

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Wychavon in Worcestershire

Report to The Electoral Commission

*July 2002*

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## WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Wychavon in Worcestershire.



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Wychavon's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 March 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

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

- **in 24 of the 36 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and 15 wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 26 wards and by more than 20% in 12 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 115 – 116) are that:

- **Wychavon District Council should have 45 councillors, four fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 32 wards, instead of 36 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 26 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and 10 wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 28 of the proposed 32 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 9% from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Bredon, Droitwich and Evesham.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 10 September 2002.

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

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Badsey	1	Aldington parish; part of Badsey parish (Badsey and Bowers Hill parish wards)	Maps 2 & A2
2	Bengeworth	2	part of Evesham parish (the proposed Bengeworth parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
3	Bowbrook	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Crowle, Hadzor, Himbleton, Huddington, Oddingley and Tibberton	Map 2
4	Bredon	1	the parish of Bredon's Norton; part of Bredon parish (the proposed Bredon parish ward)	Maps 2 & A3
5	Bretforton & Offenham	1	the parishes of Bretforton and Offenham; part of Badsey parish (Blackminster parish ward)	Maps 2 & A2
6	Broadway & Wickhamford	2	the parishes of Broadway, Childswickham, Wickhamford	Map 2
7	Dodderhill	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Dodderhill and Upton Warren	Map 2
8	Drakes Broughton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Pirton and Stoulton	Map 2
9	Droitwich Central	1	part of Droitwich Spa parish (the proposed Droitwich Central parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
10	Droitwich East	2	part of Droitwich Spa parish (the proposed Droitwich East parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
11	Droitwich South East	2	part of Droitwich Spa parish (the proposed Droitwich South East parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
12	Droitwich South West	2	part of Droitwich Spa parish (the proposed Droitwich South West parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
13	Droitwich West	2	part of Droitwich Spa parish (the proposed Droitwich West parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
14	Eckington	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Besford, Birlingham, Defford, Eckington and Strensham	Map 2
15	Elmley Castle & Somerville	1	the parishes of Aston Somerville, Elmley Castle, Great Comberton, Hinton on the Green, Little Comberton, Netherton and Sedgeberrow	Map 2
16	Evesham North	2	part of Evesham parish (the proposed Evesham North parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
17	Evesham South	2	part of Evesham parish (the proposed Evesham South parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
18	Fladbury	1	the parishes of Bricklehampton, Charlton, Cropthorne, Fladbury and Wick	Map 2
19	Great Hampton	1	part of Evesham parish (the proposed Great Hampton parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
20	Hartlebury	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Hartlebury	Map 2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
21	Harvington & Norton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Harvington and Norton & Lenchwick	Map 2
22	Honeybourne & Pebworth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Bickmarsh, Honeybourne and Pebworth	Map 2
23	Inkberrow	2	the parishes of Abberton, Abbots Morton, Church Lench, Cookhill, Hanbury, Inkberrow, Rous Lench and Stock & Bradley	Map 2
24	Little Hampton	2	part of Evesham parish (the proposed Little Hampton parish ward)	Map 2 & large map
25	Lovett & North Claines	2	the parishes of Elmbridge, Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree, North Claines, Salwarpe and Westwood	Map 2
26	Norton & Whittington	1	the parishes of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey and Whittington	Map 2
27	Omersley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Doverdale and Omersley	Map 2
28	Pershore	3	the parish of Pershore	Map 2
29	Pinvin	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Bishampton, Hill & Moor, Pinvin, Throckmorton and Wyre Piddle	Map 2
30	South Bredon Hill	1	the parishes of Ashton-under-Hill, Beckford, Conderton, Kemerton and Overbury; part of Bredon parish (the proposed Westmancote parish ward)	Maps 2 & A3
31	The Littletons	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Cleeve Prior, North & Middle Littleton and South Littleton	Map 2
32	Upton Snodsbury	1	the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill, Dormston, Flyford Flavell, Grafton Flyford, Kington, Naunton Beauchamp, North Piddle, Peopleton, Spetchley, Upton Snodsbury and White Ladies Aston	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Wychavon

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Badsey	1	2,183	2,183	8	2,205	2,205	5
2	Bengeworth	2	3,714	1,857	-8	4,101	2,051	-2
3	Bowbrook	1	1,947	1,947	-4	2,103	2,103	0
4	Bredon	1	1,997	1,997	-1	2,056	2,056	-2
5	Bretforton & Offenham	1	2,078	2,078	3	2,085	2,085	-1
6	Broadway & Wickhamford	2	3,929	1,965	-3	4,100	2,050	-2
7	Dodderhill	1	1,915	1,915	-5	1,980	1,980	-6
8	Drakes Broughton	1	1,943	1,943	-4	1,957	1,957	-7
9	Droitwich Central	1	2,042	2,042	1	2,048	2,048	-2
10	Droitwich East	2	4,140	2,070	2	4,314	2,157	3
11	Droitwich South East	2	3,932	1,966	-3	4,334	2,167	3
12	Droitwich South West	2	4,093	2,047	1	4,180	2,090	0
13	Droitwich West	2	3,943	1,972	-3	4,062	2,031	-3
14	Eckington	1	2,120	2,120	5	2,171	2,171	3
15	Elmley Castle & Somerville	1	2,062	2,062	2	2,075	2,075	-1
16	Evesham North	2	3,785	1,893	-7	4,051	2,026	-3
17	Evesham South	2	3,937	1,969	-3	3,970	1,985	-5
18	Fladbury	1	2,265	2,265	12	2,286	2,286	9
19	Great Hampton	1	2,055	2,055	1	2,083	2,083	-1
20	Hartlebury	1	2,196	2,196	8	2,222	2,222	6
21	Harvington & Norton	1	2,070	2,070	2	2,114	2,114	1
22	Honeybourne & Pebworth	1	1,855	1,855	-8	1,909	1,909	-9
23	Inkberrow	2	4,244	2,122	5	4,571	2,286	9
24	Little Hampton	2	3,913	1,957	-3	4,097	2,049	-2
25	Lovett & North Claines	2	4,116	2,058	2	4,262	2,131	2
26	Norton & Whittington	1	2,236	2,236	10	2,216	2,216	6
27	Omersley	1	1,801	1,801	-11	1,972	1,972	-6

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
28 Pershore	3	5,997	1,999	-1	6,174	2,058	-2
29 Pinvin	1	2,269	2,269	12	2,264	2,264	8
30 South Bredon Hill	1	1,958	1,958	-3	1,974	1,974	-6
31 The Littletons	1	2,255	2,255	11	2,271	2,271	8
32 Upton Snodsbury	1	2,123	2,123	5	2,198	2,198	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>91,113</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>94,405</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,025</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wychavon 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Wychavon in Worcestershire. The six districts in Worcestershire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Wychavon's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1977 (Report no. 242). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Wychavon was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

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

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. In so far as Wychavon is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Wychavon District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Worcestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage

One, was 22 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 March 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wychavon in Worcestershire*, and ended on 20 May 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The district of Wychavon is situated in the south east of the county of Worcestershire. The M5 motorway runs through the district, providing easy access to the West Midlands conurbation and the national road network. The district has direct rail links to both Birmingham and London and is within easy reach of Birmingham International Airport. The River Avon and the River Salwarpe both run through the district as well as the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

11 The district is wholly parished and contains 80 civil parishes. Droitwich town comprises 20%, Evesham town comprises 19% and Pershore town comprises 7% of the district's total electorate.

12 The electorate of the district is 91,113 (February 2001). The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 36 wards, 10 of which are relatively urban in Droitwich, Evesham and Pershore, with the remainder being mainly rural. Four of the wards are each represented by three councillors, five are each represented by two councillors and 27 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,859 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,927 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 24 of the 36 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, 15 wards by more than 20% and nine wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Evesham South ward, where the councillor represents 79% more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing wards in Wychavon*

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Badsey	1	2,273	2,273	22	2,294	2,294	19
2	Bowbrook	1	1,947	1,947	5	2,103	2,103	9
3	Bredon	1	2,264	2,264	22	2,323	2,323	21
4	Bretforton & Offenham	1	1,992	1,992	7	1,996	1,996	4
5	Broadway	2	2,644	1,322	-29	2,793	1,397	-28
6	Dodderhill	1	1,685	1,685	-9	1,980	1,980	3
7	Drakes Broughton	1	1,943	1,943	4	1,957	1,957	2
8	Droitwich Central	3	5,439	1,813	-2	5,579	1,860	-3
9	Droitwich South	3	8,114	2,705	45	8,643	2,881	50
10	Droitwich West	3	4,597	1,532	-18	4,716	1,572	-18
11	Eckington	1	2,120	2,120	14	2,171	2,171	13
12	Elmley Castle	1	1,539	1,539	-17	1,554	1,554	-19
13	Evesham East	1	1,917	1,917	3	2,079	2,079	8
14	Evesham Hampton	3	4,642	1,547	-17	4,677	1,559	-19
15	Evesham North	1	1,982	1,982	7	2,439	2,439	27
16	Evesham South	2	6,664	3,332	79	6,931	3,466	80
17	Evesham West	1	2,165	2,165	16	2,177	2,177	13
18	Fladbury	1	1,706	1,706	-8	1,717	1,717	-11
19	Hanbury	1	938	938	-50	1,010	1,010	-48
20	Hartlebury	1	2,196	2,196	18	2,222	2,222	15
21	Harvington & Norton	1	2,070	2,070	11	2,114	2,114	10
22	Honeybourne & Pebworth	1	1,855	1,855	0	1,909	1,909	-1
23	Inkberrow	1	2,538	2,538	36	2,559	2,559	33
24	Lenches	1	997	997	-46	1,002	1,002	-48
25	Lovett	1	1,548	1,548	-17	1,589	1,589	-18
26	North Claines	2	2,568	1,284	-31	2,672	1,336	-31
27	Omersley	1	1,801	1,801	-3	1,972	1,972	2
28	Pershore Holy Cross	2	2,930	1,465	-21	3,094	1,547	-20

