

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Blaby in Leicestershire

January 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Blaby Town and Narborough is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee for England which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Blaby's electoral arrangements on 12 June 2001.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Blaby.

- **in 16 of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and nine wards vary by more than 20 per cent.**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen slightly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 17 wards and by more than 20 per cent in ten wards.**

Our main proposals for Blaby future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 69-72) are that:

- **Blaby District Council should have 39 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 18 wards, instead of 21 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 17 of the proposed 18 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Blaby, Braunstone, Enderby, Glenfield, Kirby Muxloe, Narborough and Whetstone.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 15 January 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 11 March 2002:

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Blaby Review
LGCE
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
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**Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
Website: www.lgce.gov.uk**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Blaby South & Winchester	2	part of Blaby parish (the proposed Blaby South & Winchester parish ward)	Map 2, Map A5 and the large map
2	Braunstone	3	part of Braunstone parish (the proposed Fosse and Ravenshurst parish wards)	Map 2 and the large map
3	Croft Hill	1	the parishes of Croft, Elmesthorpe and Potters Marston	Map 2
4	Cosby with Whetstone	3	Cosby parish; part of Whetstone parish (the proposed South Whetstone parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A4
5	Countersthorpe	3	<i>Unchanged</i> the parishes of Countersthorpe and Kilby	Map 2 and Map A1
6	Ellis	2	part of Glenfields parish (the proposed Ellis parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
7	Enderby & St John's	2	part of Enderby parish (the proposed Enderby and St John's parish wards); Lubbersthorpe parish	Map 2 and the large map
8	Fairestone	2	part of Glenfields parish (the proposed Faire and Stone parish wards of Glenfields parish)	Map 2 and Map A2
9	Forest	3	part of Kirby Muxloe parish (the proposed Hinckley Road parish ward); Leicester Forest East parish	Map 2 and Map A3
10	Glen Parva & Blaby North	3	part of Blaby parish (the proposed Blaby North parish ward); Glen Parva parish	Map 2 and Map A5
11	Millfield	1	part of Braunstone parish (the proposed Millfield parish ward)	Map 2 and the large map
12	Muxloe	2	part of Kirby Muxloe parish (the proposed Kirby parish ward)	Map 2
13	Narborough Town & Littlethorpe	2	part of Narborough parish (the proposed Narborough Town & Littlethorpe parish ward)	Map 2, Map A2 and the large map
14	Normanton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> the parishes of Huncote, Leicester Forest West and Thurlaston	Map 2
15	North Whetstone	1	part of Whetstone parish (the proposed North Whetstone parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A4
16	Red Hill & Enderby	2	part of Enderby parish (the proposed West Enderby parish ward); part of Narborough parish (the proposed Red Hill parish ward)	Map 2 and the large map
17	Stanton	3	the parishes of Aston Flamville, Sapcote, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton and Wigston Parva	Map 2
18	Winstanley	3	part of Braunstone parish (the proposed Winstanley parish ward)	Large Map and Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1 – A5 in Appendix A.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Blaby

	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	Blaby South & Winchester	2	3,763	1,882	4	3,762	1,863	1
2	Braunstone	3	5,475	1,825	1	5,435	1,812	-2
3	Croft Hill	1	1,764	1,764	-2	1,762	1,762	-4
4	Cosby with Whetstone	3	5,543	1,848	2	5,510	1,837	0
5	Countersthorpe	3	5,463	1,821	1	5,445	1,815	-2
6	Ellis	2	3,979	1,990	10	3,988	1,994	8
7	Enderby & St John's	2	3,281	1,641	-9	3,467	1,734	-6
8	Fairestone	2	3,871	1,936	7	3,927	1,986	8
9	Forest	3	5,302	1,767	-2	5,260	1,753	-5
10	Glen Parva & Blaby North	3	5,294	1,765	-2	5,539	1,846	0
11	Millfield	1	1,908	1,908	6	1,892	1,892	3
12	Muxloe	2	3,461	1,731	-4	3,481	1,741	-6
13	Narborough Town & Littlethorpe	2	3,944	1,972	9	3,926	1,963	6
14	Normanton	1	1,988	1,988	10	1,988	1,988	8
15	North Whetstone	1	1,844	1,844	2	1,833	1,833	-1
16	Red Hill & Enderby	2	3,764	1,882	4	3,744	1,872	2
17	Stanton	3	5,776	1,925	6	5,934	1,978	7
18	Winstanley	3	4,104	1,368	-24	5,017	1,672	-9
	Totals	39	70,524	-	-	71,919	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,808	-	-	1,844	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of Blaby, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We are conducting a review of Leicester City Council, which has unitary status, on the same timetable as this review. We commenced a periodic electoral review of Rutland Unitary Authority in October 2001. Our programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Blaby. Blaby's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1980 (Report no. 387). The electoral arrangements of Leicestershire County Council were last reviewed in March 1983 (Report no. 441). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configurations are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as 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.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing

to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in 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.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Electoral Commission

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half of the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when we wrote to Blaby District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Leicestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region, the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Blaby District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 3 September 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 15 January 2002 and will end on 11 March 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The district of Blaby is situated in the county of Leicestershire to the south and west of the city of Leicester. The district is divided between a mainly urban northern and a more rural southern area made up of undulating countryside dotted with attractive villages. The district is well connected to the country's motorway system, via the M1 and M69, and has direct east-west rail links with easy connection to the north and south. The district is also in easy reach of Birmingham International and East Midlands airports. Blaby district has a number of major employers in the service and manufacturing sectors. The district contains 24 civil parishes and is entirely parished.

