbridge & Belgravia	3	Belgrave ward (part); Knightsbridge ward; West End ward (part)
9 Lancaster Gate	3	Bayswater ward (part); Lancaster Gate ward (part)
10 Little Venice	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
11 Maida Vale	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
12 Marylebone High Street	3	Baker Street ward (part); Cavendish ward (part)
13 Queen's Park	3	Harrow Road ward (part); Queen's Park ward
14 Regent's Park	3	Hamilton Terrace ward (part); Lords ward (part); Regent's Park ward (part)
15 St James's	3	St James's ward; Victoria ward (part); West End ward (part)
16 Tachbrook	3	Millbank ward (part); St George's ward (part)
17 Vincent Square	3	Millbank ward (part); Victoria ward (part)
18 Warwick	3	Belgrave ward (part); Churchill ward (part); St George's ward (part)
19 Westbourne	3	Harrow Road ward (part); Westbourne ward (part)
20 West End	3	Cavendish ward (part); West End ward (part)

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

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for the City of Westminster

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Abbey Road	3	6,406	2,135	2	6,482	2,161	-4
2 Bayswater	3	6,445	2,148	3	6,587	2,196	-2
3 Bryanston & Dorset Square	3	6,503	2,168	4	6,829	2,276	1
4 Churchill	3	6,524	2,175	4	6,758	2,253	0
5 Church Street	3	6,504	2,168	4	6,868	2,289	2
6 Harrow Road	3	6,102	2,034	-3	6,416	2,139	-5
7 Hyde Park	3	6,143	2,048	-2	6,925	2,308	3
8 Knightsbridge & Belgravia	3	5,876	1,959	-6	6,867	2,289	2
9 Lancaster Gate	3	6,621	2,207	5	6,867	2,289	2
10 Little Venice	3	6,074	2,025	-3	6,650	2,217	-1
11 Maida Vale	3	6,567	2,189	5	6,846	2,282	2
12 Marylebone High Street	3	6,485	2,162	3	6,857	2,286	2
13 Queen's Park	3	6,796	2,265	8	6,794	2,265	1
14 Regent's Park	3	6,110	2,037	-3	6,736	2,245	0
15 St James's	3	5,927	1,976	-6	6,479	2,160	-4
16 Tachbrook	3	5,885	1,962	-6	6,726	2,242	0
17 Vincent Square	3	5,725	1,908	-9	6,635	2,212	-1
18 Warwick	3	6,270	2,090	0	6,662	2,221	-1
19 Westbourne	3	6,342	2,114	1	6,824	2,275	1
20 West End	3	6,275	2,092	0	6,792	2,264	1
Totals	60	125,580	—	—	134,600	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,093	—	—	2,243	—

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Westminster.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review (PER) of the City of Westminster is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the City Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the City Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which 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.

5 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

6 We are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, would expect the overall number of members on a London borough council

usually to be between 40 and 80. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an 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 borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

The London Boroughs

7 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is 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 by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

8 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we 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 between June 1998 and February 1999.

9 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our *Guidance* were 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 welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief

officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the 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.

10 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising 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, the City of Westminster was in the third phase of reviews.

11 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.

12 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 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 has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

13 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 the City of Westminster

14 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for the City of Westminster. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report No. 225).

15 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 22 September 1998, when we wrote to Westminster City 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. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 14 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 Stage Three began on 23 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for the City of Westminster*, and ended on 17 May 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

17 The City of Westminster is situated at the heart of the capital and has a population of around 174,800 covering approximately 2,158 hectares. It comprises many historic buildings and Royal Parks and is also a centre for tourism, transport, shopping, nightlife and culture. Residentially it is characterised by a very wide range of properties and communities, including historic estates in Belgravia, Mayfair, Marylebone and Regent's Park; mansion blocks and flats in areas such as St John's Wood; and significant areas of social housing. While Westminster is considered to be a City, for the purposes of electoral arrangements it has the status of a London borough, and the terms City and borough are used interchangeably throughout this report.

18 The present borough was established as part of the London Local Government re-organisation in 1965 from the former boroughs of Marylebone, Paddington and Westminster. The cosmopolitan nature of the population is shown both by the large number of European Union citizens registered, and the significant number of households where no-one is registered to vote because they are citizens of countries not eligible to be included on the electoral register.

19 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'.

20 The electorate of the borough (February 1998) is 125,580. The Council currently has 60 councillors who are elected from 23 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Fourteen wards are each represented by three councillors and nine wards elect two councillors each. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

21 Since the last electoral review, there has been a decrease in electorate in the borough, with around 11 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago. However, the electorate has been increasing since 1990, and this is expected to continue in the next five years.

22 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,093 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 2,243 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 nine of the 23 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and in one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in St George's ward where each of the three councillors represents 25 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in the City of Westminster



© Crown Copyright 1999

Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Baker Street	2	3,415	1,708	-18	3,569	1,785	-20
2 Bayswater	3	6,524	2,175	4	6,767	2,256	1
3 Belgrave	2	4,034	2,017	-4	4,251	2,126	-5
4 Bryanston	2	3,354	1,677	-20	3,544	1,772	-21
5 Cavendish	3	6,112	2,037	-3	6,538	2,179	-3
6 Church Street	3	6,819	2,273	9	7,183	2,394	7
7 Churchill	3	6,600	2,200	5	7,043	2,348	5
8 Hamilton Terrace	2	3,883	1,942	-7	4,008	2,004	-11
9 Harrow Road	3	7,379	2,460	18	7,642	2,547	14
10 Hyde Park	3	5,327	1,776	-15	6,109	2,036	-9
11 Knightsbridge	2	3,785	1,893	-10	4,592	2,296	2
12 Lancaster Gate	3	5,575	1,858	-11	5,655	1,885	-16
13 Little Venice	3	6,074	2,025	-3	6,650	2,217	-1
14 Lords	2	4,239	2,120	1	4,380	2,190	-2
15 Maida Vale	3	6,567	2,189	5	6,846	2,282	2
16 Millbank	3	5,784	1,928	-8	6,471	2,157	-4
17 Queen's Park	3	6,282	2,094	0	6,262	2,087	-7
18 Regent's Park	3	6,085	2,028	-3	6,631	2,210	-1
19 St George's	3	7,829	2,610	25	8,652	2,884	29
20 St James's	2	3,530	1,765	-16	3,785	1,893	-16
21 Victoria	2	4,235	2,118	1	4,908	2,454	9

continued overleaf

Figure 3 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 West End	2	4,786	2,393	14	5,138	2,569	15
23 Westbourne	3	7,362	2,454	17	7,978	2,659	19
Totals	60	125,580	—	—	134,602	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,093	—	—	2,243	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Westminster City Council's Stage One 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 Bryanston ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in St George's ward were relatively under-represented by 25 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

²³ During Stage One we received a borough-wide representation from the City Council, and representations from the Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party, the Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party and the Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats commenting on various aspects of the City Council's proposals. We also received a further eight representations from a City councillor and seven local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for the City of Westminster*.

