

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire in Wiltshire

Further electoral review

February 2006

Translations and other formats

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by The Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A Further Electoral Review of West Wiltshire is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, eight wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. Development in the wards of Westbury Ham and Trowbridge Park has led to particularly poor levels of electoral equality with the councillors in these wards representing 34% and 26% more electors than the district average, respectively.

Every review is conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

We received 22 submissions during Stage One. The District Council proposed a scheme based on a council size of 48 and submitted proposals for all of the rural areas in the district. We received another partial scheme from a local resident for the district while a number of parish and town councils and local councillors provided comments regarding warding arrangements in their respective areas. We received submissions from 11 respondents who stated that they opposed combining urban and rural areas in the same ward.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The District Council projected a 10% increase in the electorate of West Wiltshire district between 2004 and 2009 which is the period over which we would seek to provide an improvement in the levels of electoral equality across the district. The accuracy of this growth was questioned by a local resident and the Labour Group on the Council. The District Council therefore provided some further information to support this projection and we have used its figures when forming our recommendations.

Council size

West Wiltshire District Council proposed increasing the council size from 44 to 48. Four other respondents also supported this increase in council size but no evidence was provided to support this proposed council size. We also received support for retaining the existing council size of 44, from three respondents. Another respondent proposed increasing the council size to 46. The majority of these respondents did not provide information in relation to the council size specifically but noted that certain council sizes would facilitate their preferred pattern of warding. Given the lack of evidence in relation to council size, we have proposed retaining the existing council size of 44.

General analysis

We are proposing a scheme based on an option in the rural areas that the District Council had consulted on, before submitting a different scheme to us. We are proposing 24 wards, in a pattern of single and multi-member configurations. We have attempted not to combine urban and rural areas although in Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon we are combining a number of surrounding parishes with the towns to provide a better level of electoral equality. In the towns where no proposals were submitted to us we have formed our own warding pattern which provide good levels of electoral equality.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations for West Wiltshire contained in the report. We welcome views from all parts of the community and believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by 22 May 2006. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decisions regarding council size particularly difficult and would welcome local views regarding this, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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This report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
1	Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall	1	Atworth parish, South Wraxall parish, the existing Shaw & Whitley parish ward of Melksham Without parish
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	the proposed Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon parish
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	Westwood parish; Wingfield parish; the proposed Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon parish.
4	Dilton	1	Chapmanslade parish; Dilton Marsh parish; Upton Scudamore parish
5	Ethandune	1	Bratton parish; Coulston parish; Edington parish; West Ashton parish
6	Holt & Hilperton	3	Broughton Gifford parish; Hilperton parish; Holt parish; Staverton parish
7	Manor Vale	1	Limpley Stoke parish; Monkton Farleigh parish; Winsley parish
8	Melksham East	2	the proposed Melksham East parish ward of Melksham parish
9	Melksham Spa	2	the proposed Melksham Spa parish ward of Melksham parish
10	Melksham Without	3	Melksham Without ward; the proposed Melksham North parish ward of Melksham parish
11	Mid Wylfe Valley	1	Mid Wylfe Valley ward; Bishopstrow parish; Norton Bavant parish
12	Shearwater	1	Shearwater ward; Corsley parish
13	Summerham	1	Bulkington parish; Great Hinton parish; Keevil parish; Semington parish; Steeple Ashton parish

Table 1 (continued): Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
14	Trowbridge & North Bradley	1	the proposed Trowbridge Bradley Road parish ward of Trowbridge parish; North Bradley parish
15	Trowbridge & Southwick	1	the proposed Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward of Trowbridge parish; Southwick parish
16	Trowbridge Central	2	the proposed Trowbridge Central parish ward of Trowbridge parish
17	Trowbridge East	3	the proposed Trowbridge East parish ward of Trowbridge parish
18	Trowbridge North East	2	the proposed Trowbridge North East parish ward of Trowbridge parish
19	Trowbridge North West	1	the proposed Trowbridge North West parish ward of Trowbridge parish
20	Trowbridge South West	2	the proposed Trowbridge South West parish ward of Trowbridge parish
21	Warminster East	3	Warminster East ward (unchanged)
22	Warminster West	3	Warminster West ward (unchanged)
23	Westbury Ham & Heywood	3	Westbury Ham ward; Heywood parish
24	Westbury Laverton	2	Westbury Laverton ward (unchanged)

Notes:

1. The whole district is parished. The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
2. We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft recommendations for West Wiltshire district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Atworth, Whitley and South Wraxall	1	2,408	2,408	13	2,468	2,468	6
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	4,426	2,213	4	4,976	2,488	7
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	4,323	2,162	2	4,408	2,204	-5
4	Dilton	1	2,278	2,278	7	2,360	2,360	1
5	Ethandune	1	2,043	2,043	-4	2,171	2,171	-7
6	Holt & Hilperton	3	5,915	1,972	-7	6,897	2,299	-1
7	Manor Vale	1	2,480	2,480	17	2,518	2,518	8
8	Melksham East	2	4,615	2,308	8	4,752	2,376	2
9	Melksham Spa	2	4,628	2,314	9	4,684	2,342	1
10	Melksham Without	3	5,605	1,868	-12	7,428	2,476	6
11	Mid Wylve Valley	1	2,220	2,220	4	2,317	2,317	-1

Table 2 (continued): Draft recommendations for West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Shearwater	1	2,419	2,419	14	2,455	2,455	5
13 Summerham	1	2,272	2,272	7	2,382	2,382	2
14 Trowbridge & North Bradley	1	2,322	2,322	9	2,314	2,314	-1
15 Trowbridge & Southwick	1	2,246	2,246	6	2,260	2,260	-3
16 Trowbridge Central	2	4,477	2,239	5	4,770	2,385	2
17 Trowbridge East	3	5,136	1,712	-20	6,952	2,317	-1
18 Trowbridge North East	2	4,231	2,116	-1	4,467	2,234	-4
19 Trowbridge North West	1	2,169	2,169	2	2,183	2,183	-6
20 Trowbridge South West	2	4,437	2,219	4	4,629	2,315	-1

Table 2 (continued): Draft recommendations for West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
21 Warminster East	3	6,349	2,116	-1	6,831	2,277	-2
22 Warminster West	3	6,464	2,155	1	6,826	2,275	-2
23 Westbury Ham & Heywood	3	6,077	2,026	-5	6,863	2,288	-2
24 Westbury Laverton	2	4,051	2,026	-5	4,586	2,293	-2
Totals	44	93,591	-	-	102,497	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,127	-	-	2,329	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of West Wiltshire, on which we are now consulting.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 The Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make on-going assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a Periodic Electoral Review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be a closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average; or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average.

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of West Wiltshire. The last review of West Wiltshire was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1999. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 22 October 1999 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2003.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework¹. This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
- secure effective and convenient local government; and
- achieve equality of representation.

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of West Wiltshire is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by The Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful in both understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for any parish and town councils in the district. We do not in these reviews consider changes to the external boundaries of parishes, district or counties.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962)

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

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction, or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, we believe that consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, The Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from that of another. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an

unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 12 July 2005 when we wrote to West Wiltshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Wiltshire Police Authority, the Wiltshire Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited West Wiltshire District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 October 2005.

