

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Hinckley & Bosworth in Leicestershire

Report to the Electoral Commission

June 2002

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the urban areas of Hinckley and Burbage is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Kru Desai
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M. Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hinckley & Bosworth in Leicestershire.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Hinckley & Bosworth's electoral arrangements on 12 June 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 15 January 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Hinckley & Bosworth:

- **in nine of the 18 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 108–109) are that:

- **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council should have 34 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, instead of 18 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 12 of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **an increase in the number of councillors (including the redistribution of councillors) and revised warding arrangements for Burbage parish;**
- **revised warding arrangements for the parish of Groby.**

All further representations on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission at the address below, and should reach the Commission by 18 July 2002:

**The Secretary
Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Ambien	1	The parishes of Higham on the Hill, Stoke Golding and Sutton Cheney; part of Sheepy parish (the existing Sibson, Upton and Wellsborough parish wards); part of Trinity ward	Maps 2, A2 and large map
2	Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Barlestone, Nailstone and Osbaston	Map 2
3	Barwell	3	Part of Ambien ward; part of Barwell ward	Map 2 and large map
4	Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill	2	Part of Burbage parish (the proposed Lash Hill and St Catherines parish wards)	Map 2 and large map
5	Burbage Sketchley & Stretton	3	Part of Burbage parish (the proposed Sketchley, Stretton and Tilton parish wards); part of Clarendon ward	Map 2 and large map
6	Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone	1	The parishes of Cadeby, Carlton, Market Bosworth and Shackerstone	Map 2
7	Earl Shilton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Earl Shilton	Map 2
8	Groby	2	Part of Groby parish (the proposed Groby parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
9	Hinckley Castle	2	Part of Burbage ward; part of Castle ward; part of Clarendon ward	Map 2 and large map
10	Hinckley Clarendon	3	Part of Burbage ward; part of Clarendon ward	Map 2 and large map
11	Hinckley De Montfort	3	Part of Barwell ward; part of Burbage ward; De Montfort ward; part of Trinity ward	Map 2 and large map
12	Hinckley Trinity	2	Part of Ambien ward; part of Clarendon ward; part of Trinity ward	Map 2 and large map
13	Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead	2	The parishes of Markfield and Stanton-under-Bardon; part of Groby parish (the proposed Fieldhead parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
14	Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton	3	The parishes of Desford, Newbold Verdon and Peckleton	Map 2
15	Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton	2	The parishes of Bagworth & Thornton and Ratby	Map 2
16	Twycross & Witherley with Sheepy	1	The parishes of Twycross and Witherley; part of Sheepy parish (the existing Sheepy parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2

Notes: 1 The urban areas of Hinckley and Barwell are the only unparished parts of the borough.

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

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to firm ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ambien	1	2,713	2,713	17	2,734	2,734	10
2	Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston	1	2,501	2,501	8	2,552	2,552	2
3	Barwell	3	6,632	2,211	-5	6,933	2,311	-7
4	Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill	2	4,849	2,425	5	4,866	2,433	-2
5	Burbage Sketchley & Stretton	3	6,794	2,265	-2	7,260	2,420	-3
6	Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone	1	2,644	2,644	14	2,772	2,772	11
7	Earl Shilton	3	6,982	2,327	1	7,684	2,561	3
8	Groby	2	5,293	2,647	14	5,394	2,697	8
9	Hinckley Castle	2	4,658	2,329	1	4,881	2,441	-2
10	Hinckley Clarendon	3	5,380	1,793	-23	7,581	2,527	1
11	Hinckley De Montfort	3	7,389	2,463	6	7,618	2,539	2
12	Hinckley Trinity	2	4,972	2,486	7	5,126	2,563	3
13	Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead	2	4,681	2,341	1	4,734	2,367	-5
14	Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton	3	6,332	2,111	-9	6,805	2,268	-9
15	Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton	2	4,356	2,178	-6	5,262	2,631	6
16	Twycross & Witherley with Sheepy	1	2,536	2,536	10	2,575	2,575	3
	Totals	34	78,712	-	-	84,777	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,315	-	-	2,493	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' columns show 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.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hinckley & Bosworth in Leicestershire. The seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire and Leicester unitary authority have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Hinckley & Bosworth's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 354). The electoral arrangements of Leicestershire County Council were last reviewed in March 1983 (Report no. 441). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Hinckley & Bosworth was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the district.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Hinckley & Bosworth is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Constabulary, the Local Government Association, Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Parish and

Local Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands region and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 September 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 15 January 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hinckley & Bosworth in Leicestershire*, and ended on 11 March 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 Hinckley & Bosworth borough is situated in the west of Leicestershire, bordered by the districts of North West Leicestershire to the north, Charnwood to the north-east, Blaby to the east and Harborough to the south-east. It is bordered by the county of Warwickshire to the west. Covering some 29,785 hectares, and with a population of some 98,600, Hinckley & Bosworth has a population density of around three persons per hectare. The borough contains 23 parishes, although the more urban Hinckley and Barwell areas are unparished. The unparished area comprises approximately 37 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

11 The electorate of the borough is 78,712 (February 2001). The Borough Council presently has 34 members who are elected from 18 wards, six of which are relatively urban in Barwell, Burbage and Hinckley, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, four are each represented by two councillors and eight are single-member wards. The Borough Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,315 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,493 by the year 2006 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 18 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, in six wards by more than 20 per cent and in two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Twycross & Shackerstone ward where the councillor represents 47 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Hinckley & Bosworth