16 The electorate of the district is 70,524 (February 2001). The Council presently has 39 members who are elected from 21 wards, seven of which are relatively urban on the edge of Leicester City, with the remainder being more rural in character. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, twelve are each represented by two councillors and six are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,808 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,844 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 21 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, eight wards by more than 20 per cent and three wards by more than thirty per cent. The worst imbalance is in Whetstone ward where the councillor represents 155 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Blaby

Table 4: 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 Cosby	2	2,783	1,392	-23	2,774	1,387	-25
2 Countersthorpe	3	5,463	1,821	1	5,445	1,815	-2
3 Croft Hill	1	1,342	1,342	-26	1,336	1,336	-28
4 Ellis	2	2,889	1,445	-20	2,888	1,444	-22
5 Enderby	2	3,197	1,599	-12	3,198	1,599	-13
6 Fairstone	3	4,961	1,654	-9	5,061	1,687	-9
7 Flamville	2	3,040	1,520	-16	3,215	1,608	-13
8 Fosse	1	1,509	1,509	-17	1,500	1,500	-19
9 Glen Parva	2	4,156	2,078	15	4,393	2,197	19
10 Kirby	2	3,784	1,892	5	3,804	1,902	3
11 Leicester Forest East	2	4,979	2,490	38	4,937	2,469	34
12 Millfield	1	1,589	1,589	-12	1,573	1,573	-15
13 Narborough	2	6,447	3,224	78	6,400	3,200	74
14 Normanton	1	1,988	1,988	10	1,988	1,988	8
15 Northfield	2	2,305	1,153	-36	2,314	1,157	-37
16 Ravenshurst	3	4,468	1,489	-18	4,427	1,476	-20
17 St John's	1	1,342	1,342	-26	1,539	1,539	-17
18 Stanton	2	3,158	1,579	-13	3,145	1,573	-15
19 Whetstone	1	4,604	4,604	155	4,569	4,569	148
20 Winchester	2	2,569	1,298	-28	2,574	1,287	-30
21 Winstanley	2	3,924	1,962	8	4,839	2,420	31
Total	39	70,524	-	-	71,919	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,808	-	-	1,844	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Northfield ward were relatively over-represented by 36 per cent, while electors in Whetstone ward were relatively under-represented by 155 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

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

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received eight submissions during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from Blaby District Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

Blaby District Council

21 Initially the District Council invited interested groups in the area to make comments and suggestions for warding arrangements in Blaby. The Council put its initial recommendations to a meeting of the council on 14 September. However, a meeting of the Working Group charged with formulating a scheme for the area on the 18 September made a number of amendments to the initial proposals put before the council. The District Council consequently put forward a scheme with these amendments as its official submission. The District Council proposed a council of 39 members, the same as at present, representing 21 wards. The Council proposed substantially re-warding the district with changes to the boundaries of all but two of the existing 21 wards, resulting in a reduction of three to 18 wards. It put forward a scheme consisting of eight three-member wards, five two-member wards and five single-member wards.

The Liberal Democrat Group on Blaby Council

22 The Liberal Democrat Group on the District Council opposed the Council's district-wide submission, arguing that the scheme destroyed the integrity of communities such as Cosby, Glen Parva and Whetstone. It stated that the increase in three-member wards under the Council's scheme would be "to the detriment of representation and proportionality in rural areas". It argued that the first scheme presented by the District Council to a full meeting of the council on the 14 September 2001 offered the best balance between electoral equality and community identity and stated that, "we firmly believe that the (unamended) working group Report of Friday 14 September remains the basis of the best possible solution to the electoral inequalities of Blaby, Cosby, Glen Parva and Whetstone."

The Labour Group on Blaby District Council

23 The Labour Group also objected to the district-wide scheme submitted by the Council. It argued that the boundary modifications contained within the Council's proposed warding arrangements a detrimental effect on community identity in the district. It went on to argue that that the size of the council should increase by four to 43 and that extra councillors should be allocated to Leicester Forest East, Narborough, Whetstone and Winstanley.

Parish and Town Councils

24 We received five responses from five parish and town councils. Braunstone Town Council argued that the number of councillors allocated to Braunstone should be increased by one. It argued that an increase in the number of councillors representing Winstanley ward from two to three would reflect the increased electorate in the area. It also proposed that all the boundaries in Braunstone should remain the same, arguing that community ties within Fosse, Ravenshurst and Winstanley wards would be adversely affected by any boundary modifications.

25 Glenfield Parish Council requested a change in the number of councillors for the three parish wards comprising Glenfield parish. It argued that each parish ward should be represented by seven councillors. Glen Parva Parish Council objected to plans put forward by the District Council to include part of South parish ward in a district ward with areas of Blaby. It put forward alternative areas which could be transferred to a ward with Blaby to improve electoral equality in the Blaby area.

