

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Leicester City

Report to the Electoral Commission

*June 2002*

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Leicester City 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 Melors

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.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Leicester.



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of the electoral arrangements of Leicester City 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 Leicester City:

- **in 13 of the 28 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to remain constant, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 251-252) are that:

- **Leicester City Council should have 54 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, instead of 28 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of six, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 18 of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the proposed 22 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the city in 2006.**

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  
30 Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

*Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1 Abbey	3	Part of Abbey ward; part of Belgrave ward and part of Mowmacre ward
2 Aylestone	2	Part of Aylestone ward; part of part of Saffron ward
3 Aylestone Park	2	Part of Aylestone ward; part of Castle ward; part of Saffron ward and part of West Knighton ward
4 Beaumont Leys	3	Part of Beaumont Leys ward and part of Mowmacre ward
5 Belgrave	2	Part of Belgrave ward; part of Latimer ward and part of Rushey Mead ward
6 Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields	3	North Braunstone ward and part of Rowley Fields ward
7 Castle	3	Part of Abbey ward; part of Castle ward; part of East Knighton ward and part of Wycliffe ward
8 Charnwood	2	Part of Charnwood ward and part of West Humberstone ward
9 Coleman	2	Part of Charnwood ward, part of Coleman ward and part of Evington ward
10 Evington	2	Part of Evington ward and part of Coleman ward
11 Eyres Monsell	2	Eyres Monsell ward; part of Saffron ward
12 Fosse	2	Part of Abbey ward; part of Beaumont Leys ward; part of St Augustine's ward and part of Westcotes ward
13 Humberstone & Hamilton	3	Part of Humberstone ward and part of West Humberstone ward
14 Knighton	3	Part of East Knighton ward; part of Stoneygate ward and part of West Knighton ward
15 Latimer	2	Part of Abbey ward; part of Belgrave ward and part of Latimer ward
16 New Parks	3	New Parks ward; part of St Augustine's ward and part of Western Park ward
17 Rushey Mead	3	Part of Belgrave ward, part of Rushey Mead ward and part of West Humberstone ward and part of Humberstone ward
18 Spinney Hills	3	Part of Crown Hills ward; part of Spinney Hill ward and part of Wycliffe ward
19 Stoneygate	3	Part of Crown Hills ward, part of Spinney Hill ward, part of Stoneygate ward and part of Wycliffe ward
20 Thurncourt	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – Thurncourt ward
21 Westcotes	2	Part of Wescotes ward and part of Rowley Fields ward
22 Western Park	2	Part of Western Park ward; part of Westcotes ward and part of St Augustine's ward

Notes: 1 *The wards in the above table are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.*

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Leicester City

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 Abbey	3	9,541	3,180	-17	10,162	3,387	-15
2 Aylestone	2	8,363	4,182	8	8,066	4,033	1
3 Aylestone Park	2	7,723	3,862	0	7,985	3,993	0
4 Beaumont Leys	3	9,447	3,149	-18	12,302	4,101	3
5 Belgrave	2	7,713	3,857	0	7,446	3,723	-6
6 Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields	3	11,438	3,813	-1	11,133	3,711	-7
7 Castle	3	11,133	3,711	-4	12,388	4,129	4
8 Charnwood	2	7,259	3,630	-6	7,704	3,852	-3
9 Coleman	2	8,412	4,206	9	8,134	4,067	2
10 Evington	2	8,012	4,006	4	7,916	3,958	0
11 Eyres Monsell	2	7,846	3,923	2	7,888	3,944	-1
12 Fosse	2	8,018	4,009	4	7,894	3,947	-1
13 Humberstone & Hamilton	3	8,801	2,934	-24	12,120	4,040	2
14 Knighton	3	12,744	4,248	10	12,913	4,304	8
15 Latimer	2	8,414	4,207	9	8,073	4,037	1
16 New Parks	3	11,407	3,802	-1	11,497	3,832	-4
17 Rushey Mead	3	11,638	3,879	1	11,556	3,852	-3
18 Spinney Hills	3	14,323	4,774	24	13,525	4,508	13
19 Stoneygate	3	12,751	4,250	10	12,437	4,146	4
20 Thurncourt	2	7,549	3,775	-2	7,488	3,744	-6
21 Westcotes	2	7,177	3,589	-7	8,326	4,163	5
22 Western Park	2	8,405	4,203	9	7,802	3,901	-2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>208,114</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>214,755</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,854</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,977</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Leicester City Council.

Note: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 There is a minor anomaly between the electorate totals on Tables 2 and 3. This is due to the rounding of figures to the nearest whole number.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Leicester. The seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire together with Leicester City 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 this programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Leicester City's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in May 1979 (Report no. 335). Since undertaking that review, Leicester City became a unitary authority (1997). The change in unitary status led to the loss of 28 county councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Leicester from 84 to 56.

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 Leicester City 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 that should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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 Leicester City 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 Leicester City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Leicester Constabulary, Local Government Association, Leicestershire Local Councils Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, 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 Leicester City 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 Leicester City*, 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 The City of Leicester is situated in the centre of Leicestershire and is famous for its multi-cultural mix. Leicester City Council gained unitary status in 1997. The City is traversed by the London to Sheffield railway line and the Grand Union Canal and is in close proximity to the M1 motorway. The City covers a predominantly urban area of 7,337 hectares, and is unparished.

11 The electorate of the city is 208,115 (February 2001). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 28 wards. There is currently a uniform pattern of two-member wards throughout the city. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

12 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, the LGCE calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the city average in percentage terms. 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 3,716 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 3,835 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 13 of the 28 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average, four wards by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Castle ward where each of the councillors represents 34 per cent more electors than the city average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Leicester City*

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 Abbey	2	6,530	3,265	-12	6,490	3,245	-15
2 Aylestone	2	7,759	3,880	4	7,749	3,875	1
3 Beaumont Leys	2	9,780	4,890	32	10,367	5,184	35
4 Belgrave	2	8,311	4,156	12	8,238	4,119	7
5 Castle	2	9,991	4,996	34	10,048	5,024	31
6 Charnwood	2	6,594	3,297	-11	6,550	3,275	-15
7 Coleman	2	6,272	3,136	-16	6,223	3,112	-19
8 Crown Hills	2	7,183	3,592	-3	7,124	3,562	-7
9 East Knighton	2	7,063	3,532	-5	7,051	3,526	-8
10 Evington	2	7,149	3,575	-4	7,078	3,539	-8
11 Eyres Monsell	2	6,142	3,071	-17	6,214	3,107	-19
12 Humberstone	2	8,044	4,022	8	10,826	5,413	41
13 Latimer	2	6,329	3,165	-15	6,259	3,130	-18
14 Mowmacre	2	5,792	2,896	-22	7,936	3,968	3
15 New Parks	2	7,678	3,839	3	7,643	3,822	0
16 North Braunstone	2	5,702	2,851	-23	5,655	2,828	-26
17 Rowley Fields	2	7,100	3,550	-4	7,021	3,511	-8
18 Rushey Mead	2	8,732	4,366	17	8,834	4,417	15
19 Saffron	2	7,417	3,709	0	7,356	3,678	-4
20 St Augustine's	2	7,252	3,626	-2	7,190	3,595	-6
21 Spinney Hill	2	6,975	3,488	-6	6,915	3,458	-10
22 Stoneygate	2	7,522	3,761	1	7,501	3,751	-2
23 Thurncourt	2	7,549	3,775	2	7,488	3,744	-2
24 West Humberstone	2	7,789	3,895	5	8,519	4,260	11

25 West Knighton	2	6,844	3,422	-8	6,770	3,385	-12
26 Westcotes	2	8,252	4,126	11	9,018	4,509	18
27 Western Park	2	8,454	4,227	14	8,365	4,183	9
28 Wycliffe	2	7,910	3,955	6	8,329	4,165	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>208,115</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>214,757</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,716</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,835</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Leicester City Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in North Braunstone ward were relatively over-represented by 23 per cent, while electors in Castle ward were relatively under-represented by 34 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received two representations, including a submission from Leicester City Council enclosing three city-wide schemes from the Conservative Group, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. A submission was also received from Woodgate Residents' Association. 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 Leicester City*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on elements of each of the city-wide schemes submitted at Stage One together with some of its own proposals. It proposed adopting the Labour Group's proposed wards in the centre, south, west and north of the city; the Conservative Group's proposals in the east of the city and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in the Belgrave area. It proposed putting forward its own Abbey ward together with a number of minor amendments throughout the city in order to tie existing and proposed boundaries to ground detail. It proposed that:

- Leicester City Council should be served by 54 councillors, compared with the current 56, representing 20 wards, eight less than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries;

**Draft Recommendation**

Leicester City Council should comprise 54 councillors, serving 20 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 17 of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2006.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 64 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Leicester City Council.

### **Leicester City Council**

18 Officers at the City Council highlighted anomalies with regards to the 2006 forecast electorates for the proposed Knighton, Stoneygate, Aylestone and Linwood wards. In addition, they proposed minor boundary amendments between the proposed Belgrave and Rushey Mead wards and Augustine's and New Parks wards in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries.

### **Members of Parliament**

19 Keith Vaz MP supported the proposals for the Leicester East wards, stating that they are "fair, efficient and represent the right approach".

20 The Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP expressed concern over the proposed Abbey ward. Her first concern was in relation to the St Matthew's Estate, which, she argued, "in terms of geography, transport and culture is very isolated from the rest of Abbey ward .... It is quite clear that St Matthews has a stronger link with the St Marks area in Latimer ward". She also expressed concern at the proposal to transfer the streets immediately to the west of Belgrave Road from the existing Abbey ward to the proposed Latimer ward. She therefore proposed that this area remain in Abbey ward with the St Matthew's Estate added to the proposed Latimer ward in order to "balance this loss of electors".

### **Elected Representatives**

21 Councillors Bhatti and Nurse (Rushey Mead ward) expressed support for the proposed Rushey Mead ward. Councillor Blackmore (Western Park ward) commented that there was concern among a number of his constituents with regards to the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. He stated that specific concern was expressed from current Western Park constituents with regard to the use of the Hinckley Road as a boundary. Opposition was also expressed to the size of the proposed three-member Augustine's ward. Although no specific proposals were submitted, the general view conveyed was that the existing two-member Westcotes, Western Park and St Augustine's wards should be "remodelled" in order to provide acceptable levels of electoral equality.

22 Councillor Coley (Western Park ward) expressed the opposition of some of his "constituents of various political persuasions" in relation to the proposed Augustine's and Western Park wards. Primarily, the view was that the proposed Augustine's ward is too large and contains areas which are considered to have few links with the "distinct community" of Western Park. It was also stated that the name of Augustine's is inappropriate, as the church after which it is named has been decommissioned. Although no specific proposals were put forward, the general view was that three-member wards are not suitable for this area and that the existing wards of Western Park, Westcotes and St Augustine's should be broadly retained.

23 Councillor Dunphy (Eyres Monsell ward) opposed the proposed Linwood ward, specifically in relation to the linking of the Eyres Monsell and Saffron estates in the same city ward. He proposed a revised two-member Eyres Monsell ward.

24 Councillor Hunt (West Knighton ward) opposed the proposed three-member Knighton ward. He proposed that the existing West Knighton ward be broadly retained with a number of minor modifications.

25 Councillor Henry conveyed the concerns of some of her constituents. She argued that the proposed Abbey ward is “far too big” and would lack a sense of community. It was proposed that Abbey Lane or the River Soar would provide a natural boundary for Abbey ward.

## **Political Organisations**

26 Councillor Scuplak, Leader of the Conservative Group, submitted a joint response to the draft recommendations from all the various elements of the Conservative Party. He stated that, “In general we are supportive of the Commission’s proposals and welcome the flexible approach taken to the number of councillors per ward. This allows wards to better reflect the size of local communities rather than creating artificial boundaries”. Based on this, the Conservative Group proposed alternative arrangements in the Humberstone/Rushey Mead area in the north-east of the city, in the Linwood/Aylestone area in the south, and to the west of the city centre in the Augustine’s/Westcotes area.

27 In the north-east of the city, the Conservative Group proposed the creation of three two-member wards as opposed to the LGCE’s proposed two three-member wards of Humberstone and Rushey Mead. In relation to the Aylestone area, it proposed that the three two-member wards of Aylestone, Aylestone Park and Eyres Monsell be created instead of the LGCE’s proposed three-member Aylestone and Linwood wards. Finally, in relation to the area to the west of the city centre, it proposed the creation of three two-member wards of St Augustine’s, Westcotes, and Western Park, to reflect the area covered by the LGCE’s proposed Augustine’s and Westcotes wards. This proposal also included a minor boundary modification to the proposed three-member New Parks ward.

28 Leicester East Constituency Labour Party stated: “We fully accept the draft recommendations of the Commission as a sensible and practical solution. We believe that they accurately reflect community considerations within the statutory guidance”. It also expressed support for a council size of 54. It did, however, propose one amendment in relation to ward names. It proposed that Charnwood ward be renamed Uppingham ward. Nine city councillors and eight local ward branches supported its submission.

29 Leicester West and South Constituency Labour Parties jointly expressed support for the original Stage One Labour Party proposal for a three-member Abbey Park ward. They strongly opposed the proposed Abbey ward, primarily based on the transfer of the area to the west of Belgrave Road to the proposed Latimer ward and the inclusion of the St Matthew’s Estate in the proposed Abbey ward. The joint submission enclosed a 945-signature petition in support of the views expressed.