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ambien	1	2,393	2,393	3	2,411	2,411	-3
2	Bagworth	1	1,383	1,383	-40	1,933	1,933	-22
3	Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston	1	2,501	2,501	8	2,552	2,552	2
4	Barwell	3	6,639	2,213	-4	6,940	2,313	-7
5	Burbage	3	8,539	2,846	23	9,022	3,007	21
6	Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth	1	2,033	2,033	-12	2,124	2,124	-15
7	Castle	3	5,389	1,796	-22	5,584	1,861	-25
8	Clarendon	3	7,753	2,584	12	10,094	3,365	35
9	De Montfort	3	7,382	2,461	6	7,611	2,537	2
10	Desford & Peckleton	2	3,785	1,893	-18	4,244	2,122	-15
11	Earl Shilton	3	6,982	2,327	1	7,684	2,561	3
12	Groby	2	5,747	2,874	24	5,852	2,926	17
13	Markfield	2	4,227	2,114	-9	4,276	2,138	-14
14	Newbold Verdon	1	2,547	2,547	10	2,561	2,561	3
15	Ratby	1	2,973	2,973	28	3,329	3,329	34
16	Sheepy & Witherley	1	2,229	2,229	-4	2,249	2,249	-10
17	Trinity	2	4,972	2,486	7	5,014	2,507	1
18	Twycross & Shackerstone	1	1,238	1,238	-47	1,297	1,297	-48
	Totals	34	78,712	-	-	84,777	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,315	-	-	2,493	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' columns show 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 2001, electors in Twycross & Shackerstone ward were relatively over-represented by 47 per cent, while electors in Ratby ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received four representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, and representations from a county councillor, a borough councillor and one local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hinckley & Bosworth in Leicestershire*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were broadly based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and continued to provide a pattern of single, two and three-member wards in the borough. However, it noted that the scheme was predominantly based on combining whole polling districts to form wards which, in some instances, resulted in illogical boundaries. Furthermore, it noted that the Borough Council proposed dividing some parishes between borough wards in order to secure a high level of electoral equality, albeit, in the LGCE's view, to the detriment of reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. It therefore moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting 10 wards. It proposed that:

- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council should be served by 34 councillors, as at present, representing 16 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be revised warding arrangements for the parishes of Burbage and Groby, including the redistribution of councillors for the parish of Burbage.

Draft Recommendation

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council should comprise 34 councillors, serving 16 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 16 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward, Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 20 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

18 The Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations, although it reiterated its Stage One proposal for Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton and Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton wards, stating that “all members present” at the full council meeting supported this. It also proposed three alternative ward names.

Leicestershire County Council

19 While not specifically mentioning Hinckley & Bosworth, Leicestershire County Council stated that it “envisages that there will be considerable difficulties in a number of districts in using the wards contained in the draft recommendations as building blocks for future County electoral divisions”. It also proposed including the name of the county town in ward names.

Parish Councils

20 Burbage Parish Council supported the borough warding proposed in the parish, “subject to the inclusion of Burbage in the Ward names”. It also proposed an increase in the number of parish wards from four to five, which would not affect the borough wards, and an increase in the number of parish councillors.

21 Desford Parish Council objected to the draft recommendation which proposed that the parishes of Desford, Peckleton and Ratby form a ward, and stated that it preferred the Borough Council’s Stage One proposal for a ward consisting of the parishes of Newbold Verdon, Desford and Peckleton.

22 Groby Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of councillors for Groby ward from two to three. Carlton Parish Council stated that it had “no objection” to the draft recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth and, in particular, supported the recommendation not to split Shackerstone parish between different borough wards. Earl Shilton Parish Council proposed alternative parish ward names for its four existing parish wards.

Other Representations

23 Borough Councillors Claridge and Price (both representing Burbage ward) and County Councillor Sherwin (representing Burbage division) jointly supported the draft recommendations for multi-member wards in Burbage, in preference to five single-member wards. Borough Councillor Joy (Castle ward) supported Burbage Parish Council’s proposal to increase the number of parish wards from four to five, and proposed that the names reflect the constituent areas. Borough Councillor Wood (Castle ward) was “sad to see that the Castle Ward is to be broken up”, although he accepted the need for some wards to change. He proposed a minor boundary amendment between two existing parish wards to unite the whole of Forresters Road in Lash Hill parish ward, which would not affect the proposed borough warding. He also proposed that the proposed St Catherines & Lash ward be renamed St Catherines/Lash Hill ward. He further supported Burbage Parish Council’s proposals for five parish wards and an increase in the number of parish councillors from 17 to 20. The proposal for five parish wards was also supported by three parish councillors, two of whom also supported the proposed increase in the number of parish councillors. One parish councillor, Councillor Hall, also included in his submission the arguments for and

against the proposal for five parish wards and the increase in parish councillors to provide a full record of the comments from the Parish Council. Four local residents supported Burbage Parish Council's proposals for five parish wards, three of whom also supported the proposal to increase the number of parish councillors.

24 County Councillor Hunt (Loughborough Blackbrook division) proposed that Hinckley ward names be preceded by the name of the town.

Other Representations

25 Two further submissions were received. Bosworth Conservative Association proposed an increase in council size from "34 to 40 (and possibly 42)" using comparisons with other Leicestershire districts and to ease the pressure of councillors' workloads. It also forwarded an extract which appeared to be from the County Council which suggested that "the draft recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth in their present form do not lend themselves to forming County Electoral Divisions without dividing a number of district wards". Finally, a local resident of Earl Shilton ward proposed an external parish boundary review of Earl Shilton parish.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Hinckley & Bosworth is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

27 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

28 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

29 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim 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 make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

30 Since 1975 there has been an increase of approximately 32 per cent in the electorate of Hinckley & Bosworth borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 8 per cent from 78,712 to 84,777 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Clarendon ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Earl Shilton and Bagworth wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

32 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

33 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted the Council's proposal to retain the current council size of 34 members as it considered that this would achieve the best balance between securing electoral equality, reflecting the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government.

