

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Leicester City

January 2002

© Crown Copyright 2002

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

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	<i>33</i>
APPENDIX	
A Code of Practice on Written Consultation	<i>35</i>
A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Leicester City 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 are:

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, and the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections.

With effect from 1 April 2002, 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 for England. 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 the electoral arrangements for Leicester City 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 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 draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 138–139) are that:

- **Leicester City Council should have 54 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, instead of 28 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of eight, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **whole council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

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, 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 determine when any changes come into effect.**

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

**Review Manager
Leicester City 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
Website: www.lgce.gov.uk**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Abbey	3	Part of Abbey ward; part of Belgrave ward, part of Mowmacre ward and part of Wycliffe ward
2 Augustine's	3	Part of St Augustine's ward; part of Abbey ward; part of Beaumont Leys ward, part of Westcotes ward and part of Western Park ward
3 Aylestone	3	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	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 Humberstone	3	Humberstone ward and part of West Humberstone ward
12 Knighton	3	Part of East Knighton ward; part of Stoneygate ward and part of West Knighton ward
13 Latimer	2	Part of Abbey ward; part of Belgrave ward and part of Latimer ward
14 Linwood	3	Part of Aylestone ward; Eyres Monsell ward and part of Saffron ward
15 New Parks	3	New Parks ward; part of St Augustine's ward and part of Western Park ward
16 Rushey Mead	3	Part of Belgrave ward, part of Rushey Mead ward and part of West Humberstone ward
17 Spinney Hills	3	Part of Crown Hills ward; part of Spinney Hill ward and part of Wycliffe ward
18 Stoneygate	3	Part of Crown Hills ward, part of Spinney Hill ward, part of Stoneygate ward and part of Wycliffe ward
19 Thurncourt	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – Thurncourt ward
20 Westcotes	3	Part of Rowley Fields ward, Part of Westcotes ward and part of Western Park 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: Draft 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	11,305	3,768	-2	12,257	4,086	3
2 Augustine's	3	13,063	4,354	13	12,645	4,215	6
3 Aylestone	3	12,402	4,134	7	12,305	4,102	3
4 Beaumont Leys	3	9,447	3,149	-18	12,302	4,101	3
5 Belgrave	2	7,722	3,861	0	7,457	3,729	-6
6 Braunstone Park	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 Humberstone	3	8,801	2,934	-24	12,120	4,040	2
12 Knighton	3	12,744	4,248	10	12,437	4,146	4
13 Latimer	2	8,414	4,207	9	8,073	4,037	1
14 Linwood	3	11,530	3,843	0	11,634	3,878	-2
15 New Parks	3	11,294	3,765	-2	11,370	3,790	-5
16 Rushey Mead	3	11,629	3,876	1	11,545	3,848	-3
17 Spinney Hills	3	12,559	4,186	9	11,430	3,810	-4
18 Stoneygate	3	12,751	4,250	10	12,913	4,304	8
19 Thurncourt	2	7,549	3,775	-2	7,488	3,744	-6
20 Westcotes	3	10,650	3,550	-8	11,504	3,835	-4
Totals	54	208,114	-	-	214,755	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,854	-	-	3,977	-

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 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 City of Leicester on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven two-tier districts in Leicestershire together with Leicester City unitary authority as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Leicester City. Leicester City's last review was carried out by our predecessor, 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 has become a unitary authority (1997). The change in unitary status has led to the loss of 28 county councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Leicester from 84 to 56. We commenced a periodic electoral review of Rutland unitary authority in October 2001.

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, ie 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.

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, ie in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authority areas the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. 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 and three-member wards in unitary authority 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 Leicester City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Leicestershire Constabulary, the local authority associations, 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. We 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.

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 then 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 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.

16 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.

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

18 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 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 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
Totals	56	208,115	-	-	214,757	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,716	-	-	3,835	-

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 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Leicester City Council.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two representations during Stage One, including a submission from the City Council enclosing three city-wide schemes, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council.