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

17 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 21 February 2006 and will end on 22 May 2006, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation about them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to:

- The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity; and
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The district of West Wiltshire contains the five towns of Trowbridge, Melksham, Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury and Warminster and 46 parishes. Significant growth is occurring in the district particularly in and around the towns of Trowbridge and Westbury. Since the last review, electorate growth for the district as a whole exceeded what was projected for the five-year period between 1998 and 2003. A further 10% growth is expected between 2004 and 2009.

22 The electorate of the district is 93,591 (December 2004). The Council presently has 44 members who are elected from 25 wards, 14 of which are relatively urban and the remainder being predominantly rural. There are currently eight single-member wards, 15 two-member wards and two three-member wards.

23 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the district average in percentage terms. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (93,591) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, (currently 44). Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor is currently 2,127.

24 The district average will increase to 2,329 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to the fact that more development was undertaken than was expected, the number of electors per councillor in eight of the 25 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 30%. Growth in Westbury Ham and Trowbridge Park wards has resulted in the councillors in these wards representing significantly more electors than in other areas of the district. The councillors for Trowbridge Park ward represent 26% more electors than the district average and the councillors for Westbury Ham ward represent 34% more electors than the district average.

25 Having considered the existing levels of electoral equality and noting that they would not improve over time, The Electoral Commission directed a further electoral review of West Wiltshire on 12 May 2005.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Atworth and Whitley	1	2,059	2,059	-3	2,107	2,107	-10
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	3,631	1,816	-15	3,859	1,930	-17
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	3,888	1,944	-9	4,281	2,141	-8
4	Dilton Marsh	2	4,292	2,146	1	4,371	2,186	-6
5	Ethandune	1	2,074	2,074	-2	2,113	2,113	-9
6	Holt	1	1,952	1,952	-8	2,060	2,060	-12
7	Manor Vale	2	3,780	1,890	-11	3,842	1,921	-18
8	Melksham North	2	4,317	2,159	2	4,638	2,319	0
9	Melksham Spa	2	4,374	2,187	3	4,443	2,222	-5
10	Melksham Without	2	4,154	2,077	-2	5,702	2,851	22
11	Melksham Woodrow	1	2,003	2,003	-6	2,081	2,081	-11

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Mid Wylke Valley	1	2,019	2,019	-5	2,102	2,102	-10
13	Paxcroft	2	4,709	2,355	11	5,593	2,797	20
14	Shearwater	1	2,049	2,049	-4	2,094	2,094	-10
15	Southwick and Wingfield	1	1,747	1,747	-18	1,763	1,763	-24
16	Summerham	1	1,861	1,861	-13	2,060	2,060	-12
17	Trowbridge Adcroft	2	3,937	1,969	-3	4,392	2,196	6
18	Trowbridge College	2	4,066	2,033	-4	4,251	2,126	-9
19	Trowbridge Drynham	2	4,716	2,358	11	4,957	2,479	6
20	Trowbridge John of Gaunt	2	4,027	2,014	-5	4,105	2,053	-12
21	Trowbridge Park	2	5,364	2,682	26	6,953	3,477	49
22	Warminster East	3	6,349	2,116	-1	6,831	2,277	-2

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Warminster West	3	6,464	2,155	1	6,826	2,275	-2
24 Westbury Ham	2	5,711	2,856	34	6,487	3,244	39
25 Westbury Laverton	2	4,051	2,026	-5	4,586	2,293	2
Totals	44	93,591	-	-	102,497	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,127	-	-	2,329	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2004, Southwick & Wingfield ward had 18% more electors than the average, while electors in Westbury Ham ward had 34% fewer. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

26 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

27 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 22 representations during Stage One, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the District Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

West Wiltshire District Council

28 The District Council proposed a council of 48 members, four more than at present. It submitted proposals for all of the rural areas in the district but did not provide specific proposals for Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon, Warminster, Melksham and Melksham Without. It proposed a combination of single and multi-member wards. Where the council had submitted proposals the levels of electoral equality would be improved by 2009.

Political groups

29 The Labour Group on the Council supported single-member wards in principle and made amendments to the District Council's proposals in Westbury and consequential amendments to the parish's electoral arrangements.

Parish and town councils

30 Representations were received from 13 parish councils and two town councils. The predominantly rural Bratton, Steeple Ashton, North Bradley, Corsley, Upton Scudamore and Hilperton parish councils objected to their respective parishes being combined with more urban areas.

31 Westbury Town Council proposed that the two Westbury district wards retain the same boundaries and that an additional councillor represent the Westbury Ham ward to account for the increase in electorate. Westwood Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals. Wingfield Parish Council supported an option that the Council had consulted on which combined Wingfield parish, Bradford-on-Avon town and three other parishes. Southwick Parish Council also supported an option the Council had consulted on for its area and opposed being included in a ward with Trowbridge.

32 Heywood Parish Council proposed that all of the parish be united in one ward and stated it did not wish for Heywood Village parish ward to be included in a ward with Westbury. Broughton Gifford Parish Council opposed its parish being divided between district wards.

33 Melksham Without Parish Council submitted two options for the district warding arrangements for the parish of Melksham Without and also proposed revised

electoral arrangements for its parish and the neighbouring Melksham parish. Staverton Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of its parish councillors. Bradford-on-Avon Town Council proposed to retain the existing arrangements.

Other representations

34 A further five representations were received from local councillors and a local resident. Councillor Chivers (Atworth & Whitley) opposed multi-member wards in principle and proposed to retain the existing Atworth & Whitley ward. Councillors Phillips (Southwick & Wingfield) and Conley (Dilton Marsh) made a joint submission stating that there was local opposition to combining any rural parishes with the town of Trowbridge. Councillors John and Marion Clegg (Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton) proposed revised parish electoral arrangements for the town of Westbury. Councillor Bower (Dilton Marsh) objected to Warminster being included with any more rural parishes. A local resident, Mr Morland, proposed two options for parts of the district, both of which were based on the existing council size.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

35 Before finalising our recommendations on the electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire we invite views on our initial thoughts as expressed in these draft recommendations. We welcome comments from all those interested relating to the number of councillors, proposed ward boundaries, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decisions regarding electorate forecasts, council size and the warding arrangements in Trowbridge and Melksham to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. We have sought to achieve the best levels of electoral equality in the absence of any other evidence. We would particularly welcome local views on these issues, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

36 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended):

- the need to secure effective and convenient local government;
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

37 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

38 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

39 If electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

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

Electorate figures

41 As part of the previous review of West Wiltshire the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 6% between 1998 and 2003. However, between 1998 and the start of this review (2004) the electorate has increased by 11%. There has been significant growth in Trowbridge and Westbury which has resulted in a knock-on effect across the district with many wards having substantially fewer electors per councillor than the district average. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 10% from 93,591 to 102,497 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. Growth is expected across the district, with areas of significant development in Melksham, Melksham Without, Staverton, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury.

42 During Stage One, the Labour Group and a local resident, Mr Morland, stated that they considered the projected electorate figures were inaccurate. Mr Morland considered that the projected 2009 figures were too high and that the figures he had produced would be more accurate. He also considered that there were a number of arithmetical errors in the Council's calculations. Mr Morland stated that in the District Council's methodology 'no information is given about where the occupants aged 18+ of these new dwellings have come from, and it appears that in all other respects this projection assumes no material changes in the existing electorate whatever (same numbers, same distribution, same age profile, same occupancy levels etc)'. He considered that the figures used for projected growth during the review of Wiltshire County Council 'could be extended'. He proceeded to use figures received by the County Council to project an electorate of 99,756 by 2009.

