

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
BRENT

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

January 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Brent.

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Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>39</i>
APPENDIX	
A Draft Recommendations for Brent (August 1999)	<i>41</i>

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



Local Government Commission for England

25 January 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 9 February 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Brent under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in August 1999 and undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 180) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Brent.

We recommend that Brent Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors representing 21 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

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

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Brent on 9 February 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 3 August 1999, after which we undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 17 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is expected to remain relatively stable, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 18 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in nine wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 180-181) are that:

- **Brent Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors, compared to 66 at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, ten fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all of the existing wards.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In all of the 21 wards the number of electors**

per councillor would vary by no more than 7 per cent from the borough average.

- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve over the next five years, with all wards expected to vary by less than 5 per cent from the average for the borough by 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 7 March 2000:

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

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
1 Alperton	3	Alperton ward; Barham ward (part); Wembley Central ward (part)
2 Barnhill	3	Barnhill ward (part); Kenton ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part); St Andrew's ward (part)
3 Brondesbury Park	3	Brondesbury Park ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part)
4 Dollis Hill	3	Brentwater ward (part); Cricklewood ward (part); Gladstone ward (part)
5 Dudden Hill	3	Church End ward (part); Gladstone ward (part); Mapesbury ward (part)
6 Fryent	3	Fryent ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part); Roe Green ward (part)
7 Harlesden	3	Harlesden ward (part); Roundwood ward; Stonebridge ward (part)
8 Kensal Green	3	Chamberlayne ward (part); Harlesden ward (part); Manor ward (part); Kensal Rise ward (part)
9 Kenton	3	Kenton ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part);
10 Kilburn	3	Carlton ward (part); Kilburn ward (part)
11 Mapesbury	3	Cricklewood ward (part); Mapesbury ward (part)
12 Northwick Park	3	Kenton ward (part); Sudbury ward (part); Sudbury Court ward (part)
13 Preston	3	Preston ward (part)
14 Queens Park	3	Carlton ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part); Kensal Rise ward (part); Queens Park ward
15 Queensbury	3	Kingsbury ward (part); Roe Green ward (part); Queensbury ward
16 Stonebridge	3	Church End ward (part); St Raphael's ward; Stonebridge ward (part)
17 Sudbury	3	Barham ward (part); Sudbury ward (part); Sudbury Court ward (part)
18 Tokyngton	3	Preston ward (part); Tokyngton ward (part)
19 Welsh Harp	3	Barnhill ward (part); Brentwater ward (part); Church End ward (part); Fryent ward (part); St Andrew's ward (part);

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
20 Wembley Central	3	Barham ward (part); Preston ward (part); Tokyngton ward (part); Wembley Central ward (part)
21 Willesden Green	3	Brondesbury Park ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part); Church End ward (part); Manor ward (part); Willesden Green ward (part)

Note: Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Brent

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alperton	3	7,961	2,654	-2	8,331	2,777	-1
2 Barnhill	3	8,449	2,816	4	8,295	2,765	-2
3 Brondesbury Park	3	8,032	2,677	-1	8,371	2,790	-1
4 Dollis Hill	3	8,061	2,687	-1	8,281	2,760	-2
5 Dudden Hill	3	8,236	2,745	1	8,527	2,842	1
6 Fryent	3	7,546	2,515	-7	8,070	2,690	-4
7 Harlesden	3	8,324	2,775	2	8,526	2,842	1
8 Kensal Green	3	7,884	2,628	-3	8,539	2,846	1
9 Kenton	3	7,963	2,654	-2	8,307	2,769	-1
10 Kilburn	3	8,447	2,816	4	8,794	2,931	4
11 Mapesbury	3	8,062	2,687	-1	8,604	2,868	2
12 Northwick Park	3	8,080	2,693	-1	8,303	2,768	-1
13 Preston	3	8,132	2,711	0	8,439	2,813	0
14 Queens Park	3	8,596	2,865	6	8,831	2,944	5
15 Queensbury	3	8,278	2,759	2	8,703	2,901	3
16 Stonebridge	3	8,670	2,890	7	8,574	2,858	2
17 Sudbury	3	8,040	2,680	-1	8,528	2,843	-1
18 Tokyngton	3	8,043	2,681	-1	8,269	2,756	-2
19 Welsh Harp	3	8,042	2,681	-1	8,353	2,784	-1
20 Wembley Central	3	7,940	2,647	-2	8,265	2,755	-2
21 Willesden Green	3	7,883	2,628	-3	8,326	2,775	-1
Totals	63	170,669	—	—	177,250	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,709	—	—	2,813	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Brent Borough Council.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the London borough of Brent.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review of Brent is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

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

4 We are required to make representations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews. We are not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a

better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

The London Boroughs

8 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

9 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis between June 1998 and February 1999.

10 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our Guidance were sent to all London boroughs, along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

11 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, Brent was in the last phase of reviews.

12 The Government's subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

13 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 Guidance. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would no doubt wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of

their areas. Our general experience has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

14 Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

The Review of Brent

15 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for Brent. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report No. 226).

16 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 9 February 1999, when we wrote to Brent Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 3 May 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

17 Stage Three began on 3 August 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Brent*, and ended on 11 October 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

18 The borough of Brent covers an area of some 4,421 hectares and is situated in the north-west of Greater London. Its eastern boundary is formed by the A5 Edgware Road, and the borough is traversed by the A406 North Circular Road, the West Coast main line between London and Scotland and the London Underground Bakerloo, Jubilee, Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines. It contains the internationally famous Wembley Stadium, as well as the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple, the largest of its kind outside India. The major settlements within Brent are Wembley, Willesden, Harlesden and Kilburn, and the borough also contains two major public spaces, Fryent Country Park and the Welsh Harp reservoir, notable for its wildlife and the sailing and walking facilities available.

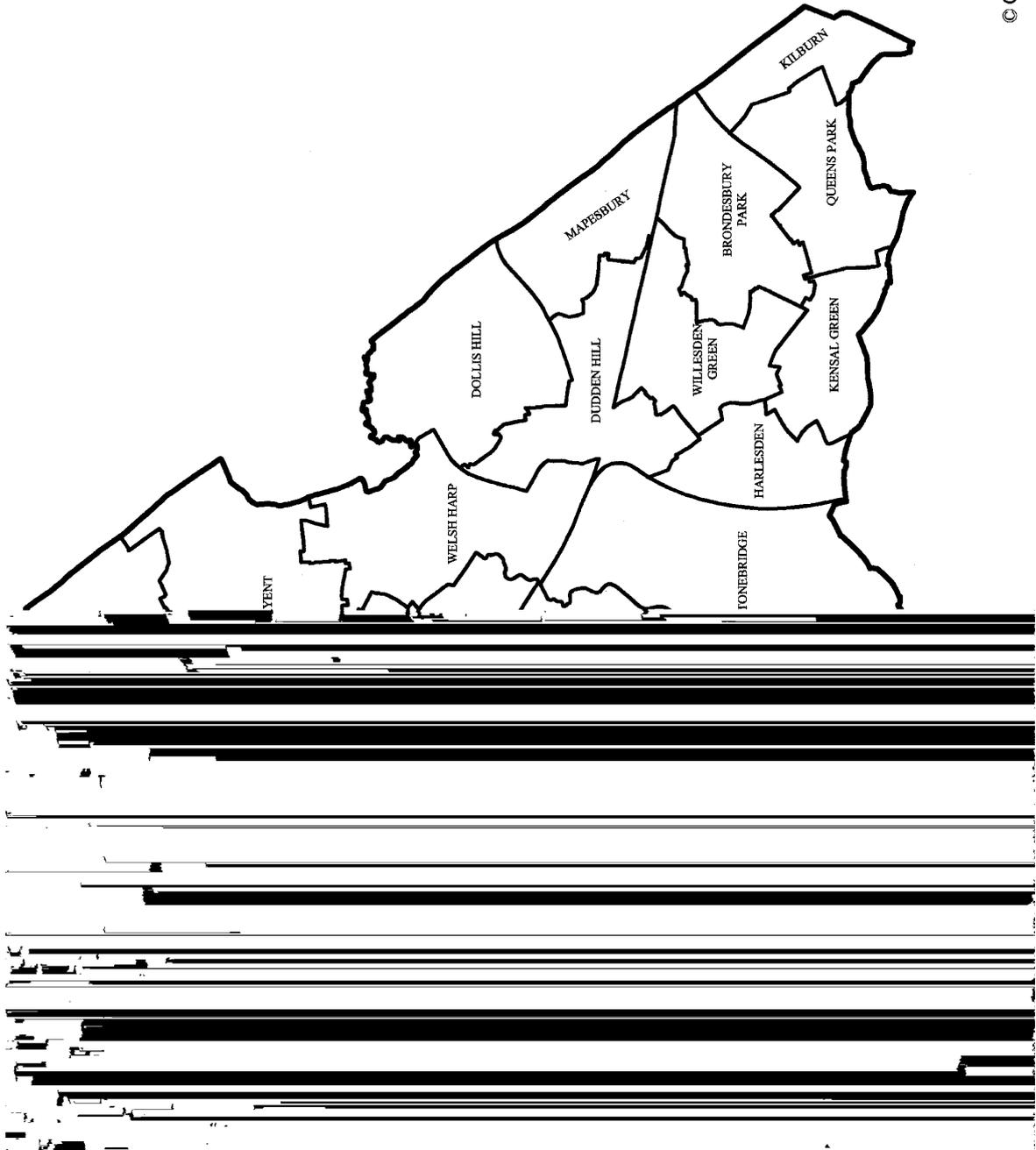
19 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using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

20 The electorate of the borough (February 1999) is 170,598. The Council currently has 66 councillors who are elected from 31 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Four wards are each represented by three councillors and 27 wards elect two councillors each. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

21 Since the last electoral review, there has been a decrease in electorate in the borough, with around 12 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago. At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,585 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,683 by the year 2004, if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 17 of the 31 wards varies by more

than 10 per cent from the borough average, and in 10 wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Stonebridge ward, where each of the two councillors represents on average 37 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Brent



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Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alperton	2	5,937	2,969	15	6,296	3,148	17
2 Barham	2	5,175	2,588	0	5,362	2,681	0
3 Barnhill	2	4,880	2,440	-6	5,006	2,503	-7
4 Brentwater	2	6,836	3,418	32	7,014	3,507	31
5 Brondesbury Park	2	6,417	3,209	24	6,733	3,367	25
6 Carlton	2	3,717	1,859	-28	3,833	1,917	-29
7 Chamberlayne	2	5,639	2,820	9	5,870	2,935	9
8 Church End	2	4,866	2,433	-6	5,149	2,575	-4
9 Cricklewood	2	6,152	3,076	19	6,357	3,179	18
10 Fryent	2	5,515	2,758	7	5,986	2,993	12
11 Gladstone	2	5,930	2,965	15	6,112	3,056	14
12 Harlesden	2	3,990	1,995	-23	4,198	2,099	-22
13 Kensal Rise	2	3,965	1,983	-23	4,327	2,164	-19
14 Kenton	2	6,634	3,317	28	6,945	3,473	29
15 Kilburn	2	4,936	2,468	-5	5,185	2,593	-3
16 Kingsbury	2	6,177	3,089	19	6,367	3,184	19
17 Manor	2	4,674	2,337	-10	4,917	2,459	-8
18 Mapesbury	2	4,693	2,347	-9	5,128	2,564	-4
19 Preston	3	9,383	3,128	21	9,734	3,245	21
20 Queens Park	2	4,060	2,030	-21	4,245	2,123	-21
21 Queensbury	2	4,529	2,265	-12	4,854	2,427	-10
22 Roe Green	2	5,676	2,838	10	5,834	2,917	9
23 Roundwood	2	4,307	2,154	-17	4,364	2,182	-19
24 St. Andrew`s	2	3,637	1,819	-30	3,326	1,663	-38

continued overleaf

Figure 3 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 St. Raphael's	3	7,145	2,382	-8	7,193	2,398	-11
26 Stonebridge	2	3,259	1,630	-37	3,187	1,594	-41
27 Sudbury Court	2	5,562	2,781	8	5,732	2,866	7
28 Sudbury	3	7,786	2,595	0	8,004	2,667	-1
29 Tokyngton	3	7,922	2,641	2	8,133	2,711	1
30 Wembley Central	2	5,882	2,941	14	6,098	3,049	14
31 Willesden Green	2	5,317	2,659	3	5,565	2,783	4
Totals	66	170,598	—	—	177,050	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,585	—	—	2,683	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Brent Borough Council.

