

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
RUGBY IN  
WARWICKSHIRE

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

*November 1999*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rugby in Warwickshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

Pamela Gordon

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# CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>25</i>
APPENDIX	
A Final Recommendations for Rugby: Detailed Mapping	<i>29</i>

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





## Local Government Commission for England

2 November 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 3 November 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Rugby under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations in their entirety. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Rugby.

We recommend that Rugby Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 20 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to be hold elections by thirds.

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

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Rugby on 3 November 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 May 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 11 of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and five wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in five wards. Two wards are expected to vary by 50 per cent or more.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 126-127) are that:

- **Rugby Borough Council should have 48 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, two fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards, with five wards being unchanged;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to 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 borough average.**
- **The electoral equality is forecast to improve even further by 2003, when the number of electors per councillor in all wards is expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the borough.**

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

- **warding for Dunchurch parish;**
- **increasing the number of councillors representing Ryton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council from eight to 10.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 15 December 1999:

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

Figure 1:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas (existing wards)</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Admirals	3	Admirals ward (part); Bilton ward (part); Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward (part – the proposed Cawston parish ward of Dunchurch parish)	Maps 2, A2 and large map
2	Avon & Swift	2	Clifton & Newton ward (the parishes of Clifton upon Dunsmore and Newton & Biggin); St Mary's ward (part – the parishes of Churchover, Cosford, Easenhall and Harborough Magna)	Map 2
3	Benn	3	Benn ward (part); Eastlands ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
4	Bilton	3	Admirals ward (part); Bilton ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
5	Brownsover North	2	Brownsover ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
6	Brownsover South	2	Brownsover ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
7	Caldecott	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 & large map
8	Dunchurch & Knightlow	3	Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward (part – the proposed Dunchurch parish ward of Dunchurch parish and Thurlaston parish); Knightlow ward (part – the parishes of Bourton & Draycote, Frankton, Marton, Princethorpe and Stretton-on-Dunsmore)	Maps 2, A2 and large map
9	Earl Craven & Wolston	3	Earl Craven ward (the parishes of Binley Woods and Brandon & Bretford); Wolston ward (the parish of Wolston)	Map 2
10	Eastlands	3	Eastlands ward (part); Paddox ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
11	Fosse	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ansty, Brinklow, Combe Fields, Monks Kirby, Pailton, Shilton, Stretton-under-Fosse, Wibtoft and Willey)	Map 2
12	Hillmorton	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 & large map
13	Lawford & King's Newnham	2	Lawford ward (the parishes of Little Lawford and Long Lawford); St Mary's ward (part – the parishes of Church Lawford and King's Newnham)	Map 2

Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas (existing wards)</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
14	Leam Valley	1	Knightlow ward (part – the parish of Birdingbury); Leam Valley ward (the parishes of Grandborough, Leamington Hastings, Willoughby and Wolfhampcote)	Map 2
15	New Bilton	3	New Bilton ward; Overslade ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
16	Newbold	3	Benn ward (part); Brownsover ward (part); Newbold ward	Map 2 & large map
17	Overslade	3	Bilton ward (part); Overslade ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
18	Paddox	2	Paddox ward (part)	Map 2 & large map
19	Ryton-on-Dunsmore	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ryton-on-Dunsmore parish)	Map 2
20	Wolvey	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Burton Hastings, Copston Magna, Stretton Baskerville, Withybrook and Wolvey)	Map 2

*The borough is parished except Rugby Town which covers the proposed wards of Benn, Bilton, Brownsover North, Brownsover South, Caldecott, Eastlands, Hillmorton, New Bilton, Newbold, Overslade and Paddox, and part of the proposed Admirals ward.*

Figure 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Rugby

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Admirals	3	3,294	1,098	-21	4,524	1,508	0
2 Avon & Swift	2	2,124	1,062	-24	2,959	1,480	-2
3 Benn	3	4,455	1,485	6	4,682	1,561	4
4 Bilton	3	4,398	1,466	5	4,527	1,509	0
5 Brownsover North	2	2,795	1,398	0	3,080	1,540	2
6 Brownsover South	2	2,773	1,387	-1	3,050	1,525	1
7 Caldecott	3	4,227	1,409	1	4,318	1,439	-5
8 Dunchurch & Knightlow	3	4,386	1,462	5	4,563	1,521	1
9 Earl Craven & Wolston	3	4,451	1,484	6	4,808	1,603	6
10 Eastlands	3	4,232	1,411	1	4,372	1,457	-3
11 Fosse	2	2,789	1,395	0	2,892	1,446	-4
12 Hillmorton	3	4,315	1,438	3	4,434	1,478	-2
13 Lawford & King's Newnham	2	2,514	1,257	-10	2,813	1,407	-7
14 Leam Valley	1	1,400	1,400	0	1,537	1,537	2
15 New Bilton	3	4,369	1,456	4	4,460	1,487	-1
16 Newbold	3	4,536	1,512	8	4,690	1,563	4
17 Overslade	3	4,464	1,488	7	4,570	1,523	1
18 Paddox	2	2,909	1,455	4	2,987	1,494	-1
19 Ryton-on-Dunsmore	1	1,057	1,057	-24	1,475	1,475	-2
20 Wolvey	1	1,524	1,524	9	1,577	1,577	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>67,012</b>	—	—	<b>72,318</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,396</b>	—	—	<b>1,507</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rugby Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rugby in Warwickshire. We have now reviewed the districts in Warwickshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all principal local authority areas in England.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Rugby. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1978 (Report No. 298). The electoral arrangements of Warwickshire County Council were last reviewed in December 1980 (Report No. 409). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the district.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (updated in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 Second, the broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 Third, we are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district 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 a district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the Warwickshire districts, that until any direction is received from the

Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

<sup>11</sup> This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 3 November 1998, when we wrote to Rugby Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 February 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

<sup>12</sup> Stage Three began on 25 May 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Rugby in Warwickshire*, and ended on 19 July 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

<sup>13</sup> Rugby Borough has an electorate of 67,012 which is forecast to increase to 72,318 by 2003. It covers an area of 36,000 hectares and has a population density of around 2.4 persons per hectare. The main population centre is Rugby town, which is surrounded by a rural belt containing a number of settlements including Binley Woods, Dunchurch, Long Lawford and Wolston. The borough has good transport links with the West Coast Main Line, the M45 and the A5 crossing the area. A number of high profile industrial firms, including Rugby Cement and GEC Alstom, are sited within the borough. With the exception of Rugby town, the borough is completely parished and is covered by 40 parishes.

<sup>14</sup> To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

<sup>15</sup> The electorate of the borough is 67,012 (February 1998). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 22 wards, 11 covering Rugby town and 11 covering the rural parished area. All of the urban wards are represented by three councillors, while, outside the town, four wards are each represented by two councillors and the remaining seven are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

<sup>16</sup> Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in the borough, with around 7 per cent more electors than two decades ago.