43 We asked West Wiltshire District Council to respond to Mr Morland's concerns regarding the electorate forecasts. It stated that it had re-examined its calculations and that the slight arithmetical errors would not affect the figures used by the District Council as the areas where minor errors were found were background information and not used in the council's forecasting methodology. In relation to Mr Morland's concerns regarding 'material changes in the existing electorate' the District Council stated that the County Council had provided these figures using a 'basic formula' in order that figures were available as soon as possible for respondents to make representations. The County Council subsequently 'confirmed that the formal projections (that take into account mortality, births and migrations etc.) are fairly close to those calculated using the "basic formula"'.

44 The Labour Group considered that given the difficulty in projecting accurate forecasts it would be better to use existing electorate data.

45 We note the concerns of both the Labour Group and Mr Morland with regard to the forecast figures and acknowledge that there are difficulties in forecasting accurate figures. We acknowledge the Labour Group's proposal to use only December 2004 data for the review. However, as stated in our Guidance, in reaching conclusions on its recommendations, the BCFE is required by Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act to have regard not only to the current electorate of an area but also to changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over the next five years. This ensures that our recommendations do not relate to a single point in time, but take account of expected population movements in the short- to medium-term.

46 We also acknowledge the concerns raised by Mr Morland and the alternative figures he provided. Estimating five-year forecasts of electorate is not an exact science. We are reliant on the local authority to provide projected figures and consider that West Wiltshire has identified and provided evidence to support the likely changes between 2004 and 2009 based on firm evidence and realistic expectations. We recognise the difficulties and potential for inaccuracies, whichever source the electorate data comes from. However, we consider that the District Council, in conjunction with information provided by the County Council has taken into account likely development expected to be completed within the five-year period between 2004 and 2009 and are satisfied to use its figures when preparing our draft recommendations for West Wiltshire.

Council size

47 West Wiltshire District Council presently has 44 members. The District Council proposed a council size of 48, four more members than at present. In its initial submission it noted that council members had been invited to complete a questionnaire detailing their preference for council size. It was noted in its submission that only thirteen members responded to this questionnaire and that of these responses, 77% considered the current council size of 44 members was adequate. Council officers then prepared three different schemes based on council sizes of 44, 46 and 48. These schemes were then distributed for consultation across the district. As a result of this consultation we received a number of comments regarding council size. Melksham Without, Southwick and Broughton Gifford parish councils and Councillors John and Marion Clegg stated that they supported a council size of 48. However, none of these respondents specifically discussed council size but supported the warding arrangement that a council size of 48 provided.

48 Steeple Ashton and Wingfield parish councils stated that they supported the scheme in their area, which the council consulted on, which was based on a council size of 44. Mr Morland considered that the District Council had not provided sufficient justification to increase the council size and proposed two options for part of the district based on the existing council size of 44. Westwood Parish Council supported the scheme for their area based on a council size of 46. No respondents provided detailed information or justification for any of the proposed council sizes. As a result of the consultation the District Council considered the scheme based on a council size of 48 should be submitted to the Boundary Committee for consideration (with some amendments).

49 As is stated in our Guidance the establishment of council size is the starting point in a review as it determines the optimum councillor:elector ratio to be achieved across the wards within the district. We expect proposals for council size to be developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors under the cabinet structure. We note that the method in which West Wiltshire District Council made a case for an increase in council size did not consider either of these points. We therefore requested that the District Council provide further justification in support of its proposed council size.

50 In its response the District Council stated that the basic reason for 48 councillors centres around 'high councillors workloads as evidenced by comparator statistics relating to ratios in other authorities ... continuing population growth ... [and] a need to ensure that wards do not grow any further in geographical size'. However, as

noted in our guidance we do not take into account comparisons with neighbouring authorities and specifically do not consider growth in the electorate is necessarily justification for an increase in council size.

51 It also considered that the 'developing community leadership and scrutiny role for backbench members ... counter-balances the reduced committee workload'. It stated that its 'over-riding view expressed by our members is that the elector ratios are about right and need to be maintained'.

52 We do not consider that the District Council provided any evidence to justify adopting a specific council size of 48 members. Retaining the current councillor:elector ratio, while being preferred by the council is not a legitimate argument to justify increasing council size. We have not been persuaded by any of the arguments that the council has provided as retaining the current councillor:elector ratio has been the primary purpose of increasing the council size.

53 We have therefore looked at whether it would be possible to provide the correct allocation of councillors to the constituent areas of West Wiltshire when considering what council size the district of West Wiltshire should have. We looked at how accurately the allocation of councillors between towns and the rural areas would be provided under a number of different council sizes. We noted that a council size of 48 would not provide for a good allocation of councillors between towns which would make forming wards which provide good levels of electoral equality difficult to achieve if the urban and rural areas of the district are not to be included in the same wards. We also note the absence of any evidence to justify an increase in council size and are therefore not proposing to adopt a council size of 48 as proposed by the Council. We noted that a council size of 46 would provide for a good allocation of councillors between the towns and rural areas. However, we did not receive any evidence to justify an increase in council size to 46.

54 Given the lack of evidence supporting an increase in council size, and the lack of any evidence that a decrease would better meet our statutory criteria, we have therefore looked at retaining the existing council size of 44. We have looked at the allocation of councillors under a council size of 44 between the towns and rural areas. We consider that there are a number of areas in West Wiltshire where the more urban towns are well linked to areas of urban overspill or neighbouring villages in parishes that generally have a more rural nature. We consider that in some of these areas these neighbouring settlements can be included in wards with the urban areas.

55 We are therefore proposing to retain the existing council size of 44 members, noting that in order to achieve a satisfactory level of electoral equality it will be necessary to include some more rural parishes in with some towns. We note that this was consulted upon by the District Council and was opposed locally on specific community identity grounds. However, council size is the starting point of the review and we have received no evidence to justify any increase in the number of councillors elected to West Wiltshire District Council. In addition, we consider that there are a number of parishes which we consider have good links with the towns. We welcome further evidence regarding our decision on council size during Stage Three.

Electoral equality

56 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. Therefore, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where inadequate justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the district average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification.

57 The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (93,591 in 2004, 102,497 in 2009) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 44 under our draft proposals. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,127 in 2004 and 2,329 in 2009.

58 As part of the review process we are seeking to improve the level of electoral equality over the five-year period. Initially five wards will have variances of over 10% but with the development that is forecast to occur over the five-year period this is forecast to improve so that no ward will have a variance of over 8% by 2009.

General analysis

59 Having established that a council size of 44 should be retained, we have developed the scheme in the rural areas for West Wiltshire using the option that the District Council had consulted on, based on a council size of 44 members. In the rural areas of the district we are proposing to adopt five of the wards that the council had considered as part of this option. In the remaining rural areas and in the towns where the council had not put forward a scheme, either under its submitted scheme with a council size of 48 or in the scheme it consulted on with a council size of 44, we have put forward our own warding arrangements. These wards will provide good levels of electoral equality by 2009 and combine parishes which we consider are better linked than in the council's consultation scheme under a 44 member council. We note that in the towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury, Trowbridge and Melksham we combine the parishes from outside of the town which the council also considered including with these towns.

60 Our proposals are a combination of single, two and three-member wards. In the towns we have proposed a combination of single and multi-member wards which we consider provide good electoral equality whilst using strong boundaries.