34 During Stage Three Bosworth Conservative Association proposed an increase in the number of councillors from "34 to 40 (and possibly 42)" as it stated that "the average number of electors per councillor in Hinckley & Bosworth is far higher than the Leicestershire county average". It contended that this increase in council size would make it easier for working people to become councillors. Groby Parish Council, while not explicitly proposing an increase in council size, proposed that Groby borough ward be represented by three councillors, instead of two, as proposed in the draft recommendations. The supporting information it provided suggested that it also supported a general increase in council size, based on comparisons of the councillor:elector ratio of other Leicestershire districts, and was identical to that submitted by Bosworth Conservative Association.

35 We have noted the submission from Bosworth Conservative Association proposing an increase in council size. However, given the cross-party support for the draft recommendation of a 34-member council from the Borough Council, we do not propose adopting such a significant increase in council size, particularly as the justification for the increase is derived from comparisons with other districts in the county, with no consideration of how Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council would operate under such an increased council size.

36 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we remain satisfied that a balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria would best be met by retaining a council of 34 members.

Electoral Arrangements

37 In view of the consultation exercise which the Borough Council undertook with interested parties, and the improvement in electoral equality which was achieved, the LGCE broadly based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. However, it proposed a number of modifications in order to avoid some parish warding and some illogical boundaries as a result of utilising whole polling districts to form wards. Furthermore, it made a number of minor boundary amendments in order to tie boundaries to firm ground detail.

38 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Ambien, Sheepy & Witherley and Twycross & Shackerstone wards;
- (b) Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston and Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth wards;
- (c) Bagworth, Groby, Markfield and Ratby wards;
- (d) Desford & Peckleton, Earl Shilton and Newbold Verdon wards;
- (e) Barwell, Clarendon, De Montfort and Trinity wards;
- (f) Burbage and Castle wards.

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

Ambien, Sheepy & Witherley and Twycross & Shackerstone wards

40 The three single-member wards of Ambien, Sheepy & Witherley and Twycross & Shackerstone are situated in the west of the borough. Ambien ward comprises the parishes

of Higham on the Hill, Stoke Golding and Sutton Cheney. There is a slight boundary anomaly in that a small part of Stoke Golding parish is actually in Trinity ward and part of the unparished area is in Ambien ward. Sheepy & Witherley and Twycross & Shackerstone wards each contain the two parishes of the same names. Under the existing electoral arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 3 per cent above the borough average in Ambien ward (3 per cent below by 2006), 4 per cent below in Sheepy & Witherley ward (10 per cent below by 2006) and 47 per cent below in Twycross & Shackerstone ward (48 per cent below by 2006).

41 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed extending the existing Ambien ward north-westwards to include the existing Sibson and Upton parish wards of Sheepy parish, currently in Sheepy & Witherley ward, also noting the existing boundary anomaly between Stoke Golding parish and Trinity ward. It proposed that the part of Stoke Golding parish currently in Trinity ward should be transferred to the revised Ambien ward. This revised ward would retain its existing name. The Borough Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Sheepy & Witherley ward be extended northwards to include Twycross parish and the existing Bilstone parish ward of Shackerstone parish. This revised ward would be renamed Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley ward. Both wards would each continue to be represented by a single councillor. Shackerstone parish would be further warded and divided between two other borough wards, in order to facilitate the Borough Council's scheme, discussed below.

42 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent above the borough average in Ambien ward (6 per cent above by 2006) and 15 per cent above in Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley ward (9 per cent above by 2006).

43 The LGCE noted that, in response to the Borough Council's consultations, Sutton Cheney Parish Council expressed a desire for the existing arrangements for the parish to be retained. Twycross Parish Council expressed satisfaction that the Borough Council did not propose to ward the parish. However, it did express concern over whether the borough councillor would be able to work with three parish councils. Shackerstone Parish Council stated that it was "strongly opposed" to the proposal to ward the parish between three borough wards.

44 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. It based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme, albeit with a number of modifications. It corrected the existing boundary anomalies between Stoke Golding parish and Barwell and Trinity wards so that the borough ward boundary would follow all of Stoke Golding parish's southern and eastern boundary. Furthermore, it included the existing Wellsborough parish ward of Sheepy parish in the Borough Council's proposed Ambien ward. It considered that this modification better reflected community identity in this area as, under the Borough Council's proposals, Wellsborough parish ward would not have reasonable road access to the remainder of its proposed ward, Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley. The LGCE's proposed Ambien ward would continue to be represented by a single member.

45 It further modified the Borough Council's proposed Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley ward by removing the existing Bilstone parish ward of Shackerstone parish from the proposed Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley ward, so that the whole of Shackerstone parish would be included in the proposed Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward, as detailed below. The LGCE noted the views expressed by Shackerstone Parish Council and agreed that dividing the parish between three borough wards would not provide for a good reflection of local communities. As a consequence of these modifications, and in order to better reflect the constituent parts of the proposed ward, the LGCE named the revised Twycross with Sheepy & Witherley ward as Twycross & Witherley with Sheepy ward,

due to the fact that Twycross and Witherley parishes would be wholly contained in the ward with only part of Sheepy parish. This would continue to be a single-member ward.

46 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 17 per cent above the borough average in Ambien ward (10 per cent above by 2006) and 10 per cent above in Twycross & Witherley with Sheepy ward (3 per cent above by 2006).