26 Narborough Parish Council stated that Narborough needed increased representation at district level in to correct the severe electoral imbalance in the area. In a later letter it argued that any formulation of warding arrangements should correspond with existing parishing arrangements, even at the expense of high electoral variances, to prevent voter confusion. Whetstone Parish Council argued that to recognize the large increase in the electorate of the parish the number of district councillors representing the parish needed to be increased from one to two.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

27 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Blaby and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

28 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Blaby is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

30 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.

31 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an 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

32 Since 1975 there has been a 31 per cent increase in the electorate of Blaby district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2 per cent, from 70,524 to 71,919 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the existing Braunstone, Glen Parva and St John’s wards. 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.

33 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

34 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

35 Blaby District Council presently has 39 members. The District Council proposed retaining the present council size of 39. It argued that the existing levels of electoral inequality could be addressed through a revision of the ward structure of the district rather than a change in the existing council size. It went on to state that after analysing the “present and likely future workload [of the council], the working group felt that the current 39-seat council within a revised ward structure would enable the type of inequalities [in the district] to be overcome and continue to provide the effective and convenient local government required by the Commission”.

36 We also received a representation from the Labour Group. It argued that there should be an increase of four in the council size of Blaby district and that the extra councillors should be allocated to the existing wards of Narborough, Leicester Forest East, Whetstone and Winstanley wards. It argued that because of the increase in electorate over the past ten years these areas were entitled to extra representation and stated “if we increase our councillors by four, then we facilitate the obviously expanding areas [of the district.]”.

37 We carefully considered the representations received regarding the issue of council size. We note the arguments forward by the Labour Group, however we do not believe they have provided sufficient argumentation to justify an increase in the size of the council to 43. The Commission is of the opinion that the size of a council should not be increased simply to accommodate increases of electorate in specific areas of a district or the district as a whole. The Commission will attempt to provide the correct levels of representation across the district using boundary amendments or changes in the number of councillors representing individual wards. We are of the opinion that due to the lack of argumentation for an increase in council size to 43 and the general support for the District Council’s proposal to retain the current council size, the present size should be adopted.

38 Therefore having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 39 members.

Electoral Arrangements

39 Having carefully considered the evidence received at Stage One, we have decided to draw upon some of the recommendations put forward by the District Council and to put forward some of our own proposals. We have noted that the Council’s submission achieves good levels of electoral equality and provides strong boundaries in a number of areas of the district. However, we have been convinced by the arguments put forward by the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups on the council that the Council’s proposals in certain areas of the district fail to provide an adequate balance between an improvement in electoral equality and a maintenance of community identity. We agree that in some areas the District Council’s proposals sacrifice the latter to achieve the former. However, we were not convinced that the

alternative suggested by the Liberal Democrat Group, of adopting the initial scheme put forward to the council, before amendments suggested by the working group were incorporated, would provide sensible boundaries in the Blaby, Cosby, Glen Parva and Whetstone areas. Therefore, to more effectively represent local community interests and identities we are proposing boundary modifications of our own in Blaby town, Braunstone town, Enderby and Narborough. We also noted the submissions from Glen Parva, Narborough and Whetstone Parish Councils and, while we note that there are strong communities in the areas concerned, we are of the opinion that achieving the best balance between electoral equality and community identity necessitates amending district ward boundaries and undertaking parish warding. We are also proposing minor boundary amendments to the Council's proposed wards of Ellis, Fairestone, Kirby and Leicester Forest East. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Croft Hill, Flamville, Normanton and Stanton wards;
- (b) Ellis, Fairestone, Kirby and Leicester Forest East wards;
- (c) Fosse, Millfield, Ravenshurst and Winstanley wards;
- (d) Cosby, Enderby, Narborough, St John's and Whetstone wards;
- (e) Countersthorpe, Glen Parva, Northfield and Winchester wards.

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

Croft Hill, Flamville, Normanton and Stanton wards

41 The existing wards of Croft Hill, a single-member ward, (comprising the parishes of Croft Hill and Potters Marston), Flamville, a two-member ward (comprising the parishes of Ashton Flamville, Sapcote, Shamford and Wigston Parva), Normanton, a one-member ward (comprising the parishes of Huncote, Leicester Forest West, and Thurlaston) and Stanton, a two-member ward (comprising the parishes of Elmesthorpe and Stoney Stanton) cover the south-west and west of the district. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor in Croft Hill, Flamville, Normanton and Stanton wards vary from the district average by 26 per cent, 16 per cent, 10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. By 2006 this level of electoral equality is expected to worsen in Croft Hill and Stanton wards to 28 per cent and 15 per cent respectively and expected improve slightly in Flamville and Normanton wards to 13 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

42 At Stage One Blaby District Council proposed that this area should comprise three wards. It proposed a new three-member Stanton ward, comprising the parishes of the existing Flamville ward together and Stoney Stanton parish, and a new single-member Croft Hill ward comprising the parishes of Croft Hill together with Elmesthorpe parish. It also proposed retaining the existing Normanton ward. It argued that its proposed wards in the area would provide for good levels of electoral equality. The Council expressed some reservations over its proposed Croft Hill ward, stating that "Elmesthorpe has no direct link with Croft parish and was much better related to Stoney Stanton" and that "the Council would therefore have preferred the existing arrangement." However, it went on to argue that the existing levels of electoral inequality in the area are unacceptable and that no other solution was possible. We received no other submissions regarding this area.