61 We note that there are five towns in the district of West Wiltshire and this has made it difficult to achieve forming a pattern of wards which do not combine urban

and rural areas. This is due to the varying size and distribution of electors in these areas. We have sought to avoid combining these town areas with other parishes but in Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Melksham it has been necessary in order to achieve satisfactory levels of electoral equality.

62 We did not receive any full proposals for Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Melksham, Melksham Without or Warminster. In these areas we have formed wards which provide good levels of electoral equality and which use strong boundaries. It has been necessary in some areas to combine some other parishes in with Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury. In Bradford-on-Avon we have included the parishes that the council had also considered including as part of its consultation scheme. In Westbury we have included all of Heywood parish with the existing Westbury Ham ward to provide an acceptable level of electoral equality and we have also combined part of Melksham town with part of Melksham Without parish. In Trowbridge, the number of councillors that the council is entitled to under a council size of 44 has necessitated us combining two parishes with the town. We note that this is locally opposed but do not consider we have received justification to allocate the incorrect number of councillors to the town or the remaining rural areas.

63 We did not receive strong evidence of where the community of identity is within the district and have therefore formed wards that provide good levels of electoral equality.

Warding arrangements

64 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a Atworth & Whitley, Bradford-on-Avon North, Bradford-on-Avon South, Manor Vale and Southwick & Wingfield wards (page 30)
- b Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park wards (page 33)
- c Melksham North, Melksham Spa, Melksham Without and Melksham Woodrow wards (page 35)
- d Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards (page 37)
- e Dilton Marsh, Ethandune, Holt, Mid Wyley Valley, Paxcroft, Shearwater and Summerham wards (page 40)

65 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Atworth & Whitley, Bradford-on-Avon North, Bradford-on-Avon South, Manor Vale, Southwick & Wingfield wards

66 Under the existing arrangements Atworth & Whitley ward comprises the parish of Atworth and the Shaw & Whitley parish ward of Melksham Without parish; Bradford-on-Avon North ward comprises the parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon North of Bradford-on-Avon parish; Bradford-on-Avon South ward comprises the parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon South of Bradford-on-Avon parish. Manor Vale ward comprises the parishes of Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall, Westwood and Winsley. Southwick & Wingfield ward comprises the parishes of Southwick and Wingfield.

Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

67 We received very few representations in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed broadly retaining the two two-member wards that cover the town of Bradford-on-Avon. However, it proposed slightly amending the boundary between the existing Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South wards to improve the level of electoral equality in both wards. Under a council size of 48, its proposals would result in a Bradford-on-Avon North ward with 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2009. Bradford-on-Avon South ward would have 5% fewer. Bradford-on-Avon Town Council proposed retaining the existing arrangements but provided no evidence to support this.

68 In the rural areas surrounding Bradford-on-Avon, the District Council proposed a Manor Vale ward comprising Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall Westwood, Wingfield and Winsley parishes which would have 3% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. Westwood Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed Manor Vale ward 'because the villages involved share common interests and concerns'. However, it did not provide any evidence to support its assertion. It also stated that it supported a council size of 46 but did not state why. Wingfield Parish Council supported the option that the Council considered under a council size of 44 which linked Bradford-on-Avon and the parishes of Limpley Stoke, Westwood, Wingfield and Winsley parishes.

69 In Mr Morland's Option One scheme he proposed a four-member ward comprising Bradford-on-Avon North ward, Bradford-on-Avon South ward, Monkton Farleigh and South Wraxall parishes and part of Winsley parish. By 2009 this ward would have a variance equal to the district average. He also proposed a two-member ward comprising the remainder of Winsley parish, Southwick & Wingfield ward, Westwood parish and Limpley Stoke parish which would have 6% fewer electors than the district average. Mr Morland's Option Two scheme outlined a four-member ward comprising Bradford-on-Avon North ward, Bradford-on-Avon South ward and part of Winsley parish which would have 5% more electors than the district average by 2009. Under Option Two he also proposed a two-member ward comprising the existing Southwick & Wingfield ward and the parishes of North Bradley and Westwood. He did not provide any justification for either of these proposals. Councillor Chivers stated that he wished for the existing Atworth & Whitley ward to be retained and for the area to be represented by a single member.

70 Having carefully considered the representations received and in the absence of detailed community identity evidence for the area, we have proposed our own warding arrangements. Under a council size of 44 the town of Bradford-on-Avon is entitled to four councillors and by 2009 each of these councillors would on average represent approximately 13% fewer electors than the district average. If the existing arrangements were to be retained Bradford-on-Avon North ward would have 17% fewer electors than the district average which we have received no evidence to justify adopting. We do not consider these levels of electoral equality are satisfactory in this area especially in light of the lack of community identity evidence received and alternative options are available to us. We have therefore considered different ways of improving this level of electoral equality.

71 We noted that in the scheme the District Council considered under a council size of 44 it combined Bradford-on-Avon with the parishes of Limpley Stoke, Westwood, Wingfield and Winsley in a five-member ward which would achieve a good level of electoral equality and Mr Morland proposed a four-member ward in the area. However, as noted previously, the Boundary Committee is not minded to adopt wards represented by more than three members other than in very exceptional circumstances and has to date not recommended any. We have not received any evidence to justify adopting a five-member ward in this area and do not propose to do so anywhere in West Wiltshire.

72 We note that it is not possible to provide a good level of electoral equality in Bradford-on-Avon without including neighbouring parishes and are proposing to include a number of the surrounding parishes with Bradford-on-Avon to provide a good level of electoral equality. We propose including the parishes of Westwood and Wingfield in with the town and dividing the area to form two two-member wards which both provide good levels of electoral equality. We have proposed using the river in Bradford-on-Avon as the point to divide the town between the two two-member wards. The area to the north of the river in Bradford-on-Avon will form a revised Bradford-on-Avon North ward and the area to the south of the river, combined with the parishes of Westwood and Wingfield will form a revised Bradford-on-Avon South ward. We note that the District Council consulted on combining these two parishes in with Bradford-on-Avon (along with Winsley and Limpley Stoke parishes) and that this received support from Wingfield Parish Council. We consider that there are good road links combining these parishes directly in with the town.

73 We note that Mr Morland proposed combining different parishes with Bradford-on-Avon in a four-member ward. However, we do not propose to adopt any four-member wards in West Wiltshire as we do not consider we have received any justification to do so. We have not adopted either of Mr Morland's proposal to combine part of Winsley parish with Bradford-on-Avon as this would require parish warding in an area where there are no strong boundaries to divide the parish. We consider using the river in Bradford-on-Avon as a boundary between district wards is far stronger and consider that including the parishes of Westwood and Wingfield is a better alternative.

74 We acknowledge that Westwood Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed Manor Vale ward which would not combine any of the parishes in the area with any part of Bradford-on-Avon. However, given the need to secure good levels of electoral equality, and in the absence of community identity evidence detailing why Westwood parish should not be combined with Bradford-on-Avon we consider our proposals provide the best option in the area.