<sup>17</sup> At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,396 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 1,507 by the year 2003 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 22 wards varies by more

than 10 per cent from the borough average, five wards vary by more than 20 per cent and two wards by 40 per cent or more. The worst imbalance is in Lawford ward where the councillor represents 60 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Rugby

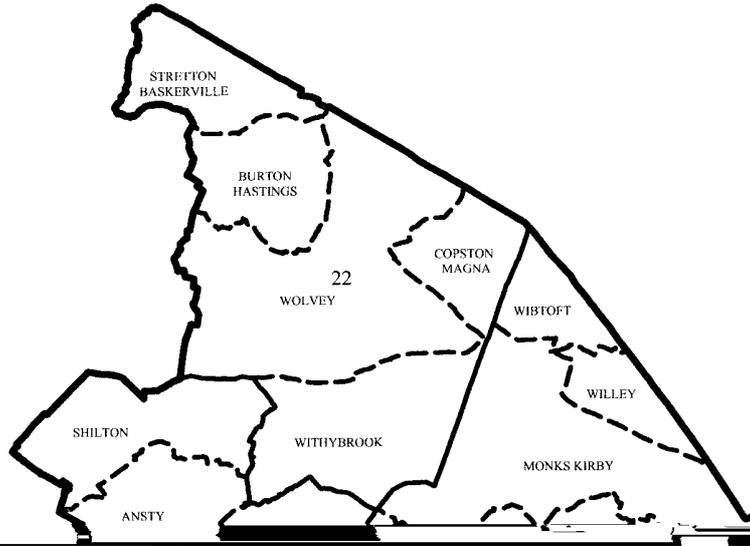


Figure 3:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Admirals	3	3,988	1,329	-5	4,128	1,376	-9
2 Benn	3	3,380	1,127	-19	3,492	1,164	-23
3 Bilton	3	3,992	1,331	-5	4,057	1,352	-10
4 Brownsover	3	6,193	2,064	48	6,776	2,259	50
5 Caldecott	3	4,227	1,409	1	4,318	1,439	-5
6 Clifton & Newton	1	1,342	1,342	-4	1,693	1,693	12
7 Dunchurch & Thurlaston	2	2,365	1,183	-15	3,640	1,820	21
8 Earl Craven	2	2,732	1,366	-2	2,815	1,408	-7
9 Eastlands	3	4,485	1,495	7	4,740	1,580	5
10 Fosse	2	2,789	1,395	0	2,892	1,446	-4
11 Hillmorton	3	4,315	1,438	3	4,434	1,478	-2
12 Knightlow	2	2,341	1,171	-16	2,413	1,207	-20
13 Lawford	1	2,235	2,235	60	2,517	2,517	67
14 Leam Valley	1	1,146	1,146	-18	1,267	1,267	-16
15 New Bilton	3	3,756	1,252	-10	3,847	1,282	-15
16 Newbold	3	3,573	1,191	-15	3,727	1,242	-18
17 Overslade	3	4,723	1,574	13	4,829	1,610	7
18 Paddox	3	4,069	1,356	-3	4,147	1,382	-8
19 Ryton-on-Dunsmore	1	1,057	1,057	-24	1,475	1,475	-2
20 St Mary's	1	1,061	1,061	-24	1,541	1,541	2
21 Wolston	1	1,719	1,719	23	1,993	1,993	32

*continued overleaf*

Figure 3 (continued):  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Wolvey	1	1,524	1,524	9	1,577	1,577	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>67,012</b>	—	—	<b>72,318</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,396</b>	—	—	<b>1,507</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rugby Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in St Mary's ward were relatively over-represented by 24 per cent, while electors in Lawford ward were relatively under-represented by 60 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 14 representations, including two borough-wide proposals from the Borough Council and the Rugby Borough Council Liberal Democrat Group; a proposal for the urban area from the Ratepayer/Independent Groups; a proposal for the rural area from the Warwickshire & West Midlands Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee); and submissions from the Rugby & Kenilworth Conservative Association, the County Council, six parish councils and two borough councillors. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Rugby in Warwickshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were generally based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two- and three-member wards in Rugby town, and a mix of single- and multi-member wards in the rest of the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting 12 wards, as we considered that even further improvements to electoral equality could be made. We proposed that:

- (a) Rugby Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, as at present, representing 20 wards, two fewer than at present;
- (b) the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be new warding arrangements for Dunchurch parish and an increase in the number of councillors for Ryton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council from eight to 10.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Rugby Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 20 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 17 of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2003.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 57 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Rugby Borough Council and the Commission.

### **Rugby Borough Council**

22 The Borough Council generally supported the draft recommendations for Rugby, but reiterated its Stage One proposals for the wards of Bilton, Overslade, Paddox, Eastlands and Benn in Rugby town.

### **Warwickshire County Council**

23 The County Council urged the Commission to reconsider its draft recommendations “to take the opportunity to allow coterminosity and to consider amending the timetables in order that any changes might be effected simultaneously with changes to county division boundaries”.

24 It stated that it objected to the draft recommendations for all five Warwickshire districts on the basis that “the importance of coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards in achieving the statutory objectives of electoral reviews has not been given adequate weight” and considered that “undue weight has been given to the objective of achieving equality of representation largely within the existing framework at district level at the expense of wider considerations”. It considered that this situation would cause “either significant inequality of representation or inadequate coterminosity between divisions and wards to emerge in the subsequent review of county council electoral divisions”.

25 The County Council also opposed the use of the centre of roads as ward boundaries which it considered to be “problematical and not conducive to the objective to reflect the interests of local communities”. It stated that “where changes to

existing ward boundaries are to take effect, we believe that matching changes to county divisional boundaries should take place simultaneously” and recognised that “to achieve this it may be necessary to delay district changes or to bring the county electoral review forward”.

26 It stated that such problems “will become even more difficult if the government moves to implement district and county elections in alternate years as set out in its recent *White Paper*”.

### **Warwickshire & West Midlands Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee)**

27 The Warwickshire & West Midlands Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) generally supported the draft recommendations for Rugby, but restated its opposition to three-member wards in the rural part of the borough. It asserted that, although some rural wards suffer from high levels of inequality, these wards “warrant exceptions to the rule” as they “meet local circumstances, interests and connections”. The Committee compared the average electorate of district wards to that of county divisions, and questioned why a district councillor should not be capable of representing around half the number of electors represented by a county councillor.

### **Rugby Independent Group**

28 The Rugby Independent Group commented only on the proposed Avon & Swift ward, supporting Clifton upon Dunsmore and Newton & Biggin parish councils’ objections to the draft recommendations to link the current Clifton & Newton ward with the parishes of Harborough Magna and Easenhall. It proposed instead including part of the new development at Coton, currently in Clifton & Newton ward, in St Mary’s ward, and retaining the existing ward names of Clifton & Newton and St Mary’s.