47 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. Carlton Parish Council supported the proposals as they avoided the need to divide Shackerstone parish between three borough wards. Councillor Hunt proposed that Ambien ward be renamed Hinckley Ambien.

48 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for the proposed Ambien and Twycross & Witherley with Sheepy wards as final. We do not propose renaming Ambien ward as proposed by Councillor Hunt as we do not consider this to be appropriate for what is a predominantly rural ward, given that Hinckley is the name of the town.

49 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston and Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth wards

50 The two single-member wards of Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston and Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth are situated in the north and centre of the borough. Both wards contain the parishes of the same names. Under the existing electoral arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 8 per cent above the borough average in Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward (2 per cent above by 2006) and 12 per cent below in Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth ward (15 per cent below by 2006).

51 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the existing Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward be extended to include the existing Odstone parish ward of Shackerstone parish. The borough ward would retain its existing name and continue to be represented by a single councillor. It also proposed that the existing Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth ward be extended to include the remainder of Shackerstone parish (the existing Barton, Congerstone and Shackerstone parish wards). It proposed that this ward be named Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward and that it continue to be represented by a single councillor.

52 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the borough average in Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward (5 per cent above by 2006) and 9 per cent above in Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward (7 per cent above by 2006).

53 The LGCE noted that, in the Borough Council's consultations, Carlton Parish Council had stated that "In any regrouping of electoral wards the Parish Council would prefer Carlton to remain grouped with Market Bosworth". With regard to the rest of the borough, it urged the Borough Council "to adopt a conservative approach to this review, and to make as few changes as possible". As detailed earlier, Shackerstone Parish Council objected to the division of the parish between borough wards. Osbaston Parish Council stated that it would "be content with the proposal to include Odstone ... in ward 12".

54 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. As discussed earlier, it considered that the warding of Shackerstone parish to divide it between

three borough wards was unnecessary and would not provide for a good reflection of local communities. It therefore proposed that the whole of Shackerstone parish form part of a new Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward. As a consequence, it proposed retaining the existing Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward. This amendment would mean that Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward would be under-represented by 11 per cent by 2006. However, it was considered that reflecting the community identity of Shackerstone parish would outweigh the potentially negative effect of the electoral imbalance which would occur as a result of the draft recommendations. Retaining the existing Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward would result in improved electoral equality, as the ward would vary from the average by only 2 per cent by 2006. Both wards would be represented by a single councillor.

55 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average in Barlestone, Nailstone & Osbaston ward (2 per cent above by 2006) and 14 per cent above in Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward (11 per cent above by 2006).

56 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. As detailed earlier, Carlton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward.

57 Given the local support for the proposed wards in this area, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final.

58 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Bagworth, Groby, Markfield and Ratby wards

59 These four wards are situated in the north-eastern corner of the borough. Bagworth and Ratby wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Groby and Markfield are both two-member wards. Groby and Ratby wards are each coterminous with the parishes of the same names. Bagworth ward is coterminous with Bagworth & Thornton parish. Markfield ward comprises the parishes of Markfield and Stanton-under-Bardon. Under the existing electoral arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 40 per cent below the borough average in Bagworth ward (22 per cent below by 2006), 24 per cent above in Groby ward (17 per cent above by 2006), 9 per cent below in Markfield ward (14 per cent below by 2006) and 28 per cent above in Ratby ward (34 per cent above by 2006).

60 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed combining the existing Bagworth and Ratby wards to form a new two-member Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward. It proposed dividing Groby parish so that the existing Fieldhead parish ward of Groby parish would be transferred to the existing Markfield ward. The remainder of Groby parish (the existing Groby parish ward) would form a revised two-member Groby ward. The revised Markfield ward would continue to be served by two councillors, and would be named Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead ward.

61 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent above the borough average in Groby ward (8 per cent above by 2006), 1 per cent above in Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead ward (5 per cent below by 2006) and 6 per cent below in Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward (6 per cent above by 2006).

62 Borough Councillor Collins (Groby ward), in a letter to the Prime Minister which was forwarded to the LGCE, objected to the Borough Council's proposals to ward the parish, stating that "Fieldhead was once rejected by Markfield and has no affinity to that Parish." Instead, he proposed that part of the existing Markfield ward be transferred to the existing

Groby ward to be represented by three councillors. However, he acknowledged that this would mean that the ward would be over-represented by 16 per cent and so would be unlikely to be acceptable. Councillor Collins also wrote to the Borough Council as part of its consultation period, commenting on the publicity the Borough Council had given the review.

63 The LGCE noted that in the Borough Council's consultation Bagworth & Thornton Parish Council objected to the proposal that it form a ward with Ratby parish. It stated that "Ratby is several villages 'away' and has few links with us" and that Bagworth & Thornton had a link with Nailstone parish. Ratby Parish Council also objected to the Borough Council's proposal, stating that "The map supplied by the Borough Council looks very convenient but in reality Ratby is several miles away from Bagworth." It considered that the parish had "close ties with Markfield and Groby and to a lesser extent with Desford". A local resident wrote in during the Borough Council's consultation, proposing that Ratby parish remain in a ward on its own.

64 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. It noted Councillor Collins' objections to the Borough Council's proposals for Groby parish. However, officers from the LGCE having visited the area, it was considered that the existing Fieldhead parish ward is similar in nature to and shares close links with Markfield parish. The LGCE therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposed Groby and Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead wards. However, it modified the boundary between Fieldhead parish ward and Groby parish ward so that the boundary would follow the centre of Bradgate Hill and then a path as far as Markfield parish boundary in order to create a more identifiable boundary. This amendment does not affect any electors.