75 Because of our decision to link Westwood and Wingfield parishes in with Bradford-on-Avon our options in the remainder of the north west of the district are limited. We consider that Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh and Winsley parishes are of a similar rural nature and uniting them in a Manor Vale ward facilitates our proposals for both Bradford-on-Avon and the majority of the rest of the north of the district. We have also proposed a single-member Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall ward. This combines the existing Atworth & Whitley ward with South Wraxall parish. We note that Councillor Chivers proposed to retain the existing Atworth & Whitley ward. This would result in the ward having 10% fewer electors than the district average. However, this would require South Wraxall parish to be combined with

Monkton Farleigh, Limpley Stoke and Winsley parishes in the revised Manor Vale ward which would result in there being 24% more electors than the district average by 2009. We consider that including South Wraxall parish with the existing Atworth & Whitley ward is a better alternative than recommending a Manor Vale ward with such a poor level of electoral equality. In addition we have no evidence to justify retaining the existing Atworth & Whitley ward.

76 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Bradford-on-Avon North; Bradford-on-Avon South; Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 3a and 3b accompanying this report.

Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park wards

77 Under the existing arrangements each of these wards comprises the parish wards of the same name. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

78 During Stage One we received representations in relation to Trowbridge from the District Council and North Bradley, Southwick and Hilperton parish councils and Councillors Phillips and Conley. The District Council did not submit full proposals for Trowbridge town but instead proposed that the town be allocated 11 councillors (under a council size of 48) and in order to provide an acceptable level of electoral equality proposed that part of the town be included with the parish of Southwick. The Council proposed that the remaining wards in the town should be multi-member wards but did not provide any justification for this proposal.

79 North Bradley, Southwick and Hilperton parish councils all objected to being included in a ward with any part of Trowbridge town. North Bradley and Southwick parish councils supported a ward which would comprise Southwick, West Ashton, Steeple Ashton, North Bradley and Wingfield. The parish councils did not wish for their respective parishes to be included in a ward with Trowbridge. North Bradley Parish Council considered that if this happened 'the village would lose its identity'. Southwick Parish Council also stated that they would prefer a council size of 48. Hilperton Parish Council stated that it did not wish to be included in a ward with Trowbridge noting that in addition to its 'rural nature', during the recent parliamentary boundary review Hilperton was recently split from the Trowbridge constituency. However, as part of this review we have no remit to take into account parliamentary boundaries and this has therefore not been included in the justification for our proposals for this area. Councillors Phillips and Conley considered that the parishes of West Ashton, Southwick, Wingfield and North Bradley should be united in one ward but provided no evidence to persuade us to support this recommendation. They also stated that there was local resistance to combining other parishes with Trowbridge.

80 Having carefully considered the representations received we have proposed our own recommendations for Trowbridge town. We did not receive any proposals for ward boundaries for the town and we have therefore proposed wards which will have good levels of electoral equality by 2009 and which, where possible, use strong

boundaries. Under a council size of 44 the town is entitled to 10.6 councillors (calculated by dividing the total electorate of the existing six town wards in 2009 by the district average). We have therefore allocated the town 11 councillors and also included the parishes of Southwick and North Bradley with parts of the town to ensure a satisfactory level of electoral equality across the town.

81 We acknowledge that both Southwick and North Bradley parish councils objected to their respective parishes being included in a ward with Trowbridge. However, neither parish council provided evidence to justify adopting the ward comprising only rural parishes that they stated they wished to see recommended. We also note that it is necessary to combine these areas with the town to ensure the correct allocation of councillors to the rural areas of the district and that it facilitates our proposals across the remainder of the rural area. We note that both these parishes have good road links into the town. We are therefore proposing a ward which combines Southwick parish with part of Trowbridge and a ward which combines North Bradley parish with part of Trowbridge. We propose that both of these wards are each represented by a single councillor.

82 The proposed Trowbridge & Southwick ward will comprise Southwick parish and that area of Trowbridge around White Row park; the proposed Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward. The proposed Trowbridge & North Bradley ward will comprise North Bradley parish and an area broadly to the east of Bradley Road around Wiltshire Drive; the proposed Trowbridge Bradley Road parish ward.

83 As part of our draft recommendations we have formed five wards in the main area of the town using the railway line as a boundary between the east and west of the town. We are proposing a two-member Trowbridge North East ward comprising the area to the east of the railway line and the area broadly north of Mortimer Street, Silver Street, Roundstone Street and Hilperton Road. A three-member Trowbridge East ward will share its northern boundary with Trowbridge North East ward and will comprise the remainder of Trowbridge town to the east of the railway line. To the west of the railway line we are proposing a single-member Trowbridge North West ward which will comprise that area north of Wingfield Road around Farleigh Avenue and its south eastern boundary would be the river that runs parallel and to the south of Brook Road.

84 We are proposing a Trowbridge Central ward comprising the area immediately to the west of the railway line and its western boundary would be broadly just to the west of Bradley Road, Avenue Road and Waterworks Road up to the southern boundary of the proposed Trowbridge North West ward. Its southern boundary is coterminous with the proposed Trowbridge & North Bradley ward. We are also proposing a Trowbridge South West ward, the eastern boundary of which is coterminous with the western boundary of the Trowbridge Central ward. Its northern boundary is Wingfield Road and it includes the remainder of the south west of Trowbridge, less the proposed Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward which is to be included in the Trowbridge & Southwick ward.

85 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Trowbridge & North Bradley, Trowbridge & Southwick, Trowbridge Central, Trowbridge East, Trowbridge North East, Trowbridge North West and Trowbridge

South West wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 3b accompanying this report.

Melksham North, Melksham Spa, Melksham Without and Melksham Woodrow wards

86 Under the existing arrangements Melksham North ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham North; Melksham Spa ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham Spa and Melksham Without ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham Woodrow. These three wards form the parish of Melksham. Melksham Without ward comprises the Beanacre & Bowerhill parish ward of Melksham Without parish. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

87 During Stage One we received three representations in relation to this area. For both Melksham and Melksham Without parishes the District Council stated that due to time constraints it had not been able to provide recommendations and were therefore requesting the Boundary Committee form its own proposals for the area. In addition, it stated that it had agreed 'for Melksham to be a multi-member ward but it was not decided as to how many wards there should be or how many councillors should represent each multi-member ward'. Under a council size of 48 it allocated Melksham town five councillors. Similarly, in the neighbouring parishes of Melksham Without, Broughton Gifford and Atworth the council did not make full proposals but allocated the area four councillors, noting the area could be represented in either two two-member wards or four single-member wards.

88 Melksham Without Parish Council supported a council size of 48 but did not provide any evidence to justify this increase. It stated that 'the parish warding which exists in Melksham Without is at present far from satisfactory'. It stated that it considers that the area known as Bowerhill should become a separate parish ward. The Parish Council also noted the development of Melksham Town which is occurring now in areas of Melksham Without as 'overspill', to the east of the town. It proposed that this area of development which by 2009 is forecast to contain approximately 1,000 electors should also become a separate parish ward so that in future reviews 'it could ... be transferred as a complete unit to the town'. It proposed that it would be called Snarlton parish ward. The Parish Council then proposed that these two parish wards be combined and form a two-member district ward. It then proposed that the remaining area of Melksham Without parish should form a more rural Berryfield & Beanacre parish ward.

89 Using these proposed parish wards as building blocks, Melksham Without Parish Council proposed two alternative district warding patterns. Both of these patterns would result in detached wards due to the proposed Snarlton and Bowerhill parish wards separating the remaining parts of Melksham Without parish from each other.

90 We note the District Council did not consider the option of combining parts of Melksham Town with Melksham Without. Mr Morland considered that Melksham and the area surrounding it did not require changes to the existing boundaries.