## Parish Councils

29 During Stage Three we received 10 representations from parish councils. Dunchurch Parish Council supported the objections from residents of Lime Tree Avenue to include this area in Admirals ward, and proposed that it be retained in Dunchurch parish. Church Lawford and King's Newnham parish councils both objected to the draft recommendations to place the two parishes in a ward with Long Lawford, stating their preference for remaining in a rural ward. They expressed support for proposals made by Councillor Bell, member for St Mary's ward, that the two parishes be placed in the proposed Avon & Swift ward. Harborough Magna Parish Council stated that it supported the draft recommendations for Avon & Swift ward, but in addition proposed that the parishes of Church Lawford and King's Newnham be placed in this ward. Easenhall Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Rugby but expressed concern over proposals to place Church Lawford and King's Newnham parishes in a ward with Long Lawford parish. Newton & Biggin Parish Council supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposals for Avon & Swift ward, while Clifton upon Dunsmore considered that the area covered by our proposed two-member Avon & Swift would be geographically too large for a single-member ward.

30 Wolston Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations to create a three-member Earl Craven & Wolston ward and considered that three-member wards would not be appropriate in rural areas. It supported the retention of the status quo in this area, stating it had undertaken a referendum in which residents had endorsed this proposal. The Parish Council stated that it did not consider that electoral equality should be an overriding factor, arguing that as a county councillor could effectively represent 6,000 electors, an electorate of nearly 2,000 could therefore be represented by a single borough councillor. Stretton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council proposed combining the parish with Wolston parish in a two-member ward, and objected to the draft recommendations to place the parish in a ward with Dunchurch parish, which it considered to be essentially urban. Monks Kirby Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for the borough of Rugby.

## Other Representations

31 A further 43 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from four borough councillors and 39 residents.

32 Councillor Hilditch, member for Dunchurch & Thurlaston, opposed our draft recommendations to include all of Lime Tree Avenue in Admirals ward.

33 Councillor Bell, member for St Mary's ward, supported the majority of the draft recommendations for the current St Mary's ward, but objected to the proposal that Church Lawford and King's Newnham parishes should form part of a new Lawford & King's Newnham ward. She instead proposed that these parishes be placed in Avon & Swift ward, which would then comprise the existing St Mary's and Clifton & Newton wards.

34 Councillor Wright, member for Wolston ward, opposed the draft recommendations for Earl Craven & Wolston ward and supported retaining the status quo. He echoed the remarks made by Wolston Parish Council in its representation.

35 Councillor Ravenhall, member for Knightlow ward, objected to the creation of geographically large rural wards, as he considered them to be impractical. He argued that our proposed Dunchurch & Knightlow ward be divided into three single-member wards, or one single- and one two-member ward.

36 Representations were received from 21 residents of that part of Lime Tree Avenue which lies in Dunchurch parish, of whom 11 stated their wish to remain within the parish of Dunchurch. Three residents also wished to remain in a rural ward covering Dunchurch. Six residents expressed concern that the road would be transferred out of Dunchurch parish at a subsequent parish boundary review and that the road would be adopted by the local authority. Five residents also objected to being placed in a parish ward with the Cawston development, stating they had no connections with the new housing development or Admirals, as it is "an urban area of the Borough".

37 We also received representations from 17 residents of Church Lawford and King's Newnham

parishes, who objected to the proposals to include these parishes in a ward with Long Lawford parish, considering that the more rural parishes would be less efficiently represented. Of these, 13 residents supported Councillor Bell's proposals that Church Lawford and King's Newnham parishes be placed in the proposed Avon & Swift ward, two preferred retaining the status quo, but supported Councillor Bell's proposals as an alternative, while two proposed that the two parishes be placed in the same ward as Wolston, as they fall in the same Church Pastorate.

38 A resident of Wolston supported the draft recommendations to combine Earl Craven and Wolston in a three-member ward, stating that it reflected the "long standing links" between the two parishes. They also opposed Wolston Parish Council's Stage One proposal to combine the parish with Stretton-on-Dunsmore parish, arguing that there are insufficient community links, and that the parishes did not share community interests as they have historically different economic profiles: one agricultural, the other light industrial.



## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

39 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Rugby is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

40 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

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

42 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and

over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

### Electorate Forecasts

43 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 8 per cent from 67,012 to 72,318 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expects much of this growth to be on the fringes of Rugby town at Cawston, in Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward, and Coton, split between St Mary’s and Clifton & Newton wards. Significant growth is also planned in Ryton-on-Dunsmore in the west of the borough. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

### Council Size

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

46 Rugby Borough Council is at present served by 48 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council and the Ratepayer/Independent Groups proposed retaining a council size of 48 members. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a council size of 40 in a pattern of one- and two-member wards in the light of the White Paper’s proposals for biennial elections. While we acknowledged the issues raised in the White Paper, we did not consider that there was enough evidence or agreement from the other

parties on the Borough Council to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposal.

47 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 48 members.

48 During Stage Three we received no further comments on council size and therefore, in view of the general support for a council of 48 members, we are confirming our draft recommendation as final.

## Electoral Arrangements

49 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, and the schemes from the Independent Group and the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee). From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our recommendations.

50 First, there is consensus among the majority of the respondents for retaining the council size of 48. As stated above, the Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in the number of councillors to 40. However, in the absence of general support for such a reduction, or any detailed evidence as to how the council would operate with such a council size, we did not propose any change to council size.

51 Second, there is general agreement to include the large development areas in more urban wards necessitating the creation of parish wards for the parishes concerned. However, adopting this proposal for the Coton area would involve creating a parish ward for an area which currently has no electors. Such a proposal would be incompatible with section 16 of the Local Government Act, 1972, which states that "where a parish is divided into parish wards there shall be a separate election of parish councillors for each ward", and we could not recommend it to the Secretary of State.

52 Third, there is agreement on using, as far as possible, whole parishes as building blocks for proposed wards in the remainder of the rural area. There were, however, conflicting views on the number of councillors which should represent each

of the rural wards. The Borough Council proposed a number of three-member wards in the parished area while the Liberal Democrats and the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee), supported by Wolston Parish Council, proposed a pattern of one- and two-member wards. We have considered each area individually and have attempted to provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

53 Fourth, a number of respondents compared the average electorate of borough wards and county divisions, with the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) stating that a district councillor should be capable of representing 50 per cent of the electorate represented by a county councillor. However, the purpose of this review is to achieve electoral equality at borough level, while having regard to the statutory criteria, namely to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in a borough ward is as nearly as possible the same as the average, whilst reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. We have therefore tried to ensure that at borough council level each person's vote carries the same weight. County, borough and parish councillors have different functions and therefore we are not prescriptive in defining a ratio between borough and county councillors, rather we aim to ensure parity at borough level.