43 Having considered the District Council's representation we have decided to adopt their proposed Croft Hill, Normanton and Stanton wards. We are of the opinion that the Council's warding arrangements provide the best available level of electoral equality. We note the reservations expressed by the Council over the warding of Elmesthorpe parish with Croft Hill parish, however having attempted a number of alternative warding arrangements in the area we are unable to achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. We consider that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identity currently available in these three wards.

44 Under our draft recommendations for a 39-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Croft Hill ward (comprising the parishes of Croft, Elmesthorpe and Potters Marston) and Stanton ward (comprising the parishes of Aston Flamville, Sapcote, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton and Wigston Parva) would vary from the district average by 2 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality would slightly worsen to vary from the district average by 4 per cent and 7 per cent respectively in 2006. We are adopting the existing Normanton ward as part of our draft recommendations and consequently the levels of electoral equality remains unchanged. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Ellis, Fairstone, Kirby and Leicester Forest East wards

45 The existing wards of Ellis, a two-member ward (comprising the Ellis parish ward of Glenfields parish), Fairstone, a three-member ward (comprising the Faire and Stone parish wards of Glenfields parish), Kirby, a two-member ward (comprising Kirby parish) and Leicester Forest East, a two-member ward, (comprising Leicester Forest East parish) cover the north west of the district. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor in Ellis, Fairstone, Kirby and Leicester Forest East wards varies from the district average by 20 per cent, 9 per cent, 5 per cent and 38 per cent respectively. By 2006 this level of electoral equality is expected to worsen in Ellis ward to 22 per cent, remain at the same level in Fairstone ward and improve slightly in Kirby and Leicester Forest East wards to 3 per cent and 34 per cent respectively.

46 At Stage One Blaby District Council proposed that this area should comprise three two-member wards, Ellis, Fairstone and Muxloe, and a single three-member Forest ward. It proposed a modification to the boundary between Ellis and Fairstone wards so that it would run in a north-westerly direction to the rear of Sword Close and Wheatfield Crescent then along Alliance Road and Glenfield Crescent and continue in a north-westerly direction along Harrison Close and along Park Drive to rejoin the existing ward boundary. It argued that amending the boundary in this way would improve the levels of electoral equality in both wards. It also proposed amending the boundary between the existing Kirby and Leicester Forest East wards and increasing by one the number of councillors representing Leicester Forest East ward so that it would return three councillors. It argued that warding part of Kirby parish and including it in a district ward with Leicester Forest East parish would improve the level of electoral equality in both wards. It also proposed that Kirby ward should be renamed Muxloe ward and that Leicester Forest East ward should be renamed Forest ward.

47 The Labour Group on Blaby District Council argued that the number of district councillors allocated to Leicester Forest East should be increased. It argued that the electorate of this part of the district has grown substantially over the last four years and therefore extra

representation is called for in the area. Glenfields Parish Council made a representation concerning levels of representation on the parish council.(discussed later in the chapter).

48 Having considered the representations received we have decided to adopt the Council's proposals in this area with minor amendments to their proposed boundaries. We are modifying the boundary between the proposed Ellis and Fairestone wards so that it runs to the rear of properties in Glenfield Crescent and Harrison Close as opposed to running along the middle of these roads. Having visited the area we are of the opinion that this minor amendment to the Council's proposed boundary would better reflect community identity and links in the area.

49 We are also of the opinion that the boundary between the Council's proposed Muxloe and Forest wards should be amended slightly to provide a more identifiable boundary and to tie it to ground detail. We propose a minor modification to the proposed boundary so that it runs along the railway line to take Southview Court and the properties on Ellis Drive into Forest ward. Our modification to the Council's proposed boundary would have a slight effect on electoral equality, improving it slightly in Forest ward and slightly worsening it in Muxloe ward. We also tried a number of alternative warding arrangements in the Leicester Forest East area to better reflect community identity and recognise the linkages between the area of the parish to the east of the M1 and the Winstanley area. We attempted running the boundary between the two wards along the middle of Hinckley Road and including parts of existing Leicester Forest East parish in the neighbouring Winstanley ward. However we were unable to provide good levels of electoral equality in the area under such proposals. We also noted that there is agreement between the Labour Party and the District Council on the need for an extra councillor in the Leicester Forest East area. We therefore propose that Leicester Forest East ward should return three councillors. We consider that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identity in these four wards.