²⁴ Our draft recommendations were based on the City Council's scheme, which achieved improved electoral equality, provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria and proposed a pattern of entirely three-member wards. However, we moved away from the City Council's scheme in the north-east of the borough, affecting six wards. We proposed that:

- (a) Westminster City Council should be served by 60 councillors;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all but two of the existing wards.

Draft Recommendation

Westminster City Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards.

²⁵ Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all 20 wards varying by no more than 9 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 5 per cent from the borough average in 2003.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

26 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 60 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Westminster City Council and the Commission.

Westminster City Council

27 The City Council welcomed the draft recommendations but urged the Commission to reconsider its draft recommendations for the wards in the north-east of the City, stating that its Stage One proposals were preferable as they would entail minimal change and retain “intact the existing and long-standing ward boundaries of Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent’s Park”.

28 It opposed the creation of a ward combining the Covent Garden and Soho areas, stating that this would be a “radical change in ward boundaries and therefore run counter to the City Council’s general approach”. It also considered that moving away from the draft recommendations “poses problems in identifying suitable alternative boundaries that would both provide electoral equality and clear physical boundaries” and noted that any such change would also have “an adverse knock-on effect in disrupting other ward boundaries”.

29 The City Council also expressed its support for the proposed boundary between the wards of Churchill and Knightsbridge & Belgravia and for the proposed ward names of Tachbrook, Vincent Square and Warwick.

Westminster City Council Labour Group

30 Westminster City Council Labour Group, (henceforth referred to as the Labour Group) supported the draft recommendations for the wards of Harrow Road, Little Venice, Maida Vale, Queen’s Park and Westbourne. It also considered that the proposals to retain Church Street ward, create a new Abbey Road ward and to modify Regent’s Park ward would reflect communities in the area.

31 It also supported the Liberal Democrats’ Stage One proposal to create a ward comprising the Fitzrovia, Soho and Covent Garden areas, as it considered that these areas have more in common with each other than with the more residential areas of Marylebone, Mayfair and St James’s.

Regent’s Park & Kensington North Labour Party

32 The Regent’s Park & Kensington North Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for the wards within its parliamentary constituency, particularly the retention of Church Street ward which it described as “a distinct community clustered around Church Street market ... very different in character from the neighbouring St John’s Wood [area] and [which] has particular needs which would best be served by having its own councillors”.

33 It supported the draft recommendation that part of Westbourne ward be transferred to Bayswater ward on community identity grounds, but opposed the draft recommendation that the Leinster Square area should remain in Bayswater ward and considered that the proposed boundary “looks artificial and will break existing community ties”. As an alternative it proposed that the Hallfield Estate be retained in Bayswater ward and should not be transferred to Lancaster Gate ward.

34 It also supported the Liberal Democrats’ Stage One proposal to create a ward comprising Fitzrovia, Soho and Covent Garden, and agreed with the view that these three areas “have much more in common with each other than with the surrounding area of Mayfair, St James’s and Marylebone”. It considered that it would be “in the interests of ... good local government if these areas could be represented by one set of councillors”, and stated that it was particularly swayed by the argument that Fitzrovia is already split between two boroughs, and that to divide the Westminster section further into two wards would “break strong community ties and make effective representation of the community’s needs and interests very much more difficult”.

West End & St James's Branch of the Cities of London & Westminster Labour Party

35 The West End & St James's Branch of the Cities of London & Westminster Labour Party supported the Liberal Democrats' Stage One proposal that the Covent Garden and Soho areas should be included in the same ward. It stated that the existing wards of West End and St James's, although very diverse, "are similar to each other in the nature of their diversity", and that Soho and Covent Garden "face unique problems in London of having to reconcile being the entertainment centre of the capital with residents' concerns". It considered that these problems could be more effectively dealt with, if the wards better reflected the common interests of the Soho and Covent Garden communities, and enclosed a petition with five signatures supporting the creation of a Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden ward.

Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats

36 The Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for a pattern of 20 three-member wards and generally supported the proposed ward boundaries apart from the proposed wards of Marylebone High Street, St James's and West End. They particularly supported the retention of a separate ward for Church Street.

37 They restated their Stage One submission for the establishment of new wards of Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden and St James's & Mayfair. They considered that, as Fitzrovia is already divided between the boroughs of Westminster and Camden, it would be a mistake to divide the Westminster portion further between two wards. They also considered that the proposed St James's ward would be "unacceptably large in area and diverse in character".

Members of Parliament

38 Karen Buck, MP for Regent's Park & Kensington North, supported the draft recommendations for the nine wards in her constituency "particularly the

decision to retain Church Street albeit with some alteration". However, she also proposed that the Hallfield Estate should form part of the new Bayswater ward and that the Fitzrovia, Soho and Covent Garden areas be united in one ward.

Other Representations

39 A further 54 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations.

40 Councillor Djanogly, member for Regent's Park ward, opposed the draft recommendations for the wards of Church Street, Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park and supported the City Council's proposals for the retention of the three latter wards and the abolition of Church Street ward.

41 Councillor Harley, member for Church Street ward, supported the draft recommendation for the retention of the ward as he considered it would ensure "that those communities with shared interests ... will continue to be represented as one as they have done since the formation of the City Council".

42 The Soho Society opposed the draft recommendation that the Chinatown area should be transferred from West End ward to a modified St James's ward and that part of Cavendish ward should form part of a modified West End ward, proposing instead no change for West End ward. The London Chinatown Chinese Association made general comments about the review process but did not make any specific comments.