30 Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed Thurncourt ward. However, it strongly opposed the mixed pattern of two and three-member wards in Leicester, stating that, “We are surprised that they now want to revert to three-member wards and even more surprised that the Commission has in the main adopted the Labour proposals”. Specific concern was expressed in relation to the proposed linking of the Eyres Monsell and Saffron areas, Mowmacre and St Matthew’s areas and Minster Grange and Western Park areas. In addition, the Liberal Democrat Group opposed the proposed ward name of Augustine’s and put forward alternatives of Danehills, Dovelands or Paget.

31 Leicester West Liberal Democrats expressed concern at the move from two- to three-member wards. They also expressed concern regarding the proposed Abbey ward, opposing the inclusion of the St Matthew’s Estate in the proposed ward. In addition, they contended that the natural boundary for Abbey ward “would appear to be either the ring road or the river”.

32 Leicester South Liberal Democrats also opposed the use of three-member wards. They stated: "We feel that there is inconsistency in the proposals you put forward. There are both two-member and three-member wards. To accept your own criteria then this is quite wrong with areas of Leicester being treated differently from others". Specific opposition was expressed with regard to the proposed Castle, Spinney Hills, Stoneygate, Aylestone and Latimer wards. A number of modifications were proposed, broadly reiterating the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals.

33 Four representations were received from local Liberal Democrat branches, all of which asserted that two-member wards should be adopted across the city as a whole. Aylestone Liberal Democrats contended that, "the Commission's proposals are fatally flawed and do not represent a sound basis for progress". Crown Hill Liberal Democrats opposed the use of three-member wards, particularly in relation to the proposed Spinney Hills, Stoneygate, Castle, Aylestone and Latimer wards. Some possible modifications were put forward for this area, based largely on the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals. East Knighton Liberal Democrats opposed the proposed Knighton and Castle wards. Saffron Liberal Democrats opposed the proposed Linwood ward, particularly in relation to the combining of the Saffron and Eyres Monsell areas.

### **Community Groups and Local Organisations**

34 Federation of Sikh Organisations Leicestershire and Shree Hindu Temple and Community Centre both expressed support for the proposed Charnwood and Coleman wards, with the former also supporting the proposals covering the existing Crown Hills ward. Gujarat Hindu Association, Karod Kiran Arts and Leicester Hindu Festival Council all expressed support for the proposed Latimer ward, largely based on the use of the Belgrave Road as a focus and the river as a western boundary.

35 Voluntary Action Leicester expressed support for the proposed Beaumont Leys, Belgrave, Braunstone Park, Charnwood, Coleman, Evington, Latimer, New Parks, Thurncourt and Westcotes wards and broadly supported the proposed Castle and Knighton wards. However, it proposed alternative warding arrangements for a number of wards which it considered to "break existing community ties". These proposals were based on the existing council size of 56 and included the creation of two four-member wards.

36 Saffron Single Regeneration Budget Executive Board opposed the linking of the Saffron Lane Estate and the Eyres Monsell Estate in the proposed Linwood ward. It stated that, "Both estates have differences in deprivation as each estate has been graded at a national level". Concern was also expressed at the proposed name of Linwood. These views were endorsed by Saffron Area Forum.

37 Leicester City West Primary Care Trust stated: "The wards proposed for Leicester by the Local Government Commission in general present no problem for Leicester City West PCT". However, it expressed concern at the proposed Abbey ward. It submitted a number of reasons as to why it considered there would be difficulties with the proposed Abbey ward, primarily based on the separation of two SRB programme areas, the breaching of strong natural boundaries such as the river, the canal and Abbey Park, and the separation of the St Matthew's Estate from its surrounding area and subsequent combining with the Mowmacre Estate. It proposed that the part of the proposed Abbey ward to the south of the river should form part of an enlarged three-member Latimer ward and the part of the proposed new Abbey ward north of that boundary should become a new two-member ward.

38 Mowmacre Tenants and Residents' Association expressed concern at the size of the proposed Abbey ward. Highfields Community Association expressed concern with regard to the division of the St Matthew's Estate and the Highfields area between different city wards. Details of a number of local partnership organisations operating in the community were

included. Two possible options were proposed for revised Wycliffe and Spinney Hills wards, largely based on the existing warding arrangements in the area. Representatives of 12 local residents' and community groups from the St Matthews and Highfields areas also signed this submission.

39 Highfields and St Matthews Community Employment Project also opposed the division of the Highfields and St Matthews areas between separate city wards, arguing that the two areas are similar in demographics, and face the same issues around social exclusion, poverty and deprivation issues. It argued that there are no links between the St Matthew's area and the rest of the proposed Abbey ward and that St Matthews should therefore form part of the proposed Spinney Hills ward.

40 St Matthews Tenants' Association opposed the abolition of the existing Wycliffe ward and consequent separation of the St Matthews and Highfields estates between separate city wards. It also commented on the impact of the proposals on socio-economic deprivation. It proposed that the existing Wycliffe ward should be retained. The St Matthews Project broadly reiterated these views, emphasising the "historic links" that St Matthew's has with the Highfields area. It proposed that it remain with the Highfield area "where there is a natural affinity".

### **Other Representations**

41 Lord Janner of Braunstone, QC supported the views expressed by the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP and Leicester West and South Constituency Labour Parties, while a local resident supported the proposed Linwood ward, based on the linking of Saffron and Eyres Monsell.

42 A local resident from the Western Park area opposed the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards, largely based on the arguments outlined by the Conservative Group. He proposed the creation of three two-member wards in this part of the city, which were almost identical to those proposed by the Conservative Group. He suggested that Augustine's ward be named Fosse or Wolsey. Another local resident from the Western Park area opposed the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. She reiterated many of the views outlined by the Conservative Group, specifically in relation to the size of the proposed wards and the proposed use of the Hinckley Road as a boundary. She proposed the creation of three two-member wards for this part of the city, which were broadly similar to those proposed by the Conservative Group.

43 A further nine representations were received from local residents opposing the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. The main concern was in relation to the proposed loss of the existing Western Park ward and the subsequently enlarged Augustine's ward. Although no specific proposals were submitted, one resident contended that "this part of Leicester will be better served by two councillors not three". Another local resident requested that "the three-member ward policy can be reconsidered with a view to achieving a more geographical rational system".

44 A local resident opposed the proposed Braunstone Park ward. Concern was expressed at the size of the proposed ward and the ward name. A resident of Stoneygate opposed the proposed Stoneygate ward, arguing that the proposed ward does not encompass the area known as Stoneygate. Another local resident from Clarendon Park opposed the proposed Castle and Knighton wards. She proposed that two-member wards would better suit this area and expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals which "best fit the natural communities, with two wards south of Victoria Park Road". Some alternative options were also suggested.

45 A further 10 representations were received from eight local businesses, Guru Nanak Gurdwara and a community organisation in relation to the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Latimer wards. They all expressed concern at the proposed transfer of the area to the west of Belgrave Road to the proposed Latimer ward, broadly reiterating the views of the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP, while a local resident opposed the proposed Abbey ward, arguing that “the proposed changes will disrupt the balance and divide the established communities and which may affect the harmony and stability of the area”.

46 A local resident commented on the size of the proposed Abbey ward and the inclusion of “drastically different” residents. Particular concern was expressed regarding the inclusion of the St Matthews estate and the impact that this would have on the “specific difficulties” of this community. It was proposed that a more suitable boundary for Abbey ward would be the River Soar or Abbey Lane.

47 A local resident put forward alternative proposals in relation to the proposed Spinney Hills, Stonegate, Castle and Abbey wards. This would have resulted in new City Centre, Clarendon, Highfields and Brook wards which were significantly different to the LGCE’s draft recommendations. No figures or argumentation was submitted. Another resident expressed support for the proposed council size of 54. However, he strongly objected to the mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards, and opposed the draft recommendations on both community and effective local government grounds.

48 Finally, another local resident raised a number of issues with regards to the draft recommendations. Specific comments were made in relation to the proposed Abbey, Aylestone, Castle and Belgrave wards and suggestions were given for alternative names for Stonegate, Humberstone and Augustine’s wards.



## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

49 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Leicester City is 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”.

50 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 within the next five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

51 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.

52 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**

53 Since 1975 there has been a 2 per cent increase in the electorate of Leicester City. At Stage One, the City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3 per cent from 208,115 to 214,757 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the Humberstone area, although a significant amount is also expected in Mowmacre ward. However, the majority of wards will be static or see a slight decline in electorate. In order to prepare these forecasts, the 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.

54 No comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts were received during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### **Council Size**

55 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.

56 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE accepted a reduction in council size from 56 to 54 members. It noted that consensus was reached between the Conservative, the Labour and the Liberal Democrat Groups on the issue of council size with all three groups proposing a slight reduction of two to 54. The LGCE received no further representations in relation to council size, and in view of the cross-party consensus received for a reduction of two, was content to put this forward for consultation.

57 At Stage Three, the Conservative Group, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party and a local resident all expressed support for the proposed council size of 54.

58 Voluntary Action Leicester expressed broad support for a number of the LGCE's draft recommendations. However, it proposed alternative warding arrangements for a number of wards, which it considered to "break existing community ties". These proposals were based on the existing council size of 56 and included the creation of two four-member wards.

59 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming the proposed council size of 54 as final. We note that there was cross-party support for this council size at Stage One and that broad support has been received at Stage Three.

60 We have considered the alternative proposals submitted by Voluntary Action Leicester. At Stage Three, the LGCE was consulting on its draft recommendations, which, subject to any comments received, would also be considered appropriate to form the final recommendations. With the LGCE having reached the conclusion that its draft recommendations should be based on a council size of 54, we are not minded to consider revised schemes based on a different council size at this stage. As detailed above, there was consensus at Stage One from all three political groups on the proposed council size of 54 and we note that continued support for this council size has been expressed at Stage Three. Furthermore, we have not received any evidence of widespread support for the existing council size to be retained. In addition, we note that, as well as being based on the existing council size of 56, Voluntary Action Leicester's proposed scheme would also result in the creation of two four-member wards, which we are not minded to propose. As stated in the *Guidance*, we believe that "numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate". Finally, we note that the proposals put forward vary significantly from the draft recommendations.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

61 Having considered all the representations received during Stage One, the LGCE decided to base its draft recommendations on the Labour Group's proposals. However, it proposed adopting elements of the proposals submitted by the Conservative Group in the east of the City and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in the Belgrave area, together with some of its own proposals.

62 When analysing each of the city-wide schemes submitted at Stage One, the LGCE concluded that they all had some merit, with each scheme providing for a much improved level of electoral equality across the city. However, the three schemes demonstrated very little consensus in relation to the proposed wards, largely due to the fact that the Labour Group's scheme was based on a uniform pattern of 18 three-member wards, while the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Group's proposals were both based on a uniform pattern of 27 two-member wards.

63 The LGCE considered that the desire to maintain a uniform pattern of wards, whether it be two- or three-member, led to the creation of some wards under each of the schemes which did not best reflect the identities and interests of the local community. It acknowledged the views expressed by each of the political groups in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of two- or three-member wards. However, the LGCE was not prescriptive on this issue and sought to arrive at a scheme which provided for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. It

therefore proposed that a revised warding pattern in Leicester should comprise a mixture of two and three-member wards, encompassing elements of each of the three city-wide schemes received at Stage One, together with some of its own proposals.

64 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage Three. The LGCE acknowledged that its draft recommendations report was very much a consultation document and welcomed views on its proposals. Consequently, the draft recommendations generated a large response, particularly from local political parties within the city. In addition, there has been a significant response to the draft recommendations from community groups. We are particularly grateful to those groups for their involvement in the review process, and for providing us with much community-based argumentation and evidence. This has assisted us considerably in the formulation of our final recommendations.

65 We note that the draft recommendations have received a degree of local support, particularly in relation to the eastern part of the city. However, opposition was expressed by a number of respondents with regards to the proposed wards in the west and south of the city, together with the proposed Abbey ward. A number of alternative options have been put to us in relation to these areas. We have given careful consideration to these alternative proposals in light of all the representations received at Stage Three.

66 We note that a number of respondents opposed the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Latimer wards. We have not been persuaded by the representations received that the area to the west of the Belgrave Road should form part of the proposed Abbey ward and that the river does not form a strong boundary in this area. We concur with the view expressed by the LGCE that the Belgrave Road is a focus as opposed to a barrier between communities in this area and, in addition, note that the proposed Latimer and Belgrave wards have received a significant amount of support at Stage Three. Furthermore, we note that much of the argumentation against this proposal is based on the impact that it could have on the parliamentary constituency boundary between Leicester West and Leicester East constituencies. As stated in the *Guidance*, the Boundary Committee for England “will take no account of parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new patterns of ward boundaries. In practice, the new ward boundaries which are implemented following a PER are taken into account by the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission in its reviews of Parliamentary constituencies”.

67 We have also given consideration to the alternative scheme submitted by a local resident regarding the proposed Spinney Hills, Stoneycgate, Castle and Abbey wards. We note that this scheme is significantly different from the draft recommendations and, in addition, has not been supported by any argumentation or electorate data. We are therefore not minded to adopt any of these proposals, particularly as they would also involve consequential changes to surrounding wards.

68 We have considered the alternative proposals submitted by Voluntary Action Leicester. While we have been unable to give full consideration to this scheme as it is based on an alternative council size of 56 and contains two four-member wards, as detailed above, we note that the Group does express broad support for a majority of the draft recommendations and that its concerns relating to the Highfields/St Matthew’s area and Eyres Monsell/Saffron area would be broadly addressed under our final recommendations.