65 It also noted the objections from Bagworth & Thornton and Ratby parish councils regarding the Borough Council's proposal that the two parishes form a ward. Having visited the area, officers from the LGCE were aware that electors in Ratby parish do not have direct road access to Bagworth & Thornton parish. It therefore proposed that Bagworth & Thornton parish should form a ward with Newbold Verdon parish, and that Ratby parish should be joined with the existing Desford & Peckleton ward in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities. These wards will be discussed further below.

66 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the Borough Council's proposals for Groby and Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead wards.

67 At Stage Three the Borough Council objected to the proposed Bagworth & Thornton with Newbold Verdon and Desford, Peckleton & Ratby wards, and reiterated its Stage One proposal for Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton and Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton wards. With regard to its proposed Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward, it said that "the Working Group accepts that this ward has minor shortcomings in terms of road links. However, it feels that whereas the Commission's solution would result in two wards with poor internal relationships, the Council's proposals offer one well formed and virtually ideal ward (Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward) and one acceptable ward (Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward)".

68 Desford Parish Council also objected to the proposed Desford, Peckleton & Ratby ward, preferring the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for this area. It considered that the Borough Council's proposed Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward would be a better reflection of community identity as "Ratby by its nature is a more urban village having different interests from the rural villages of Desford, Peckleton and Newbold Verdon".

69 Groby Parish Council proposed that the number of borough councillors for the proposed Groby ward be increased from two to three. It based this proposal on comparisons with councillor:elector ratios of wards in other Leicestershire districts.

70 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. In the draft recommendations report the LGCE stated that, having visited the area, it considered that the configuration of parishes which it proposed allowed for better road links between the constituent areas, which the Council did acknowledge in its submission. However, given that the proposals in this area have not received any support, and that preferences for the Borough Council's original configuration of parishes have been expressed as they would better reflect local community interests and identities, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's original proposals as part of our final recommendations. These wards still achieve reasonable electoral equality, and benefit from local support and cross-party support on the Council: "all members present on 5th March 2002 were firmly of the view that the Council's original proposals for these areas should be implemented".

71 However, we do not propose increasing the borough representation of Groby ward from two councillors to three. Under the proposed council size of 34 a three-member Groby ward would mean that electors would be over-represented by 24 per cent now, and over-represented by 28 per cent by 2006, and this would have consequential effects on the rest of the borough.

72 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent above the borough average in Groby ward (8 per cent above by 2006), 1 per cent above in Markfield, Stanton and Fieldhead ward (5 per cent below by 2006) and 6 per cent below in Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward (6 per cent above by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on Map A3 in Appendix A.

Desford & Peckleton, Earl Shilton and Newbold Verdon wards

73 These three wards are situated in the east of the borough. Desford & Peckleton ward contains the parishes of Desford and Peckleton, while Earl Shilton and Newbold Verdon wards are both coterminous with the parishes of the same names. Desford & Peckleton ward is represented by two councillors, Earl Shilton ward by three councillors and Newbold Verdon by a single councillor. Under the existing electoral arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 18 per cent below the borough average in Desford & Peckleton ward (15 per cent below by 2006), 1 per cent above in Earl Shilton ward (3 per cent above by 2006) and 10 per cent above in Newbold Verdon ward (3 per cent above by 2006).

74 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing three-member Earl Shilton ward. It proposed combining the existing Desford & Peckleton and Newbold Verdon wards to form a new three-member ward, to be named Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward.

75 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Earl Shilton ward (3 per cent above by 2006) and 9 per cent below in Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward, both initially and by 2006.

76 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. As stated earlier, it proposed modifications to the Borough Council's Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward as a consequence of not adopting the Borough Council's Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton ward. It proposed that the parishes of Bagworth & Thornton and Newbold Verdon should form a new two-member Bagworth & Thornton with Newbold Verdon ward, and that the parishes of Desford, Peckleton and Ratby should form a new three-member Desford, Peckleton & Ratby ward. It was considered that the alternative wards would be a better reflection of community identities, provide for better local road links and acknowledge the preferences of both Bagworth & Thornton and Ratby parish councils as expressed during the Borough Council's own consultations. In the remainder of this area the LGCE adopted the Borough Council's proposed Earl Shilton ward.

77 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 15 per cent below the borough average in Bagworth & Thornton with Newbold Verdon ward (10 per cent below by 2006), 3 per cent below in Desford, Peckleton & Ratby ward (1 per cent above by 2006) and 1 per cent above in Earl Shilton ward (3 per cent above by 2006).

78 At Stage Three the Borough Council and Desford Parish Council objected to the proposed Bagworth & Thornton with Newbold Verdon and Desford, Peckleton & Ratby wards, as detailed earlier.

79 Earl Shilton Parish Council proposed alternative parish ward names for its existing parish wards, which will be discussed below. A local resident proposed an external parish boundary review of Earl Shilton parish. However, the Boundary Committee for England is unable to recommend changes to external parish boundaries as part of a PER. Borough councils may make recommendations to the Secretary of State for such changes as part of a separate parish review process under the provisions of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

80 We have carefully considered the representations received. As stated earlier, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward in view of the local support for this configuration of parishes. We have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for Earl Shilton ward as final.

81 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Earl Shilton ward (3 per cent above by 2006) and 9 per cent below in Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton ward, both now and by 2006. Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Barwell, Clarendon, De Montfort and Trinity wards

82 These four wards are situated in the Hinckley area in the south of the borough, to the north of the railway line, and are unparished. Barwell, Clarendon and De Montfort wards are each represented by three councillors, while Trinity ward is represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the borough average in Barwell ward (7 per cent below by 2006), 12 per cent above in Clarendon ward (35 per cent above by 2006), 6 per cent above in De Montfort ward (2 per cent above by 2006) and 7 per cent above in Trinity ward (1 per cent above by 2006).