Leicester City Council

21 At Stage One the City Council submitted three schemes, from the Conservative Group, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. Agreement was reached between the three groups in relation to the proposed size of the Council and on the electoral cycle. All three groups therefore based their proposals on the areas of cross-party agreement identified at a Council Meeting on 12 July 2001: a council size of 54 (a reduction of two); and the retention of the existing electoral cycle of whole council elections every four years. All three schemes provided for significantly improved levels of electoral equality with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the city average by 2006.

22 The Labour Group's proposals, which were also supported by the three constituency Labour parties in Leicester, all three Members of Parliament, all 28 Labour Party branches and the city-wide Local Government Committee of the Labour Group, stated that "in the interests of building on natural communities and complying with the Commission criteria, we propose that Leicester should be divided into 18 new wards of three members each". It stated that the creation of three-member wards within Leicester would facilitate the grouping together of whole communities within one ward and result in "less arbitrary boundaries". It also argued that this system enabled the utilisation of significant natural boundaries throughout the City. On an administrative level, the Labour Group also argued that not having a uniform pattern of wards would introduce confusion into the system "particularly in the eyes of the public and at the time of elections".

23 The Conservative Group's proposals, which were formulated by a working party consisting of Conservative Group representatives and of the three constituency Conservative associations in the City, were based on a uniform pattern of two-member wards. It stated that the majority view on the City Council was that a uniform pattern of two-member wards should be maintained, arguing that the present system works and that there seems no reason to change it. It stated that the creation of three-member wards would result in wards encompassing a number of distinct communities, arguing that "The more distinct communities incorporated within a single ward, the greater the likelihood of there being conflict of interest between the demands of the various communities". It considered that smaller wards with a fewer number of councillors means "the more likely it is that electors will identify with their councillor (and vice versa)".

24 The Liberal Democrat Group's scheme was also based on a uniform pattern of two-member wards. It stated that it had considered in depth the issue of the number of members who should serve each ward. It argued that a uniform pattern of two-member wards is "well tried and tested within Leicester City Council and [is] known to work effectively". It argued that three-member wards mean that "the consequent electorate is too large for individual members to know their constituents".

Other Representations

25 We received one further submission at Stage One from Woodgate Residents' Association. It 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.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

27 As described earlier, our prime aim 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 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to 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”.

28 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 to maintaining local ties.

29 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.

30 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

31 Since 1975 there has been approximately a 2 per cent increase in the electorate of Leicester City. 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. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council Size

33 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.

34 Leicester City Council presently has 56 members. As detailed earlier, consensus was reached between the Conservatives, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats on the issue of council size with all three groups proposing a slight reduction of two to 54. We received no further representations in relation to council size, and in view of the cross-party consensus received for a reduction of two, we are content to put this forward for consultation.

35 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 54 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 Having considered all the representations received during Stage One, we have decided to base our draft recommendations on the Labour Group's proposals. However, we propose adopting elements of the proposals submitted by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in relation to the north-eastern part of the City, together with some of our own proposals.

37 When analysing each of the city-wide schemes, we 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 groups' proposals were both based on a uniform pattern of 27 two-member wards.

38 We consider 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 best reflect the identities and interests of the local community. We acknowledge the views expressed by each of the political groups in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of two or three-member wards. However, we are not prescriptive on this issue and seek to arrive at a scheme which provides for the best balance between electoral equality, reflecting the identities and interests of the local community and securing identifiable boundaries. We therefore propose 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 our own proposals.

39 This has been a complex task. However, officers from the Commission have visited the area and we believe that we have identified a warding pattern for Leicester City which provides for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we would very much welcome further views and suggestions at 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.

40 Details of our draft 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

41 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).

42 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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 Conservatives 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.

43 Under the Conservatives' 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).

44 The Labour Group proposed combining the existing Eyres Monsell ward with the area broadly to the south 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”.

45 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).

46 The Liberal Democrats 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 and Milligan Road and Burgess Road, together with part of the existing Castle ward, the area north of railway line bounded by Aylestone Road (A426) and Welford Road (A50), to form a revised two-member Saffron ward. The Liberal Democrats 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.