69 Finally, we note that a number of Liberal Democrat branches commented on the LGCE’s decision to base its draft recommendations on a mixture of two- and three-member wards, asserting the view that two-member wards should be adopted across the city as a whole. We also note the views of a local resident regarding the preference for either a uniform pattern of two- or three-member wards for Leicester City. As stated in its draft recommendations report, the LGCE was of the view that the best reflection of the statutory criteria would result in a mixture of two- and three-member wards. It also stated that “the desire to maintain a uniform

pattern of wards, whether it be two or three-member, has led to the creation of some wards under each of the schemes which do not reflect the identities and interests of the local community". We concur with this view and endorse a mixed pattern of two and three-member wards for Leicester City. This approach has now received the support of the Conservatives and Leicester East Constituency Labour Party. However, based on the evidence received at Stage Three, we have been persuaded that in the west and south of the City, two-member wards provide for a better reflection of community identity than the LGCE's proposed three-member wards. This is discussed in more detail below. In addition, we have been unable to utilise a majority of the Liberal Democrats' proposals which, being largely based on the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals, are not conducive with the draft recommendations throughout the city as a whole. In addition, limited argumentation has been provided in support of these modifications.

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

- (a) Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Saffron wards;
- (b) Castle, East Knighton and West Knighton wards;
- (c) Crown Hills, Spinney Hill, Stoneygate and Wycliffe wards;
- (d) Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards;
- (e) Charnwood, Humberstone and West Humberstone wards;
- (f) Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards;
- (g) Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre wards;
- (h) New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park wards;
- (i) North Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes wards.

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

### **Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Saffron wards**

72 The existing wards of Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Saffron are situated in the south of the city bordering the districts of Blaby and Oadby & Wigston. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors and are bordered by the Grand Union Canal in the west and the London to Sheffield railway line in the east. Under existing arrangements, Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Saffron wards contain 4 per cent more, 17 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent more, 19 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

73 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed combining the existing Eyres Monsell ward with the area to the south of Southfields Drive (A563) from the existing Saffron ward to form a revised two-member Eyres Monsell ward, arguing that "the ward now comprises a single distinct community". Part of the remainder of the existing Saffron ward, the Saffron council estate to the east of Saffron Lane, would be combined with part of the existing West Knighton ward, the West Knighton residential area to the west of Welford Road, to form a new two-member De Montfort ward. The remainder of the existing Saffron ward, the area to the west of Saffron Lane, would be combined with the existing Aylestone ward, less the area broadly to the north of Lansdowne Road to form a revised two-member Aylestone ward. The Conservative Group argued that "the proposed new ward is more central to Aylestone Village and has clear boundaries in the river and Saffron Lane". The remainder of the existing Aylestone ward, the area broadly to the north of Lansdowne Road, would form part of a new Southfields ward, as detailed below.

74 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Aylestone, De Montfort and Eyres Monsell wards would contain 8 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

75 The Labour Group proposed combining the existing Eyres Monsell ward with the area broadly to the south of Soar Valley Way (A563) from the existing Aylestone ward and the area bounded by the railway line, Saffron Lane and the Aylestone Recreation Ground from Saffron ward, to form a new three-member Linwood ward. It argued that the areas to be combined "have common issues having formerly been predominantly social housing". The remainder of the existing Aylestone and Saffron wards would be combined with part of the existing Castle ward (the area north of the railway line and Knighton Fields Road East), together with part of the existing West Knighton ward (the area bounded by Knighton Lane East, Welford Road and Knighton Fields Road East), to form a revised three-member Aylestone ward. The Labour Group argued that "this is very much a natural community centred on the spine of the Aylestone Road".

76 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Aylestone and Linwood wards would contain 7 per cent more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

77 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed combining the existing Eyres Monsell ward with the area broadly to the south of Stonesby Avenue (B5418) from the existing Saffron ward, together with part of the existing Aylestone ward, the area broadly to the south of Soar Valley Way, to form a revised two-member Eyres Monsell ward. The remainder of the existing Saffron ward would be combined with parts of the existing Aylestone ward, the areas broadly to the north of Knighton Lane East, part of Belvoir Drive and the area bounded by Duncan Road, Milligan Road and Burgess Road, together with part of the existing Castle ward, the area north of the railway line bounded by Aylestone Road (A426) and Welford Road (A50), to form a revised two-member Saffron ward. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that "this is a well established community". The remainder of the existing Aylestone ward would be combined with part of the existing Castle ward, the area north of the railway line, bounded by Aylestone Road and Jarrom Street to form a revised two-member Aylestone ward.

78 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Saffron wards would contain 5 per cent more, equal to the average and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

79 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposals in this area as part of its draft recommendations. The LGCE concurred with the views expressed by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group that the railway line formed a strong boundary. It therefore proposed adopting the Labour Group's three-member Aylestone and Linwood wards as it was of the view that they provided for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. They also facilitated the use of the Labour Group's wards in the centre of the city, as detailed below.

80 Officers from the LGCE visited the area, and considered that the Labour Group's proposed Aylestone ward was well linked by the Aylestone Road, which runs through the length of the ward, as well as utilising strong boundaries. It was not persuaded that the Conservative Group's proposed De Montfort ward, which united the Saffron council estate to the west of the railway line and the West Knighton residential area to the east, provided for a good reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. Nor were they persuaded by the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Aylestone and Saffron wards which united areas surrounding Attlee Way with areas to the extreme north surrounding the city centre. It was noted, however,

that there was broad consensus in this area from all three political groups in relation to the proposed use of Saffron Lane and Glenhills Boulevard as boundaries and the LGCE concurred with this view. There was also consensus that the Grand Union Canal be retained as a western boundary for the proposed Aylestone ward. The LGCE did, however, look at the possibility of adopting part of the Conservative Group's proposals in this area in relation to the area surrounding Gilmorton Avenue and the possibility of placing this area in the proposed Aylestone ward. However, this would have resulted in variances for the proposed Aylestone and Linwood wards of 11 per cent more and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively by 2006. The LGCE was not of the view that these levels of electoral inequality were justified but sought views on this issue at Stage Three.

81 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Aylestone and Linwood wards would contain 7 per cent more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

82 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party supported the draft recommendations in this area, while a local resident expressed support for the proposed Linwood ward, based on the linking of the Saffron and Eyres Monsell areas. Officers from the City Council addressed an anomaly with regards to the 2006 electorate figures for the LGCE's proposed Aylestone and Linwood wards.

83 The Conservative Group opposed the LGCE's proposed Aylestone and Linwood wards and proposed the creation of three two-member wards in this area: Aylestone, Aylestone Park and Eyres Monsell. It was argued that the LGCE's proposed wards "are so large and the requirement to stay within certain parameters in terms of electors ... ignore clear community identity considerations which the two-member wards could take into account". It proposed a revised Aylestone ward, which would consist of the Aylestone ward as proposed by the LGCE, but only up to, and not including, Landsdowne Road, together with the Gilmorton Estate and the area along Lutterworth Road from the LGCE's proposed Linwood ward. It argued that this revised ward "consists of what is generally regarded as Aylestone, namely that area between the river and Saffron Lane". The proposed Eyres Monsell ward would be created out of the LGCE's proposed Linwood ward and would consist of all the area to the south of the Southern District Distributor Road with the exception of the Gilmorton Estate and the area along Lutterworth Road, as detailed above. The Conservative Group stated: "Eyres Monsell ward would be one distinct community of predominantly Council-built housing with the strong boundary of the ring road". Finally, the proposed Aylestone Park ward would consist of Aylestone Park, the Saffron housing estate and the Knighton Fields area which, it was argued, "itself shares common features both with the Council housing of Saffron and the terraced housing which predominates in Aylestone Park".

84 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, the two-member Aylestone, Aylestone Park and Eyres Monsell wards would contain 8 per cent more, equal to the average and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent more, equal to the average and 1 per cent fewer by 2006).

85 Councillor Dunphy (Eyres Monsell ward) opposed the proposed Linwood ward, which would link the two estates of Eyres Monsell and Saffron in the same ward. It was argued that, "Saffron has for many years obtained financial support under various Government schemes whilst Eyres Monsell has not. Consequently, the two estates have developed differently". He proposed a revised two-member Eyres Monsell ward, based on the existing ward, with the addition of the Gilmorton Avenue area from the existing Aylestone ward and the area to the south of Stonesbury Avenue from the existing Saffron ward.

86 Saffron Single Regeneration Budget Executive Board opposed the linking of the Saffron Lane Estate and the Eyres Monsell Estate in the proposed Linwood ward. It stated that "both estates have differences in deprivation as each estate has been graded at a national level".

Concern was also expressed at the proposed name of Linwood. Saffron Area Forum endorsed the views expressed by Saffron Single Regeneration Budget Executive Board. It expressed concern at the linking of the Saffron Lane Estate and the Eyres Monsell Estate in the proposed Linwood ward. It stated that "Changing the boundary to incorporate both areas was seen as a method to serve the demands of the electoral system, and not those of the local residents". Concern was also expressed over the proposed ward name of Linwood.

87 Leicester South Liberal Democrats expressed concern with regards to the proposed Aylestone ward, stating that the ward does not represent a natural community nor does it adopt natural boundaries. In addition, they stated that "there is no current association or affinity of the current Saffron and Eyres Monsell wards, they each have their own clear identity". Crown Hills Liberal Democrats reiterated this view. Aylestone Liberal Democrats made no specific comments in relation to the proposed Aylestone and Linwood wards. However, they expressed concern with regards to the use of three-member wards within the city and proposed the adoption of two-member wards across the city as a whole. Saffron Liberal Democrats objected to the combining of the Saffron and Eyres Monsell areas in the proposed Linwood ward. They stated that: "Saffron and Eyres Monsell communities are quite specifically different, there are no groups that jointly meet or have met in the past ... Many would consider that if you should group the two communities together, you might well be the instigator of World War III".

88 Finally, Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group expressed a general concern at the size of some of the proposed wards, and consequently expressed concern at the combining of the Saffron and Eyres Monsell estates. It stated that "the main criticisms arise from the amalgamation of distinct and separate large communities".

89 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. Such issues as levels of social deprivation and regeneration are not factors we can reasonably take into account in reaching conclusions on our final recommendations. However, from the representations received, it seems clear to us that the Saffron and Eyres Monsell estates are quite separate and distinct communities. Similarly, we have been persuaded by the argumentation and evidence put to us that the community identities and interests of the two estates would not be best served by combining them in the same ward. We have therefore looked at alternative solutions. We have considered the alternative schemes submitted by the Conservative Group and Councillor Dunphy, whose proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area addressed the general concern expressed in relation to the size of the LGCE's proposed three-member Aylestone and Linwood wards, and the combining of the Eyres Monsell and Saffron estates. In addition, both proposals maintained the strong boundaries of the river and the railway line, thus not impacting on surrounding wards. However, Councillor Dunphy's proposals resulted in the Gilmorton Avenue area being combined with the Eyres Monsell area to its east, which, although this was the case under the LGCE's proposed Linwood ward, we are of the view that this area would be better represented with the area to its north, being well linked by Lutterworth Road. In its draft recommendations report, the LGCE acknowledged this view. However, due to the adverse impact on electoral equality which would have occurred, it proposed adopting the Labour Group's proposed Linwood ward without amendment.

90 We have therefore decided to adopt the Conservative Group's proposed two-member Aylestone, Aylestone Park and Eyres Monsell wards as part of our final recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. We propose that part of the northern boundary of the proposed Aylestone ward should follow the river as opposed to the edge of Riverside Country Park. This amendment would involve no electors.

91 As stated above, the Conservative Group's proposals addressed a number of areas of concern expressed by respondents as well as providing for acceptable levels of electoral equality. They would also result in the retention of the Eyres Monsell ward name, which has

been a cause for concern at Stage Three, and reflect concerns expressed by Saffron Single Regeneration Budget, Saffron Area Forum and Saffron Liberal Democrats.

92 Under our final recommendations, the two-member Aylestone, Aylestone Park and Eyres Monsell wards would contain 8 per cent more, equal to the average and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent more, equal to the average and 1 per cent fewer by 2006). Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Castle, East Knighton and West Knighton wards**

93 The existing wards of Castle, East Knighton and West Knighton are situated in the centre and south-east of the city, with East and West Knighton wards bordering Oadby & Wigston district. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Castle, East Knighton and West Knighton wards contain 34 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (31 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer and 12 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

94 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed combining part of the existing West Knighton ward, the West Knighton residential area to the west of Welford Road, with part of the existing Saffron ward, as detailed above. The remainder of the existing West Knighton ward would be combined with the area to the south of Greenhill Road from the existing Castle ward and the whole of the existing East Knighton ward, less the area bounded by Avenue Road, Queen's Road and London Road (A6), to form a revised two-member Knighton ward. As mentioned above, the Conservative Group proposed a new two-member Southfields ward. This ward would contain part of the existing Aylestone ward broadly to the north of Lansdowne Road, together with much of the existing Castle ward, the area broadly to the south of Waterloo Way and Walnut Street (less the area to the south of Greenhill Road). Part of the remainder of the existing Castle ward, the area broadly bounded by Waterloo Way, Walnut Street, Mill Lane and Belvoir Street, would be combined with part of the existing Wycliffe ward, broadly to the south of Humberstone Gate and St George's Retail Park to form a new two-member Station ward "covering the sprawling industrial, commercial and residential areas to the south and east of the city centre". The remainder of the existing Castle ward would form part of a revised two-member Abbey ward, as detailed below.

95 Under the Conservative Group's proposals Knighton, Southfields and Station wards would contain 9 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to the average, 6 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more than the average by 2006).