83 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing three-member Barwell, three-member De Montfort and two-member Trinity wards, other than the proposed boundary amendment with Ambien ward, as detailed earlier. It further proposed that the existing Clarendon ward be split, so that polling districts EAC and EAD (broadly in the west of the ward) form a new two-member ward, to be named St John's ward. The remainder of the existing Clarendon ward (polling districts EAA and EAB, broadly in the east of the ward) would be joined with polling districts DAA and DAB (that area from the existing Castle ward to the north of the railway line, which will be discussed below). This ward would be represented by three councillors, and would be named Castle & Clarendon ward.

84 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Barwell ward (7 per cent below by 2006), 1 per cent below in Castle & Clarendon ward (6 per cent above by 2006), 6 per cent above in De Montfort ward (2 per cent above by 2006), 32 per cent below in St John's ward (7 per cent below by 2006) and 7 per cent above in Trinity ward (1 per cent above by 2006).

85 The LGCE noted that, in the Borough Council's consultation, Councillor Joy proposed that the name of the proposed Castle & Clarendon ward be changed to Castledon.

86 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. It adopted the Borough Council's Barwell and De Montfort wards, albeit with a number of small boundary amendments. First, it proposed that the boundary of Stoke Golding parish form the western boundary of the proposed Barwell ward and also the northern boundary of the proposed Trinity ward, in order to correct an existing anomaly. Second, it proposed that the Houston Kennels properties on Leicester Road should be transferred from the proposed Barwell ward to the proposed De Montfort ward in order to provide a more identifiable boundary between the two wards. Finally, it proposed that the boundary between De Montfort and Trinity wards should follow the centre of Normandy Way and Cloverfield before rejoining the existing boundary in order that the boundary adhere to firm ground detail. This amendment would not affect any electors.

87 It proposed a further amendment to the proposed Trinity ward, so that the boundary between its proposed Trinity and St John's wards (to be discussed below) continued along Outlands Drive instead of cutting across fields near the A447. This affected a proposed development of 63 properties which would be transferred from St John's ward to the proposed Trinity ward.

88 In the Castle and Clarendon area, the LGCE noted that the Borough Council's proposals to utilise whole polling districts as the building blocks for wards resulted, in its view, in the Hollycroft estate being split quite arbitrarily between two borough wards. The LGCE did not consider this to be a good reflection of community identity. It therefore proposed modifications to the Borough Council's proposed Castle & Clarendon and St John's wards, while also reflecting the modifications to Trinity ward as described above. It proposed that the Borough Council's proposed St John's ward should be extended to include the whole of the Hollycroft estate south of Outlands Drive and west of Clifton Way, and also that it should take in properties broadly to the north of the railway line and to the west of Northfield Road. It proposed that St John's ward should become a three-member ward, while Castle & Clarendon ward should be represented by two councillors and should reflect these modifications. The LGCE stated that it would welcome comments on the names of these two wards at Stage Three. The revised Trinity ward should continue to be represented by two councillors.

89 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Barwell ward (7 per cent below by 2006), 1 per cent above in Castle & Clarendon ward (2 per cent below by 2006), 6 per cent above in De Montfort ward (2 per cent above by 2006), 23 per cent below in St John's ward (1 per cent above by 2006) and 7 per cent above in Trinity ward (3 per cent above by 2006).

90 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area, although it proposed two alternative ward names. It proposed that Castle & Clarendon ward be renamed Castle ward, and that St John's ward be renamed Clarendon ward.

91 Leicestershire County Council and Councillor Hunt proposed that 'Hinckley' be included in the ward names of those in the town.

92 We have carefully considered the representations received. Given the support received for the borough wards in this area, we have decided to confirm the boundaries as final. We do, however, propose amending the ward names in this area. In the interest of consistency across the county, we propose that 'Hinckley' precedes the ward names of those wards in the town. In addition, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's revised names for Castle & Clarendon and St John's wards. Our proposed ward names are listed below.

93 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Barwell ward (7 per cent below by 2006), 1 per cent above in Hinckley Castle ward (2 per cent below by 2006), 23 per cent below in Hinckley

Clarendon ward (1 per cent above by 2006), 6 per cent above in Hinckley De Montfort ward (2 per cent above by 2006) and 7 per cent above in Hinckley Trinity ward (3 per cent above by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Burbage and Castle wards

94 These two three-member wards are situated in the very south of the borough. Castle ward is dissected by the railway line; the area to the north of the railway line is unparished, while the part of the ward which is situated to the south of the railway line comprises Lash Hill parish ward of Burbage parish. Burbage ward contains the remainder of Burbage parish, which comprises St Catherines, Sketchley and Stretton parish wards. Under the existing electoral arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 23 per cent above the borough average in Burbage ward (21 per cent above by 2006) and 22 per cent below in Castle ward (25 per cent below by 2006).

95 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the part of the existing Castle ward situated to the south of the railway line (the existing Lash Hill parish ward of Burbage parish) be combined with the existing St Catherines parish ward of Burbage parish to form a new two-member Burbage St Catherines ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Burbage parish form a new three-member Sketchley & Stretton ward. As described earlier, the part of the existing Castle ward situated to the north of the railway line would be joined with part of the existing Clarendon ward.

96 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Burbage St Catherines ward (1 per cent above by 2006) and 5 per cent below in Sketchley & Stretton ward (6 per cent below by 2006).