47 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

48 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations. We concur with the views expressed by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats that the railway line forms a strong boundary. We propose adopting the Labour Group's three-member Aylestone and Linwood wards as we are of the view that they provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. They also facilitate the use of the Labour Group's wards in the centre of the City, as detailed below.

49 Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and we consider that the Labour Group's proposed Aylestone ward is well linked by the Aylestone Road, which runs through the length of the ward, as well as utilising strong boundaries. We have not been persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed De Montfort ward, which would unite the Saffron council estate to the west of the railway line and the West Knighton residential area to the east, would provide a good reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. Nor have we been persuaded by the Liberal Democrats' proposed Aylestone and Saffron wards which unite areas surrounding Attlee Way with areas to the extreme north surrounding the city centre. We note, 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 we concur with this view. There is also consensus that the Grand Union Canal be retained as a western boundary for the proposed Aylestone ward. We have, however, looked at the possibility of adopting part of the Conservatives' 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 result 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. We are not of the view that these levels of electoral inequality are justified but would welcome views on this issue at Stage Three.

50 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Castle, East Knighton and West Knighton wards

51 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).

52 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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 Conservatives 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.

53 Under the Conservatives' 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).

54 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".

55 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).

56 The Liberal Democrats 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 Democrats 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.

57 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

58 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposals in this area, subject to one minor amendment. We are of the view that the Labour Group's proposals combine the Knighton area in a single city ward, utilising strong boundaries such as the railway line, Gainsborough Road and Evington Brook between Broadway Road and Holmfield Avenue. As detailed above, we have not been persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed De Montfort ward, which would unite the Saffron council estate with the West Knighton residential area to its east, would provide a good reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. We are 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.

59 We consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed Knighton ward has some merit. However, having visited the area, we are 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 to the area surrounding Stoneygate. We therefore propose adopting the Labour Group's proposed three-member Knighton ward subject to a minor amendment in order to improve electoral equality. We propose that part of the northern boundary should be modified to follow the centre of Holmfield Road.

60 In relation to the centre of the City, we note there is no consensus on how this area should be re-warded. Officers from the Commission, having visited the area, concur 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 reflect this, while using strong boundaries such as the River Soar and a large section of the inner ring road. The Conservatives' proposals would divide this area between three wards while the Liberal Democrats' proposals

would divide it between four wards. Both of those latter proposals would also breach a number of strong geographical features.

61 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Crown Hills, Spinney Hill, Stoneygate and Wycliffe wards

62 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).

63 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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. They 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.

64 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 Conservatives proposed dividing the existing Wycliffe ward between three proposed two-member wards. As detailed above, the Conservatives 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.

65 Under the Conservatives' 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).

66 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.

67 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).

68 The Liberal Democrats 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 Democrats proposed including part of the existing East Knighton ward, broadly to the west of (and including) London Road. They 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.

69 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

70 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the Labour Group's proposals in this area, subject to the one minor amendment, as detailed above, and one to the western boundary of the proposed Spinney Hills ward. The Labour Group's proposals utilise 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 we note that there are 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 is very little consensus on the overall warding arrangements.

71 Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and we are of the view that, by seeking to maintain a uniform pattern of two-member wards in this area, the proposals submitted by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats dissect communities and breach significant boundaries. For example, both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed utilising Evington Road as a boundary, thus placing the areas either side in separate wards. We noted that the areas either side of Evington Road are similar in character and are of the view that Evington Road is more of a focus for the local community than a divide. We do, however, propose one minor amendment to the western boundary of the proposed Spinney Hills ward. We propose that the boundary should follow the railway line, as opposed to running to the west of the St George's Retail Park. This amendment would have a negligible effect on electoral equality, and in our view, provides for a more identifiable boundary.

72 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Coleman, Evington and Thurncourt wards

73 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).

74 At Stage One, the Conservatives proposed retaining the existing two-member Thurncourt ward, arguing that it is “clearly a distinct community”. They 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.