50 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in Ellis ward (comprising the Ellis parish ward of Glenfields parish), Fairestone ward (comprising the proposed Faire and Stone parish wards of Glenfields parish), Forest ward (comprising Leicester Forest East parish and the proposed Hinckley Road parish ward of Kirby Muxloe parish), Muxloe ward (comprising the proposed Kirby parish ward of Kirby Muxloe parish) would vary from the district average by 10 per cent, 7 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve slightly in Ellis ward to vary from the district average by 8 per cent in 2006. In Fairestone, Forest and Muxloe the level of electoral equality is expected to worsen slightly to vary from the district average by 8 per cent, 5 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Fosse, Millfield, Ravenshurst and Winstanley wards

51 The existing wards of Fosse, a single member ward (comprising the Fosse parish ward of Braunstone parish), Millfield, a single-member ward (comprising the Millfield parish ward of Braunstone parish), Ravenshurst, a three-member ward (comprising the Ravenshurst parish ward of Braunstone parish) and Winstanley, a two-member ward (comprising the Winstanley parish ward of Braunstone parish) cover Braunstone town, which is situated on the northern fringes of the district. Under current arrangements for Fosse, Millfield, Ravenshurst and

Winstanley wards, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average by 17 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. The level of electoral equality is expected to worsen in Fosse, Millfield, Ravenhurst and Winstanley wards to vary from the district average by 19 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent and 31 per cent respectively by 2006.

52 At Stage One the District Council proposed two single-member Fosse and Millfield wards, a two-member Ravenhurst ward and a three-member Winstanley ward. It proposed boundary amendments to all of the existing wards in Braunstone. It proposed that the boundary between Ravenhurst and Winstanley wards should run along Shakespeare Drive, southwards along Hathaway Drive, eastwards along Shottery Drive and northwards along Arden Avenue. It also proposed that the boundary between Fosse ward and Ravenhurst ward should be amended so as to include Cleveleys Avenue in Fosse ward and that the boundary between Ravenhurst and Millfield wards be modified to run along the western side of Kingsway and then westwards along Ashurst Road, Chiselhurst Avenue and then Brockenhurst Avenue. It argued that these boundary amendments would improve the level of electoral equality in Braunstone.

53 Braunstone Town Council proposed an increase in the number of councillors representing Winstanley ward from two to three and stated that the existing boundaries of all wards should remain the same. It argued that any boundary modifications in the area would affect community ties, an issue of vital importance in such a deprived area. It went on to argue that the increase in electorate in Winstanley ward necessitated an increase in the number of councillors to represent the area, and that the socio-economic status of the Braunstone area meant that it had “special needs, that would best be catered for by keeping the existing boundaries the same as at present.” In the case of Winstanley ward it stated that, “there is a danger that newly established local ties could be broken by the fixing of new ward boundaries in this area”. In the case of Fosse ward it stated that “the elected representative for this area will continue to have a particularly high workload and that this should be recognised by the review”. In the case of Ravenhurst ward it stated, “any changes to the ward boundaries in this area would be likely to break well established local ties and community identities.”

54 Having considered the representations received at Stage One we are proposing our own boundary amendments in the area loosely based on the Council’s proposals. We have noted the boundaries proposed by the District Council, however having visited the area we are of the opinion that some of these boundaries do not reflect community identity. We have also noted the arguments of Braunstone Town Council, however we are not minded to take into account arguments citing social deprivation as a reason for maintenance of the status quo. Both the District Council and Braunstone Town Council proposed an increase of one in the number of councillors representing Winstanley ward and given the improvement in electoral equality which results from this we are proposing that Winstanley ward should return three councillors. We propose amending the boundary between the District Council’s proposed Ravenhurst and Winstanley wards and running it along the A563 to form a stronger, more recognisable boundary on the ground. This boundary modification would not involve the transfer of any electors. Having visited the area, we are of the opinion that the boundary between the District Council’s proposed Fosse and Ravenhurst wards is not easily recognisable. Additionally, we are not convinced that the District Council’s proposed Fosse ward would represent an adequate reflection of community identity in the area. We agree that Narborough Road South needs to be crossed at some point in the area to avoid the creation of a ward with a high level of electoral inequality. We have attempted various warding arrangements to achieve an adequate balance between community identity and electoral

equality, however we have been unable to find any viable alternatives based on the existing pattern of a single-member and two-member ward. Therefore we propose creating a three-member ward comprising the whole of the existing Fosse ward and the remaining parts of Ravenshurst ward. We are of the opinion that such a ward, despite crossing Narborough Road South, creates a more cohesive area and avoids creating an arbitrary boundary, which would divide established communities. We consider that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identity in these three wards.

55 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average in our proposed Braunstone ward (comprising the proposed Fosse and Ravenshurst parish wards of Braunstone parish), Millfield ward (comprising the proposed Millfield parish ward of Braunstone parish) and Winstanley ward (comprising the Winstanley parish ward of Braunstone parish) by 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. The level of electoral equality is expected to improve in Millfield and Winstanley wards to 3 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in 2006 and to slightly worsen in Braunstone ward to vary from the district average by 2 per cent. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Cosby, Enderby, Narborough, St John's and Whetstone wards

56 The existing wards of Cosby, a two-member ward (comprising the parish of Cosby), Enderby, a two-member ward (comprising the Enderby and Lubbersthorpe parish wards of Enderby parish), Narborough, a two-member ward (comprising the parish of Narborough), St Johns, a single-member ward (comprising the St John's parish ward of Enderby parish) Whetstone, a single-member ward (comprising Whetstone parish) cover an area stretching from the centre to the south of the district. Under the current arrangements for Cosby, Enderby, Narborough, St John's and Whetstone wards the number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 23 per cent, 12 per cent, 78 per cent, 26 per cent and 155 per cent. In 2006 the level of electoral inequality is expected to worsen slightly in Cosby and Enderby wards to vary from the district average by 25 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. It is expected to improve slightly in Narborough, St John's and Whetstone wards to vary from the district average by 74 per cent, 17 per cent and 148 per cent respectively.