96 The Labour Group proposed combining the existing West Knighton ward, less the area bounded by Knighton Lane East, Welford Road and Knighton Fields Road East, as detailed above, with the existing East Knighton ward, less the area broadly to the north of Avenue Road, together with part of the existing Stoneygate ward, the area broadly bounded by Holmfield Road and Holmfield Avenue, to form a new three-member Knighton ward. It argued that this proposed ward "brings together areas that are traditionally considered as very similar". The remainder of the existing Castle ward, less the area north of the railway line and Knighton Fields Road East, as detailed above, would be combined with part of the existing Wycliffe ward, the area broadly to the south of St Matthew's Way, St George's Way and Sparkenhoe Street, together with part of the existing Abbey ward, the area broadly to the south of Vaughan Way and Burley's Way, to form a revised three-member Castle ward. The Labour Group argued that "this ward brings the City centre within the Inner Ring Road within a single ward and links it to communities that relate to it along the radial routes of Welford and London Roads".

97 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Castle and Knighton wards would contain 4 per cent fewer and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent and 9 per cent more than the average by 2006).

98 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed combining part of the existing West Knighton ward, the area broadly to the south of Knighton Lane East and Chapel Lane, with part of the existing East Knighton ward, the area broadly to the south of Knighton Road and west of the London Road to form a new two-member Knighton ward. The remainder of the existing West Knighton ward would be combined with part of the remainder of the existing East Knighton ward (less the properties on the west side of London Road), together with part of the existing Castle ward, the area broadly to the east of the railway line and south of Victoria Park Road (B6416), to form a new two-member Clarendon Park ward. The remainder of the existing East Knighton ward would form part of a revised Stoneygate ward, as detailed below. Parts of the remainder of the existing Castle ward would form part of the revised Aylestone and Saffron wards as detailed above. Part of the remainder of the existing Castle ward, the area broadly to the north of Victoria Park would be combined with the areas surrounding College Street and Tichborne Street from the existing Wycliffe ward, the area surrounding St James Road from the existing Stoneygate ward, together with the area to the west of the Western Boulevard from the existing Westcotes ward to form a revised two-member Castle ward. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that this proposed ward utilises "major natural boundaries". The remaining part of the existing Castle ward would form part of a revised Abbey ward, as detailed below.

99 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Castle, Clarendon Park and Knighton wards would contain 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006).

100 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposals in this area, subject to one minor amendment. The Labour Group's proposal combined the Knighton area in a single city ward, which utilised strong boundaries such as the railway line, Gainsborough Road and Evington Brook between Broadway Road and Holmfield Avenue. As detailed above, the LGCE were not persuaded that the Conservative Group's proposed De Monfort ward, which united the Saffron council estate with the West Knighton residential area to its east, provided a good reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. The LGCE were therefore of the view that the West Knighton area should form part of a ward with the rest of the Knighton area to its east, as would be the case under the Labour Group's proposed three-member Knighton ward.

101 The LGCE considered that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Knighton ward had some merit. However, having visited the area, it was of the view that the area broadly to the east of London Road should form part of a proposed Knighton ward, being somewhat different in character from the area surrounding Stoneygate. The LGCE therefore proposed adopting the Labour Group's proposed three-member Knighton ward subject to a minor amendment in order to improve electoral equality. It proposed that part of the northern boundary should be modified to follow the centre of Holmfield Road.

102 In relation to the centre of the city, the LGCE was of the view that there was no consensus on how this area should be re-warded. Officers from the LGCE, having visited the area, concurred with the view expressed by the Labour Group that the whole of the city centre area should be united within a revised three-member Castle ward. The Labour Group's proposals reflected this, while using strong boundaries such as the River Soar and a large section of the inner ring road. The Conservative Group's proposals divided this area between three wards while the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals divided it between four wards. Both of these latter proposals also breached a number of strong geographical features.

103 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Castle and Knighton wards would contain 4 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent and 4 per cent more than the average by 2006).

104 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party and the Conservative Group expressed support for the proposed Castle and Knighton wards, while Voluntary Action Leicester broadly supported the LGCE's proposals in this area. Officers from the City Council addressed an anomaly with regards to the 2006 electorate figure for the LGCE's proposed Knighton ward.

105 Leicester South Liberal Democrats argued that "The proposed new Castle ward is not a community that people would identify with". They strongly opposed the combining of the area bounded by Queens Road, Victoria Park Road, London Road and Avenue Road with the city centre area in the proposed Castle ward. They argued that "the Community in this area have no contacts nor identities with Castle ward and this area should remain within Knighton ward". In order to offset the resulting electoral imbalances, they proposed that the area bounded by Holmfield Avenue and Holmfield Road (on the A6 London Road south-eastwards) should be transferred to the proposed Stoneygate ward. In addition, they proposed the creation of a two-member Clarendon ward, to the south of Victoria Park Road, as originally proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group at Stage One. East Knighton Liberal Democrats opposed the proposed combining of the existing East and West Knighton wards to form the proposed three-member Knighton ward. They stated: "It is very difficult to see a connection with the two communities of East Knighton and West Knighton other than the communal use of one name. The proposal to 'link' the two wards makes the combination too bulky and difficult to manage". In addition, they argued, "the proposed Castle ward is not a community that people who live between Avenue Road and Victoria Park Road can identify with".

106 Crown Hills Liberal Democrats stated, "The proposed Castle ward is an awkward collection of areas that have nothing in common". They also proposed alternative warding arrangements based on the creation of a separate two-member Clarendon ward, as originally proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group at Stage One. Councillor Hunt (West Knighton ward) expressed opposition to the proposed three-member Knighton ward. He proposed that the existing West Knighton ward be broadly retained with a number of minor modifications in order "to complete the area in line with the natural community boundaries".

107 A local resident of Clarendon Park opposed the proposed Castle and Knighton wards. She argued: "The proposed reorganisation sees Castle including the whole of the City Centre, with part of Clarendon Park 'tacked on'. I cannot imagine how anyone can think this area in any way identifies with or has similar issues to the City Centre." In addition, she stated that "the southern end of Clarendon Park, which would be included in Knighton ward under these proposals, would not be able to get effective representation from their councillors on issues that concern them". She proposed that two-member wards would better suit this area and expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals which "best fit the natural communities, with two wards south of Victoria Park Road". Some alternative options were also suggested. Finally, a local resident opposed the proposed Castle ward, stating, "As well as including the core of the city centre, this now includes Clarendon Park, with which it has little in common".

108 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the proposed Castle and Knighton wards as final, subject to the amendment to the 2006 electorate figure for Knighton ward as highlighted by officers from the City Council. We note that the proposed Castle and Knighton wards have received an element of local support. However, a number of community-based issues have arisen at Stage Three. While we note the concerns expressed, there has been no viable alternative that has been put forward to us that will provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality while not having an

adverse effect on the surrounding wards. There also appears to be little consensus regarding the most suitable warding arrangements for this area.

109 We have, however, looked at some of the alternative proposals put forward. We looked at the possibility of transferring the area bounded by Holmfield Avenue and Holmfield Road from the proposed Knighton ward to the proposed Stoneygate ward and the area bounded by Avenue Road and Queens Road from the proposed Castle ward to the proposed Knighton ward, as proposed by Leicester South Liberal Democrats. Under this proposal, Knighton and Stoneygate wards would contain 2 per cent more and 27 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively by 2006, while Castle ward would contain 12 per cent fewer than the average. We have not been persuaded by the argumentation provided that there is sufficient justification for a variance of 27 per cent to be acceptable. We also looked at the possibility of broadly retaining the existing East Knighton and West Knighton wards, as proposed by Councillor Hunt. Although under existing arrangements East and West Knighton wards do not contain especially high levels of electoral inequality, retaining the existing wards would have a consequential effect on the surrounding wards which, in general, have received broad local support.

110 In addition, we looked at the possibility of basing revised wards in this area on the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals, which were the basis for many of the alternative views put forward at Stage Three. Although the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed two-member Clarendon Park and Knighton wards provided for acceptable levels of electoral equality, their adoption would have a consequential effect on the proposed wards to the north and west, specifically in relation to the LGCE's proposed Castle ward which covers the centre of the city. Castle ward has strong boundaries to its north, west and south and the inclusion of the Clarendon Park area is fundamental to this proposed ward. Furthermore, under the LGCE's proposals, the Clarendon Park area would broadly be retained within the same city ward and not be dissected by Queens Road as under the existing arrangements.

111 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Castle and Knighton wards would contain 4 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent and 8 per cent more by 2006). Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Crown Hills, Spinney Hill, Stoneygate and Wycliffe wards**

112 The existing wards of Crown Hills, Spinney Hill, Stoneygate and Wycliffe are situated in the central and eastern parts of the city and are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Crown Hills, Spinney Hill, Stoneygate and Wycliffe wards contain 3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7 per cent fewer, 10 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more than the average by 2006).

113 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed combining much of the existing Stoneygate ward, less the areas bounded by Evington Road and Devana Road and to the north-east of Victoria Park (centred around St James' Road), with the area bounded by Avenue Road, Queen's Road and London Road (A6) from the existing East Knighton ward, together with the area to the east of Mayflower Road from the existing Crown Hills ward to form a revised two-member Stoneygate ward. It argued that "its boundaries are more recognisable as traditional Stoneygate". The existing Crown Hills ward, less the area to the east of Mayflower Road, would be combined with part of the remainder of the existing Stoneygate ward, the area bounded by Evington Road and Devana Road, together with the area broadly to the east of Spinney Hill Park and Egginton Street from the existing Spinney Hill ward, to form a revised two-member Crown Hills ward.

114 The remainder of the existing Stoneygate ward would be combined with the remainder of the existing Spinney Hill ward to form a revised two-member Spinney Hill ward. The Conservative Group proposed dividing the existing Wycliffe ward between three proposed two-member wards. As detailed above, the Conservative Group proposed that the area broadly to the south of Humberstone Gate and St George's Retail Park should form part of a new two-member Station ward. The area bounded by St Matthew's Way and Humberstone Gate would form part of a revised two-member Abbey ward, as detailed below, while the area broadly to the north of St Matthew's Way and Humberstone Gate would form part of a revised Latimer ward, also detailed below.

115 Under the Conservative Group's proposals Crown Hills, Spinney Hill and Stoneygate wards would contain 10 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

116 The Labour Group proposed a revised three-member Stoneygate ward comprising the existing Stoneygate ward, less the area broadly bounded by Holmfield Road and Holmfield Avenue, as detailed above, together with part of the existing Crown Hills ward, broadly to the south of Chesterfield Road and Ethel Road, part of the existing Spinney Hill ward, broadly to the south of St Peter's Road, and part of the existing Wycliffe ward surrounding Highfield Street. It argued that this proposed ward "brings together the community that is linked by the radial routes of London Road, Evington Road and St Peter's Road". The remainder of the existing Crown Hills and Spinney Hill wards would be combined with part of the existing Wycliffe ward, broadly to the east of Humberstone Road and St George's Way, to form a revised three-member Spinney Hills ward. The remaining parts of the existing Wycliffe ward would be divided between a revised Castle ward, as detailed above and a new South Belgrave ward as detailed below.

117 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Spinney Hills and Stoneygate wards would contain 9 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more than the average by 2006).

118 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Stoneygate ward, less the area surrounding St James' Road which, as detailed above, would form part of a revised Castle ward. However, as also detailed above, the Liberal Democrat Group proposed including part of the existing East Knighton ward, broadly to the west of (and including) London Road. It also proposed broadly retaining the existing two-member Crown Hills wards, with an amendment to its western boundary to include the area surrounding Egginton Street from the existing Spinney Hill ward. The remainder of the existing Spinney Hill ward would be combined with part of the existing Wycliffe ward, broadly to the east of the railway line to form a revised two-member Spinney Hills ward. Part of the remainder of the proposed Wycliffe ward would form part of a revised Castle ward, as detailed above, while the remaining part of the existing Wycliffe ward would form part of a revised Abbey ward, as detailed below.

119 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Crown Hills, Spinney Hills and Stoneygate wards would contain 7 per cent, 11 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2 per cent more, 1 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

120 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed adopting the Labour Group's proposals in this area, subject to the one minor amendment, detailed above, and one to the western boundary of the proposed Spinney Hills ward. The Labour Group's proposals utilised strong boundaries such as Chesterfield Road, Ethel Road, Gwendolen Road and St Saviour's Road, while uniting areas of similar character in the same ward. While it was noted that there were some elements of consensus in this area, with

regards to the use of St Saviour's Road and the Stoughton Road (A6030) as boundaries, there was very little consensus on the overall warding arrangements.

121 Officers from the LGCE visited the area, and were of the view that, by seeking to maintain a uniform pattern of two-member wards in this area, the proposals submitted by the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups dissected communities and breached significant boundaries. For example, both the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups proposed utilising Evington Road as a boundary, thus placing the areas either side in separate wards. The LGCE noted that the areas either side of Evington Road were similar in character and were of the view that Evington Road was more of a focus for the local community than a divide. The LGCE did, however, propose one minor amendment to the western boundary of the proposed Spinney Hills ward. It proposed that the boundary should follow the railway line, as opposed to running to the west of the St George's Retail Park. This amendment had a negligible effect on electoral equality and, in the view of the LGCE, provided for a more identifiable boundary.

122 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Spinney Hills and Stoneygate wards would contain 9 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more than the average by 2006).

123 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party, the Conservative Group and Federation of Sikh Organisations Leicestershire, all broadly supported the draft recommendations in this area, while officers from the City Council addressed an anomaly with regards to the 2006 electorate figure for the proposed Stoneygate ward.

124 Leicester South Liberal Democrats argued: "The proposed Spinney Hills ward does not represent any kind of natural community. The area near the railway station has nothing in common with the area close to the General Hospital. East Park Road is a natural boundary, which the Commission has ignored. Chesterfield/Ethel Road is not a natural boundary". In addition, they stated: "The proposed Stoneygate ward includes areas that are completely different. Areas such as St Stephens Road have nothing in common with the rest of Stoneygate". Based on these comments, alternative suggestions were made although no detailed proposals were put forward. Crown Hills Liberal Democrats reiterated these views. As detailed above, Leicester South Liberal Democrats also proposed an amendment to the southern boundary of the proposed Stoneygate ward to facilitate their proposals in the Clarendon Park area.