Note: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Stonebridge ward were relatively over-represented by 37 per cent, while electors in Brentwater ward were relatively under-represented by 32 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 Due to inaccuracies in the information provided, total electorate figures in this table and other tables may vary slightly, however, we would expect this to have a marginal impact on variances.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

22 During Stage One we received eight representations. The Borough Council, the Conservative Group on the Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and the Wembley Observer newspaper all submitted borough-wide schemes. In the light of all the representations received and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Brent*.

23 We noted that there was broad agreement on a number of key issues, with the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all proposing to reduce council size by three, while each of the four borough-wide submissions proposed a pattern of entirely three member wards, and we agreed with this local consensus view.

24 On the balance of evidence received at Stage One, our draft recommendations were based on proposals put forward by the Conservatives and the Wembley Observer which, in our judgement, provided the best balance between electoral equality and reflecting the identities and interests of communities in Brent, while minimising disruption to existing warding arrangements. In particular, we considered that these proposals would make best use of the strong, physical boundaries within the borough.

25 Under our draft recommendations, the North Circular Road would be used as a boundary only where there were no defined crossing points. The Conservatives argued that communities within the borough, including Brentwater, Church End and St Raphaels, straddled this road and share common issues in relation to air quality, noise and parking. As a result they argued that it was important for the North Circular road to be a central issue for ward councillors in the area. This view was supported by the Wembley Observer newspaper. We were persuaded by this view, and noted that the boundary used by the Conservatives would be the River Brent, which forms a strong and logical ward boundary. While the Borough Council argued that the North Circular Road does form a barrier between communities, they provided little supporting evidence. Moreover, we considered that adopting the North Circular Road as a boundary

for its whole length would restrict alternative warding arrangements elsewhere in the borough, and would result in a somewhat artificial and arbitrary division of communities.

26 We considered that the West Coast main line represents a significant community boundary, and noted that the Conservatives' proposals would utilise the line for most of its length and, in particular, as the boundary between their proposed Northwick Park and Preston wards. This was supported by the Wembley Observer newspaper. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Park ward would straddle the West Coast Main Line and this was opposed by the Sudbury Court Residents' Association, Preston Ward Labour Party and two local residents.

27 However, in the interests of better reflecting the identities and interests of communities and providing strong and logical boundaries in Brent we proposed minor changes to the Conservatives' scheme in relation to the boundaries between the proposed wards of Queensbury, Fryent, Harlesden and Willesden Green. We proposed that:

- (a) Brent Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors;
- (b) there should be 21 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all existing wards.

Draft Recommendation

Brent Borough Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards.

28 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all 21 wards varying by no more than 7 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 2 per cent from the borough average in 2004.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

²⁹ During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 89 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Brent Borough Council and the Commission.

Brent Borough Council

³⁰ The Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations, and argued that our proposed ward boundaries “failed to meet the statutory criteria requiring as high a standard of electoral equality as possible”. It also argued that our proposals would not preserve existing communities within the same ward and failed to acknowledge the most significant recognisable boundaries, particularly the North Circular Road which, it was argued, formed a more significant barrier than the River Brent. Accordingly, the Borough Council rejected our draft recommendations and reiterated its Stage One proposals, subject to minor boundary modifications. A number of alternative ward names were proposed.

Brent Borough Council Conservative Group

³¹ Brent Borough Council Conservative Group (‘the Conservatives’) welcomed our draft recommendations, subject to minor boundary modifications in the interests of tidying up a number of proposed boundaries. They supported utilising the North Circular Road as a boundary only where there are no crossing points, and maintained that the North Circular Road should remain a central issue for local representatives. However, they argued that the Circle, Avondale Avenue, Eastleigh Close and that part of the North Circular Road near Neasden Shopping Centre should be included in the proposed Dudden Hill ward, as they had proposed at Stage One, given that our proposed boundaries would result in the area represented by Neasden Residents Association being split between two wards. They also proposed that Kensal Green Station be incorporated within Kensal Green ward. A number of alternative ward names were proposed.

The Wembley Observer

³² The Wembley Observer supported in “broad principle” our draft recommendations for 21 wards with 63 councillors, subject to minor boundary modifications to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities, particularly in respect of Dudden Hill and Welsh Harp wards. A number of alternative ward names were proposed.

Members of Parliament

³³ We received a joint submission signed by Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP. They expressed support for the Borough Council’s proposals, and argued that our proposals split natural communities in each of their constituencies, including the Church End estate, the Dobre estate, the Waterloo estate, the Northwick Park estate and the Lyon Park estate. They also expressed concern in relation to the North Circular Road not being utilised as a ward boundary for its entire length, arguing that this is the significant barrier to communication within the borough. In addition, Ken Livingstone MP and Paul Boateng MP submitted individual representations.

Other Representations

³⁴ A further 83 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations subject to the minor modifications proposed by the Conservatives. Brent Labour Party opposed the proposal to split the Northwick Park estate between two wards, as well as opposing the proposal to continue to use the River Brent as a boundary instead of the North Circular Road. It also expressed concern in relation to the proposed boundaries between Brondesbury Park and Queens Park wards, Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards and Mapesbury and Dudden Hill wards on the grounds of communities being split. Brent North Constituency Labour Party (Kenton Branch) expressed concern that the Northwick Park estate be incorporated in the proposed Northwick Park ward rather than Kenton ward. Mapesbury Branch Labour Party opposed

the proposed warding arrangements for Mapesbury ward, and argued that the natural Mapesbury community around Melrose Avenue would be severed. It also objected to the proposal to utilise the River Brent as a boundary rather than the North Circular Road. Cricklewood Labour Party argued that the proposed new ward of Mapesbury should be called Cricklewood, arguing that Cricklewood is a place and that Mapesbury is not.

35 We received eight submissions from borough councillors supporting our draft recommendations. Of those, one councillor supported our proposed warding arrangements for Tokyngton ward which, it was argued, should be renamed Stadium ward to reflect the fact that the ward would centre around Wembley Stadium. He also expressed support for the proposed Kenton and Kingsbury wards, and proposed minor boundary modifications to Wembley Central ward's boundaries with Sudbury and Alperton wards. One councillor supported our proposed warding arrangements in Kenton ward, another supported our proposed warding arrangements in Queensbury ward, another supported our proposed warding arrangements in Sudbury ward, while a third supported our proposed warding arrangements in Tokyngton ward. One councillor supported our proposed warding arrangements for Welsh Harp ward, but argued that this ward should be renamed St Andrews ward to better reflect the historical nature of the area. Two councillors proposed renaming the proposed Mapesbury ward as Cricklewood West ward which, it was argued, would better reflect the identities and interests of the constituent communities.

36 We received 13 submissions from borough councillors opposing our draft recommendations. Of those, one councillor expressed "surprise" at our draft recommendations, and submitted a point by point response to our draft recommendations. She supported the Borough Council's proposals which, it was argued, better achieved sensible communities, and respected significant barriers like the North Circular Road while achieving good electoral equality. Three councillors argued that the North Circular Road is a natural boundary and should be utilised as a ward boundary in any proposed new warding arrangements, with one of those councillors arguing that our proposals split natural communities such as the Church End estate, the Dobree estate and the Northwick Park estate. Two councillors opposed our proposals for

Brondesbury Park ward, with one of those councillors expressing reservations in relation to Dyne Road and Plympton Road being split between wards. Three councillors argued that the Church End estate should not continue to be divided, arguing that the whole of the Church End estate would more logically fall in an enlarged Stonebridge ward, with one of those councillors opposing the use of Crownhill Road as a ward boundary for the proposed Harlesden ward. One councillor opposed our proposal to split the "natural community" around Church Lane between two wards and, in particular, expressed reservations in respect of the area around Valley Drive being included in the proposed Fryent ward. One councillor opposed our proposals in relation to the existing Queens Park ward, while another councillor expressed reservations in relation to the existing Chamberlayne ward. One councillor opposed our proposal to split the existing St Andrews ward between two new wards, and maintained that the North Circular Road is a significant barrier to communication.

37 Christchurch Tenants & Residents Association objected to the proposed splitting of the Christchurch estate, and suggested that the boundary between Wembley Central and Alperton should be modified in order to better reflect the constituent communities in the area. Neasden Business Corporation supported our proposals for new ward boundaries in Brent, subject to a minor boundary modification and the proposed Dudden Hill ward being renamed Neasden ward. Neasden Residents' Association supported our proposals and, in particular, supported that most of the area surrounding Neasden Shopping Centre would be covered by only two wards rather than three as at present. It also supported our proposal not to utilise the North Circular Road as a boundary in this area, and argued that the North Circular Road gives rise to many "social and environmental problems", and that it should not be "marginalised" by making it a ward boundary. It also proposed that The Circle and Avondale Avenue should be included in the proposed Dudden Hill ward, as initially proposed by the Conservatives.

38 We also received submissions from 52 residents. Twenty-six residents supported our draft recommendations throughout Brent, with one resident supporting the Conservatives' proposals and three residents supporting the Wembley Observer's proposals. Of those residents

supporting our draft recommendations, two supported St Andrews being retained as a ward name, two supported retaining Kingsbury as a ward name, while another argued that the proposed Dudden Hill ward should be renamed Neasden and that the proposed Mapesbury ward should be renamed Cricklewood. A further two residents suggested that Mapesbury ward would be better named as Cricklewood.

39 Eight residents opposed our proposal to use the River Brent as a ward boundary, and argued that the North Circular Road should be the determining factor for new warding arrangements in Brent. Of these, two residents opposed our proposals as they affected Brondesbury Park ward, while another opposed our proposals in respect of Willesden Green ward. Nine residents opposed proposed changes in the Mapesbury area, with one expressing particular opposition to the proposal to split Melrose Avenue between two wards. One resident objected to Longstone Avenue being included in the proposed Kensal Green ward. Three residents opposed the proposal to include Northwick Avenue in the proposed Northwick Park ward, and argued that this area is part of the natural community of Kenton.

40 One resident opposed our proposals as they affected the proposed Kenton ward, Welsh Harp ward and Tokyngton ward. Two residents objected to proposed ward boundaries for Dudden Hill ward. One resident from the Chalkhill estate objected to being included in the proposed Barnhill ward. Four residents objected to the proposed boundary between Brondesbury Park and Queens Park wards. One resident argued that our proposals were driven by numbers rather than reflecting the identities and interests of communities, and proposed a number of minor boundary modifications.

41 One resident argued that the existing St Andrews ward has more in common with Neasden and that part of Brentwater to the north of the North Circular Road than with Barnhill. He also expressed support for the proposed Welsh Harp ward. One resident argued that Kingsbury should be retained as a ward name in place of Fryent ward.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

45 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10

per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly urban areas such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

Electorate Forecasts

46 At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of 4 per cent, from 170,598 to 177,050, over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorate is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

47 At Stage Three, the Borough Council argued that since it had prepared its electoral forecasts, approval has been given for two significant residential developments in the borough and that, as a result, the existing Sudbury ward will contain an additional 218 electors by 2004. We also note that the Borough Council have submitted revised electorate data for our draft recommendations, arguing that they are inaccurate. However, this was rejected by the Conservatives who argued that its proposals were tested on the Council's GIS system. We have carefully considered both views put to us at Stage Three and, on balance, we have been persuaded to confirm the electorate forecasts used in our draft recommendations report, with the exception of the 218 electors mentioned above. In particular, we do not consider that the Borough Council's revisions to our electorate forecast would have a material impact in respect of our draft recommendations, and we remain satisfied, subject to the modification detailed above, that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

48 As already indicated, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government.

49 Brent Borough Council currently has 66 members. Over the past 20 years the borough has experienced a decrease in electorate, although there is projected to be growth of 4 per cent over the next five years as a result of new housing developments. At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all proposed that there should be a reduction in council size of three, while the Wembley Observer proposed that the existing council size of 66 should be retained. In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, and we concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 63 members.

50 At Stage Three, our draft recommendation in respect of council size was supported, with the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Wembley Observer expressing support. In the light of this, and in the absence of alternative proposals, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for a council size of 63 as final.

The North Circular Road

51 At Stage One, we received competing views in relation to the North Circular Road, with the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats arguing that the road should be used as a ward boundary throughout the borough, while the Conservatives and the Wembley Observer argued that it should be used as a ward boundary only where there are no defined crossing points. In our draft recommendations report, we recognised that the North Circular Road represents a significant barrier between communities but, on the balance of evidence received, we considered that proposals to utilise the River Brent as a ward boundary for part of its length offered the better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we considered that communities either side of the road share common interests and concerns, such as air quality, noise and parking, and that there was merit in the road remaining a central

issue for councillors in this area. Under our draft recommendations, the River Brent would continue to be utilised as a strong and natural western ward boundary to the proposed Stonebridge ward, and the North London railway line would provide a well-defined eastern boundary.