57 At Stage One Blaby District Council proposed two new three-member Cosby with Whetstone and Enderby & St John's wards and a new single-member North Whetstone ward. It proposed creating two parish wards in Whetstone parish, to be named North Whetstone and South Whetstone. It proposed a single-member North Whetstone ward comprising the parish ward of the same name, and including the South Whetstone parish ward with the parish of Cosby in a new three-member Cosby with Whetstone ward. It also proposed creating a new parish ward, which it left unnamed, in the north-west of Narborough parish and including it in a district ward with the whole of Enderby parish to create a three-member Enderby & St Johns ward. The remainder of Narborough parish would form a three-member Narborough ward. Narborough Town Council argued that any district ward created in the Narborough area should respect the existing parish boundaries. It also argued that the number of councillors representing the Narborough area should be increased to address the high level of electoral inequality and increase of electorate in the area.

58 The Liberal Democrats argued that the Council's final submission would destroy community identity in the Cosby and Whetstone areas and argued that the increase in three-

member wards in these areas would result in the erosion of community identity. The Liberal Democrats argued that the Council's original proposal offered the best solution for the Cosby and Whetstone areas. In the Council's initial submission, the parishes of Cosby and Whetstone were warded separately at district level, with parts of Whetstone parish being warded with Blaby parish and a part of Cosby parish being warded with Narborough parish. They stated that the "unamended report remains the basis of the best possible solution to the electoral inequalities of Blaby, Cosby, Glen Parva and Whetstone", and went on to state that "we feel that this (the Council's final submission) destroys the integrity of the communities of Cosby, Whetstone and Glen Parva".

59 Having considered all the representations received regarding this area at Stage One we have decided to put forward a number of our own proposals. We have noted the proposals of the District Council, however we are of the opinion that the boundary between its proposed Enderby & St John's ward and its proposed Narborough ward is weak and does not utilise any strong ground features and that these two proposed wards do not offer a good reflection of community identity. We also consider that the District Council has failed to provide sufficient argumentation in its submission to justify the use of this particular boundary and the composition of the Enderby & St John's and Narborough wards. We have noted the reservations of both the District Council and the Town Council over dividing the Narborough area between different district wards. However, we are of the opinion that the existing level of electoral inequality in the area necessitates the Narborough Town Council area being divided between different district wards.

60 We have decided to create three new two-member wards in the area rather than two three-member wards as proposed by the District Council. We propose creating a two-member Narborough Town & Littlethorpe ward made up of the existing Littlethorpe parish ward of Narborough parish and part of the existing Narborough parish ward, to the south of Woodlands Day Nursery and Red Hill School. We are of the opinion that this district ward would serve to place the centre of Narborough Town in a distinct ward of its own and would recognise its links with the Littlethorpe area to the south of the railway line. We also propose creating a two-member Red Hill & Enderby ward, comprising a new Red Hill parish ward of Narborough parish covering the area to the north of Red Hill School and Woodlands Day Nursery and a new West Enderby parish ward of Enderby parish made up of the area to the west of Equity, Mitchell and West streets. Having visited the area we are of the opinion that this ward would serve to reflect the community links between the outlying areas of Narborough and Enderby. We also propose creating a two-member Enderby & St John's ward comprising the remainder of Enderby parish and Lubbersthorpe parish. We are of the opinion that that part of the existing Enderby ward contained within this new Enderby & St John's ward has good links with the St John's area and is of a different nature to the proposed West Enderby parish ward.

61 We have also noted that the District Council proposed creating a new Cosby with Whetstone ward which would link two parishes on the east and west sides of the M1. We are aware that the M1 could be seen as a significant boundary between the two parishes, however having visited the area we are content that the links between the two areas are adequate, with the M1 running above Cambridge Road which links the two parishes. We have noted the representation from the Liberal Democrat Group on Blaby District Council. However, we also felt that the alternatives highlighted by the Liberal Democrats in the Council's original submission, such as placing part of Blaby parish with Whetstone parish and thus creating a ward spanning the A426 Blaby by-pass, which has limited crossing points, or placing part of

Cosby parish and the Littlethorpe area of Narborough parish in the same ward, would create wards with poor community links and would sacrifice community identity. We consider that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identity that is currently available in these five wards.

62 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average in our proposed three-member Cosby with Whetstone ward (comprising Cosby parish and the proposed South Whetsone parish ward of Whetsone parish), our proposed two-member Enderby & St John's ward (comprising the proposed Enderby and St John's parish wards of Enderby parish), our proposed two-member Narborough Town & Littlethorpe ward (comprising the proposed Narborough Town & Littlethorpe parish ward of Narborough parish), our proposed single-member North Whetstone ward (comprising the proposed North Whetstone parish ward of Whetstone parish) and our proposed two-member Red Hill & Enderby ward (comprising the proposed West Enderby parish ward of Enderby parish and the proposed Red Hill parish ward of Narborough parish) by 2 per cent, 9 per cent, 9 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to improve so that Cosby with Whetstone ward would have an electoral variance equal the district average by 2006. In Enderby & St John's, Narborough Town & Littlethorpe, North Whetsone and Red Hill & Enderby wards the level of electoral equality is expected to improve by 2006 in all wards, to vary from the district average by 6 per cent, 6 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Countersthorpe, Glen Parva, Northfield and Winchester wards