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29	Pershore St Andrews	2	3,067	1,534	-18	3,080	1,540	-20
30	Pinvin	1	2,269	2,269	22	2,264	2,264	18
31	Somerville	1	1,672	1,672	-10	1,686	1,686	-12
32	South Bredon Hill	1	1,106	1,106	-41	1,111	1,111	-42
33	Spetchley	1	2,669	2,669	44	2,658	2,658	38
34	The Littletons	1	2,255	2,255	21	2,271	2,271	18
35	Upton Snodsbury	1	1,716	1,716	-8	1,756	1,756	-9
36	Wickhamford	1	1,285	1,285	-31	1,307	1,307	-32
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>91,113</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>94,405</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,859</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wychavon 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 2001, electors in Hanbury ward were relatively over-represented by 50%, while electors in Evesham South ward were significantly under-represented by 79%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received 13 representations, including district-wide schemes from Wychavon District Council and The Mid Worcestershire, West Worcestershire & Redditch & Inkberrow Liberal Democrats. Representations from Wychavon District Council Labour Group, eight parish and town councils, a district councillor and a local resident were also received. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wychavon in Worcestershire*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were broadly based on parts of the District Council's proposed scheme as well as a number of the Liberal Democrats' proposals. The LGCE also put forward its own proposals in Evesham town and in four wards in the rural area. These draft recommendations achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of single- and two-member wards across the majority of the district with only one three-member ward covering Pershore town. The LGCE proposed that:

- Wychavon District Council should be served by 45 councillors, compared with the current 49, representing 32 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while nine wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Bredon, Droitwich, Evesham and Hanbury parishes.

**Draft recommendation**

Wychavon District Council should comprise 45 councillors, serving 32 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 28 of the 32 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 9% from the average in 2006.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 137 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Wychavon District Council.

### **Wychavon District Council**

19 The District Council supported the proposed reduction in council size, the retention of the outer boundaries of the three towns in the district and that where possible multi-member wards should be two-member wards. The Council did not support the draft recommendations for Evesham town, Elmley Castle & Somerville and Fladbury wards and the rural wards in the centre of the district, restating its Stage One submission in these areas.

### **Political groups**

20 The Mid Worcestershire, West Worcestershire & Redditch & Inkberrow Liberal Democrats (referred to as the Liberal Democrats in the remainder of this report) supported the proposed reduction in council size and the retention of the outer boundaries of the three towns in the district. However, they reiterated their preference for single-member wards across the entire district. The Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for the rural wards in the centre of the district, they restated their Stage One proposals for Evesham town and Inkberrow ward as well as putting forward slightly modified proposals for the proposed Lovett & North Claines ward. They supported the District Council's opposition to the proposed Elmley Castle & Somerville and Fladbury wards.

21 Evesham & District Labour Party broadly supported the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Evesham town. However, it put forward its own proposals in the existing Evesham North and Evesham West wards. It also commented on the Town Council's electoral arrangements.

### **Parish and town councils**

22 Droitwich Spa Town Council supported the draft recommendations for Droitwich. Saleway and Tibberton parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Bowbrook ward. Drakes Broughton & Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Drakes Broughton ward. Cookhill Parish Council had 'no objections' to the draft recommendations for Inkberrow ward. Hindlip & Martin Hussingtree and Salwarpe parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward. Bishampton & Throckmorton, Hill & Moor, Pinvin and Wyre Piddle parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Pinvin ward. Flyford Flavell, Grafton Flyford & North Piddle, Kington & Dormston and Naunton Beauchamp parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Upton Snodsbury ward.

23 Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton, Great Comberton and Wick parish councils and Bricklehampton Parish Meeting opposed the draft recommendations for Elmley Castle & Somerville and Fladbury wards, stating that Bricklehampton parish should not be included in Fladbury ward. Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parish councils opposed the draft recommendations for Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards. Both councils put forward alternative groupings of parishes. North Claines Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward and put forward its own grouping of parishes. Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Norton & Whittington ward stating that it wished to see its parish included in a ward with the parishes of the existing Drakes Broughton ward. Ashton-under-Hill and Sedgeberrow parish councils opposed the draft recommendations which split up the existing Somerville ward.

24 Badsey & Aldington Parish Council questioned how the proposed electoral arrangements for their area would work. Little Comberton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations stating that ‘the removal of Wick parish from [Eimley Castle] ward will almost certainly mean that we shall lose our district councillor’.

### **Other representations**

25 A further 108 representations were received in response to the LGCE’s draft recommendations from a local Member of Parliament, local councillors and residents as well as the editor of a local newsletter. Peter Luff MP, member for Mid Worcestershire, opposed the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards as put forward under the draft recommendations. The editor of the Hanbury Village Newsletter opposed the proposal to divide Hanbury parish on community identity grounds.

26 Councillor Argyle, member for Pinvin ward, supported the retention of the existing Pinvin ward as put forward in the draft recommendations. Councillor Christian-Brookes, member for Lovett ward, put forward an alternative grouping of parishes to those which form the proposed Lovett & North Claines ward which would be ‘fairer to the communities involved’. Councillor Coley, member for North Claines ward, supported the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward. Councillor Hotham, member for Hanbury ward, opposed the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards and supported the District Council’s Stage One proposal. Councillor Rowley, member for Bowbrook ward, supported the retention of the existing Bowbrook ward as put forward in the draft recommendations.

27 We received 11 representations from residents of Bricklehampton opposing the inclusion of the whole of Bricklehampton parish in Fladbury ward. These residents supported the proposal to include only those electors north of the A44 in Fladbury ward. We received a submission signed by six residents of Bricklehampton parish opposing any proposal which divides Bricklehampton parish between two district wards. We received 17 representations from residents of Hanbury opposing the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards, two of these submissions supported the District Council’s proposals. We received two representations from a resident of Broughton Green and a resident of Hanbury supporting the draft recommendations to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards. We received 52 representations from residents of Norton opposing the draft recommendation for Norton & Whittington ward. These residents stated that Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish should be included in a ward with the parishes of Drakes Broughton ward.

28 A resident of Cutnall Green stated a preference for two single-member wards instead of the draft recommendations for a two-member Lovett & North Claines ward. We also received 13 proforma letters from residents of the existing Lovett ward, which opposed the draft recommendation for Lovett & North Claines ward. A resident of Evesham put forward alternative proposals for the proposed Evesham South and Little Hampton wards. A resident of Norton opposed any proposal to include Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish in Worcester City. A resident of Stock Green requested that the parish boundary between Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parishes be modified. A resident of Evesham made comments on issues not related to the periodic electoral review.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wychavon is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, 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 referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being ‘as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough’.

30 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

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

32 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### **Electorate forecasts**

33 Since 1975 there has been a 44% increase in the electorate of Wychavon district. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4% from 91,113 to 94,405 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expected most of the growth to be in Droitwich South and Evesham North wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. The Liberal Democrats supported these electorate forecasts. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

34 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### **Council size**

35 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although was willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

36 Wychavon District Council presently has 49 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed a council of 45 members, which was adopted as part of its Stage One submission following the consultation undertaken on its initial proposals. The Council stated that a council size of 45 would help facilitate the 'new executive structure', provided us with details of a new committee structure and stated that 'reducing to 45 members enables 80% of the councillors to be directly involved in the decision-making processes of the Council'. The District Council also stated that a council size of 45 would enable a scheme to be developed which retained a split between urban and rural areas, kept parish warding to a minimum and reduced the number of three-member wards. The Liberal Democrats' district-wide scheme was also based on a council size of 45 which they stated 'requires fewer boundary changes and re-warding of parishes'. The LGCE therefore based its draft recommendations on a council size of 45, a reduction of four.

37 At Stage Three both the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendation to reduce the council size from 49 to 45. No further comments on council size were received.

38 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 45 members.

## **Electoral arrangements**

39 Both district-wide schemes received at Stage One were based on a council size of 45 which enabled the LGCE to consider both sets of proposals for individual areas. The Liberal Democrats proposed a pattern of single-member wards across the entire district and consequently there were a number of differences between the schemes, especially in the three towns of Droitwich, Evesham and Pershore, where the District Council proposed multi-member wards. However, there was general consensus over the proposed electoral arrangements in the south of the district. The proposals in the north of the district were also similar with only one significant difference, in the proposals for North Claines parish. However, the draft recommendations in the centre of the district hinged on the proposals for the existing Pinvin ward and whether or not Bishampton parish should be transferred into a new Inkberrow & Lenches ward. The LGCE adopted proposals from both the District Council's and the Liberal Democrats' schemes, as well as putting forward its own proposals in some areas.