52 Moreover, we considered that adopting the North Circular Road as a boundary for its whole length would restrict alternative warding arrangements elsewhere in the borough, and would result in a somewhat artificial and arbitrary division of communities. In particular, we considered that the West Coast main line represents a significant community boundary, and that while the Conservatives' and the Wembley Observer's proposals would utilise the line for most of its length, this would not be the case under the Borough Council's proposals, with the proposed Park ward comprising areas either side of the West Coast main line. As previously indicated, this was opposed by the Sudbury Court Residents' Association, Preston Ward Labour Party and two local residents.

53 At Stage Three, the contentious issue has remained the use of boundaries and, in particular, our decision to retain the River Brent as a ward boundary for part of its length rather than utilising the North Circular for its whole length. Our draft recommendations were broadly supported by the Conservatives, the Wembley Observer, Brent East Conservative Association, eight borough councillors, Neasden Residents Association and 26 residents, while the Borough Council, the three members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Brent Labour Party, Brent North Constituency Labour Party (Kenton Branch), Mapesbury Branch Labour Party, 13 borough councillors and 26 residents opposed our draft recommendations.

54 Having carefully considered the competing views, we note that the arguments are finely balanced, with responses for and against our draft recommendations being broadly split along party political lines. Those supporting and opposing our draft recommendations provided detailed argumentation in support of their respective views. However, in the light of evidence received during the two consultation stages, we remain of the view that using the River Brent as a ward boundary would provide a scheme that achieves the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and we have decided to confirm our decision to retain the River Brent as a

ward boundary for part of its length, in preference to the North Circular Road, as final. We recognise that there are numerous significant barriers to movement in Brent, including the North Circular Road, the River Brent, the West Coast main line, the London Underground Jubilee and Metropolitan lines, the North London Line and the Dudding Hill Loop, and we consider that our draft recommendations would better reflect these barriers than the boundaries proposed by the Borough Council's proposals.

55 We accept that the North Circular Road is a major topographical feature within the borough, and that it has developed significantly in size and strategic importance since the last review. However, we do not share the view that the River Brent is any less significant a boundary, particularly given that the only connection between the St Raphaels estate and Tokyngton is the Monks Park footbridge, whereas there are several access points connecting the two areas either side of the North Circular Road, including the four-lane A4088 Kilburn to Wembley route. Also, as indicated previously, we remain of the view that alternative warding arrangements elsewhere in the borough would be restricted by adopting the North Circular road as a boundary for its whole length, and would result in a somewhat artificial and arbitrary division of communities. In particular, we continue to believe that the West Coast main line also forms a significant natural barrier between communities, and we have reservations in respect of the Borough Council's proposals to combine the Preston Park estate with the Sudbury Court estate either side of the West Coast main line, with the only connection being a single pedestrian underpass between the two estates.

56 We note that there has been criticism that, by not adopting the North Circular Road as a ward boundary for its entire length, we are being inconsistent with reviews of other London boroughs which are also traversed by this road. However, this is inaccurate, and wards comprising areas either side of the North Circular Road have been proposed as part of the London borough reviews of Barnet, Enfield and Waltham Forest.

Electoral Arrangements

57 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received, including borough-wide schemes from

the Borough Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and the Wembley Observer. We expressed gratitude for the positive approach taken by respondents who had each submitted detailed borough-wide proposals for change to the present electoral arrangements. From these representations some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

58 First, there was general agreement on council size, with the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposing that the council size should be reduced by three, to 63. We concurred with this view and, as indicated above, concluded that a council size of 63 would provide the best balance between the need for electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

59 Second, the current electoral arrangements provide for predominantly two-member wards in Brent, with 27 wards each being represented by two councillors and four wards electing three councillors each. All four borough-wide schemes proposed basing new warding arrangements on a pattern of three-member wards for the borough, and we concurred with this view

60 Third, we noted that the proposals attempted to build on existing and well-known local communities, and respect the major natural boundaries within the borough, where possible, and that there was a degree of consensus between the borough-wide submissions regarding ward boundaries in some areas. In particular, all of the submissions have utilised the London Underground lines within the borough, wherever possible. However, the key distinction between schemes related to the extent to which the North Circular Road and the West Coast main line had been utilised as ward boundaries. We noted the arguments put to us about community identities in the borough, and we tried to reflect such considerations in our draft recommendations where it was consistent with our objective of electoral equality, although we note that there is no consensus locally on the precise boundary of such communities.

61 Finally, all of the borough-wide schemes provided improved electoral equality, although to varying degrees. Under the four proposals, the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the

borough average would reduce from 17 to none. This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue over the next five years.

62 In our draft recommendations we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve good electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. Where it existed, we tried to reflect the consensus for warding arrangements in particular parts of the borough. Inevitably we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations. Our draft recommendations were based substantially on the Conservatives' and the Wembley Observer's proposals, together with some further modifications.

63 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and note that a number of issues have emerged during consultation, with the significant issue, as previously discussed, being the extent to which the North Circular Road should be utilised as a ward boundary. Having carefully considered all representations received, we judge that modifications should be made to a number of our proposed boundaries and ward names. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Preston, Sudbury and Sudbury Court wards;
- (b) Alperton, Barham, Tokyngton and Wembley Central wards;
- (c) St Raphael's and Stonebridge wards;
- (d) Barnhill, Kenton and Kingsbury wards;
- (e) Fryent, Queensbury, Roe Green and St Andrew's wards;
- (f) Brentwater, Church End, Cricklewood, Gladstone and Mapesbury wards;
- (g) Harlesden, Kensal Rise, Manor and Roundwood wards;
- (h) Brondesbury Park, Chamberlayne and Willesden Green wards;
- (i) Carlton, Kilburn and Queens Park wards;

64 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover of the report.

Preston, Sudbury and Sudbury Court wards

65 The existing wards of Preston, Sudbury and Sudbury Court are located in the west of the borough and are bisected by the West Coast main line and bounded by the London Underground Metropolitan line. Preston and Sudbury wards are each represented by three members, while Sudbury Court ward is represented by two members. Under current arrangements, electoral equality in Sudbury and Sudbury Court wards is reasonable, with the number of electors per councillor being equal to the borough average and varying by 8 per cent respectively. However, there is poor electoral equality in Preston ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 21 per cent. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

66 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining parts of the existing Sudbury Court, Preston and Sudbury wards to form a new Park ward, with the remainder of Sudbury Court ward being combined with Sudbury and Barham wards to form a revised Sudbury ward. The remainder of Preston ward would be combined with part of the existing Tokyngton ward to form a revised Preston ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed similar warding arrangements to those of the Borough Council, although they proposed minor boundary modifications between all three wards to better reflect the identities and interests of communities in the area, and proposed renaming Park and Preston wards as Northwick Park and Preston Road respectively.

67 The Conservatives argued that the West Coast main line forms a strong boundary between different types of housing, and that it should therefore be utilised as a ward boundary. They proposed combining parts of the existing Sudbury Court, Kenton and Sudbury wards in a new Northwick Park ward, with the remainder of Sudbury ward being combined with part of Barham ward. They also proposed that Preston ward would largely retain its existing ward boundaries, except for the area to the south of King Edward Park and east of Wembley Park Drive, which would be incorporated into Tokyngton and Wembley Central wards. The Wembley Observer proposed similar warding arrangements to the

Conservatives' and, in particular, agreed that the West Coast main line should form the boundary between the proposed Northwick Park and North Wembley wards. However, it proposed changes to the boundary between Northwick Park and Sudbury wards, and proposed that the boundary between Sudbury and Wembley Central wards should follow the east side of Barham Park.

68 We also received four other representations in relation to this area, from the Sudbury Court Residents Association, Preston Ward Labour Party and two local residents, all of whom opposed the Borough Council's proposal to include part of Preston ward within the proposed Park ward. It was argued that this would result in the proposed ward comprising distinct communities with little sense of shared affinity, separated from each other by the West Coast main line.

69 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that the key distinction between the various proposals in this area was the extent to which ward boundaries should respect the West Coast main line. We agreed that the West Coast main line represents a significant barrier to movement between communities in the area, and we therefore proposed adopting the Conservatives' proposals in this area. While the proposed Northwick Park ward would comprise areas either side of the London Underground Metropolitan line, we were not persuaded that this line represented as significant a barrier between communities as the West Coast main line, and noted that that part of Kenton ward which would be included in the proposed Northwick Park ward is already separated from its existing ward by the West Coast main line.

70 At Stage Three the Borough Council reiterated its Stage One proposals. It opposed our draft recommendations to include the Northwick Park estate in the proposed Northwick Park ward, and argued that this area has greater affinity and links with Northwick Circle of the Northwick Park estate to the east than to Abbots Drive in Sudbury Court to the south. It also argued that the acceptance of railway lines to form two of the proposed Preston's three ward boundaries could be achieved only at the expense of electoral equality. It also suggested renaming Northwick Park ward as Park ward. The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations, and maintained that the West Coast main line is a significant barrier, with fewer

crossing points than the tube lines or the North London line, and that the Northwick Park estate is distinct from Kenton. It also opposed the Borough Council's proposals to split the Preston community between Preston and Park wards. The Wembley Observer supported our draft recommendations for the wards of Northwick Park and Preston, subject to Preston ward being renamed North Wembley or North Wembley & Preston.

71 We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, arguing that our draft recommendations would split the Northwick Park estate between wards, and expressing support for the Borough Council's proposals.

72 Brent East Conservative Association supported our proposals. Brent Labour Party, Kenton Branch Labour Party and three residents opposed the proposal that the area bordered by the West Coast main line, the London Underground Metropolitan line and Kenton Road should be transferred from Kenton ward to Northwick Park ward.

73 Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Sudbury ward. One resident supported our proposals for Kenton ward. Two councillors opposed the proposal to split the Northwick Park estate between wards on the grounds that it is "completely separated" from the rest of the proposed Northwick Park ward. One councillor proposed modifying the boundary between the proposed Sudbury and Wembley Central wards, with the boundary following Harrow Road up to the Barnham roundabout, and then following Bridgewater Road. This, it was argued, would ensure that Chaplin Road would not be divided between wards, and would represent a more natural separation, as residents in this area see themselves as Wembley residents. One councillor supported our proposals for Sudbury ward.

74 Five residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Preston ward, one expressing particular support for the proposed Sudbury ward, and three supporting the Wembley Observer's proposals. Three residents opposed the proposal to include Northwick Avenue in the proposed Northwick Park ward, arguing that its natural affinity lies with Kenton.

75 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three we note that the key issue relates to the extent to which the West Coast main line should be utilised as a ward boundary in this area. Our draft recommendations have been broadly supported, although there has been a degree of opposition concerning the Northwick Park estate being separated from Kenton ward, to the other side of the West Coast main line. However, on the balance of evidence received, and in the absence of significant local opposition to our draft recommendations in this area, we have decided to confirm them as final. We recognise that this area is geographically isolated from the rest of the borough, but remain of the view that our draft recommendations would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we have reservations in relation to the Borough Council's proposals to split the existing Preston ward and combine half with part of Northwick Park on the other side of the West Coast main line, with the only connection between the two areas being a single pedestrian subway access.

76 We have considered the proposal to modify the boundary between Sudbury and Wembley Central wards, and we note that this has been proposed together with boundary modifications between Wembley Central and Alperton wards. However, as discussed later, while we recognise that the boundary between Wembley Central and Alperton wards could be drawn in a number of places, we consider that our proposed boundary represents the strongest and most sensible boundary. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendation in respect of Sudbury ward.

77 We have considered the proposal to rename Preston ward either North Wembley or North Wembley & Preston. However, while we agree that there may be merit in this, in the absence of any further views, we have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to warrant modifying ward names in this area, and therefore confirm our proposed ward names as final.

78 Under our final recommendations there would be improved electoral equality, with the numbers of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 1 per cent in the proposed Northwick Park and Sudbury wards, and being equal to the borough average in the proposed Preston ward. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Alperton, Barham, Tokyngton and Wembley Central wards

79 The existing wards of Alperton, Barham, Tokyngton and Wembley Central are located in the centre and south-west of the borough. The wards are traversed by the West Coast main line and the London Underground Bakerloo, Metropolitan, Jubilee and Piccadilly lines. The internationally famous Wembley Stadium is situated within the existing Tokyngton ward. Alperton, Barham and Wembley Central wards are each represented by two members, while Tokyngton ward is represented by three members. Under current arrangements, there is reasonable electoral equality in Barham and Tokyngton wards, with the number of electors per councillor being equal to the borough average and varying by 2 per cent respectively. However, electoral equality in Alperton and Wembley Central wards is poor, with electoral variances of 15 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain constant over the next five years.