63 The existing wards of Countersthorpe, a three-member ward (comprising the parishes of Countersthorpe and Kilby), Glen Parva, a two-member ward (comprising the parish of Glen Parva), Northfield, a two-member ward (comprising the Northfield parish ward of Blaby parish) and Winchester, a two-member ward (comprising the Winchester parish ward of Blaby parish) cover the south-east of the district. Under the current arrangements in Countersthorpe, Glen Parva, Northfield and Winchester wards the number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 1 per cent, 15 per cent, 36 per cent and 28 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to worsen slightly in all the wards to vary from the district average by 2 per cent, 19 per cent, 37 per cent and 30 per cent respectively in 2006.

64 At Stage One Blaby District Council proposed retaining the existing three-member Countersthorpe ward and combining the existing Northfield and Winchester wards and part of the existing Glen Parva ward to create a new three-member Bouskell ward and a revised two-member Glen Parva ward. It argued that the existing Countersthorpe ward should be retained because of its low level of electoral inequality. It also argued that the high levels of electoral inequality in Glen Parva ward necessitated including the South parish ward of Glen Parva parish in a district ward with Blaby parish. It argued that the area of new development off the Newbridge Road, currently in Glen Parva ward, would be a suitable area to ward with the rest of Blaby parish.

65 Glen Parva Parish Council commented on the District Council's consultation document and argued that warding the South parish ward of Glen Parva parish with part of Blaby parish would be detrimental to community identity in the area, because of the poor transport links

across the Grand Union Canal and the lack of community identity between the two areas. It went on to argue that a more sensible arrangement would be to ward part of Whetstone parish with Blaby parish to lower electoral inequality. Failing that, it proposed that an area of new housing development around the Newbridge Road could be included in a ward with Blaby parish. The Liberal Democrat Group on the District Council argued that the Council's scheme destroyed "community integrity in a number of areas, including Glen Parva."

66 Having considered the representations received at Stage One regarding this part of the district, we propose adopting the Council's proposed Countersthorpe ward. We are of the opinion that retaining the existing Countersthorpe ward provides a good balance between electoral equality and community identity. We have noted the good levels of electoral equality achieved by the Council's proposed Bouskell and Glen Parva wards. We are aware of the difficulty of drawing ward boundaries in the area, due to its proximity to the district boundary and the geographical shape of Glen Parva ward. However, having visited the area we are of the opinion that the boundary between the proposed wards of Bouskell and Glen Parva is poor and that to place a small part of Glen Parva parish in a ward with Blaby parish on the other side of the Grand Union Canal is a poor reflection of community identity in the area. Having tried various alternative warding arrangements in the area we are of the opinion that Blaby Parish would be better served by two wards reflecting the split between the north of the parish and the centre of Blaby Town itself. We consider that it is possible to divide Blaby parish between two different distinctive wards while providing a strong boundary and a good reflection of community identity. We consider that this is not possible in Glen Parva parish, as any boundary which would provide good electoral equality would not be easily recognisable. Consequently, we propose creating a new three-member Glen Parva & Blaby North ward comprising the existing Glen Parva ward and a new Blaby North parish ward of Blaby parish, covering the area to the north of Mill Lane, the northwest of Welford Road and the north of Park Road. We are also of the opinion that our proposed Glen Parva & Blaby North ward would keep the existing Glen Parva parish together and that any proposal to split the Glen Parva area would create a ward with a weak boundary and would be detrimental to community identity. We also propose creating a new two-member Blaby South & Winchester ward comprising the remainder of Blaby parish. We are of the opinion that this ward would reflect existing community ties and that the name of the ward would reflect the constituent areas of the proposed ward. We consider that our draft recommendations would provide the best balance between community identity and electoral equality in these three wards.

67 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average in our proposed two-member Blaby South & Winchester ward (comprising the proposed Blaby South & Winchester parish ward of Blaby parish), three-member Countersthorpe ward (comprising the parishes of Countersthorpe and Kilby) and our proposed Glen Parva & Blaby North ward (comprising the proposed Blaby North parish ward of Blaby parish and Glen Parva parish) by 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. By 2006 this level of electoral equality is expected to improve so that Glen Parva & Blaby North ward would have a level of electoral equality equal to the district average. The level of electoral equality would improve in Blaby South & Winchester and Countersthorpe to vary from the district average by 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and Map A5 in Appendix A at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

68 At Stage One we did not receive any comments relating to the electoral cycle of the district. We therefore make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

69 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 39 members should be retained;
- there should be 18 wards;
- the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

70 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose that Blaby parish should be divided into two new parish wards and that Blaby North parish ward be included in a new Glen Parva & Blaby North ward and Blaby South & Winchester parish ward should have the same boundaries as Blaby South & Winchester district ward;
- we propose new arrangements for the Braunstone town area, to include two new three-member wards of Braunstone and Winstanley and to slightly amend the boundaries of the existing Millfield ward;
- we propose new arrangements for the Enderby and Narborough areas to create three new two-member wards of Enderby & St John's, Narborough Town & Littlethorpe and Red Hill & Enderby;
- we propose minor boundary amendments to Ellis, Fairestone, Forest and Muxloe wards.