43 The St Marylebone Society opposed the draft recommendations for the north-east of the borough, which it considered to be "confusing, and in some cases quite damaging to the community". It considered that "the problem ... lies in the under populated West End ward", and that if it is accepted that the West End ward "has to be anomalous, everything follows easily from that". It considered that the proposed wards of Bryanston & Dorset Square and West End would breach "historic boundaries". The Society also proposed no change to the wards of Cavendish, Church Street and Regent's Park, and that the existing wards of Hamilton Terrace and Lords, and Baker Street and Bryanston should be combined to form two new three-member wards.

44 A resident of Queen's Park ward and two residents of Harrow Road ward supported the creation of a ward for Fitzrovia, Covent Garden and Soho, as did a resident of West End ward who enclosed a petition with 33 signatures. A resident of Bayswater ward also supported this alternative proposal and enclosed a petition with 23 signatures.

45 Another resident of West End ward also supported the creation of a ward for Covent Garden and Soho, as did two residents of St James's ward, one of whom also supported a ward for Mayfair and St James's. A third resident of West End ward supported the draft recommendation for the ward.

46 Eleven residents of Regent's Park ward, six residents of Hamilton Terrace ward, three residents of Maida Vale ward, three residents of Baker Street ward, two residents of Little Venice ward, two residents of Lords ward, a resident of Harrow Road ward, a resident of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and a resident of the London Borough of Camden opposed the draft recommendations for the wards in the north-east of the borough, and supported the City Council's proposals to retain the wards of Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park.

47 Two residents of Church Street ward, four residents of Harrow Road ward and a resident of Queen's Park ward supported the draft recommendation for the retention of Church Street ward, three of whom expressed support for the draft recommendations for the rest of the wards in this area. Another resident of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea supported the draft recommendations.

48 Three of the residents of Harrow Road ward and the resident of Queen's Park ward plus two residents of Bayswater ward and a resident of Lancaster Gate ward opposed the draft recommendation to transfer the Hallfield Estate from Bayswater ward to Lancaster Gate ward on community identity grounds. One of the residents of Bayswater ward enclosed a petition signed by 23 residents of the ward.

49 Finally, a resident of Cavendish ward opposed the draft recommendation that part of Cavendish ward should be transferred to West End ward and two residents of Belgrave ward opposed the draft recommendation to transfer parts of Belgrave ward to Churchill ward and Warwick ward.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

50 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the City of Westminster 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 being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

51 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.

52 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.

53 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 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. In reviews of predominantly

urban areas 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

54 At Stage One the City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of around 7 per cent from 125,580 to 134,602 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expected most of the growth to be in the wards of Hyde Park (which incorporates the Paddington Basin development), Knightsbridge and St George’s, but significant growth is also expected in the wards of Little Venice, Millbank, Regent’s Park, Victoria and Westbourne. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the City of Westminster, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

55 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorate is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

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

58 Westminster City Council currently has 60 members. At Stage One the City Council, the Labour constituency parties and the Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats all proposed retaining the current council size.

59 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 60 members.

60 At Stage Three, we did not receive any alternatives to our proposed council size of 60. In view of the general support for such a council size, which would provide a good electoral scheme, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 60 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

61 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the representations received at Stage One from the City Council, the Labour constituency parties, the Liberal Democrats and other respondents. We expressed gratitude for the positive approach taken by respondents who had each submitted detailed borough-wide proposals for change to the present electoral arrangements. From these representations some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

62 First, there was a consensus among the majority of members of the Council for the retention of a council size of 60.

63 Second, the current electoral arrangements provide for predominantly three-member wards in the City of Westminster, although there are also nine two-member wards. The City Council, the Labour constituency parties and the Liberal Democrats all submitted proposals for future electoral arrangements based on a pattern of 20 three-member wards for the borough.

64 Third, there was a considerable degree of consensus on ward configuration throughout the borough, with the exception of the north-eastern wards. The Liberal Democrats also proposed alternative warding arrangements for West End and St James's wards.

65 Fourth, we noted the arguments put to us about community identities in the borough. We tried to reflect such considerations in our draft recommendations, where it would be consistent with our objective of electoral equality, although we noted that there was not consensus locally on the precise boundaries of such communities.

66 Finally, all the schemes provided improved electoral equality, although to varying degrees. Under the City Council's and the Labour constituency parties' proposals all wards would have an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent from the average. This improvement in electoral equality would be maintained at 2003. The Liberal Democrats only provided 2003 figures, but under their proposals all wards would also have an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent from the borough average.

67 In our draft recommendations we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve good electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. Where it existed, we tried to reflect the consensus among representations for warding arrangements in particular parts of the borough. This was most notable in the west of the borough. However, we made further modifications in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve yet further improvements in electoral equality, while also seeking to reflect the statutory criteria. Inevitably, we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations.

68 In view of the degree of consensus behind significant elements of the Council's proposals, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on its scheme. The Council's scheme would provide much improved electoral equality than under the current arrangements and would use good boundaries, having regard to the statutory criteria. However, to improve electoral equality further and to more closely reflect community identities, we departed from the Council's scheme for the existing wards of Baker Street, Bryanston, Cavendish, Church Street, Hamilton Terrace, Lords, Regent's Park and West End.

69 Most respondents welcomed the majority of the proposals in our draft recommendations report. At Stage Three the Council supported the draft recommendations, except for the wards in the

north-east of the borough, where it reiterated its Stage One submission, while both the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for this area. The Liberal Democrats reiterated their Stage One submission for the establishment of a ward comprising Fitzrovia, Soho and Covent Garden, a proposal supported by the Labour Group, the Regent's Park & Kensington North Labour Party and the West End & St James's branch of the Cities of London & Westminster Labour Party.

70 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and judge that our draft recommendations should be confirmed in their entirety. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Church Street, Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park wards;
- (b) Baker Street, Bryanston and Cavendish wards;
- (c) Hyde Park, Little Venice and Maida Vale wards;
- (d) Bayswater, Harrow Road, Lancaster Gate, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards;
- (e) Knightsbridge, St James's and West End wards;
- (f) Belgrave, Churchill, Millbank, St George's and Victoria wards.

71 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover of the report.