54 As stated earlier, Warwickshire County Council opposed the draft recommendations. It noted that, particularly in Rugby town, due to the high degree of change and the proposed ward sizes under the draft recommendations, "the draft proposals not only fail to achieve coterminosity with this district level review, but has also preclude the option to remedy this with the later county level review." It urged us to reconsider our draft recommendations "to take the opportunity to allow coterminosity and to consider amending the timetable in order that any changes might be effected simultaneously with changes to county division boundaries".

55 This is an issue which has arisen in a number of review areas. It is indicative of the tensions which can arise between the achievement of electoral equality within the individual districts of a county, each of whose electoral arrangements can vary significantly in terms of councillor:elector ratios and ward sizes, and across county council electoral divisions, while also seeking some measure of coterminosity between the two. These tensions are not readily reconciled.

56 In certain cases, it has been put to us that in reviewing district electoral arrangements we should prescribe that ward patterns and sizes should be such that they would be compatible with county council divisions. We do not believe this to be an approach the Commission should take. As a Commission, we rely heavily on local authorities and others to put proposals to us on how the electoral arrangements within their individual areas might be improved. We believe that the interests of local democracy are best served by basing our recommendations on schemes which are generated locally, address the statutory criteria, and achieve a high level of electoral equality.

57 Nevertheless, we recognise that coterminosity between county divisions and district wards is capable of being conducive to effective and convenient local government, and we place a high value on its achievement as part of our reviews of county council electoral arrangements.

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

### **Rugby Town**

- Benn, Brownsover and Newbold wards;
- Caldecott, Eastlands, Hillmorton and Paddox wards;
- Admirals, Bilton, New Bilton and Overslade wards.

### **The Rural Area**

- Leam Valley and Ryton-on-Dunsmore wards;
- Clifton & Newton, Lawford and St Mary's wards;
- Dunchurch & Thurlaston, Earl Craven, Knightlow and Wolston wards;
- Fosse and Wolvey wards.

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

### **Rugby Town**

60 There are currently 11 wards covering Rugby town, each represented by three councillors. As

part of our draft recommendations we adopted much of the Council's scheme for the town. However, as stated earlier, we have been unable to recommend including the Coton area in a town ward. We therefore proposed that the town as a whole should be represented by 32 councillors; the level of representation which the town warrants given the total council size and electorate. Our proposals would have involved a pattern of two- and three-member wards for the town.

### **Benn, Brownsover and Newbold wards**

61 The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Benn, Brownsover and Newbold is 19 per cent below, 48 per cent above and 15 per cent below the average respectively (23 per cent below, 50 per cent above and 18 per cent below in 2003).

62 At Stage One, due to the current high levels of electoral inequality in Brownsover ward and planned growth in the Coton area, the Borough Council proposed that Brownsover ward should be split, with the northern part of the current ward being joined with the development site, currently in St Mary's and Clifton & Newton wards, to form a new three-member Coton ward. The Council also proposed transferring polling district BA, situated south of the railway line, from Brownsover ward to Newbold ward. The remainder of Brownsover ward (polling districts BB, BD and BE) would then form a modified two-member Brownsover ward. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Brownsover and Coton wards would be 13 per cent below and 25 per cent below the borough average respectively (10 per cent below and 9 per cent below in 2003).

63 The Borough Council further proposed transferring polling district DA from Eastlands ward to Benn ward, maintaining a three-member Benn ward. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor in Benn ward would be 1 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent below in 2003).

64 The Ratepayer/Independent Groups, the Rugby & Kenilworth Conservative Association and the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) opposed the Borough Council's proposals for these wards. They specifically considered that the over-representation in Benn ward should be addressed by reducing the number of councillors representing this ward from three to two with minor boundary changes, facilitating the retention of a three-member Paddox ward, described later.

This alternative was supported by Councillor Franklyn (member for Bilton ward).

65 Although in the long term we could see the merit in the Borough Council's proposal to include the Coton development site in the urban wards, this would necessitate the creation of parish wards in Churchover and Newton & Biggin parishes which would not contain any electors and would not provide for convenient and effective local government at parish level. However, we acknowledged that the current three-member Brownsover ward is under-represented and, in order to improve electoral equality, proposed that it should be split into two two-member wards of Brownsover North and Brownsover South. We considered that the Borough Council's proposal for an enlarged three-member Benn ward would result in improved levels of electoral equality for the ward, together with the surrounding wards in the town, while meeting the statutory criteria. We also endorsed the Borough Council's proposed transfer of polling district BA from Brownsover ward to Newbold ward. Furthermore, in order to provide improved levels of electoral equality, we proposed transferring polling district CA (the area bounded by Railway Terrace) from Benn ward to Newbold ward, reflecting, in part, the Ratepayer/Independent Groups' proposed boundary for Benn ward.

66 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Benn, Brownsover North, Brownsover South and Newbold wards would be 6 per cent above, equal to, 1 per cent below and 8 per cent above the average (4 per cent above, 2 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 4 per cent above in 2003).

67 At Stage Three the Borough Council generally accepted the draft recommendations for this area, but proposed modifying the proposed boundary between Benn ward and Eastlands ward, detailed below. We did not receive any other proposals relating to these wards. The Borough Council did not provide supporting evidence regarding community issues to justify the deterioration in electoral equality which would occur under its proposal and we have therefore not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for the wards in this area, as we remain of the view that they would achieve the best levels of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Benn, Brownsover North, Brownsover South and Newbold wards as final.

### **Caldecott, Eastlands, Hillmorton and Paddox wards**

68 The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Caldecott, Eastlands, Hillmorton and Paddox is 1 per cent above, 7 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 3 per cent below respectively (5 per cent below, 5 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 8 per cent below in 2003).

69 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed transferring polling district DA from Eastlands ward to Benn ward and polling district EA from Paddox ward to Eastlands ward, together with a reduction in the number of councillors representing Paddox ward from three to two. These proposals would have resulted in the number of electors per councillor in Paddox and Eastlands wards being 13 per cent above and 9 per cent above the average respectively (7 per cent above and 4 per cent above the average in 2003). The Council proposed no change to the wards of Caldecott and Hillmorton.

70 The Independent/Ratepayer Groups, the Rugby & Kenilworth Conservative Association and Councillor Franklyn (member for Bilton ward) objected to the Borough Council's proposal for Benn and Paddox wards, instead proposing a decrease in the number of councillors representing Benn ward from three to two and retaining the current boundary between the three-member Paddox and Eastlands wards, as stated earlier. No changes were proposed to the wards of Caldecott and Hillmorton.

