

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Staffordshire

Report to The Electoral Commission

April 2004

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out the Committee's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the county of Staffordshire.

Summary

We began a review of Staffordshire County Council's electoral arrangements on 9 July 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 28 May 2003, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **In 28 of the 62 divisions, each of which are currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors varies by more than 10% from the average for the county and 13 divisions vary by more than 20%.**
- **By 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 31 divisions and by more than 20% in 16 divisions.**

Our main final recommendations for Staffordshire County Council's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 141–142) are:

- **Staffordshire County Council should have 62 councillors, the same as at present, representing 59 divisions, three fewer than at present;**
- **as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves been changed as a result of recent district reviews, the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change.**

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

- **In 31 of the proposed 59 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the average, with only three divisions varying by more than 20%.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 44 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average by 2006, with only two divisions varying by more than 20%.**

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

- **Revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of parish councillors for the parish of Rugeley.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, at the address overleaf, which will not make an Order implementing them before 8 June 2004. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)		Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
Cannock Chase district			
1	Brereton & Ravenhill	1	Brereton & Ravenhill ward; Hagley ward; part of Western Springs ward (the proposed Western Springs South parish ward)
2	Cannock Town Centre	1	Cannock South ward; Cannock West ward
3	Cannock Villages	1	Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward; Norton Canes ward
4	Chadsmoor	1	Cannock East ward; Cannock North ward
5	Etchinghill & Heath	1	Etching Hill & The Heath ward; part of Western Springs ward (the proposed Western Springs North parish ward)
6	Hednesford & Rawsley	2	Hawks Green ward; Hednesford Green Heath ward; Hednesford North ward; Hednesford South ward; Rawsley ward
East Staffordshire borough			
7	Burton Tower	1	Brizlincote ward; Winshill ward
8	Burton Town	1	Burton ward; Eton Park ward; Shobnall ward
9	Burton Trent	1	Anglesey ward; Stapenhill ward
10	Dove	1	Crown ward; Rolleston on Dove ward; Tutbury & Outwoods ward
11	Horninglow & Stretton	1	Horninglow ward; Stretton ward
12	Needwood Forest	1	Branston ward; Needwood ward; Yoxall ward
13	Uttoxeter Rural	1	Abbey ward; Bagots ward; Churnet ward; Weaver ward
14	Uttoxeter Town	1	Heath ward; Town ward
Lichfield district			
15	Burntwood North	1	Boney Hay ward; Burntwood Central ward; Chase Terrace ward
16	Burntwood South	1	All Saints ward; Chasetown ward; Summerfield ward
17	Lichfield City North	1	Chadsmead ward; Curborough ward; Stowe ward
18	Lichfield City South	1	Leomansley ward; St John's ward
19	Lichfield Rural East	1	Bourne Vale ward; Fazeley ward; Mease & Tame ward; part of Whittington ward (the parishes of Fisherwick and Whittington)
20	Lichfield Rural North	1	Alrewas & Fradley ward; Boley Park ward; King's Bromley ward; part of Whittington ward (Streethay parish)
21	Lichfield Rural South	1	Hammerwich ward; Little Aston ward; Shenstone ward; Stonnall ward
22	Lichfield Rural West	1	Armitage with Handsacre ward; Colton & Mavesyn Ridware ward; Highfield ward; Longdon ward
Newcastle under Lyme borough			
23	Audley & Chesterton	1	Audley & Bignall End ward; Chesterton ward; part of Halmerend ward (the southern parish ward of Audley Rural parish and an unparished area)

Division name (by district council area)		Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
24	Bradwell & Porthill	1	Bradwell ward; Holditch ward; Porthill ward
25	Cross Heath & Silverdale	1	Cross Heath ward; Knutton & Silverdale ward; Silverdale & Parkside ward
26	Keele & Westlands	1	Keele ward; Thistleberry ward; Westlands ward
27	Kidsgrove & Talke	2	Butt Lane ward; Kidsgrove ward; Newchapel ward; Ravenscliffe ward; Talke ward
28	Newcastle Rural	1	Loggerheads & Whitmore ward; Madeley ward; part of Halmerend ward (the parishes of Balterley and Betley)
29	Newcastle South	1	Clayton ward; Seabridge ward; Town ward
30	Wolstanton	1	May Bank ward; Wolstanton ward
South Staffordshire district			
31	Brewood	1	Brewood & Coven ward; Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley ward
32	Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Wyrley	2	Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward; Cheslyn Hay South ward; Essington ward; Featherstone & Sharesill ward; Great Wyrley Landywood ward; Great Wyrley Town ward
33	Codsall	1	Bilbrook ward; Codsall North ward; Codsall South ward
34	Kinver	1	Himley & Swindon ward; Kinver ward; Trysull & Seisdon ward
35	Penkridge	1	Huntington & Hatherton ward; Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell ward; Penkridge South East ward; Penkridge West ward
36	Perton	1	Pattingham & Patshull ward; Perton Dippons ward; Perton East ward; Perton Lakeside ward
37	Wombourne	1	Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward; Wombourne South East ward; Wombourne South West ward
Stafford borough			
38	Barlaston & Fulford	1	Barlaston & Oulton ward; Fulford ward; Milwich ward
39	Eccleshall	1	Eccleshall ward; Swynnerton ward
40	Gnosall & Doxley	1	Church Eaton ward; Gnosall & Woodseaves ward; Seighford ward; part of Tillington ward
41	Stafford Central	1	Coton ward; part of Forebridge ward; Littleworth ward; part of Rowley ward
42	Stafford North	1	Common ward; Holmcroft ward; part of Tillington ward
43	Stafford South-East	1	Baswich ward; part of Forebridge ward; Penside ward; Weeping Cross ward
44	Stafford Trent Valley	1	Chartley ward; Haywood & Hixon ward; Milford ward
45	Stafford West	1	Highfields & Western Downs ward; Manor ward; part of Rowley ward
46	Stone	1	St Michael's ward; Stonefield & Christchurch ward; Walton ward
Staffordshire Moorlands district			
47	Biddulph North	1	Biddulph Moor ward; Biddulph North ward; Biddulph West ward
48	Biddulph South & Endon	1	Bagnall & Stanley ward; Biddulph East ward; Biddulph South ward; Brown Edge & Endon ward

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
49 Caverswall	1	Caverswall ward; Cellarhead ward; Forsbrook ward; Werrington ward
50 Cheadle & Checkley	1	Cheadle South East ward; Cheadle West ward; Checkley ward
51 Churnet Valley	1	Alton ward; Cheadle North East ward; Cheddleton ward; Churnet ward
52 Leek Rural	1	Dane ward; Hamps Valley ward; Horton ward; Ipstones ward; Leek North ward; Manifold ward
53 Leek South	1	Leek East ward; Leek South ward; Leek West ward
Tamworth borough		
54 Amington	1	Amington ward; part of Bolehall ward; part of Glascote ward
55 Bolebridge	1	Part of Belgrave ward; part of Bolehall ward; part of Castle ward; part of Mercian ward
56 Perrycrofts	1	Part of Mercian ward; Spital ward
57 Stonydelph	1	Part of Glascote ward; Stonydelph ward
58 Watling North	1	Part of Belgrave ward; part of Castle ward; part of Trinity ward; part of Wilnecote ward
59 Watling South	1	Part of Trinity ward; part of Wilnecote ward

Notes:

1. *The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the Staffordshire districts which were completed in 1999. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*
2. *The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above and the maps in Appendix A illustrate some of the proposed boundaries in more detail.*

Table 2: Final recommendations for Staffordshire

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	
Cannock Chase district								
1	Brereton & Ravenhill	1	8,566	8,566	-17	9,460	9,460	-10
2	Cannock Town Centre	1	11,085	11,085	8	11,340	11,340	8
3	Cannock Villages	1	10,010	10,010	-3	10,763	10,763	3
4	Chadsmoor	1	11,147	11,147	9	10,987	10,987	5
5	Etching Hill & Heath	1	9,440	9,440	-8	9,454	9,454	-10
6	Hednesford & Rawsley	2	21,575	10,788	5	22,565	11,283	8
East Staffordshire district								
7	Burton Tower	1	10,179	10,179	-1	9,977	9,977	-5
8	Burton Town	1	10,040	10,040	-2	10,561	10,561	1
9	Burton Trent	1	10,276	10,276	0	10,012	10,012	-4
10	Dove	1	8,932	8,932	-13	9,093	9,093	-13
11	Horninglow & Stretton	1	12,094	12,094	18	11,976	11,976	15
12	Needwood Forest	1	11,960	11,960	16	11,938	11,938	14
13	Uttoxeter Rural	1	7,859	7,859	-24	8,034	8,034	-23
14	Uttoxeter Town	1	9,241	9,241	-10	9,028	9,028	-14
Lichfield district								
15	Burntwood North	1	9,123	9,123	-11	9,686	9,686	-7
16	Burntwood South	1	8,617	8,617	-16	9,352	9,352	-11
17	Lichfield City North	1	10,668	10,668	4	11,517	11,517	10
18	Lichfield City South	1	7,837	7,837	-24	9,715	9,715	-7
19	Lichfield Rural East	1	10,031	10,031	-2	10,651	10,651	2
20	Lichfield Rural North	1	9,574	9,574	-7	10,549	10,549	1
21	Lichfield Rural South	1	9,090	9,090	-11	9,752	9,752	-7
22	Lichfield Rural West	1	10,056	10,056	-2	10,651	10,651	2
Newcastle under Lyme borough								
23	Audley & Chesterton	1	11,562	11,562	13	10,845	10,845	4

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Bradwell & Porthill	1	11,480	11,480	12	11,135	11,135	6
25 Cross Heath & Silverdale	1	10,435	10,435	2	10,057	10,057	-4
26 Keele & Westlands	1	12,609	12,609	23	12,362	12,362	18
27 Kidsgrove & Talke	2	18,537	9,269	-10	18,094	9,047	-13
28 Newcastle Rural	1	9,664	9,664	-6	10,004	10,004	-4
29 Newcastle South	1	11,322	11,322	10	10,882	10,882	4
30 Wolstanton	1	9,573	9,573	-7	9,403	9,403	-10
South Staffordshire district							
31 Brewood	1	8,551	8,551	-17	9,099	9,099	-13
32 Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Wyrley	2	22,774	11,387	11	23,109	11,555	10
33 Codsall	1	10,052	10,052	-2	10,279	10,279	-2
34 Kinver	1	9,165	9,165	-11	9,528	9,528	-9
35 Penkridge	1	11,599	11,599	13	11,981	11,981	15
36 Perton	1	10,351	10,351	1	10,490	10,490	0
37 Wombourne	1	11,927	11,927	16	12,445	12,445	19
Stafford borough							
38 Barlaston & Fulford	1	9,240	9,240	-10	9,681	9,681	-7
39 Eccleshall	1	8,787	8,787	-14	8,836	8,836	-15
40 Gnosall & Doxey	1	11,559	11,559	12	11,484	11,484	10
41 Stafford Central	1	11,484	11,484	12	11,366	11,366	9
42 Stafford North	1	9,903	9,903	-4	9,858	9,858	-6
43 Stafford South-East	1	12,104	12,104	18	12,669	12,669	21
44 Stafford Trent Valley	1	9,417	9,417	-8	9,958	9,958	-5
45 Stafford West	1	12,145	12,145	18	11,996	11,996	15
46 Stone	1	11,594	11,594	13	12,031	12,031	15
Staffordshire Moorlands district							
47 Biddulph North	1	10,029	10,029	-2	9,789	9,789	-6
48 Biddulph South & Endon	1	11,217	11,217	9	10,369	10,369	-1

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
49 Caverswall	1	11,263	11,263	10	10,522	10,522	1
50 Cheadle & Checkley	1	11,282	11,282	10	10,620	10,620	2
51 Churnet Valley	1	10,413	10,413	1	10,283	10,283	-2
52 Leek Rural	1	11,423	11,423	11	10,622	10,622	2
53 Leek South	1	11,971	11,971	17	11,337	11,337	8
Tamworth borough							
54 Amington	1	10,286	10,286	0	10,661	10,661	2
55 Bolebridge	1	8,940	8,940	-13	9,652	9,652	-8
56 Perrycrofts	1	9,204	9,204	-10	9,889	9,889	-5
57 Stonydelph	1	9,913	9,913	-4	10,265	10,265	-2
58 Watling North	1	8,886	8,886	-14	9,411	9,411	-10
59 Watling South	1	8,984	8,984	-13	10,238	10,238	-2
Totals	62	636,805	-	-	648,311	-	-
Averages	-	-	10,271	-	-	10,457	-

Source Electorate figures are based on information provided by Staffordshire County Council. The figures provided by Staffordshire County Council, due to the creation of new ward boundaries and rounding, may differ very slightly between Table 2 and Table 4. The final recommendations figures for Stafford borough have been slightly amended from the draft recommendations, having a negligible effect on electoral equality.