Church Street, Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park wards

72 The north-east of the City of Westminster is covered by the two two-member wards of Hamilton Terrace and Lords, and the two three-member wards of Church Street and Regent's Park. The number of electors per councillor in Church Street ward is 9 per cent above the average, 7 per cent below in Hamilton Terrace, 1 per cent above in Lords and 3 per cent below the average in Regent's Park (7 per cent above, 11 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 1 per cent below respectively in 2003).

73 At Stage One, in order to improve electoral equality in the area, the City Council proposed disbanding Church Street ward, with the area east of Lisson Grove forming part of an enlarged Lords ward, while the area west of Lisson Grove would form part of an enlarged Hamilton Terrace ward. It

also proposed that part of Church Street ward, south of Broadley Street, Broadley Terrace, Harewood Avenue and Rossmore Road, should form part of a proposed Bryanston & Bell Street ward. The City Council noted that in its consultation exercise, it had detected some opposition to the proposal to disband Church Street ward, but stated that its proposals were designed "to minimise the changes to ward boundaries as far as possible".

74 The Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party, the Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party and the Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats objected to the City Council's proposals for these wards, and proposed retaining a three-member Church Street ward. The Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats both proposed establishing a new Abbey Road ward in the north of the area, comprising parts of the existing Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park wards. The remainder of Hamilton Terrace and Lords wards would then form part of a modified Regent's Park ward. The boundary between these wards would run along Hall Road, Circus Road, St John's Wood Terrace, Charlbert Street, Allitsen Road and St Edmund's Terrace. Lords ward would be abolished.

75 In order to improve electoral equality in the area, the Labour constituency parties proposed that the area in the south-east of Church Street ward, south of Broadley Terrace, Rossmore Road and east of Lisson Grove, be transferred to a modified Bryanston ward, to be renamed Bryanston & Dorset Square ward. They further proposed that part of Regent's Park ward to the south of the Outer Circle and east of Baker Street should form part of a proposed Marylebone High Street ward, while the area of Regent's Park ward to the west of Baker Street and Park Road and south of Taunton Place, should also form part of the proposed Bryanston & Dorset Square ward.

76 At Stage Two, we carefully considered the representations received for these wards and noted the improved electoral equality which would result under both the City Council's proposals, and the Labour constituency parties' proposals, which were also supported by the Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats. We endorsed the Labour constituency parties' and the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the retention of a separate ward for Church Street as part of our draft recommendations, as we considered that this

would establish wards with a clear focus for the electorate and comprise coherent community areas, while also retaining the obvious physical barrier of the Grand Union Canal as a ward boundary. While we noted the City Council's comments that its proposals would "minimise change to existing boundaries" we concluded that the alternative proposals provided for improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. These proposed wards would cover areas of similar community identities and outlook and we considered that they would provide understandable and recognisable areas for the electorate.

77 We also proposed adopting the Labour constituency parties' proposals for a modified Regent's Park ward and a new Abbey Road ward. However, in order to further improve electoral equality, we proposed modifying these proposals so that the boundary between the wards of Bryanston & Dorset Square and Regent's Park would run along Marylebone Road, Baker Street and Park Road, and that the boundary between the wards of Regent's Park and West End would follow the existing boundary of Marylebone Road, York Gate and the Outer Circle. We considered that this proposal would reflect community identities in the area, utilise clear boundaries and produce a good level of electoral equality. We proposed a slight modification to the boundary between the wards of Bryanston & Dorset Square and Church Street, so that it would run along the existing polling district boundary of Rossmore Road rather than Broadley Street. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the average in Abbey Road ward (4 per cent below in 2003), 4 per cent above the average in Church Street ward (2 per cent above in 2003) and 3 per cent below the average in Regent's Park ward (equal to the average in 2003).

78 In response to our draft recommendations the City Council stated that the proposals ran counter to its approach "of minimising the degree of change to all boundaries across the City" and that they would cause major change to all wards in the area, except Church Street. The City Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for the wards in this area, and considered that they would achieve "the same broad level of electoral equality whilst also having the benefit of retaining intact the existing and long-standing ward boundaries of Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park". The City Council also stated that it did not consider the Grand Union Canal to be a significant barrier, and

that the major roads that currently form ward boundaries running north/south (Abbey Road and Finchley Road/Wellington Road) constitute more significant geographical barriers than the canal.

79 The Labour Group reiterated its Stage One proposal and supported the draft recommendations for the area. It considered that the proposal to retain Church Street ward would "allow the needs of this distinct and thriving community to be properly represented on the Council", and that a new Abbey Road ward and a modified Regent's Park ward would "provide a more coherent configuration than the previous Lords, Hamilton Terrace and Regent's Park wards as they unite the residential area of St John's Wood".

80 The Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for this area, particularly the retention of a separate ward for Church Street. Karen Buck, MP for Regent's Park & Kensington North, also supported the draft recommendations for these wards.

81 The St Marylebone Society opposed the draft recommendations for these wards and considered them to be "highly unsatisfactory". It proposed no change for Regent's Park and Church Street wards, that Lords ward be combined with Hamilton Terrace ward and that the historic boundaries of Marylebone, namely Oxford Street and Edgware Road, be retained. It also argued that Marylebone Road constituted a natural boundary which should not be crossed, and that our draft recommendations would cause confusion in the planning process, as two separate planning teams would be involved. However, the organisation of planning teams is a matter for the City Council's internal management structure and is not something to which the Commission must have regard. Furthermore, the Society's proposals would result in an unacceptably high degree of electoral inequality in the combined Hamilton Terrace & Lords ward.

82 During Stage Three we also received a number of representations from individuals concerning the proposals for these wards, some supporting the draft recommendations, others opposing them and supporting the City Council's proposals for the area. A number of respondents considered that Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent's Park wards were as equally justified in describing themselves as largely homogeneous entities with "easily identifiable boundaries" as Church Street ward. They also pointed out that while the draft

recommendations use the canal as a boundary in this area, they cross the canal in the Westbourne/Harrow Road area. They stated that the “true physical boundaries have always been and will continue to be the north/south main traffic routes of Edgware Road, Abbey Road and Finchley Road” and that the true divide was east/west as under the existing warding pattern. They also considered that the draft recommendations for Bryanston & Dorset Square ward did not reflect the community identity of those residents in Regent’s Park ward who would be transferred to Bryanston & Dorset Square ward.