71 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	39	39	39	39
Number of wards	21	18	21	18
Average number of electors per councillor	1,808	1,808	1,844	1,844
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	16	1	17	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	1	10	0

72 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Blaby District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 16 to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Blaby District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 18 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

73 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Blaby, Braunstone, Enderby, Glenfield, Kirby Muxloe, Narborough and Whetstone to reflect the proposed district wards.

74 The parish of Blaby is currently served by 18 councillors representing two wards: Northfield (returning eight councillors) and Winchester (returning ten councillors). At Stage One the District Council proposed placing the whole of Blaby parish in a single ward at district level, with a parish ward of Glen Parva parish. However, having adopted our own district warding arrangements in this area, we propose creating two new parish wards Blaby North (returning eight parish councillors) and Blaby South & Winchester (returning 10 parish councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Blaby Parish Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Blaby North (returning eight councillors) and Blaby South & Winchester (returning 10 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A

75 The parish of Braunstone is currently served by 21 councillors representing four wards: Fosse (returning three councillors), Millfield (returning three councillors) Ravenshurst (returning ten councillors) and Winstanley (returning five councillors). At Stage One the District Council proposed boundary modifications at district level to all the wards in Braunstone parish. However, we are proposing modifications to the District Council's proposed district wards and consequently we propose creating four new parish wards: Fosse (returning three councillors), Millfield (returning three councillors), Ravenshurst (returning ten councillors) and Winstanley (returning five councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Braunstone Town Council should comprise 21 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Fosse ward (returning three councillors), Millfield (returning three councillors) Ravenshurst (returning 10 councillors) and Winstanley (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

75 The parish of Enderby is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: Enderby (returning 11 councillors) and St John's (returning five councillors). At Stage One the District Council proposed placing the whole of the parish within the same district ward. However we are proposing modifications to the District Council's proposed Enderby and Narborough wards and consequently we propose creating a new West Enderby parish ward. We propose retaining the existing boundaries of St John's parish ward (returning four councillors) and creating two new parish wards: Enderby (returning 10 councillors) and West Enderby (returning two councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Enderby Parish Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Enderby (returning 10 councillors) St John's (returning four councillors) and West Enderby (returning two councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

76 The parish of Glenfield is currently served by 21 councillors: Ellis parish ward (returning eight councillors), Faire parish ward (returning eight councillors) and Stone parish ward (returning five councillors). At Stage One the Parish Council requested that each parish ward be allocated seven parish councillors. We propose endorsing this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. We have also amended the boundary between Ellis and Fairstone district

wards, and consequently we propose amending the boundary between Ellis and Stone parish wards.

Draft Recommendation

Glenfield Parish Council should comprise 21 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Ellis parish ward (returning seven councillors) Faire parish ward (returning seven councillors) and Stone parish ward (returning seven councillors). The boundaries between these three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

77 The parish of Kirby Muxloe is currently served by 14 councillors and is not warded. At Stage One the District Council proposed creating a new parish ward covering the Hinckley Road area. We are making a slight boundary amendment to the District Council's proposed district wards in the area and consequently we propose slightly amending the boundaries of the proposed Hinckley Road parish ward. We propose creating two new parish wards: Hinckley Road (returning one councillor) and Kirby (returning 13 councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Kirby Muxloe Parish Council should comprise 14 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Hinckley (returning one councillor) and Kirby (returning 13 councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

78 The parish of Narborough is currently represented by 19 councillors representing two parish wards: Littlethorpe (returning five councillors) and Narborough (returning 14 councillors). At Stage One the District Council proposed creating a new parish ward in Narborough to reflect its district ward proposals. However, we are proposing our own district warding arrangements in this area and consequently we propose creating two new parish wards: Narborough & Littlethorpe (returning seven councillors) and Red Hill (returning 12 councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Narborough Parish Council should comprise 19 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Narborough & Littlethorpe ward (returning seven councillors) and Red Hill & Enderby ward (returning 12 councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary as illustrated and named on the large map in the back of the report.

79 Whetstone Parish Council is currently represented by 15 councillors and is not warded. At Stage One the District Council proposed creating a new single-member North Whetstone district ward in the north of the parish. We have decided to adopt the Council's proposals at district level and consequently we propose creating two new parish wards: North Whetstone (returning four councillors) and South Whetstone (returning 11 councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Whetstone Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing two new wards: North Whetstone (returning four councillors) and South Whetstone (returning 11 councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

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

Draft Recommendation

Parish and Town Council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Blaby

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

81 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Blaby contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 11 March 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

82 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Blaby Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

83 In the light of responses received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Blaby: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Blaby area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2, A3, A4, A5 and the large map at the back of this report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Glenfield parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Kirby parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Whetsone parish

Map A5 illustrated the proposed warding of Blaby parish

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Blaby Town and Narborough.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Blaby: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Glenfield Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Kirby Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Whetstone Parish:

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Blaby Parish:

Appendix B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken..	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.