91 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One and are proposing our own wards in this area. We note the proposal from Mr Morland to

retain the same boundaries in this area. However, given that the existing Melksham Without ward is forecast to have 22% more electors than the district average by 2009 we are not persuaded to retain the existing boundaries. We received no other proposals for this area and have therefore proposed wards which provide good levels of electoral equality and use strong boundaries, where possible.

92 The parish of Melksham Without surrounds the town of Melksham to the north, east and south. We had some difficulty in forming wards in this area due to the development that is due to occur over the five year period 2004 – 2009 in the area that Melksham Parish Council referred to as Snarlton. This development along with other growth occurring in the area would result in the existing Melksham Without ward having 22% more electors than the district average by 2009 under a council size of 44. In order to improve this level of electoral equality it is therefore necessary to combine part of the ward with another area. Melksham Without Parish Council acknowledged the difficulties of forming wards in a parish which comprises both built-up and more rural areas. However, its proposals would result in a detached district ward whereby parts of the same ward would not be adjoining. The Boundary Committee would not normally recommend a detached ward, other than in exceptional circumstances, for example for an off shore island. We do not consider that the proposal in this area for a detached ward would provide for effective and convenient local government as the area would not be well linked and we are therefore not adopting the parish council's proposal for this area.

93 We are also not proposing to adopt the parish warding that Melksham Without Parish Council has proposed. The Snarlton area that the parish council proposed form a parish ward is yet to be developed. We do not consider it would reflect convenient and effective local government to propose a parish ward where there are currently insufficient electors to justify its creation. The proposed Bowerhill parish ward would effectively 'cut off' that area of Melksham Without parish to the west. This area to the west would therefore need to form a new parish ward. We consider that this area does not contain a sufficient number of electors to justify forming a parish ward at this stage. Consequently, we are unable to adopt the proposed Bowerhill parish ward.

94 We looked at ways of combining the areas that are overspill from Melksham town but lie in Melksham Without parish with Melksham town in order that the more rural areas would not be combined with urban areas. However, it would be necessary to form parish wards in the areas of over-spill and as discussed above, in relation to Melksham Without Parish Council's proposals we do not consider that this would provide effective and convenient local government in this area. It has therefore been necessary for us to combine the existing Melksham Without ward which contains both built-up and more rural areas with part of Melksham town. We have proposed a revised three-member Melksham Without ward comprising the two polling districts north of the River Avon in Melksham town with all of the existing Melksham Without ward. In the town of Melksham itself we have proposed two two-member wards with good levels of electoral equality. We have proposed a Melksham Spa ward comprising the existing Melksham Spa ward plus part of the existing Melksham North ward, that area broadly south of Thackeray Crescent and Pembroke Road. Our proposed Melksham East ward will comprise the remainder of Melksham North ward and all of the existing Melksham Woodrow ward.

95 We note that our proposals in this area are not ideal and combine areas which may not best reflect community identity. However, given the difficulties that the

development around the town has created we consider that the area to the north of the River Avon is the best area of Melksham town to transfer out as the river is a strong boundary that divides this area from the rest of the town and has direct links to the north of Melksham Without parish.

96 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Melksham East, Melksham Spa and Melksham Without wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 2 accompanying this report.

Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards

97 Under the existing arrangements Warminster East comprises the parish ward of Warminster East; Warminster West comprises the parish ward of Warminster West. Westbury Ham ward comprises the parish ward of Westbury Ham and the parish ward of Heywood Storridge from Heywood parish. Westbury Laverton comprises Westbury Laverton parish ward. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

98 During Stage One, the District Council forwarded two options under a council size of 48 for the Boundary Committee to consider in Warminster. Its first option was to retain the existing three-member Warminster East ward which would have 7% fewer electors than the average by 2009 (under a council size of 48) and a revised four-member Warminster West ward which would comprise the existing Warminster West ward plus Upton Scudamore and Corsley parishes. It noted that the inclusion of these two parishes with the town was locally opposed but that it had included them to provide an improved level of electoral equality (10% fewer electors than the district average by 2009). However, due to the local opposition to combining urban and rural areas it also submitted an alternative option. This second option combined these two rural parishes with just part of the town of Warminster in a single-member ward which would have 12% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. The existing Warminster East ward would be retained and the remainder of Warminster would form a three-member ward with 10% fewer electors than the district average. The District Council forwarded its proposals for this area for the Boundary Committee to consider and did not give support for one option over the other.

99 Corsley Parish Council objected to both of the options that the council put forward as it did not wish to be included with Warminster town as 'the needs of a town ... are different to those representing those living in rural parishes'. It stated that it was happy with the existing arrangements. Upton Scudamore Parish Council also objected to both the District Council's options as it considered that it would result in 'rural communities [being] unrepresented'. Councillor Bower objected to the option that combined all of Warminster with the two parishes as 'the two villages would be swamped by the town'. It stated that his preferred option would be to combine part of Warminster with the two parishes although considered this would still not be ideal.

100 Mr Morland considered that the existing wards in Warminster should be retained but did not provide any evidence in support of his proposal.

101 We received a number of representations in relation to the town of Westbury. The District Council proposed five single-member wards in Westbury but did not provide any evidence of community identity in support of any of these wards. The level of electoral equality in these wards varied from 4% fewer electors than the district average to 9% more electors than the district average. Westbury Town Council proposed that the existing ward boundaries be retained but that the representation of Westbury Ham ward be increased from two members to three members to take account of the development forecast for the area. It also proposed revised electoral arrangements for the town council – see paragraph 129 for details. Councillors John and Marion Clegg reiterated the comments of Westbury Town Council and noted that Westbury was the only town in West Wiltshire which the District Council had proposed be represented by single-member wards. They proposed that the town be represented in multi-member wards.

102 The Labour Group on the Council supported using single-member wards in Westbury as they considered they would provide ‘better accountability’ and ‘voters will become more involved in the democratic process’. The Labour Group also proposed amendments to the District Council’s proposals. It proposed transferring electors between proposed wards which would initially improve the electoral equality of the wards. It stated that this was preferable to using 2009 figures as the figures in the 2004 electoral registers are factual, whereas there is likely to be inaccuracies by 2009 using the projected figures. It also queried the figures provided by the District Council, as discussed in paragraph 42 and proposed alternative electoral arrangements for the parish – see paragraph 130.

103 Heywood Parish Council opposed being included in a ward with Westbury Town. It stated that its preferred option would be for the whole parish to be included in Ethandune ward. It also provided an alternative option which was for the existing Heywood Storridge parish ward to remain in a ward with part of Westbury Town but for the existing Heywood Village parish ward to remain in Ethandune ward as it wished ‘to retain as far as possible the rural status of the parish’. It did not provide any evidence to support its proposal but noted that it was not ideal to combine urban and rural areas.

104 Mr Morland’s Option One scheme in this area outlined a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Dilton Marsh, Chapmanslade, Corsley, Upton Scudamore, the parish ward of Heywood Storridge and approximately 1,000 electors from Westbury parish. This ward would have approximately 7% fewer electors than the district average. The remainder of Westbury would form a four-member ward with approximately 7% more electors than the district average. Mr Morland’s Option Two scheme outlined a single-member ward comprising an area from Westbury parish which has ‘always enjoyed distinct community identities more akin to the nearby villages than to the rest of the town of Westbury’ and the parishes of Upton Scudamore and Corsley. This ward which would have approximately 11% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. The remainder of Westbury would form a four-member ward with 5% more electors than the district average. As part of his Option Two scheme he also proposed a single-member ward comprising the parishes of Bratton, Edington and Heywood which would have 4% fewer electors than the district average. He did not provide further evidence detailing the community identity of this area.