83 Several of these respondents contended that the Grand Union Canal did not form a real or defining boundary, and two residents of Regent’s Park ward opposed the recommendation that part of the ward should form part of Bryanston & Dorset Square ward, as it would cross the “natural boundary” of the Marylebone Road.

84 We have given careful consideration to the further evidence and representations received, but are not convinced that there is justification for change to our draft recommendations in the north-east of the borough. We note the City Council’s concerns that our draft recommendations would entail a greater degree of change than its proposals. However, while we do not seek to propose unnecessary change, we do believe that change is necessary here to reflect the statutory criteria.

85 We do not consider that there is a groundswell of opinion against our draft recommendations and consider that the City Council’s proposals for the abolition of Church Street ward would have a detrimental effect on a clearly defined local community identity. At Stage Three officers revisited the area and remain satisfied that the draft recommendations take more account of local community interests and identities, than would be the case if Church Street ward were to be abolished and redistributed among neighbouring wards.

86 We consider that there is a commonality between the existing Hamilton Terrace, Lords and Regent’s Park wards which does not exist between Church Street ward and the other wards in the locality. Consequently, while we recognise the existence of communities elsewhere in this area, we are satisfied that our draft recommendations for Abbey Road and Regent’s Park wards would continue to combine communities with similar identities and interests, and therefore take more

account of community identities in the area as a whole than the City Council’s proposals. We therefore confirm our draft recommendation for the wards of Abbey Road, Church Street and Regent’s Park as final.

Baker Street, Bryanston and Cavendish wards

87 The two-member wards of Baker Street and Bryanston, and the three-member ward of Cavendish, cover the area directly north of Oxford Street and east of Edgware Road. The number of electors per councillor is 18 per cent below the average in Baker Street ward, 20 per cent below in Bryanston ward and 3 per cent below in Cavendish ward (20 per cent below, 21 per cent below, and 3 per cent below respectively in 2003).

88 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the City Council’s proposed wards of Bryanston & Bell Street and Devonshire were similar to the Labour constituency parties’ proposed wards of Bryanston & Dorset Square and Marylebone High Street. While we broadly endorsed the Labour constituency parties’ proposals for these wards, we proposed modifying the boundaries to achieve improved levels of electoral equality in the area, while having regard to community identities, and in the light of our proposals for wards to the north. We also proposed endorsing the ward names of Bryanston & Dorset Square and Marylebone High Street.

89 We proposed that the boundary between the wards of West End and Marylebone High Street should run along Oxford Street, Vere Street, Henrietta Place, Harley Street and New Cavendish Street, and that the boundary between the wards of Marylebone High Street and Bryanston & Dorset Square should run along Portman Street, Gloucester Place, York Street and Baker Street. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Marylebone High Street ward (2 per cent in 2003) and 4 per cent above the average in Bryanston & Dorset Square ward (1 per cent in 2003). We considered that these proposals would provide a good level of electoral equality, utilised clear boundaries and reflected local communities, and put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

90 At Stage Three the City Council reiterated its Stage One submission for the wards in this area,

including the establishment of a Bryanston & Bell Street ward, which would reunite in one ward the former wards of Bryanston Square and Bell Street, which existed prior to the amalgamation of the three former boroughs of Marylebone, Paddington and Westminster.

91 The St Marylebone Society opposed the draft recommendations for these wards. It objected to part of Cavendish ward forming part of a modified West End ward on the grounds that this would breach the historic boundary of Oxford Street. It stated that the proposed Bryanston & Dorset Square ward would not only cross the historic boundary of Marylebone Road, but could also “seriously interfere in the planning process” as it would mean that planning applications for the area would be handled by two separate teams.

92 A resident of Cavendish ward opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Cavendish ward to West End ward, while a resident of Baker Street ward supported no change for the area.

93 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we recognise that there is some opposition to our draft recommendations for the three wards in this area, we remain of the view that they would provide the best level of electoral equality, while having regard, as far as possible, to well-defined boundaries and communities and reflecting the warding pattern which we propose for the remainder of the borough. In recognition of this and in the absence of any viable alternative arrangements, we therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Bryanston & Dorset Square and Marylebone High Street as final.

Hyde Park, Little Venice and Maida Vale wards

94 These three-member wards lie to the west of Edgware Road. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the average in Hyde Park ward, 3 per cent below the average in Little Venice ward and 5 per cent above the average in Maida Vale ward (9 per cent below, 1 per cent below and 2 per cent above respectively in 2003).

95 At Stage One the City Council proposed no change to the wards of Little Venice and Maida Vale on the grounds that they already enjoy a good level of electoral equality. In order to improve electoral equality in Hyde Park ward, it proposed transferring

the area to the east of Gloucester Terrace and Lancaster Terrace from Lancaster Gate ward to Hyde Park ward. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the average in Hyde Park ward (3 per cent above in 2003).

96 The Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party supported the City Council’s proposed boundary between the wards of Hyde Park and Lancaster Gate, but made no comment regarding the wards of Little Venice and Maida Vale. The Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats supported the City Council’s proposals for these wards while the Regent’s Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party made no comments regarding these wards.

97 In view of the level of electoral equality which would result in these wards, the clear boundaries which would be utilised, and the level of consensus which existed, we endorsed the City Council’s proposals for the wards of Hyde Park, Little Venice and Maida Vale as part of our draft recommendations.

98 At Stage Three the Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards, while the Labour Group and Karen Buck, MP for Regent’s Park & Kensington North expressed support for the draft recommendations for Little Venice and Maida Vale wards.

99 Having carefully considered the representations received, and noting the support which our draft recommendations have received, we remain of the view that they would achieve the best levels of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Hyde Park, Little Venice and Maida Vale wards as final.

Bayswater, Harrow Road, Lancaster Gate, Queen’s Park and Westbourne wards

100 The north-west of the City of Westminster is covered by these five three-member wards. The number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent above the borough average in Bayswater ward, 18 per cent above in Harrow Road ward, 11 per cent below in Lancaster Gate ward, equal to the average in Queen’s Park ward and 17 per cent above in Westbourne ward (1 per cent above, 14 per cent above, 16 per cent below, 7 per cent below and 19 per cent above respectively in 2003).