71 Having considered all the available evidence, we based our draft recommendations for these wards on the Borough Council's scheme. However, as a consequence of our boundary amendments in the north of the town and to further improve electoral equality, we proposed a number of boundary modifications in this area. We proposed transferring the area bounded by Eastlands Road and the rear of Sheriff Road (including Whinfield Park) from Eastlands ward to Benn ward. We also proposed that the area bounded by Great Central Walk and Clifton Road Cemetery should be transferred from Eastlands ward to Benn ward. In Paddox ward, in addition to the Borough Council's proposal, we proposed transferring the area around Paddox First School, including parts of Sidney Road, Hillmorton Road, Fisher Avenue and St John's Avenue from Paddox ward to Eastlands ward. We also proposed transferring the area bounded by Fareham Avenue and Balcombe Road from Paddox ward to Eastlands ward. Under our draft

recommendations for Eastlands and Paddox wards, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above and 4 per cent above the borough average respectively (3 per cent below and 1 per cent below in 2003).

72 We also adopted the Borough Council's Stage One proposals for no change to Caldecott and Hillmorton wards, as supported by the Ratepayer/Independent Groups.

73 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for Rugby except for our proposals for Benn, Paddox and Eastlands wards. While the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations that the area around Clifton Cemetery be transferred from Eastlands ward to Benn ward, it did not support the draft recommendations for the remainder of the boundary between Eastlands and Benn wards.

74 It also objected to the draft recommendation to transfer the area around Paddox First School, including Hillmorton Road and St John's Avenue, from Paddox ward to Eastlands ward, but supported our proposal that numbers 1-9 Sidney Road should be transferred from Paddox ward to Eastlands ward "since the rest of Sidney Road is already within Eastlands Ward boundary". The Borough Council provided no new evidence in support of its proposals. We received no other representations regarding these wards.

75 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. While we note the Borough Council's comments, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for the wards of Eastlands and Paddox as we remain of the view that they would provide the best levels of electoral equality, while having regard, as far as possible, to the statutory criteria and to well defined boundaries. Furthermore, in the absence of further representations, we are satisfied that our draft recommendations for Caldecott and Hillmorton wards would achieve the best levels of electoral equality, reflect community identities in the area and utilise clear boundaries, and therefore confirm them as final.

76 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Caldecott, Eastlands, Hillmorton and Paddox wards would be 1 per cent above, 1 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 4 per cent above the borough average respectively (5 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 1 per cent below in 2003).

These proposals are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

### **Admirals, Bilton, New Bilton and Overslade wards**

77 The number of electors per councillor in Admirals, Bilton, New Bilton and Overslade wards is currently 5 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 10 per cent below and 13 per cent above the borough average respectively (9 per cent below, 10 per cent below, 15 per cent below and 7 per cent above in 2003).

78 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the planned new housing development at Cawston, currently in Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward, should be included in Admirals ward. As a consequence, Admirals ward would be under-represented. The Council therefore proposed transferring polling district KA from Admirals ward to Bilton ward, and transferring polling district HA from Overslade ward to New Bilton ward.

79 The Council also proposed that part of Lime Tree Avenue, currently in Dunchurch parish, should be included with the remainder of that road in Bilton ward. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Admirals, Bilton, New Bilton and Overslade wards would be 24 per cent below, 16 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 2 per cent below the average respectively but given the significant growth planned for the area this level of imbalance would reduce to 2 per cent below, 9 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 7 per cent below the average by 2003.

80 We considered that the Council's proposals would provide good levels of electoral equality, particularly when taking into account the substantial planned development, while retaining a pattern of three-member wards in this part of the town. However, having visited the area, in our draft recommendations we proposed that the Cawston site, together with the whole of Lime Tree Avenue, should be transferred to Admirals ward. Our draft recommendations proposed dividing Dunchurch parish into two parish wards, while the Borough Council's proposal would have required splitting the parish into three parish wards. Under our draft recommendations for Admirals ward, the number of electors per councillor would be 21 per cent below the average initially but equal to the average in 2003, given the development at Cawston.

81 Our draft recommendations for Admirals ward, based on locally-generated proposals, would include the new development at Cawston in a town ward. We consider that the new development's community of interest would be with Rugby town and it would have less in common with the more rural, parished area. Our proposals would also provide for improved levels of electoral equality by 2003 and would, in our opinion, provide for lasting electoral arrangements. As part of these recommendations we also proposed including the whole of Lime Tree Avenue in Admirals ward, uniting the whole of the road in one ward for borough election purposes.

82 During Stage Three we received submissions from Councillor Hilditch and 21 residents of Lime Tree Avenue. Many of the respondents argued that the parished part of the road has strong community and historical ties with Dunchurch parish and stated that residents wished to remain in the parish of Dunchurch. They also commented that that part of Lime Tree Avenue in Dunchurch parish was a private, unadopted road, and expressed fears that its transfer to Admirals ward would result in its adoption by the local authority. Some respondents stated that there was no common community identity between the two parts of the road, or between the road and Cawston and Admirals ward.

83 In our draft recommendations report we stated that our proposals would retain the current external boundary of Dunchurch parish, thereby retaining part of Lime Tree Avenue in the parish. Our recommendations would only include this area in a town ward for the purposes of borough council elections: residents of that part of Lime Tree Avenue to the south would continue to participate in parish matters and form part of Dunchurch parish. Any change to the external boundary of Dunchurch parish would have to follow a full four-stage review by the Borough Council under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, involving full local consultation.

84 We noted that the only vehicular access to Lime Tree Avenue is from the urban part of the road and that the road is a cul-de-sac. We also noted residents concerns over the status of the parished part of the road. However, this status would be unaffected by a periodic electoral review; unadopted roads exist in both parished and unparished areas and in a variety of authority types, including two-tier districts, metropolitan districts and London boroughs.

85 While we acknowledge the community arguments put forward at Stage Three, we consider that, as this part of Lime Tree Avenue would remain in Dunchurch parish, such community ties would continue to be reflected at parish level. However, at borough council level, we consider that uniting the whole of Lime Tree Avenue in a single borough ward would provide an appropriate balance between the need to achieve electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria, particularly the need to provide effective and convenient local government. Given these factors we confirm our draft recommendations for Admirals ward as final, subject to a minor realignment of the western boundary of Cawston parish ward to avoid the creation of an undesirable salient. Under our final recommendations for Admirals ward, the number of electors per councillor would be 21 per cent below the average but equal to the average in 2003.

86 While we generally adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Overslade wards, we considered that electoral equality could be further improved by transferring the area bounded by parts of Barton Road, David Road, Selborne Road and Deepmore Road from Bilton ward to Overslade ward. We also adopted the Borough Council's proposals for New Bilton ward, as part of our draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Overslade, Bilton and New Bilton would be 7 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 4 per cent above the average (1 per cent above, equal to the average and 1 per cent below in 2003).