125 The LGCE received a number of representations at Stage Three with regard to the division of the Highfields and St Matthew's areas between the proposed Spinney Hills and Abbey wards respectively. Highfields Community Association expressed concern with regard to the division of the St Matthew's Estate and the Highfields area between different city wards. It argued, "the grouping of Highfields and St Matthew's represented by Wycliffe and Spinney Hills wards constitutes an inner-city community united by history, poverty and social endeavour." It contended that the division of these areas between the proposed Abbey, Spinney Hills, Castle and Stoneygate wards would mean that, "the reality of socio-economic deprivation in these areas will be masked in the new ward statistics". Details of a number of local partnership organisations operating in the community were included. Two possible options were proposed for revised Wycliffe and Spinney Hills wards, largely based on the existing warding arrangements in the area. Representatives of 12 local resident and community groups from the St Matthew's and Highfields areas also signed this submission.

126 Highfields and St Matthew's Community Employment Project also opposed the division of the Highfields and St Matthew's areas between separate city wards. It stated that, "St Matthew's & Highfields have been linked together for the purpose of economic development, strategic planning and community capacity building. The two areas are similar in demographics, population and issues around social exclusion, poverty and deprivation". It

argued that there are no links between the St Matthew's area and the rest of the proposed Abbey ward. It therefore proposed that St Matthew's form part of the proposed Spinney Hills ward.

127 Leicester West Liberal Democrats expressed concern over the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Abbey ward, stating that "people in St Matthews feel that they would sooner be incorporated into the Highfields area as they have more in common with that area than with Mowmacre/Abbey".

128 St Matthew's Tenants' Association opposed the abolition of the existing Wycliffe ward and consequent separation of the St Matthew's and Highfields estates between separate city wards. It stated that, "the two areas are linked historically and geographically". It also expressed a number of concerns with regard to the impact of the proposals on socio-economic deprivation, stating, "St Matthew's would become more deprived and disadvantaged, resulting in the knock-on effects of increased poverty, high unemployment, poorer diets and health, and an increase in crime". It was proposed that the existing Wycliffe ward should be retained. The St Matthew's Project broadly reiterated these views, emphasising the "historic links" that St Matthew's has with the Highfields area. It proposed that it remain with the Highfield area "where there is a natural affinity".

129 Councillor Henry conveyed the concerns of some of her constituents in relation to the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Abbey ward. She stated that "the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate is a particular concern as it is both geographically removed and has a more transient population. They also think that regeneration will be affected in the future, as the ward will become mainly middle class".

130 A local resident expressed particular concern regarding the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Abbey ward and the impact that this would have on the "specific difficulties" of this community. Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group also expressed concern with regard to the size of the proposed Abbey ward and the linking of the St Matthew's and Mowmacre areas.

131 Finally, a local resident commented on the Stoneygate ward name. He stated: "This name is now inappropriate, as nearly all of the district known as Stoneygate is included in the new Knighton ward, with a small part in Castle. As it is now centred on Evington Road/Lane, and part of Evington Valley Road, I would suggest that a better name would be Evington Valley".

132 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Stoneygate ward as final, subject to an amendment to the 2006 electorate figure as highlighted by officers from the City Council. As detailed above, a number of views have been expressed in relation to this proposed ward; however, we have not been persuaded by the evidence submitted that any of the alternative proposals would provide for a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the LGCE's proposed ward. In addition, all the alternative proposals put forward would have a consequential effect on surrounding wards, which have received an element of support at Stage Three.

133 As mentioned earlier in relation to Aylestone and Linwood wards, levels of social deprivation and regeneration initiatives are not issues we take into account in reaching conclusions on our recommendations. Having said that, we were impressed by the numbers and scope of the community based groups and organisations which had been established to address the particular characteristics of, and issues faced, by residents in the St Matthew's and Highfields areas. In our view, the existence of these groups and the fact that their coverage extends to both St Matthew's and Highfields is indicative of strong community identity, which is shared between the two areas. In considering the responses to the

consultations on the draft recommendations, we have come to the conclusion that community identity would not be best served by placing St Matthew's and Highfields in separate wards.

134 We have therefore been persuaded that the two areas should be retained within the same city ward and propose including the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Spinney Hills ward in order to maintain its link with the Highfields area. Under our final recommendation, the proposed Abbey and Spinney Hills wards would contain 17 per cent fewer and 24 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (15 per cent fewer and 13 per cent more by 2006). While this is a higher level of electoral inequality by 2006 than we would normally recommend for a compact, urban area such as Leicester City, we are of the view that the circumstances in relation to St Matthew's and Highfields are such for this to be warranted. In addition, this proposal would also reduce the size of the proposed Abbey ward, which, as detailed below, has also been a cause for concern at Stage Three.

135 Finally, we have considered the alternative ward name of Evington Valley put forward by a local resident. We have not been persuaded that this alternative is a better reflection of the constituent parts of the proposed Stoneygate ward than the LGCE's proposed ward name.

136 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Spinney Hills and Stoneygate wards would contain 24 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (13 per cent and 4 per cent more by 2006). Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards**

137 The existing wards of Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt are situated in the east of the city with Evington and Thurncourt wards bordering Harborough district. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards contain 16 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (19 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

138 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing two-member Thurncourt ward, arguing that it is "clearly a distinct community". It proposed broadly retaining the existing two-member Evington ward, subject to a minor amendment in the north-west where they proposed including the Greenacre Drive area and the area broadly to the north of Wicklow Drive from the existing Coleman ward in the revised Evington ward. The remainder of the existing Coleman ward would be combined with the area to the east of Cottesmore Road and Prospect Hill and to the west of Kitchener Road from the existing Charnwood ward to form a revised two-member Coleman ward.

139 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards would contain 9 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2 per cent more, equal to the average and 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

140 The Labour Group proposed combining the existing Thurncourt ward, less the area bounded by Colchester Road and Uppingham Road, with the existing Evington ward less the area surrounding the Leicester General Hospital site and the area around St Denys Road, to form a revised three-member Evington ward. It stated that this proposal resulted in the combining of the Goodwood and Thurnby Lodge council estates with the "affluent Downing Road area". The remainder of the existing Thurncourt ward, bounded by Colchester Road and Uppingham Road, would form part of a revised Humberstone ward, as detailed below. The remainder of the existing Evington ward would be combined with the whole of the existing Coleman ward, together with the area broadly between Kitchener Road and Spinney Hill

Road/Mere Road from the existing Charnwood ward, to form a revised three-member Coleman ward. It argued that this ward “has a cosmopolitan feel and exemplifies Leicester’s cultural diversity”.

141 Under the Labour Group’s proposals, Coleman and Evington wards would contain 7 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2 per cent more and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

142 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed retaining the existing Thurncourt ward, arguing that “community identity and lack of unnecessary upheaval both point towards the retention of the ward”. It also proposed retaining the existing Evington ward, subject to the inclusion of the area to the south-east of Copdale Road from the existing Coleman ward to form a revised two-member Evington ward. The remainder of the existing Coleman ward would be combined with the area broadly to the west of Kitchener Road and east of Asfordby Street from the existing Charnwood ward to form a revised two-member Coleman ward.

143 Under the Liberal Democrat Group’s proposals, Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards would contain 6 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

144 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed basing its draft recommendations on a mix of the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Group’s proposals in this area. The LGCE proposed adopting the Conservative Group’s proposals in relation to its proposed two-member Evington, Thurncourt and Coleman wards. These proposals were broadly similar to those submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group. Having visited the area, the LGCE were of the view that the use of three-member wards in this area under the Labour Group’s proposals resulted in the combining of areas which were significantly different in character as well as being somewhat geographically separate. In relation to the Labour Group’s proposed Evington ward, the LGCE was not persuaded that the combining of the Goodwood and Thurnby council estates with the “more affluent” Downing Road area would be in the best interests of the local community. These two areas are significantly different in character as well as being separated by Uppingham Road and Gipsy Lane. It was considered that there was merit in the existing Thurncourt ward being retained (as proposed by the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups), utilising strong boundaries such as Uppingham Road and Scraftoft Lane. The Conservative Group’s proposed two-member Evington ward united communities centred on Spencerfield Road and Goodwood Road, while the proposed two-member Coleman ward would be centred on Coleman Road, which runs through the centre of the ward.

145 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards would contain 9 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2 per cent more, equal to the average and 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

146 At Stage Three Keith Vaz MP, the Conservative Group and Voluntary Action Leicester all expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area. Leicester East Constituency Labour Party stated, “We agree with the recommendations regarding Thurncourt ward and the utilization of strong boundaries such as Uppingham Road and Scraftoft Lane”. It expressed support for the proposed Evington ward stating that the proposed ward “does unite the communities centred round Spencefield Lane and Goodwood Road”. Finally, support was expressed for the proposed Coleman ward, stating, “We accept the Coleman Road as a focus not a divide”. Shree Hindu Temple & Community Centre and Federation of Sikh Organisations Leicestershire expressed support for the proposed Coleman ward, while Leicestershire City Council Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed Thurncourt ward.

147 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards as final. We note that these wards have received a significant amount of support at Stage Three as well as achieving acceptable levels of electoral equality.

148 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Charnwood, Humberstone and West Humberstone wards**

149 The existing wards of Charnwood, Humberstone and West Humberstone are situated in the north-eastern corner of the city. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Charnwood, Humberstone and West Humberstone wards contain 11 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (15 per cent fewer, 41 per cent more and 11 per cent more than the average by 2006).

150 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed combining part of the existing Charnwood ward in their proposed Coleman ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of Charnwood ward would be combined with part of the existing West Humberstone ward broadly to the south of Gipsy Lane and Wycombe Road to form a revised two-member Charnwood ward. Part of the remainder of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area surrounding the Towers Hospital and Turner Road, would be combined with part of the existing Humberstone ward, the area broadly to the south of Keyham Lane to form a revised two-member Humberstone ward. The remainder of the existing Humberstone and West Humberstone wards would be combined to form a new two-member Hamilton ward, encompassing the ongoing Hamilton development.

151 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Charnwood, Hamilton and Humberstone wards would contain 6 per cent, 31 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent fewer, equal to the average and 6 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

152 The Labour Group proposed including part of the existing Charnwood ward in its proposed Coleman ward, as detailed above. The remainder of the proposed Charnwood ward would be combined with part of the existing West Humberstone ward, broadly to the south of the Towers Hospital site and the Northfields area, together with part of the existing Latimer ward, less the areas broadly to the east of Catherine Street and the properties on the south side of Canon Street, and part of the existing Wycliffe ward, as detailed above, to form a new three-member South Belgrave ward. Part of the remainder of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area surrounding the Towers Hospital site and the Northfields area, south of Gipsy Lane, would be combined with the area broadly to the east of Catherine Street and the properties on the south side of Canon Street from the existing Latimer ward, together with the majority of the existing Belgrave ward, less the area to the west of Abbey Lane (A6) and part of the existing Rushey Mead ward broadly to the south of Woodbridge Road to form a new three-member North Belgrave ward.

153 Part of the remainder of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area to the east of the Troon Industrial area, would be combined with the existing Humberstone ward, together with the area bounded by Uppingham Road and Colchester Road from the existing Thurncourt ward, as detailed above, to form a revised three-member Humberstone ward. The Labour Group argued that this ward would "meet the needs of the changing community". The remainder of the existing West Humberstone ward would be combined with the existing

Rushey Mead ward, less the area to be transferred to the proposed North Belgrave ward, as detailed above, to form a revised three-member Rushey Mead ward. The remaining part of the existing Belgrave ward, the area to the west of Abbey Lane would form part of a revised Abbey Park ward, as detailed below.

154 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Humberstone, North Belgrave, Rushey Mead and South Belgrave wards would contain 19 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

155 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed including part of the existing Charnwood ward in its proposed Coleman ward, as detailed above. The remainder of the existing Charnwood ward would be combined with part of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area broadly to the south of Gipsy Lane and west of Victoria Road East to form a revised two-member Charnwood ward. Part of the remainder of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area surrounding the Towers Hospital site and the Mundella Community College would be combined with part of the existing Humberstone ward, the area broadly to the south of Lower Keyham Lane and Keyham Lane to form a revised two-member Humberstone ward. The remaining parts of the existing West Humberstone and Humberstone wards would then be combined to form a new two-member Hamilton ward.

156 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Charnwood, Hamilton and Humberstone wards would contain 7 per cent, 30 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent fewer, equal to the average and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

157 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed adopting the Conservative Group's proposed Charnwood ward and the Labour Group's proposed Humberstone ward, subject to two amendments. It considered that the Conservative Group's proposed Charnwood ward had merit, using the railway line as a strong western boundary. It was not persuaded by the Labour Group's proposed wards, which covered part of this area. Both the proposed three-member North Belgrave and South Belgrave wards breached the railway line which, officers from the LGCE having visited the area, identified as having limited crossing points. In addition, the proposed North Belgrave ward would cover a large geographical area uniting the Beaumanor Road area to the west of the River Soar with the area surrounding the Towers Hospital site to the east of Victoria Road East. The LGCE was of the view that the railway line and the River Soar provided for strong boundaries in this area, as identified by the Liberal Democrat and the Conservative Groups.

