

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Tamworth in Staffordshire

May 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tamworth in Staffordshire.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Tamworth on 28 September 1999.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

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

- **in two of the 10 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in four wards, with one ward varying by more than 20 per cent.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 53–54) are that:

- **Tamworth Borough Council should have 30 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 10 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 10 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by less than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **Electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 May 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**

- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 3 July 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Amington	3	Amington ward (part)
2	Belgrave	3	Belgrave ward; Glascote ward (part); Wilnecote ward (part)
3	Bolehall	3	Bolehall ward; Amington ward (part)
4	Castle	3	Castle ward (part)
5	Glascote	3	Glascote ward (part); Amington ward (part)
6	Mercian	3	Mercian ward; Castle ward (part); Spital ward (part)
7	Spital	3	Spital ward (part); Castle ward (part)
8	Stonydelph	3	Stonydelph ward (part); Wilnecote ward (part)
9	Trinity	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
10	Wilnecote	3	Wilnecote ward (part); Stonydelph ward (part)

Notes: 1 The whole of Tamworth borough is unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Tamworth

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 Amington	3	5,992	1,997	8	6,019	2,006	4
2 Belgrave	3	5,575	1,858	1	5,609	1,870	-3
3 Bolehall	3	5,413	1,804	-2	5,457	1,819	-5
4 Castle	3	5,068	1,689	-8	5,870	1,957	2
5 Glascote	3	5,879	1,960	6	5,909	1,970	2
6 Mercian	3	5,486	1,829	-1	5,513	1,838	-4
7 Spital	3	5,218	1,739	-6	5,506	1,835	-5
8 Stonydelph	3	5,729	1,910	4	5,759	1,920	0
9 Trinity	3	5,236	1,745	-5	6,080	2,027	5
10 Wilnecote	3	5,699	1,900	3	5,960	1,987	3
Totals	30	55,295	-	-	57,682	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,843	-	-	1,923	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tamworth in Staffordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 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 Tamworth. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1984 (Report No. 470). The electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council were last reviewed in July 1980 (Report No. 386). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

- the statutory criteria 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* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix B).

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

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This 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 then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, 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 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 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, i.e. 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.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Staffordshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, 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 are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Tamworth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough 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 Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000.

13 At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

14 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 and will end on 3 July 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of Tamworth covers some 12 square miles, with a population of just under 80,000. It is located in the south of Staffordshire, within easy reach of Birmingham. Tamworth and a number of other satellite towns around the West Midlands conurbation were identified for town expansion to accommodate population and industrial overspill. Tamworth expanded rapidly in the 1970s, with the majority of people coming from the Birmingham overspill. It comprises the ancient communities of Amington, Glascote, Wilnecote and Dosthill, together with several outlying mining villages. The borough is located at the heart of England's motorway and rail network, with frequent direct passenger rail services to London, North Wales, Manchester, Birmingham and Derby. Tamworth is unique in Staffordshire, as it is the only borough that is entirely unparished.

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

18 The electorate of the borough is 55,295 (February 1999). The Council presently has 30 members who are elected from 10 wards, each represented by three councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Tamworth borough, with around 30 per cent more electors than 16 years ago as a result of new housing developments, most notably in the Amington and Castle areas.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,843 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,923 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past 16 years, the number of electors per councillor in two of the 10 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, with the worst imbalance in Amington ward, where each of the three councillors represents 18 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Tamworth

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Amington	3	6,546	2,182	18	6,576	2,192	14
2 Belgrave	3	5,558	1,853	1	5,593	1,864	-3
3 Bolehall	3	5,413	1,804	-2	5,456	1,819	-5
4 Castle	3	6,086	2,029	10	6,975	2,325	21
5 Glascote	3	5,325	1,775	-4	5,352	1,784	-7
6 Mercian	3	4,976	1,659	-10	5,003	1,668	-13
7 Spital	3	4,710	1,570	-15	4,911	1,637	-15
8 Stonydelph	3	5,729	1,910	4	5,759	1,920	0
9 Trinity	3	5,236	1,745	-5	6,080	2,027	5
10 Wilnecote	3	5,716	1,905	3	5,978	1,993	4
Totals	30	55,295	-	-	57,683	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,843	-	-	1,923	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Spital ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Amington ward were relatively under-represented by 18 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Tamworth Borough Council.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the Borough Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two representations during Stage One – one from the Borough Council and a joint one from the Conservative Group on the Council and Tamworth Conservative Association, both of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Tamworth Borough Council

23 The Borough Council proposed a council of 30 members, as at present, representing 10 wards. Changes were proposed to the boundaries of five of the existing 10 wards “to reflect the electoral imbalance which has developed since the last review”. Under this proposal, all the wards would have an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent, except for Castle (14 per cent). By 2004, all the wards would vary by less than 10 per cent from the borough average. The Council’s proposals are summarised at Appendix A.