80 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed splitting Barham ward, with part being combined with Alperton ward and part being combined with Wembley Central ward. It also proposed combining part of St Raphael's ward with the existing Tokyngton ward in a new Stadium ward, with Wembley Hill Drive forming the new ward's western boundary. The Liberal Democrats put forward modifications to the Borough Council's proposed wards, putting forward boundary modifications to the proposed Wembley Central ward, and renaming Barham & Wembley ward. They also proposed minor boundary modifications to the boundary between Alperton and Barham & Wembley wards, and argued that the proposed Stadium ward should incorporate the 'Brent Triangle' area.

81 The Conservatives proposed combining parts of Wembley Central, Barham and Tokyngton wards, with Alperton ward being combined with part of Wembley Central and Barham wards. They also proposed combining part of Tokyngton ward with part of Preston ward. The Wembley Observer proposed similar warding arrangements to the Conservatives in relation to Tokyngton ward, subject to minor boundary changes. It proposed that Alperton ward should largely retain its existing boundaries, except in relation to its boundary with Barham ward, and that part of Barham ward should be combined with Wembley Central ward.

82 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was a measure of agreement that Alperton and Tokyngton wards should broadly retain their existing boundaries, and that Barham ward should be divided between Alperton and Wembley Central wards, with the only issue relating to precise boundaries for this division. On balance, we considered that the Conservatives' proposals offered the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. We noted that their proposals would minimise disruption to existing warding arrangements, particularly in relation to the proposed Tokyngton ward, and would ensure that the River Brent continues to be utilised as a strong, natural ward boundary. As previously discussed, we were not persuaded by proposals to incorporate the St Raphael's estate in the proposed Stadium ward, which would result in areas being combined whose only direct connection would be a pedestrian footbridge over the River Brent.

83 At Stage Three the Borough Council reiterated its Stage One proposals. It argued that our proposed boundary between Alperton and Wembley Central wards along the centre and to the rear of properties in Douglas Avenue split the local community of the Lyon Park/Christchurch estate. It argued that the Alperton Park estate roads of Westbury Road and Clayton Avenue should form part of Alperton ward, with the Lyon Park estate being retained in Wembley Central ward. It argued that Lyon Park Avenue is currently used as a ward boundary, and remains an appropriate division between Wembley Central and Alperton wards. The Borough Council also expressed reservations in relation to the "triangle" of roads to the south of Harrow Road (Chatsworth Avenue to Jesmond Avenue) being incorporated within the proposed Wembley Central ward, and argued that their dependence on Harrow Road for access and the open space to the rear means that this area has greater links with the remainder of Tokyngton. It also argued that the blocks of flats along Empire Way should be retained in Preston ward rather than Tokyngton ward, while the St Raphael's estate, which lies beyond the River Brent, should be included within Tokyngton ward. It also suggested that Tokyngton ward would be better named as Stadium ward.

84 The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations and, in particular, maintained that the St Raphael's estate is "completely isolated" from Tokyngton ward, with the only connection

being a pedestrian footbridge. The Wembley Observer supported our draft recommendations in this area, subject to minor boundary modifications. It argued that Alperton Community School's Ealing Road campus should be included in Alperton ward to be consistent with the school's Stanley Avenue campus nearby, and that One Tree Hill Park should also be included in Alperton ward, with the boundary being set two streets further north, between Braemar Avenue and Bowrons Avenue. It also proposed renaming the proposed Tokyngton ward as Wembley Tokyngton.

85 We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, arguing that our draft recommendations would split the Lyon Park estate between wards, and expressing support for the Borough Council's proposals.

86 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations in this area. Christchurch Tenants and Residents Association opposed our draft recommendations for Wembley Central ward, arguing that the Christchurch Estate would be divided between the proposed Wembley Central and Alperton wards. It suggested that the area containing Lyon Park Avenue, Hillfield Avenue and Highmead Crescent be transferred into Wembley Central ward and that the area bounded by Eagle Road and St James Gardens be transferred into Alperton ward.

87 Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations with one, in particular, welcoming our proposed warding arrangements for Tokyngton ward. She strongly supported the proposal to exclude St Raphael's estate from Tokyngton ward as this "shares none of the characteristics of the area, has only a connection via a pedestrian footbridge over the River Brent and no vehicular access to the rest of the ward except via the North Circular/Harrow Road". One councillor, while supporting our draft recommendations, proposed modifying the boundary between Wembley Central and Sudbury wards, as already indicated, and between Wembley Central and Alperton wards, with the Alperton boundary being extended to include the whole of the Lyon Park estate.

88 Seven residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with four expressing particular support for the proposed Tokyngton ward, and three supporting the Wembley Observer's proposals. One resident opposed the

warding arrangements for the proposed Tokyngton ward, while another argued that our proposals would split the Christchurch estate, and proposed boundary modifications between Wembley Central and Alperton wards. He also opposed the proposed transfer of Chatsworth Avenue and adjoining areas from Tokyngton ward to Wembley Central ward, and the proposed transfer of Keswick Gardens and Princes Court from Preston ward to Wembley Central ward.

89 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that our draft recommendations have commanded significant support, subject to a number of boundary issues which have been brought to our attention. However, on balance, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. While we have carefully considered alternative warding arrangements put forward by respondents, we have not been persuaded that their proposed ward boundaries would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria nor, in the absence of significant opposition, necessarily command local support. While we recognise that our proposed boundary between Alperton and Wembley Central ward would split the Christchurch estate, we note that alternative ward boundaries would impact upon the level of electoral equality in the area. We also note that the boundary between Alperton and Wembley Central wards could be drawn in a number of areas, and remain of the view that our proposals, utilising the London Underground Piccadilly Line, Ealing Road and the rear boundary line of properties in Douglas Avenue, represent strong and sensible boundaries between the proposed Alperton and Wembley Central wards.

90 Similarly, we have not been persuaded by alternative warding arrangements in relation to the proposed Tokyngton ward. We have carefully considered the views of the Borough Council in respect of boundary modifications in this area, but note that these would be dependent on accepting the North Circular Road as the prime boundary in this area and, as previously discussed, we do not consider that this would necessarily facilitate the best possible warding arrangements in this area nor elsewhere in the borough. We also remain unpersuaded in respect of arguments that the River Brent no longer has relevance as a natural boundary, and that it is now superseded by the “wider, swifter flowing mass of traffic along the North Circular Road”. Indeed, as previously discussed, the only connection between the St

Raphael’s estate and Tokyngton would be the Monks Park footbridge, whereas there are several access points connecting the two areas either side of the North Circular Road, including the four-lane A4088 Kilburn to Wembley route.

91 We have considered proposals to rename Tokyngton ward as either Stadium or Wembley Tokyngton. However, while we agree that there may be merit in this, in the absence of any further views, we have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to warrant modifying ward names in this area, and therefore confirm our proposed ward names as final.

92 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Alperton, Tokyngton and Wembley Central would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

St Raphael’s and Stonebridge wards

93 The existing wards of St Raphael’s and Stonebridge are located in the centre and south of the borough bounded by the River Brent, the Chiltern railway line and the borough boundary. St Raphael’s ward is represented by three councillors, while Stonebridge ward is represented by two councillors. Under current arrangements, while the number of electors per councillor varies by 8 per cent from the borough average in St Raphael’s ward, there are 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor in Stonebridge ward. This level of electoral equality is expected to further deteriorate over the next five years due to the redevelopment of the Stonebridge Park estate, with St Raphael’s and Stonebridge wards expected to have electoral variances of 11 per cent and 41 per cent respectively by 2004.

94 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining St Raphael’s ward to the south of the North Circular Road, Stonebridge ward to the west of the North London railway line together with parts of Roundwood ward to the west of Church Road and Church End ward to the south of Neasden Lane to form a revised Stonebridge ward. It argued that road widening and increased traffic flows had resulted in the North Circular Road increasing in significance as a barrier to movement, and that it should therefore be utilised as a ward boundary. These proposals were supported by the Liberal Democrats.

95 The Conservatives proposed combining St Raphael's ward with that part of Stonebridge ward to the west of the North London railway line in a revised Stonebridge ward. They argued that the North Circular Road should not be adopted as a ward boundary in this area as communities, including the St Raphael's estate, straddled the North Circular Road, and that there was merit in the road remaining a central issue for councillors. The Wembley Observer proposed identical ward boundaries to the Conservatives in this area, subject to naming the proposed ward Stonebridge & Park Royal North.

96 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that the key distinction between proposals in this area concerned the extent to which the North Circular Road should be utilised as a ward boundary. As already discussed, while we recognised that the North Circular Road represents a significant barrier between communities for some of its length, we were not persuaded that this was necessarily the case in Brent. We therefore proposed adopting the Conservatives' and Wembley Observer's proposals in this area. We also noted that, under our draft recommendations, the River Brent would continue to be utilised as a strong and natural eastern ward boundary to the proposed ward, with the North London railway line providing a well-defined western boundary. We also proposed reflecting the consensual view that the ward should be named Stonebridge, but we welcomed further views on the matter.

97 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations and, as previously indicated, argued that the North Circular Road "represents the single most important barrier to pedestrian and vehicular movement", and that it did not link the St Raphael's estate and Stonebridge. It argued that the footbridge over the River Brent is a valuable facility for local residents, including school children from the St Raphael's estate attending Oakington Manor School at Oakington Manor Drive. It also argued that there was merit in linking Stonebridge and Church End, and that our proposals would split recognised communities between different wards, including the Church End estate. The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations, and argued that the only part of the Church End Estate that would be split would be two geographically isolated roads. The Wembley Observer supported our draft recommendations for Stonebridge ward,

subject to renaming the ward as Stonebridge & Park Royal. It argued that it did not support the argument that the St Raphael's estate would continue to be cut off from the remainder of Stonebridge ward, and argued that there was "much lighter people movement" between the St Raphael's estate over the river footbridge to Tokyngton ward.

98 We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, expressing concern that the North Circular Road would not form the boundary in this area, arguing that it is a major barrier to communication, and that "road widening, increased traffic density and the increased retail activity adjoining it have reinforced that".

99 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations in this area. Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Tokyngton ward. Seven councillors argued that the North Circular Road should be adopted as the ward boundary in this area as it was a far more significant barrier than the River Brent. It was argued that residents from the St Raphael's estate would continue to be cut off from the rest of the proposed Stonebridge ward by the North Circular Road. Two councillors argued that the Church End estate should not be divided, and that it would more logically fall in Stonebridge ward.

100 Three residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with three supporting the Wembley Observer's proposals. Nine residents opposed proposed warding arrangements in this area, arguing that the North Circular Road is the natural boundary that delineates communities in this area, and expressed support for the Borough Council's proposals.

101 Having carefully considered the representations received we note that the key issue concerns our proposal to utilise the River Brent in this area as the ward boundary rather than the North Circular Road. However, as previously discussed, having re-examined all the evidence received, we continue to believe that the River Brent should continue to form the boundary in this area. While we recognise that, as a consequence of this, the roads which form the Church End estate would be represented in different wards in the interests of electoral equality, we note that these roads have traditionally been

split between wards, and that in any event the roads which would continue to be separated, Wharton Close and Knapp Close, are “geographically separate” from the remainder of the estate. Nor have we been persuaded that the Borough Council’s proposals of combining Stonebridge and Church End wards would better reflect the identities and interests of those communities and, in particular, note that they would be separated by a main railway line, which has no crossing point in this area.

102 We also note that the Wembley Observer has maintained that Stonebridge ward should be renamed Stonebridge & Park Royal. However, while we agree that there may be merit in this, in the absence of any further views, we have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to warrant renaming the proposed Stonebridge ward, and therefore confirm our proposed ward name as final.

103 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Stonebridge ward would initially vary from the borough average by 7 per cent. However, this level of electoral equality is expected to improve over the next five years with the ward expected to have an electoral variance of 2 per cent by 2004.

Barnhill, Kenton and Kingsbury wards

104 The existing wards of Barnhill, Kenton and Kingsbury are each represented by two councillors and are located in the north-west of the borough. They are traversed by the London Underground Metropolitan and Jubilee lines and contain the Barnhill Open Space and Brent Town Hall. While the number of electors per councillor in Barnhill ward varies by 6 per cent from the borough average, there is poor electoral equality in Kenton and Kingsbury wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 28 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years

105 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining Kenton ward with part of Sudbury Court and Kingsbury wards, with the remainder of Kingsbury ward being combined with part of Barnhill ward. It also proposed modifying the boundary between Barnhill and Kenton wards. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council’s proposals in this area.