158 In relation to the Humberstone area, the LGCE were not persuaded by the proposals submitted by the Conservative or the Liberal Democrat Groups. Under both of these proposals, the new build area surrounding Columbine Road and Maidenwell Avenue would be combined with areas to the west of the railway line, from which it is separated by the Humberstone Heights Golf Course and the Troon Industrial area. The LGCE was of the view that these proposals would not provide for the best reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. The LGCE concurred with the view expressed by the Labour Group that the areas to the north and south of Lower Keyham Lane and Keyham Lane West should form part of the same ward. The newer residential areas surrounding Columbine Road and Maidenwell Avenue are accessed from the A563, which runs through the centre of the Labour Group's proposed three-member Humberstone ward. The LGCE did, however, propose three amendments to the Labour Group's Humberstone ward in order to facilitate its proposals to the south and west. It proposed that the area bounded by Scruptoft Lane, Colchester Road and Uppingham Road should be incorporated in the proposed Thurncourt ward and that the area surrounding the Towers Hospital site and the area containing Turner Road, Hallaton Road and part of Humberstone Drive should form part of the proposed Humberstone ward.

159 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Charnwood and Humberstone wards would contain 6 per cent and 24 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more than the average by 2006).

160 At Stage Three, Keith Vaz MP expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area. Leicester East Constituency Labour Party also expressed support. It stated that the proposed three-member Humberstone ward “recognizes the status of the Humberstone area as a large and identifiable one. It also unites East and West Hamilton”. In addition, it stated that “the proposed Charnwood ward also has the advantage of uniting communities”. It did, however, suggest that a more suitable name for Charnwood ward would be Uppingham ward “as the road will be the dominant factor in the area”. Shree Hindu Temple & Community Centre, Federation of Sikh Organisations Leicestershire and Voluntary Action Leicester all expressed support for the proposed Charnwood ward.

161 The Conservative Group supported the proposed Charnwood ward. However, it put forward alternative warding arrangements in the north-east of the city. It proposed that consideration be given for the creation of the three two-member wards of Hamilton, Humberstone and Rushey Mead as opposed to the LGCE’s proposed three-member Humberstone and Rushey Mead wards. The proposed two-member Hamilton ward would be created out of part of the LGCE’s proposed Humberstone ward, to the north of Keynham Lane and the A563 and part of the proposed Rushey Mead ward to the east of the railway line. It argued that this proposed ward recognises the “interrelationship” between the three communities of the new Hamilton residential development, the South Thurmaston area and the Cromwell Estate. In addition, they stated that, “the creation of a Hamilton ward also makes sense for the perspective of other divisions within the City created by the Council”.

162 The remaining part of the LGCE’s proposed Humberstone ward would form a new two-member Humberstone ward, while the remainder of the proposed Rushey Mead ward would form a new two-member Rushey Mead ward. The Conservative Group expressed the view that the railway line is a significant barrier in this area and that “the communities on either side are divided not only by the railway line itself, but also by large industrial areas and a park”. In addition, the Group asserted the view that the communities either side of the railway line are very different in character. In reference to the area to the east of the railway line, they argued that, “under no circumstances do they consider themselves to be part of the Rushey Mead area”.

163 Finally, a local resident suggested that the proposed Humberstone ward should be renamed Humberstone & Hamilton ward, as the proposed ward “includes most of Hamilton, a major new suburb to the north of Humberstone”.

164 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for Charnwood ward as final. We note that this proposal has received a degree of local support at Stage Three as well as achieving an acceptable level of electoral equality. We have considered the alternative ward name of Uppingham put forward by Leicester East Constituency Labour Party. However, we have not been persuaded that this alternative is a better reflection of the constituent parts of the proposed ward than the LGCE’s proposed ward name.

165 We have also decided to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Humberstone ward as final, subject to a ward name change. We have been persuaded by the proposal put forward by a local resident that the ward name Humberstone & Hamilton is a better reflection of the constituent parts of the proposed ward. In relation to the Conservative Group’s proposals for the north-east of the city, we have not been persuaded that they would provide for a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the LGCE’s draft recommendations in this area. The Group’s proposals would utilise the railway line as a boundary in this area, based on the argument that it is a strong boundary and that the areas either side share few

links. The LGCE was not persuaded by this argument at Stage One and considered that there were a number of similarities and links between the two areas either side of the railway line. We concur with this view and, as detailed below, also note that the proposed Rushey Mead ward has received broad support at Stage Three, with the view expressed that “there are a lot of similarities of the areas on either side of the railway line”. In addition, we concur with the view expressed by the LGCE that the areas to the north and south of Lower Keyham Lane and Keyham Lane West should form part of the same ward and that the newer residential areas surrounding Columbine Road and Maidenwell Avenue have better links with the area to its south than to its north. Based on these conclusions, we have therefore decided to confirm the LGCE’s proposed Humberstone ward as final, subject to the ward name change detailed above.

166 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Charnwood and Humberstone & Hamilton wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back on the report.

### **Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards**

167 The existing wards of Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead are situated in the central and northern parts of the city. All four wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards contain 12 per cent fewer, 12 per cent more, 15 per cent fewer and 17 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (15 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more, 18 per cent fewer and 15 per cent more than the average by 2006).

168 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Rushey Mead ward, maintaining the railway line as its eastern boundary. However, it proposed amending the southern boundary to follow the River Soar (Grand Union Canal), Melton Road (A607) and Marfitt Street, including the area to the north of Marfitt Street from the existing Belgrave ward in the revised two-member ward and transferring the area surrounding Sandringham Avenue into the revised Belgrave ward, as detailed below. It argued that their proposed Rushey Mead ward “is clearly a distinct community”. The Conservative Group’s revised two-member Belgrave ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area to the north of Marfitt Street, as detailed above, the area to the west of the River Soar, which would form part of a new Beaumont Leys South ward, as detailed below, together with the area surrounding Sandringham Avenue, as detailed above and the area bounded by Doncaster Road and Glendon Street from the existing Latimer ward. The Group stated that “the proposed new ward has clearer boundaries and a single, more distinct, mainly Asian community identity than at present”.

169 The Conservative Group proposed a revised Latimer ward, largely based on the existing ward, less the area bounded by Doncaster Road and Glendon Street, as detailed above, together with the St Matthew’s Estate, to the north of St Matthew’s Way from the existing Wycliffe ward, as detailed above. The Group’s proposed Abbey ward would comprise the whole of the existing Abbey ward, less the area broadly to the north of Menzies Road and Abbey Meadows, together with part of the existing Wycliffe ward bounded by St Matthew’s Way and Humberstone Gate, as detailed above, part of the existing Castle ward, the area broadly to the north of Mill Lane and Belvoir Street, also detailed above, together with part of the existing St Augustine’s ward, the area broadly to the east of Brading Road and part of the existing Westcotes ward, broadly between Western Boulevard and Fosse Road South. The remaining part of Abbey ward would form part of a new two-member Anstey Heights ward, as detailed below.

170 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards would contain 2 per cent, 11 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 2 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2006).

171 The Labour Group proposed a revised three-member Rushey Mead ward comprising the existing ward less the area broadly to south of Woodbridge Road, as detailed above and part of the existing West Humberstone ward, the area surrounding the Troon Industrial area. It also proposed new North Belgrave and South Belgrave wards in this area, as detailed above. The Labour Group also proposed a new three-member Abbey Park ward, comprising the existing Abbey ward less the area to the south of the inner ring road included in the revised Castle ward, as detailed above, and the area surrounding Jean Drive, as detailed below, together with part of the existing Mowmacre ward, the Stocking Farm and Mowmacre Hill areas and part of the existing Belgrave ward to the west of Abbey Lane.

172 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Abbey Park ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average initially, 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2006.

173 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a revised two-member Rushey Mead ward largely based on the existing ward less the area surrounding Sandringham Avenue and to the west of the River Soar (Grand Union Canal), together with part of the existing Belgrave ward broadly to the north of Marfitt Street. It proposed a revised two-member Belgrave ward comprising the existing Belgrave ward less the areas broadly to the north of Marfitt Street, as detailed above, to the west of the River Soar (Grand Union Canal), and broadly to the north of Bruin Street, but including the area broadly to the east of Catherine Street from the existing Latimer ward and the area surrounding Sandringham Avenue from the existing Rushey Mead ward. The revised two-member Latimer ward would comprise the existing ward less the area to the east of Catherine Street, as detailed above, together with the area broadly to the north of Bruin Street from the existing Belgrave ward and the area bounded by Abbey Park Road, Belgrave ward and the River Soar from the existing Abbey ward.

174 The remainder of the existing Rushey Mead and Belgrave wards, broadly to the west of the River Soar, would form part of a revised two-member Abbey ward, together with the majority of the existing Abbey ward (less the areas bounded by Abbey Park Road and the River Soar, as detailed above, and surrounding Jean Drive and Cheltenham Road), together with the area to the west of the railway line from the existing Wycliffe ward and the area broadly to the north of Newarke Street and Belvoir Street from the existing Castle ward. The remainder of the existing Abbey ward would form part of a new two-member Minster Grange ward, as detailed below.

175 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards would contain 20 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 12 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

176 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed adopting elements of the proposals put forward by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group, together with some of its own proposals. While it considered that the railway line formed a strong boundary in the south and centre of the city, it was not of the view that there was such a strong case for its utilisation in the extreme north. Both the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups proposed dividing the Rushey Mead area by using the railway line while the Labour Group proposed uniting the areas either side of the railway line in a proposed three-member Rushey Mead ward. LGCE officers who visited the area noted that there were a number of crossing points at this part of the railway line (including the A563 Troon Way) and

considered that there were a number of similarities between the areas either side. It therefore proposed adopting the Labour Group's three-member Rushey Mead ward.

177 As detailed above, the LGCE was not persuaded by the Labour Group's proposed three-member North Belgrave and South Belgrave wards as it did not consider that they provided for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. Officers from the LGCE, having visited the area, identified some key boundaries in this area. It was of the view that the railway line in the east and the River Soar (Grand Union Canal) in the west formed significant boundaries in this area, a view that was also expressed by the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups. The LGCE noted that all three schemes identified the Belgrave Road as a focus rather than a divide of communities and it concurred with this view. Based on these conclusions, the LGCE proposed basing its draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group, which were broadly similar to those put forward by the Conservative Group.

178 The LGCE proposed adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed two-member Belgrave ward subject to an amendment to the northern boundary in order to facilitate the use of the Labour Group's Rushey Mead ward, together with the proposed two-member Latimer ward, subject to a minor amendment to the western boundary resulting in the utilisation of the River Soar as a boundary to the junction with Abbey Park Road. It also proposed an amendment to the boundary between the two wards in order to provide for an improved level of electoral equality and provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. It proposed that the area bounded by Loughborough Road and Melton Road, broadly to the south of Ratcliffe Street and Quemby Close should be transferred to the proposed Belgrave ward.

179 The LGCE put forward its own proposals in the Abbey Park and Mowmacre Hill areas, in order to facilitate a good scheme across the city as a whole. Having decided on its proposals to the east, south and west of this area the LGCE was left with the area stretching from north of the city centre to the south of Birstall Golf Course. Given the size of this area, the LGCE looked at the possibility of creating a single-member Abbey ward and a two-member Mowmacre ward with the boundary between them being Abbey Lane and Corporation Road. However, this resulted in significant electoral imbalances in both wards. The LGCE was therefore of the view that these areas be combined to form a new three-member Abbey ward.

180 Having visited the area, the LGCE noted that the two areas, although somewhat different in character, were linked by Abbey Lane and St Margaret's Way and, if combined, resulted in a revised ward containing 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average by 2006. In addition, this proposal was broadly similar to that proposed by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group and facilitated the provision of a good scheme across the city as a whole. Further views on this issue were welcomed at Stage Three.

181 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards would contain 2 per cent fewer, equal to the average, 9 per cent more and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

182 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party expressed support for the proposed wards in this area. In relation to the proposed Rushey Mead ward, it agreed with the views expressed by the LGCE that the areas either side of the railway line in the north of the city are "broadly similar" and that there are a number of crossing points. In relation to the proposed Belgrave and Latimer wards, support was expressed over the use of Belgrave Road as a focus rather than a divide in this area. In addition, the Constituency Labour Party stated, "the proposed Latimer ward has strong and identifiable boundaries and a strong community identity". Keith Vaz MP also expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area, while Voluntary Action Leicester expressed support for the proposed Belgrave and Latimer wards.

183 Councillors Bhatti and Nurse (Rushey Mead ward) expressed support for the proposed Rushey Mead ward. They stated: "There is a lot of similarities of the areas of either side of the railway line. This will eliminate the confusion prevalent upon residents on the other side of the railway line, that they are part of the Rushey Mead ward". Gujarat Hindu Association, Karod Kiran Arts and Leicester Hindu Festival Council all expressed support for the proposed Latimer ward, largely based on the use of the Belgrave Road as a focus and the river as a western boundary.

184 The Conservative Group expressed support for the proposed Abbey, Belgrave and Latimer wards. However, as detailed above, it proposed a revised two-member Rushey Mead ward utilising the railway line as its eastern boundary. In addition the Group stated that: "If the Commission is minded to retain the boundaries as detailed in its draft recommendations, we urge that the name of the ward be changed to East Belgrave so as to not alienate the one-third of the population of the new ward who would take exception to being described as living in the Rushey Mead ward". Officers from the City Council proposed a minor amendment between the proposed Belgrave and Rushey Mead wards in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. They proposed that numbers 21, 23, 52, 54 and 56 Clarke Street and Mellor Primary School be included in the proposed Rushey Mead ward.

185 A number of representations were received regarding the proposed Abbey ward. As detailed above, a number of respondents expressed concern with regard to the division of the St Matthew's and Highfields areas between separate city wards.