101 The City Council proposed modifying the boundaries of all these wards. As stated earlier, in order to improve electoral equality, it proposed that the area to the east of Gloucester Terrace and Lancaster Terrace should be transferred from Lancaster Gate ward to Hyde Park ward. It also proposed that the area to the south of Bishop's Bridge Road and Westbourne Grove and east of Garway Road, should be transferred from Bayswater ward to Lancaster Gate ward. The City Council also proposed that the boundary between the wards of Bayswater and Westbourne should be modified to run along Talbot Road, Shrewsbury Road, Westbourne Park Road, across the railway line and along the Westway. It considered that its proposed boundaries for Bayswater ward would be clearer than the current ward boundaries, and improve electoral equality.

102 The City Council also proposed that the boundary between the wards of Westbourne and Harrow Road should be modified to run along Marylands Road, Maryland Road, Harrow Road and Great Western Road, and that the area to the west of Portnall Road should be transferred from Harrow Road ward to Queen's Park ward.

103 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Bayswater ward (2 per cent below in 2003), 3 per cent below in Harrow Road ward (5 per cent below in 2003), 5 per cent above in Lancaster Gate ward (2 per cent in 2003), 8 per cent above in Queen's Park ward (1 per cent in 2003) and 1 per cent above in Westbourne ward (unchanged in 2003).

104 While we noted the Labour constituency parties' comments regarding the proposed boundary between the wards of Bayswater and Lancaster Gate (that the Hallfield Estate should remain in Bayswater ward and not be transferred to Lancaster Gate ward), we considered that the City Council's proposals would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality in the area and utilise the clear boundary of Bishop's Bridge Road. We also noted the large degree of consensus which existed between the City Council and the political parties in the area. In order to achieve improved levels of electoral equality in the area while having regard to community identity, we adopted the City Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

105 At Stage Three the Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards. The Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards, but made no comments regarding Bayswater and Lancaster Gate wards.

106 Karen Buck MP and the Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for the wards of Harrow Road and Queen's Park, but proposed that the Hallfield Estate should be retained in the modified Bayswater ward on community identity grounds, as did three residents of Harrow Road ward, two residents of Bayswater ward, a resident of Lancaster Gate ward and a resident of Queen's Park ward. One of the Bayswater residents enclosed a petition signed by 23 residents.

107 We have given careful consideration to the views expressed to us during the consultation stage, including the proposal that the Hallfield Estate be retained in Bayswater ward. Officers have visited the area and are satisfied that the draft recommendations take account of local community interests and identities, and consider that there is sufficient ease of access from the estate south into Lancaster Gate ward. Consequently, we do not consider that our draft recommendations would have a detrimental effect on community identities in the area. We are satisfied that our draft recommendations for the Bayswater, Harrow Road, Lancaster Gate, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards would achieve the best level of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm them as final.

Knightsbridge, St James's and West End wards

108 The area directly to the south of Oxford Street and Bayswater Road is covered by these three two-member wards. The number of electors per councillor is 10 per cent below the average in Knightsbridge ward, 16 per cent below the average in St James's ward and 14 per cent above the average in West End ward (2 per cent above, 16 per cent below and 15 per cent above respectively in 2003).

109 At Stage One the City Council proposed modifying the boundaries of all three wards. It proposed that that part of Cavendish ward to the

south of New Cavendish Street and east of Wimpole Street and Vere Street should form part of a modified West End ward, that all of Mayfair should remain in West End ward and that the Chinatown area south of Shaftesbury Avenue should form part of a modified St James's ward. The City Council also proposed that all of Hyde Park should be transferred to a new Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward and that the area to the north of Horseferry Road, Rutherford Street, Vincent Square, Elverton Street, Greycoat Street, Greycoat Place and Artillery Row, currently in Victoria ward, should be transferred to St James's ward. Finally in this area, the City Council proposed that the area of Belgrave ward to the north of Graham Terrace, Eaton Terrace and Ebury Street should be joined with Knightsbridge ward to form a new ward of Knightsbridge & Belgravia. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the average in Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward (2 per cent above in 2003), 6 per cent below in St James's ward (4 per cent below in 2003) and 3 per cent above in West End ward (4 per cent in 2003).

110 The Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party rejected the City Council's proposals for West End ward and supported instead an alternative proposal that the ward should additionally comprise that part of Cavendish ward south of New Cavendish Street. It also proposed that the boundary between the wards of Churchill and Knightsbridge & Belgravia should run along Ebury Street and Pimlico Road to take more account of community identity. It recognised that in order to maintain electoral equality in the area, this proposal would necessitate a subsequent transfer of some 150 electors from the proposed Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward to Warwick ward at the north-east end of Ebury Street. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the average in Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward (2 per cent above in 2003). The Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party made no comments regarding these wards.

111 Although the Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats supported the City Council's proposals for Belgrave and Knightsbridge wards, they put forward alternative warding arrangements for the wards of St James's and West End. They proposed a new St James's & Mayfair ward comprising that part of West End ward west of

Regent Street, and that part of St James's ward west of Haymarket, Cockspur Street and Northumberland Avenue, which they considered would provide "a more compact and less diverse entity" than the City Council's proposal. The Liberal Democrats stated that the Fitzrovia area is already divided between the boroughs of Camden and Westminster, and considered that the City Council's proposals "further divide its own portion between two wards". As an alternative, the Liberal Democrats proposed that a new Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden ward be established, comprising that part of West End ward east of Regent Street, that part of St James's ward east of Haymarket, Cockspur Street and Northumberland Avenue, and that part of Cavendish ward east of Great Portland Street. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor in 2003 would be 2 per cent above the average in St James's & Mayfair ward and equal to the average in Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden ward.

112 At Stage Two we carefully considered the representations received during the initial consultation period and used the City Council's scheme as the basis for our draft recommendations, including its proposal that all of Mayfair be included in West End ward, and that the Chinatown area, south of Shaftesbury Avenue, should form part of a modified St James's ward. While we endorsed the City Council's proposals for the wards of Knightsbridge & Belgravia and St James's, we proposed some modifications to West End ward to improve electoral equality still further and in the light of proposals elsewhere in the borough.