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 county. 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 county of Staffordshire. Our review of the county is 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 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 no. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

3 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (Published by the EC in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when the Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made, then to commence a PER of the County Council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Staffordshire in April 2001 and we are now conducting our county review in this area.

5 Prior to the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000, each county council division could only return one member. This restraint has now been removed by section 89 of the 2000 Act, and we may now recommend the creation of multi-member county divisions. In areas where we are unable to identify single-member divisions that are coterminous with ward boundaries and provide acceptable levels of electoral equality, we will consider recommending multi-member divisions if they provide a better balance between these two factors. However, we do not expect to recommend large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps, in the more urban areas of a county.

6 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements*. These statutory *Rules* state that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

7 In the *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission states that we should, wherever possible, build on schemes that 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 division configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that each district area within the county is allocated the correct number of county councillors with respect to the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The *Rules* provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. The term 'coterminosity' is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say, where county divisions comprise one or more whole district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise that it is unlikely to be possible to achieve absolute coterminosity throughout a county area while also providing for the optimum level of electoral equality. In this respect, county reviews are different from those of districts. We will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions. The average level of coterminosity secured under our final recommendations for the first eleven counties that we have reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. Therefore, we recommend that, in formulating schemes, interested parties should seek to secure a level of coterminosity of around 60% to 80%.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. 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.

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we must recognise that it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining rural and urban areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some of the existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations would continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 As a part of this review we may also make recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. We therefore expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews only on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

The review of Staffordshire

16 We completed the reviews of the eight district council areas in Staffordshire in October 2000 and Orders for the new electoral arrangements have since been made. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council. The last such review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1980 (Report No.386).

17 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 9 July 2002, when we wrote to Staffordshire County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, district, parish and town councils in the county, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the County, the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Staffordshire County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 October 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

18 Stage Three began on 28 May 2003 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Staffordshire County Council*, and ended on 21 July 2003. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties 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.

19 In preparing this report the Committee has had regard to the general duty under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 to promote racial equality and to the approach set out in BCFE (03) 35, *Race Relations Legislation*, which the Committee considered and agreed at its meeting on 9 April 2003.

2 Current electoral arrangements

20 The county of Staffordshire comprises the districts of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Newcastle under Lyme, South Staffordshire, Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands and Tamworth.

21 Staffordshire is in the centre of England, and is bounded by Cheshire to the north, Derbyshire to the north-east, Warwickshire, the West Midlands and Worcestershire to the south, and Shropshire to the west. Staffordshire covers an area of 262,355 hectares. The unitary authority of Stoke on Trent is contained within the county, and a mixture of farmland, towns and villages makes up the south and east of the county.

22 The electorate of the county is 636,847. The Council presently has 62 members, with one member elected from each division.

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

24 At present, each councillor represents an average of 10,272 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 10,457 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the last two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 28 of the 62 divisions varies by more than 10% from the district average, and in 13 divisions by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is currently in The Heaths division where the councillor represents 30% more electors than the county average. Since 1975, the total electorate of Staffordshire (less Stoke-on-Trent) has increased by 18% from 519,548 in 1976, to 636,847 in 2001. The most significant growth has been in Tamworth, although South Staffordshire, Lichfield and Stafford have seen notable growth.

25 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Staffordshire, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions; our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards, and changes in the electorate over the past 20 years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
Cannock Chase district					
1 Cannock	1	8,828	-14	8,965	-14
2 Chadsmoor	1	8,639	-16	8,536	-18
3 Hednesford	1	13,086	27	13,561	30
4 Norton Canes	1	9,995	-3	10,551	1
5 Rugeley North	1	9,931	-3	10,048	-4
6 Rugeley South	1	8,490	-17	9,398	-10
7 The Hayes	1	12,854	25	13,508	29
East Staffordshire district					
8 Burton Tower	1	10,482	2	10,359	-1
9 Burton Town	1	9,510	-7	10,012	-4
10 Burton Trent	1	8,689	-15	8,376	-20
11 Burton West	1	9,526	-7	9,376	-10
12 Dove	1	12,121	18	12,067	15
13 Needwood Forest	1	11,195	9	11,305	8
14 Uttoxeter Rural	1	9,830	-4	9,958	-5
15 Uttoxeter Urban	1	9,230	-10	9,169	-12
Lichfield district					
16 Burntwood Chase	1	9,797	-5	10,407	0
17 Burntwood Saints	1	10,631	3	11,589	11
18 Lichfield City North	1	9,932	-3	10,330	-1
19 Lichfield City South	1	12,566	22	15,108	44
20 Lichfield Rural East	1	10,010	-3	10,615	2
21 Lichfield Rural North	1	12,560	22	13,904	33
22 Lichfield Rural South	1	9,499	-8	9,919	-5
Newcastle under Lyme borough					
23 Audley & Chesterton	1	11,316	10	11,071	6

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
24 Bradwell & Porthill	1	8,483	-17	8,134	-22
25 Cross Heath	1	7,503	-27	7,207	-31
26 Keele & Silverdale	1	9,292	-10	8,973	-14
27 Kidsgrove	1	11,132	8	10,967	5
28 Newcastle Rural	1	11,346	10	11,219	7
29 Talke	1	7,413	-28	7,156	-32
30 Thistleberry	1	10,760	5	10,508	0
31 Westlands	1	9,803	-5	9,488	-9
32 Wolstanton	1	8,152	-21	8,060	-23
South Staffordshire district					
33 Brewood	1	9,500	-8	9,817	-6
34 Codsall	1	10,052	-2	10,471	0
35 Essington	1	11,374	11	11,619	11
36 Great Wyrley	1	8,794	-14	8,885	-46
37 Kinver	1	9,165	-11	9,538	-45
38 Penkridge	1	13,256	29	13,697	-30
39 Wombourne	1	11,096	8	11,509	10
40 Wrottesley	1	11,182	9	11,395	9
Stafford borough					
41 Eccleshall	1	11,284	10	11,368	9
42 Gnosall	1	10,698	4	10,552	1
43 Stafford East Gate	1	9,393	-9	9,274	-11
44 Stafford North Gate	1	9,904	-4	10,378	-1
45 Stafford South Gate	1	11,702	14	12,387	18
46 Stafford Trent Valley	1	11,274	10	11,741	12
47 Stafford West Gate	1	10,502	2	10,402	-1
48 Stone Rural	1	9,657	-6	9,797	-6
49 Stone Urban	1	11,597	13	11,983	15

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
Staffordshire Moorlands district					
50 Biddulph Endon	1	10,572	3	9,878	-6
51 Biddulph Town	1	10,672	4	10,202	-2
52 Caverswall	1	10,372	1	9,573	-8
53 Cheadle Checkley	1	11,636	13	11,055	6
54 Churnet Valley	1	7,872	-23	7,457	-29
55 Leek North	1	8,971	-13	8,359	-20
56 Leek Rural	1	8,820	-14	8,710	-17
57 Leek South	1	8,688	-15	8,307	-21
Tamworth borough					
58 Bolebridge	1	13,107	28	14,066	35
59 Castle Liberty	1	9,542	-7	10,216	-2
60 Perry Crofts	1	7,835	-24	8,408	-20
61 The Heaths	1	13,303	30	13,908	33
62 Watling	1	12,426	21	13,519	29
Totals	62	636,847	-	648,315	-
Averages	-	10,272	-	10,457	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Staffordshire County Council. The figures provided by Staffordshire County Council, due to the creation of new ward boundaries and rounding, may differ very slightly between Table 2 and Table 4.

Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, and the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol(-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Cross Heath division in Newcastle under Lyme were relatively over-represented by 27%, while electors in The Heaths division in Tamworth were relatively under-represented by 30%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

26 During Stage One we received 80 representations, including county-wide schemes from the County Council and Conservative Group, and representations from four district councils, 25 parish and town councils (including Staffordshire Parish Council Association) and a further 34 representations from local political parties, county councillors, district councillors, residents' associations and local residents. 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 Staffordshire County Council*.

27 We based our draft recommendations on a number of different proposals, along with our own amendments in various areas. The County Council's proposals put heavy emphasis on achieving high levels of electoral equality but this resulted in a low level of coterminosity. As a result, we were unable to consider its scheme in a number of districts, and adopted parts of the Conservative Group's proposals, a district council's, a residents' association's and a local resident's proposals. We proposed that:

- Staffordshire Borough Council should be served by 62 councillors;
- there should be 59 electoral divisions, involving changes to the boundaries of all divisions.

Draft recommendation

Staffordshire County Council should comprise 62 councillors, serving 59 divisions.

28 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 28 of the 59 divisions varying by no more than 10% from the county average.

4 Responses to consultation

29 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 88 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Staffordshire County Council.

Staffordshire County Council

30 The County Council generally objected to our draft recommendations as it felt that emphasis was placed too strongly on coterminosity as opposed to electoral equality.

31 The County Council opposed our proposals for Cannock Chase, arguing that community identity had been reduced in the existing divisions. In East Staffordshire, it considered that our recommendations created large divisions with high electoral inequality. It also suggested that our Stretton division be renamed Burton West. In Lichfield, the County Council felt that Lichfield North and Lichfield South divisions did not best reflect community identity and electoral equality. In most cases, the County Council reiterated its Stage One proposals. In South Staffordshire District, the County Council felt that the proposed Cheslyn Hay, Essington and Great Wyrley divisions should be divided and renamed as outlined in their Stage One proposals. In Stafford Borough, the County Council also recommended reverting to their Stage One proposals for the Castletown area. The County Council had 'no adverse comment' with regard to our proposals in Newcastle under Lyme Borough and Tamworth Borough.

Political Parties

32 The Staffordshire County Council Conservative Group offered full support for our draft recommendations across the County. The Staffordshire County Council Liberal Democrat Group offered general support for our draft recommendations. However, it did mention 'some minor areas of concern', which it referred to its local parties for further comment.