186 The Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP expressed concern over the proposed Abbey ward. Her first concern was in relation to the St Matthew's Estate which she argued: "In terms of geography, transport and culture is very isolated from the rest of Abbey ward .... It is quite clear that St Matthew's has a stronger link with the St Marks area in Latimer ward". She also expressed concern at the proposal to transfer the streets immediately to the west of Belgrave Road from the existing Abbey ward to the proposed Latimer ward. She stated that: "My main worry about the effect of this proposal is that it takes the majority of the community of South Asian origin out of the current Abbey ward - with the almost inevitable consequence that, after the next parliamentary boundary review, Leicester West will lose a very large number of south Asian residents". She therefore proposed that this area remain in Abbey ward with the St Matthew's Estate be added to the proposed Latimer ward in order to "balance this loss of electors".

187 Leicester West and South Constituency Labour Parties jointly supported the original Stage One Labour Party proposal for a three-member Abbey Park ward "with the boundary following the existing constituency boundary, except for the inclusion of Abbey Rise East from Leicester East Constituency". They strongly opposed the proposed Abbey ward, primarily because of the transfer of the area to the west of Belgrave Road to the proposed Latimer ward and the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Abbey ward, which it argued, "has closed geographical and residential contacts with the new Latimer ward. This estate is geographically closely linked to the St Marks estate in Latimer ward". This submission included a petition containing 945 signatures in support of these views.

188 Lord Janner of Braunstone, QC expressed support for the views expressed by the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP and Leicester West and South Constituency Labour Parties. Leicester City West Primary Care Trust stated that "the wards proposed for Leicester by the Local Government Commission in general present no problem for Leicester City West PCT". However, it expressed concern at the proposed Abbey ward, stating that the proposed ward "may present considerable problems for both elected members and local residents in establishing effective partnership with the PCT". It submitted a number of reasons as to why it considered there would be difficulties with the proposed Abbey ward, primarily because of the separation of two SRB programme areas, the breaching of strong natural boundaries such as the river, the canal and Abbey Park, and the separation of the St Matthew's Estate from its

surrounding area and subsequent combining with the Mowmacre Estate which “is both geographically remote and has entirely different socio-economic characteristics”. It proposed that the part of the proposed Abbey ward to the south of the river should form part of an enlarged three-member Latimer ward and the part of the proposed new Abbey ward north of that boundary should become a new two-member ward.

189 A further 10 representations were received from eight local businesses, Guru Nanak Gurdwara and a community organisation in relation to the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Latimer wards. They all expressed concern at the proposed transfer of the area to the west of Belgrave Road to the proposed Latimer ward, broadly reiterating the views of the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP.

190 Mowmacre Tenants & Residents’ Association commented on the size of the proposed Abbey ward. It stated that, “It is bad enough that we are to be merged and lose our identity without spreading the ward so widely across the city”. A local resident opposed the proposed Abbey ward, arguing that “the proposed changes will disrupt the balance and divide the established communities and which may affect the harmony and stability of the area”.

191 Councillor Henry conveyed the concerns of some of her constituents. She commented that the proposed Abbey ward is “far too big” and would lack a sense of community. She stated that “the inclusion of the St Matthew’s Estate is a particular concern as it is both geographically removed and has a more transient population. They also think that regeneration will be affected in the future, as the ward will become mainly middle class”. She said that a natural boundary for Abbey ward would be the river or Abbey Lane.

192 A local resident expressed concern regarding the size of the proposed Abbey ward and the inclusion of “drastically different” residents. Particular concern was expressed regarding the inclusion of the St Matthew’s Estate and the impact that this would have on the “specific difficulties” of this community. It was proposed that a more suitable boundary for Abbey ward would be the river or Abbey Lane. Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group also expressed concern with regard to the size of the proposed Abbey ward and the linking of the St Matthew’s and Mowmacre areas.

193 Leicester West Liberal Democrats expressed concern at the move from two to three-member wards arguing that this “can only be at the detriment of constituents as representation would be difficult over such a large area”. They also expressed concern regarding the proposed Abbey ward, stating that it “destroys any sense of community that we have been striving to build up over four years through the SRB5 programme”. They also expressed concern over the inclusion of the St Matthew’s Estate in the proposed ward, stating that “people in St Matthew’s feel that they would sooner be incorporated into the Highfields area as they have more in common with that area than with Mowmacre/Abbey”. In addition, they contended that the natural boundary for Abbey ward “would appear to be either the ring road or the river”.

194 Finally, a local resident broadly supported the proposed Latimer and Belgrave wards. However, he asserted that the two areas have considerable affinity with one another and should be combined to form a three-member ward, which he acknowledged would be over populous.

195 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three we have decided to confirm the LGCE’s proposed Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards as final, subject to the minor amendment between Belgrave and Rushey Mead wards as put forward by officers at the City Council. We have been persuaded that the transfer of the area surrounding Mellor Primary School to the proposed Rushey Mead ward would provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary, while having no impact on electoral equality. As detailed above, we have not been persuaded by the Conservative Group’s proposed Rushey Mead ward, largely based

on us concurring with the view of the LGCE over the use of the railway line as a focus as opposed to a boundary in this area, and in view of support for these proposals being received at Stage Three. In addition, we have not been persuaded that the Conservative Group's proposed ward name of East Belgrave would be more identifiable to local communities than the LGCE's proposal to retain the name of Rushey Mead.

196 We note that a number of representations (including a petition of 945 signatures) have been received in relation to the proposed Abbey ward. There are three main areas of concern, which have been conveyed. First, we note the strong opposition expressed to the inclusion of the St Matthew's Estate in the proposed Abbey ward, and, as detailed above, we concur with this view and propose transferring the St Matthew's area to the proposed Spinney Hills ward. Second, we note that a number of respondents oppose the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Latimer wards. As detailed above, we have not been persuaded by the representations received that the area to the west of the Belgrave Road should form part of the proposed Abbey ward and that the river does not form a strong boundary in this area. We concur with the view expressed by the LGCE that the Belgrave Road is a focus as opposed to a barrier between communities in this area and in addition note that the proposed Latimer and Belgrave wards have received a significant amount of support at Stage Three. Furthermore, we note that much of the argumentation against this proposal is based on the impact that it could have on the parliamentary constituency boundary between Leicester West and Leicester East constituencies. As discussed earlier, we do not give regard to such implications as part of this review.

197 In addition, in order to balance the number of electors, the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP and Leicester West and South Constituency Labour Parties proposed that the St Matthew's Estate be combined with the St Marks Estate, which is currently in the proposed Latimer ward. As detailed above, a significant number of representations regarding the St Matthew's Estate were received from active local community groups in this area, all of which emphasised the strong links between the St Matthew's Estate and the Highfields area, which is currently in the proposed Spinney Hills ward. Based on this evidence and taking into account all the views expressed, together with our decision to transfer the St Matthew's Estate to the proposed Spinney Hills wards, as detailed above, we propose retaining the boundary between the proposed Abbey and Latimer wards as part of our final recommendations.

198 Third, concern was expressed at Stage Three by a number of respondents with regard to the size of the LGCE's proposed Abbey ward. We broadly concur with this view and looked at possible alternatives based on the creation of a two-member and a single-member ward to cover this area. We note that some respondents suggested the use of Abbey Lane or the river as a possible boundary; however, this would result in unacceptably high levels of electoral inequality. We therefore propose broadly retaining the proposed Abbey ward, subject to the transfer of the St Matthew's Estate to the proposed Spinney Hills ward, as detailed above. This amendment would reduce the size of Abbey ward and provide for a better reflection of community identity and interests.

199 Under our final recommendations the proposed Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards would contain 17 per cent fewer, equal to the average, 9 per cent more and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (15 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer by 2006). Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## **Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre wards**

200 The existing wards of Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre are situated in the north-western corner of the city bordering Charnwood district. Both wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre wards contain 32 per cent more and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (35 per cent and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006).

201 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed combining part of the existing Belgrave ward, to the west of the River Soar, as detailed above, with part of the existing Mowmacre ward, broadly to the south of Red Hill Way (A563), together with part of the existing Beaumont Leys ward, broadly to the south of Krefeld Way and east of Heacham Drive to form a new two-member Beaumont Leys South ward. Part of the remainder of the existing Beaumont Leys ward, broadly to the north of Krefeld Way would be combined with part of the remainder of the existing Mowmacre ward, broadly to the north of Red Hill Way to form a new two-member Beaumont Leys North ward. The Conservative Group stated that, "Beaumont Leys North ward comprises those parts of the current Beaumont Leys ward and Mowmacre wards isolated from the rest of the City by the main City ring road". The remaining part of the existing Beaumont Leys ward would form part of the new two-member Anstey Heights ward, together with part of the existing Abbey ward, as detailed above, part of the existing St Augustine's ward surrounding St Helen's Drive and part of the existing Western Park ward, the area surrounding Stokes Wood Primary School.

202 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Anstey Heights, Beaumont Leys North and Beaumont Leys South wards would contain 7 per cent more, 18 per cent fewer and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent, 5 per cent and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006).

203 The Labour Group proposed a new three-member Abbey Park ward comprising part of the existing Belgrave ward, to the west of Abbey Lane, with part of the existing Mowmacre ward surrounding the Stocking Farm and Mowmacre Hill areas and part of the existing Abbey Park ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the existing Mowmacre ward would be combined with the existing Beaumont Leys ward less the area broadly to the east of Beaumont Leys School and Blackbird Road Playing Fields, to form an enlarged three-member Beaumont Leys ward.

204 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Beaumont Leys ward would contain 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average initially, 3 per cent more than the average by 2006.

205 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed retaining the existing two-member Mowmacre ward. Part of the existing Beaumont Leys ward less the areas broadly to the south of Anstey Lane (B5372), east of Roydene Crescent and the English Martyrs School, would form a revised two-member Beaumont Leys ward. The remaining parts of the existing Beaumont Leys ward would form part of revised New Parks and new Minster Grange wards, as detailed below.

206 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre wards would contain 5 per cent more and 25 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent more and equal to the average by 2006).

207 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed adopting the Labour Group's proposals for this area. Having visited the area, it was of the view that the area to the north and south of Red Hill Way should form part of the same ward, as they were similar in character. This was reflected in the Labour Group's proposals and broadly reflected in the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals. However, under the Conservative

Group's proposals, Red Hill Way would be utilised as a boundary thus combining the area to the north with areas from which it is geographically separated by Birstall Golf Course, Beaumont Park and Bursom Industrial Estate. The LGCE was therefore of the view that the Labour Group's proposed three-member Beaumont Leys ward provided for the best reflection of community identities and interests in this area, while utilising strong boundaries such as the A50 and Beaumont Leys Lane.

208 Under the draft recommendations, Beaumont Leys ward would contain 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average initially, 3 per cent more than the average by 2006.

209 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party, the Conservative Group and Voluntary Action Leicester all expressed support for the proposed Beaumont Leys ward.

210 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for Beaumont Leys ward as final. We consider that this ward has received an element of support at Stage Three, as well as providing for an acceptable level of electoral equality.

211 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Beaumont Leys ward would contain the same number of electors per councillor as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park wards**

212 The existing wards of New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park are situated in the west of the city bordering Blaby district. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park wards contain 3 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 14 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to the average, 6 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more than the average by 2006).

213 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed including parts of the existing St Augustine's ward in its proposed Abbey and Anstey Heights ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the existing St Augustine's ward would be combined with part of the existing Western Park ward broadly to the north of Alkman Avenue and to the east of Coates Avenue to form a new two-member St Augustine's ward. Part of the remainder of the existing Western Park ward, the area broadly to the south of Alkman Avenue, would be combined with part of the existing New Parks ward, the area surrounding Western Park and those properties broadly to the south-west of Park View, together with part of the existing Westcotes ward, broadly to the west of Fosse Road South, to form a revised two-member Western Park ward which the Conservative Group argued has "a more distinct community identity than the present Western Park ward". Part of the remainder of the existing Western Park ward, the area broadly to the north of Alkman Avenue and west of Coates Avenue would be combined with the remainder of the existing New Parks ward to form a revised two-member New Parks ward. The remainder of the existing Western Park ward would form part of a new two-member Anstey Heights ward, as detailed above.

214 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park wards would contain 2 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 14 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to the average, 4 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more than the average by 2006).

215 The Labour Group proposed combining the existing St Augustine's ward, together with the areas broadly to the east of Beaumont Leys School and Blackbird Road Playing Fields and

surrounding Jean Drive, as detailed above, with the area broadly to the north of Hinckley Road (A47) and south of Lindfield Road from the existing Western Park ward to form a new three-member Augustine's ward. Part of the remainder of the existing Western Park ward, the area broadly to the north of Lindfield Road would be combined with the whole of the existing New Parks ward to form a revised three-member New Parks ward. The remainder of the existing Western Park ward, the area to the south of Hinckley Road (A47), would be combined with the existing Westcotes ward, together with part of the existing Rowley Fields ward, to form a revised three-member Westcotes ward, as detailed below.

216 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Augustine's and New Parks wards would contain 12 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

217 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed combining the existing St Augustine's ward less the area broadly to the west of Fosse Road North with parts of the existing Abbey ward surrounding Jean Drive and Cheltenham Road and part of the existing Beaumont Leys ward, the area including and up to the south of Blackbird Road Playing Fields, to form a new two-member Minster Grange ward. The remaining part of the existing St Augustine's ward, the area broadly to the west of Fosse Road North, would be combined with the existing Western Park ward less the areas broadly to the south of Hinckley Road and west of Stokes Wood and New Parks House primary schools to form a revised two-member Western Park ward. Part of the remainder of the existing Western Park ward, the area broadly to west of Stokes Wood and New Parks House primary schools, would be combined with part of the existing Beaumont Leys ward, as detailed above, and the existing New Parks ward, less the area broadly to the west of Liberty Road, surrounding Braunstone Frith, to form a revised two-member New Parks ward. The remainder of the existing Western Park ward would form part of a revised Westcotes ward, while the remainder of the existing New Parks ward would form part of a new Braunstone ward, both detailed below.