40 At Stage Three the District Council and the Liberal Democrats requested that their Stage One proposals for a number of wards be reconsidered. However, neither submission provided any new evidence to support these proposals. The majority of the submissions received during Stage Three dealt with four issues: the inclusion of Bricklehampton parish in Fladbury ward; the division of Hanbury parish between Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards; the proposed two-member Lovett & North Claines ward, and the proposals for a single-member Norton & Whittington ward. The submissions received and the conclusions that we have reached are detailed later in the chapter.

41 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Evesham East, Evesham Hampton, Evesham North, Evesham South and Evesham West wards;
- (b) Droitwich Central, Droitwich South and Droitwich West wards;
- (c) Broadway, Pershore Holy Cross, Pershore St Andrews and Wickhamford wards;
- (d) Dodderhill, Hartlebury, Lovett, North Claines and Ombersley wards;
- (e) Bowbrook, Hanbury, Inkberrow, Lenches and Upton Snodsbury wards;
- (f) Drakes Broughton, Eckington, Pinvin and Spetchley wards;

- (g) Bredon, Elmley Castle, Fladbury, Somerville and South Bredon Hill wards;
- (h) Badsey, Bretforton & Offenham, Harvington & Norton, Honeybourne & Pebworth and The Littletons wards.

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

### **Evesham East, Evesham Hampton, Evesham North, Evesham South and Evesham West wards**

43 These five wards cover the town of Evesham, which is situated in the southeast of the district. Under the existing arrangements Evesham Hampton ward returns three councillors, Evesham South ward returns two councillors and Evesham East, Evesham North and Evesham West wards each return a single councillor. Evesham East, Evesham North, Evesham South and Evesham West wards have councillor:elector ratios 3%, 7%, 79% and 16% above the district average respectively (8%, 27%, 80% and 13% by 2006). Evesham Hampton ward has a councillor:elector ratio 17% below the district average (19% by 2006).

44 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed that Evesham town be represented by nine councillors, proposing four two-member and one single-member wards. The Council proposed a two-member Evesham Town ward covering the entire area to the north of the River Avon which it described as a 'natural encircling boundary'. It also stated 'Great Hampton ought to stand alone as a single-member ward' while the remainder of Evesham should be divided into three two-member wards to provide the best levels of electoral equality. The Council proposed a two-member Little Hampton ward covering that part of the town south of Evesham General Hospital and Fairfield Road, to the east of Four Pools Industrial Estate and to the south of The Link. It proposed a two-member Evesham South ward to the north of Little Hampton ward and south of the properties on Port Street and Broadway Road not including Digby Road and Porter Road which should be transferred into a new two-member Bengeworth ward. The Council stated that 'Evesham is basically a rural community, especially in Great Hampton and the market town centre and the 10% rural deviation should be allowed'. These proposals were broadly accepted by a local resident. The Liberal Democrats proposed nine single-member wards, which provided good levels of electoral equality across the town of Evesham. They proposed two new Evesham North and Evesham West wards north of the River Avon as well as a new Evesham Workman ward which would comprise electors from both sides of the river. The Liberal Democrats also proposed single-member Bengeworth, Charity, East, Fairfield, Four Pools and Hampton wards covering the remainder of Evesham. The Labour Group supported the Liberal Democrats' proposed nine single-member wards covering Evesham town.

45 The LGCE carefully considered all representations received at Stage One concerning Evesham town. It considered the Liberal Democrats' proposal for single-member wards, however, having visited the area it considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposals for single-member wards divided existing communities, especially in the south of the town. The District Council's proposals for Evesham town provided electoral variances of 7%, 8%, 8% and 10%, which the LGCE considered too high for an urban area. It noted the District Council's argument that Evesham town is a 'rural community', however it considered that in a town with over 17,000 electors it is possible to provide improved levels of electoral equality. It therefore proposed a ward spanning the River Avon, utilising the boundary put forward by the Liberal Democrats for Workman ward. Those electors to the east of Abbey Road, south of Swan Lane, east of Common Road and south of the Oxford to Worcester railway were transferred into a revised Bengeworth ward. It proposed that the remainder of the District Council's proposed Evesham Town ward should form a revised two-member Evesham North ward. Having transferred those electors to the north of the River Avon into the District Council's Bengeworth ward, the LGCE proposed a modification to the ward's southern boundary. It transferred those electors to the south of Broadway Road into the District Council's proposed Evesham South ward. It also modified the District Council's proposed Evesham South and Little Hampton wards, running the

boundary to the north of Evesham General Hospital and Battleton Road, transferring the electors to the south of this boundary into a revised Little Hampton ward. It proposed that Bengeworth, Evesham North, Evesham South and Little Hampton wards should return two councillors each. The LGCE adopted the District Council's proposed single-member Great Hampton ward without modification.

46 Under the draft recommendations Bengeworth, Evesham North, Evesham South and Little Hampton wards would have councillor:elector ratios 8%, 7%, 3% and 3% below the district average respectively (2%, 3%, 5% and 2% by 2006). Great Hampton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the district average (1% below by 2006).

47 At Stage Three Wychavon District Council restated its Stage One submission for Evesham town. It reiterated that the area north of the River Avon is 'distinct from Bengeworth and Hampton' and should therefore be covered in its entirety by a two-member ward. It argued that 'parts of the Council's proposed [Evesham Town] ward are rural and therefore the deviation of 10% from the recommended councillor:elector ratio is acceptable'. The Liberal Democrats requested that its Stage One proposals be reconsidered. They supported the LGCE's view that high electoral variances should not be tolerated in Evesham town. Evesham & District Labour Party broadly supported the Liberal Democrats' Stage One proposals. However, it proposed that the southern end of the existing Evesham North ward should be included in a ward with electors of the existing Evesham West ward. The electors on the west side of Greenhill would then be transferred into Evesham North ward from Evesham West ward and the modified Evesham West ward would be renamed Evesham Town.

48 A resident of Evesham commented on the draft recommendations for Evesham South and Little Hampton wards. He stated that the draft recommendations 'artificially divide the Four Pools area of the town' especially in the area surrounding The Link. The resident proposed a new Hampton ward comprising all those electors to the west of Cheltenham Road. He stated that the electoral arrangements for the area to the east of Cheltenham Road should be reconsidered.

49 We have carefully considered the representations received regarding Evesham town. We noted that both the District Council and the Liberal Democrats stated that their Stage One proposals should be adopted in Evesham. However, neither submission provided any new evidence or argumentation to persuade us that their proposals would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. The Evesham & District Labour Party's proposed modifications relate to the Liberal Democrats' scheme but, as we do not propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals, we have been unable to adopt the Labour Party's modifications. We carefully considered the comments from a local resident concerning the proposed Evesham South and Little Hampton wards. His proposals for a new Hampton ward would provide an unacceptably high electoral variance and would also have a considerable knock-on effect for the electoral arrangements of the remaining wards in the town. Consequently, we have not been convinced to move away from the draft recommendations in this area. We have therefore decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Bengeworth, Evesham North, Evesham South, Great Hampton and Little Hampton wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Droitwich Central, Droitwich South and Droitwich West wards**

50 These three wards cover the town of Droitwich, which is situated in the north of the district. Under the existing arrangements each of these three wards returns three councillors. Droitwich Central and Droitwich West wards have councillor:elector ratios 2% and 18% below the district average respectively (3% and 18% by 2006). Droitwich South ward has a councillor:elector ratio 45% above the district average (50% by 2006).

51 At Stage One Wychavon District Council stated that Droitwich town should be represented by nine councillors, with four two-member wards and one single-member ward. It proposed a two-member Droitwich West ward covering that part of the town to the west of the Kidderminster to Worcester railway line and Droitwich Canal. It proposed a single-member Droitwich Central ward comprising the Ledwych Road area and the town centre. The proposed Droitwich Central ward covers the area encircled by Droitwich Canal and The Saltway, Blackfriars Avenue and Celvestone Way. The Council proposed a two-member Droitwich East ward covering the area to the east of the Kidderminster to Worcester railway line, The Saltway, Lyttleton Road and Newland Road and north of Primsland Way. The proposed Droitwich South West ward covered the area encircled by the Kidderminster to Worcester railway line, Celvestone Way, Blackfriars Avenue, The Saltway, Lyttleton Road, Oakland Avenue, Worcester Road and the Copcut stream. The Council proposed a new two-member Droitwich South East ward covering the area to the east of Worcester Road and south of Oakland Avenue and Primsland Way. The Liberal Democrats proposed nine new single-member wards in Droitwich. They proposed including a small part of Westlands in a new Hill & Valley ward with the Chawson Valley area of the town. The majority of the Westlands area would be covered by a new Westlands ward. They proposed a further seven new wards, to be named Chawson, North East, Park, South, South East, Town and Witton covering that part of the town to the east of the Kidderminster to Worcester railway line. The Labour Group supported the Liberal Democrats' proposals for nine single-member wards covering Droitwich town.

52 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One concerning Droitwich. It noted that the Westlands area is separate from the remainder of the town, however the area has too many electors for a single member and too few for two members. Having visited the area it considered that the Westlands area should not be divided, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, as this would provide high electoral variances, a weak boundary and would not reflect community identities in the area. The LGCE therefore adopted the District Council's proposed two-member Droitwich West ward. In the remainder of Droitwich town there are relatively few natural boundaries and it was not possible to provide good levels of electoral equality while utilising those natural boundaries which do exist. Having adopted the District Council's proposed Droitwich West ward the electoral equality provided for the remainder of the town under the District Council's proposals was better than under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. The LGCE adopted the District Council's proposals for Droitwich town with one minor modification. It proposed running the boundary between Droitwich East and Droitwich South West wards behind the properties on the east of Lyttleton Road to include all the electors of Lyttleton Road in Droitwich South West ward.