33 Chadsmoor and Broomhill Branch Labour Party and Cannock Chase Conservative Association offered their full support for our proposals in Cannock Chase District. Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Branch Labour Party opposed our draft recommendations for the Cannock Chase area, arguing that too much emphasis has been placed on coterminosity as opposed to electoral equality and that community identity was negatively affected. Cannock Branch Labour Party expressed opposition to our draft recommendations and suggested that the four Cannock wards be incorporated into one two-member Cannock Town division. Cannock Chase Constituency Labour Party expressed opposition to our recommendations arguing the original criteria had 'not been adhered to'.

34 Burton Conservative Association supported our recommendations for the area, offering suggestions for name changes of Tutbury and Stretton divisions to Dove and Stretton & Horninglow respectively, the latter change also being echoed by a local resident. We received 153 pro forma letters from the Stone Liberal Democrats, 105 of which opposed linking Haughton and Church Eaton with Doxley and 48 supporting the proposal. Stoke On Trent Liberal Democrats registered their support for our proposals for Staffordshire Moorlands District. Staffordshire Moorlands Constituency Labour Party opposed our draft recommendations, supporting Option 2 as outlined in the County Council's proposals as an alternative. Cheadle and District Labour Party generally supported our draft recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands but did express opposition to Cheadle North having two county councillors.

District, parish and town councils

35 In Cannock Chase, Cannock Chase District Council offered their full support for our proposals. Rugeley Town Council expressed opposition to our draft recommendations offering

its Stage One proposals as an alternative; however, it did not provide any further evidence to support this. Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Parish Council also opposed our draft recommendations for Cannock Chase, providing a comprehensive list of objections concluding with a request to keep Heath Hayes 'intact as an electoral entity'. Bridgtown Parish Council expressed support for the County Council's proposals and suggested a Cannock Town division identical to that suggested by Cannock Branch Labour Party.

36 We received support for our proposals in East Staffordshire from East Staffordshire Borough Council, Barton under Needwood Parish Council, Yoxall Parish Council, Rolleston On Dove Parish Council and Newborough Parish Council.

37 In Lichfield, Lichfield District Council and Lichfield City Council supported our draft recommendations. Hamstall Ridware Parish Council proposed that Hamstall Ridware Parish be included in Lichfield Rural West, with which, it stated, it shares greater affinity than Lichfield Rural North.

38 In Newcastle under Lyme, the Borough Council and Madeley Parish Council did not wish to make any formal representations about our draft recommendations. Betley, Balterley & Wrinehill Parish Council pointed out the correct full name of its Council, as opposed to Betley and Balterley, which we had stated.

39 In South Staffordshire, Great Wyrley Parish Council and Cheslyn Hay Parish Council expressed concern over our proposed two-member division for the area stating that the size of the division would make it too large for effective representation and operation. Councillor Boyle, representing Cheslyn Hay North and Saredon, echoed this. All three proposed similar alternatives which included splitting the division into two single-member wards.

40 In Stafford, Church Eaton Parish Council and Gnosall Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations, although the latter did voice concern that the proposed Castle ward would be too large for a councillor to manage effectively.

41 In Staffordshire Moorlands, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council supported our draft recommendations but expressed disappointment over the reduction in the number of councillors serving the district. Bagnall Parish Council also supported our recommendations. Caverswall Parish Council and Ipstones Parish Council both voiced opposition over a reduction in the number of councillors serving the district.

Other representations

42 A number of further representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents.

43 Paul Farrelly, Member of Parliament for Newcastle under Lyme, expressed support for our proposals for the area. Charlotte Atkins, Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands, opposed our proposals for Staffordshire Moorlands District and expressed support for the County Council's Option 2 for the area as an alternative.

44 District Councillors Kraujalis and Morgan submitted their opposition to our proposals and attached a petition signed by 19 residents to the same effect. They expressed support for the County Council's proposals as they felt that the proposals took 'better account of local feelings and local communities'. Councillor Faulkner, representing Cannock Chase, and Councillor Freeman, representing Cannock West, offered full support for our proposals in Cannock Chase District. Councillor Toth, representing Hayes, opposed our proposals for Cannock Chase, instead expressing support for the County Council's Stage One proposals. Councillor Gribbin, representing Norton Canes, opposed any change in Norton Canes, arguing that the division is well established with strong community identity and, as an alternative, offered support for the

County Council's proposals for the area. Councillor Gribbin did however add support for our Cannock Town division in the event of the County Council's scheme for the area not being implemented. Councillor Corbett, representing Yoxall ward and Needwood Forest division, expressed full support for our recommendations in East Staffordshire. Councillor Dalgarno, Leader of the Conservative Group on Stafford Borough Council, Councillor Simpson, representing Stafford North, Councillor Bloomer, representing Stafford Trent Valley and Councillor Wakefield, representing Stone Urban, fully supported our draft recommendations for Stafford Borough. Councillor Stamp, representing Church Eaton ward, expressed support for our recommendations but suggested switching the names of our proposed Castle ward and Stafford West ward around to better reflect the respective community identities. Councillor Heath, representing Leek Rural division, confirmed her acceptance of our proposals for the area. Councillor Lovatt, representing Leek North, opposed our proposals to include Leek North in a new rural area arguing that it would not be fairly represented. Councillor Lovatt urged for an alternative to be sought. Councillors M & Y Ahmad, representing Cheddleton ward and Wetley Rocks ward respectively, expressed support for Option 2 of the County Council's proposals In Staffordshire Moorlands.

45 Four local residents in Cannock Chase offered their full support for our proposals for the area. Five further residents expressed opposition to our proposals for Cannock Chase, four of which fully supported the County Council's proposals as an alternative. We also received six pro forma letters opposing our proposals for Heath Hayes division. We received three further responses to our draft recommendations in East Staffordshire, including two letters of support, one from a former county councillor and one from a resident and a third from a local resident suggesting our proposed Stretton division be renamed Stretton & Horninglow to reflect the size and nature of both wards equally. We received support for our proposals in Stafford from the Castle Community Partnership. A resident of Stafford expressed his general support for our proposals in Staffordshire County and detailed further some minor alterations for our proposals in Stafford, including name changes to better reflect local communities and a slight boundary amendment between Castle and Stafford North divisions to enhance community identity. Another resident of Stafford fully supported our proposed name changes in Stafford. Four residents in Staffordshire Moorlands opposed our draft recommendations, instead expressing support for Option 2 outlined in the County Council's proposals.

46 We also received 123 pro forma letters supporting our Kidsgrove division, 199 pro forma letters opposing our recommendations for the Leek area of Staffordshire Moorlands Districts, 42 pro forma letters opposing our recommendations for the Biddulph area of Staffordshire Moorlands District and 19 pro forma letters opposing our recommendations and alternatively supporting the County Council's Option 2 for the Waterhouses area of Staffordshire Moorlands District.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

47 As with our reviews of districts, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Staffordshire County Council is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) which defines the need to secure effective and convenient local government, reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every division of the county'.

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

49 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters which apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards to achieve coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that, having reached conclusions on the appropriate number of councillors to be elected to the county council, each district council area is allocated the number of county councillors to which it is entitled. It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every division of a county.

50 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. 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. Accordingly, 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 the boundaries of district wards and community identities. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be taken into account and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

51 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not therefore able to take into account any representations that are based on these issues.

Electorate forecasts

52 Since 1975 there has been an 18% increase in the electorate of Staffordshire County Council. The County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of 1.8% from 636,805 to 648,313 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Lichfield and Tamworth. However, it also forecasts a decline in electorate in Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle under Lyme. 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. We accept that this is an inexact science, and having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

53 During Stage One, Rugeley Town Council noted that it appeared two planning applications for new housing developments in the town had not been taken into consideration as part of the County Council's projected electorate figures. We note the concern expressed by Rugeley Town Council. However, following correspondence with the County Council on this matter, we note that one of the development sites was included in the Council's submission, and the second was not received until several weeks after the electorate projection work was undertaken. We recognise that a cut-off point has to be established for considering planning applications in projected electorate figures, and that amending one ward projection would have a knock-on effect on other wards. Therefore, we consider the County Council's electorate projections to be as accurate as is possible, given the constraints of the review.

54 Uttoxeter Town Council questioned the County Council's projected electorate figures for the two Uttoxeter wards of Heath and Town, the total electorate for which it claimed would rise more quickly by 2006. However, we note that the County Council's projected electorate figures take account of future developments, the death rate and migration patterns, and if we adjusted the projected electorate figures, it would have a knock-on effect on all the other wards. Therefore, as stated above, we consider the figures provided by the County Council to be as accurate as possible.

55 We had difficulty in obtaining from the County Council, the required 2001 electorate figures for its scheme. We note the difficulties that the County Council experienced collecting and producing the 2001 electorate figures based on the new district and borough wards. We requested additional information and clarification of the 2001 figures for the new wards, provided by the Council. It stated that East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Staffordshire Moorlands district councils were unable to provide 2001 electorate figures based on the new wards. Therefore, the County Council estimated the 2001 electorate figures for the five districts from the 1999 electorate, and each district's total electorate for 2001. We note that the figures listed in Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Staffordshire, and Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements, differ very slightly due to rounding, however we accept that as the difference between the totals is so small (42 electors), the electoral variances are not affected.

56 During Stage Three we received one representation regarding the Council's electorate forecasts. Rugeley Town Council reiterated its concerns over the Council's projections for the area. However, these concerns were addressed during Stage One of the review and we remain convinced that the Council's projected electorate figures are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

57 As explained earlier, we now require justification for any council size proposed, whether it is an increase, decrease, or retention of the existing council size.

58 Staffordshire County Council presently has 62 members. At Stage One the County Council proposed retaining a council of 62 members, a proposal which had support from the other political groups on the council. Evidence of local support for the retention of the existing council size was shown by Gnosall Parish Council's submission to the Committee, which also proposed a council size of 62. After carefully considering the evidence received regarding council size and having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we concluded in our draft recommendations that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 62 members.

59 During Stage Three we received no further comments regarding council size. We therefore propose confirming a council size of 62 as final.

Electoral arrangements

60 Having carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One, we based our draft recommendations on a combination of proposals received and our own amendments. We acknowledged the difficulties faced in seeking to address the electoral inequality in Staffordshire, and recognised the County Council's attempts to improve electoral equality in many areas within the county. However, we noted that there would remain a relatively high degree of non-coterminous divisions in some areas, particularly in Cannock Chase, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford and Tamworth, compared to other districts in the county. We concluded that better coterminosity could be achieved throughout the county and therefore developed a scheme, based on a council size of 62, which adopted some elements of the schemes received, including those from the County Council, the Conservative Group, Cannock Chase Conservative Association, South Staffordshire District Council, and a local resident, as well as some of our own proposals. Overall, our draft recommendations secured 71% coterminosity, although 14 divisions would vary by more than 10%, and two by more than 20% by 2006.

61 During Stage Three we received a large number of responses, the majority of which were in the form of pro-forma letters. A mixture of support for and opposition to our draft recommendations was received. However, the nature of the opposition to our draft recommendations is such that we have been unable to recommend any significant alterations to our draft recommendations. The majority of responses in opposition offered no alternatives, and those that did mainly proposed the County Council's alternative proposals, such as for Staffordshire Moorlands district. These proposals came with little or no further evidence as to why they would strike a better balance between our statutory criteria and we therefore could not justify departing from our draft recommendations.