87 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards, except for our proposed modification to the wards of Bilton and Overslade where it restated its Stage One proposals. We are not minded to accept these proposals, however, as no additional evidence was provided in support of them and we are not persuaded that the higher electoral imbalances that would result would provide better recognition of community identity or improved provision of convenient and effective local government. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Bilton and Overslade as final. We received no comments relating specifically to New Bilton ward and we remain of the view that our draft recommendations for this ward would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and therefore confirm our draft recommendation

as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Overslade, Bilton and New Bilton wards would be 7 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 4 per cent above the average (1 per cent above, equal to the average and 1 per cent below in 2003).

## **The Rural Area**

88 There are currently 15 councillors representing seven single- and four two-member wards in the rural area. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a significant reconfiguration of parishes in the rural area, providing for four single-member, two two-member and two three-member wards, reducing the number of wards from 11 to eight and the number of councillors from 15 to 14. In proposing its configuration for the rural area, the Borough Council used whole parishes as building blocks except in Churchover, Newton & Biggin and Dunchurch parishes where, as described earlier, it proposed including the two development areas at Coton and Cawston in urban wards. We also received a number of alternative configurations based on a pattern of single- and two-member wards only.

89 As stated earlier, we did not propose including the Coton development site in a town ward, given the implications at parish level, as part of our draft recommendations. As a consequence, the overall balance of representation between the rural and the urban area would be affected, and we therefore proposed that 15 rural councillors should be retained, as opposed to 14 proposed by the Borough Council, together with a different configuration of a number of the rural wards, using whole parishes as building blocks. These proposals would involve the creation of a number of three-member wards. However, we considered that these wards would not be detrimental to effective representation in the rural area, and given the improvement to electoral equality together with the configuration of surrounding wards, we considered that they provided the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

90 At Stage Three the Borough Council did not make specific comments on our draft recommendations for these wards, but we received a number of submissions from parish councils and other interested parties.

## **Leam Valley and Ryton-on-Dunsmore wards**

91 The single-member Leam Valley ward comprises the parishes of Grandborough, Leamington Hastings, Willoughby and Wolfhampcote and has 18 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (16 per cent fewer in 2003). In the single-member Ryton-on-Dunsmore ward, which comprises the parish of the same name, the number of electors per councillor is 24 per cent below the average, improving to 2 per cent below in 2003.

92 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Birdingbury parish, in the current Knightlow ward, should be included in the current Leam Valley ward to improve electoral equality, which was supported by the Ratepayer/Independent Groups and the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee). Under its proposal, the number of electors per councillor for Leam Valley ward would be equal to the average (2 per cent above in 2003). We considered that a single-member Leam Valley ward would provide good levels of electoral equality in this area while having regard to the statutory criteria. Accordingly, we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Leam Valley ward as part of our draft recommendations.

93 The Borough Council, supported by the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) and the Ratepayer/Independent Groups, proposed no change to Ryton-on-Dunsmore ward, stating that, although it would initially result in a high level of electoral inequality, the electoral variance would improve to 2 per cent below the average in 2003, due to development in the area. Despite the initial large imbalance, we considered that retaining the current Ryton-on-Dunsmore ward provided the best balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria and, given the overall support for this proposal, adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

94 At Stage Three we received no comments on our draft recommendations for Leam Valley and Ryton-on-Dunsmore wards. We remain satisfied that our draft recommendations for these wards would provide the best level of electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Leam Valley and Ryton-on-Dunsmore as final.

## **Clifton & Newton, Lawford and St Mary's**

95 The single-member Clifton & Newton ward has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (12 per cent more in 2003) and comprises the parishes of Clifton upon Dunsmore and Newton & Biggin. The single-member St Mary's ward comprises the parishes of Churchover, Church Lawford, Cosford, Easenhall, Harborough Magna and King's Newnham, and has 24 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (2 per cent more in 2003). The single-member Lawford ward comprises the parishes of Little Lawford and Long Lawford and has 60 per cent more electors than the borough average (67 per cent more in 2003).

96 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the current Clifton & Newton ward should be combined with Churchover and Cosford parishes, currently in St Mary's ward, to form a new single-member Avon & Swift ward, with the Coton development site (part of Newton & Biggin and Churchover parishes) forming part of a new Coton ward in the north of Rugby town. It also proposed an enlarged Lawford ward, represented by two members, combining the current Lawford ward with the parishes of Church Lawford, King's Newnham and Harborough Magna, currently in St Mary's ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Avon & Swift ward and Lawford ward would be 11 per cent above and 3 per cent above the average respectively (8 per cent above and 6 per cent above in 2003).

97 The Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) proposed a single-member ward combining the parishes of Churchover and Cosford with the current Clifton & Newton ward. Councillor Bell (member for St Mary's ward), and the parish councils of Church Lawford, Easenhall and Harborough Magna objected to the Borough Council's proposals. Councillor Bell, supported by Harborough Magna Parish Council, considered that there should be no change to St Mary's ward while Easenhall Parish Council wished to retain links with Harborough Magna. Church Lawford Parish Council stated that there are no community links with Long Lawford parish which, it considered, has greater identity with the town.

98 In considering this area, we noted the support for including the development sites at Coton in the

urban area. However, as stated earlier, we did not adopt proposals to include the Coton development site in a town ward given the implications at parish level. Accordingly, we proposed retaining the development site as part of the rural area.

99 In order to achieve electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria, we proposed combining the parishes of Churchover, Clifton upon Dunsmore, Cosford, Easenhall, Harborough Magna and Newton & Biggin to form a two-member Avon & Swift ward, reflecting the preference of Easenhall Parish Council for retaining links with Harborough Magna parish. We also proposed combining the parishes of King's Newnham, Little Lawford, Church Lawford and Long Lawford in a two-member Lawford & King's Newnham ward. While we noted the comments from the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee), and Church Lawford and Harborough Magna parish councils, we concluded that the increase in electoral inequality under alternative ward configurations was not outweighed by the community arguments expressed at Stage One. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Avon & Swift ward would initially be 24 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent below in 2003). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Lawford & King's Newnham ward would be 10 per cent below the borough average (7 per cent below in 2003).

100 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for the wards of Clifton & Newton, Lawford and St Mary's. Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council considered that our proposed Avon & Swift ward would be too geographically large to be represented by a single councillor. Newton & Biggin Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations to combine Clifton & Newton ward with the parishes of Churchover, Cosford, Harborough Magna and Easenhall in the two-member Avon & Swift ward. It instead supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal for a single-member Avon & Swift ward covering the current Clifton & Newton ward with the parishes of Churchover and Cosford. The Rugby Independent Group stated that Clifton upon Dunsmore and Newton & Biggin parish councils shared its objections to the draft recommendations to combine Clifton & Newton ward with Harborough Magna and Easenhall

parishes. It proposed instead transferring that part of the new Coton development which will be in Newton & Biggin parish to Churchover parish, and retaining the existing ward names of Clifton & Newton and St Mary's.