105 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One for these areas. In Warminster we are proposing to retain the existing three-member Warminster East and Warminster West wards as they provide excellent levels of electoral equality by 2009. We note that the District Council provided alternative options in this area for Warminster West ward which included the ward with Corsley and Upton Scudamore parishes. However, it stated that this was only proposed in order to improve the level of electoral equality and as we are adopting a council size of 44, electoral equality is satisfactory without the need to include any part of Warminster with any other parishes. Our proposal in Warminster to retain the existing Warminster East and Warminster West wards therefore reflect the proposals of all those that submitted representations during Stage One.

106 In Westbury and Heywood we have proposed retaining the existing two-member Westbury Laverton ward as this provides a good level of electoral equality and we are proposing an amended three-member Westbury Ham & Heywood ward which also provides a good level of electoral equality. This ward comprises the existing Westbury Ham ward and the remainder of Heywood parish. Its representation has increased from two members to three members to provide electoral equality following the growth in the town.

107 We note Mr Morland's proposals to include a number of parishes with part of Westbury. We have not been persuaded to adopt his proposals as we note that the existing Westbury Laverton and amended Westbury Ham wards would provide a better level of electoral equality than his proposal. We also note our proposals in this area do not combine as many parishes with the town of Westbury. We were not persuaded that the part of Westbury Mr Morland proposed combining with parishes to the west would reflect community identities and note that Upton Scudamore and Corsley parish councils objected to being included with the town. We have therefore not adopted any of his proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

108 We note that Heywood Parish Council opposed Heywood parish being included in a ward with Westbury. However, if all of Heywood parish were included in the revised Ethandune ward it would have 21% more electors than the district average which we would not normally adopt without very persuasive evidence. We note that if Heywood Village parish ward were included with the revised Ethandune ward it would have 9% more electors than the district average and the neighbouring ward comprising Westbury Ham and Heywood Storridge parish ward would have 7% fewer electors than the district average. However, we have identified an Ethandune ward combining Bratton, Coulston, Edington and West Ashton parishes. This ward will have 7% fewer electors than the district average and Westbury Ham & Heywood ward will have just 2% fewer electors than the district average. We have received no evidence to support adopting higher electoral variances. However, we welcome further evidence during Stage Three from Heywood Parish Council and all other interested parties on the community identity in this area.

109 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Dilton, Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham & Heywood and Westbury Laverton wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 4 and 5 accompanying this report.

Dilton Marsh, Ethandune, Holt, Mid Wylve Valley, Paxcroft, Shearwater and Summerham wards

110 The table below details the constituent parts of the existing wards in these areas:

Table 5: Existing arrangements

Ward	Constituent areas
Dilton Marsh	Chapmanslade, Corsley, Dilton Marsh, North Bradley and Upton Scudamore parishes
Ethandune	Bratton, Coulston and Edington parishes and Heywood Village parish ward of Heywood parish
Holt	Broughton Gifford and Holt parishes
Mid Wylve Valley	Boyton, Chitterne, Codford, Heytesbury, Knook, Sherrington, Stockton and Upton Lovell parishes
Paxcroft	Hilperton, Semington and Staverton parishes
Shearwater	Bishopstrow, Brixton Deverill, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill, Norton Bavant and Sutton Veny parishes
Summerham	Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, Steeple Ashton, West Ashton parishes

111 Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

112 The District Council proposed a new single-member Dilton & Chapmanslade ward comprising Dilton Marsh and Chapmanslade parishes; an Ethandune ward identical to the existing ward of the same name. It proposed a Hilperton, Staverton & Holt ward comprising the parishes of Hilperton, Holt and Staverton. It proposed a Mid Wylve Valley ward and Shearwater ward, both identical to the existing wards of the same names. It proposed a Summerham ward comprising the parishes of Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, North Bradley, Semington, Steeple Ashton and West Ashton. The submission put forward by the Council used these names but stated that they had not been consulted on or approved by full council and were therefore for informational purposes only.

113 Under Mr Morland's Option One scheme he proposed to retain the existing Holt and Ethandune wards. He proposed a two-member ward comprising Hilperton and Staverton parishes and a two-member ward comprising Summerham ward and North Bradley and Semington parishes. He also proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Dilton Marsh, Chapmanslade, Corsley, Upton Scudamore, Heywood Storridge parish ward and part of Westbury parish. Under his Option Two scheme he proposed a two-member ward comprising Hilperton and Semington parishes and a two-member ward comprising Holt ward and the parishes of Staverton, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall, Limpley Stoke and Winsley North. He proposed a single-member ward comprising Summerham ward and Coulston parish and a single-member ward comprising Dilton Marsh parish and Chapmanslade parish. He also

proposed a two-member ward comprising Southwick & Wingfield ward and North Bradley and Westwood parishes. Mr Morland did not provide any community identity evidence in support of either of his options in this area.

114 Broughton Gifford Parish Council stated that it would object to any proposal that would split the parish between two different district wards. Steeple Ashton Parish Council proposed to retain the existing Summerham ward and opposed rural and urban areas being combined in one ward. Hilperton Parish Council stated that it supported the District Council's proposal to form a new ward comprising Hilperton, Holt and Staverton parishes and stated the name of the new ward 'would need careful consideration' although did not propose a ward name for the area. It also stated that it did not wish to be included in a ward with Trowbridge town. Bratton Parish Council stated it was 'happy to remain in the ward of Ethandune' and stated that it would object to 'any urban area encroachment from Westbury into this ward'. Staverton Parish Council proposed revised electoral arrangements for its parish – see paragraph 124.

115 We have carefully considered all the representations we received during Stage One in this area. We have used the scheme the District Council consulted on, based on a council size of 44 as a basis for our proposals in these areas. In the rural areas in the north west of the district we have made some amendments to the council's consulted scheme which in part reflect the scheme the District Council proposed under a council size of 48: We consider that we can improve the three-member ward that the council consulted on which combined small rural parishes in the north west of the district with three semi-urban parishes just outside Trowbridge: the parishes of Holt, Staverton, Hilperton, Broughton Gifford, South Wraxall and Monkton Farleigh. We consider that the three-member Holt & Hilperton ward that we are proposing comprising the parishes of Holt, Hilperton, Staverton and Broughton Gifford combines parishes which are more similar in terms of their size. We consider that South Wraxall and Monkton Farleigh are more rural and would be better placed with similarly rural parishes and would therefore provide a better reflection of community identity. We also note that in its actual proposal the District Council proposed combining Holt, Hilperton and Staverton parishes in a ward and that this was supported by Hilperton Parish Council.

116 We did not receive evidence of community identity in this area. However, given our proposals in the remainder of the north of the district our options are limited in this area and we consider that combining these areas links similar parishes in terms of their rural nature and are an improvement on the Council's consulted scheme which also includes the more rural Monkton Farleigh and South Wraxall parishes. We note that it also provides a good level of electoral equality. We noted that Broughton Gifford parish is more rural than the remainder of this ward and considered including it in a ward with Melksham Without parish but noted that this would provide worse levels of electoral equality in both wards and noted that it has good links into Holt parish, with which it is currently in a ward. We also note that our proposals for Broughton Gifford do not divide the parish between district wards which the parish council stated it would not wish to see.