62 Having reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- i. Cannock Chase (page 31)
- ii. East Staffordshire (page 34)
- iii. Lichfield (page 36)
- iv. Newcastle Under Lyme (page 38)
- v. South Staffordshire (page 40)
- vi. Stafford (page 42)
- vii. Staffordshire Moorlands (page 45)
- viii. Tamworth (page 47)

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

Cannock Chase district

64 Under the current arrangements, the district of Cannock Chase is represented by seven county councillors, serving the seven divisions of Cannock, Chadsmoor, Hednesford, Norton Canes, Rugeley North, Rugeley South, and The Hayes. The number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the county average in five divisions, and by more than 20% in two divisions. The worst electoral imbalances are in Hednesford division which is under-represented by 27% (30% by 2006), and The Hayes division which is under-represented by 25% (29% by 2006). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Cannock Chase district is represented by the correct number of county councillors under a council size of 62.

65 During Stage One, the County Council submitted a scheme for seven single-member divisions in Cannock Chase, five of which were non-coterminous, resulting in just 29% coterminosity. In the south of the district, the County Council submitted a Norton Canes division comprising Cannock South and Norton Canes wards. In the west of the district, it proposed a Cannock division based on Cannock North and Cannock West wards. It proposed a Hednesford North division, composed of Hednesford Green Heath and Hednesford North wards, and part of Rawnsley ward. The County Council's Heath Hayes division consisted of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury wards, and part of Rawnsley ward. It proposed a Hednesford Central division comprising Cannock East and Hednesford South wards, and part of Rawnsley ward. In the north of the district the Council proposed Rugeley West division comprising Etching Hill & The Heath ward and part of Western Springs ward. Finally in the north east, the Council proposed a Rugeley East division based on Brereton & Ravenhill and Hagley wards, and part of Western Springs ward. Under the County Council's proposals, only two divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average in 2006.

66 Cannock Chase Conservative Association submitted proposals for seven single-member divisions covering the whole district of Cannock Chase. In the Rugeley area its proposals were identical to the Council's, but the remaining five divisions differed from the County Council's proposals. It proposed a Hednesford East division, comprising Hawks Green ward, Rawnsley ward, and part of Hednesford South ward, and a Hednesford Town Centre division comprising Hednesford Green Heath and Hednesford North wards and part of Hednesford South ward. Hednesford South ward would be split so that polling district HS2 and part of polling district HS3 would be included in Hednesford Town Centre division, and the remainder of the ward would be in Hednesford East division. Cannock Chase Conservative Association proposed a Chadsmoor division comprising Cannock East and Cannock North wards, and a Cannock Villages division comprising Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury and Norton Canes wards. This would allow for the formation of a Cannock Town Centre division comprising Cannock South and Cannock West wards, and would avoid splitting the town. Under the Association's proposals, all divisions would be within 10% of the county average by 2006, and the proposals would provide for 43% coterminosity.

67 The Conservative Group's proposals for Cannock Chase were the same as those of Cannock Chase Conservative Association, and both organisations agreed that Cannock and Hednesford should both be in single county divisions. However, the one difference would be that Hawks Green ward (under the Conservative Group's scheme) would be in a division with Norton Canes ward, as opposed to Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward as proposed by the Cannock Chase Conservative Association. This slight difference would result in just 1% difference between electoral variances in the two divisions.

68 We also received submissions from Cannock Chase District Council, Cannock Branch Labour Party, Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Branch Labour Party, Rugeley Town Council, Councillor Faulkner and four residents.

69 Having carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One, we noted that, while the County Council's scheme, supported by Cannock Branch Labour Party and Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Branch Labour Party, would secure good electoral equality, it would not provide for a high level of coterminosity between division and district ward boundaries. We also noted the opposition against the County Council scheme for Cannock Chase, expressed by the Conservative Group, Cannock Chase Conservative Association, Councillor Faulkner and local residents. We therefore based our draft recommendations on Cannock Chase Conservative Association's scheme, incorporating our own modifications, in order to achieve an improved level of coterminosity and a better reflection of community identity.

70 Under our draft recommendations the single-member Brereton & Ravenhill and Cannock Town Centre divisions would vary from the county average number of electors per councillor by

17% and 8% (10% and 8% in 2006). The single-member Cannock Villages and Chadsmoor divisions would vary from the county average by 3% and 9% (3% and 5% in 2006). The single-member Etching Hill & The Heath and two-member Hednesford & Rawnsley divisions would vary by 8% and 5% respectively (10% and 8% in 2006). Four of the six divisions would be formed from whole ward districts, resulting in a 67% level of coterminosity.

71 During Stage Three, the County Council opposed our draft recommendations, and argued that its Stage One proposals should be considered again. It specifically questioned our recommendations for Heath Hayes and Norton Canes, claiming that the split of Heath Hayes 'destroys community identity' and that there are 'no community links of significance' between Heath Hayes and Norton Canes. It further argues that the Hednesford and Rawnsley division has 'dubious community ties at best'. The Council also opposed combining Cannock South ward and Cannock West ward, stating that there is 'no strong community link apart from the areas both being in Cannock'. It proposed that we revert to its Stage One proposals for Cannock Chase district.

72 The Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the County Council offered support for our recommendations for Cannock Chase. A further 31 submissions were returned in response to our recommendations for the district. Cannock Chase District Council stated it noted our draft recommendations. The Conservative Group on the District Council, Cannock Chase Conservative Association, Chadsmoor and Broomhill Branch Labour Party, County Councillor Brian Faulkner, District Councillor Freeman and five local residents all offered strong support for our draft recommendations for the district. Cannock Chase Constituency Labour Party and a local resident opposed our draft recommendations, proposing only that the Committee 're-examine [its] present position in fairness to all participating organisations'. Rugeley Town Council reiterated its Stage One proposals to amend the Brereton & Ravenhill and Etching Hill & Heath divisions.

73 Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council, Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Branch Labour Party and county councillor Janet Toth opposed our recommendations for Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Cannock town, on the same basis as that of the County Council. All preferred that the County Council's Stage One proposals for Cannock Chase be adopted. We also received six pro-forma letters arguing that the County Council's proposals for these areas be reconsidered. County councillor Alexandra Gribben and a local resident opposed our draft recommendations for the proposed Hednesford & Rawnsley division, again arguing for the County Council's Stage One proposals to be adopted across the district. Cannock Branch Labour Party, district councillors Kraujalis and Morgan, Bridgtown Parish Council and three local residents all argued against our proposals for Cannock town. All proposed recommending a two-member division encompassing Cannock Town Centre and Chadsmoor divisions, effectively covering the whole of Cannock town.

74 We have carefully considered all representations received in response to our draft recommendations. As detailed previously in this report, we have noted that, where opposition has been voiced, little suitable alternatives have been provided. We decided during Stage Two of our review that the County Council's proposals for Cannock Chase did not, in our view, provide for the best reflection between our statutory criteria and, in particular, taking into account the issue of coterminosity. While we note the opposition received to our proposals, we do not believe that significant further evidence has been provided for us to justify adopting the County Council's proposals for Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Hednesford & Rawnsley (the main areas of contention).

75 Having considered the opposition to the divisions in Cannock town, and the counter-proposal to recommend a two-member division encompassing all of the town, we do not consider that significant arguments have been provided as to how two councillors covering the whole town would result in more effective and convenient local government. While we now have the ability to recommend multi-member divisions, we believe that they are only to be

recommended when a suitable alternative cannot be found. In this occasion, we note that a two-member division would not result in better levels of electoral equality or indeed coterminosity, and would therefore have to be proposed on the basis of either better reflecting community identity or providing for more convenient and effective local government. Having considered the submissions received regarding this issue, we have not been convinced that such a division would improve the balance between our criteria and as such do not intend to depart from our draft recommendations for Cannock town.

76 We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for Cannock Chase district as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor for the divisions in Cannock Chase district would remain the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map and Map 3.

East Staffordshire borough

77 Under the current arrangements, the borough of East Staffordshire is represented by eight county councillors serving the eight divisions of Burton Tower, Burton Town, Burton Trent, Burton West, Dove, Needwood Forest, Uttoxeter Rural, and Uttoxeter Urban. Two divisions currently vary by more than 10%, with the worst imbalances in Burton Trent division which is over-represented by 15% and Dove division which is under-represented by 18%. Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, East Staffordshire is represented by the correct number of councillors under a council size of 62.

78 At Stage One, the County Council submitted proposals for eight single-member divisions, which would result in no division varying by more than 10% from the average for the county, initially and by 2006, and would provide for 50% coterminosity. The Council noted that the electorate in Burton upon Trent would be entitled to be represented by 4.6 councillors and the remaining area entitled to be represented by 3.4 councillors under a council size of 62. Therefore, in order to maintain good electoral equality, it was acknowledged that some rural and urban areas would have to be combined in a division.

79 In the north west of the borough the Council proposed an Uttoxeter North division comprising a part of Abbey ward, Churnet, Heath and Weaver wards, and an Uttoxeter South division comprising a part of Abbey ward, Bagots, Crown, Town, and Yoxall wards. This would result in the town of Uttoxeter being split between two divisions. The Council stated that it looked into an alternative arrangement of retaining Uttoxeter in a single division, but decided that this would also result in a rural division in the surrounding area, which it considered would be too large for one councillor to represent effectively if good electoral equality was also to be achieved. In the north east of the borough the Council proposed a Tutbury & Horninglow division comprising Horninglow and Tutbury & Outwoods wards. The Council also proposed a Rolleston & Stretton division comprising part of Burton ward, and Rolleston on Dove and Stretton wards. In the south of the borough the Council proposed a Needwood Forest division comprising Branston and Needwood wards. In the urban east of the borough the Council proposed a Burton Town division comprising part of Burton ward, and Eton Park and Snoball wards. The Council's Burton Tower division would consist of Brizlincote and Winshill wards, and Burton Trent division would comprise Anglesey and Stapenhill wards.

80 The Conservative Group and Burton Conservative Association submitted identical schemes for the whole of East Staffordshire borough. Both were opposed to the County Council's proposals. Burton Conservative Association argued that the County Council's scheme ignored community links, crossed natural boundaries, and mixed urban and rural areas. The two Conservative organisations proposed a Uttoxeter division composed of Heath and Town wards, which would ensure that Uttoxeter town remains in one division. They proposed an Uttoxeter Rural division comprising Abbey, Bagots, Churnet, and Weaver wards, and the parishes of Draycott in the Clay, and Marchington from Crown ward. Their Needwood Forest division in the southeast would comprise part of Crown ward (Hanbury parish), the whole of Needwood ward,

part of Tutbury & Outwoods ward (Anslow and Outwoods parishes) and Yoxall ward. Their proposed Dove division would comprise Rolleston on Dove and Stretton wards, and part of Tutbury & Outwoods ward (Tutbury parish). Burton West division would comprise Branston and Shobnall wards. Burton Town division would comprise Burton, Eton Park and Horninglow wards. Their Burton Trent division would comprise Anglesey and Stapenhill wards. Burton Tower division would comprise Brizlincote and Winshill wards. Under these proposals three divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average number of electors per councillor, and the district would achieve 63% coterminosity.

81 We also received submissions from Borough Councillor Trelinski, Rolleston on Dove Parish Council, Rolleston Civic Trust, Uttoxeter Town Council and Uttoxeter Rural Parish Council.