101 Harborough Magna Parish Council accepted the draft recommendations for Avon & Swift ward, particularly as the parish would then be placed in a ward with Easenhall parish. However, it proposed that King's Newnham and Church Lawford should also be included in this ward. Easenhall Parish Council accepted the draft recommendations for Rugby, but expressed concern that King's Newnham and Church Lawford would be linked with Long Lawford.

102 Councillor Bell, member for St Mary's ward, objected to the draft recommendation for a new Lawford & King's Newnham ward and proposed instead that Church Lawford and King's Newnham parishes be placed in the proposed Avon & Swift ward. Church Lawford and King's Newnham parish councils objected to being included in a ward with Long Lawford parish and instead supported Councillor Bell's proposal.

103 We note the lack of consensus regarding this area. Some respondents objected to the proposed wards, arguing that they were too large, while others proposed increasing the size of rural wards. This lack of consensus is particularly evident in relation to our proposed Avon & Swift ward.

104 We have considered a number of alternative proposals, but these would have resulted in large imbalances in several wards. As stated in our draft recommendations, we were unable to accept the Borough Council's proposal to include the new development at Coton in a town ward, given the implications at parish level. Similarly, we cannot endorse the Rugby Independent Group's proposal to include parts of Newton & Biggin parish in Churchover parish as again this would involve creating parish wards which initially do not cover any electors. Under Councillor Bell's proposal to include the parishes of King's Newnham and Church Lawford within Avon & Swift ward, the amended Avon & Swift ward would be 14 per cent below the borough average (8 per cent above in 2003) while Lawford ward (containing Long Lawford and Little Lawford only) would be 20 per cent below (16 per cent below in 2003).

105 We do not consider that the proposals put forward by respondents during Stage Three provide for a more appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. While we acknowledge the community arguments, we do not consider that the resulting levels of inequality are outweighed by other factors. Our proposals use whole parishes as building blocks and reflect some of the submissions we received during Stage Three.

106 We have not therefore been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for the two-member Avon & Swift and Lawford & King's Newnham wards and remain of the opinion that these would provide the best solution, achieving a balance between the need to secure electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria, and therefore propose confirming these wards as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Avon & Swift ward would initially be 24 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent below in 2003). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Lawford & King's Newnham ward would be 10 per cent below the borough average (7 per cent below in 2003).

#### **Dunchurch & Thurlaston, Earl Craven, Knightlow and Wolston**

107 The two-member Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward comprises the parishes of Dunchurch and Thurlaston and has 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, but is projected to have 21 per cent more than the average by 2003 due to significant development in Dunchurch parish. The two-member Earl Craven ward, covering the parishes of Binley Woods and Brandon & Bretford, has 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (7 per cent fewer than the average in 2003).

108 The two-member Knightlow ward has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (20 per cent fewer in 2003), and comprises the parishes of Birdingbury, Bourton & Draycote, Frankton, Marton, Princethorpe and Stretton-on-Dunsmore. The single-member Wolston ward, covering the parish of the same name, has 23 per cent more electors than the borough average (32 per cent more in 2003).

109 The Borough Council proposed that the current Knightlow and Dunchurch & Thurlaston wards

should be combined to form a new three-member Dunchurch & Knightlow ward. It proposed, however, that the Cawston development site, in Dunchurch parish, should be included in Admirals ward. It also proposed that the parished part of Lime Tree Avenue should be included in Bilton ward, uniting the whole road in one ward. Both these transfers would necessitate creating parish wards for Dunchurch parish. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Dunchurch & Knightlow ward would be 5 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent above in 2003).

110 At Stage One the Borough Council additionally proposed that the existing Earl Craven and Wolston wards should be combined to form a new three-member Earl Craven & Wolston ward, in order to improve electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above the average, unchanged in 2003. The Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee) proposed a single-member ward combining the parishes of Bourton & Draycote, Frankton, Marton and Princethorpe (currently in Knightlow ward) and Thurlaston (currently in Dunchurch & Thurlaston ward) together with a two-member ward covering Dunchurch parish.

111 Wolston Parish Council objected to the Borough Council's proposal for a three-member ward in this area, proposing instead that the parish should be linked with Stretton-on-Dunsmore parish in a two-member ward.

112 While we noted the views of Wolston Parish Council and the Association of Local Councils (Rugby Area Committee), we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for three-member Earl Craven & Wolston and Dunchurch & Knightlow wards, as part of our draft recommendations, to improve electoral equality and as a consequence of our proposals for the surrounding area. We did not consider that such proposals would have a detrimental effect on community identities. Under our draft recommendations for Earl Craven & Wolston and Dunchurch & Knightlow wards, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above and 5 per cent above the borough average respectively (6 per cent above and 1 per cent above in 2003).

113 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for Earl Craven & Wolston and Dunchurch & Knightlow wards. Councillor Ravenhall, member for Knightlow,

stated that large rural wards would be impractical in terms of size, distance between electors, and the large number of constituent parishes. He proposed dividing the proposed Dunchurch & Knightlow ward into a pattern of either three single-member wards, or one single- and one two-member ward.

114 Dunchurch Parish Council supported the views expressed by the residents of Lime Tree Avenue. It proposed that Lime Tree Avenue should be included in the proposed Dunchurch parish ward, rather than the proposed Cawston parish ward, thus retaining the area in a rural borough ward.

115 Stretton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations to include the parish in a ward with Dunchurch, as it feared it would leave the area essentially unrepresented. It instead proposed that it should be joined in a ward with Wolston parish. At Stage Three Wolston Parish opposed the draft recommendations and instead proposed that the parish continue to constitute a single-member ward, despite high electoral variances. The Parish Council stated it had undertaken a local referendum to consult on the draft recommendations for Wolston, and that residents were in favour of retaining the status quo, however no details were provided. A resident of Wolston supported the draft recommendation for Earl Craven & Wolston ward, stating that it reflected existing community links. They objected to Wolston Parish Council's Stage One proposal to link Wolston parish with Stretton-on-Dunsmore, stating that there are no direct transport links between the two parishes.

116 We note the objections raised by Wolston Parish Council and the alternatives it proposed. Maintaining the existing wards of Wolston and Earl Craven separately would result in variances of 23 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (becoming 32 per cent in Wolston and 7 per cent in Earl Craven by 2003). We have examined the options which would retain the current Wolston ward, but we are unable to recommend any such options, given the high electoral variances which would remain. To place the parishes of Wolston and Stretton-on-Dunsmore together in a ward would require transferring a councillor from Dunchurch & Knightlow ward to create a two-member Wolston & Stretton ward; however, this would result in variances in the two-member Dunchurch & Knightlow ward of 23 per cent above the borough average (19 per cent above in 2003).



- (d) the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

129 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 11 to three. The level of electoral equality would improve further in 2003, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### Final Recommendation

Rugby Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

## Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

130 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Dunchurch parish to reflect the proposed borough wards.

