

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for South Staffordshire

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

*October 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of South Staffordshire.

Members of the Commission are:

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Peter Brokenshire  
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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the Penkridge area is inserted inside the back cover of this report.





## Local Government Commission for England

10 October 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 28 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of South Staffordshire under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 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 paragraph 91) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in South Staffordshire.

We recommend that South Staffordshire District Council should be served by 49 councillors representing 25 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 whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.

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 South Staffordshire on 28 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 2000, 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 South Staffordshire:

- **in 16 of the 26 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve significantly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 14 wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 91-92) are that:

- **South Staffordshire District Council should have 49 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, instead of 26 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified and eight wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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 23 of the proposed 25 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 two wards, Kinver and Pattingham & Patshull, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Bilbrook, Penkridge, Perton and Wombourne;**
- **revised warding arrangements for the parishes of Cheslyn Hay, Codsall, Kinver and Great Wyrley;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Huntington Parish Council;**
- **a redistribution of councillors for the parish of Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston.**

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 21 November 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

|    | <b>Ward name</b>                      | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas</b>   | <b>Map reference</b> |
|----|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 1  | Bilbrook                              | 2                            | Bilbrook ward (part – the proposed East and West parish wards of Bilbrook parish)  | Maps 2 and A4        |
| 2  | Brewood & Coven                       | 3                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Brewood & Coven ward (the Brewood, Coven and Coven Heath parish wards of Brewood parish)  | Map 2                |
| 3  | Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon           | 2                            | Cheslyn Hay ward (part – the Littlewood parish ward and Pinfold parish ward (part) of Cheslyn Hay parish); Shareshill ward (part – Saredon parish)   | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 4  | Cheslyn Hay South                     | 2                            | Cheslyn Hay ward (part – the South parish ward and proposed Pinfold parish ward of Cheslyn Hay parish)   | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 5  | Codsall North                         | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> (the North parish ward of Codsall parish)   | Map 2                |
| 6  | Codsall South                         | 2                            | Codsall South ward (the South parish ward of Codsall parish); Bilbrook ward (part – the proposed Lane Green parish ward of Bilbrook parish)  | Maps 2 and A4        |
| 7  | Essington                             | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Essington ward (the parish of Essington)  | Map 2                |
| 8  | Featherstone & Shareshill             | 2                            | Featherstone ward (the parishes of Featherstone and Hilton); Shareshill ward (part – the parish of Shareshill)   | Map 2                |
| 9  | Great Wyrley Landywood                | 2                            | Great Landywood ward (part – the proposed Landywood parish ward of Great Wyrley parish)  | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 10 | Great Wyrley Town                     | 3                            | Great Wyrley Town ward (the proposed North and Town parish wards of Great Wyrley parish)   | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 11 | Himley & Swindon                      | 1                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Swindon ward (the parishes of Himley and Swindon)   | Map 2                |
| 12 | Huntington & Hatherton                | 2                            | Huntington ward (the parish of Huntington); Shareshill ward (part–the parish of Hatherton)   | Map 2                |
| 13 | Kinver                                | 3                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Kinver ward (the parish ward of Kinver)   | Maps 2 and A6        |
| 14 | Pattingham & Patshull                 | 1                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Pattingham & Patshull ward (the parish of Pattingham & Patshull)  | Map 2                |
| 15 | Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell | 2                            | Acton Trussell ward (the parishes of Acton Trussell & Bednall, Coppenhall, Dunston and Teddesley Hay); Penkridge North East ward (the proposed North East parish ward of Penkridge parish) | Large map            |

|    | <b>Ward name</b>                    | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas</b>  | <b>Map reference</b> |
|----|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 16 | Penkridge South East                | 2                            | Penkridge South East ward (the proposed South East parish ward of Penkridge parish)   | Large map            |
| 17 | Penkridge West                      | 1                            | Penkridge West ward (the proposed West parish ward of Penkridge parish)   | Large map            |
| 18 | Perton Dippons                      | 1                            | Perton Dippons ward (part – the proposed Kingswood & Trescott parish ward of Perton parish)   | Maps 2 and A3        |
| 19 | Perton East                         | 1                            | Perton Dippons ward (part – the proposed Dippons parish ward of Perton parish)  | Maps 2 and A3        |
| 20 | Perton Lakeside                     | 3                            | Perton Central ward (the proposed Lakeside ward of Perton parish)   | Maps 2 and A3        |
| 21 | Trysull & Seisdon                   | 1                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Trysull & Seisdon ward (the parishes of Bobbington, Enville and Trysull & Seisdon)   | Map 2                |
| 22 | Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> Bishopswood & Lapley ward (the parishes of Blymhill & Weston-Under-Lizard and Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston, and the Bishopswood parish ward of Brewood parish) | Map 2                |
| 23 | Wombourne North & Lower Penn        | 3                            | Lower Penn ward (the parish of Lower Penn); Wombourne North ward (the North parish ward of Wombourne parish)  | Map 2                |
| 24 | Wombourne South East                | 2                            | Wombourne South East ward (the proposed South East parish ward of Wombourne parish)   | Maps 2 and A2        |
| 25 | Wombourne South West                | 2                            | Wombourne South West ward (the proposed South West ward of Wombourne parish)  | Maps 2 and A2        |

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Staffordshire

| Ward name                                | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Bilbrook                               | 2                     | 3,118             | 1,559                             | -9                      | 3,253             | 1,627                             | -10                     |
| 2 Brewood & Coven                        | 3                     | 5,250             | 1,750                             | 3                       | 5,750             | 1,917                             | 6                       |
| 3 Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon            | 2                     | 3,065             | 1,533                             | -10                     | 3,459             | 1,730                             | -4                      |
| 4 Cheslyn Hay South                      | 2                     | 3,283             | 1,642                             | -4                      | 3,400             | 1,700                             | -6                      |
| 5 Codsall North                          | 2                     | 3,414             | 1,707                             | 0                       | 3,855             | 1,928                             | 7                       |
| 6 Codsall South                          | 2                     | 3,311             | 1,656                             | -3                      | 3,373             | 1,687                             | -7                      |
| 7 Essington                              | 2                     | 3,768             | 1,884                             | 11                      | 3,847             | 1,924                             | 6                       |
| 8 Featherstone & Shareshill              | 2                     | 3,616             | 1,808                             | 6                       | 3,911             | 1,956                             | 8                       |
| 9 Great Wyrley Landywood                 | 2                     | 3,722             | 1,861                             | 9                       | 3,738             | 1,869                             | 3                       |
| 10 Great Wyrley Town                     | 3                     | 5,016             | 1,672                             | -2                      | 5,296             | 1,765                             | -2                      |
| 11 Himley & Swindon                      | 1                     | 1,709             | 1,709                             | 0                       | 1,806             | 1,806                             | 0                       |
| 12 Huntington & Hatherton                | 2                     | 3,170             | 1,585                             | -7                      | 3,489             | 1,745                             | -3                      |
| 13 Kinver                                | 3                     | 5,673             | 1,891                             | 11                      | 6,016             | 2,005                             | 11                      |
| 14 Pattingham & Patshull                 | 1                     | 1,862             | 1,862                             | 9                       | 2,052             | 2,052                             | 14                      |
| 15 Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell | 2                     | 3,130             | 1,565                             | -8                      | 3,418             | 1,709                             | -5                      |
| 16 Penkridge South East                  | 2                     | 3,208             | 1,604                             | -6                      | 3,500             | 1,750                             | -3                      |
| 17 Penkridge West                        | 1                     | 1,771             | 1,771                             | 4                       | 1,833             | 1,833                             | 1                       |
| 18 Perton Dippons                        | 1                     | 1,555             | 1,555                             | -9                      | 1,627             | 1,627                             | -10                     |
| 19 Perton East                           | 1                     | 1,702             | 1,702                             | 0                       | 1,774             | 1,774                             | -2                      |
| 20 Perton Lakeside                       | 3                     | 5,177             | 1,726                             | 1                       | 5,282             | 1,761                             | -3                      |
| 21 Trysull & Seisdon                     | 1                     | 1,705             | 1,705                             | 0                       | 1,810             | 1,810                             | 0                       |