53 Under the draft recommendations Droitwich Central, Droitwich East and Droitwich South West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1%, 2% and 1% above the district average respectively (2% below, 3% above and equal to the district average by 2006). Droitwich South East and Droitwich West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3% below the district average in both wards (3% above and 3% below by 2006 respectively).

54 At Stage Three Droitwich Spa Town Council supported the draft recommendations for Droitwich town. No further comments on the draft recommendations for Droitwich were received. We have therefore decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Droitwich Central, Droitwich East, Droitwich South East, Droitwich South West and Droitwich West wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Broadway, Pershore Holy Cross, Pershore St Andrews and Wickhamford wards**

55 Pershore Holy Cross and Pershore St Andrews wards cover the town of Pershore, which is situated in the centre of the district. Broadway ward includes the town of Broadway and the surrounding rural area and is bordered by Wickhamford ward which contains the parishes of

Childswickham and Wickhamford. The wards of Broadway and Wickhamford are situated in the south of the district. Pershore Holy Cross and Pershore St Andrews wards have councillor:elector ratios 21% and 18% below the district average respectively (20% in both wards by 2006). Broadway and Wickhamford wards have councillor:elector ratios 29% and 31% below the district average respectively (28% and 32% by 2006).

56 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed that Pershore town should be represented by a single three-member ward. It proposed combining the existing Broadway and Wickhamford wards in a new two-member Broadway & Wickhamford ward. Pershore Town Council stated that it supported 'the District Council's proposal for a single three-member ward for Pershore'. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Pershore town should be divided into three single-member wards: Pershore Central, Pershore North and Pershore South. They proposed creating two single-member wards covering the parishes of Broadway, Childswickham and Wickhamford.

57 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One regarding these four wards. It noted that Pershore Town Council supported the District Council's proposal for a single three-member ward. It also considered that the boundaries put forward by the Liberal Democrats for three single-member wards were not easily identifiable and did not reflect the community identities of the town. It therefore adopted a single three-member ward, covering Pershore town in its entirety, as part of the draft recommendations. The LGCE considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to ward Broadway parish would not reflect community identity in the town. Consequently it adopted the District Council's proposal for a two-member Broadway & Wickhamford ward as part of the draft recommendations.

58 Under the draft recommendations Pershore ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% below the district average (2% by 2006). Broadway & Wickhamford ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3% below the district average (2% by 2006).

59 At Stage Three no comments on the draft recommendations for these areas were received. We have therefore decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Broadway & Wickhamford and Pershore wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Dodderhill, Hartlebury, Lovett, North Claines and Ombersley wards**

60 These five wards are situated in the north of the district to the north, south and west of Droitwich town. Under the existing arrangements Dodderhill ward comprises the parishes of Dodderhill and Upton Warren; Lovett ward comprises the parishes of Elmbridge, Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree, Salwarpe and Westwood; and Ombersley ward comprises the parishes of Doverdale and Ombersley. The wards of Hartlebury and North Claines are coterminous with the parishes of the same names. North Claines ward currently returns two councillors, while Dodderhill, Hartlebury, Lovett and Ombersley wards each return a single councillor. Dodderhill, Lovett, North Claines and Ombersley wards have councillor:elector ratios 9%, 17%, 31% and 3% below the district average respectively (3% above, 18% below, 31% below and 2% above by 2006). Hartlebury ward has a councillor:elector ratio 18% above the district average (15% by 2006).

61 Wychavon District Council proposed combining the existing Lovett and North Claines wards in a new two-member Lovett & North Claines ward. The Council proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Dodderhill, Hartlebury and Ombersley wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed warding the parish of North Claines in order to facilitate single-member Fernhill Heath and Lovett wards. They proposed a new single-member ward covering the village of Fernhill Heath. They stated that that part of North Claines parish to the west of Fernhill Heath, the settlement of Bevere and the surrounding area should be transferred into a revised Ombersley

ward. The remainder of North Claines parish, the settlement of Lower Town and Porter Hill Farm, would be transferred into the existing Lovett ward, along with the parish of Upton Warren, currently in Dodderhill ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed transferring part of Hanbury parish into a revised Dodderhill & Hanbury ward with the parish of Dodderhill, as detailed later in the chapter.

62 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One concerning these five wards. It considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to ward North Claines parish, so that electors in three different parts of the parish would be situated in three different district wards, would not provide effective and convenient local government to the electors of this area. Although the District Council's proposed Lovett & North Claines ward covers a large area it considered this to be preferable to the proposal to ward North Claines parish. It therefore adopted the District Council's proposed two-member Lovett & North Claines ward as part of the draft recommendations, and also retained the existing electoral arrangements of Hartlebury and Ombersley wards. The LGCE put forward its own proposals for a new single-member Dodderhill & Hanbury ward comprising the parishes of Dodderhill and Upton Warren with part of Hanbury parish, as detailed later in the chapter.

63 Under the draft recommendations Dodderhill & Hanbury, Hartlebury and Lovett & North Claines wards would have councillor:elector ratios 5%, 8% and 2% above the district average respectively (5%, 6% and 2% by 2006). Ombersley ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 11% below the district average (6% by 2006).

64 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward, stating that 'the residents of Lovett ward, particularly in the very rural areas north of Droitwich, have little in common with the large village of Fernhill Heath'. They put forward a proposal to divide the proposed Lovett & North Claines ward into two single-member wards. A new single-member Fernhill Heath ward would cover part of North Claines East and Central parish wards with a single-member Lovett ward comprising the remainder of North Claines parish and Elmbridge, Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree, Salwarpe and Westwood parishes. They supported the draft recommendation to include Upton Warren parish in the proposed Dodderhill & Hanbury ward.

65 North Claines Parish Council stated that the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward do not reflect community identity. It proposed including its parish in a ward with Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree and Salwarpe parishes 'as there is a synergy between these areas'. Hindlip & Martin Hussingtree Parish Council supported the draft recommendation for Lovett & North Claines ward which 'will continue to provide effective local government'. However, it opposed the inclusion of North Claines in the ward name stating that 'the title leads the electorate to believe that one councillor will specifically represent North Claines and the other councillor the remaining parts of Lovett'. Salwarpe Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward.

66 Councillor Christian-Brookes stated that 'many of my constituents are unhappy with [the draft recommendations] and feel that the southern urban conurbations of Fernhill Heath, Claines and Bevere have little in common with the rural parishes and hamlets in the north of Lovett'. Councillor Christian-Brookes put forward proposals which he stated 'would ensure that the boundary review is fairer to the communities involved'. He proposed a new two-member West Mercia ward comprising the parishes of Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree, North Claines and Salwarpe and a two-member South Worcestershire ward comprising the parishes of Dodderhill, Elmbridge, Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Hanbury, Upton Warren and Westwood. Councillor Coley supported the draft recommendations for Lovett & North Claines ward which avoid any parish warding.

67 We received 13 proforma letters from residents of Lovett ward as well as a representation from a resident of Cutnall Green. All of these submissions opposed the draft recommendations

for Lovett & North Claines ward stating they 'would prefer to continue to be represented by a single councillor'. They stated that 'by including the rural areas to the west and north of Fernhill Heath in Lovett ward that the councillor:elector ratio will be within the average range'.

68 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding this area. We propose transferring the proposed Hanbury North parish ward, included in the Dodderhill & Hanbury ward under the draft recommendations, into a revised Inkberrow ward, as outlined later in the chapter. Consequently we propose renaming Dodderhill & Hanbury ward as Dodderhill. We considered the proposal to ward North Claines parish as put forward by the Liberal Democrats and 14 residents of Lovett ward. However, we support the view of the LGCE that it is preferable to avoid parish warding where an alternative that uses whole parishes is available. Therefore, we do not propose adopting this proposal under the final recommendations. We also considered the proposal from North Claines Parish Council and Councillor Christian-Brookes to create a new two-member ward comprising Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree, North Claines and Salwarpe parishes. This proposal would provide a councillor:elector ratio 22% below the district average both initially and by 2006. We consider that this electoral variance is too high, especially as the draft recommendations provide a councillor:elector ratio of 2% and are supported by Hindlip & Martin Hussingtree and Salwarpe parish councils and Councillor Coley. Therefore, we are not adopting this proposal as part of our final recommendations. Consequently, we have been unable to consider Councillor Christian-Brookes proposed South Worcestershire ward. No comments on the draft recommendations for Hartlebury and Ombersley wards were received.

69 We have decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Hartlebury, Lovett & North Claines and Ombersley wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Dodderhill ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% below the district average (6% by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Bowbrook, Hanbury, Inkberrow, Lenches and Upton Snodsbury wards**

70 These five wards are situated in the centre of the district and each ward returns a single councillor. Bowbrook ward comprises the parishes of Crowle, Hadzor, Himbleton, Huddington, Oddingley and Tibberton; Hanbury ward comprises the parishes of Hanbury and Stock & Bradley; Inkberrow ward comprises the parishes of Cookhill and Inkberrow; Lenches ward comprises the parishes of Abberton, Abbots Morton, Church Lench and Rous Lench; and Upton Snodsbury ward comprises the parishes of Dormston, Flyford Flavell, Grafton Flyford, Kington, Naunton Beauchamp, North Piddle, Peopleton and Upton Snodsbury. Hanbury, Lenches and Upton Snodsbury wards have councillor:elector ratios 50%, 46% and 8% below the district average respectively (48%, 48% and 9% by 2006). Bowbrook and Inkberrow wards have councillor:elector ratios 5% and 36% above the district average respectively (9% and 33% by 2006).