106 The Conservatives proposed that the West Coast main line should form the western boundary to Kenton ward, and that the ward should be combined with part of Kingsbury ward. They also proposed modifying the boundary between Kenton and Barnhill wards, and that part of Barnhill ward should be combined with part of Kingsbury and St Andrew’s wards. The Wembley Observer proposed combining part of Kenton ward with part of Barnhill ward, St Andrew’s ward, Tokyngton ward and Preston ward to form a new Barnhill & Wembley Park ward. It also proposed that the West Coast main line should form the western boundary to the remainder of Kenton ward, and that the ward should be combined with part of Kingsbury ward in a new Kenton South ward.

107 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was agreement between all respondents that the London Underground Metropolitan line should form the southern boundary to Kenton ward, and between the Conservatives and the Wembley Observer that the West Coast main line should form its western ward boundary, and we concurred with this view. We also noted that there was agreement that parts of Kingsbury ward should be combined with Barnhill and Kenton wards, although there was no agreement over the precise boundaries for this division. On balance, we proposed adopting the Conservatives’ proposals in this area, which we considered represented the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, while respecting the strong and logical boundaries provided by the London Underground Metropolitan line and the West Coast main line.

108 At Stage Three, the Borough Council opposed our proposals in this area, and argued that our draft recommendations would split Kingsbury Town centre between several wards and, in particular, opposed the proposal to include Crundale Avenue and the Valley Farm estate in the proposed Fryent ward, from which they would be completely divided by open space. It also argued that our proposed boundary runs through the buildings of the proposed Jews’ Free School to the east of the Mall, and separates the town centre from its immediate hinterland. The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations in their entirety. The Wembley Observer supported our proposals in this area, subject to boundary modifications to the two proposed wards. It

proposed that Langdon Drive, Rossdale Drive, Hill Drive and Kingsmere Park should be transferred from Barnhill ward to Welsh Harp ward.

109 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations in this area. Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations with two expressing particular support for the proposed Kenton ward, and one expressing particular support for the proposed Kingsbury ward. Three councillors opposed the proposal to combine the Chalkhill estate with the Barnhill estate in a revised Barnhill ward on the grounds that these two areas have no natural affinity, with one opposing our proposed Fryent ward which, it was argued, would include an area set apart around Kingsbury Station.

110 Eight residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with three expressing particular support for the proposed Barnhill ward, and three supporting the Wembley Observer's proposals. Two residents supported the retention of Kingsbury as a ward name, while another suggested renaming Barnhill ward Town Hall.

111 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that our draft recommendations have been broadly supported, although a number of respondents have opposed the precise boundaries of proposed wards. However, in the light of evidence received, and proposals elsewhere within the borough, we have not been persuaded that alternative warding arrangements would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and we have therefore decided to confirm them, subject to a minor boundary modification. We have noted the reservations expressed in relation to our proposals dividing the proposed Jews' Free School between wards, and agree that there is merit in modifying the boundary between the proposed Barnhill and Kenton wards in order to incorporate the whole of the school in the proposed Barnhill ward. We note that this would not affect any electors.

112 While we have noted the concerns expressed in relation to other boundaries in this area, given the number of electors that would be involved in any further ward boundary changes, we do not consider that it is possible to address these without impacting upon the level of electoral equality in the

area. Moreover, in the absence of any significant support for these alternative warding arrangements, we have not been persuaded that any proposed boundary modifications would necessarily better reflect the identities and interests of local communities. We have carefully considered the concerns that the Valley Drive area would be separated from the remainder of Fryent ward by open space. However, we remain of the view that this proposal would unite the area which is connected to the south of Kingsbury Road and note that, under the Borough Council's proposals, Kingsbury would be combined with Wembley's Barnhill area on the other side of the mile-wide open space. We have also carefully considered the arguments concerning the proposed boundaries between Kenton and Fryent wards and Barnhill and Welsh Harp wards. However, for the reasons outlined above, we remain of the view that the proposed boundaries which we have adopted would offer the most sensible boundaries in this area, and would achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Also, in the absence of any significant support for alternative ward names in this area, we have decided to confirm the proposed ward names as final.

113 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Barnhill and Kenton wards would vary from the borough average by 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the two wards both expected to have electoral variances of 2 per cent by 2004.

Fryent, Queensbury, Roe Green and St Andrew's wards

114 The existing wards of Fryent, Queensbury, Roe Green and St Andrew's are situated in the north of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Under current arrangements, there is poor electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in the four wards varying from the borough average by 7 per cent, 12 per cent, 10 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. While this level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant in Queensbury and Roe Green wards over the next five years, it is expected to deteriorate in Fryent and St Andrew's, wards which are expected to have electoral variances of 12 per cent and 38 per cent by 2004.

115 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining Queensbury ward with parts of Kingsbury and Roe Green wards, with the remainder of Roe Green ward being combined with parts of Fryent and Barnhill wards to form a new Kingsbury ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Fryent ward should be combined with St Andrew's ward and parts of Barnhill, Brentwater and Church End wards to form a new Welsh Harp ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for these wards.

116 The Conservatives proposed combining parts of St Andrew's, Brentwater, Church End, Fryent and Barnhill wards, with the remainder of Fryent ward being combined with parts of Kingsbury and Roe Green wards. They also proposed similar warding arrangements to the Borough Council in relation to Queensbury ward, except that Stag Lane would be included in Fryent ward, to provide a better level of electoral equality. The Wembley Observer proposed combining parts of St Andrew's, Barnhill and Fryent wards to form a new South Kingsbury ward, with the remainder of Fryent ward being combined with parts of Roe Green and Kingsbury wards in a new Kingsbury Green ward. It also proposed combining the remainder of Roe Green ward with Queensbury ward in a new Roe Green & Queensbury South ward.

117 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was a degree of consensus in relation to Queensbury ward, with broad agreement that the existing ward should be combined with part of Roe Green ward, and we concurred with this view. On balance, we considered that there was merit in retaining Stag Lane in Queensbury ward, as proposed by the Borough Council. While this would result in marginally worse electoral equality than under the Conservatives' proposals, we were persuaded that this proposal would better reflect the identities and interests of communities in the area, and secure a better boundary.

118 We proposed adopting the Conservatives' proposals in relation to Fryent and St Andrew's wards, which we considered would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than alternative proposals. However, we were not persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed ward name of St Andrew's would satisfactorily reflect the

communities covered by the new ward, which would contain significant parts of the existing Church End and Barnhill wards and, on balance, proposed that this ward would be better named Welsh Harp ward, as proposed by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, to reflect the Welsh Harp reservoir which is located within the proposed ward. However, we welcomed further views during our consultation stage.

119 At Stage Three the Borough Council argued that the boundary between Queensbury and Fryent wards should take the fence line behind Evelyn Avenue on the Grove Park estate, arguing that the estate is a cohesive development of semi-detached housing, with its own identity and residents' association. It also argued that our proposals had subdivided a number of estates which are rooted in the Church Lane community where the Fryent/Welsh Harp/Barnhill wards come together. It also argued that our proposals failed to recognise Church Lane as a focal point for these communities, and that our proposals would divide these related communities from one of their major focal points. It argued that Church Lane's shops and facilities and Fryent school serve residents on the Elthorne and Higginbottom estates, which have been cut off from Fryent estate, that the Valley Farm area looks towards Kingsbury, and is cut off from Fryent by open space, and that Chalkhill has its historic and community ties with the Kingsbury Lands contained within Welsh Harp ward and has little connection with Barnhill.

120 The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations, subject to renaming Queensbury ward as North Kingsbury ward, Fryent ward as Kingsbury Green and Welsh Harp ward as St Andrews. The Wembley Observer also supported our proposals, although it argued that the Kingsbury Circle and the top of Fryent Way should be included in Fryent ward, and that its southern boundary be modified to follow Slough Lane and Kingsbury Green. It also proposed renaming Fryent ward as Kingsbury or Kingsbury & Fryent, Queensbury ward as Roe Green & Queensbury, and Welsh Harp ward as South Kingsbury.

121 Ken Livingstone MP objected to the proposed inclusion of the area of Ballogie and Balnacriag Avenue area in Welsh Harp ward on the grounds that this would "cut these roads off from their natural ties to the Neasden shopping centre".

122 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations. Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations, with one particularly welcoming the proposed warding arrangements for Queensbury ward and one expressing particular support for the proposed Welsh Harp ward, subject to renaming it St Andrews ward. One councillor supported the retention of the name 'Fryent', but argued that our proposals would split the natural community around Church Lane between two wards and, as a consequence, include an area to the north, currently in Roe Green, and an area to the north-west of the Fryent Country Park (the Valley Drive area) in the proposed Fryent ward. One councillor expressed reservations in respect of our proposal to split St Andrews ward between two wards, arguing that the Chalkhill estate has no natural alliance with the Barnhill estate to the north of the town Hall, and that residents of Chalkhill see the Welsh Harp as accessible through Birchen Grove. One councillor opposed the proposal to incorporate an area to the north, currently in Roe Green, and an area to the north west of the Fryent Country Park (the Valley Drive area) in the proposed Fryent ward rather than Barnhill ward. This view was endorsed by a further councillor, who also argued that our proposals would separate the southern part of the existing Fryent ward from its natural hinterland to the north.

123 Six residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Fryent ward, one supporting our proposed Welsh Harp ward, although he argued that it should be renamed St Andrews ward. Another resident supported our draft recommendations, subject to retaining St Andrews as a ward name. Three residents expressed support for the Wembley Observer's proposals. One resident opposed proposed warding arrangements for Fryent ward and Welsh Harp ward, while one resident argued that the existing St Andrews ward has more in common with Neasden and that part of Brentwater to the north of the North Circular Road than with Barnhill ward. One resident objected to combining the Chalkhill estate with the existing St Andrew's ward in the revised Barnhill ward, while one opposed the proposed Welsh Harp ward. One resident argued that Fryent ward should be renamed as Kingsbury ward.

124 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that there is limited agreement between respondents over the

most suitable warding arrangements in this area. However, in the light of evidence received, and proposals elsewhere within the borough, we have not been persuaded that significant modifications to our draft recommendations would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations, subject to modifying the boundary between Queensbury and Fryent wards, with the boundary following the fence line behind Evelyn Avenue on the Grove Park estate, as proposed by the Borough Council. This would result in marginally worse electoral equality in Queensbury and Fryent wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 2 per cent and 7 per cent initially, and by 3 per cent and 4 per cent in five years time. Nevertheless, we consider that there is merit in this estate being wholly represented within a single ward and that, given the only marginal impact upon electoral equality, this boundary modification would result in a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than that achieved by our draft recommendations.

125 However, we have not been persuaded to modify our draft recommendations elsewhere in this area. In particular, given the significant boundary modifications proposed, we do not consider that it would be possible to address these without impacting upon the level of electoral equality in the area. Moreover, in the absence of any significant support for these alternative warding arrangements, we have not been persuaded that the proposed boundary modifications would necessarily command widespread local support. We have carefully considered concerns in relation to our draft recommendations subdividing a number of estates in the Church Lane area but, given proposals elsewhere in the borough, we have not been persuaded that alternative warding arrangements would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have also carefully considered the concerns expressed in relation to the Chalkhill estate, but note that it does not appear to have an affinity with any of the surrounding housing, and that the community on the Chalkhill estate is very different from adjoining areas. Also, as discussed previously, while we recognise that the Valley Drive area would be separated from the remainder of Fryent ward by open space, we do not consider that the Borough Council's proposals would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

126 We note that the issue of ward names has provoked a degree of response in this area, with particular concern expressed in relation to the loss of Kingsbury and St Andrews as ward names. We have carefully considered these views, and note that there is no real agreement about different ward names or evidence that alternative ward names would necessarily command more widespread local support. Accordingly, we have not been persuaded that any of the proposals would better reflect the constituent communities in these wards.

127 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Fryent, Queensbury and Welsh Harp would vary from the borough average by 7 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years in Queensbury and Welsh Harp wards, and is expected to improve in Fryent ward which is expected to have an electoral variance of 4 per cent by 2004.

Brentwater, Church End, Cricklewood, Gladstone and Mapesbury wards

128 The existing wards of Brentwater, Church End, Cricklewood, Gladstone and Mapesbury are located in the east of the borough. The Welsh Harp reservoir is situated within Brentwater ward and the wards are traversed by the London Underground Metropolitan and Jubilee lines. All five wards are each represented by two members. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor varies from the borough average by 32 per cent, 6 per cent, 19 per cent, 15 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is not expected to improve significantly over the next five years, apart from in Mapesbury ward which is expected to have an electoral variance of 4 per cent by 2004.