75 Under the Conservatives’ 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).

76 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”.

77 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).

78 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Thurncourt ward, arguing that “community identity and lack of unnecessary upheaval both point towards the retention of the ward”. They 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.

79 Under the Liberal Democrats’ 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).

80 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations on a mix of the Conservatives' and the Liberal Democrats' proposals in this area. We propose adopting the Conservatives' proposals in relation to their proposed two-member Evington, Thurncourt and Coleman wards. These proposals are broadly similar to those submitted by the Liberal Democrats. Having visited the area, we are of the view that the utilisation of three-member wards in this area under the Labour Group's proposals would result in the combining of areas which are significantly different in character as well as being somewhat geographically separate. In relation to the Labour Group's proposed Evington ward, we have not been 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. We consider that there is merit in the existing Thurncourt ward being retained (as proposed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats), utilising strong boundaries such as Uppingham Road and Scraftoft Lane. The Conservatives' proposed two-member Evington ward would unite communities centred around Spencerfield Road and Goodwood Road, while the proposed two-member Coleman ward is centred around Coleman Road which runs through the centre of the ward.

81 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Charnwood, Humberstone and West Humberstone wards

82 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).

83 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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.

84 Under the Conservatives' 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).

85 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.

86 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.

87 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).

88 The Liberal Democrats proposed including part of the existing Charnwood ward in their 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.

89 Under the Liberal Democrats’ 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).

90 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the Conservatives’ proposed Charnwood ward and the Labour Group’s proposed Humberstone ward, subject to two amendments. We consider that the Conservatives’ proposed Charnwood ward has merit, utilising the railway line as a strong western boundary. We have not been persuaded by the Labour Group’s proposed wards which cover part of this area. Both the proposed three-member North Belgrave and South Belgrave wards breach the railway line which, officers from

the Commission 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. We are of the view that the railway line and the River Soar provide for strong boundaries in this area, as identified by the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives.

91 In relation to the Humberstone area, we have not been persuaded by the proposals submitted by the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats. 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. We are not of the view that these proposals would provide for the best reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. We concur 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. We do, however, propose three amendments to the Labour Group's Humberstone ward in order to facilitate our proposals to the south and west. We propose that the area bounded by Scraftoft 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.

92 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Abbey, Belgrave, Latimer and Rushey Mead wards

93 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).

94 At Stage One, the Conservatives proposed broadly retaining the existing Rushey Mead ward, maintaining the railway line as its eastern boundary. However, they 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. They argued that their proposed Rushey Mead ward "is clearly a distinct community". The Conservatives' 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 Conservatives stated that "the proposed new ward has clearer boundaries and a single, more distinct, mainly Asian community identity than at present".

95 The Conservatives proposed a revised Latimer ward, largely based on the existing ward, less the area bounded 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 Conservatives' 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 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.

96 Under the Conservatives' 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).

97 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.

98 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.

99 The Liberal Democrats 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. They 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.

100 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 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.

101 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

102 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting elements of the proposals put forward by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats, together with some of our own proposals. While we consider that the railway line forms a strong boundary in the south and centre of the city, we are not of the view that there is such a strong case for its utilisation in the extreme north. Both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats 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. Having visited the area, we note that there are a number of crossing points at this part of the railway line (including the A563 Troon Way) and consider that there are a number of similarities between the areas either side. We therefore propose adopting the Labour Group's three-member Rushey Mead ward.

103 As detailed above, we have not been persuaded by the Labour Group's proposed three-member North Belgrave and South Belgrave wards as we do not consider that they would provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Officers from the Commission, having visited the area, identified some key boundaries in this area. We are of the view that the railway line in the east and the River Soar (Grand Union Canal) in the west form significant boundaries in this area, a view which was also expressed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. We note that all three schemes identify the Belgrave Road as a focus rather than a divide of communities and we concur with this view. Based on these conclusions, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats, which are broadly similar to those put forward by the Conservatives.