71 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed modifications to all five of these wards, which resulted in new groupings of parishes. It proposed a new Hanbury ward comprising the parishes of Flyford Flavell, Grafton Flyford, Hadzor, Hanbury, Himbleton, Huddington, Oddingley, North Piddle and Stock & Bradley. The District Council proposed a new two-member Inkberrow & Lenches ward comprising the existing Inkberrow and Lenches wards together with the parish of Bishampton, currently in Pinvin ward, and the parishes of Dormston and Kington, currently in Upton Snodsbury ward. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Bowbrook ward, the parishes of Crowle and Tibberton, should be included in a new single-member Crowle ward with the parishes of Naunton Beauchamp and Upton Snodsbury, currently in Upton Snodsbury ward, and the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill and Spetchley, currently in Spetchley ward. Finally the District Council proposed that Peopleton parish, currently in Upton Snodsbury ward, should be transferred into a revised Pinvin ward, as outlined later in the chapter.

72 The Liberal Democrats proposed the retention of the existing Bowbrook ward. They proposed transferring the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill, Spetchley and White Ladies Aston, currently in Spetchley ward, into a revised Upton Snodsbury ward with the parishes of the existing ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed dividing Hanbury parish between two wards. They proposed that part of Hanbury parish 'north of the B4090, the Roman road known as 'The Saltway'' should be transferred into a new Dodderhill & Hanbury ward with the parish of Dodderhill. The remainder of Hanbury parish and Stock & Bradley parish would be included in a new Inkberrow ward under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. They proposed warding Inkberrow parish, transferring the village of Inkberrow and the western part of the parish into their proposed Inkberrow ward. The remainder of Inkberrow parish and Cookhill parish would be transferred into a new Cookhill to Lenches ward with the parishes of the existing Lenches ward.

73 Hanbury Parish Council stated that it 'would support the proposal to create a ward consisting of Hanbury, Stock & Bradley, Hadzor, Himbleton and Oddingley as it is the most acceptable option that has been put forward and is only slightly adrift of the desired ratio'. Kington & Dormston Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposal to transfer the parishes of Dormston and Kington into a new two-member Inkberrow ward. The Parish Council fully supported the proposals of Councillor E Tucker [the Liberal Democrats' Stage One proposals]. Naunton Beauchamp Parish Council stated that it was opposed to the District Council's proposed Crowle ward, which included its parish in a ward with parishes that looked towards Droitwich instead of Pershore. It stated its preference was for 'the proposals put forward by Councillor E Tucker [the Liberal Democrats' Stage One proposals] keeping single-member wards throughout'. Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish Council opposed the proposal by the District Council to transfer Bishampton parish into a revised two-member Inkberrow & Lenches ward. Councillor Argyle also stated his opposition to this proposal, and Hill & Moor Parish Council stated that the existing Pinvin ward should be retained (all three submissions are detailed later in the chapter).

74 The LGCE carefully considered all representations received concerning these five wards. The draft recommendations in this area hinged on whether or not the parish of Bishampton should be retained in the existing Pinvin ward. The LGCE proposed retaining the existing Pinvin ward as part of the draft recommendations, as detailed later in the chapter. Having decided not to include Bishampton parish in a proposed Inkberrow & Lenches ward it was unable to adopt the District Council's proposals in any of the neighbouring wards. The LGCE noted the general support from Kington & Dormston and Naunton Beauchamp parish councils for the Liberal Democrats' proposed Upton Snodsbury ward. Consequently it adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed Upton Snodsbury ward which would retain all eight parishes of the existing Upton Snodsbury ward in the same ward as well as the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill and Spetchley, currently in Spetchley ward. The LGCE also retained the existing Bowbrook ward, as put forward by the Liberal Democrats.

75 The LGCE considered the proposals put forward by the Liberal Democrats to ward the parishes of Hanbury and Inkberrow to facilitate three single-member Dodderhill & Hanbury, Inkberrow and Cookhill to Lenches wards. It noted that Hanbury Parish Council wished to see its parish included in a ward with the parishes of Hadzor, Himbleton, Oddingley and Stock & Bradley. However, it was unable to adopt this proposal as it had to have regard to the district as a whole, and this proposal would have had an adverse affect on the draft recommendations for neighbouring wards. Consequently it proposed adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposal to transfer part of Hanbury parish into a ward with Dodderhill parish, however it also proposed including the parish of Upton Warren in the proposed Dodderhill & Hanbury ward. The LGCE did not propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed Cookhill to Lenches and Inkberrow wards. It considered that the proposed boundary between these two wards was not as strong and easily identifiable as the proposal to divide Hanbury parish. Therefore, having visited the area it did not adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposal to ward Inkberrow parish as part of the draft recommendations. It proposed combining the Liberal Democrats' proposed Cookhill to

Lenches and Inkberrow wards in a new two-member Inkberrow ward. This proposed Inkberrow ward comprised the parishes of Abberton, Abbots Morton, Church Lench, Cookhill, Inkberrow, Rous Lench and Stock & Bradley as well as the proposed Hanbury South parish ward. The proposed Inkberrow ward provided a good level of electoral equality and all constituent parts had good links with Inkberrow village, which is situated at the centre of the ward.

76 Under the draft recommendations Bowbrook and Inkberrow wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4% and 1% below the district average respectively (equal to the district average and 4% above by 2006). Dodderhill & Hanbury and Upton Snodsbury wards would both have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the district average, both initially and by 2006.

77 At Stage Three Wychavon District Council stated that its Stage One proposals should be adopted as the draft recommendations create problems which 'outweigh the perceived problems created by the Council's proposals, in the Throckmorton/Bishampton area'. The Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendation to divide Hanbury parish stating that as 'the area transferred is outside the main village of Hanbury, [it does] not consider that the change proposed would be as disruptive as the alternative proposed by the Council'. However, the Liberal Democrats were opposed to the proposed Inkberrow ward which it stated was 'a large ward with little common interest', they requested that their Stage One proposal, to divide Inkberrow parish between two district wards, be reconsidered. The Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for Bowbrook, Dodderhill & Hanbury and Upton Snodsbury wards.

78 Flyford Flavell, Grafton Flyford & North Piddle Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Upton Snodsbury ward and opposed any proposal to link its parishes with Hanbury parish. Kington & Dormston and Naunton Beauchamp parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Upton Snodsbury ward and opposed the District Council's proposals. Saleway Parish Council (which represents the parishes of Hadzor, Himbleton, Huddington and Oddingley) and Tibberton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Bowbrook ward. Cookhill Parish Council had no objection to the draft recommendations for a two-member Inkberrow ward. Councillor Rowley supported the draft recommendations for Bowbrook ward and opposed the District Council's proposals to include the parishes of the existing ward with Hanbury parish.

79 Hanbury Parish Council opposed the proposal to divide its parish between Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards under the draft recommendations. The Parish Council stated that the draft recommendations would result in a number of 'impracticalities' as well as failing to represent community identities in the parish. It supported the District Council's Stage One proposal and requested that Hanbury parish should be maintained 'as a single entity'. Stock & Bradley Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards and supported the District Council's Stage One proposal. The Parish Council was opposed to 'the splitting of some parishes, Hanbury in particular' and stated that 'historically and ecclesiastically Hanbury and Stock & Bradley [parishes] should remain together'.

80 Peter Luff MP opposed the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards stating that Hanbury parish should be reunited 'as a single parish within a single ward'. Councillor Hotham opposed the draft recommendation to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards. Councillor Hotham stated that the proposed Hanbury North parish ward has no links with the urbanised part of Dodderhill ward and argued that Hanbury parish has strong community links with Stock & Bradley parish. Councillor Hotham supported the District Council's proposal to include Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parishes in a ward with the parishes of Bowbrook ward. Councillor Christian-Brookes proposed including Hanbury parish in a new two-member South Worcestershire ward, as outlined earlier in the chapter.

81 The editor of the Hanbury Village newsletter opposed the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between two district wards stating that ‘people in Hanbury have worked and continue to work on developing the community identity here’. She stated that ‘Hanbury’s most natural alliance will be with other wards in the Bowbrook group ... we have no natural alliance with Inkberrow nor with Upton Warren’. She went on to state that she ‘would support the existing Hanbury parish being linked to other whole parishes’. Seventeen residents of Hanbury opposed the draft recommendations to divide Hanbury parish between Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards, two of these residents supported the District Council’s Stage One proposal. A resident of Broughton Green and a resident of Hanbury supported the draft recommendation to divide Hanbury parish. A resident of Stock Green commented on the boundaries of Hanbury parish, as outlined later in the chapter.