129 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining Mapesbury ward with part of Gladstone and Cricklewood wards, with the remainder of Cricklewood ward being combined with parts of Brentwater and Gladstone wards in a new Oxgate ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Gladstone and Brentwater wards should be combined with part of Church End ward in a new Dudden Hill ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's

proposals in this area, with the exception of naming the proposed Oxgate ward Dollis Hill ward on the grounds that this would better reflect local communities in the area.

130 The Conservatives proposed combining parts of Mapesbury and Cricklewood wards to form a revised Mapesbury ward, with the remainder of Cricklewood ward being combined with parts of Brentwater and Gladstone wards to form a new Dollis Hill ward. They also proposed that the remainder of Gladstone ward should be combined with parts of Mapesbury and Church End ward to form a new Dudden Hill ward. The Wembley Observer proposed combining parts of Mapesbury ward and Cricklewood wards in a new Cricklewood West ward, with the remainder of Cricklewood ward being combined with parts of Brentwater and Gladstone wards in a new Dollis Hill ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Brentwater ward should be combined with the remainder of Gladstone ward and part of Church End ward in a new Neasden ward.

131 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was broad agreement that parts of Mapesbury and Cricklewood wards should be combined, and that there was agreement between the Conservatives and the Wembley Observer that the Dudding Hill railway line should be utilised as the boundary between their proposed wards. On the evidence received at that stage, we decided to endorse the Conservatives' proposals which, in our judgement, would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. Although this would result in the proposed Dudden Hill ward comprising areas either side of the London Underground Jubilee and Metropolitan lines, we noted that access between the two areas is provided by two road crossings, and we did not consider that the line forms a significant boundary at this point. Moreover, the boundary of the existing Church End ward already crosses the line at this point. While we considered the proposals from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, we noted that the extent to which we were able to reflect their views was restricted as a consequence of our draft recommendations elsewhere in the borough.

132 At Stage Three the Borough Council argued that our proposals were "less than satisfactory" in the way communities and housing estates are

divided, and continued to argue, as previously discussed, that the North Circular Road should form the boundary in this area. It argued that our proposals split Neasden's hinterland and its suburban communities, and that Ballogie and Balnacraig Avenues comprise a recognisable estate which feeds into Neasden Lane and Dudden Hill Lane, and should therefore be kept in Dudden Hill ward. It argued that our proposals for Church End split the Church End estate and, in particular, Knapp Close and Wharton Close would be divided from the main estate to the south. It also argued that the residential area to the east of the North Circular Road is more appropriately included in Dudden Hill ward. It further opposed the proposed boundaries between the wards of Dudden Hill and Dollis Hill, which it argued were "artificial", and that its proposed boundary between Dollis Hill and Mapesbury wards offered a better warding arrangement, on the grounds that Cricklewood was part of Dollis Hill and not Mapesbury. It also argued that the boundary between Mapesbury and Dudden Hill was "unsatisfactory" given that Riffel Road and Chandos Road would be included in Dudden Hill ward.

¹³³ The Conservatives supported our draft recommendations, arguing that our proposals recognised that the Neasden area crosses the North Circular Road and that there is an efficient road connection between residential areas either side. They argued that Neasden, which is currently split between three wards, would be split only between two wards under our proposals, and would result in better representation for the Neasden community. They also proposed a minor boundary modification to our draft recommendations, with The Circle and Avondale Avenue being included in the proposed Dudden Hill ward rather than Dollis Hill ward, and also proposed that Eastleigh Close and that part of the North Circular Road near to Neasden shopping centre be included in Dudden Hill ward. They also proposed that Mapesbury ward be renamed Cricklewood.

¹³⁴ The Wembley Observer supported our proposed Dollis Hill ward, subject to Cricklewood Bus Garage being included in Mapesbury ward, and the area around The Circle being included in Dudden Hill ward, with the boundary between Dollis Hill and Dudden Hill wards falling between Tanfield Avenue and Randal Avenue. It argued that

the proposed Dudden Hill ward had little apparent community identity, and proposed a realignment of its proposed boundary with Dollis Hill, Mapesbury, and Willesden Green wards, with the realigned ward being renamed Neasden & Gladstone Park ward. It also supported our proposals for Mapesbury ward, subject to modifying the boundary with Dudden Hill ward, and with the revised ward being renamed Cricklewood given that the 'Mapesbury' title has no historical significance.

¹³⁵ We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, arguing that our draft recommendations would split the Church End estate between wards, and expressing support for the Borough Council's proposals.

¹³⁶ Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations, subject to the minor boundary modifications proposed by the Conservatives. Neasden Business Corporation broadly supported our draft recommendations subject to minor modifications to the proposed Dudden Hill ward. It proposed that the north-western boundary should be formed by the River Brent, not the North Circular Road, and argued that adopting the North Circular Road as a boundary in this area would divide the existing community of Neasden. It also proposed that Dudden Hill be renamed Neasden to better reflect the constituent communities within this new ward. Neasden Residents Association broadly supported our draft recommendations with specific reference to the proposed Dudden Hill and Welsh Harp wards. However, it reiterated the Conservatives' proposal to transfer The Circle and Avondale Avenue from the proposed Dollis Hill ward to the proposed Dudden Hill ward on the basis of community identity.

¹³⁷ Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations, two with specific reference to the proposed Mapesbury ward, although they argued that Mapesbury ward should be renamed Cricklewood ward. Four councillors opposed our draft recommendations on the grounds that the Church End estate would continue to be split between wards, with three arguing that the whole of the Church End estate, including Yewfield Road, Ilex Road and Cobbold Road, should be incorporated in the proposed Stonebridge ward,

and the other arguing that this area would fit naturally with similar streets around Roundwood Road in Harlesden. One councillor opposed the proposal to transfer Riffel Road, Chandos Road and part of Melrose Avenue from Mapesbury ward on the grounds that these roads all share common interests and problems.

138 Seven residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Dollis Hill ward, one expressing particular support for the proposed Dudden Hill ward and two expressing particular support for the proposed Mapesbury ward, but suggested that it would be better named Cricklewood. Three residents expressed support for the Wembley Observer's proposals. Four residents opposed our draft recommendations for Mapesbury ward, and supported the Borough Council's proposals, while four residents argued that the Riffel/Chados/Cranhurst/Blenheim/Melrose streets should be retained in Mapesbury ward, and one resident argued that Park Avenue North should form the boundary between Mapesbury and Dudden Hill wards. Three residents objected to proposed ward boundaries for Dudden Hill ward. One resident proposed renaming Dudden Hill ward as Neasden, while three proposed renaming Mapesbury ward as Cricklewood.

139 Having carefully considered representations received at Stage Three, we note that there has been a degree of opposition to our proposed ward boundaries in this area. While we have sympathy with the views expressed in relation to changes in this area, as a consequence of our proposals elsewhere within the borough and, in particular, our decision to confirm the use of the River Brent as a ward boundary, we do not consider that there are alternative warding arrangements which would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Dudden Hill and Dollis Hill wards as final, subject to a minor boundary modification between the two wards, as illustrated on the large map in our draft recommendations report. For the purposes of our draft recommendations, we intended to include The Circle and Avondale Avenue in the proposed Dudden Hill ward. However, while this was reflected in Figure 2 in our report, it was not reflected on the large map. We therefore confirm

our intention that The Circle and Avondale Avenue should form part of the proposed Dudden Hill ward.

140 We have carefully also considered the concerns expressed in relation to our proposed Mapesbury ward, and note that our draft recommendation has drawn some local opposition, with particular concern being expressed in relation to the proposed boundary between Mapesbury and Dudden Hill wards. We have examined the possibility of incorporating Riffel Road, Chandos Road and all of Melrose Avenue in the proposed Mapesbury ward, but note that this would involve in excess of 800 people, and would result in the proposed Mapesbury ward having an electoral variance of 13 per cent. We have considered the possibility of further changes in the proposed Mapesbury ward, but we continue to consider that the Dudding Hill loop railway line would form a strong northern boundary, while the London Underground Jubilee Line would form a strong southern boundary.

141 We have considered the arguments in relation to the Church End estate being split between wards, and note that some respondents have argued that the whole of the Church End estate, including Yewfield Road, Ilex Road and Cobbold Road, should be incorporated in the proposed Stonebridge ward, while others have argued that it should be incorporated in the proposed Harlesden ward. However, while we again have sympathy with these views expressed, as already indicated, it is necessary to include roads that form part of the Church End estate in different wards in the interests of electoral equality. However, we note that these roads have traditionally been split between wards, and that in any event the roads from the Church End estate which would be contained in the proposed Dudden Hill ward, Wharton Close and Knapp Close, are "geographically separate" from the remainder of the estate. Accordingly, we remain of the view that our draft recommendation here would provide the better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

142 We note that a number of respondents have argued that the proposed Mapesbury ward would be better named as Cricklewood ward. However, while we agree that there may be merit in this, we have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to warrant renaming the proposed Mapesbury ward. We are therefore confirming our

draft recommendations for this area, as final subject to the minor boundary modification detailed above.

¹⁴³ Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average by 1 per cent in the proposed wards of Dollis Hill, Dudden Hill and Mapesbury. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

Harlesden, Kensal Rise, Manor and Roundwood wards

¹⁴⁴ The existing wards of Harlesden, Kensal Rise, Manor and Roundwood are located in the south of the borough, and are bounded by the West Coast main line and the North London railway line. All four of the existing wards are each represented by two councillors. Under current arrangements, there is poor electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 23 per cent, 23 per cent, 10 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

¹⁴⁵ At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining parts of Harlesden, Stonebridge, Roundwood, Church End and Manor wards in a revised Harlesden ward, with part of Harlesden, Manor, Chamberlayne and Kensal Rise wards forming a new Kensal ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for Harlesden ward, and proposed a minor change to the northern boundary of Kensal ward affecting four electors.

¹⁴⁶ The Conservatives proposed combining part of Harlesden ward, Stonebridge ward, Church End ward and Manor ward in a revised Harlesden ward, with the remainder of Manor ward being combined with part of Chamberlayne and Kensal Rise wards in a new Kensal Green ward. The Wembley Observer proposed combining Roundwood ward with parts of Church End and Willesden Green wards in a revised Willesden Green ward, with the remainder of Roundwood ward being combined with Harlesden ward and parts of Stonebridge and Manor wards. It also proposed combining the remainder of Manor ward with parts of Chamberlayne and Kensal Rise wards to form a new Kensal Green ward.

¹⁴⁷ In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was broad agreement that Kensal Rise ward should be divided, with all four borough-wide submissions agreeing that College Road should form the new boundary, and that the North London railway line should form the western boundary to a revised Harlesden ward, and we concurred with this view. On balance, we proposed basing our draft recommendations on the Conservatives' proposals for this area, which we considered would provide the best possible balance between the need for electoral equality and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. While we considered the alternative proposals in this area, the extent to which we were able to reflect their views was restricted as a consequence of our draft recommendations elsewhere in the borough. However, in order to provide better warding arrangements and to minimise disruption to existing warding arrangements, we proposed retaining the eastern boundary of the existing Roundwood ward, and including Willesden Cemetery and Roundwood Park in the proposed Willesden Green ward.

¹⁴⁸ At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our proposals to split Harlesden Gardens, and argued that the school in Crownhill Road and Harlesden Park in the proposed Harlesden ward. It also argued that the ward boundary should be redrawn along Neasden Lane and High Road so that the Cobbold estate (including Ilex, and Cobbold, Yewfield and Franklyn Roads) should be included in the proposed Harlesden ward. It also proposed renaming Kensal Green ward as Kensal. The Conservatives broadly supported our draft recommendations, with a minor boundary modification suggested for Kensal Green ward. They proposed incorporating Kensal Green station in Kensal Green ward or, as an alternative, renaming the proposed Kensal Green ward East Harlesden. They also proposed renaming Harlesden ward as West Harlesden. The Wembley Observer supported our proposals, although it argued that streets to the north of Park Parade should remain in Harlesden ward rather than being transferred to Kensal Green ward. It also argued that the area to the south of the North London railway line between Harrow Road and College Road should be retained in Queens Park ward with the area of Queens Park to the north of the railway line between College Road and Chamberlayne Road being transferred instead to Kensal Green ward.

149 Paul Boateng MP argued that the Borough Council's proposals made sense from a community point of view and, in particular, argued that the area around Harlesden Gardens relates more closely to the town centre.