104 We propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' 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. We also propose 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. We propose 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.

105 We propose putting forward our 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 our proposals to the east, south and west of this area we are left with the area stretching from north of the city centre to the south of Birstall Golf Course. Given the size of this area, we 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 would result in significant electoral imbalances in both wards. We are therefore of the view that these areas be combined to form a new three-member Abbey ward.

106 Having visited the area, we note that the two areas, although somewhat different in character, are linked by Abbey Lane and St Margaret's Way and, if combined, would result in a revised ward containing 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the city average by 2006. In addition, this proposal is broadly similar to that proposed by the Labour Group and the Liberal

Democrats and would facilitate the provision of a good scheme across the city as a whole. We welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

107 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Beaumont Leys and Mowmacre wards

108 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).

109 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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 Conservatives 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.

110 Under the Conservatives’ 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).

111 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.

112 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.

113 The Liberal Democrats 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.

114 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

115 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the Labour Group's proposals for this area. Having visited the area, we are of the view that the area to the north and south of Red Hill Way should form part of the same ward as they are similar in character. This is reflected in the Labour Group's proposals and broadly reflected in the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, under the Conservatives' 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. We are therefore of the view that the Labour Group's proposed three-member Beaumont Leys ward provides for the best reflection of community identities and interests in this area, while utilising strong boundaries such as the A50 and Beaumont Leys Lane.

116 Under our 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. Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

New Parks, St Augustine's and Western Park wards

117 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).

118 At Stage One, the Conservatives proposed including parts of the existing St Augustine's ward in their 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 Conservatives 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.

119 Under the Conservatives' 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).

120 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.

121 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).

122 The Liberal Democrats 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 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.

123 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

124 We received one further submission 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.

125 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Labour Group's proposals. We are of the view that these proposals provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the other two schemes. They also reflect the views of Woodgate Residents' Association. We noted that there was very little consensus between the three schemes in this area and we are of the view that the desire by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to maintain a pattern of

two-member wards has led to the division of communities and the breaching of strong geographical features. The Labour Group's proposals utilise 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.

126 Under our 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). Our proposed wards in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

North Braunstone, Rowley Fields and Westcotes wards

127 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).

128 At Stage One, the Conservatives 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.

129 Under the Conservatives' 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).

130 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.

131 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).

132 The Liberal Democrats 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.

133 Under the Liberal Democrats' 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).

134 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Labour Group's proposals. As stated above, we note that there is very little consensus between the three schemes in this area, and consider that the desire to maintain two-member wards has led to the division of communities. We note that there is broad consensus between the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats in relation to the utilisation of the railway line and Hinckley Road as boundaries. However, we are not of the view that the proposals under each of the schemes submitted by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats would best reflect the identities and interests of the local community.

135 Under our 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).

Electoral Cycle

136 We received three representations regarding the City Council's electoral cycle. Leicester City Council Conservative Group, Leicester Labour Group and Leicester Liberal Democrat Group all proposed that the existing electoral cycle of whole council elections every four years be retained.

137 We have considered carefully all representations. At present, there appears to be a majority view that the present electoral cycle should be retained and we therefore propose no change.

Conclusions

138 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 54;
- there should be 20 wards;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of eight wards, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- whole council elections should continue to take place every four years.

139 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on elements of each of the city-wide schemes submitted at Stage One, together with some of our own proposals:

- we propose adopting the Labour Group’s proposed wards in the centre, south, west and north of the city;
- we propose adopting the Conservatives’ proposals in the east of the city;
- we propose adopting the Liberal Democrats’ proposals in the Belgrave area;
- we propose putting forward our own Abbey ward;
- we propose a number of minor amendments throughout the city in order to tie existing and proposed boundaries to ground detail.

140 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect 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	56	54	56	54
Number of wards	28	20	28	20
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	3	13	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	1	4	0

141 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Leicester City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 13 to three. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Leicester City Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover of this report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Leicester City

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

142 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Leicester City 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 City Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

143 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Leicester City 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

144 In the light of representations 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

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, 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.