131 Dunchurch Parish Council is currently represented by a total of 10 councillors. As a consequence of including the Cawston development site and the parished part of Lime Tree Avenue in Admirals ward for borough council purposes we proposed warding Dunchurch parish, creating two parish wards of Cawston and Dunchurch.

132 In response to our consultation report, we received objections to our proposed warding arrangements from Dunchurch Parish Council,

Figure 4 :  
*Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	48	48	48	48
Number of wards	22	20	22	20
Average number of electors per councillor	1,396	1,396	1,507	1,507
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	3	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	3	5	0

Councillor Hilditch, member for Dunchurch & Thurlaston, and 21 residents of Lime Tree Avenue. The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area.

133 Having considered all the evidence received we have reconfirmed our draft recommendations for borough council electoral arrangements for this area. We therefore confirm our draft recommendation for warding Dunchurch parish as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Dunchurch Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Dunchurch (to be represented by nine councillors) and Cawston (to be represented by one councillor), as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

134 In response to a request from Ryton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council at Stage One we proposed increasing the number of parish councillors from eight to 10. We did not receive any comments on this proposal and we therefore confirm our recommendation for an increase in parish councillors for Ryton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Ryton-on-Dunsmore Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors representing the whole Council.

135 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Rugby



Key to Wards

- |                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Admirals                | 11 Fosse                      |
| 2 Avon and Swift          | 12 Hillmorton                 |
| 3 Benn                    | 13 Lawford and King's Newnham |
| 4 Bilton                  | 14 Leam Valley                |
| 5 Brownsover North        | 15 New Bilton                 |
| 6 Brownsover South        | 16 Newbold                    |
| 7 Caldecott               | 17 Overslade                  |
| 8 Dunchurch and Knightlow | 18 Paddock                    |
| 9 Earl Craven and Wolston | 19 Ryton-on-Dunsmore          |
| 10 Eastlands              | 20 Wolvey                     |

KEY	
PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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## 6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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



# APPENDIX A

## Final Recommendations for Rugby: Detailed Mapping

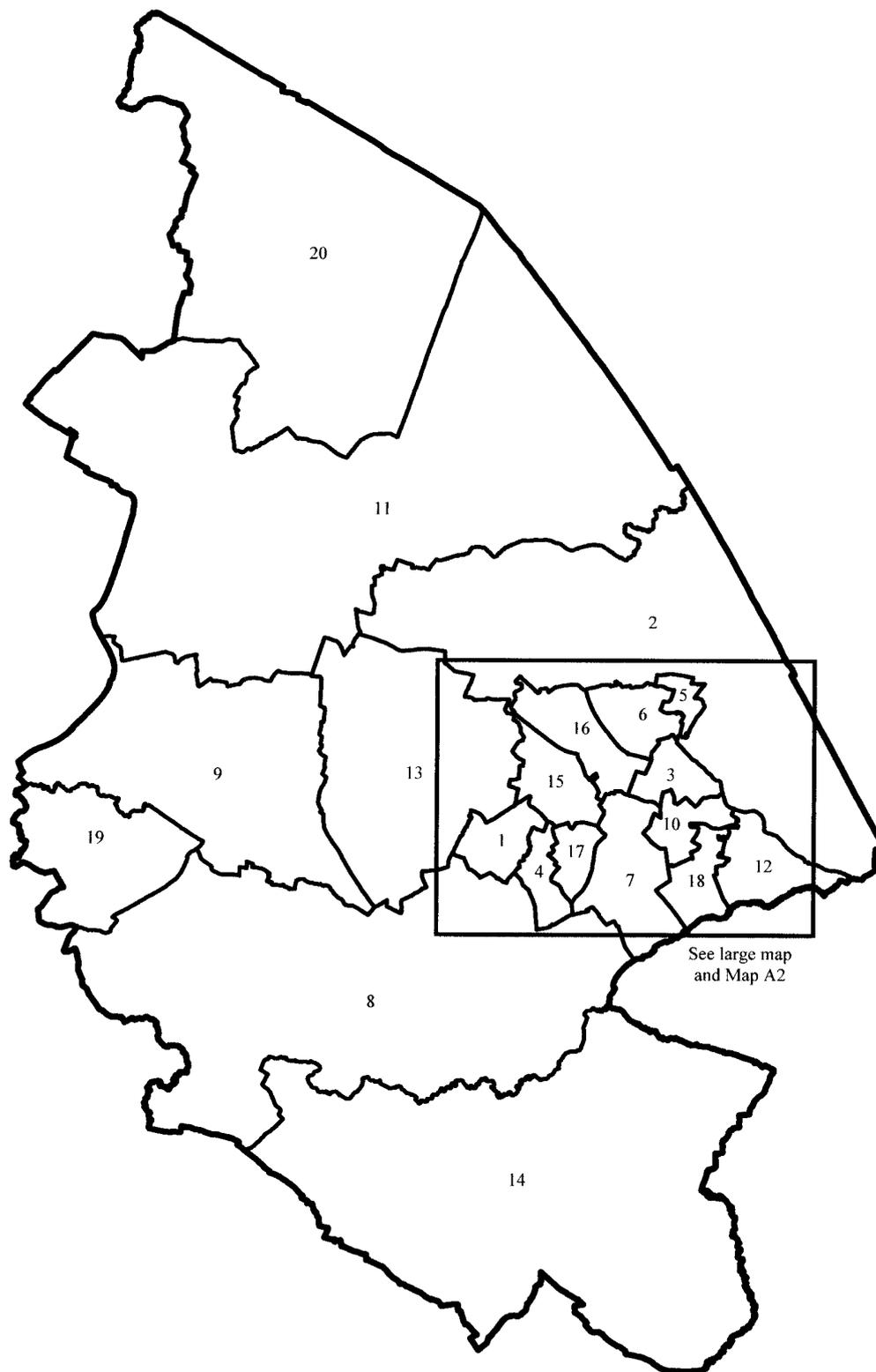
The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Rugby area.

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed parish ward boundary between Cawston and Dunchurch parish wards in Dunchurch parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the Rugby town area including Cawston parish ward of Dunchurch parish.

Map A1:  
Final Recommendations for Rugby: Key Map



Key to Wards

- |                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Admirals                | 11 Fosse                      |
| 2 Avon and Swift          | 12 Hillmorton                 |
| 3 Benn                    | 13 Lawford and King's Newnham |
| 4 Bilton                  | 14 Leam Valley                |
| 5 Brownsover North        | 15 New Bilton                 |
| 6 Brownsover South        | 16 Newbold                    |
| 7 Caldecott               | 17 Overslade                  |
| 8 Dunchurch and Knightlow | 18 Paddock                    |
| 9 Earl Craven and Wolston | 19 Ryton-on-Dunsmore          |
| 10 Eastlands              | 20 Wolvey                     |

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Map A2:  
*Proposed Boundary between Cawston and Dunchurch Parish Wards*