82 We have carefully considered the representations received concerning this area. We were pleased to note that the draft recommendations for Bowbrook and Upton Snodsbury wards received support from the Liberal Democrats, local parish councils and Councillor Rowley. We have noted that the District Council, Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parish councils, Councillor Hotham and two Hanbury residents wish to see the parishes of Hanbury and Stock & Bradley included in a ward with parishes of Bowbrook ward. However, this proposal would have considerable knock-on effects across neighbouring wards, especially Pinvin and Upton Snodsbury wards. In light of the support we have received for our draft recommendations for Bowbrook, Pinvin and Upton Snodsbury wards we are not adopting this proposal as part of our final recommendations. However, we have noted that there has been strong local opposition to the proposal to divide Hanbury parish between Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards. Although the Liberal Democrats and two residents of Hanbury supported the draft recommendations we have been convinced by the arguments put forward by Hanbury Parish Council, Councillor Hotham, the editor of the Hanbury village newsletter and a number of local residents that the draft recommendations do not reflect community identities and interests in Hanbury parish. Consequently, we have considered including the whole of Hanbury parish in either Dodderhill & Hanbury or Inkberrow wards. We noted that a number of submissions identified strong community links between the parishes of Hanbury and Stock & Bradley. Stock & Bradley parish was included in Inkberrow ward under the draft recommendations, in light of the fact that we have received no compelling evidence to include Hanbury parish in a ward with Dodderhill parish, we propose including the whole of Hanbury parish in a revised two-member Inkberrow ward with the parishes of Abberton, Abbots Morton, Church Lench, Cookhill, Inkberrow, Rous Lench and Stock & Bradley. We note that this modification will result in the area of Inkberrow ward being increased further, however, in light of the evidence received at Stage Three, we consider this to be preferable to dividing Hanbury parish between two district wards. We have reconsidered the Liberal Democrats’ Stage One proposal to divide Inkberrow parish between two district wards, however we have received no new evidence to support this proposal.

83 We have decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Bowbrook and Upton Snodsbury wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Inkberrow ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the district average (9% by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Drakes Broughton, Eckington, Pinvin and Spetchley wards**

84 These four wards are situated in the centre and west of the district, to the north and west of Pershore town, and return a single councillor each. Drakes Broughton ward comprises the parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Pirton and Stoulton; Eckington ward comprises the parishes of Besford, Birlingham, Defford, Eckington and Strensham; Pinvin ward comprises the parishes of Bishampton, Hill & Moor, Pinvin, Throckmorton and Wyre Piddle; Spetchley ward comprises the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey, Spetchley, White Ladies Aston and Whittington. Drakes Broughton, Eckington, Pinvin and

Spetchley wards have councillor:elector ratios 4%, 14%, 22% and 44% above the district average respectively (2%, 13%, 18% and 38% above by 2006).

85 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed modifications to Drakes Broughton, Pinvin and Spetchley wards, and proposed retaining the existing arrangements of Eckington ward. It proposed transferring Bishampton parish, currently in Pinvin ward, into a new Inkberrow & Lenches ward. In order to retain a good level of electoral equality after this modification the District Council proposed transferring Peopleton parish, currently in Upton Snodsbury ward, into Pinvin ward. The District Council proposed transferring the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill and Spetchley currently in Spetchley ward, into a new single-member Crowle ward, as outlined earlier in the chapter. It proposed a new single-member Norton & Whittington ward, comprising the parishes of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey and Whittington, currently in Spetchley ward. The Council proposed a modified Drakes Broughton ward comprising the parishes of the existing ward and White Ladies Aston parish, currently in Spetchley ward. Under the District Council's proposals Spetchley ward would cease to exist. The Liberal Democrats proposed no change to the existing electoral arrangements of Pinvin ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the parishes of Bredicot, Broughton Hackett, Churchill, Spetchley and White Ladies Aston, currently in Spetchley ward, into a revised Upton Snodsbury ward with the parishes of the existing ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the District Council's proposals for a new Norton & Whittington ward and the retention of the existing Eckington ward. They also proposed that there should be no change to the existing Drakes Broughton ward.

86 Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish Council opposed Wychavon District Council's proposal to transfer Bishampton parish into a new two-member Inkberrow & Lenches ward, stating that the existing Pinvin ward should be retained. The Parish Council stated that it supported the proposals put forward by Councillor E Tucker [the Liberal Democrats' Stage One proposals] which retained the existing electoral arrangements of Pinvin ward. Hill & Moor Parish Council stated that 'in terms of communication and effective local government management it considers it is imperative this area [Pinvin ward] remains as an integrated unit with a single accountable councillor'. Councillor Argyle opposed the proposal to change the existing electoral arrangements of Pinvin ward. He opposed the proposal to split Bishampton and Throckmorton parishes, which both return councillors to Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish Council. Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council stated that 'it is logical to be allied with Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Pirton and Stoulton [parishes] to form the Drakes Broughton ward' as there are already links and common interests between the four communities.

87 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding these four wards. It noted that during the District Council's consultation on its Stage One proposals there was strong opposition to the proposal to transfer Bishampton parish out of the existing Pinvin ward. It also noted that the Liberal Democrats, Bishampton Parish Council and Councillor Argyle all put forward strong arguments together with evidence to support their proposals. The retention of the existing Pinvin ward was also supported by Hill & Moor Parish Council. Having visited the area the LGCE concluded that the issues arising within the existing ward have created a strong sense of community identity between the constituent parishes of the existing ward. It therefore considered that as the existing Pinvin ward provides an acceptable level of electoral equality the best reflection of community identity would be met by the retention of the existing ward. It therefore proposed retaining the existing Pinvin ward as part of the draft recommendations.

88 The LGCE considered the proposal put forward by Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council for a ward comprising the parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey, Pirton and Stoulton. This proposal provided a relatively high level of electoral inequality in both this proposed ward and the neighbouring Upton Snodsbury ward. The LGCE considered including Whittington parish in a two-member ward with the parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey, Pirton and Stoulton. However, as this proposal was not put forward locally at Stage One, the LGCE adopted the District Council's

proposed Norton & Whittington ward, which provided a good level of electoral equality and has the support of the Liberal Democrats. It proposed retaining the existing Drakes Broughton ward, as put forward by the Liberal Democrats, and Eckington ward as put forward by both the District Council and the Liberal Democrats.

89 Under the draft recommendations Eckington, Norton & Whittington and Pinvin wards would have councillor:elector ratios 5%, 10% and 12% above the district average respectively (3%, 6% and 8% above by 2006). Drakes Broughton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% below the district average (7% by 2006).

90 At Stage Three Wychavon District Council stated that its Stage One proposals should be adopted as the draft recommendations create problems which 'outweigh the perceived problems created by the Council's proposals, in the Throckmorton/Bishampton area'. The Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for all four wards in this area.

91 Bishampton & Throckmorton, Hill & Moor, Pinvin and Wyre Piddle parish councils supported the draft recommendations for Pinvin ward. Councillor Argyle supported the draft recommendations for Pinvin ward and stated he was 'very concerned that Wychavon District Council have restated their original plan of removing Bishampton from the ward'.

92 Drakes Broughton & Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Drakes Broughton ward and stated that it 'sees no merit in the proposal to include the two quasi-urban parishes of Whittington and Norton-Juxta-Kempsey ... in a two-member district ward with the rural parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Pirton and Stoulton'. Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for a single-member Norton & Whittington ward. It stated that it wished to see its parish included in a ward with the parishes of Drakes Broughton ward arguing that it has 'a close affinity and strong rural identity with these parishes through the Pershore pyramid of schools and the local churches and [it] would not want these historical ties/community links severed'. The Parish Council stated that it would support a proposal to combine the proposed single-member Drakes Broughton and Norton & Whittington wards in a two-member ward.

93 Fifty-two residents of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish opposed the draft recommendation for Norton & Whittington ward and supported the Parish Council's proposal to include the parish in a ward with the parishes of Drakes Broughton ward, rather than Whittington parish. These submissions commented on the loss of rural identity and possible future encroachment from Worcester city as a result of the draft recommendations as well as outlining the links Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish has with Drakes Broughton ward through the Pershore pyramid of schools and the church. A resident of Norton stated that they opposed any proposal to include Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish in Worcester city.

94 We have carefully considered the representations received concerning this area. We have considered the arguments put forward at Stage Three, by Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council and 52 local residents, to include Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish in a ward with the parishes of Drakes Broughton & Wadborough, Pirton and Stoulton. We have noted that one of the submissions received from a local resident during Stage Three included a copy of a letter which had been sent to residents of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish from the Chairman of the Parish Council. We consider that this letter does not provide a true reflection of the draft recommendations. In this letter the Parish Council stated the draft recommendations could result in a loss of rural identity and that 'to join with Whittington would make us closer to Worcester City, and possible future encroachment of the City onto our boundary'. In our opinion including Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish in a ward with the smaller parish of Whittington (both parishes are currently situated together in the existing Spetchley ward) would not result in a loss of rural identity or encourage any future developments in the ward, as stated by the Parish Council. We have noted that in the letter from the Chairman of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council to residents the 'strong links and common interests with Drakes Broughton through the

Pershore pyramid of schools [and] the church' are stated as reasons to oppose the draft recommendations. As Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish is not currently in a ward with Drakes Broughton we would not envisage any change to these links following the creation of a single-member Norton & Whittington ward.