113 As stated earlier, we proposed that the boundary between West End ward and Marylebone High Street ward should run along Oxford Street, Vere Street, Henrietta Place, Harley Street and New Cavendish Street. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed West End ward would be equal to the average (1 per cent above in 2003). In addition to the improved levels of electoral equality which would result, we sought to utilise strong local boundaries. Although our proposal would cross Oxford Street, we noted that this concept featured in the submissions from the City Council, the Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats.

114 While we noted that there was some support for establishing a ward combining the Covent Garden and Soho areas, we were satisfied that our draft

recommendations reflected local communities and provided an improved level of electoral equality. However, we invited further evidence at Stage Three. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the average in Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward (2 per cent above in 2003) and 6 per cent below in St James's ward (4 per cent below in 2003).

115 At Stage Three the Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards. As regards the proposed boundary between the wards of Churchill and Knightsbridge & Belgravia, it stated that it could see "no basis for moving the boundaries away from those proposed in the draft recommendations". It also opposed the Liberal Democrats' proposal for a ward combining the Covent Garden and Soho areas, and stated that such "radical change in ward boundaries" would "run counter to the City Council's general approach" which was for minimal change. It also considered that moving away from the draft recommendations also poses problems in identifying suitable alternative boundaries that would provide electoral equality and utilise clear physical boundaries without having an adverse effect in disrupting other ward boundaries.

116 The Liberal Democrats reiterated their Stage One submission for the establishment of new wards of Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden, Marylebone High Street and St James's & Mayfair and considered that, as Fitzrovia is already divided between the boroughs of Westminster and Camden, it would be problematic to divide the Westminster portion further between two wards. They also considered that the proposed St James's ward would be "unacceptably large in area and diverse in character".

117 The Labour Group stated that it had considered the Liberal Democrats' proposals as outlined in the draft recommendations and had decided to support the establishment of a ward comprising Fitzrovia, Soho & Covent Garden. The Group considered that these areas with their "multi-cultural community, mix of housing tenure and concentration of businesses, theatres, restaurants and other attractions" have more in common with each other than with the more residential areas of Marylebone, Mayfair and St James's. While they recognised that such a proposal would create "another geographically large ward", they noted that the proposed St James's ward "is itself very large" and that "whatever configuration is adopted there will always be one geographically large ward in this part of the City".

118 The West End & St James's branch of the Cities of London & Westminster Labour Party considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposals "better reflect the identities and interests of local communities ... achieve electoral equality and has strong, easily discernible local boundaries". It described both the existing wards of St James's and West End as very diverse, and considered that while Soho and Covent Garden face "unique problems", the Mayfair and St James's areas are similar to each other. It considered that the situation in Soho and Covent Garden could "be greatly helped by councillors who specialised in these problems, not splitting their time between diverse areas with vastly different problems", and that effective local government would be assisted if the warding pattern better reflected the common interests of the Soho and Covent Garden communities.

119 The Liberal Democrats' proposals were also supported by the Regent's Park & Kensington North Constituency Labour Party and Karen Buck MP.

120 We received two petitions supporting the establishment of a single ward for the Fitzrovia, Covent Garden and Soho areas: one from a resident of West End ward signed by 33 residents and one from a resident of Bayswater ward signed by 23 residents. The proposal was also supported by a resident of Queen's Park ward and two residents of Harrow Road ward. One resident of West End ward and two residents of St James's ward also proposed that Covent Garden and Soho should be united in a single ward.

121 As stated earlier, a resident of Cavendish ward opposed the draft recommendation that part of Cavendish ward should be transferred to West End ward, while a resident of West End ward supported the draft recommendation to retain Soho and Mayfair in a single ward.

122 The St Marylebone Society opposed the draft recommendations for these wards. As stated earlier it opposed the draft recommendation that part of Cavendish ward should form part of a modified West End ward, arguing that this would breach the historic boundary of Oxford Street and cause confusion. As an alternative, it proposed that West End ward should continue to be represented by two members.

123 We have noted the views expressed to us regarding our draft recommendations for this area. While we note that there is some support for the

creation of a ward covering the Covent Garden & Soho areas, we also note that there is not a broad consensus on this issue and no evidence of a groundswell of support for such a move. Given all the evidence received during the review, we have not been persuaded that this proposal would provide better electoral equality or better reflect community identities than our draft recommendations, which utilise equally coherent boundaries. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final for the wards of Knightsbridge & Belgravia, St James's and West End.

Belgrave, Churchill, Millbank, St George's and Victoria wards

¹²⁴ The south of the City of Westminster is covered by the two-member wards of Belgrave and Victoria and the three-member wards of Churchill, Millbank and St George's. The number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the average in Belgrave ward, 5 per cent above in Churchill ward, 8 per cent below in Millbank ward, 25 per cent above in St George's ward and 1 per cent above in Victoria ward (5 per cent below, 5 per cent above, 4 per cent below, 29 per cent above and 9 per cent above the average respectively in 2003).

¹²⁵ At Stage One the City Council proposed that the area of Belgrave ward to the north of Graham Terrace, Eaton Terrace and Ebury Street should form a new Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward, together with the current Knightsbridge ward. It proposed that the remainder of Belgrave ward should be distributed between a modified Churchill ward and a proposed Warwick ward, with the area south of Elizabeth Street forming part of Churchill ward, and the area north of Elizabeth Street and east of Ebury Street forming part of Warwick ward.

¹²⁶ The City Council proposed that that part of Churchill ward which lies north of Ebury Bridge, Sutherland Street and Lupus Street should also form part of the proposed Warwick ward, together with that part of St George's ward to the west of Warwick Way, Tachbrook Street, Charlwood Street and St George's Drive. The remainder of St George's ward would then join with that part of Millbank ward south of Vauxhall Bridge Road to form a new Tachbrook ward. The City Council proposed that the area to the north of Horseferry Road, Rutherford Street, Vincent Square, Elverton Street, Greycoat Street, Greycoat Place and Artillery Row, currently in Victoria ward, should be transferred to St James's ward. The remainder of

Victoria ward would then join with that part of Millbank ward north of Vauxhall Bridge Road to form a new Vincent Square ward.