97 County Councillor Mrs Sherwin (Burbage division) supported the proposed two wards for Burbage and opposed any proposal for five single-member wards. A local resident proposed that the proposed Burbage St Catherines ward be named St Catherines/Lash ward in order to reflect the constituent parish wards.

98 The LGCE noted that, in response to the Borough Council's consultation, Burbage Parish Council stated that "the majority" of councillors supported the recommendations for the parish, and requested that the historical names of Lash Hill & St Catherines and Sketchley & Stretton be retained. A borough councillor, Councillor Claridge, proposed that the two wards be named Burbage St Catherines and Burbage Stretton/Sketchley. Two parish councillors, Councillor Hall and Councillor Mrs Hall, proposed that Burbage be divided into five single-member wards to improve community identity within the parish. "Burbage Matters" (a local community group) also proposed that there should be five single-member wards in Burbage.

99 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. It noted the proposals for five single-member wards in Burbage, but considered that as the Borough Council's scheme had received some local support, both from representations made directly to the LGCE and as part of the Borough Council's own consultations, and in the light of the improved electoral equality achieved by the Borough Council's scheme, the statutory criteria would best be met by adopting the Borough Council's proposed wards, albeit with minor modifications. As with the Castle and Clarendon area, the Borough Council's proposals to utilise whole polling districts as the building blocks for wards in Burbage resulted in some roads being arbitrarily split between two borough wards and occasionally resulted in culs-de-sac not having vehicular access to the remainder of the proposed ward.

100 In the south-western area of the proposed Burbage St Catherines ward, the LGCE proposed that the whole of The Ridgeway should be in the proposed Sketchley & Stretton ward to keep the whole of the road in the same ward. In the eastern part of the ward it

transferred the properties on Forresters Road which the Borough Council proposed be in Sketchley & Stretton ward to Burbage St Catherines ward. It proposed that the boundary should follow the rear of properties on Falconers Green, Swains Green and Bowman Green before rejoining the Borough Council's proposed boundary. A further modification to the Borough Council's proposed wards was that 79 Twycross Road would be transferred from the Borough Council's proposed Burbage St Catherines ward to its proposed Sketchley & Stretton ward to unite it with the remainder of Twycross Road. It also proposed transferring De-la-Bere Crescent to the proposed Sketchley & Stretton ward to give the properties in this cul-de-sac access to the rest of its ward. It proposed that the northern boundary of both Burbage wards follow the parish boundary rather than the railway line and canal, as proposed by the Borough Council, as the LGCE was of the view that this would provide the stronger boundary. Finally, it renamed the proposed Burbage St Catherines ward as St Catherines & Lash ward in order to acknowledge the Lash Hill area as a constituent part of this ward.

101 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in St Catherines & Lash ward (2 per cent below by 2006) and 2 per cent below in Sketchley & Stretton ward (3 per cent below by 2006).

102 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for Burbage, although it proposed an alternative ward name. It proposed that St Catherines & Lash ward be renamed St Catherines & Lash Hill ward "to reflect the historical name".

103 Councillors Claridge, Price and Sherwin supported multi-member wards for Burbage, as proposed in the draft recommendations, as they considered that "Burbage is at last going to be able to achieve a real sense of community as a village, which will be strongly represented at all levels of local government".

104 Burbage Parish Council supported the borough wards for Burbage "subject to the inclusion of Burbage in the ward names" and proposed revised parish warding arrangements, which would not affect the borough wards. These are discussed below. Councillor Wood expressed regret that the existing Castle ward was being changed, although he acknowledged that some change was needed. He also proposed an alternative ward name, proposing that St Catherines & Lash ward be renamed St Catherines/Lash Hill ward, for the same reasons as those submitted by the Borough Council. Councillor Hunt proposed that St Catherines & Lash ward be named Hinckley St Catherines & Lash ward. There were also a further nine representations supporting the Parish Council's proposed amendments to the parish warding arrangements, to be discussed below.

105 We have carefully considered the representations received. Given the support for the borough warding in Burbage, we have decided to confirm the boundaries as final. However, we propose amending the ward names following local suggestions. We propose using the name 'Burbage' in the names of the two Burbage wards, as proposed by Burbage Parish Council, and we also propose that the name of St Catherines & Lash ward be changed to Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill ward, as proposed by the Borough Council and a local borough councillor, in order to reflect the historical name of the area. We do not consider that Councillor Hunt's proposal to use 'Hinckley' as part of the ward name for St Catherines & Lash ward is appropriate given that the ward is part of Burbage parish rather than the Hinckley town area.

106 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill ward (2 per cent below by 2006) and 2 per cent below in Burbage Sketchley & Stretton ward (3 per cent below by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

107 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycles.

Conclusions

108 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in the north-east of the borough we propose utilising the Borough Council's original Newbold Verdon with Desford & Peckleton and Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton wards;
- in the Hinckley area we propose a number of ward name changes – we propose renaming Castle & Clarendon, De Montfort, St John's and Trinity wards as Hinckley Castle, Hinckley De Montfort, Hinckley Clarendon and Hinckley Trinity wards respectively;
- in Burbage we propose renaming St Catherines & Lash and Sketchley & Stretton wards as Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill and Burbage Sketchley & Stretton respectively.

109 We conclude that, in Hinckley & Bosworth:

- a council of 34 members should be retained;
- there should be 16 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified.

110 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	34	34	34	34
Number of wards	18	16	18	16
Average number of electors per councillor	2,315	2,315	2,493	2,493
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average	9	4	10	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20 per cent from the average	6	1	6	0

111 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to four. By 2006 only one ward, Cadeby, Carlton & Market Bosworth with Shackerstone ward, is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council should comprise 34 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

112 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In its draft recommendations report the LGCE proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Burbage and Groby, and we are also proposing revised parish ward names for Earl Shilton parish.