95 Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council also informed residents that 'the present recommendations have a councillor:elector ratio of 4% below the district average in Drakes Broughton ward. With the Norton/Whittington link the councillor:elector ratio would be 10% above the district average'. It should be noted that under the existing arrangements Spetchley ward, in which Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish is currently situated, has a councillor:elector ratio 44% above the district average (38 % by 2006). Under the draft recommendations Norton & Whittington ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 10% above the district average (6% by 2006), this is a much improved level of electoral equality. The inclusion of Norton-Juxta-Kempsey parish in a two-member ward with the parishes of the existing Drakes Broughton ward would result in a councillor:elector ratio 8% below the district average (11% by 2006). As a consequence of such a modification Whittington parish would have to be transferred into Upton Snodsbury ward which would provide a councillor:elector ratio 27% above the district average (26% by 2006). We have also noted that Drakes Broughton & Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for the retention of the existing Drakes Broughton ward. It specifically stated that it did not wish to see its parishes included in a ward with Norton-Juxta-Kempsey or Whittington parishes. We have therefore not been convinced to move away from the draft recommendations for Drakes Broughton and Norton & Whittington wards. At Stage Three the draft recommendations for Pinvin ward have received support locally from the Liberal Democrats, local parish councils and Councillor Argyle. No comments were received regarding Eckington ward.

96 We have decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Drakes Broughton, Eckington, Norton & Whittington and Pinvin wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Bredon, Elmley Castle, Fladbury, Somerville and South Bredon Hill wards**

97 These five wards are situated in the south of the district; each ward currently returns a single councillor. Bredon ward comprises the parishes of Bredon and Bredon's Norton; Elmley Castle ward comprises the parishes of Bricklehampton, Elmley Castle, Great Comberton, Little Comberton, Netherton and Wick; Fladbury ward comprises the parishes of Charlton, Cropthorne and Fladbury; Somerville ward comprises the parishes of Ashton-under-Hill, Aston Somerville, Hinton on the Green and Sedgeberrow; South Bredon Hill ward comprises the parishes of Beckford, Conderton, Kemerton and Overbury. Elmley Castle, Fladbury, Somerville and South Bredon Hill wards would have councillor:elector ratios 17%, 8%, 10% and 41% below the district average respectively (19%, 11%, 12% and 42% below by 2006). Bredon ward has a councillor:elector ratio 22% above the district average (21% by 2006).

98 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed modifications to all five of these wards. It proposed transferring Bredon's Norton parish and the north-eastern corner of Bredon parish, currently in Bredon ward, into a modified single-member South Bredon Hill ward with the parishes of the existing ward and Ashton-under-Hill parish, which is currently in Somerville ward. The District Council proposed including the remainder of the existing Somerville ward, the parishes of Aston Somerville, Hinton on the Green and Sedgeberrow, in a new single-member Elmley Castle & Somerville ward with the parishes of Elmley Castle, Great Comberton, Little Comberton, Netherton and part of Bricklehampton parish, currently in Elmley Castle ward. The District Council stated that its proposal would require a change to the external boundary of Bricklehampton parish under the Local Government & Rating Act 1997. It proposed including the northern part of Bricklehampton parish in a revised Fladbury ward with the parishes of the existing ward and with Wick parish, currently in Elmley Castle ward.

99 The Liberal Democrats supported the District Council's proposals for a new Elmley Castle & Somerville ward and a revised Fladbury ward. However, they proposed an alternative warding arrangement between the proposed wards of Bredon and South Bredon Hill which was identical to the proposal put forward by Kemerton Parish Council. Kemerton Parish Council put forward an alternative proposal for warding Bredon parish to the one put forward by Wychavon District Council. Kemerton Parish Council proposed including the settlements of Lower Westmancote and Westmancote in a revised South Bredon Hill ward with the parishes of the existing ward and Ashton-under-Hill parish, currently in Somerville ward. This proposal would leave the remainder of Bredon parish in a revised Bredon ward with Bredon's Norton parish.

100 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received regarding these five wards. In order to provide an acceptable level of electoral equality in Bredon and South Bredon Hill wards it was necessary to ward the parish of Bredon, for which it received two different proposals, as outlined above. It noted that there is no direct access to South Bredon Hill ward from Bredon's Norton parish. Having visited the area it adopted the proposals put forward by Kemerton Parish Council and the Liberal Democrats as part of its draft recommendations.

101 The LGCE considered the proposal put forward by the District Council for a new Elmley Castle & Somerville ward and a revised Fladbury ward, and noted that this proposal had the support of the Liberal Democrats and provided acceptable levels of electoral equality. However, this proposal involved including that part of Bricklehampton parish to the north of Lower End in a revised Fladbury ward. The District Council stated that this would involve a change to the external boundaries of the parish. The LGCE had no power to modify this boundary. In order to transfer part of Bricklehampton parish into Fladbury ward it would have had to create two parish wards, which could then be placed in different district wards. However, this would have meant the creation of a parish ward containing 58 electors who would return a parish councillor to Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton Parish Council. The LGCE did not consider that the creation of such a small parish ward would provide effective and convenient local government at a parish or district level. Consequently the LGCE was left with two options, to include the whole of the parish of Bricklehampton in Elmley Castle & Somerville ward or Fladbury ward. It noted that Bricklehampton parish is part of Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton Parish Council. However, to include Bricklehampton parish in Elmley Castle & Somerville ward would have resulted in Wick parish becoming detached from the remainder of the proposed Fladbury ward. The LGCE considered that detached wards lack community identity and are therefore undesirable electoral areas. With this in mind, in order to retain Bricklehampton in a ward with the parishes of Elmley Castle and Netherton, the LGCE would have had to develop a completely new electoral scheme for the south of the district, as Wick parish would not be included in a new Fladbury ward. Consequently it proposed transferring the whole of Bricklehampton parish into a revised Fladbury ward with the parishes of Charlton, Cropthorne, Fladbury and Wick as part of our draft recommendations. Its proposed Elmley Castle & Somerville wards would comprise the parishes of Aston Somerville, Elmley Castle, Great Comberton, Little Comberton, Hinton on the Green, Netherton and Sedgeberrow. The LGCE's draft recommendations provided acceptable levels of electoral equality while facilitating a locally generated scheme in the remainder of the southern part of the district.

102 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Bredon and South Bredon Hill wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1% and 3% below the district average respectively (2% and 6% below by 2006). Elmley Castle & Somerville and Fladbury wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2% and 12% above the district average respectively (1% below and 9% above by 2006).

103 At Stage Three Wychavon District Council stated that 'following a public meeting in the parishes of Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton and Netherton' it had agreed a revised proposal for Elmley Castle & Somerville and Fladbury wards. It proposed that 'a boundary be drawn along the A44, in the northern part of Bricklehampton [parish], with the small parcel of land north of this boundary being included in the new Fladbury ward, and the southern part of Bricklehampton [parish] being included within the proposed Elmley Castle & Somerville ward'. It

went on to state 'if the Boundary Committee accept this proposal the Council will use the powers vested in it under the Local Government & Rating Act 1997, to change the parish boundary of Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton, to include the area of land north of the A44 in the Wick parish'. This proposal was supported by the Liberal Democrats.

104 Elmley Castle, Bricklehampton & Netherton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations stating that 'the parish of Bricklehampton is very closely connected in every possible way with the parish of Elmley Castle'. It stated that the parishes of Cropthorne and Wick could be connected 'if just one small area (consisting of two fields north of the A44 main road, including approximately six properties) was taken out of Bricklehampton, and transferred into Fladbury ward'. It proposed that the remainder of Bricklehampton parish be included in a ward with Elmley Castle parish. Great Comberton Parish Council opposed any proposal to divide the parish of Bricklehampton between two district wards. It stated that the whole parish should be included in a ward with Elmley Castle parish. Wick Parish Council supported the proposal to include its parish in a ward with Charlton, Cropthorne and Fladbury parishes. However, it had 'major reservations about the inclusion of Bricklehampton parish in the proposed Fladbury ward as its main link village is Elmley Castle'. Wick Parish Council stated that the creation of a detached ward 'is of no consequence'. Bricklehampton Parish Meeting opposed the draft recommendation to include Bricklehampton parish in Fladbury ward. It stated that 'there is no valid reason for Bricklehampton [parish] to be changed other than the geographical problem which can be solved by altering the parish boundary to the A44 allowing the fields and houses to the north to be joined with Cropthorne parish'.

105 Ashton-under-Hill and Sedgeberrow parish councils opposed the proposal to split up the existing Somerville ward. They proposed that the existing ward should be retained with the inclusion of Beckford parish from South Bredon Hill ward to improve electoral equality. Ashton-under-Hill Parish Council stated that its parish had 'no community identity or interests' with the parishes of South Bredon Hill ward. Little Comberton Parish Council stated that the removal of Wick parish from the existing Elmley Castle ward would 'almost certainly mean that we shall lose our district councillor'.

106 Ten residents of Bricklehampton proposed transferring the area of Bricklehampton parish north of the A44 into Fladbury ward with the remainder of the parish being included in a ward with Elmley Castle parish. A further resident of Bricklehampton stated that Bricklehampton parish should be linked with Elmley Castle parish. We received a submission signed by six residents of Bricklehampton who live to the north of the A44. These residents strongly opposed any proposal to divide the parish of Bricklehampton 'along the path of the A44'. They supported the local opposition to the draft recommendations but wished to see the whole of Bricklehampton parish included in the proposed Elmley Castle & Somerville ward.