¹²⁷ Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in Churchill ward (equal to the average in 2003), 6 per cent below in Tachbrook ward (equal to the average in 2003), 9 per cent below in Vincent Square ward (1 per cent below in 2003) and equal to the average in Warwick ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

¹²⁸ We received a submission from the Cities of London & Westminster Constituency Labour Party. As stated earlier, it proposed that the boundary between the wards of Churchill and Knightsbridge & Belgravia should run along Ebury Street and Pimlico Road, arguing that this would take more account of community identity. It recognised that in order to maintain electoral equality in the area, this proposal would necessitate a subsequent transfer of some 150 electors from the proposed Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward to Warwick ward at the north-east end of Ebury Street.

¹²⁹ We carefully considered all the representations received, and we adopted the City Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations. We considered they would broadly reflect community identities in the area while providing improvements to electoral equality. We also proposed endorsing, as part of our draft recommendations, the City Council's proposed ward names of Tachbrook, Vincent Square and Warwick, as we considered that they would accurately reflect the areas they cover. However, we invited comments on all these recommendations, including ward names, at Stage Three.

¹³⁰ At Stage Three the City Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards, including the proposed ward names, and confirmed its support for the boundary between the wards of Churchill and Knightsbridge & Belgravia as proposed in the draft recommendations.

¹³¹ As stated earlier, two residents of Belgrave ward opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Belgrave ward, east of Graham Terrace and Ebury Street, into Churchill ward and Warwick ward on community identity grounds. One proposed the creation of a four-member Knightsbridge & Belgrave ward comprising all of the

two existing wards. The other stated that if change were necessary, then the south-east part of Belgrave ward should form part of Warwick ward rather than Churchill ward, and that to maintain electoral equality, part of Tachbrook ward or Warwick ward should be transferred to Churchill ward.

132 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we remain of the view that the draft recommendations would provide the most appropriate balance between achieving electoral equality and reflecting community identities in the area. As none of the alternatives suggested would produce a better level of electoral equality and we have not been made aware of any widespread, evidence-based, local opposition to our proposals, we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations (including the proposed ward names) for all four wards as final.

Conclusions

133 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations in their entirety.

134 We conclude that, in the City of Westminster:

- (a) there should be no change to the council size of 60 members;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, three less than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all but two of the existing wards.

135 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

136 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Westminster City 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 nine to none. This improved balance of representation is expected to continue in 2003. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

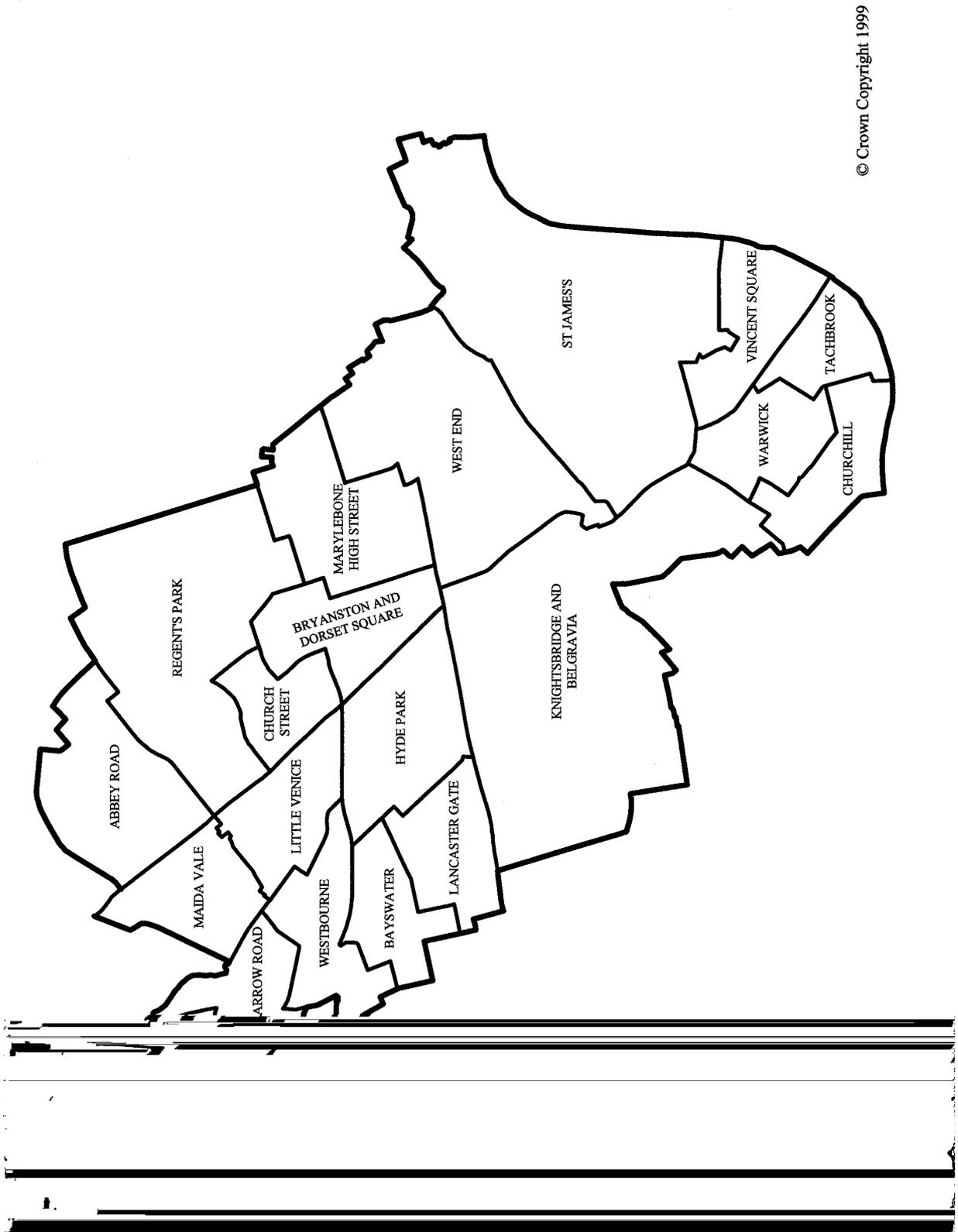
Final Recommendation

Westminster City Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map in the back of the report.

Figure 4 :
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	23	20	23	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,093	2,093	2,243	2,243
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	0	9	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	2	0

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for the City of Westminster



© Crown Copyright 1999

6. NEXT STEPS

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

138 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

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

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