82 Having carefully considered the representations received, we did not propose to endorse the County Council's proposals, and instead proposed to keep Town and Heath wards in one Uttoxeter Town division, and the surrounding rural area in a new Uttoxeter Rural division. This latter division would comprise Abbey, Bagots, Churnet and Weaver wards. Although these two divisions would have higher councillor:elector variances of 14% and 23% respectively (by 2006), we considered this to be justified in this particular case, in order that the identities and interests of the Uttoxeter community can be better reflected. The Uttoxeter Rural division would be over-represented by 23% both initially and by 2006, again, however we were of the view that this is justifiable given that the proposed division would cover a large geographical area. Furthermore, we were of the view that the configuration of the borough boundary in this area is restrictive and limits the alternative options open to us. We based our draft recommendations for Needwood Forest on the Council's proposed division, but also including Yoxall ward and argued that these arrangements would ensure that communities which share good communication links are kept together, and that the division is coterminous. Having noted the opposition of Rolleston on Dove Parish Council, Rolleston Civic Trust and Councillor Trelinski to the County Council's proposed Rolleston and Stretton division and having considered the two Conservative organisations alternative Dove division, we proposed a modified Tutbury division comprising Crown, Rolleston on Dove and Tutbury & Outwoods wards. Additionally, in place of the County Council's proposed Rolleston & Stretton and Tutbury & Horninglow divisions, we proposed a new Stretton division comprising Horninglow and Stretton wards. We proposed an amended Burton Town division so that the whole of Burton ward is included in the division, which provides for improved coterminosity and also a better electoral variance.

83 Under our draft recommendations, four of the proposed eight divisions in East Staffordshire would vary by more than 10% from the county average. The Burton Tower division, based on the existing division of the same name, would vary from the county average councillor:elector ratio by 1% in 2001 (5% in 2006), and the revised Burton Town division would vary by 2% (4% in 2006). The revised Burton Trent and Needwood Forest divisions and the new Stretton division would vary from the county average by 0%, 16%, 18% (4%, 14%, 15% in 2006). The new Tutbury division, revised Uttoxeter Rural division and newly named Uttoxeter Town division would vary from the county average by 13%, 23% and 10% (13%, 23% and 14% in 2006). We recognised that our draft recommendations would result in some higher electoral variances, but were of the view that these were justifiable given the better reflection of local community identities achieved, and given that our draft recommendations would result in 100% coterminosity with borough wards.

84 During Stage Three, we received 14 representations in response to our draft recommendations for East Staffordshire. The County Council opposed our recommendations and argued that its Stage One proposals be adopted, although offered no further evidence in support of this. It also proposed that Stretton division be renamed as Burton West division. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the Council offered full support, with the Conservative Group particularly supporting our recommendations for Uttoxeter, and proposing that we rename Tutbury division as Dove division.

85 A further 11 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations for East Staffordshire. The Borough Council, Burton Conservative Association and a local resident supported our draft recommendations, subject to the renaming of Stretton and Tutbury divisions as Stretton & Horninglow and Dove divisions, respectively, in order to better reflect the constituent areas. Barton under Needwood Parish Council, Newborough Parish Council, Yoxall Parish Council and two local residents all supported our draft recommendations for the borough. Finally, Marchington Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations to link Crown and Tutbury wards. It argued that Crown ward shared more affinity with Uttoxeter town centre.

86 We have carefully considered all representations received in response to our draft recommendations for East Staffordshire. We note the high levels of strong local support for those recommendations. We also note that the County Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for the borough, without providing further evidence as to why these proposals would strike a better balance between our statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We consequently do not intend to adopt the County Council's proposals for East Staffordshire, as we argued in our draft recommendations that our recommendations for the borough better reflected our statutory criteria and the evidence received has not convinced us that this isn't the case.

87 In considering the division names, we concur that there is a strong argument for the renaming of Tutbury and Stretton divisions to better reflect the constituent areas in those divisions. We therefore recommend renaming Stretton as Horninglow & Stretton and Tutbury as Dove division. Subject to the name changes, we intend confirming our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor for the divisions in East Staffordshire would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map.

Lichfield district

88 Under the current arrangements, the district of Lichfield is represented by seven county councillors, who serve seven divisions: Burntwood Chase, Burntwood Saints, Lichfield City North, Lichfield City South, Lichfield Rural East, Lichfield Rural North, and Lichfield Rural South. The worst electoral imbalances are in Lichfield City South and Lichfield Rural North divisions, which are both currently under-represented by 22% (44% and 33% by 2006). Overall, under the current arrangements, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Lichfield district is under-represented on the County Council. Furthermore the district's population is projected to increase further, and therefore we propose to allocate an additional councillor under a council size of 62, so that Lichfield would be represented by a total of eight councillors.

89 At Stage One, the County Council submitted a scheme for the Lichfield district which comprised eight single-member divisions, none of which would vary by more than 10% from the county average. In the west, the County Council proposed a Burntwood North division comprising Boney Hay and Burntwood Central wards, and part of Chase Terrace ward. The County Council proposed a Burntwood South division comprising All Saints and Chasetown wards, part of Chase Terrace ward and the whole of Summerfield ward. In the centre of the district the County Council proposed a Lichfield City North division, consisting of Chadsmead and Curborough wards and part of Stowe ward. The County Council also proposed a Lichfield City South division comprising Leomansley and St John's wards and part of Stowe ward. In the surrounding rural area, the Council put forward a Lichfield Rural East division comprising Bourne Vale, Fazeley and Mease & Tame wards and part of Whittington ward (Fisherwick and Whittington parishes). It proposed a Lichfield Rural North division comprising Alrewas & Fradley, Boley Park and King's Bromley wards and part of Whittington ward (Streethay parish). It proposed a Lichfield Rural South division comprising Hammerwich, Little Aston, Shenstone and Stonnall wards, an arrangement very similar to the existing Lichfield Rural South division. Finally the County Council put forward Lichfield Rural West division based on Armitage & Handsacre,

Colton & Mavesyn Ridware, Highfield and Longdon wards. These proposals would provide 25% coterminosity.

90 The Conservative Group put forward a district-wide scheme for Lichfield, which was broadly similar to the County Council's proposal, except that the Conservative Group did not propose to split Chase Terrace and Stowe wards. This would result in all of Chase Terrace ward being included in Burntwood North division, and all of Stowe ward being included in Lichfield City North division. However, the Conservative Group did propose to divide King's Bromley ward, so that Hamstall Ridware parish would be within Lichfield Rural West division instead of Lichfield Rural North division. We also received submissions from Councillor Lewis and Lichfield City Council.

91 Having carefully considered the representations received, we noted the County Council's proposals to split the wards of Chase Terrace and Stowe and that Lichfield City Council and the Conservative Group submitted proposals which opposed the partition of Stowe ward. We further noted that incorporating the whole of Stowe ward in Lichfield City North division would result in a variance of 4% (10% in 2006) for Lichfield City North division and consequently 24% in Lichfield City South (7% in 2006). Given that both divisions would be within 10% variance of the county average of electors per division by 2006, as well as being fully coterminous, we proposed this as part of our draft recommendations. After noting that the Conservative Group's amendment to the County Council's proposed Burntwood North and Burntwood South divisions would affect just 103 electors, we decided to adopt this division in order to secure better coterminosity. We adopted the County Council's proposals for a Lichfield Rural West division, which facilitated an improved level of coterminosity. We also adopted the County Council's proposals for Lichfield Rural North division. We also propose to adopt the County Council's proposals for Lichfield Rural East and Lichfield Rural South divisions as part of our draft recommendations as they provide for good electoral equality and coterminous boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the new Burntwood North and Burntwood South divisions would vary from the county average by 11% and 16% (7% and 10% in 2006) respectively. Lichfield City North division would vary by 4% (10% in 2006) and the revised Lichfield City South division by 24% (7% in 2006). The number of electors in Lichfield Rural East and the revised Lichfield Rural North divisions would vary from the county average by 2% (2% in 2006), and 7% (1% in 2006) respectively. The number of electors in Lichfield Rural South division and new Lichfield Rural West division, would vary by 11% (7% in 2006), and 2% (2% in 2006). Under our draft recommendations for Lichfield, coterminosity would be 75%.

92 During Stage Three, the County Council supported our draft recommendations for the majority of the district. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposals for Lichfield North and Lichfield South divisions, stating that they 'are considered better to serve community interests'. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the council offered full support for our draft recommendations, with the Conservatives specifically supporting the proposals for Lichfield North and Lichfield South division. Lichfield District Council and Lichfield City Council offered support for our draft recommendations. Hamstall Ridware Parish Council proposed that its parish be transferred from Lichfield Rural North division into Lichfield Rural West division.

93 Having carefully considered the representations received, and noting the significant local support received, we intend confirming our draft recommendations as final for Lichfield district. In considering the County Council's Stage One proposal, we note that we moved away from it for our draft recommendations in order to keep Stowe ward contained in one division. None of the evidence received during Stage Three has convinced us that adopting the County Council's proposals as part of our final recommendations would significantly benefit any of the other criteria, given the loss of coterminosity in the area. Similarly, transferring Hamstall Ridware parish as proposed by the Parish Council would involve the loss of coterminosity and we do not feel this is justified given the arguments used by the Parish Council.

94 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Lichfield as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor for the divisions in Lichfield would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Newcastle Under Lyme borough

95 Under the current arrangements, the borough of Newcastle under Lyme comprises 10 divisions, served by 10 county councillors. There are notable electoral imbalances in the borough with Audley & Chesterton, Bradwell & Porthill, and Cross Heath divisions varying from the county average number of electors per councillor by 10%, 17% and 27% (6%, 22% and 31% in 2006). Keele & Silverdale, Kidsgrove, and Newcastle Rural divisions have electoral variances of 10%, 8% and 10% (14%, 5% and 7% in 2006). Talke, Thistleberry, Westlands, and Wolstanton divisions vary from the county average by 28%, 5%, 5% and 21% (32%, 0%, 9% and 23% by 2006). Newcastle under Lyme would be entitled to 8.87 councillors under the projected electorate for 2006 under a council size of 62. Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Newcastle under Lyme is therefore over-represented and, under our draft recommendations, the borough would be represented by nine councillors, one less than at present.

96 At Stage One the County Council submitted a borough-wide scheme for Newcastle Under Lyme, a scheme which it stated took account of 'community affinities' following consultation. This particularly involved the Butt Lane, Kidsgrove and Talke areas, which the Council proposed to keep within the two divisions of Kidsgrove and Talke (14% and 13% respectively in 2006). In all, the County Council proposed nine single-member divisions. In the north west of the borough, Audley & Chesterton division would comprise Audley & Bignall End and Chesterton wards and part of Halmerend ward. The County Council proposed that the remainder of the more rural area in the south of the borough, be included in Newcastle Rural division, based on part of Halmerend ward (less Betley parish) and Loggerheads & Whitmore and Madeley wards. It also proposed including a very small area of Keele parish south of the M6, in Newcastle Rural division, which would split Keele parish. The remainder of the urban area in the east of the borough would make up the five other divisions. The County Council proposed a Bradwell & Porthill division comprising Bradwell, Holditch and Porthill wards, and a Wolstanton division based on May Bank and Wolstanton wards. Its Cross Heath & Silverdale division would comprise Cross Heath, Knutton & Silverdale and Silverdale & Parkside wards, and the northern area of Thistleberry ward. The remaining area of Thistleberry ward would be included in the County Council's proposed Keele & Westlands division, along with Keele and Westlands wards. Finally, in the eastern edge of the borough, Newcastle South division would comprise Clayton, Seabridge and Town wards. The County Council's proposals would result in a coterminosity level of 33%.