150 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations, subject to minor boundary modifications proposed by the Conservatives. Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations. One councillor welcomed the proposal to merge broadly similar streets of Victorian terraced housing in Roundwood with those in Harlesden, although he argued that we had missed the opportunity to unite these similar areas with identical and adjacent streets currently in Church End ward, namely Yewfield Road, Ilex Road and Cobbold Road. He also argued that the whole of the Church End estate would more logically fall in Stonebridge ward. Another councillor argued that there was "no logic" in the division of the proposed Harlesden ward along Crownhill Road, and that Sellons Avenue looks towards Harlesden and not Kensal. One councillor argued that the proposed Kensal Green ward extends to the heart of Harlesden Town Centre but does not include Kensal Green station at its heart. Another councillor opposed the proposal to divide Harlesden's streets at Crownhill Road, and to exclude Harlesden Gardens and Sellons/Springwell Avenue from Harlesden ward. He also expressed reservations that Ilex, Cobbold, Yewfield and Franklyn have been detached from Harlesden ward.

151 Five residents supported our draft recommendations in this area. Three residents expressed support for the Wembley Observer's proposals. One resident opposed the proposed split of the Dobree estate, while one opposed Longstone Avenue being transferred into Kensal Green ward. One resident objected to the proposal to separate the Sellons/Springwell Road from the rest of Harlesden, and opposed the splitting of Harlesden Gardens between wards.

152 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that there has been a degree of opposition to the proposed ward boundaries in this area. While we have sympathy with the views expressed in relation to changes in this area, as a consequence of our proposals elsewhere within the borough and, in particular,

our decision to confirm the use of the River Brent as a ward boundary, we do not consider that alternative warding arrangements are available which would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final in their entirety, subject to two minor boundary modifications. First, we propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Kensal Green and Brondesbury wards, with that part of Leighton Gardens currently contained within the proposed Kensal Green ward being included in Brondesbury ward. Second, we propose modifying the boundary between Kensal Green and Queens Park wards, in order to include Kensal Green station in the proposed Kensal Green ward. This would not affect any electors.

153 While we recognise that there is merit in modifying the boundary between Harlesden and Queens Parks ward, with streets to the north of Park Parade remaining in Harlesden ward rather than being transferred to Kensal Green ward, this would result in a large electoral imbalance in the proposed Harlesden ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 9 per cent from the average. We have not been persuaded that this level of electoral imbalance is warranted. We have also examined the possibility of the area to the south of the North London railway line between Harrow Road and College Road being retained in Queens Park ward, with the area of Queens Park to the north of the railway line between College Road and Chamberlayne Road being transferred to Kensal Green ward. However, we note that this would result in worse electoral equality in both wards, and have not been persuaded that this would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have also considered including the whole of the Church End estate in the proposed Harlesden ward but, as already indicated, we have not been persuaded that this would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

154 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Harlesden and Kensal Green would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent and 3 per cent. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Brondesbury Park, Chamberlayne and Willesden Green wards

155 The existing wards of Brondesbury Park, Chamberlayne and Willesden Green are situated in the south-east of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. The London Underground Metropolitan and Jubilee lines form the northern boundary to Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards. Under current arrangements the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the borough average by 24 per cent, 9 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

156 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining Willesden Green ward with part of Chamberlayne, Manor, Church End and Brondesbury Park wards in a revised Willesden Green ward, with the remainder of Brondesbury Park ward, except for a small area, being combined with part of Chamberlayne, Kilburn and Queens Park wards in a new Brondesbury ward. The Liberal Democrats broadly supported the Borough Council's proposals for these wards, subject to minor boundary changes to Brondesbury ward and the boundary between the proposed Willesden Green and Kensal wards.

157 The Conservatives proposed combining most of Brondesbury Park ward with part of Chamberlayne ward, with the remainder of Brondesbury Park ward being combined with part of Willesden Green, Church End and Manor wards. The Wembley Observer proposed combining parts of Brondesbury Park, Chamberlayne and Mapesbury wards in a new Brondesbury ward, with part of Chamberlayne ward, the remainder of Brondesbury Park ward, and parts of Willesden Green and Gladstone wards forming a new Willesden Church End ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Willesden Green ward should be combined with parts of Church End and Roundwood wards, as previously indicated.

158 In our draft recommendations, we noted that there were broad similarities between the proposals submitted by the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. In particular, there was agreement on combining Willesden Green ward with parts of Church End, Chamberlayne and Brondesbury Park wards,

although there was no agreement on the precise boundaries between these wards. On balance, we proposed basing our draft recommendations on the Conservatives' proposals which we considered would represent the best balance between the need for electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we noted that these proposals would minimise disruption to existing warding arrangements and ensure that the North London line continues to be utilised as the southern boundary to Brondesbury Park ward. While these proposals would result in Queens Park school being included within Brondesbury Park ward, we noted that the school was until recently Aylestone School and was only renamed following a merger with surrounding schools. Furthermore, we noted that the proposal to include the school in Brondesbury ward was supported by the Liberal Democrats. While we considered the proposals from the Borough Council and the Wembley Observer, we noted that the extent to which we were able to reflect their views was restricted as a consequence of our draft recommendations elsewhere in the borough. However, in the interests of providing better boundaries we proposed that Roundwood Park and Willesden Cemetery should form part of the proposed Willesden Green ward, as previously indicated.

159 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed the proposal to split roads in the Dobree estate between wards, and argued that the this area should be retained as a recognisable community, and that the whole of the area should be retained in Willesden, to which it looks. It also argued that the area to the north of Willesden Lane relates to Kilburn High Road, and is part of the Brondesbury Residents and Tenants Association. It argued that Rutland Park is already in Brondesbury Park ward, and that it could easily be transferred to Willesden Green ward, but that this would affect electoral equality.

160 The Conservatives argued that under our draft recommendations the Dobree estate would be contained almost completely in Brondesbury ward, and that Peter Avenue would be the only road omitted. The Wembley Observer supported our proposals in Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards, subject to extending the proposed Willesden Green boundary to incorporate St Mary at Willesden Church in Willesden Green ward rather than Dudden Hill ward.

161 We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, arguing that our draft recommendations would split the Dobree estate between wards, and expressing support for the Borough Council's proposals. In addition, Ken Livingstone MP opposed the use of the North London Line as a ward boundary, arguing that the areas on either side are similar in housing type, and that the Brondesbury Residents and Tenants Association covers both sides of the line.

162 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations, as did four councillors. Brent Labour Party opposed our proposals that the square of roads between Okehampton Road, Tiverton Road, Wrentham Avenue and Chamberlayne Road should be included in Brondesbury Park ward, and argued that these should be included in the proposed Queens Park ward. It also opposed the splitting of the Dobree estate between wards, and argued that the estate looks towards Willesden Green and should be placed in that ward in its entirety.

163 Three councillors expressed concern that our proposals would split the Waterloo estate between wards, and argued that the whole area, which has been designated a conservation area and is represented by the Brondesbury Residents and Tenants Association, should form part of a single ward. One of those councillors also argued that the Winchester Avenue and Kimberley Road area should be included in the proposed Brondesbury Park ward rather than in Queens Park ward. Two councillors opposed the proposal to split the Dobree estate between wards, and argued that the proposed Brondesbury Park ward would comprise areas with little community affinity. Another councillor argued that the Wrentham Avenue and Okehampton Avenue area should be incorporated in Queens Park ward rather than Brondesbury Park ward. Two councillors opposed the proposed Brondesbury Park ward, arguing that it would comprise areas that had few communication links.

164 Five residents supported our draft recommendations in this area, with one expressing particular support for the proposed Brondesbury Park ward. Three residents expressed support for the Wembley Observer's proposals. One resident opposed proposed ward boundaries for Brondesbury Park ward.

165 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note there is limited agreement in relation to the most appropriate warding arrangements in this area. While we have sympathy with the views expressed in relation to changes in this area, as a consequence of our proposals elsewhere within the borough, we have not been persuaded to significantly modify our draft recommendations in this area. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to modifying the ward boundary between the proposed Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards and the proposed Brondesbury Park and Queens Park ward. On balance, we have been persuaded that there is merit in including Peter Avenue in Brondesbury Park ward, in order that the Dobree estate can be wholly contained in one ward. This would reflect a number of concerns expressed at Stage Three. We also consider that there is merit in retaining Okehampton Road, Tiverton Road, Dundonald Road, Crediton Road, Wrentham Road and part of Chamberlyn Road in Queens Park ward rather than Brondesbury Park ward. This would also reflect a number of concerns expressed at Stage Three, and would help facilitate a better level of electoral equality in Brondesbury Park ward. However, we also propose including the whole of Leighton Gardens currently split between the proposed Kensal Green and Queens Park wards in Brondesbury Park ward again to facilitate a better level of electoral equality between all three wards.

166 We have considered the Borough Council's proposals regarding the area to the north of Willesden Lane relating to Kilburn High Road, which is covered by the the Brondesbury Residents and Tenants Association, and that Rutland Park should be transferred to Willesden Green ward. However, we note that this would adversely affect electoral equality in the area. Nor, in the absence of any evidence, are we persuaded that this would necessarily command local support. Similarly, we have also considered the Wembley Observer's proposal to transfer St Mary at Willesden Church from Dudden Hill ward to Willesden Green ward, but in the absence of any evidence, we are not persuaded that this would necessarily command local support.

167 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards

would vary from the average by 1 per cent and 3 per cent. This level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Carlton, Kilburn and Queens Park wards

168 The existing wards of Carlton, Kilburn and Queens Park are situated in the south-east of the borough, and are traversed by the West Coast main line and the North London railway line. All three of the existing wards are each represented by two councillors. Under current arrangements, there is poor electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varying from the borough average by 28 per cent, 5 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is not expected to improve significantly over the next five years.

169 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed combining part of Carlton, Kilburn and Queens Park wards to form a new Kilburn ward, with the remainder of Queens Park ward being combined with part of Kensal Rise, Chamberlayne and Brondesbury Park wards to form a revised Queens Park ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for these wards although, as discussed above, they argued that Queens Park school should be included in Brondesbury ward.

170 The Conservatives proposed combining parts of Carlton and Kilburn wards, with the remainder of Carlton and Kilburn wards being combined with the whole of the existing Queens Park ward and parts of Kensal Rise and Chamberlayne wards. The Wembley Observer proposed similar warding arrangements to the Conservatives in relation to Carlton and Kilburn wards, although it proposed boundary modifications to its proposed Kilburn West ward. It also proposed similar warding arrangements to the Conservatives in relation to Queens Park ward, subject to minor boundary modifications.

171 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that there was considerable agreement between respondents in relation to these wards and, in particular, in relation to Carlton ward being divided between Kilburn and Queens Park wards, and Salusbury Road forming the boundary between the two. In addition, there was agreement that that part of the existing Kensal Rise ward to

the east of College Road should be combined with part of Queens Park ward. On balance, we proposed adopting the Conservatives' proposals in this area, which we considered represent the best possible balance between electoral equality and respecting the identities and interests of communities in the area. In particular, we noted that these proposals would respect the strong and logical boundary provided by the North London railway line, while minimising disruption to existing warding arrangements. While we considered the proposals from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Wembley Observer, we noted that they proposed wards that would comprise areas either side of the North London railway line and that, as a consequence of our draft recommendations elsewhere in the borough, the extent to which we were able to reflect their views was restricted.

172 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations, and argued that our proposals would "artificially divide" the Waterloo estate between Dyne Road, Willesden Lane and Kilburn High Road, and that the boundary should be redrawn along Willesden Lane. It argued that the North London railway line was not a significant boundary, and that there were frequent crossing points. It also argued that Cullen House formed part of the South Kilburn estate, and should be included in Kilburn ward rather than Queens Park. It also argued that the proposed Queens Park/Kensal/Brondesbury boundary bisects the College Road community, and that the boundary should follow rear garden boundaries. It argued that Hardinge Road, to the north, forms a natural end-stop to the residential layout, and that its proposals would form a "rational solution" whilst retaining Wrentham Avenue and Queens Park Community School within Queens Park to the east. It also argued that the boundary along Harrow Road should be modified to include Kensal Green Station within Kensal Green ward, and that this would not affect any electors. It also opposed the use of Donaldson Road as the boundary between Queens Park and Kilburn wards which, it argued, would result in Victoria Road, Brondesbury Villas and Brondesbury Road being split between wards. As a consequence, it argued that Salusbury Road should be utilised as the ward boundary.

173 The Conservatives supported our proposals for Brondesbury Park ward, arguing the Borough

Council's proposals were "inferior" in respect of electoral equality, natural geographic boundaries and representing communities of interest. They argued that the North London line is a major barrier, and should be retained as the ward boundary in this area. They also agreed that Kensal Green station should be sited within Kensal ward, with no effect on electoral equality. They also argued that Donaldson Road was an appropriate boundary between Kilburn and Queens Park wards. The Wembley Observer supported our proposals for Kilburn ward, subject to its northern boundary with Queens Park following Willesden Lane rather than Torbay Road. It also supported our proposals for Queens Park ward, subject to modifying the boundary with Kensal Green ward, as already discussed.