117 In the south of the district we are proposing five rural wards, each of which are identical to the ones the Council consulted on under a council size of 44. We are proposing a Dilton ward comprising Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parishes; a Summerham ward comprising Bulkington, Great Hinton,

Keevil, Semington and Steeple Ashton parishes. We are also proposing an Ethandune ward comprising Bratton, Coulston, Edington and West Ashton parishes and a Shearwater ward comprising Brixton Deverill, Corsley, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill and Sutton Veny. Finally, we are proposing a Mid Wylde Valley ward comprising the existing Mid Wylde Valley ward plus the parishes of Bishopstrow and Norton Bavant. These wards will all have good levels of electoral equality by 2009. We note that none of these wards combine rural and urban areas and in this area we have therefore also been able to reflect the proposals of Bratton and Steeple Ashton parish councils.

118 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Dilton, Ethandune, Holt & Hilperton, Mid Wyley Valley, Shearwater and Summerham wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

119 Table 6 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2004 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2009.

Table 6: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Draft recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	44	44	44	44
Number of wards	25	25	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,127	2,329	2,127	2,329
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	8	11	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	4	0	0

120 As shown in Table 6, our draft recommendations for West Wiltshire District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from eight to five. By 2009 no ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 8% from the district average. We propose to retain the existing council size and are recommending a council size of 44 members. We would particularly welcome further feedback on the proposed council size and any further information on community identity.

Draft recommendation:

West Wiltshire District Council should comprise 44 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

121 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the District Council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the district council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

122 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with the district council.² If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or The Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

123 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Melksham to reflect the proposed district wards. We also propose a revised allocation of councillors between the existing Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton parish wards.

124 We also received proposals to make amendments to the number of parish councillors in Staverton parish. Staverton Parish Council proposed to increase its representation from seven to 11. The Parish Council noted that in the five year period between 2004 and 2009 development is anticipated in the parish which is forecast to increase the electorate of the parish from 348 to 1,337. It considered that four additional councillors would be 'essential in order to enable them to plan for the future'. However, as this development has not yet taken place we do not consider it appropriate to increase its representation at this stage. However, once the development has taken place, the District Council may wish to undertake a review carried out under Section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 to consider the electoral arrangements, including the number of parish councillors of Staverton Parish Council.

² Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

125 The parish of Melksham Without is currently divided into two parish wards, Shaw & Whitley (returning three councillors) and Beanacre & Bowerhill (returning 10 councillors).

126 Melksham Without Parish Council proposed three new parish wards in Melksham Without. It proposed that the area known as Bowerhill should become a parish ward and that an area which is forecast to contain approximately 1,000 electors by 2009 form a new Snarlton parish ward. It proposed that the remaining area of Melksham Without parish should form a more rural Berryfield & Beanacre parish ward. However, our proposed district warding arrangements would result in no change to this area and we have not been persuaded to amend the existing electoral arrangements in Melksham Without parish.

127 The parish of Winsley is currently not warded and is represented by 11 parish councillors. To reflect his proposed district warding Mr Morland proposed re-warding the parish. However as we have not adopted Mr Morland's proposals at the district ward level we do not propose to amend the parish's electoral arrangements.

128 The parish of Westbury is currently divided into two parish wards, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton, each parish ward being represented by eight councillors.

129 Westbury Town Council and Councillors John and Marion Clegg proposed that the existing boundaries of both parish wards should be retained but that Westbury Ham parish ward should be served by nine councillors, instead of the current eight and that Westbury Laverton parish ward should be served by seven councillors, instead of the current eight. This would retain 16 councillors on the Town Council.

130 The Labour Group proposed reducing the number of councillors of Westbury Town Council from 16 to 15. It proposed three new parish wards, each coterminous with the new district wards that it proposed, with five members representing each new parish ward.

131 Our proposed district warding arrangements would result in no change to this area. However, given the significant increase in electorate in the Westbury Ham district ward we are content to put forward the Town Council's proposal to increase its representation.

Draft recommendation:

Westbury Town Council should comprise 16 parish councillors: Westbury Ham parish ward (returning nine councillors) and Westbury Laverton parish ward (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 4 at the back of this report.

132 The parish of Melksham is currently divided into three parish wards, Melksham North, Melksham Spa and Melksham Woodrow, represented by six, six and three councillors, respectively.

133 Melksham Without Parish Council proposed that Melksham should be represented by five district wards, each returning one district councillor and three town councillors. It did not state what the boundaries of these wards should be and we are therefore not proposing to adopt this proposal. However, as a result of our

revised district warding and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Melksham parish.

Draft recommendation:

Melksham Town Council should comprise 15 town councillors: Melksham East parish ward (returning seven councillors), Melksham Spa parish ward (returning six councillors) and Melksham North parish ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 2 at the back of this report.

134 The parish of Trowbridge is currently divided into five parish wards, each of which are coterminous with the district ward of the same name and are represented by four parish councillors: Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College ward, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park.

135 We received no proposals for the electoral arrangements of Trowbridge but as a result of our revised district warding arrangements and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we are proposing seven new parish wards in the town.

Draft recommendation:

Trowbridge Town Council should comprise 20 parish councillors, the same as at present: Trowbridge Central parish ward (returning four councillors), Trowbridge East parish ward (returning five councillors), Trowbridge North East parish ward (returning three councillors), Trowbridge North West parish ward (returning two councillors), Trowbridge South West parish ward (returning four councillors), Trowbridge Bradley Road parish ward (returning one councillor) and Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 3b at the back of this report.

136 The parish of Bradford-on-Avon is currently divided into two parish wards, Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward and Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward, each parish ward being represented by six councillors.

137 We received no proposals for new parish electoral arrangements in this area. However, as a result of our revised district warding and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bradford-on-Avon parish.

Draft recommendation:

Bradford-on-Avon Town Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, the same as under the existing arrangements: Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward (returning six councillors) and Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 3a at the back of this report.

5 What happens next?

138 There will now be a consultation period of 13 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 22 May 2006. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

139 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decisions regarding council size to be difficult. We would welcome further views on this and further information and evidence about the reflection of community identities in West Wiltshire during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

140 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Manager
West Wiltshire Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

submissions can also be made online at
www.boundarycommittee.org.uk/our-work/ferfeedback.cfm

141 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Committee now makes available for public inspection full copies of all representations it takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of West Wiltshire Council, at the Committee's offices in Trevelyan House and on its website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

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

6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for West Wiltshire district:

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for West Wiltshire district.

Sheet 1, Map 1 illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for West Wiltshire including constituent parishes.

Sheet 2, Map 2 illustrates the proposed boundaries in Melksham and Melksham Without

Sheet 3, Map 3a illustrates the proposed wards in Bradford-on-Avon.

Sheet 3, Map 3b illustrates the proposed wards in Trowbridge.

Sheet 4, Map 4 illustrates the proposed wards in Westbury.

Sheet 5, Map 5 illustrates the proposed wards in Westminster.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
the Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
The Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the district
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or Further Electoral Review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last Periodic Electoral Review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The twelve National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon

	<p>be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>"an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; - access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; - wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; - established farming use is effectively maintained"
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined the area of land within a single district enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or Periodic Electoral Review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by The Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the

	now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet; a cabinet with a leader; or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the district average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm>), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

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