97 The Conservative Group also submitted proposals for Newcastle Under Lyme borough based on nine single-member divisions. It proposed an almost-identical Newcastle Rural division to the County Council, except it did not propose to split the southern part of Keele parish. The remainder of the divisions differed from the County Council's proposals. Audley & Chesterton division would comprise part of Audley & Bignall End ward (Bignall End parish), and Chesterton and Holditch wards. Bradwell & Porthill division would comprise Bradwell, and Porthill wards and the northern part of Wolstanton ward (approximately north east of the golf course and north west of Wolstanton Retail Park). The remaining southern half of Wolstanton ward would be included in Cross Heath & Silverdale division, together with Cross Heath, and May Bank wards. Keele & Knutton division would consist of Keele, Knutton, and Silverdale & Parkside wards. Its proposed Kidsgrove division would consist of Kidsgrove, Newchapel and Ravenscliffe wards, the towns of which it argued are 'naturally placed' to comprise a single division. Its Newcastle South division would comprise Clayton and Seabridge wards and the eastern part of Town ward. Its Talke division would comprise part of Audley & Bignall End ward (Audley parish ward), and Halmerend ward (Halmerend parish) and the whole of Butt Lane and

Talke wards. Finally, the Conservative Group proposed a Westlands division based on Thistleberry ward, part of Town ward (the remaining western part of Town ward), and Westlands ward. The Conservative Group proposals for Newcastle under Lyme would result in 22% coterminosity with the ward boundaries, with one division (Cross Heath & Silverdale) varying by more than 10% above the county average by 2006.

98 Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council submitted a borough-wide scheme, which was identical to the County Council proposals for Newcastle under Lyme borough. Newcastle Staffordshire Liberal Democrat Executive and the Borough of Newcastle under Lyme Liberal Democrat Group (the Liberal Democrats) submitted a borough-wide scheme which was one of the County Council's original draft consultation proposals, but which was not approved by the Council. The Liberal Democrats stated that they 'are of a view that the original draft comes closer to meeting the requirements' than the County Council's revised submission. They argued that their proposals provided better electoral variances (all 10% or below) and improved coterminosity (56%). The only division which would be the same as the County Council's Stage One submission, would be Wolstanton division on the eastern perimeter of the borough, comprising May Bank and Wolstanton wards. We also received submissions from Councillor Clarke, Councillor Cornes and eight local residents.

99 Having considered all representations received during Stage One, we did not propose to adopt the proposals of the Liberal Democrats or the Conservative Group, as they would split wards and link the Talke community with outlying areas. We noted Councillor Cornes' opposition to the Liberal Democrat proposal to split Audley & Bignall End ward and the evidence of the existence of strong communities in the Talke and Kidsgrove areas, as demonstrated during the Council's consultation. We proposed to incorporate Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Newchapel, Ravenscliffe and Talke wards in a two-member Kidsgrove & Talke division, stating that this proposal would ensure that the communities are not divided or linked with outlying areas, and would achieve an acceptable electoral variance for the division at 10% (13% by 2006). In the north west of the borough, we noted that the County Council's proposal would ensure that Audley & Bignall End ward is not split, and considered that the constituent wards had clear road links. We therefore adopted the County Council's proposal for Audley & Chesterton division, with the minor amendment of transferring Balterley parish into the more rural division of Newcastle Rural.

100 In the south of the borough, we proposed a Newcastle Rural division comprising part of Halmerend ward (Betley and Balterley parishes), and Loggerheads & Whitmore and Madeley wards, while in the north east of the borough we considered that the County Council's proposals provided more appropriate division boundaries and better coterminosity in addition to a good level (6% in 2006) of electoral equality. We proposed to broadly adopt the County Council's proposal for a Cross Heath & Silverdale division, less the northern part of Thistleberry ward. We adopted the County Council's proposals for Keele & Westlands division with two amendments to include the whole of Keele ward and Thistleberry ward, creating a division coterminous with the ward boundaries. Finally, we adopted the County Council's proposal for Newcastle South division as it is coterminous and keeps the urban areas together, as well as achieving some consensus with the Conservative Group's proposal.

101 Under our draft recommendations Audley & Chesterton, Bradwell & Porthill, and Cross Heath & Silverdale divisions would vary from the county average number of electors per councillor by 13%, 12% and 2% respectively (4%, 6% and 4% in 2006). Keele & Westlands, and Kidsgrove & Talke divisions would vary from the county average by 23% and 10% (18% and 13% in 2006). Newcastle Rural, Newcastle South and Wolstanton divisions would have variances of 6%, 10% and 7% (4%, 4% and 10% in 2006) respectively. Our recommendations for Newcastle under Lyme borough were 75% coterminous.

102 During Stage Three, we received eight submissions in response to our draft recommendations, along with 123 pro-forma responses. The County Council had no adverse

comment to make regarding this borough, while the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups offered full support. The Borough Council had no comment to make on the proposals. Paul Farrelly, Member of Parliament for Newcastle Under Lyme, offered full support for our draft recommendations. Charlotte Atkins, Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands, also supported our draft recommendations for the district, in particular our proposed two-member Kidsgrove & Talke division. Betley, Balterley & Wrinehill Parish Council pointed out the correct name of its council, while Madeley Parish Council had no comment to make on the recommendations. A further 123 pro-forma letters were received, all in support of our draft recommendations for the two-member Kidsgrove & Talke division.

103 Having considered the representations received in response to our draft recommendations, we intend confirming them as final, given the overwhelming support for them. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor for the divisions in the district would remain the same as under of draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map.

South Staffordshire district

104 Under the current arrangements, the district of South Staffordshire is represented by eight county councillors serving eight divisions: Brewood, Codsall, Essington, Great Wyrley, Kinver, Penkridge, Wombourne and Wrottesley. The worst imbalance is in Penkridge division which is under-represented by 29%, increasing to 30% by 2006. Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, South Staffordshire is currently represented on the County Council by the correct number of councillors.

105 During Stage One, Staffordshire County Council submitted a proposal for eight single-member divisions, none of which would vary by more than 10% from the county average number of electors per councillor by 2006. In the north west of the district it proposed a Brewood division comprising Brewood & Coven, Penkridge West and Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley wards. In the north east, the County Council proposed a Penkridge division comprising part of Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward (part of Saredon parish), part of Featherstone & Shareshill ward (Shareshill parish), and Huntington & Hatherton, Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell and Penkridge South East wards. In the east of the district the County Council proposed a Cheslyn Hay & Featherstone division comprising part of Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward (Cheslyn Hay parish, and part of Saredon parish), Cheslyn Hay South ward, part of Essington ward and part of Featherstone & Shareshill ward. In the far east of the district, the County Council put forward a Great Wyrley division comprising part of Essington ward and Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. In the centre of the district, the County Council proposed a Codsall division comprising Bilbrook, Codsall North, and Codsall South wards. The County Council also proposed a Perton division based on Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Dippons, Perton East and Perton Lakeside wards, and part of Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward (Lower Penn parish). In the south of the district the County Council proposed a Wombourne division comprising part of Wombourne North & Lower Penn (less Lower Penn parish and Penn Common polling district), and Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards. The County Council also proposed a Kinver division comprising Himley & Swindon, Kinver and Trysull & Seisdon wards and part of Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward (Penn Common polling district). The Council's proposals would result in a level of coterminosity with district wards of 25%.

106 The Conservative Group proposed four identical divisions to the County Council in the south of the district; Codsall, Kinver, Perton and Wombourne divisions. However, in the north it proposed four alternative divisions. Brewood division would comprise Brewood & Coven ward, Featherstone & Shareshill ward and part of Wheaton Aston Bishopswood & Lapley ward (less Lapley Stretton & Wheaton Aston parish). In the east of the district, the Conservative Group put forward a Cheslyn Hay division comprising Cheslyn Hay North, and Cheslyn Hay South wards and part of Essington ward, a small part of Featherstone & Shareshill ward and Huntington &

Hatherton ward. Finally, the Conservative Group proposed a Great Wyrley division comprising part of Essington ward and Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. South Staffordshire District Council submitted broadly similar proposals as the County Council and Conservative Group, which would result in two divisions having electoral variances 10% above the county average, and coterminosity of 75%. Submissions were also received from Cheslyn Hay Parish Council, Essington Parish Council, Great Wyrley Parish Council, Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council and Councillor Hampson.

107 After carefully considering the representations received during Stage One, we proposed a Wombourne division comprising Wombourne North & Lower Penn, Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards, creating a coterminous division. This would keep communities together which, we stated, justified the electoral variance of 16% initially (19% by 2006). We proposed a coterminous Kinver division comprising Himley & Swindon, Kinver, and Trysull & Seisdon wards. Given the consensus between the County Council, the Conservative Group and South Staffordshire Council regarding the boundaries for Codsall and Perton divisions, we proposed to broadly adopt these two divisions, less Lower Penn parish. In the north west of the district we proposed a Brewwood division comprising Brewwood & Coven and Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley wards. We proposed to broadly adopt South Staffordshire Council's proposed Penkridge division based on Huntington & Hatherton, Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell and Penkridge South East wards, with the addition of Penkridge West ward. In the east of the district, we proposed to amalgamate South Staffordshire District Council's Essington and Great Wyrley divisions into a two-member division of Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Wyrley. Our proposal would ensure that communities, wards and parishes are not split, and the number of electors per councillor would be 10% above the county average (by 2006), and would address the concerns raised in the representations received.

108 Under our draft recommendations Brewwood, Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Wyrley and Codsall divisions would vary from the county average number of electors per councillor by 17%, 11% and 2% (13%, 10% and 2% in 2006). Kinver division would vary by 11% from the county average and Penkridge would vary by 13% (9% and 15% by 2006 respectively). Perton and Wombourne divisions would vary from the county councillor:elector ratio by 1% and 16% (equal to and 19% in 2006). Under our draft recommendations South Staffordshire district would be 100% coterminous to the existing ward boundaries.

109 During Stage Three, we received six responses to our draft recommendations. The County Council, County Councillor Boyle, Cheslyn Hay Parish Council and Great Wyrley Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for the two-member Cheslyn Hay, Essington and Great Wyrley division. All proposed two new single-member divisions. Cheslyn Hay division would comprise Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward, and a small area of Great Wyrley Landywood ward. Great Wyrley division would comprise the remainder of Great Wyrley Landywood ward, Great Wyrley Town ward and Essington ward. Under these proposals, Cheslyn Hay division would have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the county average, and Great Wyrley division would have 18% more electors per councillor than the county average, by 2006, but neither division would be coterminous. County Councillor Boyle argues that the proposed two-member division was too large in both geographic and demographic terms, and that his solution 'would provide a more practical solution and maintain the vital link between the elected member and the community on an equitable basis'. Both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the County Council supported our draft recommendations.

110 Having considered the responses received during Stage Three, we intend confirming our draft recommendations as final for South Staffordshire district. We acknowledge that the two-member Cheslyn Hay, Essington and Great Wyrley division has provoked some local opposition. However, in considering the alternative proposed, we have noted that it results in a deterioration in the levels of electoral equality, loses coterminosity and results in the further warding of Great Wyrley Parish Council. Having assessed the evidence provided as to the improvement of community identity and the provision of effective and convenient local

government, we do not consider that sufficient arguments have been produced to justify our departing from our draft recommendations.

111 We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final for South Staffordshire. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor for the divisions in South Staffordshire would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Stafford borough

112 Under the current arrangements, the borough of Stafford is represented by nine county councillors, serving the nine divisions of Eccleshall, Gnosall, Stafford East Gate, Stafford North Gate, Stafford South Gate, Stafford Trent Valley, Stafford West Gate, Stone Rural and Stone Urban. The worst imbalances are in Stafford South Gate and Stone Urban divisions which have electoral variances of 14% and 13% (18 and 15% by 2006). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Stafford borough is currently represented by the correct number of councillors, under a council size of 62.