218 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Minster Grange, New Parks and Western Park wards would contain 5 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more than the average by 2006).

219 One further submission was received in relation to this area. Woodgate Residents' Association proposed that the area designated by the Association as 'Woodgate', the area bounded by Woodgate (the main street), Fosse Road North (Woodgate to Bonchurch Street), Bonchurch Street and the River Soar/Repton Street remain in one ward.

220 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed basing its draft recommendations for this area on the Labour Group's proposals. It was of the view that these proposals provided for a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the other two schemes. They also reflected the views of Woodgate Residents' Association. It was noted that there was very little consensus between the three schemes in this area and the LGCE were of the view that the desire by the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups to maintain a pattern of two-member wards led to the division of communities and the breaching of strong geographical features. The Labour Group's proposals utilised strong boundaries such as the A50 for the northern boundary of its proposed New Parks ward and the A47 (Hinckley Road), the railway line and the A5460 in relation to its proposed New Parks, Augustine's, Westcotes and Braunstone Park wards.

221 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Augustine's and New Parks wards would contain 13 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (6 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

222 At Stage Three, Leicester East Constituency Labour Party expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area, while Leicester City West NHS Primary Care Trust expressed broad support. Voluntary Action Leicester supported the proposed New Parks ward. Officers from the City Council proposed a minor amendment between the proposed Augustine's and New Parks ward in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. They proposed that The Rocket and 129-145 Stephenson Drive be transferred to the proposed Augustine's ward.

223 The Conservative Group opposed the draft recommendations in this area, stating that "The Augustine's ward as proposed by the Commission encompasses too many disparate communities with no common identity". It also disputed the use of Hinckley Road as a boundary stating that "Hinckley Road may well be a major arterial road but it does not serve as a natural boundary separating communities. Quite the contrary. It serves to link the population either side of the road ...The strong community boundary in this area is the railway line, not Hinckley Road". The Conservative Group proposed the creation of three two-member wards in this area, St Augustine's, Westcotes, and Western Park, to reflect the area covered by the LGCE's proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. This proposal also included a minor boundary modification to the proposed three-member New Parks ward. The proposed two-member St Augustine's ward would comprise the LGCE's proposed Augustine's ward, but in the south-west it would be bounded by Glenfield Road, Henley Road and Pool Road. The area bounded by Beatrice Road, Fosse Road North and the south side of Barton Road would be transferred to the proposed New Parks ward. The proposed two-member Westcotes ward would be formed out of the LGCE's proposed Westcotes ward but in its west would be bounded by Fosse Road South. The remainder of both the LGCE's proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards, together with Lindfield Road and the five streets to its south from the proposed New Parks ward, would combine to form the revised two-member Western Park ward. In addition, the Conservative Group questioned the proposed ward name of Augustine's and proposed that, "a more meaningful name such as Fosse should be considered".

224 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, New Parks, St Augustine's, Westcotes and Western Park wards would contain 1 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer by 2006).

225 A local resident from the Western Park area opposed the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards, largely based on the arguments outlined by the Conservative Group. He proposed the creation of three two-member wards in this part of the city, which were almost identical to those proposed by the Conservative Group. In addition, he suggested that Augustine's ward be named Fosse or Wolsey. Another local resident of the Western Park area opposed the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. She reiterated many of the views outlined by the Conservative Group, specifically in relation to the size of the proposed wards and the proposed use of the Hinckley Road as a boundary. She proposed the creation of three two-member wards for this part of the city, which were broadly similar to those proposed by the Conservative Group.

226 A further 11 representations were received specifically in relation to the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. Councillor Blackmore (Western Park ward) commented that there was concern among a number of his constituents with regards to the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. He stated that specific concern was expressed from current Western Park constituents with regard to the use of the Hinckley Road as a boundary. Opposition was also expressed to the size of the proposed three-member Augustine's ward, which would stretch from Western Park gates to the Blackbird Road area and the Stadium Estate. He stated that "this, they see as a totally unnatural split across communities, which pays little or no regard to current community identity". The overall view was that two-member wards "are more localised, community focused and leading to greater personal contact between the local ward councillors and the local residents". Although no specific proposals

were submitted, the general view was conveyed that the existing two-member Westcotes, Western Park and St Augustine's wards should be "remodelled" in order to provide acceptable levels of electoral equality.

227 Councillor Coley (Western Park ward) expressed the opposition of some of his "constituents of various political persuasions" in relation to the proposed Augustine's and Western Park wards. Primarily, the view was that the proposed Augustine's ward is too large and contains areas which are considered to have few links with the "distinct community" of Western Park. It was also stated that the name of Augustine's is inappropriate, as the church after which it is named has been decommissioned. Although no specific proposals were put forward, the general view was that three-member wards are not suitable for this area and that the existing wards of Western Park, Westcotes and St Augustine's should be broadly retained.

228 Nine representations were received from local residents opposing the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards. The main concern was in relation to the proposed loss of the existing Western Park ward and the subsequent enlarged Augustine's ward. There was also opposition to the proposed use of the Hinckley Road as a boundary in this area and the loss of the Western Park ward name and the current Liberal Democrat Councillors. Although no specific proposals were submitted, one resident put forward a proposal aimed at keeping the Western Park community together, and contended that "this part of Leicester will be better served by two councillors not three". Another local resident requested, "the three-member ward policy can be reconsidered with a view to achieving a more geographical rational system". As detailed above, Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group was concerned at the proposed adoption of three-member wards across the city. Specific concern was expressed over the proposals for the Western Park/Augustine's area.

229 Finally, a number of alternative ward names were put forward for the proposed Augustine's ward on the basis that this name is no longer appropriate, as the St Augustine's church has closed down. The Conservatives proposed the alternative name of Fosse, as did two local residents, while Leicester City Council Liberal Democrat Group proposed the alternatives of Danehills, Dovelands or Paget.

230 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that a significant amount of opposition has been expressed with regard to the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards, with the main argument being that this area of the city would be better represented by two as opposed to three-member wards. We considered the alternative proposals put forward by the Conservative Group and two local residents in this area, all of which were broadly similar and provided for three two-member wards covering the area containing the LGCE's proposed three-member Augustine's and Westcotes wards. Having considered all the representations received, we concur with the views expressed that the proposed Augustine's and Westcotes wards should be modified and that the creation of two-member wards in this area would provide for a better reflection of local communities.

231 We are also persuaded to the view that the Hinckley Road is a focus rather than a divide in this area and that the Western Park area has little community of interest with the Stadium Estate area. We also concur with the view that Fosse Road South forms a strong boundary in this area. We therefore propose adopting the Conservative Group's proposals, which have sought to address a number of controversial issues conveyed at Stage Three, as well as providing for acceptable levels of electoral equality. In addition, apart from a minor impact on the proposed New Parks ward, the Conservative Group's proposals would not have a consequential impact on the surrounding wards. We do, however, propose a minor amendment to the proposed boundary between the Group's proposed Western Park and St Augustine's wards in order that the boundary follow Fosse Road North to the east of the Fosse Road Recreation Ground. We consider that this boundary is more clearly identifiable and note that a local resident also proposed it.

232 In relation to the proposed amendment put forward by officers from the City Council between the LGCE's proposed Augustine's and New Parks ward, we note that this issue would be addressed within our proposals for this area.

233 Finally, we propose that the name of St Augustine's ward be changed to Fosse ward as suggested by the Conservative Group and two local respondents at Stage Three. We concur with the view that local residents would identify more with this name.

234 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Fosse, New Parks, Westcotes and Western Parks wards would contain 4 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer by 2006). Our proposals in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **North Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes wards**

235 The existing wards of North Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes are situated in the central and western parts of the city. All three wards are currently each represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements North Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes wards contain 23 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (26 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and 18 per cent more than the average by 2006).

236 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed dividing the existing Westcotes ward between three proposed wards. As detailed above, the area broadly to the west of Fosse Road South would form part of a revised Western Park ward, while the area broadly between Western Boulevard and Fosse Road South would form part of a revised Abbey ward. The remaining part of the existing Westcotes ward, the area broadly to the south of Westcotes Drive and Briton Street, would be combined with the existing Rowley Fields ward less the area bounded by Fullhurst Avenue and Narborough Road, broadly to the east of Braunstone Park, to form a revised two-member Rowley Fields ward. The remainder of the existing Rowley Fields ward, the area bounded by Fullhurst Avenue and Narborough Road, broadly to the east of Braunstone Park, would be combined with the existing North Braunstone ward to form a new two-member Braunstone ward.

237 Under the Conservative Group's proposals, Braunstone and Rowley Fields wards would contain 8 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

238 The Labour Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Westcotes ward, subject to the inclusion of the area to the south of Hinckley Road (A47) from the existing Western Park ward, together with part of the existing Rowley Fields ward, the area broadly to the north of Evesham Road, to form a revised three-member Westcotes ward. The remainder of the existing Rowley Fields ward would be combined with the remainder of the existing North Braunstone ward to form a new three-member Braunstone Park ward.

239 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Braunstone Park and Westcotes wards would contain 1 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

240 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed combining the existing Westcotes ward less the area broadly to the west of the River Soar (which would form part of a revised Castle ward, as detailed above) and the area bounded by Upperton Road and Narborough Road with part of the existing Western Park ward, the area to the south of Hinckley Road, to form a revised two-member Westcotes ward. The remainder of the existing Westcotes ward, the area broadly

bounded by Upperton Road and Narborough Road, would be combined with the existing Rowley Fields ward to form a revised two-member Rowley Fields ward. The existing North Braunstone ward would be combined with the area broadly to the west of Liberty Road, surrounding Braunstone Frith from the existing New Parks ward, as detailed above, to form a new two-member Braunstone ward.

241 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes wards would contain 1 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and equal to the average by 2006).

242 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE proposed basing its draft recommendations for this area on the Labour Group's proposals. As stated above, it was noted that there was very little consensus between the three schemes in this area, and the LGCE considered that the desire to maintain two-member wards led to the division of communities. It was noted that there was broad consensus between the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group in relation to the utilisation of the railway line and Hinckley Road as boundaries. However, the LGCE were not of the view that the proposals under each of the schemes submitted by the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Groups would best reflect the identities and interests of the local community.

243 Under the draft recommendations, the proposed Braunstone Park and Westcotes wards would contain 1 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

244 At Stage Three, East Leicester Constituency Labour Party and Voluntary Action Leicester both expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area, while Leicester City West NHS Primary Care Trust expressed broad support. The Conservative Group expressed support for the proposed Braunstone Park ward. However, as detailed above, it opposed the LGCE's proposed Westcotes ward and put forward alternative warding arrangements in this area, which provided for the creation of three two-member wards. Two local residents also submitted broadly similar schemes.

245 As detailed above, a further 11 representations were received in relation to the proposed wards in the west of the city. Opposition was expressed with regard to the LGCE's proposals in this area, with the general view being that this area would be better represented by two- as opposed to three-member wards.

246 Finally, a local resident opposed the proposed Braunstone Park ward, arguing that, "We on the south side of Narborough Road have no affinity with the North Braunstone housing estate or the park which is surrounds". Concern was also expressed at the size of the proposed ward and the ward name. It was suggested that Rowley Fields & North Braunstone or Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields would be more appropriate.

247 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for Braunstone Park ward as final, subject to a ward name change. We note the concerns of a local resident with regard to the proposed Braunstone Park ward. However, due to the presence of strong boundaries in this area such as the river, the railway line and the city boundary, there are limitations on the number of possible alternative warding arrangements. In addition, the existing North Braunstone ward would contain 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average by 2006 under existing arrangements and it is therefore necessary that it be combined with adjacent areas in order to provide for an acceptable level of electoral equality. We have, however, been persuaded to change the ward name of Braunstone Park to Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields.

248 As detailed above, we have been persuaded by the views expressed at Stage Three that the area to the west of the city centre should comprise two- as opposed to three-member wards and therefore propose adopting the Conservative Group's proposals in this area, subject to one amendment. These proposals would address a number of concerns expressed at Stage Three, as well as providing for acceptable levels of electoral equality and having a limited consequential effect on surrounding wards.

249 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields ward would contain 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the city average (7 per cent fewer by 2006).

## **Electoral Cycle**

250 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 cycle.

## **Conclusions**

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

- In the west of the city, we propose the creation of three two-member wards based on the Conservative Group's proposals.
- In the south of the city, we propose the creation of three two-member wards based on the Conservative Group's proposals.
- We propose that the St Matthew's area be transferred from the proposed Abbey ward to the proposed Spinney Hills ward in order to retain its links with the Highfields area.
- We propose a minor amendment between the proposed Belgrave and Rushey Mead wards to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary.
- We propose that Humberstone ward be renamed Humberstone & Hamilton ward, that Braunstone Park ward be renamed Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields ward and that Augustine's ward be renamed Fosse ward.

252 We conclude that, in Leicester City:

- There should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 54.
- There should be 22 wards, six fewer than at present.
- The boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified.

253 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	56	54	56	54
Number of wards	28	22	28	22
Average number of electors per councillor	3,716	3,854	3,835	3,977
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	4	13	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	2	4	0

254 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 13 to four, with only two wards, Humberstone & Hamilton and Spinney Hills varying by more than 20 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with only two wards, Abbey and Spinney Hills, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 15 per cent below and 13 per cent more respectively. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Leicester City Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inside the back cover of this report.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Leicester City*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

255 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Leicester City 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).

256 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.

257 All 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  
30 Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW