

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Stroud in Gloucestershire

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

June 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Stroud in Gloucestershire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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



Local Government Commission for England

26 June 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 27 June 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Stroud under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2001 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 160–161) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Stroud.

We recommend that Stroud District Council should be served by 51 councillors representing 30 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to conduct elections by thirds.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Stroud on 27 June 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 January 2001, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 19 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and nine wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 17 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 11 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 160–161) are that:

- **Stroud District Council should have 51 councillors, four fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 30 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 26 of the existing wards should be modified and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 26 of the proposed 30 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only four wards, Over Stroud, Stonehouse, Upton St Leonards and Vale, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised or new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Dursley, Minchinhampton, Randwick, Rodborough and Thrupp;**
- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors serving Cam Parish Council and Stroud Town Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 6 August 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Berkeley	2	Berkeley ward (part – Berkeley parish); Hinton ward (Hinton parish); Vale ward (part – Hamfallow parish)	Map 2
2 Bisley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bisley-with-Lypiatt parish)	Map 2
3 Cainscross	3	Cainscross ward (Cainscross parish); Randwick ward (part – the proposed Lower Westrip parish ward of Randwick parish)	Maps 2 and A4
4 Cam East	2	Cam ward (part – part of the proposed Central and East parish wards of Cam parish); Woodfield ward (part – part of the proposed Central and East parish ward of Cam parish)	Maps 2 and A2
5 Cam West	2	Cam ward (part – part of the proposed Lower and Woodfield parish wards of Cam parish); Woodfield ward (part – part of the proposed Woodfield parish ward of Cam parish)	Maps 2 and A2
6 Central	1	Central ward (part – part of the proposed Central parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of the proposed Central parish ward of Stroud parish); Uplands ward (part – part of the proposed Central parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map
7 Chalford	3	Chalford ward (Chalford parish); Thrupp ward (part – the proposed Bourne parish ward of Thrupp parish)	Maps 2 and A6
8 Coaley & Uley	1	Cambridge ward (part – Coaley parish); Uley ward (the parishes of Nymphsfield, Owlpen and Uley)	Map 2
9 Dursley	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Dursley parish)	Map 2
10 Eastington & Standish	1	Eastington ward (part – Eastington parish); Parklands ward (part – Standish parish)	Map 2
11 Farmhill & Paganhill	1	Uplands ward (part – the proposed Farmhill/Paganhill parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map
12 Hardwicke	2	Hardwicke ward (the parishes of Elmore, Hardwicke and Longney); Parklands ward (part – Haresfield parish)	Map 2
13 Kingswood	1	Wotton & Kingswood ward (part – the parishes of Alderley, Hillesley & Tresham and Kingswood)	Map 2
14 Minchinhampton	2	Minchinhampton ward (part – Brimscombe, North and South parish wards of Minchinhampton parish)	Maps 2 and A3
15 Nailsworth	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Horsley and Nailsworth)	Map 2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16 Over Stroud	1	Randwick ward (part – the proposed Randwick parish ward of Randwick parish); Whiteshill ward (Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish)	Maps 2 and A4
17 Painswick	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Cranham, Miserden, Painswick and Pitchcombe parishes)	Map 2
18 Rodborough	2	Rodborough ward (part – North, South and West parish wards of Rodborough parish)	Maps 2 and A5
19 Severn	2	Cambridge ward (part – Slimbridge parish); Parklands ward (part – the parishes of Moreton Valence and Whitminster); Severn ward (the parishes of Arlingham, Frampton on Severn and Frethern with Saul)	Map 2
20 Slade	1	Central ward (part – part of the proposed Slade parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of the proposed Slade parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map
21 Stonehouse	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Stonehouse parish)	Map 2
22 The Stanleys	2	Eastington ward (part – Frocester parish); King’s Stanley ward (part – King’s Stanley parish); Leonard Stanley ward (Leonard Stanley parish)	Map 2
23 Thrupp	1	Rodborough ward (part – the proposed Butterow parish ward of Rodborough parish); Thrupp ward (part – the proposed Thrupp parish ward of Thrupp parish)	Maps 2, A5 and A6
24 Trinity	1	Central ward (part – part of the proposed Trinity parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of the proposed Trinity parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map
25 Uplands	1	Uplands ward (part – the proposed Uplands parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map
26 Upton St Leonards	1	Parklands ward (part – Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon and Harescombe parishes); Upton St Leonards ward (Upton St Leonards parish)	Map 2
27 Vale	1	Berkeley ward (part – Ham & Stone parish); Nibley ward (part – Stinchcombe parish); Vale ward (part – Alkington parish)	Map 2
28 Valley	1	Central ward (part – part of the proposed Valley parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of the proposed Valley parish ward of Stroud parish); Uplands ward (part – part of the proposed Valley parish ward of Stroud parish)	Large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
29	Woodchester	1	King's Stanley ward (part – Woodchester parish); Minchinhampton ward (part – Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton parish)	Map 2
30	Wotton-under-Edge	3	Nibley ward (part – North Nibley parish); Wotton & Kingswood ward (part – Wotton-under-Edge parish)	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.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Stroud

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Berkeley	2	3,324	1,662	-1	3,377	1,689	-3
2 Bisley	1	1,807	1,807	7	1,870	1,870	7
3 Cainscross	3	5,183	1,728	3	5,444	1,815	4
4 Cam East	2	3,326	1,663	-1	3,354	1,677	-4
5 Cam West	2	3,295	1,648	-2	3,323	1,662	-5
6 Central	1	1,448	1,448	-14	1,610	1,610	-8
7 Chalford	3	4,845	1,615	-4	5,041	1,680	-4
8 Coaley & Uley	1	1,881	1,881	12	1,901	1,901	9
9 Dursley	3	4,568	1,523	-9	5,008	1,669	-4
10 Eastington & Standish	1	1,534	1,534	-9	1,595	1,595	-8
11 Farmhill & Paganhill	1	1,799	1,799	7	1,850	1,850	6
12 Hardwicke	2	3,223	1,612	-4	3,463	1,732	-1
13 Kingswood	1	1,539	1,539	-9	1,565	1,565	-10
14 Minchinhampton	2	3,524	1,762	5	3,596	1,798	3
15 Nailsworth	3	4,950	1,650	-2	5,154	1,718	-1
16 Over Stroud	1	1,473	1,473	-12	1,486	1,486	-15
17 Painswick	2	3,489	1,745	4	3,591	1,796	3
18 Rodborough	2	3,582	1,791	6	3,709	1,855	6
19 Severn	2	3,564	1,782	6	3,633	1,817	4
20 Slade	1	1,666	1,666	-1	1,682	1,682	-3
21 Stonehouse	3	5,432	1,811	8	5,779	1,926	11
22 The Stanleys	2	3,466	1,733	3	3,515	1,758	1
23 Thrupp	1	1,743	1,743	4	1,798	1,798	3
24 Trinity	1	1,668	1,668	-1	1,684	1,684	-3
25 Uplands	1	1,654	1,654	-2	1,697	1,697	-3
26 Upton St Leonards	1	1,801	1,801	7	1,941	1,941	11
27 Vale	1	1,492	1,492	-11	1,510	1,510	-13

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
28 Valley	1	1,651	1,651	-2	1,695	1,695	-3
29 Woodchester	1	1,800	1,800	7	1,831	1,831	5
30 Wotton-under-Edge	3	5,080	1,693	1	5,176	1,725	-1
Totals	51	85,807	–	–	88,878	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,682	–	–	1,743	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stroud 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 Stroud in Gloucestershire. We have now reviewed the six districts in Gloucestershire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Stroud. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1979 (Report No. 325). The electoral arrangements of Gloucestershire County Council were last reviewed in May 1982 (Report No. 424). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Stroud District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Gloucestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 2 October 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 9 January 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stroud in Gloucestershire*, and ended on 5 March 2001. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 Stroud is bordered by the Gloucestershire districts of Forest of Dean to the west, Tewkesbury and Gloucester to the north, and Cotswold to the east. South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority is to the south. It covers an area of 45,318 hectares, and has a population of 108,000. The district includes the towns of Stroud and Dursley, with the Severn Vale to the west of the district and the Cotswold Hills to the east, and is bisected by the M5 motorway. The area is predominantly rural, and local industries include agriculture, the wool industry, light engineering and an inland estuarial port at Sharpness.

13 The district contains 52 parishes and is entirely parished.

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

15 The electorate of the district is 85,807 (February 2000). The Council presently has 55 members who are elected from 31 wards. Stroud is represented by seven members and Dursley is represented by three members. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and 16 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Stroud District, with around 6 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments, the most notable increases being in Chalford and Cam wards (78 per cent and 42 per cent respectively). However, due to external boundary changes there has been a decrease in the electorate in Hardwicke ward as a result of the transfer of Quedgeley parish to Gloucester City, and an increase in the electorate of Wotton & Kingswood ward as a result of the transfer of Hillesley & Tresham parish from Northavon District.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,560 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,616 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, nine wards by more than 20 per cent and five wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Chalford ward where each of the councillors represent 48 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Stroud

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Berkeley	1	2,097	2,097	34	2,160	2,160	34
2 Bisley	1	1,807	1,807	16	1,870	1,870	16
3 Cainscross	3	4,480	1,493	-4	4,727	1,576	-2
4 Cam	2	3,997	1,999	28	4,033	2,017	25
5 Cambridge	1	1,532	1,532	-2	1,555	1,555	-4
6 Central	1	1,322	1,322	-15	1,481	1,481	-8
7 Chalford	2	4,618	2,309	48	4,806	2,403	49
8 Dursley	3	4,568	1,523	-2	5,008	1,669	3
9 Eastington	1	1,465	1,465	-6	1,527	1,527	-6
10 Hardwicke	2	2,907	1,454	-7	3,138	1,569	-3
11 Hinton	1	903	903	-42	905	905	-44
12 King's Stanley	2	3,066	1,533	-2	3,128	1,564	-3
13 Leonard Stanley	1	1,241	1,241	-20	1,241	1,241	-23
14 Minchinhampton	3	4,281	1,427	-9	4,364	1,455	-10
15 Nailsworth	3	4,950	1,650	6	5,154	1,718	6
16 Nibley	1	1,006	1,006	-36	1,012	1,012	-37
17 Painswick	2	3,489	1,745	12	3,593	1,797	11
18 Parklands	1	1,716	1,716	10	1,768	1,768	9
19 Randwick	1	1,183	1,183	-24	1,206	1,206	-25
20 Rodborough	3	4,208	1,403	-10	4,350	1,450	-10
21 Severn	1	1,939	1,939	24	1,970	1,970	22
22 Stonehouse	3	5,432	1,811	16	5,779	1,926	19
23 Thrupp	1	1,385	1,385	-11	1,433	1,433	-11
24 Trinity	3	3,989	1,330	-15	4,030	1,343	-17
25 Uley	1	1,248	1,248	-20	1,258	1,258	-22
26 Uplands	3	4,575	1,525	-2	4,707	1,569	-3
27 Upton St Leonards	1	1,357	1,357	-13	1,485	1,485	-8
28 Vale	1	1,475	1,475	-5	1,479	1,479	-8

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29 Whiteshill	1	993	993	-36	995	995	-38
30 Woodfield	2	2,624	1,312	-16	2,644	1,322	-18
31 Wotton & Kingswood	3	5,954	1,985	27	6,072	2,024	25
Totals	55	85,807	–	–	88,878	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,560	–	–	1,616	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stroud 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 2000, electors in Chalford ward were relatively under-represented by 48 per cent, while electors in Hinton ward were relatively over-represented by 42 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 11 representations, including five district-wide schemes, three from the District Council and one each from Stroud Constituency Labour Party and Stroud Conservative Association. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stroud in Gloucestershire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's Scheme 3, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, providing for a mixed pattern of single and multi-member wards. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in Cam, Stroud and Minchinhampton, affecting seven wards, to further improve electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Stroud District Council should have 51 councillors, compared to 55 at present, representing 27 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 27 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements and a redistribution of councillors for Randwick and Thrupp parishes, revised warding arrangements and a redistribution of councillors for Dursley and Rodborough parishes and revised warding arrangements and an increase in councillors for Cam and Stroud parishes.

Draft Recommendation

Stroud District Council should comprise 51 councillors, serving 27 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 25 of the 27 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of improved electoral equality was forecast to continue, with only three wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

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

Stroud Constituency Labour Party

22 Stroud Constituency Labour Party (“the Labour Party”) objected to the majority of the draft recommendations, generally repeating its Stage One proposals, although it supported the draft recommendations for Berkeley and Vale wards. It stated its preference for single-member wards across the district, considering that these better reflect local communities. It supported the draft recommendation that Stroud town be served by six parish wards, but proposed that the town be served by six coterminous district wards, each served by a single member, rather than three two-member wards.

Parish and Town Councils

23 We received representations from 18 parish and town councils. Stroud Town Council supported the draft recommendations that Stroud should be represented by six new parish wards, each served by three town councillors, and a total of six district councillors overall. However, it objected to the draft recommendations for three two-member district wards, and proposed instead six single-member wards, coterminous with the new parish wards. It argued that, although it had proposed three two-member wards at Stage One, single-member wards “would be easy to understand for local residents and provide direct accountability”, further contending that coterminous district and parish wards “will create a simple, easy to understand system”. The Town Council objected to the naming of the wards as Stroud Central, Stroud East and Stroud West, preferring community names, and therefore proposed that the district wards should take the names of the parish wards.

24 Brookethorpe-with-Whaddon Parish Council supported the proposal to retain its link with Harescombe parish. Upton St Leonards Parish Council objected to the proposal to combine Upton St Leonards ward with Harescombe and Brookethorpe-with-Whaddon parishes, proposing no change to the current Upton St Leonards ward.

25 Painswick and Pitchcombe parish councils objected to the transfer of Pitchcombe parish from Painswick ward to the new Over Stroud ward, arguing that it shares few community links. Pitchcombe Parish Council also argued that Pitchcombe parish would have no direct road link to Whiteshill & Ruscombe or Randwick parishes, the remainder of the ward.

26 Chalford Parish Council objected to the transfer of part of Thrupp parish to Chalford ward, proposing that the existing ward boundary be retained.

27 Horsley Parish Council supported the draft recommendation for Nailsworth ward. King’s Stanley Parish Council objected to the draft recommendation to combine the parish with Leonard

Stanley parish, and instead proposed a single-member ward comprising solely King's Stanley parish. Minchinhampton Parish Council supported Box Village Society's proposal that Box village should form a new parish ward of Minchinhampton parish.

28 Hardwicke Parish Council supported the draft recommendation for a revised Hardwicke ward. Haresfield Parish Council objected to the proposal to link Haresfield and Hardwicke, arguing that the new ward would contain a mix of rural and more urban areas. It also proposed, in principle, a uniform pattern of single-member wards. Hamfallow Parish Council supported the proposed Berkeley ward, comprising the parishes of Hamfallow, Hinton and Berkeley, although the Parish Council repeated its preference for a ward comprising the parishes of Hamfallow and Hinton only. Hinton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, and objected to any proposal to link Hinton parish with Slimbridge parish.

29 Hillesley & Tresham Parish Council objected to the transfer of Wotton-under-Edge parish out of Wotton & Kingswood ward, proposing that the existing ward be retained as a four-member ward. Kingswood Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for Kingswood, preferring to retain the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward. Wotton-under-Edge Town Council proposed that the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward should be retained as a four-member ward, or that the proposed new Wotton-under-Edge (including North Nibley parish) and Kingswood wards should be combined as a four-member ward. It also commented that our proposals in this area would have a consequential affect on the parliamentary constituency boundary. It also objected to the reduction in council size to 51.

30 North Nibley Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer the parish to the new Wotton-under-Edge ward, and Stinchcombe Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer the parish to Vale ward. Both parishes alternatively proposed an enlarged Nibley ward, comprising North Nibley and Stinchcombe parishes, together with Alkington parish.

Other Representations

31 Further representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from a branch Labour party, a local society, five district councillors, a county councillor and two local residents.

32 Stroud Branch Labour Party also supported the proposed six parish wards and objected to the proposed three two-member district wards, proposing six single-member wards.

33 Box Village Society proposed that Box, Scar Hill and Hampton Green should form a new single-member Box parish ward, to improve representation on Minchinhampton Parish Council.

34 Councillor Read, member for Cainscross district ward and Slade parish ward of Stroud Town Council, broadly supported the draft recommendations but proposed that Stroud town be split into six single-member district wards, based upon the proposed parish wards, and that the district wards be named after the parish wards. He also proposed that the council be elected as a whole.

35 Councillor Charley, member for Randwick ward, also objected to the proposal to include Pitchcombe parish in Over Stroud ward, arguing that there is no community identity between

Pitchcombe and Whiteshill or Randwick, and no direct road link between Pitchcombe and Whiteshill. Councillor Horsfall, member for Whiteshill ward, accepted the proposal to link Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish with Randwick parish in a new Over Stroud ward, but objected to the proposal to also include Pitchcombe parish, arguing there are no direct road links between the villages, and that Pitchcombe has greater links with Painswick parish.

36 Councillor Mrs Smith, member for Thrupp ward, accepted the transfer of part of Thrupp parish to Chalford ward. However, she objected to the proposal to include part of Rodborough parish in Thrupp ward, arguing this area is separated from Thrupp by a railway line, canal and river. She proposed instead that the Brimscombe area, currently split between Thrupp and Minchinhampton parishes, be united in Thrupp ward.

37 County Councillor Dr Cordwell, member for Wotton-under-Edge division, objected to the draft recommendations, arguing that the parishes in the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward share community identity and should be kept together. Councillor Cordwell also proposed that North Nibley parish should remain with Stinchcombe parish and be represented by one councillor. He also objected to the reduction in council size. Councillor Powell, member for Nibley ward, stated that the recommendation affecting North Nibley “appears superficially to be reasonable”. However, he stated a preference for North Nibley, Stinchcombe and Alkington parishes to form a ward, arguing that the parishes concerned preferred this option.

38 A resident of Pitchcombe also objected to the transfer of Pitchcombe to Over Stroud ward, preferring to remain in Painswick ward. A resident of South Gloucestershire supported the draft recommendations, particularly the new Berkeley and Vale wards, although he expressed concern about the effectiveness of multi-member wards.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

39 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Stroud 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 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

42 Our *Guidance* states that 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 kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

43 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 85,807 to 88,878 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Dursley ward, although significant growth is also expected in Stonehouse ward. 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. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

44 At Stage Three Hardwicke and Upton St Leonards parish councils queried the forecast growth in their respective parishes. North Nibley Parish Council also noted that a new development in the parish, which has not yet commenced, would “add a further 12-20 electors”.

Additionally, Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon Parish Council stated that significant development in the Upton St Leonards, Hardwicke and Eastington area was under discussion. It accepted that this future development had not yet been confirmed, but argued that “once the housing has been confirmed it will mean the electoral arrangements will need to be reviewed again”. It proposed that Parklands ward remain unchanged, but be “re-organised when the development pattern has been settled and a plausible forecast can be made”.

45 However, officers at Stroud District Council have assured us that the forecast electorates submitted at Stage One for these parishes remain the best estimates available, and that the development referred to is not expected to be fully completed and occupied by electors within the five-year period to 2005. Considerable electorate growth of 8 and 9 per cent in Hardwicke and Upton St Leonards parishes respectively, has, however, been included in the District Council’s forecast electorate to allow for partial completion of these development sites. Therefore, we remain satisfied that the District Council’s forecast electorates represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

46 As already explained, the Commission’s starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

47 Stroud District Council is presently served by 55 councillors. At Stage One the District Council, the Conservative Association and the Labour Party all proposed a council of 51 members, a decrease of four. The District Council stated that “there is no apparent evidence to support a contention that the size of the Council should be altered radically”. Given this, the Council stated that that “due regard has been taken of the Commission’s general assumption that the existing number of Councillors ... already secures effective and convenient local government”. The Conservative Association stated that “there is a general feeling” that the size of the council “could be reduced by this small amount”. A resident of Trinity ward argued for a reduction in council size “in view of voter apathy”.

48 In our draft recommendations report we considered that, given the consensus amongst parties represented on the Council, the Conservative Association and the Labour Party for a council of 51, and as a council of 51 would provide the correct allocation of councillors across the district, the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

49 During Stage Three Wotton-under-Edge Town Council objected to the proposed reduction by four in the number of councillors, considering community identities could be better reflected under the existing council size. County Councillor Dr Cordwell, member for Wotton-under-Edge division, also objected to the proposed reduction in council size to 51, stating “I doubt that the proposed number secures effective and convenient local government”. The Vice-Chair of Chalford Parish Council considered “a great opportunity has been missed” to reduce the size of the Council, arguing that a smaller council size would be more efficient, but did not propose a specific council size.

50 We have carefully considered all the comments received, but, noting the consensus among all the district-wide schemes submitted for a reduction by four councillors, and in the absence of significant evidence to persuade us otherwise, we continue to consider that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral Arrangements

51 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, the Labour Party and the Conservative Association. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

52 First, there was consensus that four wards, namely Bisley, Dursley, Nailsworth and Stonehouse, remain unchanged. Second, there was general agreement that a new ward comprising the parishes of Coaley, Nympsfield, Owlpen and Uley be formed. Third, there was consensus that Randwick parish be warded so that part of the parish form a ward with Cainscross parish. Fourth, there was some agreement that Woodchester parish, together with Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton, form a new ward. Finally, all schemes except that from the Conservative Association adopted proposals from Cam Parish Council and Stroud Town Council for their respective parishes.

53 No scheme provided particularly good evidence in relation to the extent to which they met the statutory criteria. However, we noted that the District Council's Scheme 3 would provide for the best levels of electoral equality, with no ward varying by more than 13 per cent by 2005. We also noted that Scheme 3 was developed from an earlier consultation scheme, Scheme 2, taking into account "as many representations as could be accommodated within the overall scheme". We considered therefore, that Scheme 3 would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, we decided to move away from the scheme to improve electoral equality further in Cam and Stroud and to avoid creating a very small parish ward in Minchinhampton parish.

54 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. We received a number of well argued, detailed submissions in response to our draft recommendations, particularly regarding our proposals in Stroud town. These have led us to reconsider our proposals for three two-member wards for Stroud, and we therefore propose adopting a pattern of six single-member wards, with the same names as the proposed parish wards, as detailed later in this report.

55 We also received a number of objections to our proposed Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood wards in the south of the district. Several respondents proposed instead that this area should be served by a four-member ward, to enable the parishes in the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward to remain together in one ward. However, as laid down in our *Guidance*, we consider that wards with more than three members could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate, and therefore we do not propose adopting this proposal.

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

- (a) Stroud Town (Central, Trinity and Uplands wards);
- (b) Cainscross, Chalford, King's Stanley, Leonard Stanley, Minchinhampton, Rodborough, Stonehouse and Thrupp wards;
- (c) Bisley, Painswick, Randwick and Whiteshill wards;
- (d) Cambridge, Eastington, Hardwicke, Parklands, Severn and Upton St Leonards wards;
- (e) Cam, Dursley, Nailsworth, Uley and Woodfield wards;
- (f) Berkeley, Hinton, Nibley, Vale and Wotton & Kingswood wards.

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

Stroud Town (Central, Trinity and Uplands wards)

58 The principal urban area in Stroud district is centred on Stroud town, in the eastern part of the district. Stroud is the largest town in the district, and is the point where five valleys converge. The town area is represented by three district wards: Central ward is represented by a single member, while Trinity and Uplands wards are each represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the district average in Central ward (8 per cent in 2005), 15 per cent below in Trinity ward (17 per cent in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Uplands ward (3 per cent in 2005).

59 We received five representations regarding Stroud town at Stage One. All three of the District Council's schemes proposed that Stroud town be represented by three district wards, as at present. All three wards would be represented by two members, resulting in a reduction by one to six members for the area. The District Council proposed that Central ward be extended, so that the area around Farmhill Lane and Stratford Road, including the Leisure Centre, would be transferred from Uplands ward. Uplands ward would be extended to the south, to include parts of Central and Trinity wards, so that the boundary would follow Locking Hill and Ryleaze Road south to Parliament Street, then run east along the backs of properties on Summer Street to the parish boundary. The District Council further proposed that the western boundary of Trinity ward be modified, so that Castle Rise, currently split between Central and Trinity wards, would be transferred to Central ward. Finally, the District Council proposed that Central, Trinity and Uplands wards be renamed Stroud West, Stroud East and Stroud North respectively. Under the District Council's proposals for Stroud the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district average in Stroud East ward (1 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent below in Stroud North ward (8 per cent in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Stroud West ward (equal to the average in 2005).

60 The Labour Party stated "we wish to support the proposals put forward by Stroud Town Council".

61 The Conservative Association proposed that Stroud be represented by two district wards, one fewer than at present. Both wards would be represented by three members, resulting in a

reduction of one to six members for the area. It proposed that Uplands ward remain unchanged, stating that “the polling districts of Stroud Valley, Farmhill, Stroud Uplands and Paganhill all enjoy a natural affinity in geographical and social terms”. It proposed that Trinity ward be combined with the existing Central ward, noting that under the existing arrangements both wards are over-represented. Under the Conservative Association’s proposals the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be 6 per cent above the district average in Trinity ward and 10 per cent below the average in Uplands ward. Existing-year electorates were not provided.

62 Stroud Town Council proposed that Stroud town be represented by six district councillors, a reduction of one, in a uniform pattern of three two-member wards. As a second preference, it proposed six single-member district wards. It proposed that the Town Council be represented by six three-member wards, an increase of one. Based on the District Council’s proposed district wards, under the Town Council’s proposals Stroud West ward would comprise Central and Farmhill & Paganhill parish wards, Stroud East ward would comprise Slade and Trinity parish wards, and Stroud North ward would comprise Uplands and Valley parish wards. Under the Town Council’s preferred three ward option the number of electors per councillor would be as proposed by the District Council. Under its six ward option the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the district average in Central ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 27 per cent above in Farmhill & Paganhill ward (6 per cent in 2005), 32 per cent above in Slade ward (equal to the average in 2005), 7 per cent above in Trinity ward (equal to the average in 2005), 3 per cent below in Valley ward (8 per cent in 2005) and 45 per cent below in Uplands ward (2 per cent in 2005).

63 Councillor Read, member for Cainscross district ward and Slade parish ward, proposed that the Stroud area be served by six district councillors, representing six single-member wards, and 18 town councillors, representing six three-member wards. Boundaries would be as proposed by Stroud Town Council. Councillor Read argued that “one single councillor representing a single community would be easy to understand for local residents and provide direct accountability”.

64 We carefully considered all the representations we received regarding Stroud town. We noted that the District Council, the Labour Party and Stroud Town Council (as its preference) proposed that Stroud be represented by three two-member wards, while the Conservative Association proposed two three-member wards and Councillor Read and Stroud Town Council (as second option) proposed six single-member wards. We also noted that there was consensus that Stroud Town Council be represented by 18 members, representing six three-member wards. Given this consensus, and the fact that the Conservative Association’s proposals would utilise significantly different boundaries, we compared the three two-member ward option and the six single-member ward option. We noted Councillor Read’s arguments in favour of single-member wards, but noted the consensus on the District Council for three two-member wards and Stroud Town Council’s preference for such a warding pattern and therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Stroud as part of our draft recommendations, subject to two minor amendments.

65 We noted that by 2005 Stroud East and Stroud West wards would have variances from the average of no more than 1 per cent, but Stroud North ward would be over-represented by 8 per cent. We considered that further improvements to electoral equality could be made in Stroud without adversely affecting community identities in the area, and therefore proposed that the area around Bisley Old Road, Nuncell Cross and Middle Hill be transferred to Stroud North ward,

and that the area around Lovedays Mead and West Grange Court be transferred from Stroud West ward to Stroud North ward. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Stroud East ward (3 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Stroud North ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent below in Stroud West ward (2 per cent in 2005).

66 At Stage Three, Stroud Town Council supported the draft recommendations that Stroud should be represented by six new parish wards, each served by three town councillors, and a total of six district councillors overall. It supported the modifications made to the District Council's Stage One proposal, stating "it not only makes a better balance in electoral equality but these areas relate more closely with the ... areas which are already in the Valley ward". It requested no further change to boundaries. The Town Council objected to the draft recommendations for three two-member district wards, and proposed instead six single-member wards, coterminous with the new parish wards. It argued that, although it had proposed three two-member wards at Stage One, it considered that single-member wards "would be easy to understand for local residents and provide direct accountability". It also considered that coterminous district and parish wards "will create a simple, easy to understand system". The Town Council further objected to the naming of the wards as Stroud Central, Stroud East and Stroud West, preferring community names, and therefore proposed that the district wards should take the names of the parish wards.

67 The Labour Party stated it supported the draft recommendations that Stroud town be served by 18 town councillors, representing six parish wards, and six district councillors. It stated it supported the parish ward boundaries as shown in the draft recommendations, including the modifications made by the Commission to Valley parish ward. However, it objected to the draft recommendation that Stroud town be served by three two-member wards, and instead stated its support for Stroud Town Council's Stage Three submission which proposed six single-member district wards, contending that this would provide for more convenient and effective local government and better reflect local geography.

68 Stroud Branch Labour Party also supported the proposed parish wards for Stroud town, but objected to the draft recommendations for district wards in the town. It also proposed that Stroud town should be served by six single-member wards, coterminous with the new parish wards. It argued that this would "create a simple, easy to understand system that achieves far better consistency in representation".

69 Councillor Read, member for Cainscross district ward and Slade parish ward, supported the enlarged three-member Cainscross ward, noting that while his first preference was for single member wards, it is not always possible to divide parishes into single-member district wards which "still achieve both electoral equality and wards which represent the community/geographical nature of the parishes". He also supported the draft recommendations for six parish wards for Stroud town, each represented by three town councillors. He supported the modifications made to the Stage One proposals, considering they would "make for a better geographical representation". However, Councillor Read reiterated his Stage One proposal for six single-member district wards in Stroud town, with the same names and boundaries as the new parish wards. He argued that these new parish wards are "based around easily identifiable boundaries that strongly reflect local communities", and that coterminous district and parish

wards would be easily understood, allow electors easy access to their representative, increase interest in elections and provide for more effective councillors.

70 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have noted that there is consensus between Stroud Constituency Labour Party, Stroud Branch Labour Party, Stroud Town Council and Councillor Read in support of a pattern of six single-member district wards for Stroud town, coterminous with the parish wards proposed in our draft recommendations. In the light of this local support and the evidence received we have been persuaded that a pattern of single-member wards would better secure effective and convenient local government and better reflect local community identity than the pattern of three two-member wards originally proposed by Stroud Town Council and adopted in our draft recommendations.

71 However, we have noted that such proposals would result in a worse level of electoral equality, particularly in the proposed Slade, Central and Farmhill & Paganhill wards, which would have electoral variances of 5 per cent below the district average (8 per cent in 2005), 17 per cent below (11 per cent in 2005) and 7 per cent above (6 per cent in 2005). We are therefore proposing minor modifications to four of the six proposed wards in order to improve electoral equality and secure clearer boundaries. We propose that the boundary between the proposed Trinity and Slade wards should follow the centre of Middle Street, that the boundary between Valley and Uplands wards should be modified to include The Woodlands, Birches Close and Birches Drive in Uplands ward, and that the area to the west of Lovedays Mead and to the north of Beeches Green should be transferred from Uplands ward into Central ward.

72 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed single-member wards of Central, Farmhill & Paganhill and Slade would be 14 per cent below, 7 per cent above and 1 per cent below the district average respectively (8 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed single-member wards of Trinity, Uplands and Valley would be 1 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (3 per cent below the average in each of the wards by 2005). Our final recommendations for Stroud are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Cainscross, Chalford, King's Stanley, Leonard Stanley, Minchinhampton, Rodborough, Stonehouse and Thrupp wards

73 The seven wards of Cainscross, Chalford, Leonard Stanley, Minchinhampton, Rodborough, Stonehouse and Thrupp each contain the parish of the same name, while King's Stanley ward contains King's Stanley and Woodchester parishes. These wards run horizontally across the district and circle Stroud town to the south. Leonard Stanley and Thrupp wards are each represented by a single member, Chalford and King's Stanley wards are each served by two members, while Cainscross, Minchinhampton, Rodborough and Stonehouse wards are each represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the district average in Cainscross ward (2 per cent in 2005), 48 per cent above in Chalford ward (49 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in King's Stanley ward (3 per cent in 2005), 20 per cent below in Leonard Stanley ward (23 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Minchinhampton ward (10

per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Rodborough ward (unchanged in 2005), 16 per cent above in Stonehouse ward (19 per cent in 2005) and 11 per cent below in Thrupp ward (unchanged in 2005).

74 At Stage One the District Council proposed three different schemes for this area: Scheme 3, the Administration's scheme and Councillor Priest's scheme. The District Council proposed in Scheme 3 that Chalford ward be extended to the west to include that part of Thrupp ward east of Toadsmoor Road and north of London Road, and that the ward be represented by three members, one more than at present. It proposed that Thrupp ward be amended to the west, so that the part of Rodborough ward east of Butterow Hill, and the properties on Bownham Park, currently in Minchinhampton ward, be included in Thrupp ward. The remainder of Rodborough ward would be represented by two members, a decrease of one. Cainscross ward would be extended in the north to include that part of Randwick ward bounded by Redhouse Lane and Park End Road. It proposed that Stonehouse ward remain unchanged, arguing that the projected electorate for Stonehouse ward was only "just over 10 per cent above the average".

75 The District Council also proposed that Frocester parish, currently linked with Eastington parish, be combined with Leonard Stanley and King's Stanley parishes in a new two-member ward, to be named The Stanleys. Woodchester parish would form a new Woodchester ward, together with Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton parish, to be served by a single member. The remainder of Minchinhampton ward would be represented by two members, one fewer than at present. Under Scheme 3 the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district average in Cainscross ward (4 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent below in Chalford ward (unchanged in 2005), 4 per cent above in Minchinhampton ward (2 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above in Rodborough ward (unchanged in 2005), 8 per cent above in Stonehouse ward (11 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent above in The Stanleys ward (1 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above in Thrupp ward (unchanged in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Woodchester ward (5 per cent in 2005).

76 In the Administration's scheme the District Council proposed that Chalford ward be split into three single-member wards, to be named Chalford-Brownhill, Chalford-Manor and Chalford-Village. It proposed that Thrupp ward be extended to include part of Brimscombe parish ward of Minchinhampton parish, and that part of Rodborough ward be transferred to Minchinhampton ward. The remainder of Rodborough ward would be represented by two members, one fewer than at present. The District Council proposed that part of Randwick parish be transferred to Cainscross ward, and that Stonehouse ward remain unchanged. It further proposed that the parishes of Leonard Stanley and King's Stanley form a new two-member The Stanleys ward. It proposed a new Woodchester ward, containing Woodchester parish and Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton parish, to be represented by a single member. Minchinhampton ward, to be represented by two members, would be modified so that part of Rodborough parish would be included in the ward, and part of Minchinhampton parish would be transferred to Thrupp ward, as described earlier.

77 Under the Administration's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Cainscross ward (6 per cent in 2005), 26 per cent below in Chalford-Brownhill ward (25 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent below in Chalford-Manor ward (2 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent above in Chalford-Village ward (2 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above the

district average in Minchinhampton ward (5 per cent in 2005), 13 per cent above in Rodborough ward (unchanged in 2005), 8 per cent above in Stonehouse ward (11 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in The Stanleys ward (4 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Thrupp ward (unchanged in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Woodchester ward (5 per cent in 2005).

78 The District Council proposed, in Councillor Priest's scheme, that the boundaries of Chalford ward remain unchanged, but that it be represented by three members, one more than at present. It proposed that Thrupp ward be included in an enlarged Minchinhampton ward, represented by three members, as at present. Rodborough ward would be modified to include Woodchester parish, and would be represented by three members, as at present. Cainscross ward would be extended to include part of Randwick parish, and Stonehouse ward would remain unchanged. It also proposed a modified two-member King's Stanley ward, comprising the parishes of King's Stanley and Leonard Stanley. Under Councillor Priest's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average in Cainscross ward (1 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Chalford ward (8 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in King's Stanley ward (4 per cent in 2005), 12 per cent above in Minchinhampton ward (11 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent above in Rodborough ward (unchanged in 2005) and 8 per cent above in Stonehouse ward (11 per cent in 2005).

79 Stroud Labour Party proposed a three-member Cainscross ward, single-member Chalford-Brownhill, Chalford-Manor and Chalford-Village wards, two-member Minchinhampton and Rodborough wards, a three-member Stonehouse ward, a two-member The Stanleys ward and single-member Thrupp ward, with boundaries identical to those proposed under the District Council's Administration scheme. It also proposed that the Administration's Woodchester ward be named Woodchester & Amberley.

80 The Conservative Association proposed that the boundaries of Chalford ward remain unchanged, but that it be represented by three members, an increase of one. It also proposed that Rodborough ward be combined with Thrupp ward to form an extended Rodborough ward, and that Cainscross ward be enlarged to include part of Randwick parish. Stonehouse ward would remain unchanged. It further proposed that King's Stanley parish be transferred to Leonard Stanley ward, to be renamed The Stanleys, which would be represented by two members, an increase of one. Woodchester parish would be combined with Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton, forming a new single-member Woodchester ward, while the remainder of Minchinhampton ward would be represented by two members, one fewer than at present. Under the Conservative Association's proposals the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be equal to the district average in Cainscross ward, 8 per cent below in Chalford ward, 2 per cent above in Minchinhampton ward, 11 per cent above in Rodborough ward, 11 per cent above in Stonehouse ward, 4 per cent below in The Stanleys ward and 5 per cent above in Woodchester ward. Existing-year electorates were not provided.

81 We carefully considered all the proposals for this area. We noted that all three of the schemes submitted by the District Council, as well as those schemes submitted by the Labour Party and the Conservative Association, proposed that Stonehouse ward remain unchanged. While we noted that this would retain a variance from the average of 11 per cent by 2005, we considered that Stonehouse is relatively separated from the Stroud urban area, and alternative configurations would not reflect the statutory criteria as well. We therefore retained Stonehouse ward

unchanged. We also noted the general consensus that a new Lower Westrip parish ward of Randwick parish be combined with Cainscross parish to form an enlarged Cainscross ward. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we considered that those boundaries proposed in Scheme 3 would provide for good electoral equality while utilising strong boundaries, and therefore adopted the District Council's Scheme 3 proposals for Cainscross ward as part of our draft recommendations. We examined the four options for the Rodborough, Thrupp and Chalford areas and considered that the District Council's Scheme 3 provided the best balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

82 However, we noted that in Scheme 3 the District Council proposed that the Bownham Park area of Minchinhampton parish be transferred to Thrupp ward. This would require the creation of a parish ward for 41 electors. We did not consider that this would best reflect the statutory criteria, and therefore proposed that these electors remain in Minchinhampton ward.

83 We noted that all schemes proposed that King's Stanley and Leonard Stanley be placed in a ward together, and we considered that not only do these two parishes have a community of interest, they also have good links with Frocester parish. We therefore adopted Scheme 3's The Stanleys ward as part of our draft recommendations. We also considered that Woodchester and Amberley parish ward of Minchinhampton share a community of interest, and given our proposals for Thrupp ward, adopted a new Woodchester ward, and a two-member Minchinhampton ward as part of our draft recommendations, as proposed in Scheme 3 and by the Conservative Association.

84 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district average in Cainscross ward (4 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent below in Chalford ward (unchanged in 2005), 5 per cent above in Minchinhampton ward (3 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above in Rodborough ward (unchanged in 2005), 8 per cent above in Stonehouse ward (11 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent above in The Stanleys ward (1 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent above in Thrupp ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Woodchester ward (5 per cent in 2005).

85 During Stage Three, in response to our draft recommendations, the Labour Party objected to the draft recommendations for Thrupp, Rodborough and Minchinhampton, preferring its Stage One proposals for this area. It argued that "there is no natural link" between the Butterow and Bownham Park areas, linked together in the enlarged Thrupp ward under our draft recommendations, and that the two areas are separated by a river with no bridge.

86 The Vice-Chair of Chalford Parish Council objected to the transfer of part of Thrupp parish to Chalford ward, arguing that there was local support for the existing ward boundary "and the geographical convenience of Toadsmoor Road [the proposed new boundary] should not be taken into account".

87 King's Stanley Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for The Stanleys wards, considering it would increase the councillors' workload. It expressed concern that linking King's Stanley and Leonard Stanley in a district ward would lead to the merger of the two parishes, and instead proposed a single-member ward comprising solely King's Stanley parish.

88 Box Village Society proposed that the settlements of Box, Scar Hill and Hampton Green, part of Minchinhampton parish, should form a new single-member parish ward, to improve representation on the Parish Council. Minchinhampton Parish Council supported Box Village Society's proposal that Box village should form a new parish ward of Minchinhampton parish, and requested that the number of parish councillors representing South parish ward be reduced by one to maintain the total number of parish councillors at 15.

89 Councillor Mrs Smith, member for Thrupp ward, accepted the transfer of part of Thrupp parish to Chalford ward, stating "I would acknowledge that the Toadsmoor Valley seems a natural boundary". However, she objected to the proposal to include part of Rodborough parish in Thrupp ward, arguing that this area is separated from Thrupp by a railway line, canal and river. She proposed instead that the Brimscombe area, currently split between Thrupp and Minchinhampton parishes, be united in Thrupp ward, stating there is some local support "that Brimscombe should be properly united". Councillor Mrs Smith enclosed a letter from Thrupp Parish Council to the District Council supporting this proposal.

90 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three. However, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area. Any alterations to our draft recommendations, as suggested by Stage Three respondents, would result in either an unacceptable level of electoral equality or necessitate consequent changes across the district as a whole, which, in our view, would result in a poorer reflection of communities and less identifiable boundaries.

91 For example, if King's Stanley parish were to form a single-member ward on its own, under a 51-member council it would be under-represented by 23 per cent initially (25 per cent by 2005) which would be an unacceptable imbalance. Similarly, we have noted that Councillor Mrs Smith's alternative proposal for Thrupp ward would necessitate consequent changes to the neighbouring wards of Minchinhampton and/or Rodborough if a good level of electoral equality was to be secured which, in our view, would have a detrimental effect on the reflection of local communities. We do not believe that any one area can be looked at in isolation and, in the absence of any viable alternatives for wards in this area, we therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final, as we remain of the view that they continue to represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

92 We noted Box Village Society's proposal that Minchinhampton parish be further warded so that Box village would be served by a single parish councillor. Given the support from Minchinhampton Parish Council, and given this would not affect district warding in this area, we are content to adopt the local society's proposal as part of our final recommendations, as detailed later in this report.

93 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Cainscross, Chalford, Minchinhampton, Rodborough, Stonehouse, The Stanleys, Thrupp and Woodchester wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2, Maps A3–A6 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Bisley, Painswick, Randwick and Whiteshill wards

94 The three single-member wards of Bisley, Randwick and Whiteshill and the two-member Painswick ward encircle Stroud town to the north, and border Cotswold district to the east. Bisley ward contains the parish of Bisley-with-Lypiatt, Painswick ward contains the parishes of Cranham, Miserden, Painswick and Pitchcombe, Randwick ward contains the parish of the same name, and Whiteshill ward contains Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish. The number of electors per councillor is 16 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward (unchanged in 2005), 12 per cent above in Painswick ward (11 per cent in 2005), 24 per cent below in Randwick ward (25 per cent in 2005) and 36 per cent below in Whiteshill ward (38 per cent in 2005).

95 At Stage One we received submissions regarding these wards from the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Association and Pitchcombe Parish Council. The District Council proposed three different schemes for this area: Scheme 3, the Administration's scheme and Councillor Priest's scheme. The District Council proposed in Scheme 3 that Randwick parish be warded into two: Lower Westrip parish ward, to be combined with Cainscross ward, as described earlier, and Randwick parish ward, the majority of the parish, to be combined with Whiteshill ward and Pitchcombe parish, currently part of Painswick ward, in a new single-member Over Stroud ward. The two-member Painswick ward would be otherwise unchanged, and Bisley ward would remain as at present. Under Scheme 3 the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward (unchanged in 2005), 1 per cent above in Over Stroud ward (2 per cent in 2005) and 3 per cent below in Painswick ward (unchanged in 2005).

96 In the Administration's scheme the District Council proposed that Randwick parish be warded, so that part of the parish be transferred to Cainscross ward, as described earlier. The remainder of Randwick parish would be combined with Whiteshill ward in a new single-member Randwick & Whiteshill ward. Painswick and Bisley wards would both remain unchanged. Under the Administration's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward (unchanged in 2005), 4 per cent above in Painswick ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 17 per cent above in Randwick & Whiteshill ward (14 per cent in 2005).

97 The District Council proposed, in Councillor Priest's scheme, that a new Lower Westrip parish ward of Randwick parish form part of an enlarged Cainscross ward, as described earlier. Randwick Village ward, the remainder of the parish, would be linked with Whiteshill ward, forming a new single-member Randwick & Whiteshill ward. The two-member Painswick ward and the single-member Bisley ward would remain as at present. Under Councillor Priest's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward (unchanged in 2005), 4 per cent above in Painswick ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 2 per cent above in Randwick & Whiteshill ward (equal to the average in 2005).

98 The Labour Party proposed a single-member Bisley ward, a two-member Painswick ward and a single-member Randwick & Whiteshill ward, with boundaries identical to those proposed under the District Council's Administration scheme.

99 The Conservative Association proposed that part of Randwick parish be transferred to Cainscross ward, as described earlier. The remainder of the parish would be linked to Whiteshill ward, forming a new single-member Over Stroud ward. It proposed no change to Painswick ward

and Bisley ward. Under the Conservative Association's proposals, the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be 7 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward, 2 per cent below in Over Stroud ward and 3 per cent above in Painswick ward. Existing-year electorates were not provided.

100 Pitchcombe Parish Council stated that, with regard to Stroud's two consultation schemes, it preferred Scheme 1. Under this proposal Pitchcombe parish would be placed with the parishes of Painswick and Miserden in a two-member ward.

101 Having considered all the representations received, we noted the consensus that Bisley ward remain unchanged and, given the good levels of electoral equality that would be retained, adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. The District Council also proposed, in the Administration's and Councillor Priest's schemes, that Painswick ward remain unchanged. However, we noted that, although this would result in good levels of electoral equality in Painswick ward, as a consequence of our proposals for Cainscross ward, the retention of Painswick ward would result in an imbalance of 12 per cent below the district average (rising to 15 per cent by 2005) in the new ward containing Randwick Village and Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish. We stated that we cannot look at any area of the district in isolation and that we must seek to achieve electoral equality across the district as a whole. We therefore considered that the District Council's Scheme 3 proposal for a new Over Stroud ward and an amended Painswick ward would provide for the best balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

102 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Bisley ward (unchanged in 2005), 1 per cent above in Over Stroud ward (2 per cent in 2005) and 3 per cent below in Painswick ward (unchanged in 2005).

103 At Stage Three the Labour Party objected to the draft recommendations for a three-member Chalford ward. It argued that its Stage One proposal for three single-member wards would better reflect local communities. The Labour Party also objected to the draft recommendation to transfer Pitchcombe parish to Over Stroud ward, stating "Pitchcombe looks naturally and geographically towards Painswick, not back towards Whiteshill".

104 Pitchcombe Parish Council objected to the transfer of Pitchcombe parish from Painswick ward to the new Over Stroud ward. It noted that there are no direct road links from Pitchcombe parish to either Whiteshill & Ruscombe or Randwick parishes, the remainder of the ward, whereas there is a direct link to Painswick parish along the A46. Painswick Parish Council also objected to the transfer of Pitchcombe parish from Painswick ward, contending that the two parishes share a strong community identity.

105 Councillor Charley, member for Randwick ward, also objected to the proposal to include Pitchcombe parish in Over Stroud ward, arguing that although Whiteshill & Ruscombe and Randwick parishes share a community identity, "there has never been any link between Pitchcombe and Whiteshill and Randwick", noting in particular that there is no direct road link between the settlements of Whiteshill and Pitchcombe. He alternatively proposed that a smaller part of Randwick parish be transferred to Cainscross ward to improve electoral equality in Over Stroud ward.

106 Councillor Horsfall, member for Whiteshill ward, accepted the proposal to link Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish with Randwick parish in a new Over Stroud ward, but objected to the proposal to also include Pitchcombe parish, arguing that Whiteshill has no community links with Pitchcombe, noting “they are adjacent only by virtue of several large fields. There is no direct road link”.

107 A resident of Pitchcombe also objected to the transfer of Pitchcombe to Over Stroud ward, preferring to remain in Painswick ward, with which it shares greater community links.

108 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three. We have examined the proposals put forward by Painswick and Pitchcombe parish councils, Councillor Charley, Councillor Horsfall, and a local resident, that Pitchcombe parish should remain in Painswick ward in order to better reflect local communities and secure more effective and convenient local government. Officers of the Commission having visited the area, we have been persuaded that Pitchcombe and Painswick have many similarities and we also agree that there is no direct road link between Pitchcombe and Whiteshill and Randwick, the remainder of the proposed Over Stroud ward. We therefore propose that Pitchcombe parish should be retained in Painswick ward.

109 We have noted, however, that while the retention of Pitchcombe parish in Painswick ward would have a negligible effect on electoral equality in Painswick ward, with the number of electors per councillor being 4 per cent above the district average initially (3 per cent above by 2005), the revised Over Stroud ward would be over-represented by 12 per cent initially (15 per cent by 2005). However, given the local geography and the better reflection of community identity, we are of the view that this level of electoral inequality is justified.

110 In the absence of any opposition to our proposed Bisley ward we propose confirming it as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Bisley, Over Stroud and Painswick wards would be 7 per cent above, 12 per cent below and 4 per cent above the district average respectively (7 per cent above, 15 per cent below and 3 per cent above by 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2, Map A4 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Cambridge, Eastington, Hardwicke, Parklands, Severn and Upton St Leonards wards

111 The five single-member wards of Cambridge, Eastington, Parklands, Severn and Upton St Leonards and the two-member Hardwicke ward are situated in the far north of the district, and are bounded by the River Severn to the west and Tewkesbury district and Gloucester city to the north. Cambridge ward comprises Coaley and Slimbridge parishes; Eastington ward contains the parishes of Eastington and Frocester; Hardwicke ward contains the parishes of Elmore, Hardwicke and Longney; Parklands ward contains the parishes of Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon, Harescombe, Haresfield, Moreton Valance, Standish and Whitminster; Severn ward comprises Arlingham, Frampton on Severn and Frethern with Saul parishes; and Upton St Leonards ward contains the parish of the same name.

112 The number of electors per councillor is 2 per cent below the district average in Cambridge ward (4 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent below in Eastington ward (unchanged in 2005), 7 per cent below in Hardwicke ward (3 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent above in Parklands ward (9 per cent in 2005), 24 per cent above in Severn ward (22 per cent in 2005) and 13 per cent below in Upton St Leonards ward (8 per cent in 2005).

113 At Stage One Stroud District Council proposed three options for this area. Its Scheme 3 proposed that Upton St Leonards ward be combined with the parishes of Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon and Harescombe to form an enlarged single-member Upton St Leonards ward. It stated that this proposed ward could achieve even further improvements to electoral equality if Harescombe parish were excluded from the ward. However, it argued that “the nucleus of the village of Brookthorpe is split by the parish boundary with Harescombe”, and therefore these parishes should not be split. The District Council further proposed that the two-member Hardwicke ward should be extended to include Haresfield parish, and that Standish parish be linked to Eastington parish, forming a new single-member Eastington & Standish ward. Frocester parish, currently part of Eastington ward, would be transferred to a new ward containing King’s Stanley and Leonard Stanley parishes. Moreton Valance and Whitminster parishes, currently part of Parklands ward, and Slimbridge parish, currently part of Cambridge ward, would be transferred to an extended single-member Severn ward. Under Scheme 3 the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the district average in Eastington & Standish ward (8 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent below in Hardwicke ward (1 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above in Severn ward (4 per cent in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Upton St Leonards ward (11 per cent in 2005).

114 The District Council’s Administration scheme proposed that Upton St Leonards, Parklands, Hardwicke, Severn and Eastington wards remain unchanged. It proposed that Slimbridge parish, currently part of Cambridge ward, should be linked with Hinton ward to form a new Hinton & Slimbridge ward, to be served by a single member. Under the Administration’s scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent below the district average in Eastington ward (12 per cent in 2005), 14 per cent below in Hardwicke ward (10 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent above in Hinton & Slimbridge ward (4 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Parklands ward (1 per cent in 2005), 15 per cent above in Severn ward (13 per cent in 2005) and 19 per cent below in Upton St Leonards ward (15 per cent in 2005).

115 In the third option, Councillor Priest’s scheme, the District Council proposed no change for the wards of Upton St Leonards, Parklands, Hardwicke, Severn and Eastington. It proposed that Slimbridge parish be combined with Hinton ward, forming a new single-member Hinton & Slimbridge ward. Under Councillor Priest’s scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent below the district average in Eastington ward (12 per cent in 2005), 14 per cent below in Hardwicke ward (10 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent above in Hinton & Slimbridge ward (4 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Parklands ward (1 per cent in 2005), 15 per cent above in Severn ward (13 per cent in 2005) and 19 per cent below in Upton St Leonards ward (15 per cent in 2005).

116 The Labour Party proposed a single-member Eastington ward, a two-member Hardwicke ward, and single-member Hinton & Slimbridge, Parklands, Severn and Upton St Leonards wards, with boundaries identical to those proposed under the District Council’s Administration scheme.

117 The Conservative Association proposed that Upton St Leonards ward be combined with Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon parish in a new single-member Upton ward. The remainder of Parklands ward would be represented by a single member, as at present. Hardwicke, Severn and Eastington wards would remain unchanged. A new Slimbridge & Hinton ward, to be represented by a single member, would be formed, comprising the parishes of the same name. Under the Conservative Association's proposals the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be 12 per cent below the district average in Eastington ward, 10 per cent below in Hardwicke ward, 13 per cent below in Parklands ward, 13 per cent above in Severn ward, 4 per cent above in Slimbridge & Hinton ward and equal to the average in Upton ward. Existing-year electorates were not provided.

118 Eastington Parish Council expressed a preference for being linked with the parishes of Frocester and Standish in a single-member ward. Alternatively, the Council proposed a single-member ward comprising Eastington and Standish parishes. The Council objected to its place in the existing Severn ward, considering it did not share "common ground" with the other parishes.

119 We noted that the District Council's Administration and Councillor Priest schemes, the Labour Party and the Conservative Association, proposed that most of the northern and western part of the district remain unchanged. However, this would fail to address imbalances of up to 24 per cent above the district average in this area. We noted that the District Council's Scheme 3 would provide for improved electoral equality in this area, while appearing to have regard to communities, in particular adopting Eastington Parish Council's proposal to create a new Eastington & Standish ward and retaining Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon and Harescombe parishes in a ward together, and therefore we adopted the District Council's Scheme 3 for this area as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the district average in Eastington & Standish ward (8 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent below in Hardwicke ward (1 per cent in 2005), 6 per cent above in Severn ward (4 per cent in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Upton St Leonards ward (11 per cent in 2005).

120 At Stage Three the Labour Party objected to the draft recommendation to transfer Slimbridge parish to an enlarged Severn ward, considering that this would not have regard to communities. It also stated it did not consider "that democracy is well served" by the proposed Severn ward, noting it would double the number of parishes in the ward to six, adding "it would be virtually impossible for any one person to attend this number of Parish meetings". The Labour Party also objected to the transfer of those parishes currently in Parklands ward to neighbouring wards, particularly the transfer of Haresfield parish to Hardwicke ward. It repeated its Stage One proposal that Parklands ward remain unaltered, arguing that although it is a "very spread out ward" the constituent parishes share "characteristics".

121 Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon Parish Council supported the proposal to retain its link with Harescombe parish, although it proposed that Parklands ward remain unchanged in the light of possible future development, as discussed earlier. Upton St Leonards Parish Council objected to the proposal to combine Upton St Leonards ward with Harescombe and Brookthorpe-with-Whaddon parishes. It instead proposed no change, arguing that future development, to be completed after 2005, would bring the ward closer to the district average (as discussed earlier).

122 Hardwicke Parish Council supported the adoption of the District Council's Scheme 3 as part of our draft recommendations in this area. Haresfield Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer Haresfield parish to an enlarged Hardwicke ward, arguing that this ward would contain a mix of rural and more urban areas. It also proposed, in principle, a uniform pattern of single-member wards, contending that single-member wards "would be more accountable to the electorate and would reduce both cost and voter fatigue at elections".

123 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three and have noted that our draft recommendations have received some support. We have further noted that a large part of the local opposition to our proposals in this area was based on the future housing development in the area and the electorate forecasts. However, as outlined earlier in the report, having discussed these comments with the District Council, we remain content that the electorate forecasts put forward are the best estimates currently available. Furthermore, we have noted that no viable alternatives for wards in this area have been put forward. We therefore remain content that our draft recommendations provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area and propose confirming them as final.

124 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Eastington & Standish, Hardwicke, Severn and Upton St Leonards wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

Cam, Dursley, Nailsworth, Uley and Woodfield wards

125 Cam and Woodfield wards are each represented by two members and together comprise Cam parish, while the three-member Dursley ward contains the parish of the same name. The three-member Nailsworth ward contains the parishes of Horsley and Nailsworth and the single-member Uley ward comprises Nymphsfield, Owlpen and Uley parishes. These five wards are situated to the west of the M5 and north of Cotswold district. The number of electors per councillor is 28 per cent above the district average in Cam ward (25 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in Dursley ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in Nailsworth ward (unchanged in 2005), 20 per cent below in Uley ward (22 per cent in 2005) and 16 per cent below in Woodfield ward (18 per cent in 2005).

126 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Association, Horsley Parish Council, Owlpen Parish Meeting and Uley Parish Council. All three of the District Council's schemes proposed that Dursley and Nailsworth wards remain unchanged. There was also consensus that Cam parish be re-warded to form two new two-member wards, to be named Cam East and Cam West, a proposal originating from the Parish Council. The boundary between the two wards would follow Dursley Road west, then run north along the backs of properties on Springfield and Meadow Vale to Cam Pitch. It would then run west between Hague Avenue and Little Quillet Court, then follow the backs of properties on Larkrise north, then south along the backs of properties on May Evans Close, returning to Cam Pitch, and continuing generally northwards to the parish boundary. Finally in this area, all the District Council's schemes proposed a new single-member Coaley & Uley ward, comprising Coaley parish and Uley ward. Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the district average in Cam East ward (8 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Cam West ward (equal to the average in 2005), 12

per cent above in Coaley & Uley ward (9 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Dursley ward (4 per cent in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Nailsworth ward (1 per cent in 2005).

127 The Labour Party proposed a single-member Coaley & Uley ward and three-member Dursley and Nailsworth wards, with boundaries identical to those proposed by the District Council. It also stated “we wish to support the proposals put forward by Cam parish”.

128 The Conservative Association proposed that Cam be represented by four single-member wards, to be named Cam Central, Cam Lower, Cam Upper and Cam Woodfield. It proposed that Dursley and Nailsworth wards be retained, and that Coaley parish be transferred to Uley ward, forming a new single-member Cotswold Edge ward. Under the Conservative Association’s proposals the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be 7 per cent below the district average in Cam Central ward, 5 per cent below in Cam Lower ward, 10 per cent below in Cam Upper ward, 3 per cent above in Cam Woodfield ward, 9 per cent above in Cotswold Edge ward, 4 per cent below in Dursley ward and 1 per cent below in Nailsworth ward. Existing-year electorates were not supplied.

129 Horsley Parish Council proposed that the existing three-member Nailsworth ward be retained, considering it to provide for good electoral equality while reflecting local communities. Owlpen Parish Meeting objected to the District Council’s consultation proposal to transfer the parish to a new Wotton-under-Edge/North Nibley ward, and stated its preference to remain in Uley ward. Uley Parish Council stated its preference for the District Council’s consultation Scheme 2, specifically that a new Coaley, Nymphsfield & Uley ward be formed. However, it proposed that Owlpen also be included in this ward.

130 We carefully considered the representations received regarding wards in this area. We noted that, as a consequence of representations received, the District Council amended its proposed Coaley, Nymphsfield & Uley ward to include Owlpen parish, as requested by Owlpen Parish Meeting and Uley Parish Council. Given the general consensus for this ward, we adopted the District Council’s Coaley & Uley ward as part of our draft recommendations. We also noted the general support for the retention of Dursley and Nailsworth wards, and given the good electoral equality which would be retained, adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. Regarding Cam parish, we noted that, while the District Council and the Labour Party proposed two two-member wards for Cam, the Conservative Association proposed four single-member wards. Given that the District Council’s proposals are the result of local consultation, involving the parish council, and the Conservative Association did not provide any evidence to show how its proposal better reflects the statutory criteria, we adopted the District Council’s Cam East and Cam West wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor amendment.

131 We noted that by 2005 Cam East would be over-represented by 8 per cent, while Cam West would be equal to the district average. We considered that a further improvement to electoral equality in Cam could be achieved, while providing a clearer boundary between the two wards. We therefore proposed that the area bounded by The Hawthorns and High Furlong be transferred to Cam East ward. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Cam East ward (4 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in Cam West ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 12 per cent above in Coaley & Uley ward (9 per

cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Dursley ward (4 per cent in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Nailsworth ward (1 per cent in 2005).

132 At Stage Three the Labour Party stated it supported four single-member wards for Cam. It also proposed three single-member wards for Dursley, generally reflecting the town's three polling districts, considering this would ensure that all parts of the town received equal representation. Horsley Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Nailsworth ward.

133 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that the Labour Party proposed a single-member ward pattern for both the parish of Cam and Dursley. However, we have not been persuaded by the evidence provided that these would better reflect local communities or provide for more identifiable boundaries. In the absence of any other opposition to our draft recommendations, and given the broad local support that they received during Stage One, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

134 The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Cam East, Cam West, Coaley & Uley, Dursley and Nailsworth wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Berkeley, Hinton, Nibley, Vale and Wotton & Kingswood wards

135 The four single-member wards of Berkeley, Hinton, Nibley and Vale and the three-member Wotton & Kingswood ward are situated in the south-west of the district, and are bordered by the River Severn to the west and South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority to the south. Berkeley ward contains the parishes of Berkeley and Ham & Stone, Hinton ward contains the parish of the same name, Nibley ward consists of the parishes of North Nibley and Stinchcombe, Vale ward contains Alkington and Hamfallow parishes and Wotton & Kingswood ward contains the parishes of Alderley, Hillesley & Tresham, Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge. The number of electors per councillor is 34 per cent above the district average in Berkeley ward (unchanged in 2005), 42 per cent below in Hinton ward (44 per cent in 2005), 36 per cent below in Nibley ward (37 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent below in Vale ward (8 per cent in 2005) and 27 per cent above in Wotton & Kingswood ward (25 per cent in 2005).

136 The District Council proposed three different schemes for this area. It proposed in Scheme 3 that Hinton ward be combined with Berkeley and Hamfallow parishes to form a modified Berkeley ward, to be represented by two members. The District Council proposed an amended Vale ward, comprising Alkington, Ham & Stone and Stinchcombe parishes, which would be represented by a single member, as at present. It noted that its proposed Vale ward would be over-represented, but argued that "the pattern of adjacent parishes does not permit a workable alternative". North Nibley parish would be linked with Wotton-under-Edge parish, forming a new Wotton-under-Edge ward. Finally in this area, the remaining parishes of Wotton & Kingswood ward (Alderley, Hillesley & Tresham and Kingswood parishes) would comprise a new single-member Kingswood ward. The District Council argued that the variance from the average in Kingswood is "small", and the pattern of parishes "does not permit a reasonable alternative".

Under Scheme 3 the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Berkeley ward (3 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Kingswood ward (10 per cent in 2005), 11 per cent below in Vale ward (13 per cent in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Wotton-under-Edge ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

137 In the Administration's scheme the District Council proposed that Hinton ward be combined with Slimbridge parish, as described earlier. It proposed that Ham & Stone and Hamfallow parishes be combined to form a new single-member Ham ward. Berkeley ward would then comprise the parish of the same name only, and would be represented by a single member, as at present. The single-member Vale ward would be modified to comprise the parishes of Alkington, North Nibley and Stinchcombe. The boundaries of Wotton & Kingswood ward would remain unchanged, but it would be renamed Wotton. Under the Administration's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent below the district average in Berkeley ward (12 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Ham ward (11 per cent in 2005), 8 per cent below in Vale ward (11 per cent in 2005) and 18 per cent above in Wotton ward (16 per cent in 2005).

138 Finally, the District Council proposed in Councillor Priest's scheme that Hinton ward be combined with Slimbridge parish, as described earlier. It proposed that Stone parish ward of Ham & Stone parish be transferred from Berkeley ward to Vale ward. The single-member Berkeley and Vale wards would otherwise remain unchanged. North Nibley ward would be combined with Wotton-under-Edge parish, to form a new three-member Wotton ward. The remainder of Wotton & Kingswood ward would be renamed Kingswood, and would be served by a single member. Under Councillor Priest's scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Berkeley ward (2 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Kingswood ward (10 per cent in 2005), 14 per cent above in Vale ward (11 per cent in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Wotton ward (6 per cent in 2005).

139 The Labour Party proposed single-member Berkeley and Vale wards, and a three-member Wotton ward, with boundaries identical to those proposed under the District Council's Administration scheme. Additionally, it proposed that the Administration's Ham ward be named Hamfallow, Ham & Stone.

140 The Conservative Association proposed that Slimbridge parish be transferred to Hinton ward, forming a new Slimbridge & Hinton ward, as described earlier. Vale ward would be extended to include Stone parish ward of Ham & Stone parish. The single-member Berkeley ward would be otherwise unchanged. It proposed that North Nibley ward and Wotton-under-Edge parish be combined to form a new three-member Wotton & Nibley ward. The remainder of Wotton & Kingswood ward would be represented by a single member, and would be named Kingswood. Under the Conservative Association's proposals the number of electors per councillor by 2005 would be 2 per cent below the district average in Berkeley ward, 10 per cent below in Kingswood ward, 11 per cent above in Vale ward and 4 per cent above in Wotton & Nibley ward.

141 We noted that the District Council's Scheme 3 and Councillor Priest schemes, together with the Conservative Association, proposed that the parishes of Alderley, Hillesley & Tresham and Kingswood form a new single-member Kingswood ward, while the District Council's Administration scheme proposed that the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward remain unchanged.

We did not consider that under-representation of 18 per cent could be justified, given that no significant evidence was provided to justify such an imbalance, and therefore we adopted Scheme 3's Kingswood ward as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that the District Council's Scheme 3 provided a good balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria in its proposed Berkeley, Wotton-under-Edge and Vale wards, particularly regarding its proposals for Ham & Stone parish. We considered that proposals to split the parish between two wards would not best reflect local communities, and therefore adopted Berkeley, Wotton-under-Edge and Vale wards, as proposed in Scheme 3, as part of our draft recommendations.

142 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Berkeley ward (3 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Kingswood ward (10 per cent in 2005), 11 per cent below in Vale ward (13 per cent in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Wotton-under-Edge ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

143 At Stage Three the Labour Party stated that it accepted the draft recommendations for Berkeley and Vale wards, having consulted further with local branches. However, it continued to prefer single-member wards over multi-member wards. It stated its support for a Stage Three representation submitted by a resident of South Gloucestershire.

144 Hamfallow Parish Council supported the proposed Berkeley ward, comprising the parishes of Hamfallow, Hinton and Berkeley, although the Parish Council repeated its preference for a ward comprising the parishes of Hamfallow and Hinton only. Hinton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, stating "this reflects the strong community ties between the two parishes". It stated it would object to any proposal to link Hinton parish with Slimbridge parish, noting there is no direct access between the two parishes. A resident of South Gloucestershire supported the draft recommendations, particularly the new Berkeley and Vale wards, arguing that the parishes within share a commonality of interest, although he would have preferred separate Berkeley and Hinton/Hamfallow wards. He also objected to any proposed Hinton & Slimbridge ward, arguing "the only dry-land connection between the two [parishes] is a small bit of shoreline west of the Gloucester-Sharpness canal".

145 Hillesley & Tresham Parish Council objected to the transfer of Wotton-under-Edge parish from Wotton & Kingswood ward, and proposed instead that the existing ward be retained as a four member-ward. Kingswood Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for Kingswood, preferring to retain the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward. Wotton-under-Edge Town Council proposed that the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward be retained as a four-member ward, or that the proposed new Wotton-under-Edge (including North Nibley parish) and Kingswood wards be combined as a four-member ward. The Parish Council also objected to the reduction in council size to 51, further noting that our revised wards would result in a consequential effect on the parliamentary constituency boundary in the area.

146 County Councillor Dr Cordwell, member for Wotton-under-Edge division, objected to the draft recommendations, arguing that the parishes in the existing Wotton & Kingswood ward share community identity and should be kept together. Councillor Cordwell also proposed that North Nibley parish should remain with Stinchcombe parish and be represented by one councillor. He also objected to the reduction in council size.

147 North Nibley Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer the parish to the new Wotton-under-Edge ward, and Stinchcombe Parish Council objected to the proposal to transfer the parish to Vale ward. Both parishes alternatively proposed an enlarged Nibley ward, comprising North Nibley and Stinchcombe parishes, together with Alkington parish. Councillor Powell, member for Nibley ward, broadly supported the recommendations for North Nibley. However, he stated a preference that North Nibley, Stinchcombe and Alkington parishes form a ward, arguing that the parishes preferred this option.

148 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three. We have noted the objections to our proposals in the far south of the district, and have considered the alternative proposals put forward by some Stage Three respondents. However, while we recognise that the combination of our proposed two-member wards of Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood to form a new four-member ward would result in good electoral equality (2 per cent below the district average initially, 3 per cent below by 2005) we do not consider that a four-member ward can be justified in this area, as we are of the view that wards with more than three members could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. We have also examined the alternative proposal that the existing three-member Wotton & Kingswood ward be retained and the remaining southern parishes of Alkington, Ham & Stone, North Nibley and Stinchcombe should form a two-member ward. However, this would result in unacceptable levels of electoral inequality: Wotton & Kingswood ward would vary by 16 per cent (18 per cent by 2005) while Nibley & Vale ward would vary by 36 per cent (37 per cent by 2005). We are not persuaded that such significant inequality is justified.

149 We have also noted the comments regarding the consequential affect of our proposals on the parliamentary constituency boundary in this area. However, as outlined in our *Guidance*, we acknowledge that in devising electoral schemes it may be necessary to recommend ward boundaries that do not coincide with existing parliamentary constituency boundaries, but we are of the view that this is not a sufficient reason to justify modifying our proposals in this area. The new district wards created by the periodic electoral review will form the “building blocks” for future reviews of parliamentary constituency boundaries.

150 Given that there has been some local support for our proposed Berkeley and Vale wards, and in the absence of any viable alternatives being put forward for wards in the remainder of this southern area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final, as we remain of the view that they provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Berkeley, Kingswood, Vale and Wotton-under-Edge wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

151 At Stage One we received seven representations regarding the District Council’s electoral cycle. The District Council proposed “continuing with elections by thirds at present”, but expressed a preference for biennial elections “when such powers become available to principal local authorities such as Stroud District Council”. Horsley Parish Council supported the retention of elections by thirds, stating that “the present system best suits the local electorate”.

152 The Conservative Association proposed whole-council elections every four years, arguing “this system conveys more power onto the electorate”, adding that whole-council elections would “enhance accountability and will improve the incentives for democratic participation”. This was also proposed by Councillor Read, member for Cainscross district ward and Slade parish ward of Stroud parish, who considered it would “increase voter turnout, improve the efficiency of the council and follow the principals [*sic*] of Best Value”.

153 The Labour Party proposed a cycle of biennial elections. This was also proposed by Stroud Town Council and Uley Parish Council.

154 In our draft recommendations we noted that the District Council proposed that elections by thirds be maintained, with a view to moving to biennial elections if such an option became available. A mixed pattern of single, two and three-member wards, as recommended for Stroud, would not preclude a move to biennial elections were such a cycle to become available. However, as stated earlier, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas. Statutorily, we are unable to recommend any election cycle other than whole-council elections or elections by thirds. We considered the proposals for whole-council elections, but in the absence of widespread support for such a change, we proposed no change to the Council’s present system of elections by thirds as part of our draft recommendations.