113 At Stage One we received borough-wide schemes from the County Council, the Conservative Group, Stone Liberal Democrat Party, and a local resident. The County Council proposed nine single-member divisions, a number of which incorporated both urban and rural areas in order to achieve good electoral equality. In the south west of the borough, the County Council proposed a Castle division comprising Church Eaton and Rowley wards, part of Seighford ward (Ellenhall, and Ranton parishes and part of Seighford parish, less Great Bridgeford parish ward). In the west of the borough the Council proposed an Eccleshall & Gnosall division comprising Eccleshall and Gnosall & Woodseaves wards, and part of Swynnerton ward (Yarnfield parish ward). In the north of the borough, the County Council proposed a Barlaston & Fulford division comprising Barlaston & Oulton, and Fulford wards, part of Stonefield & Christchurch ward (west of the railway line), and part of Swynnerton ward (less Yarnfield parish ward).

114 In the east of the borough, the County Council proposed a Stafford Trent Valley division comprising Chartley, Haywood & Hixon, Milford and Milwich wards. In order to ensure that the electoral variance did not go above 12% in 2006, the County Council proposed a Stone division comprising St Michael's ward, part of Stonefield & Christchurch ward (east of the railway line), and Walton ward. In the centre of the borough, the Council proposed a Stafford North division comprising Common and Holmcroft wards and part of Seighford ward (parishes of Creswell, Marston and Whitgreave, and Great Bridgeford parish ward). In the urban area of Stafford in the south of the borough, the Council proposed a Stafford East division comprising Coton, Forebridge and Littleworth wards. The Stafford West division proposed by the County Council comprised Highfields & Western Downs and Manor ward and part of Penside ward (polling districts PKA and PKD). The Council proposed a Stafford South division based on Baswich ward, part of Penside ward (polling districts PKB and PKC) and Weeping Cross ward. The County Council's proposals would be 22% coterminous with borough wards.

115 The Conservative Group put forward a similar scheme for Stafford borough as the County Council. The Conservative Group's Castle, Eccleshall & Gnosall, Stafford East, Stone Rural (Barlaston & Fulford under the County Council proposals), and Stone Urban divisions were identical to the County Council's proposals. The Stafford South division proposed by the Conservative Group comprised Baswich ward, part of Penside ward and Weeping Cross ward. It proposed a Stafford North Gate division, comprising Common and Holmcroft wards, part of Milford ward, and part of Seighford (Great Bridgeford parish ward). It also proposed a Stafford Trent Valley division based on Chartley, part of Milford ward and Milwich ward. Finally, the Conservative Group proposed a Stafford West division based on Highfields & Western Downs and Manor wards and part of Penside ward.

116 Councillor Stamp (Borough Councillor for Church Eaton ward) submitted a scheme for Stafford borough, on behalf of the Stone Liberal Democrat Party, as an alternative to the County Council's proposals. The Stone Liberal Democrat Party proposed five urban and three rural divisions and one Stone division, all without division names. In the west of the borough it proposed a division based on Church Eaton ward, part of Eccleshall ward and Gnosall & Woodseaves ward. In the north, Stone Liberal Democrat Party proposed a division comprising part of Barlaston & Oulton ward, part of Eccleshall ward, and Fulford and Swynnerton wards. In the east of the borough it proposed a division comprising part of Barlaston ward, and Chartley, Haywood & Hixon, Milwich and Seighford wards. It proposed a Stone division based on the three Stone town wards of St Michael's, Stonefield & Christchurch and Walton. In the north of the Stafford urban area, it proposed a division comprising Common and Holmcroft wards and part of Milford ward and part of Tillington ward. To the west of the Stafford urban area, Stone Liberal Democrat Party proposed a division comprising Highfields & Western Downs and Rowley wards, and part of Tillington ward. The Stone Liberal Democrats proposed a division based on Coton, part of Forebridge and Littleworth ward, in the east of the urban area, and a division based on part of Forebridge, Manor and Penside wards, and part of Weeping Cross ward. Lastly it proposed a division comprising Baswich ward, part of Milford ward (Berkswich, Brocton, Tixall, and Ingestre parishes), and part of Weeping Cross ward. All divisions except the proposed Stone division (at 15% by 2006) would be within 10% of the county average number of electors per councillor. The proposals would provide 11% coterminosity.

117 Submissions were also received from Castle Community Partnership, Councillor Simpson, Councillor Wakefield, Church Eaton Parish Council, Gnosall Parish Council, Haughton Parish Council, Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council, Sandon and Burston Parish Council and Swynnerton Parish Council. A local resident submitted a scheme for Stafford borough, as he had concerns regarding the County Council's proposals for the county and, in particular, Stafford. He proposed four predominately rural electoral divisions, four Stafford town divisions and one Stone town division. He proposed a Gnosall division in the southwest, based on Church Eaton, Gnosall & Woodseaves and Seighford wards. In the north of the borough, the resident proposed an Eccleshall division based on Eccleshall and Swynnerton wards, and Stone Rural division based on Barlaston & Oulton, Fulford and Milwich wards. His proposed Stone Urban division would be based on the same three wards (St Michael's, Stonefield & Christchurch and Walton) as the Stone Liberal Democrat Party, and his Stafford Trent Valley division would comprise Chartley, Haywood & Hixon and Milford wards. As regards Stafford town urban area, the local resident proposed four non-coterminous divisions. Firstly, Stafford North West comprising Holmcroft ward, part of Rowley ward (polling districts ROA, ROC, ROD and ROE, south of the dismantled railway), and Tillington ward. Secondly, Stafford North East division, based on Common and Coton wards, part of Forebridge ward (polling districts FRB, FRD, FRF and FRG, north west of Wolverhampton Road), and Littleworth ward. Thirdly, he proposed Stafford South East division based on Baswich ward, part of Forebridge ward (polling districts FRA, FRC, and FRE, south east of Wolverhampton Road), part of Penside ward (PKB and part of PKC polling districts, north east of the path situated north east of Meadow Road), and the whole of Weeping Cross ward. Lastly, the resident proposed Stafford South West division comprising Highfields & Western Downs and Manor wards, part of Penside ward (polling districts PK and PKD, south west of the path situated north east of Meadow Road), and part of Rowley ward (polling district ROB, north east of West Way). The local resident's proposals would result in five divisions varying by 10% above the county average number of electors per councillor. His proposed Stafford South division would result in the worst level of electoral equality; 17% by 2006, and his proposals would provide for 56% coterminosity.

118 Having considered all representations received during Stage One, we were of the opinion that the proposal of a local resident for a Gnosall division based on Church Eaton, Gnosall & Woodseaves and Seighford, would reflect the concerns expressed by Castle Community Partnership, Church Eaton Parish Council and Haughton Parish Council, and better reflect community identity in the area. We also noted that, as Stafford town is entitled to 4.5 councillors, in order to achieve a reasonable degree of electoral equality, a part of the town has to be

included with the rural area. Consequently, we proposed a Castle division based on the local resident's proposal above, (Church Eaton, Gnosall & Woodseaves and Seighford wards) with the addition of part of Tillington ward, south of the existing railway track and Doxey Marshes. We considered that Doxey is a well defined area, bordered by the existing and dismantled railway lines, which has a clear road link with the outlying rural area, and is therefore the most suitable area to be included in a more rural division.

119 In the north-west of the district, we considered that the Eccleshall division proposed by a local resident, based on Eccleshall and Swynnerton wards, would better reflect local views of community identity in the area, and noted that it would be coterminous. We therefore adopted this division as part of our draft recommendations. Similarly, in the north of the borough, we considered that the proposal of the local resident for Stone Rural division comprising Barlaston & Oulton, Fulford and Milwich wards to be the best option and therefore adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. In the south-east of the borough we adopted the proposal of the local resident for a Stafford Trent Valley division, as this would create a coterminous division. In the centre of the borough we proposed a coterminous division based on St Michael's, Stonefield & Christchurch and Walton wards, acknowledging that this arrangement would result in an electoral variance 13% above the county average (15% above by 2006). We considered, however, that this was justified in order to maintain community links. We proposed a Stafford North division broadly based on Stone Liberal Democrat Party's division (less Hopton & Coton parish), comprising Common and Holmcroft wards and part of Tillington ward (north of the railway line). In the east of Stafford town, we considered the County Council's Stafford East division to be a sensible division, which keeps the interlinked urban wards together, bounded by the A513 to the east and noted that it was broadly supported at a local level. However, we made an amendment to include part of Rowley ward (north of Newport Road, the A518). In the south west of Stafford town, we proposed a Stafford West division based on Highfields & Western Downs and Manor wards and part of Rowley ward (south of Newport Road). Finally, in the south east of Stafford town, we proposed a Stafford South division comprising Baswich ward, part of Forebridge ward (south of the railway), Penside ward and Weeping Cross ward, stating that we consider that our proposed Stafford South division keeps urban wards together, avoids splitting too many wards, and is the best option given that the area is on the edge of the borough.

120 Under our draft recommendations, Barlaston & Fulford, Castle, and Eccleshall divisions would vary from the county average of electors per councillor by 10%, 11% and 14% (7%, 10% and 15% in 2006). Stafford East, Stafford North and Stafford South divisions would vary from the county average by 11%, 4% and 18% (9%, 6% and 21% in 2006) respectively. Stafford Trent Valley, Stafford West and Stone divisions would vary from the county average councillor:elector ratio by 8%, 19% and 13% (5%, 15% and 15% in 2006) respectively. Our draft recommendations would result in a level of 56% coterminosity.

121 During Stage Three, we received 13 submissions in response to our draft recommendations, as well as 153 pro-forma letters. The County Council proposed transferring the Castletown area from Stafford East division, with which it has 'no connection', to Stafford North division. It also proposed renaming Stafford North, South and West divisions as Stafford Northgate, Southgate and Westgate divisions, and renaming Stafford East and Castle divisions as Stafford Central and Gnosall divisions. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the council offered full support for our draft recommendations; however the Conservative Group also supported the County Council's proposed renaming of Stafford East and Castle divisions.

122 Stafford Borough Council Conservative Group, County Councillors Robert Simpson, Len Bloomer and John Wakefield, Borough Councillor Barry Stamp, Church Eaton Parish Council, Gnosall Parish Council and Castle Community Partnership all offered full support for our draft recommendations for the borough. A local resident offered full support for the divisions, subject to one amendment to the Castletown area. He proposed moving the boundary between Castle and Stafford North divisions from the railway line to the River Sow, thus transferring the area to the south of the river into Castle division. He argued that these electors share much more

affinity with the area of Doxey to the west than with the remainder of Stafford North division, noting that the access for these electors is far easier into Doxey. This amendment would have a negligible effect on electoral equality and does not affect coterminosity.

123 In addition to the individual responses to our draft recommendations, we received 153 proforma letters in relation to the proposed Castle division. Of those, 105 opposed linking Haughton, Church Eaton and Bradley with Rowley & Tillington ward. The remaining 48 letters supported this division.

124 Having carefully considered the representations received in response to our draft recommendations, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final subject to one boundary amendment and the renaming of three divisions. While we recognise that linking Doxey with the more rural area to the west of Stafford has provoked some response, it has been a mixture of support and opposition. In addition, those opposed to the division have offered no viable alternative. In considering the two boundary amendments proposed for the Castletown area, from the County Council and a local resident, we conclude that a better reflection of community identity would be achieved in transferring the boundary between Castle and Stafford North divisions from the railway line to the River Sow. We believe that the electors to the south of the river associate more with the Doxey area to the west, in Castle division, and note that this amendment has a negligible effect on electoral equality and no effect on coterminosity.

125 Having considered the various division name alterations suggested, we concur that the division names of Castle, Stafford East and Stafford South, proposed as part of our draft recommendations, do not adequately reflect the constituent areas. We therefore intend renaming these divisions as Gnosall & Doxey, Stafford Central and Stafford South East, respectively.

126 We therefore are confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to the boundary amendment detailed above and the renaming of three divisions. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Gnosall & Doxey and Stafford North divisions would be 12% above and 4% below the county average initially (10% above and 6% below the county average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the remaining divisions in Stafford borough would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report and on Map 2.

Staffordshire Moorlands district

127 Under the current arrangements, the district of Staffordshire Moorlands is represented by eight county councillors, serving the same number of divisions. The divisions are Biddulph Endon, Biddulph Town, Caverswall, Cheadle Checkley, Churnet Valley, Leek North, Leek Rural and Leek South. Churnet Valley division has the worst electoral equality; 23% over the county average number of electors per councillor (29% by 2006). Staffordshire Moorlands is entitled to 7.03 councillors under the projected electorate for 2006. Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Staffordshire Moorlands district is over-represented on the County Council by one councillor, and therefore under our draft recommendations, we proposed that Staffordshire Moorlands be represented by seven councillors, one less councillor than at present.

128 The County Council and Conservative Group put forward identical, 100% coterminous schemes for Staffordshire Moorlands district, with no divisions varying by more than 8% (by 2006) from the county average number of electors per councillor. In the north west of the district, the proposed Biddulph North division would comprise Biddulph Moor, Biddulph North and Biddulph West wards. In the west of the district, the proposed Biddulph South & Endon division would comprise Bagnall & Stanley, Biddulph East, Biddulph South, and Brown Edge & Endon wards. In the south west of the district the proposed Caverswall division would comprise Caverswall, Cellarhead, Forsbrook and Werrington wards. In the south of the district the

proposed Cheadle Checkley division would comprise Cheadle South East, Cheadle West and Checkley wards. The proposed Churnet Valley division would comprise Alton, Cheadle North East, Cheddleton and Churnet wards. In the north-east of the district the proposed Leek Rural division would comprise Dane, Hamps Valley, Horton, Ipstones, Leek North, and Manifold wards. Finally, in the centre of the district, the proposed Leek South division would comprise Leek East, Leek South and Leek West wards.

129 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Staffordshire Moorlands Conservative Association, Councillor Heath and Councillor Hawkins all supported the County Council's scheme. Alstonefield Parish Council broadly supported the County Council's proposal. Cheadle Town Council and Horton Parish Council also supported the County Council's proposals. Cheddleton Parish Council opposed the loss of one county councillor for Staffordshire Moorlands district. Submissions were also received from Quarnford Parish Council and Wetton Parish Council.

130 After carefully considering the representations received during Stage One, we noted that the County Council consulted on two alternative proposals for Staffordshire Moorlands and that it received broad support for its 'Alternative One' option, which it eventually submitted as its proposal for Staffordshire Moorlands, as described above. We further noted that the proposals of the County Council and Conservative Group received broad support, and no other district-wide proposals were submitted for Staffordshire Moorlands. Therefore, in light of the consensus and support for the County Council's proposals, we adopted its proposals in their entirety as part of our draft recommendations.

131 Under our draft recommendations, Biddulph North, and Biddulph South & Endon divisions would vary from the county average number of electors per councillor by 2% and 9% (6% and 1% by 2006). Caverswall, Cheadle & Checkley, and Churnet divisions would vary from the county councillor:elector ratio by 10%, 10% and 1% (1%, 2% and 2% by 2006) respectively. Leek Rural and Leek South divisions would vary from the county average by 17% and 11% (2% and 8% by 2006).

132 During Stage Three we received 21 individual representations in response to our draft recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands, along with a number of proforma letters. The County Council stated it had no adverse comment to make, while the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the councils offered support for our draft recommendations. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Councillor Gill Heath, Staffordshire Moorlands Liberal Democrats, Stoke on Trent Liberal Democrats and Bagnall Parish Council all offered support for our draft recommendations for the district. Caverswall Parish Council and Ipstones Parish Council opposed the reduction in councillors serving Staffordshire Moorlands district. Councillor Margaret Lovatt and the Staffordshire Moorlands Labour Group opposed the draft recommendations for Leek and the surrounding rural area. Charlotte Atkins, Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands, Staffordshire Moorlands Constituency Labour Party, Cheadle & District Labour Party and six residents all opposed our draft recommendations for Leek and the surrounding rural area. All were united in proposing the County Council's alternative Option 2 of its consultation document, which the Council decided not to submit to us. In addition to the individual submissions in response to our draft recommendations, we received 260 pro forma letters regarding Staffordshire Moorlands. Of these, 199 opposed our draft recommendations for Leek specifically, 42 opposed our draft recommendations for Biddulph specifically and 19 opposed our draft recommendations for Waterhouses specifically. All pro forma letters stated that the Committee should adopt the County Council's Option 2 as part of the final recommendations.

133 After considering the representations received during Stage Three, and given the significant levels of support received, we intend confirming our draft recommendations as final. In considering the opposition to our draft recommendations which link Leek North ward with the more rural area to the north and east, we note that the only alternative put forward was the County Council's Option 2. This option was consulted on by the Council prior to its submission

to the Committee at Stage One, and duly rejected as a feasible proposal. We note that there was political consensus and evidence of local support during Stage One for the County Council's proposal, and that the Council's Option 2 also entails linking an urban area of Leek with a more rural area. This is necessary due to the imbalance in electors between the urban and rural areas, which means that, in order for electoral equality to be contained at acceptable levels, some part of Leek must be in a division with rural areas. All district-wide submissions recognised this, and we remain of the opinion that our draft recommendations, which were the County Council's and the Conservative Group's submission, strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

134 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the divisions in Staffordshire Moorlands would be the same as under draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Tamworth borough

135 Under the current arrangements, the borough of Tamworth is represented by five county councillors serving five divisions. The divisions are Bolebridge, Castle Liberty, Perrycrofts, The Heaths and Watling. The divisions with the worst electoral variances are Bolebridge and The Heaths which are 28% and 30% respectively (35% and 33% by 2006) over the county average number of electors per councillor. Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, Tamworth is under-represented under a council size of 62. Therefore it is entitled to six councillors, one additional councillor than at present.

136 At Stage One, the County Council submitted a proposal for Tamworth based on six non-coterminous divisions, four of which the Conservative Group supported. In the north west of the borough, the Council and Conservative Group proposed a Bolebridge division (the Conservative Group named the division Bolebridge & Castle) based on part of Belgrave ward, part of Castle ward and part of Mercian ward. In the north of the borough the County Council and Conservative Group proposed a Perrycrofts division (the Conservative Group named the division Spital), comprising part of Mercian ward and all of Spital ward. In the north east of the borough the County Council and Conservative Group submitted an Amington division comprising Amington ward and part of Bolehall ward and part of Glascote ward. In the east of the borough, the County Council and Conservative Group proposed a Stonydelph division comprising part of Glascote ward and all of Stonydelph ward. It proposed a Watling North division comprising part of Belgrave ward, part of Castle ward, part of Trinity ward and part of Wilnecote ward. Finally, in the south of the borough, the County Council proposed a Watling South division comprising part of Trinity ward and part of Wilnecote ward. All of the County Council's proposed divisions for Tamworth would be within 10% of the county average number of electors per councillor by 2006.

137 The Conservative Group proposed two alternative divisions in the south of the borough: Wilnecote division comprising part of Belgrave ward and Wilnecote ward; and Trinity division, comprising part of Belgrave ward, part of Castle ward and all of Trinity ward.

138 Having carefully considered the two representations received during Stage One, we adopted the County Council's submission for Tamworth as a whole, as we considered that the proposals would provide excellent electoral equality, and are based on clear boundaries, such as main roads, rivers, and railway lines. We also noted that the Conservative Group supported the majority of the County Council's proposal. We acknowledged the proposal would not create any conterminous divisions but agreed with the Conservative Group's comment that the number of councillors allocated to the district results in difficulties in achieving both good electoral equality and coterminous divisions. Under our draft recommendations, Amington, Bolebridge and Perrycrofts divisions would vary from the county average of electors per councillor by 0%, 13% and 10% (2%, 8% and 5% in 2006), respectively. Stonydelph, Watling North and Watling

South divisions would vary from the county average of electors per councillor by 3%, 13% and 13% (2%, 10% and 2% in 2006) respectively.

139 At Stage Three the County Council and both Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the council supported the draft recommendations for Tamworth borough. We received no further representations in response to our draft recommendations and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

140 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the divisions in Tamworth would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on large Map 1.

Conclusions

141 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we propose that:

- a council of 62 members should be retained, serving 59 divisions;
- the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the district reviews.

142 We have decided to substantially confirm our draft recommendations subject to the following:

- amending the boundary between Castle division (to be renamed Gnosall & Doxey) and Stafford North division, in Stafford borough, in order to better reflect community identities;
- renaming Stretton and Tutbury divisions as Horninglow & Stretton and Dove divisions, in East Staffordshire borough;
- renaming Castle, Stafford East and Stafford South divisions as Gnosall & Doxey, Stafford Central and Stafford South-East divisions in Stafford borough.

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

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	62	62	62	62
Number of divisions	62	59	62	59
Average number of electors per councillor	10,272	10,275	10,457	10,457
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	28	28	31	14
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	13	3	16	2

144 As Table 4 shows, our final recommendations would result in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10% remaining at 28. However, by 2006, only 14 divisions are forecast to vary by more than 10%, and in only 2 divisions would the variances exceed 20%. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Maps 1 to 4 at the back of this report.

Final recommendation

Staffordshire County Council should comprise 62 councillors serving 59 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

145 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different county divisions, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report, we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Rugeley Parish to reflect the proposed county divisions in those areas.

146 The parish of Rugeley is currently served by 19 parish councillors representing three parish wards: Etching Hill, Hagley and Western Springs. In order to reflect the county divisions in the area, we proposed that Western Springs ward be divided into two parish wards. Western Springs North ward (north of Church Street and Station Road) would be in the north east of Etching Hill & Heath division, and Western Springs South parish ward (south of Church Street and Station Road) would be in the north of Brereton & Ravenhill division.

147 We received no comment on our draft recommendations for the electoral arrangements of Rugeley Parish and therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Rugeley Parish Council should comprise 19 councillors, as at present, representing four parish wards: Etching Hill (returning seven councillors), Hagley (returning five councillors), Western Springs North (returning five councillors) and Western Springs South (returning two councillors) The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed county division boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map and Map 3.

6 What happens next?

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

149 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 8 June 2004, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk
(This address should only be used for this purpose.)**

Appendix A

Final Recommendations for Staffordshire County Council: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed division boundaries for the Staffordshire County Council area.

Map 1 illustrates the proposed electoral division boundaries in Tamworth district.

Map 2 illustrates the proposed electoral division boundaries in Stafford town.

Map 3 illustrates the proposed electoral division boundary between Brereton & Ravenhill and Etching Hill & Heath divisions.

The **large map (Sheet 1)** inserted at the back of this report illustrates in outline form the proposed divisions for Staffordshire, including constituent district wards and parishes.