| Ward name                               | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 22 Wheaton Aston<br>Bishopwood & Lapley | 2                     | 3,354             | 1,677                             | -2                      | 3,544             | 1,772                             | -2                      |
| 23 Wombourne North<br>& Lower Penn      | 3                     | 4,971             | 1,657                             | -3                      | 5,348             | 1,783                             | -1                      |
| 24 Wombourne South<br>East              | 2                     | 3,383             | 1,692                             | -1                      | 3,507             | 1,754                             | -3                      |
| 25 Wombourne South<br>West              | 2                     | 3,606             | 1,803                             | 6                       | 3,646             | 1,823                             | 1                       |
| <b>Totals</b>                           | <b>49</b>             | <b>83,521</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                | <b>88,534</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                |
| <b>Averages</b>                         | <b>-</b>              | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,705</b>                      | <b>-</b>                | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,807</b>                      | <b>-</b>                |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Staffordshire District Council.

Note: 1. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Note: 2. There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data for 1999 shown in figures 2 and 3.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of South Staffordshire. We have now reviewed eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent 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 South Staffordshire. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1987 (Report No. 543). The electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council were last reviewed in July 1980 (Report No. 386). We intend reviewing 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 councils in the district.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), 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 our 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.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Staffordshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. 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*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to South Staffordshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Staffordshire*, and ended on 3 July 2000. 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

13 The district of South Staffordshire is situated to the west and north of the West Midlands conurbation and covers an area of approximately 50,000 hectares. The district stretches from the boundary with Stafford in the north to Worcestershire in the south. Much of the district comprises agricultural land and covers a large part of the West Midlands Green Belt. The main areas of residential development include Codsall, Great Wyrley, Penkridge and Wombourne. The district is entirely parished and contains 29 parishes which form 27 parish councils.

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 83,548 (February 1999). The Council presently has 50 members who are elected from 26 wards. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 12 are each represented by two councillors and eight are single-member wards. The whole council is elected every four years.

16 The last periodic electoral review took place in 1987 since when modifications have been made to the district's boundaries with the neighbouring boroughs of Wolverhampton and Dudley. Since the review in 1987, the electorate of the Huntington, Perton and Cheslyn Hay areas has increased, while the electorate for the Lower Penn area has declined, due to boundary changes.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,671 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,771 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Lower Penn ward where the councillor represents 51 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in South Staffordshire*

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

|    | <b>Ward name</b>       | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Electorate (1999)</b> | <b>Number of electors per councillor</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> | <b>Electorate (2004)</b> | <b>Number of electors per councillor</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> |
|----|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Acton Trussell         | 1                            | 1,360                    | 1,360                                    | -19                            | 1,500                    | 1,500                                    | -15                            |
| 2  | Bilbrook               | 2                            | 3,514                    | 1,757                                    | 5                              | 3,648                    | 1,824                                    | 3                              |
| 3  | Bishopswood & Lapley   | 2                            | 3,354                    | 1,677                                    | 0                              | 3,544                    | 1,772                                    | 0                              |
| 4  | Brewood & Coven        | 3                            | 5,250                    | 1,750                                    | 5                              | 5,750                    | 1,917                                    | 8                              |
| 5  | Cheslyn Hay            | 3                            | 5,772                    | 1,924                                    | 15                             | 6,219                    | 2,073                                    | 17                             |
| 6  | Codsall North          | 2                            | 3,414                    | 1,707                                    | 2                              | 3,855                    | 1,928                                    | 9                              |
| 7  | Codsall South          | 2                            | 2,920                    | 1,460                                    | -13                            | 2,978                    | 1,489                                    | -16                            |
| 8  | Essington              | 2                            | 3,768                    | 1,884                                    | 13                             | 3,847                    | 1,924                                    | 9                              |
| 9  | Featherstone           | 2                            | 2,991                    | 1,496                                    | -11                            | 3,221                    | 1,611                                    | -9                             |
| 10 | Great Wyrley Landywood | 2                            | 3,793                    | 1,897                                    | 13                             | 3,810                    | 1,905                                    | 8                              |
| 11 | Great Wyrley Town      | 3                            | 4,945                    | 1,648                                    | -1                             | 5,224                    | 1,741                                    | -2                             |
| 12 | Huntington             | 2                            | 2,704                    | 1,352                                    | -19                            | 2,960                    | 1,480                                    | -16                            |
| 13 | Kinver                 | 3                            | 5,673                    | 1,891                                    | 13                             | 6,016                    | 2,005                                    | 13                             |
| 14 | Lower Penn             | 1                            | 825                      | 825                                      | -51                            | 837                      | 837                                      | -53                            |
| 15 | Pattingham & Patshull  | 1                            | 1,862                    | 1,862                                    | 11                             | 2,052                    | 2,052                                    | 16                             |
| 16 | Penkridge North East   | 1                            | 1,675                    | 1,675                                    | 0                              | 1,823                    | 1,823                                    | 3                              |
| 17 | Penkridge South East   | 2                            | 3,655                    | 1,828                                    | 9                              | 3,940                    | 1,970                                    | 11                             |
| 18 | Penkridge West         | 1                            | 1,419                    | 1,419                                    | -15                            | 1,488                    | 1,488                                    | -16                            |
| 19 | Perton Central         | 3                            | 4,303                    | 1,434                                    | -14                            | 4,418                    | 1,473                                    | -17                            |
| 20 | Perton Dippons         | 2                            | 4,132                    | 2,066                                    | 24                             | 4,265                    | 2,133                                    | 20                             |

|    | <b>Ward name</b>     | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Electorate (1999)</b> | <b>Number of electors per councillor</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> | <b>Electorate (2004)</b> | <b>Number of electors per councillor</b> | <b>Variance from average %</b> |
|----|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 21 | Shareshill           | 1                            | 1,667                    | 1,667                                    | 0                              | 1,859                    | 1,859                                    | 5                              |
| 22 | Swindon              | 1                            | 1,709                    | 1,709                                    | 2                              | 1,806                    | 1,806                                    | 2                              |
| 23 | Trysull & Seisdon    | 1                            | 1,705                    | 1,705                                    | 2                              | 1,810                    | 1,810                                    | 2                              |
| 24 | Wombourne North      | 2                            | 4,146                    | 2,073                                    | 24                             | 4,511                    | 2,256                                    | 27                             |
| 25 | Wombourne South East | 2                            | 2,684                    | 1,342                                    | -20                            | 2,802                    | 1,401                                    | -21                            |
| 26 | Wombourne South West | 3                            | 4,308                    | 1,436                                    | -14                            | 4,351                    | 1,450                                    | -18                            |
|    | <b>Totals</b>        | <b>50</b>                    | <b>83,548</b>            | –  | –                              | <b>88,534</b>            | –  | –                              |
|    | <b>Averages</b>      | –                            | –                        | <b>1,671</b>                             | –                              | –                        | <b>1,771</b>                             | –                              |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Staffordshire District Council.

Notes: 1. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Lower Penn ward were relatively over-represented by 51 per cent, while electors in Perton Dippons ward were relatively under-represented by 24 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2. There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data for 1999 shown in Figures 2 and 3.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received eight representations, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, three parish councils and four local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence made available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Staffordshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of single-, two- and three-member wards throughout the district. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas, and made several boundary modifications to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries, better reflect the identities and interests of local communities and achieve improved levels of electoral equality. We proposed that:

- South Staffordshire District Council should be served by 49 councillors, compared with the current 50, representing 25 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, while seven wards should retain their existing boundaries.

Recommendations were also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements which provided for:

- revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Bilbrook, Penkridge, Perton and Wombourne;
- revised warding arrangements for the parishes of Cheslyn Hay, Codsall, Kinver and Great Wyrley;
- an increase in the number of councillors serving Huntington Parish Council;
- a redistribution of councillors for the parish of Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

South Staffordshire District Council should comprise 49 councillors, serving 25 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 25 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to remain constant over the next five years with two wards, Kinver and Pattingham & Patshull, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 35 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of South Staffordshire District Council and the Commission.

### **South Staffordshire District Council**

22 The District Council supported the majority of our draft recommendations but proposed a minor boundary amendment between Wombourne South West and Wombourne South East wards. It also proposed that Perton Central ward be renamed Perton Lakeside ward and that Bishopswood & Lapley ward be renamed Bishopswood, Lapley & Wheaton Aston ward.

### **Parish Councils**

23 We received representations direct from six parish councils and from Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association. Himley and Kinver Parish Councils supported our draft recommendations. Codsall Parish Council objected to our proposals in their area and proposed that Codsall Wood remain part of Codsall North ward. Great Wyrley Parish Council objected to our proposals for Great Wyrley Town and Great Wyrley Landywood wards and proposed a number of boundary amendments that would retain the whole of Bentons Lane within Great Wyrley Landywood ward. Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council proposed that Bishopswood & Lapley ward be renamed Wheaton Aston with Bishopswood & Lapley ward and objected to our proposed allocation of parish councillors within the parish. The Parish Council of Lower Penn objected to our proposals for their area and stated that there had been local concern about future boundary change proposals that could result in rural areas being transferred to Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council. Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association made no specific comment with regard to South Staffordshire district but stated that our recommendations regarding the Staffordshire districts seemed to "balance the need for electoral equality with community identity".

### **Other Representations**

24 A further 27 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from three district councillors, three parish councillors, 20 residents and a joint submission from two district councillors regarding Great Wyrley Town and Great Wyrley Landywood wards.

25 Councillor Cartwright (district councillor for Penkrige West ward) objected to our proposals to move Gailey parish ward into Penkrige South East ward and to moving part of Vale Gardens into Penkrige West ward. Councillor Reade (district councillor for Lower Penn) supported our draft recommendations for Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward. Councillor Hood (district councillor for Shareshill ward) objected to our proposals for the parishes of Featherstone, Huntington and Shareshill, proposing that the current arrangements be maintained. Councillors Moran and Wood (district councillors for Landywood ward) submitted a joint

proposal for a boundary amendment between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards.

26 Parish Councillor Carter proposed that electors be transferred from Wombourne North ward to the current Lower Penn ward rather than combining the two wards. Parish Councillor Punter supported our parishing arrangements for Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston parish council but proposed that Bishopswood & Lapley ward be renamed Wheaton Aston ward. Parish Councillor Raven fully supported our draft recommendations.

27 Three local residents commented on our draft recommendations for the proposed Bishopswood & Lapley ward. One resident supported our proposed parishing arrangements for the area, while the other two residents proposed that the name Wheaton Aston be included in the ward name.

28 We received 17 representations from local residents concerning our proposed Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward. Three residents stated that they had no objections in principle to uniting Lower Penn and Wombourne North in a single ward, and six residents objected to our proposals, while all of the respondents expressed concern that future boundary changes could result in rural areas being transferred to Wolverhampton MBC.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for South Staffordshire 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”.

30 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.

31 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.

32 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 also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

33 At Stage One, the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 6 per cent from 83,548 to 88,534 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Brewood & Coven, Cheslyn Hay and Codsall North wards. The Council has 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.

34 At Stage Three Codsall Parish Council argued that our proposals for Codsall North ward assumed the development of a large residential site and that there were “no known plans” for any such development. The District Council confirmed that the area in Codsall North ward was “white land”, that is eligible for development, and would be likely to be used for house building “which would accommodate for this growth”. Councillor Cartwright stated that the next Structure

Plan was likely to envisage that a further 400 to 500 homes would be built in Penkrige West ward. The District Council again confirmed that their projected figures were the best estimate that could be made. We therefore remain satisfied that the electorate projections which it put forward at Stage One are the best estimates currently available.

## **Council Size**

35 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 look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

36 South Staffordshire District Council is at present served by 50 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a decrease in council size from 50 to 49. This proposal was supported by Kinver and Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston parish councils.

37 In our draft recommendations report, we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, and concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 49 members.

38 At Stage Three we received no specific comments regarding council size. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 49 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council and the representations that it received during its consultation exercise. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

40 The Council's proposals provided for a council size of 49 members, one fewer than at present, serving 24 wards, compared to the existing 26. Under the District Council's proposals, 10 wards would remain unchanged, with one having a proposed new ward name. The Council's proposals would result in the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in 20 of the proposed 24 wards. This level of electoral equality was projected to improve further, with all but two of the proposed 24 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average by 2004.

41 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the District Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. We were content to base our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme, in the light of the local support that it received during local consultations prior to its submission to us during Stage One. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we considered changes to ward boundaries

in the Perton and Penkridge areas in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities.

42 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed concern that our proposals for the current Lower Penn ward could lead to future boundary changes whereby rural areas would be absorbed by Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council.

43 However, this does not fall within the remit of this review. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1992, this Commission has only the power to undertake periodic electoral reviews of the electoral arrangements of local authority areas. The Commission may only undertake a review of district administrative boundaries if it is directed to do so by the Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions. There are currently no plans for any such reviews to be conducted.

44 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. As a consequence, we are proposing three minor boundary amendments in Codsall, Great Wyrley and Wombourne wards and are proposing that Perton Central and Bishopswood & Lapley wards be renamed Perton Lakeside and Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley wards respectively. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Kinver, Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon wards;
- (b) Lower Penn, Wombourne North, Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards;
- (c) Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Central and Perton Dippons wards;
- (d) Bilbrook, Bishopswood & Lapley, Brewood & Coven, Codsall North and Codsall South wards;
- (e) Featherstone, Huntington and Shareshill wards;
- (f) Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards;
- (g) Acton Trussell, Penkridge North East, Penkridge South East and Penkridge West wards.

45 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.

### **Kinver, Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon wards**

46 The existing wards of Kinver, Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon are situated in the south of the district, adjoining the counties of Shropshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands. Kinver ward is currently represented by three councillors and is coterminous with Kinver parish. Swindon ward is currently represented by a single councillor and contains the parishes of Himley and Swindon. Trysull & Seisdon ward, which is also currently represented by a single councillor, comprises the parishes of Bobbington, Enville and Trysull & Seisdon. Under current arrangements, Kinver, Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon wards contain 13 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor respectively than the district average. This level of electoral equality is predicted to remain unchanged over the next five years.

47 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for the wards of Kinver, Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon but proposed that Swindon ward be renamed Himley & Swindon to better reflect its constituent parish councils. The District Council recognised that, under its proposals, Kinver ward would continue to have an electoral variance in excess of 10 per cent from the district average. However, it argued that there is strong justification for retaining the existing ward as “Kinver is a self-contained village in the extreme south of the district bordering the West Midlands Region and Worcestershire. It has no strong ties with the two bordering district wards of Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon”.

48 We received one other representation in relation to this area, from Kinver Parish Council, which supported the District Council’s proposals.

49 We concluded that the District Council’s proposals for Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon wards provided for reasonable levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and were content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. We also proposed, for the purpose of consultation, to endorse the proposed name of Himley & Swindon, but requested further evidence on this proposed ward name at Stage Three. In relation to Kinver ward, we noted the limitations on the options to improve electoral equality due to the area’s geographical location and concluded that there was exceptional justification for a variance of 11 per cent from the district average in this case. We therefore proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Kinver as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Himley & Swindon and Trysull & Seisdon wards would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in 2004. Kinver ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2004.

50 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposal that Swindon ward be renamed Himley & Swindon ward, stating further that there was local support for this change. Himley Parish Council also supported our proposals in Himley & Swindon ward. Kinver Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for their area. In the light of this support we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Himley & Swindon, Kinver and Trysull & Seisdon wards as final.

### **Lower Penn, Wombourne North, Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards**

51 The existing wards of Lower Penn, Wombourne North, Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West are situated in the south-east of the district, adjoining the West Midlands. Lower Penn is currently represented by a single councillor. Wombourne North and Wombourne South East are each represented by two councillors and Wombourne South West ward is represented by three councillors. Lower Penn ward comprises Lower Penn parish. Wombourne North ward comprises North parish ward of Wombourne parish. Wombourne South East ward comprises South East parish ward of Wombourne parish, and Wombourne South West ward comprises South West parish ward of Wombourne parish. Under the current arrangements, there is a relatively poor level of electoral equality with Lower Penn ward containing 51 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. This is largely due to the modification of the district boundary with Wolverhampton which occurred in the early 1990s. Wombourne South

East and Wombourne South West wards contain 20 per cent and 14 per cent fewer electors than the district average respectively, while Wombourne North ward contains 24 per cent more than the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years.

52 At Stage One the District Council proposed combining Lower Penn ward with Wombourne North ward to form a new three-member Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward. It also proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards, transferring Park Avenue, Wombourne Park, Sytch Lane and part of Common Road from Wombourne South West ward to Wombourne South East ward. These revised wards would each be represented by two councillors. We noted that the District Council's proposals for this area would provide for improved levels of electoral equality, and considered that they reflected community ties. We considered that, largely as a result of boundary changes with Wolverhampton, Lower Penn ward had a high level of electoral inequality which should be addressed as part of this review. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposals for this area as our draft recommendations, subject to a minor boundary modification between the proposed Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards in order to improve electoral equality. We proposed that the boundary between the two wards should further follow the rear of properties on Common Road, which would result in the whole of Common Road being contained in Wombourne South East ward.

53 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Wombourne North & Lower Penn and Wombourne South East wards would contain 3 per cent and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Wombourne South West ward would contain 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally improve over the next five years. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

54 In response to our draft recommendations the District Council proposed that the boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards to the rear of Common Lane should include the properties on Wesley Close and the properties numbered 85 to 111 on Common Lane, including the flats numbered 1 to 3 at the corner with Giggety Lane. It reiterated its preference for its Stage One proposal for the boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards to run along the centre of Common Lane, but said that it did not oppose our draft recommendations for those wards.

55 The Parish Council of Lower Penn stated that it accepted the "principle of these recommendations" but objected to our proposed Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward, arguing that Lower Penn should not "cease to exist as an individual ward". They further argued that there had been concern in the community that future boundary change proposals could result in rural areas being transferred to Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council. District Councillor Reade stated that the merger of Lower Penn and Wombourne North wards was the "most convenient resolve to the inequalities that exist". Parish Councillor Carter proposed that "sufficient electors currently living in Wombourne North" be transferred to the current Lower Penn ward but did not provide detailed proposals. We received a further 17 representations from local residents concerning Wombourne North & Lower Penn ward, of which three local residents stated that they had no objection in principle to our proposals and six opposed them. All 17 respondents expressed concern about future external district boundary arrangements.

56 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received and have decided to largely confirm our draft recommendations as final, albeit subject to the minor modification to the boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards proposed by the District Council. We consider that running the boundary behind the properties on Common Lane and including the properties on Wesley Close as far as Kingswinford Railway Walk, would better reflect the local community while slightly improving the electoral equality of both wards. Under our final recommendations Wombourne South East, Wombourne South West and Wombourne North & Lower Penn wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer in 2004).

### **Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Central and Perton Dippons wards**

57 The existing wards of Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Central and Perton Dippons are situated in the centre of the district. Pattingham & Patshull ward is currently represented by a single councillor, Perton Central ward is represented by three councillors and Perton Dippons ward is represented by two councillors. Pattingham & Patshull ward is coterminous with Pattingham & Patshull parish. Perton Central ward comprises Lakeside parish ward of Perton parish, with Dippons and Kingswood & Trescott parish wards of Perton parish forming Perton Dippons ward. Under current arrangements, Pattingham & Patshull and Perton Dippons wards contain 11 per cent and 24 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Perton Central ward contains 14 per cent fewer than the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years.

58 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Pattingham & Patshull ward, arguing that it is geographically isolated from the rest of the district and contains two villages with strong community links. The District Council proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Perton Central and Perton Dippons ward, resulting in the transfer of the area bounded by The Parkway from Perton Dippons ward to Perton Central ward. This would result in a revised three-member Perton Central ward and a two-member Perton Dippons ward.

59 We concluded that the District Council's proposals for this area went some way towards addressing the high levels of electoral inequality which currently exist. We noted the specific geographical circumstances of Pattingham & Patshull ward, being a sparsely populated rural area surrounded by the county of Shropshire on three sides. It also has little affinity with the neighbouring Perton area, increasing the limitations on improving electoral equality without adversely affecting community identities and interests. On balance, therefore, we were content to endorse the District Council's proposals for Pattingham & Patshull ward. We were also content to put forward the District Council's proposed Perton Central ward as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that the proposed ward would have strong, clear boundaries and would have a reasonable level of electoral equality. We proposed, however, dividing the District Council's proposed Perton Dippons ward, in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities. We proposed creating a new single-member Perton East ward which would contain the urban development on the fringe of Wolverhampton, and a single-member Perton Dippons ward, containing the rural Kingswood & Trescott area and adjacent northern part of Perton.

60 At Stage Three the District Council stated that it had no objection to the division of the current Perton Dippons ward. However, it proposed that Perton Central ward be renamed Perton Lakeside ward, the same as the parish ward. It stated that the ward name change had the support of the current district ward members.

61 We have carefully considered the District Council's representation and, given the support of the local district councillors, are content that Perton Central ward be renamed Perton Lakeside ward. In the absence of any opposition to our proposals we have decided to confirm our proposed Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Dippons and Perton East wards as final. Under our final recommendations, Pattingham & Patshull, Perton Dippons and Perton East wards would have 9 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors currently (14 per cent more, 10 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer in 2004). Our proposed Perton Lakeside ward would have 1 per cent more electors than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer in 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A3 in Appendix A.

### **Bilbrook, Bishopswood & Lapley, Brewood & Coven, Codsall North and Codsall South wards**

62 The existing wards of Bilbrook, Bishopswood & Lapley, Brewood & Coven, Codsall North and Codsall South are situated in the centre and north-west of the district. Brewood & Coven is represented by three councillors. The remaining four wards are each currently represented by two councillors. Bilbrook ward comprises Bilbrook parish, Bishopswood & Lapley ward comprises Blymhill & Weston-Under-Lizard and Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston parishes as well as the Bishopswood parish ward of Brewood parish. Brewood & Coven ward comprises the remainder of Brewood parish. Codsall North ward comprises North parish ward of Codsall parish, with the remainder of Codsall parish, South ward, forming Codsall South ward. Under current arrangements, Bilbrook, Brewood & Coven and Codsall North wards contain 5 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Codsall South ward contains 13 per cent fewer than average. Bishopswood & Lapley ward currently contains equal to the average number of electors per councillor. These levels of electoral equality are projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

63 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Bishopswood & Lapley and Brewood & Coven wards. It proposed that the existing Bilbrook ward should be largely retained, but with the Lane Green area being combined with the Codsall Wood area from the current Codsall North ward and the current Codsall South ward to form a new two-member Codsall South West ward. The remainder of Codsall North ward would form a revised two-member Codsall North ward, resulting in an improved level of electoral equality.

64 We received two other representations in relation to this area. Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed Bishopswood & Lapley ward. A local resident suggested that Bishopswood & Lapley ward would be better named Wheaton Aston ward.

65 Brewood Parish Council proposed alternative warding arrangements for the north-west of the district. It proposed six district councillors for the area rather than five, resulting in a council

size of 50. It proposed that Bishopswood parish ward should be transferred from Bishopswood & Lapley ward and be combined with Brewood parish ward to form a new Brewood & Bishop's Wood ward. The remainder of the current Brewood & Coven ward, Coven and Coven Heath parish wards would form a new Coven & Coven Heath ward. Each ward would be represented by two councillors.

66 We concluded that the District Council's proposals for this area would achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality, addressing the inequality which exists under the current electoral arrangements. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposals for this area but invited the views of local residents and interested parties at Stage Three. In relation to ward names, we were not persuaded to change the name of Bishopswood & Lapley ward to Wheaton Aston ward but, again, invited further views on this issue. Under our draft recommendations, Bilbrook, Bishopswood & Lapley and Codsall North wards would contain 9 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Brewood & Coven and Codsall South West wards would contain 3 per cent more and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

67 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that the name Wheaton Aston be included within Bishopswood & Lapley ward, arguing that Wheaton Aston is "by far the largest community within the area". Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council also argued that as Wheaton Aston has "the largest number of electors" within the ward the ward name should therefore reflect this. It proposed that the ward be named Wheaton Aston with Bishopswood and Lapley. Parish Councillor Punter proposed that Bishopswood & Lapley ward be renamed Wheaton Aston ward, stating that Wheaton Aston is "the geographical and demographic centre of the district ward". He further argued that the proposed ward name Wheaton Aston with Bishopswood & Lapley would be an "administrative nightmare" and that Blymhill would be more entitled to be included in the ward name than Lapley. Two local residents also argued that Wheaton Aston should be included in our proposed ward name of Bishopswood & Lapley, commenting that it is the largest area in the ward.

68 Codsall Parish Council objected to our proposed Codsall North and Codsall South West wards, arguing that the area to be transferred to Codsall South West ward, Codsall Wood village, is "closer to the North ward as well as being on the northern side of the railway line which splits the current North/South wards".

69 As we received no specific comments at Stage Three with regard to our proposed Bilbrook and Brewood & Coven wards we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. We have carefully considered the representations with regard to our proposed Bishopswood & Lapley ward and acknowledge that the village of Wheaton Aston is the largest area within the proposed ward. Therefore we have decided that our proposed ward of Bishopswood & Lapley be renamed Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley ward in order to more accurately reflect its composite parts. We carefully considered Codsall Parish Council's objection to our proposed Codsall North and Codsall South West wards and have been persuaded that the boundary should run along the railway line in the west of the two wards as at present, as we consider that this would better reflect local community identity without significantly affecting electoral equality in the area. As a result of our proposed boundary amendment we also propose that Codsall South West ward be

renamed Codsall South ward. Under our final recommendations Codsall North, Codsall South and Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley wards would have equal to, 3 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (7 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer in 2004).

### **Featherstone, Huntington and Shareshill wards**

70 The existing wards of Featherstone, Huntington and Shareshill are situated in the eastern part of the district. Featherstone ward is currently represented by two councillors and comprises Featherstone and Hilton parishes. Huntington ward is also represented by two councillors and comprises Huntington parish. Shareshill ward is represented by a single councillor and contains the parishes of Hatherton, Saredon and Shareshill. Under existing arrangements, Featherstone and Huntington wards contain 11 per cent and 19 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Shareshill ward has equal to the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

71 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining Shareshill parish, from the existing Shareshill ward, with Featherstone ward, to create a new two-member Featherstone & Shareshill ward. It proposed that Saredon parish, from the existing Shareshill ward, should be combined with Pinfold and Littlewood parish wards of Cheslyn Hay parish (currently in Cheslyn Hay ward) to create a new two-member Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward. It proposed that the remainder of Shareshill ward, Hatherton parish, should be combined with the existing Huntington ward to create a new two-member Huntington & Hatherton ward.

72 We received two further submissions in relation to this area. Hatherton, Saredon and Shareshill Parish Councils submitted a joint submission opposing the District Council's proposals for this area, which would result in dividing them between three wards. They argued that the existing warding arrangements for Shareshill ward should be retained and that future housing development in Featherstone and Cheslyn Hay would "distort the electoral estimates" in the Council's scheme. Councillor Hood argued that Shareshill ward "is still a model for the representation of a group of small parishes", stating that there are strong community and economic links within the existing ward.

73 We recognised that there was a degree of support for retaining the existing Shareshill ward. We also noted that the current Shareshill ward had a good level of electoral equality. However, the ward could not be considered in isolation from the surrounding wards of Cheslyn Hay and Huntington, where the current arrangements provided a poor level of electoral equality. We considered that the high level of electoral inequality in the area should be addressed, and were satisfied that the District Council's proposals for this area achieved reasonable levels of electoral equality while having regard for the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor boundary modification to the proposed Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward, which is detailed later.

74 Under our draft recommendations, Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon and Huntington & Hatherton wards would contain 10 per cent and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Featherstone & Shareshill ward would contain 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to

improve marginally over the next five years to 4 per cent and 3 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more than the district average respectively.

75 At Stage Three the District Council stated that it had no objection to the minor boundary modification between Cheslyn Hay North and Saredon wards. District Councillor Hood objected to our proposals for the current Featherstone, Huntington and Shareshill wards, arguing that they were damaging to local interests and that future housing development was expected in the area. He proposed that the existing Shareshill ward be maintained.

76 We have considered the representations received at Stage Three but have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. As discussed earlier, we are content that the electoral projections provided by the District Council are the best estimates currently available. Therefore, we have decided to confirm our proposed Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon, Huntington & Hatherton and Featherstone & Shareshill wards as final.

### **Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards**

77 The existing wards of Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town are situated in the east of the district. Essington and Great Wyrley Landywood wards are each represented by two councillors, while Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley Town wards are each represented by three councillors. Cheslyn Hay ward comprises Cheslyn Hay parish while Essington ward comprises Essington parish. Great Wyrley Landywood comprises the Landywood parish ward of Great Wyrley parish, while the North and Town parish wards of Great Wyrley parish form Great Wyrley Town ward. Under current arrangements, Cheslyn Hay, Essington and Great Wyrley Landywood wards contain 15 per cent, 13 per cent and 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Great Wyrley Town ward contains 1 per cent fewer than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve marginally over the next five years.

78 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing Essington, Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. It proposed that the Littlewood and Pinfold parish wards of Cheslyn parish, from the existing Cheslyn Hay ward, should be combined with Saredon parish, from the existing Shareshill ward, to create a new two-member Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon ward. The remainder of the existing Cheslyn Hay ward, the South parish ward of Cheslyn Hay parish, would form a new two-member Cheslyn Hay South ward.

79 We considered that the District Council's proposals for this area provided for acceptable levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. In addition, we noted that they would have provided for an additional councillor for the Cheslyn Hay area, albeit on different boundaries, to which it is entitled. We were therefore content to adopt these proposals subject to two minor modifications. First, in order to provide a clearer boundary, we proposed a modification to the boundary between the proposed Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon and Cheslyn Hay South wards, to follow the boundary of the cemetery and Wolverhampton Road. Second, we proposed a modification between the existing Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. We proposed that the boundary should follow Bentons Lane and incorporate the whole

of New Street, Forest Way and parts of Walsall Road, Hilton Lane, and Gorsey Lane in a revised Great Wyrley Town ward. We considered that this would provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary while achieving improved levels of electoral equality for both wards. Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon and Cheslyn Hay South wards would have 10 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent and 6 per cent fewer by 2004). Essington and Great Wyrley Landywood wards would have 11 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor (6 per cent and 1 per cent more by 2004). Great Wyrley Town ward would have equal to the average now, and 1 per cent fewer by 2004.

80 At Stage Three the District Council stated that it had no objections to our proposed minor boundary modifications between Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon and Cheslyn Hay South wards and Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. However, Great Wyrley Parish Council objected to our minor boundary amendment between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards, arguing that the current arrangements would provide for an acceptable level of electoral variance and that the new boundary would confuse electors. It proposed that the whole of Bentons Lane be retained within Great Wyrley Landywood ward which it argued would retain “Bentons Lane as a cohesive community”. Councillors Moran and Wood proposed that parts of Gorsey Lane, Bentons Lane and Walsall Road remain in Great Wyrley Landywood ward, while Hilton Lane, New Street and Forest Way be transferred to Great Wyrley Town ward. They argued that there was no justification for splitting Bentons Lane down the middle and that there was a strong argument to keep Gorsey Lane within Great Wyrley Landywood ward as “the rest of the road is in this ward”.

81 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We are content that the boundary between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards should run behind the properties on the northern side of Bentons Lane and that Gorsey Lane should be united within Great Wyrley Landywood ward as the properties have direct access to this ward. We consider that this would better reflect community identity without significantly affecting electoral equality in the area.

82 Given the support we have received for our proposed Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon, Cheslyn Hay South and Essington wards we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards would have 9 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (3 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer in 2004).

### **Acton Trussell, Penkrige North East, Penkrige South East and Penkrige West wards**

83 The existing wards of Acton Trussell, Penkrige North East, Penkrige South East and Penkrige West are situated in the north-east of the district. Acton Trussell, Penkrige North East and Penkrige West wards are each currently represented by a single councillor, while Penkrige South East ward is represented by two councillors. Acton Trussell contains the parishes of Acton Trussell & Bednall, Coppenhall, Dunston and Teddesley Hay. Penkrige North East ward contains North East ward of Penkrige parish. Penkrige South East ward contains Central and

South East wards of Penkridge parish. The remainder of Penkridge parish, Gailey and West wards form Penkridge West ward. Under current arrangements, Acton Trussell and Penkridge West wards contain 19 per cent and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Penkridge North East and Penkridge South East wards contain equal to the average and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

84 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing Penkridge North East ward. It proposed combining the existing Acton Trussell ward with the existing Penkridge West ward and part of the existing Penkridge South East ward in a new two-member Penkridge West & Acton Trussell ward. The remainder of Penkridge South East ward would form a revised two-member Penkridge South East ward.

85 We considered that the District Council's proposals for this area achieved reasonable levels of electoral equality, but we were not persuaded that these proposals adequately reflected the identities and interests of the local community. In particular the Council's proposed Penkridge West & Acton Trussell ward would have combined a large area to the west of the town with rural parishes to the north and east. We therefore proposed significant changes to the District Council's proposed Penkridge North East, Penkridge South East and Penkridge West & Acton Trussell wards, in order to better reflect the identities and interests of the local communities in this area. We proposed creating a new two-member Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell ward, combining the existing Acton Trussell and Penkridge North East wards, together with part of Penkridge South East ward to the east of the M6 motorway, as we considered that this part of Penkridge was closer geographically to the rural area covered by Acton Trussell ward. The existing Penkridge West ward, less Gailey parish ward, would be combined with the Vale Gardens area to the east of the Wolverhampton Road (as proposed by the Council) to form a revised single-member Penkridge West ward. We also proposed a revised two-member Penkridge South East ward, combining the remainder of the existing Penkridge South East ward with Gailey parish ward from Penkridge West ward. We considered that our proposals would have provided for reasonable levels of electoral equality, while meeting the statutory criteria. We recognised that these proposals were different from those proposed locally, and therefore particularly invited views of local residents and interested parties at Stage Three.

86 Under our draft recommendations, Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell and Penkridge South East wards would contain 8 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, while Penkridge West ward would contain 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years to 5 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively.

87 At Stage Three the District Council stated that it had no objections to the "significant changes proposed to its recommendations" for our proposed Penkridge North East & Acton Trussell, Penkridge South East and Penkridge West wards. Councillor Cartwright objected to our boundary amendments between Penkridge West and Penkridge South East wards and queried the District Council's electorate forecast.

88 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We remain satisfied that the electorate projections put forward at Stage One represent the best estimates presently available and, given the support of the District Council, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

89 At Stage One we received one proposal in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. The District Council proposed the retention of whole-council elections every four years. In view of this, we proposed no change to the current electoral cycle.

90 At Stage Three the District Council welcomed the support for whole-council elections, therefore we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

91 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:

- there should be a minor boundary amendment between our proposed Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards;
- there should be a boundary amendment between Codsall North and Codsall South West wards;
- there should be a minor boundary amendment between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards;
- the proposed Codsall South West ward should retain the name Codsall South ward;
- the proposed Bishopswood & Lapley ward should be renamed Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley ward;
- the proposed Perton Central ward should be renamed Perton Lakeside ward.

92 We conclude that, in South Staffordshire:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 50 to 49;
- there should be 25 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

*Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

|  | 1999 electorate      |                       | 2004 forecast electorate |                       |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Current arrangements | Final recommendations | Current arrangements     | Final recommendations |
| Number of councillors  | 50                   | 49                    | 50                       | 49                    |
| Number of wards  | 26                   | 25                    | 26                       | 25                    |
| Average number of electors per councillor                              | 1,671                | 1,705                 | 1,771                    | 1,807                 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 16                   | 2                     | 14                       | 2                     |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 3                    | 0                     | 3                        | 0                     |

94 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 16 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. By 2004 only two wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**  
 South Staffordshire District Council should comprise 49 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at this back of the report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

**Parish Council Electoral Arrangements**

95 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 should 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 Bilbrook, Cheslyn Hay, Codsall, Great Wyrley, Perton, Penkridge and Wombourne to reflect the proposed district wards.

96 The parish of Bilbrook is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. As part of its submission, the District Council proposed that the parish be divided into three wards, Lane Green (to be served by one councillor), East (to be served by seven councillors) and West (to be served by five councillors). Bilbrook Parish Council was opposed to being warded and to the division of the parish between two district wards. While we noted the concerns of Bilbrook parish, we recognised the need to modify district warding arrangements in order to deal with the high levels of electoral inequality which existed in this area. We therefore adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

97 We received no comments at Stage Three. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Bilbrook parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Bilbrook Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Lane Green (returning one councillor), East (returning seven councillors) and West (returning five councillors). These proposals are illustrated on Map A4 in Appendix A.

98 The parish of Cheslyn Hay is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Littlewood (returning five councillors), Pinfold (returning two councillors) and South (returning eight councillors). As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed a minor modification to the boundary (affecting no electors), between Pinfold and South parish wards to align this with the proposed district ward boundary.

99 We received no comments at Stage Three. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Cheslyn Hay parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Cheslyn Hay Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Littlewood (returning five councillor), Pinfold (returning two councillors) and South (returning eight councillors). The revised parish ward boundaries between Pinfold and South wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map A5 in Appendix A.

100 The parish of Codsall is currently served by 15 councillors representing North parish ward (returning eight councillors) and South parish ward (returning seven councillors). For district warding purposes, the District Council proposed that the Codsall Wood area should be transferred from Codsall North ward to a new Codsall South West ward. As a result, it also proposed that the Codsall Wood area should be transferred from North parish ward to South parish ward. The revised North ward would return eight parish councillors and the revised South ward would return seven parish councils, as at present.

101 At Stage One, we understood that Codsall Parish Council opposed this proposal, arguing that it did not satisfactorily reflect the identities and interests of the local community. While we noted the concerns raised by Codsall Parish Council we were, for the purpose of consultation, putting forward the District Council’s proposals for this area, due to the improved levels of electoral equality they achieved.

102 At Stage Three we received opposition to our proposed district warding arrangements from Codsall Parish Council. In the light of the responses we have revised our proposed district boundary between the wards of Codsall North and Codsall South West (to be renamed Codsall South). We confirm that the boundary between the parish wards of North and South should be amended accordingly as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**  
Codsall Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North (returning eight councillors) and South (returning seven councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary.

103 The parish of Great Wyrley is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Landywood (returning six councillors), North (returning two councillors) and Town (returning seven councillors). As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed modifying the boundary between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town district wards in order to improve electoral equality. As a result, we proposed amending the parish ward boundaries in this area.

104 At Stage Three we received opposition to our proposed district warding arrangements from Great Wyrley Parish Council and Councillors Moran and Wood. In the light of the responses we have revised our proposed district boundary between Great Wyrley Landywood and Great Wyrley Town wards. We confirm that the boundary between the parish wards of Landywood and Town should be amended accordingly as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**  
Great Wyrley Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Landywood (returning six councillors), North (returning two councillors) and Town (returning seven councillors). North parish ward would remain unchanged, while the boundary between Landywood and Town parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated on Map A5 in Appendix A.

105 The parish of Perton is currently represented by 15 councillors and is divided into three wards: Dippons (returning seven parish councillors), Lakeside (returning seven parish councillors) and Kingswood & Trescott (returning a single parish councillor). For district warding purposes, we proposed modifying the boundary between the existing Dippons and Lakeside wards to follow The Parkway as proposed by the District Council. We also proposed dividing the existing Dippons parish ward into two new wards, a revised Dippons ward and a new East ward,

in order to better reflect community ties. Under our proposals, Kingswood & Trescott parish ward would remain unchanged.

106 We received no comments at Stage Three and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Perton parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Perton Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Dippons (returning two councillors), East, (returning three councillors), Lakeside (returning nine councillors) and Kingswood & Trescott (returning a single councillor). Kingswood & Trescott ward would remain unchanged. The boundary between the revised Dippons, East and Lakeside parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

107 The parish of Penkrige is currently represented by 15 councillors and is divided into five wards: Central (returning four councillors), Gailey (returning a single councillor), North East (returning four councillors), South East (returning three councillors) and West (returning three councillors). For district warding purposes, we proposed combining Penkrige North East ward, part of Penkrige South East ward and Acton Trussell ward in a new Penkrige North East & Acton Trussell ward. In addition, we proposed that the boundary between Penkrige South East and Penkrige West wards should be modified. As a result, we proposed a number of changes to parish warding. Under our proposal, part of Central parish ward would be combined with the existing West parish ward to create an enlarged West parish ward. The remainder of Central parish ward would be combined with South East parish ward, less the area being transferred to North East parish ward. Gailey parish ward would remain unchanged. We therefore particularly welcomed views of local residents and interested parties at Stage Three.

108 We received no comments at Stage Three. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Penkrige parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Penkrige Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four parish wards: Gailey (returning a single councillor), North East (returning four councillors), South East (returning six councillors) and West (returning four councillors). Gailey parish ward would remain unchanged. The boundary between the revised West and South East parish wards and North East and South East parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

109 The parish of Wombourne is currently represented by 15 councillors and is divided into three wards: North (returning five councillors), South East (returning four councillors) and South

West (returning six councillors). For district warding purposes, we proposed modifying the boundary between South East and South West wards, while North ward would remain unchanged. As part of the District Council’s own consultation exercise, Wombourne Parish Council largely supported its proposals.

110 At Stage Three we received opposition to our proposed district warding arrangements from the District Council. It proposed that the boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards should run behind the properties on the western side of Common Lane. In the light of the reponse we have revised our proposed district warding arrangements. We therefore confirm that the boundary between the parish wards of South East and South West should be amended accordingly as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**  
Wombourne Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North (returning six councillors), South East ward (returning four councillors) and South West (returning five councillors). North ward would remain unchanged, while the boundary between South East and South West parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A.