113 The parish of Burbage is currently served by 17 councillors representing the four parish wards of Lash Hill, St Catherines, Sketchley and Stretton, which are represented by five, three, five and four councillors respectively.

114 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Burbage parish continue to be served by the four existing parish wards, as detailed above. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed. The LGCE broadly based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals in Burbage, but with amendments to the Borough Council's proposed boundaries in order to provide for more identifiable boundaries, as detailed earlier in the report.

115 Therefore, in the light of the draft recommendations for borough warding in Burbage parish (reflecting the proposed amendments to the Borough Council's scheme), the LGCE modified the current parish ward boundaries accordingly, as described earlier, and redistributed parish councillors in order to get a better balance of representation within the parish. However, it noted that there was some support during the Borough Council's consultation for five single-member borough wards in Burbage and stated that it would welcome comments at Stage Three on its proposals for Burbage parish.

116 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, Burbage Parish Council proposed that the number of parish wards be increased to five, as it "believes that the existing four ward structure is not conducive to fostering good community spirit". It also proposed an increase in the number of councillors from 17 to 20 "in order to maintain the appropriate balance of councillors per number of electors". It proposed that the existing Lash Hill and St Catherines parish wards, as amended by the draft recommendations, together form the Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill borough ward. Its proposed North/Lash parish ward would be represented by five councillors, and its proposed East/St Catherines parish ward would be represented by three councillors. It also proposed that the existing Sketchley and Stretton parish wards, as amended by the draft recommendations, be modified to facilitate the creation of a new Central/Tilton parish ward, and these three parish wards would together form the Burbage Sketchley & Stretton borough ward. The boundary between the proposed Sketchley and Tilton and Sketchley and Stretton parish wards should follow the centre of Rugby Road until reaching the borough boundary in the south of the borough. Its proposed

West/Sketchley, Central/Tilton and South/Stretton parish wards would each be represented by four councillors.

117 Burbage Parish Council's proposed parish warding and increase in parish councillors was supported by two borough councillors, three parish councillors and four local residents, although there were two alternative sets of parish ward names proposed; one set of proposals utilised the areas that the parish wards were based around as names, for example St Catherines, and the other utilised North, South, East, West and Central. There was also a parish ward boundary amendment, which would unite the whole of Forresters Road in the proposed North/Lash ward, proposed by one of the borough councillors which did not differ significantly from the parish wards proposed by the Parish Council.

118 Having considered all the evidence received, in the light of the fact that our borough warding would be unaffected by these proposals and the local support received, we consider the Parish Council's request reasonable and are content to put this forward as part of our final recommendations. We consider that the use of the areas as the parish ward names would be a better reflection of the communities in Burbage, and note that there is local support for this proposal. We also propose adopting Councillor Wood's minor boundary amendment between Lash Hill and St Catherines wards as we consider this to be a logical amendment.

Final Recommendation

Burbage Parish Council should comprise 20 councillors, three more than at present, representing five wards: Lash Hill (returning five councillors), St Catherines (three), Sketchley (four), Stretton (four) and Tilton (four). The modified parish wards of Lash Hill and St Catherines together form the borough ward of Burbage St Catherines & Lash Hill, and the modified parish wards of Sketchley and Stretton and the new parish ward of Tilton together form the borough ward of Burbage Sketchley & Stretton, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

119 The parish of Earl Shilton is currently served by 14 councillors representing the four parish wards of Central, East, South and West, which are represented by four, two, four and four councillors respectively.

120 No comments were received regarding the parish at Stage One. However, at Stage Three the parish council proposed alternative ward names for the existing parish wards. It proposed that Central parish ward should be renamed Weavers parish ward, East parish ward should be renamed Church parish ward, South parish ward should be renamed Townlands parish ward and West parish ward should be renamed Westfield parish ward.

121 Having considered all the evidence received and in the light of the fact that our borough warding would be unaffected by these proposals, we are content to put these proposals forward as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation

The existing Central, East, South and West parish wards of Earl Shilton parish should be named Weavers, Church, Townlands and Westfield respectively.

122 The parish of Groby is currently served by 16 councillors representing the two parish wards of Fieldhead and Groby, which are represented by three and 13 councillors respectively. The Borough Council proposed that Groby parish be served by two borough

wards and two parish wards: Groby ward would contain the existing Groby parish ward and Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead ward would contain the existing Fieldhead parish ward. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed.

123 In the light of the draft recommendations for borough warding in Groby parish, reflecting the LGCE’s minor modification to the Borough Council’s scheme, the LGCE modified the current parish ward boundary accordingly, as described earlier. It proposed that the proposed Groby ward contain the modified Groby parish ward which would continue to be represented by 13 councillors. It also proposed that the proposed Markfield, Stanton & Fieldhead ward contain the modified Fieldhead parish ward which would continue to be represented by three councillors.

124 At Stage Three no comments were received regarding the parishing arrangements for Groby parish.

125 Having considered all the evidence received, we propose confirming the draft recommendations for Groby parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Groby Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Fieldhead (returning three councillors) and Groby (13). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

126 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Hinckley & Bosworth and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692).

127 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 18 July 2002.

128 Any further representations concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission at the address below, to arrive no later than 18 July 2002.

The Secretary
Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Hinckley & Bosworth area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Sheepy parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Groby parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the urban areas of Hinckley and Burbage.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Hinckley & Bosworth: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Sheepy Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Groby Parish