107 We have carefully considered the representations received concerning this area. As the LGCE stated in the draft recommendations, it had no power to modify the boundaries of Bricklehampton parish and it did not consider the creation of a parish ward of 58 electors would provide effective and convenient local government in the area. We also have no power to modify the boundaries of Bricklehampton parish. We note that Wychavon District Council has stated it would modify the parish boundaries in the area if its proposals were adopted. However, the proposal to transfer the area of Bricklehampton parish north of the A44 into Fladbury ward would result in the creation of a parish ward containing 12 electors which would be inappropriate due to the small number of electors, notwithstanding the opposition to this proposal from residents who live to the north of the A44. Consequently we are unable to adopt this proposal as part of our final recommendations. We have some sympathy with the arguments put forward to include Bricklehampton parish in the same ward as Elmley Castle parish. However, we concur with the LGCE's conclusion that it is preferable to include Bricklehampton in Fladbury ward than have to introduce new electoral arrangements in the remainder of the south of the district in place of the locally generated proposals which were adopted in the draft recommendations. We would advise the District Council to undertake a

review of the parish boundaries after the PER has been completed, if the parish boundaries were modified in the area the District Council could then request that the Electoral Commission make consequential changes to the district ward boundaries. As part of these final recommendations we propose endorsing the draft recommendation to include Bricklehampton parish in Fladbury ward.

108 We considered the representations from Ashton-under-Hill and Sedgeberrow parish councils arguing for the retention of the existing Somerville ward. However, we did not consider that these submissions provided us with any supporting evidence for this proposal. It should also be noted that although providing acceptable levels of electoral equality in Somerville ward this proposal would provide very high electoral variances in the neighbouring Elmley Castle and South Bredon Hill wards. When formulating final recommendations we must give consideration to the district as a whole. No comments were received on the draft recommendations for Bredon ward.

109 We have decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Bredon, Elmley Castle & Somerville, Fladbury and South Bredon Hill wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A3.

### **Badsey, Bretforton & Offenham, Harvington & Norton, Honeybourne & Pebworth and The Littletons wards**

110 These five wards are situated in the south-east corner of the district, to the east of Evesham town. Each of these wards returns a single councillor. Badsey ward comprises the parishes of Aldington and Badsey; Bretforton & Offenham ward comprises the parishes of the same names; Harvington & Norton ward comprises the parishes of Harvington and Norton & Lenchwick; Honeybourne & Pebworth ward comprises the parishes of Bickmarsh, Honeybourne and Pebworth; The Littletons ward comprises the parishes of Cleeve Prior, North & Middle Littleton and South Littleton. Badsey, Bretforton & Offenham, Harvington & Norton and The Littletons wards have councillor:elector ratios 22%, 7%, 11% and 21% above the district average respectively (19%, 4%, 10% and 18% by 2006). Honeybourne & Pebworth ward has a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (1% below by 2006).

111 At Stage One Wychavon District Council proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements for Harvington & Norton, Honeybourne & Pebworth and The Littletons wards. It proposed a boundary modification between Badsey and Bretforton & Offenham wards, stating that the existing Blackminster parish ward of Badsey parish should be transferred into a revised Bretforton & Offenham ward. The Council proposed no further modifications to the remainder of Badsey and Bretforton & Offenham wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed the retention of the existing electoral arrangements in all five of these wards.

112 The LGCE carefully considered both submissions received relating to these five wards. It noted that the District Council's proposal to transfer the Blackminster parish ward of Badsey parish into Bretforton & Offenham ward would provide much improved levels of electoral equality in both wards. It therefore adopted the District Council's proposed Badsey and Bretforton & Offenham wards as part of its draft recommendations. The LGCE proposed the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for Harvington & Norton, Honeybourne & Pebworth and The Littletons wards. Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Badsey, Bretforton & Offenham, Harvington & Norton and The Littletons wards would have councillor:elector ratios 8%, 3%, 2% and 11% above the district average respectively (5% above, 1% below, 1% above and 8% above by 2006). Honeybourne & Pebworth ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 8% below the district average (9% by 2006).

113 At Stage Three Badsey & Aldington Parish Council queried how the new warding arrangements would be put into practice, but made no direct comments on the proposed

electoral arrangements of Badsey or Bretforton & Offenham wards. No further comments on the draft recommendations for this area were received. We have therefore decided to endorse fully the draft recommendations for Badsey, Bretforton & Offenham, Harvington & Pebworth and The Littletons wards. Consequently our final recommendations for these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

## Electoral cycle

114 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

## Conclusions

115 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- the whole of Hanbury parish should be included in a revised two-member Inkberrow ward and the proposed Dodderhill & Hanbury ward should be renamed as Dodderhill.

116 We conclude that, in Wychavon:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 49 to 45;
- there should be 32 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 26 of the existing wards should be modified.

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

*Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	49	45	49	45
Number of wards	36	32	36	32
Average number of electors per councillor	1,859	2,025	1,927	2,098
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	24	4	26	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	15	0	12	0

118 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 24 to four, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with no ward varying by more than 9% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

**Final recommendation**

Wychavon District Council should comprise 45 councillors serving 32 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inserted at the back of this report.

**Parish and town council electoral arrangements**

119 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Bredon, Droitwich, Evesham and Hanbury parishes to reflect the proposed district wards.

120 The parish of Bredon currently returns 11 councillors to Bredon & Bredon's Norton Parish Council, which is served by 12 councillors. Bredon parish is currently not warded. At Stage One the District Council and the Liberal Democrats put forward two different warding arrangements at district ward level. The LGCE adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which were also put forward by Kemerton Parish Council, at a district ward level, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Therefore it proposed that the parish ward boundary for Bredon be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundary in the same area.

121 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, no comments were received on the draft recommendations for the electoral arrangements of Bredon parish. Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Bredon parish as final.

**Final recommendation**

The parish of Bredon should return 11 councillors to Bredon & Bredon's Norton Parish Council, which should comprise 12 councillors, as at present. Bredon parish should be divided into two wards: Bredon parish ward (returning nine councillors), and Westmancote parish ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundary between Bredon and Westmancote parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

122 The parish of Droitwich Spa is currently served by 18 councillors representing three wards, Droitwich Central, Droitwich South and Droitwich West wards, each returning six councillors. At Stage One the District Council and the Liberal Democrats put forward two different warding arrangements at a district ward level. The LGCE adopted the District Council's proposals with one minor modification, at a district ward level, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Therefore it proposed that the parish ward boundaries for Droitwich Spa be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the same area.

123 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, Droitwich Spa Town Council supported the draft recommendations for Droitwich. No further comments were received. Having

considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Droitwich Spa parish as final.

**Final recommendation**

Droitwich Spa Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Droitwich East, Droitwich South East, Droitwich South West and Droitwich West parish wards (each returning four councillors) and Droitwich Central parish ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

124 The parish of Evesham is currently served by 24 councillors representing six wards, Evesham East, Evesham Hampton No. 1, Evesham Hampton No. 2, Evesham North, Evesham South and Evesham West wards, each returning four councillors. At Stage One the District Council and the Liberal Democrats put forward two different warding arrangements at a district ward level. The LGCE adopted the District Council's proposed Great Hampton ward; however it put forward its own proposals in the remainder of the town at a district ward level, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Therefore the LGCE proposed that the parish ward boundaries for Evesham be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the same area.

125 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats stated that their Stage One proposals should be reconsidered. The Evesham & District Labour Party and a local resident also commented on the draft recommendations boundaries for Evesham. However, as outlined earlier in the chapter we do not propose moving away from the draft recommendations for Evesham town. Evesham & District Labour Party also stated that it 'was surprised that the draft recommendations make no reference to the size of Evesham Town Council. Noting that the number of district councillors is to be increased from eight to nine'. A PER is an opportunity for parish and town councils to consider their own council size. We have received no submissions during the PER requesting a change in the council size of Evesham Town Council or any evidence to suggest that the current council size does not facilitate convenient and effective local government.

126 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Evesham parish as final.

**Final recommendation**

Evesham Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Evesham North parish ward (returning six councillors), Bengeworth, Evesham South and Little Hampton parish wards (each returning five councillors) and Great Hampton parish ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

127 The parish of Hanbury is currently served by nine councillors and is not warded. At Stage One the Liberal Democrats proposed including part of Hanbury parish in a new Dodderhill & Hanbury ward and part in a revised Inkberrow ward at a district ward level. The LGCE adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Therefore it proposed that the parish ward boundary for Hanbury be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundary in the same area.

128 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, Wychavon District Council, Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parish councils, Peter Luff MP, Councillor Hotham, the editor of the Hanbury Village newsletter and 17 residents of Hanbury opposed the draft recommendations to divide Hanbury parish between Dodderhill & Hanbury and Inkberrow wards. The draft recommendations were supported by the Liberal Democrats and two local residents, however, we concluded that Hanbury parish should be included in Inkberrow ward in its entirety, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Consequently, we do not propose warding Hanbury parish as part of the final recommendations.

129 A resident of Stock Green requested that the boundary between Hanbury and Stock & Bradley parishes should be amended. The Boundary Committee has no power to amend parish boundaries; such a review can be carried out by Wychavon District Council.

130 Having considered all the evidence received, we propose retaining the existing electoral arrangements of Hanbury parish as part of our final recommendations.

**Final recommendation**

Hanbury Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing the parish as a whole, as outlined on Map 2.

*Map 2: Final recommendations for Wychavon*

## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

131 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Wychavon and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

132 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 10 September 2002.

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Final recommendations for Wychavon: Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wychavon area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of this report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Badsey parish.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Bredon parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Droitwich and Evesham towns.

*Map A1: Final recommendations for Wychavon: Key map*

*Map A2: Proposed warding of Badsey parish*

*Map A3: Proposed warding of Bredon parish*