174 We also received submissions from Paul Boateng MP, Barry Gardiner MP and Ken Livingstone MP, arguing that our draft recommendations would split the Waterloo estate between wards, and expressing support for the Borough Council's proposals. In particular, Ken Livingstone MP argued that the proposed boundary between Kilburn and Queens Park wards would follow the rear of properties on Torbay Road and, as a consequence, would split Dyne Road, Plympton Road and Clarence Road. He argued that Salusbury Road would offer a better boundary.

175 Brent East Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations. Eight councillors supported our draft recommendations. Two councillors argued that Salusbury rather than Donaldson Road should form the boundary between Kilburn and Queens Park wards, with one arguing that the Wrentham Avenue and Okehampton Road area should be incorporated in Queens Park ward. One councillor expressed concern that our proposals would split the Waterloo estate between wards, and argued that the whole area should form part of a single ward. He also argued that the Winchester Avenue and Kimberley Road area should be included in the proposed Brondesbury Park ward rather than Queens Park ward.

176 Eight residents supported our draft recommendations in this area. Three residents expressed support for the Wembley Observer's proposals. Four residents argued that the square of roads between Okehampton Road, Tiverton Road,

Wrentham Avenue and Chamberlayne Road should be in Queens Park ward rather than Brondesbury Park ward. One resident argued that Salusbury Road and Willesden Lane should form the boundaries in this area, and opposed our draft recommendations on the grounds that they cross Willesden Lane, and include Clarence Road in Queens Park ward.

177 Having carefully considered the representations received, we note that there is limited agreement in relation to the most appropriate warding arrangements in this area. However, as a consequence of our proposals elsewhere within the borough, we have not been persuaded to significantly modify our draft recommendations in this area. We therefore propose substantially confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to four minor boundary modifications. As already indicated, we have been persuaded that there is merit in modifying the ward boundary between Queens Park and Brondesbury wards in order to include Okehampton Road, Tiverton Road, Dundonald Road, Crediton Road, Wrentham Road and part of Chamberlayne Road in Queens Park ward, together with the ward boundary between Queens Park and Kensal Green wards in order that Kensal Green station is included in the proposed Kensal Green ward, and the boundary between Queens Park and Brondesbury wards so that Leighton Gardens will be wholly contained in one ward. In the light of evidence received, we consider that there is also merit in modifying the boundary between Queens Park and Kilburn wards in order that Dyne Road, Plympton Road and Clarence Road are not split between wards. The boundary in this area would therefore continue to follow Willesden Lane, as proposed by a number of respondents.

178 We note that our proposal to utilise Donaldson Road as part of the boundary between Queens Park and Kilburn wards has attracted a degree of opposition, with respondents arguing that Salusbury Road should form the ward boundary in this area. However, this would entail a significant departure from our proposals, and we note that adopting Salusbury Road as the ward boundary would significantly impact upon the level of electoral equality in the area. We have therefore not been persuaded that this would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations.

179 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Kilburn and Queens Park would initially vary from the borough average by 4 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

Conclusions

180 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- (a) the boundary between the proposed Barnhill and Kenton wards should be modified in order to incorporate the whole of the proposed Jews' Free School in the proposed Barnhill ward;
- (b) the boundary between the proposed Queensbury and Fryent wards should be modified, with the boundary following the fence line behind Evelyn Avenue on the Grove Park estate;
- (c) the boundary between Kensal Green and Queens Park wards, in order to include Kensal Green station in the proposed Kensal Green ward;
- (d) the boundary between the proposed Brondesbury Park and Willesden Green wards,

with Peter Avenue being included in Brondesbury Park ward, in order that the Dobree estate can be wholly contained in one ward;

- (e) the proposed boundary between Brondesbury Park and Queens Park ward, with Okehampton Road, Tiverton Road, Dundonald Road, Crediton Road, Wrentham Road and part of Chamberlayne Road being included in Queens Park ward;
- (f) the boundary between Queens Park and Kilburn wards, in order that Dyne Road, Plympton Road and Clarence Road are not split between wards;
- (g) the boundary between Brondesbury Park, Kensal Green and Queens Park wards, with Leighton Gardens being included in Brondesbury Park ward.

181 We conclude that, in Brent:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 66 to 63;
- (b) there should be 21 wards, 10 less than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all of the existing wards.

182 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4 : Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

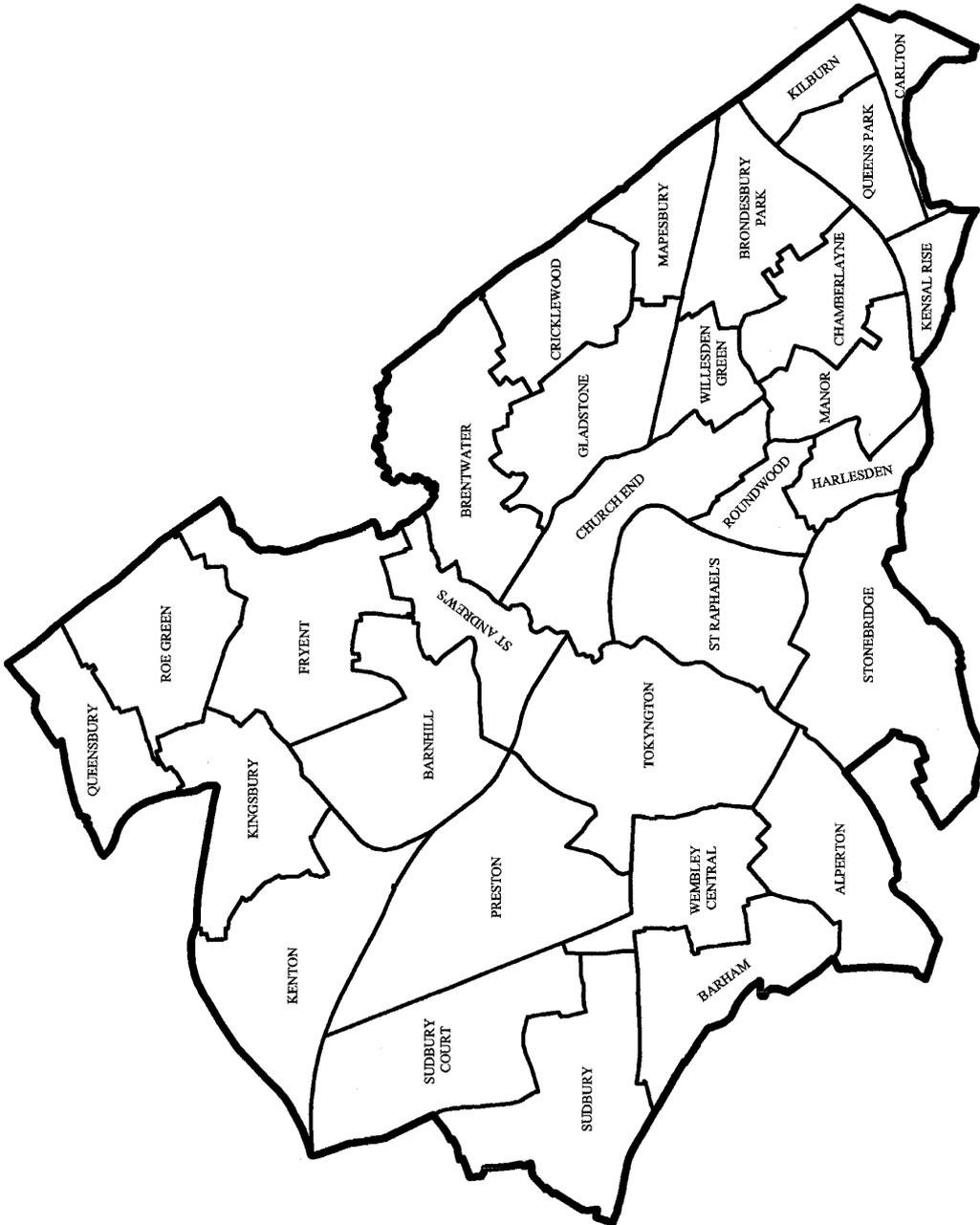
	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	66	63	66	63
Number of wards	31	21	31	21
Average number of electors per councillor	2,585	2,709	2,683	2,813
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	17	0	18	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	0	9	0

183 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Brent Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 17 to none. This improved balance of representation is expected to remain constant over the next five years. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Final Recommendation

Brent Borough Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map in the back of the report.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Brent



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6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Brent

Our final recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of nine wards. Our draft proposals are set out below:

*Figure A1:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
1	Alperton	3	Alperton ward; Barham ward (part); Wembley Central ward (part)
2	Barnhill	3	Barnhill ward (part); Kenton ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part); St Andrew's ward (part)
3	Brondesbury Park	3	Brondesbury Park ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part)
4	Dollis Hill	3	Brentwater ward (part); Cricklewood ward (part); Gladstone ward (part)
5	Dudden Hill	3	Church End ward (part); Gladstone ward (part); Mapesbury ward (part)
6	Fryent	3	Fryent ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part); Roe Green ward (part)
7	Harlesden	3	Harlesden ward (part); Roundwood ward; Stonebridge ward (part)
8	Kensal Green	3	Chamberlayne ward (part); Harlesden ward (part); Manor ward (part); Kensal Rise ward (part)
9	Kenton	3	Kenton ward (part); Kingsbury ward (part);
10	Kilburn	3	Carlton ward (part); Kilburn ward (part)
11	Mapesbury	3	Cricklewood ward (part); Mapesbury ward (part)
12	Northwick Park	3	Kenton ward (part); Sudbury ward (part); Sudbury Court ward (part)
13	Preston	3	Preston ward (part)
14	Queens Park	3	Carlton ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part); Kilburn ward (part); Kensal Rise ward (part); Queens Park ward

continued overleaf

*Figure A1 (continued):
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
15 Queensbury	3	Kingsbury ward (part); Roe Green ward (part); Queensbury ward
16 Stonebridge	3	Church End ward (part); St Raphael's ward; Stonebridge ward (part)
17 Sudbury	3	Barham ward (part); Sudbury ward (part); Sudbury Court ward (part)
18 Tokyngton	3	Preston ward (part); Tokyngton ward (part)
19 Welsh Harp	3	Barnhill ward (part); Brentwater ward (part); Fryent ward (part); St Andrew's ward (part);
20 Wembley Central	3	Barham ward (part); Preston ward (part); Tokyngton ward (part); Wembley Central ward (part)
21 Willesden Green	3	Brondesbury Park ward (part); Chamberlayne ward (part); Church End ward (part); Manor ward (part); Willesden Green ward (part)

Figure A2:

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alperton	3	7,961	2,654	-2	8,331	2,777	-1
2 Barnhill	3	8,449	2,816	4	8,295	2,765	-2
3 Brondesbury Park	3	8,272	2,757	2	8,600	2,867	2
4 Dollis Hill	3	8,061	2,687	-1	8,281	2,760	-2
5 Dudden Hill	3	8,236	2,745	1	8,527	2,842	1
6 Fryent	3	7,767	2,589	-4	8,295	2,762	-2
7 Harlesden	3	8,324	2,775	2	8,526	2,842	1
8 Kensal Green	3	7,941	2,647	-2	8,606	2,869	2
9 Kenton	3	7,963	2,654	-2	8,307	2,769	-1
10 Kilburn	3	8,239	2,746	1	8,579	2,860	2
11 Mapesbury	3	8,062	2,687	-1	8,604	2,868	2
12 Northwick Park	3	8,080	2,693	-1	8,303	2,768	-2
13 Preston	3	8,132	2,711	0	8,439	2,813	0
14 Queens Park	3	8,275	2,758	2	8,505	2,835	1
15 Queensbury	3	8,057	2,686	-1	8,482	2,827	1
16 Stonebridge	3	8,670	2,890	7	8,574	2,858	2
17 Sudbury	3	8,040	2,680	-1	8,310	2,770	-1
18 Tokyngton	3	8,043	2,681	-1	8,269	2,756	-2
19 Welsh Harp	3	8,042	2,681	-1	8,353	2,784	-1
20 Wembley Central	3	7,940	2,647	-2	8,265	2,755	-2
21 Willesden Green	3	8,115	2,705	0	8,581	2,860	2
Totals	63	170,669	—	—	177,032	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,709	—	—	2,810	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Brent Borough Council.

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