155 At Stage Three the Labour Party stated that although some Branches preferred whole-council elections others supported biennial elections (as soon as legislation permits), contending that “no-one is happy with elections in thirds”. It argued that elections produced a “slow down in decision making”, which “hinders progress and sensible decision making”.

156 Stroud Town Council, noting that we cannot propose biennial elections at this time, argued that elections by thirds “leads to voter apathy and fatigue and added confusion” and creates inefficient local government. It compared the District Council’s cycle of elections by thirds to the Town Council’s whole-council election cycle, and concluded that “whole-council elections every four years will give people much more reason to vote and create a more effective district council”.

157 Councillor Read, member for Cainscross district ward and Slade parish ward, repeated his Stage One proposal for whole-council elections, considering this cycle would be easier to understand, increase turnout, provide for stronger decision-making and reduce expenditure.

158 Haresfield Parish Council stated it “strongly rejected” a move to whole-council elections every four years, had “no real feeling” about elections by thirds, but expressed support for biennial elections as “a means of helping to combat voter fatigue”.

159 Having considered the Stage Three representations, we have noted that a number of different comments were received regarding the most appropriate electoral cycle for the District. As outlined in our draft recommendations report, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier

areas, and we are unable to recommend biennial elections. On balance, however, we remain of the view that there is insufficient support for a change to whole-council elections and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendation for the retention of elections by thirds as final.

Conclusions

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

- we propose that Stroud town should be represented by six single-member wards, based on the six new parish wards, to be named Central, Farmhill/Paganhill, Slade, Trinity, Uplands and Valley wards;
- we also propose minor boundary amendments to five of the six new parish wards (Central, Slade, Trinity, Uplands and Valley) to improve electoral equality at district level;
- we propose that Pitchcombe parish be retained in Painswick ward.

161 We conclude that, in Stroud:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 55 to 51;
- there should be 30 wards;
- the boundaries of 26 of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

162 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	55	51	55	51
Number of wards	31	30	31	30
Average number of electors per councillor	1,560	1,682	1,616	1,743
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	19	4	17	4
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	0	11	0

163 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 19 to four with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This improved level of electoral equality would continue in 2005, with four wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Stroud District Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 30 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

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

165 Cam Parish Council is currently served by 15 councillors representing the three parish wards of Lower, Upper and Woodfield, which are represented by six, three and six councillors respectively.

166 At Stage One the District Council proposed that Cam parish be served by two district wards and four parish wards: Cam East district ward would comprise the parish wards of Central and Upper, while Cam West district ward would comprise the parish wards of Lower and Woodfield. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed.

167 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Cam parish, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Cam East and Cam West district wards, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish. In addition we proposed that Central, Lower, Upper and Woodfield parish wards each be represented by four councillors, a total of 16, an increase of one. We stated that we would welcome comments on this distribution at Stage Three.

168 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for warding Cam parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Cam Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing four wards: Central, Lower, Upper and Woodfield, each returning four councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

169 Minchinhampton Parish Council is currently served by 15 councillors representing the four parish wards of Amberley, Brimscombe, North and South, which are represented by two, three, six and four councillors respectively.

170 At Stage Three Box Village Society proposed that Box, Scar Hill and Hampton Green should form a new single-member parish ward, to improve representation on Minchinhampton Parish Council. Minchinhampton Parish Council supported Box Village Society's proposal for a new Box parish ward of Minchinhampton parish, and proposed that South parish ward be served by three parish councillors, one fewer than at present, to allow for one member for the new Box parish ward, currently part of South parish ward. This would allow the current council size of 15 to be maintained. In the light of this local consensus, we are putting forward this revised parish warding as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation

Minchinhampton Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Amberley (represented by two councillors), Box (one), Brimscombe (three), North (six) and South (three). The parish wards of Amberley, Brimscombe and North should retain their existing boundaries. The new boundary between the two parish wards of South and Box is illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

171 Randwick Parish Council is currently served by nine councillors and the parish is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Randwick parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the settlement nearest to Cainscross parish, to be named Lower Westrip ward, and the other covering the remainder of the parish, to be named Randwick ward. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed.

172 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Randwick parish, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Cainscross and Over Stroud wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish. In addition we proposed that Lower Westrip parish ward be represented by five councillors and Randwick parish ward be represented by four councillors, a total of nine. We stated that we would welcome comments on this distribution at Stage Three.

173 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of confirmation of our

proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for warding Randwick parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Randwick Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Lower Westrip and Randwick, represented by five and four councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

174 Rodborough Parish Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing the three parish wards of North, South and West, which are each represented by four councillors.

175 The District Council proposed at Stage One that Rodborough parish be served by two district wards and four parish wards: Rodborough district ward would comprise the parish wards of North, South and West, while Butterow parish ward would form part of Thrupp district ward. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed.

176 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Rodborough parish, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Rodborough and Thrupp wards, we adopted the District Council’s proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish. In addition we proposed that Butterow parish ward be represented by two councillors, North parish ward be represented by four parish councillors, South parish ward be represented by one parish councillor and West parish ward be represented by five parish councillors, a total of 12. We stated that we would welcome comments on this distribution at Stage Three.

177 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council. Councillor Mrs Smith opposed our proposed district warding in this area. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for warding Rodborough parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Rodborough Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Butterow (returning two councillors), North (four), South (one) and West (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A.

178 Stroud Town Council is currently served by 17 councillors representing the seven parish wards of Central (represented by two councillors), Farmhill (two), Paganhill (two), Slade (four), Trinity (three), Uplands (two) and Valley (two).

179 At Stage One the District Council proposed that Stroud parish be served by three district wards and six parish wards: Stroud East district ward, comprising the parish wards of Slade and Trinity, Stroud North district ward, comprising the parish wards of Uplands and Valley, and Stroud West district ward, comprising the parish wards of Central and Farmhill/Paganhill.

180 This warding pattern was also proposed by Stroud Town Council and Councillor Read, both additionally proposing that each parish ward be represented by three parish councillors, resulting in a net increase by one to 18.

181 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Stroud parish, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Stroud East, Stroud North and Stroud West wards, we adopted the District Council’s proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish.

182 In response to our draft recommendations Stroud Constituency Labour Party, Stroud Town Council, Stroud Branch Labour Party and Councillor Read supported our draft recommendations for parish wards in Stroud, but proposed that Stroud town should be served by six single-member district wards, coterminous with the parish wards as proposed in our draft recommendations.

183 As detailed earlier, we are persuaded that coterminous parish and district wards would better reflect local communities in this area and therefore propose adopting six single-member district wards. However, noting that electoral equality could be further improved, we are proposing minor boundary modifications in four areas, affecting five wards, with corresponding changes to parish ward boundaries to reflect these modifications.

Final Recommendation
Stroud Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, one more than at present, representing six wards: Central, Farmhill/Paganhill, Slade, Trinity, Uplands and Valley, each represented by three councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in this area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

184 The parish of Thrupp is currently served by nine councillors and the parish is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed at Stage One that Thrupp parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering that part of the parish east of Toadsmoor Road, to be named Bourne ward, and the other covering the remainder of the parish, to be named Thrupp ward. The number and distribution of parish councillors was not proposed.

185 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Thrupp parish, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Chalford and Thrupp wards, we adopted the District Council’s proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish. In addition we proposed that Bourne parish ward be represented by one councillor and

Thrupp parish ward be represented by eight councillors, a total of nine. We stated that we would welcome comments on this distribution at Stage Three.

186 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council. Councillor Mrs Smith “accepted” the transfer of the Bourne area into the proposed Chalford district ward. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for warding Thrupp parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Thrupp Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Bourne, to be represented by one councillor, and Thrupp, to be represented by eight councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in this area, as illustrated and named on Map A6 in Appendix A.

187 The parish of Dursley is currently divided into three parish wards, Central, Highfields and Kingshill, which are represented by five, seven and five councillors respectively. In agreement with the District Council, Dursley Town Council proposed that Central and Highfields parish wards should each be served by six councillors. This would not alter the total number of parish councillors.

188 Our proposed district warding arrangements would not result in change to this area and we were content to put forward the Town Council’s proposal for consultation as part of our draft recommendations.

189 At Stage Three no further comments were received from the District Council or the Town Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the electoral arrangements for Dursley parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Dursley Town Council should comprise 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central (returning six councillors), Highfields (six) and Kingshill (five).

190 The District Council, in response to a request from Hardwicke Parish Council, proposed a change to the electoral cycle of the Parish Council, so that ordinary parish council elections would be held in the same year as the ordinary election for a district councillor representing the parish.

191 We carefully considered the District Council’s request to change the parish council’s electoral cycle so that parish elections are held in either of the two years when Hardwicke parish

councillors are elected. We considered the request to be reasonable, and therefore proposed that the parish council elections should be held at the same time as those for the District Council.

192 In response to our draft recommendations Hardwicke Parish Council supported our draft recommendations to align the Parish Council’s electoral cycle with the remainder of the district. In the absence of any comments to the contrary, we are confirming our proposals for electoral cycles as final.

<p>Final Recommendation Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years and should be held at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.</p>
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Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Stroud

6 NEXT STEPS

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

194 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 6 August 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Stroud: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Stroud 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–A6 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Cam parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Minchinhampton parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Randwick parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Rodborough parish.

Map A6 illustrates the proposed warding of Thrupp parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Stroud town.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Stroud: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Cam Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Minchinhampton Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Randwick Parish

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Rodborough Parish

Map A6: Proposed Warding of Thrupp Parish

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Stroud

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

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Over Stroud	Painswick ward (part – Pitchcombe parish); Randwick ward (part – the proposed Randwick parish ward of Randwick parish); Whiteshill ward (Whiteshill & Ruscombe parish)
Painswick	Painswick ward (part – Cranham, Miserden and Painswick parishes)
Stroud East	Central ward (part – part of Central parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of Slade and Trinity parish wards of Stroud parish)
Stroud North	Trinity ward (part – part of Slade parish ward of Stroud parish); Uplands ward (part – parts of Uplands and Valley parish wards of Stroud parish)
Stroud West	Central ward (part – part of Central parish ward of Stroud parish); Trinity ward (part – part of Trinity parish ward of Stroud parish); Uplands ward (part – Farmhill and Paganhill parish wards and parts of Uplands and Valley parish wards of Stroud parish)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Over Stroud	1	1,693	1,693	1	1,706	1,706	-2
Painswick	2	3,269	1,635	-3	3,371	1,686	-3
Stroud East	2	3,334	1,667	-1	3,366	1,683	-3
Stroud North	2	3,358	1,679	0	3,445	1,723	-1
Stroud West	2	3,194	1,597	-5	3,407	1,704	-2

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stroud 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.

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table C1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

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