111 Kinver Parish Council is currently represented by 15 councillors and is divided into three wards: Dunsley ward (returning four councillors), Potters Cross ward (returning seven councillors) and Stourton ward (returning four councillors). In agreement with the District Council, Kinver Parish Council proposed that the boundary between the existing Dunsley and Potters Cross wards should be modified in order to correct administrative anomalies associated with new buildings in the village.

112 Our proposed district warding arrangements resulted in no change to this area and we were content to adopt the Parish Council’s proposal for consultation. We received no comments at Stage Three and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Kinver parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Kinver Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Dunsley (returning four councillors), Potters Cross (returning seven councillors) and Stourton (returning four councillors). The boundary between Dunsley and Potters Cross wards of Kinver Parish Council should be modified in order to provide a clearer boundary. This boundary modification is illustrated on Map A6 in Appendix A.

113 The parish of Huntington is currently divided into two parish wards, Chase and Littleton. In agreement with the District Council, Huntington Parish Council proposed that Chase parish ward should be served by six councillors, instead of the current four, and that Littleton parish ward should be served by seven members, as at present, thereby increasing the total number of

councillors on the Parish Council from 11 to 13. We were content to put forward the Parish Council’s proposal for consultation, but welcomed further views at Stage Three.

114 We received no representations regarding this issue at Stage Three. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendations for Huntington parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
Huntington Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, instead of 11 as at present. Chase parish ward should return six councillors and Littleton parish ward should return seven councillors.

115 Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council is currently represented by 11 councillors and is divided into three parish wards: Lapley (represented by two councillors), Stretton (represented by two councillors) and Wheaton Aston (represented by seven councillors). In order to address the electoral inequality which currently exists within the parish, it proposed that the number of parish councillors for Wheaton Aston ward be increased from seven to nine, thereby increasing the number of councillors for the parish from 11 to 13. Under its proposal, Lapley and Stretton wards would each continue to be represented by two councillors. The District Council noted that Wheaton Aston has 1,864 electors, while Lapley has 226 and Stretton 107. As a result, it argued that this proposal would continue to over-represent Lapley and Stretton wards and it stated that “it would therefore seem difficult to justify the Parish Council’s case”.

116 At Stage One, we received three further representations in relation to this issue. Councillor Timson, a parish councillor for the area, and one resident proposed that the total number of councillors for the parish should remain unchanged, but be distributed so that Lapley and Stretton would each have one councillor and Wheaton Aston would have nine councillors. Councillor Timson argued that Wheaton Aston is “substantially under-represented” under the current arrangements. A local resident proposed that Wheaton Aston be represented by five councillors and that Lapley and Stretton parish wards should be jointly represented by a single councillor.

117 Having carefully considered the representations received, we were not persuaded to increase or reduce the number of councillors for the parish. However, we recognised that the Wheaton Aston area was significantly under-represented under the current arrangements and considered that this should be addressed. We also noted the current over-representation that existed within Lapley and Stretton wards. We therefore adopted Councillor Timson’s proposals for this area, which we considered improved electoral equality within the parish.

118 In response to our consultation report Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council objected to the composition of the parish council, arguing that Lapley and Stretton should retain two councillors each as “at times of illness or for other reasons, sections of the community may be unrepresented”. Three local residents supported our proposed composition of the parish, one local resident stated “Lapley and Stretton have long been over-represented ... one [councillor] each would more accurately reflect the populations of the respective areas”.

119 We have carefully considered all the representations received on this issue at Stage Three, and it is clear to us that there is no local consensus over the appropriate distribution of councillors between the three parish wards. We are reluctant to recommend a change to the pattern of representation in such circumstances and believe that the matter should be the subject of further discussion and consultation locally. South Staffordshire District Council has powers under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 to consider and make local orders to alter the distribution of parish councillors between parish wards. Accordingly, we have decided to depart from our draft recommendations and recommend no change to the current distribution of councillors in the parish council area.

**Final Recommendation**  
Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council should comprise 11 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Lapley (returning two councillors), Stretton (returning two councillors) and Wheaton Aston (returning seven councillors).

120 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

**Final Recommendation**  
For parish councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

*Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Staffordshire*



## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

122 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 21 November 2001.

123 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 South Staffordshire: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the South Staffordshire 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 to A7 and the large map at the back of this report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the Perton area.

**Map A4** illustrates the proposed boundary between Bilbrook and Codsall South wards.

**Map A5** illustrates the proposed boundaries for the Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley area.

**Map A6** illustrates revised parish warding arrangements for Kinver parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the Penkridge area.

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for South Staffordshire: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed boundary between Wombourne South East and Wombourne South West wards*

*Map A3: Proposed warding arrangements for the Perton area*

*Map A4: Proposed boundary between Bilbrook and Codsall South wards*

*Map A5: Proposed ward boundaries for the Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley area*

*Map A6: Revised parish warding arrangements for Kinver parish*



## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for South Staffordshire

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only six wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other changes from draft to final recommendations, which are not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose that Bishopswood & Lapley ward be renamed Wheaton Aston, Bishopswood & Lapley ward, Codsall South West ward be renamed Codsall South ward and Perton Central ward be renamed Perton Lakeside ward.

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

|   | <b>Ward name</b>       | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas</b>   |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Codsall North          | 2                            | Codsall North ward (part – North ward (part) of Codsall parish)  |
| 2 | Codsall South West     | 2                            | Codsall South ward (South ward of Codsall parish); Codsall North ward (part – Codsall North ward of Codsall parish (part); Bilbrook ward (part – Lane Green ward of Bilbrook parish as proposed) |
| 3 | Great Wyrley Landywood | 2                            | Great Landywood ward (part – Landywood ward (part) of Great Wyrley parish)   |
| 4 | Great Wyrley Town      | 3                            | Great Wyrley Town ward (North and Town wards of Great Wyrley parish); Great Wyrley Landywood ward (part – Landywood ward (part) of Great Wyrley parish)  |
| 5 | Wombourne South East   | 2                            | Wombourne South East ward (South East ward of Wombourne parish); Wombourne South West ward (part – South West ward (part) of Wombourne parish)   |
| 6 | Wombourne South West   | 2                            | Wombourne South West ward (part – South West ward (part) of Wombourne parish)  |

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

|   | Ward name              | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Codsall North          | 2                     | 3,224             | 1,612                             | -5                      | 3,681             | 1,841                             | 2                       |
| 2 | Codsall South West     | 2                     | 3,483             | 1,742                             | 2                       | 3,547             | 1,774                             | -2                      |
| 3 | Great Wyrley Landywood | 2                     | 3,646             | 1,823                             | 7                       | 3,662             | 1,831                             | 1                       |
| 4 | Great Wyrley Town      | 3                     | 5,092             | 1,697                             | 0                       | 5,372             | 1,791                             | -1                      |
| 5 | Wombourne South East   | 2                     | 3,337             | 1,669                             | -2                      | 3,461             | 1,731                             | -4                      |
| 6 | Wombourne South West   | 2                     | 3,652             | 1,826                             | 7                       | 3,692             | 1,846                             | 2                       |
|   | <b>Totals</b>          | <b>49</b>             | <b>83,521</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                | <b>88,534</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                |
|   | <b>Averages</b>        | <b>-</b>              | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,705</b>                      | <b>-</b>                | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,807</b>                      | <b>-</b>                |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Staffordshire 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.