Tamworth Borough Council Conservative Group and Tamworth Conservative Association

24 The Conservative Group on the Borough Council, together with Tamworth Conservative Association stated that they were unable to support the Council’s proposal as “it misses an opportunity for more radical change”. They considered that the council size should be reduced slightly to minimise costs and believed that 10 three-member wards were unnecessarily large for a relatively small and densely populated town. They therefore proposed a council of 28 members, representing 14 two-member wards and considered that such a proposal would make wards physically smaller and enable councillors to be closer to their constituents. Under these proposals all the wards would initially vary by less than 10 per cent from the borough average. However, two wards, Dosthill and Riverside, would each be under-represented by 16 per cent in 2004. The Conservatives’ proposals are summarised at Appendix A.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

25 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Tamworth is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities 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”.

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

27 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.

28 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. We consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

29 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 55,295 to 57,683 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Castle and Trinity 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. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

30 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

32 Tamworth Borough Council presently has 30 members, which the Council proposed retaining.

33 The Conservative Group on the Council, supported by Tamworth Conservative Association, proposed a council of 28 members, as they believed that a slightly reduced council size would minimise costs without impacting on member workload, and that the existing wards with around 6,000 electors each were “unnecessarily large for a relatively small and densely populated town”.

34 We note the two proposals for different council sizes. As stated in our *Guidance*, any proposal for an increase or decrease in council size will need to be justified and well argued, and we found that this was not the case under the Conservatives’ proposals. Moreover, their proposal was not supported by the Borough Council, neither was it consulted upon locally.

35 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining a council of 30 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 In looking at the two borough-wide proposals we received for Tamworth, we note that a three-member ward pattern has a long history in Tamworth, having been recommended by our predecessor (the LGBC) in both 1975 and 1984, and that the Borough Council proposed continuing this trend. The Conservatives, in putting forward a pattern of 14 two-member wards, proposed some fairly major changes, expressing the view that its new wards would better reflect communities in the borough. However, the Group did not provide significant evidence as to how its proposed pattern of two-member wards would actually better reflect communities within the borough, or how the current pattern failed to meet the statutory criteria. Therefore, on balance, we are basing our draft recommendations on a pattern of 10 three-member wards as supported by the Borough Council, and are unable to consider further the proposals from the Conservatives in this report. However, we look to all participants during the consultation stage to provide evidence on the extent to which three-member wards actually reflect community identities within the borough.

37 To improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council’s proposals in a number of areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Castle, Mercian and Spital wards;
- (b) Amington and Glascote wards;

- (c) Belgrave and Bolehall wards;
- (d) Stonydelph, Trinity and Wilnecote wards.

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

Castle, Mercian and Spital wards

39 Castle, Mercian and Spital wards are located in the north and west of the borough, bordering the district of Lichfield. The number of electors represented by the three councillors for each ward is 10 per cent above the borough average in Castle (21 per cent in 2004 due to extensive development), 10 per cent below in Mercian (13 per cent in 2004) and 15 per cent below in Spital (unchanged in 2004).

40 To achieve a better balance of representation in this area, the Borough Council proposed that 990 electors from polling districts TJ and TK be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward. The proposed boundary would follow Lichfield Road, Moor Street, Halford Street, Nevill Street, Barbara Street, Hospital Street, then Upper Gungate to the existing ward boundary. It also proposed that 360 electors from polling district TM of Castle ward should be included in a modified Spital ward, with the modified ward boundary following Aldergate, Silver Street, Market Street, George Street and Victoria Road. No further changes were proposed in this area and under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 14 per cent below the borough average in Castle (6 per cent in 2004), 8 per cent above in Mercian (7 per cent in 2004) and 8 per cent below in Spital (unchanged in 2004).

41 We acknowledge the Council's attempts to improve electoral equality in this area. However, having visited the area, we consider the balance of representation could be further improved, while still reflecting the statutory criteria. We therefore propose the following boundary changes: that a smaller part of polling district TJ (comprising 206 electors) be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward, with the remainder being included in Spital ward; that only Lichfield Road Industrial Estate (part of polling district TK) be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward, with Bradford Street, Meadow Park, Park Street and Swanmote (comprising 305 electors) remaining in Castle ward; that only 42 electors in Rosy Cross and Albert Road (nos. 2–31) be transferred to Spital ward, together with the remaining electors from polling district TJ (less Aldergate); and that 304 electors from polling district TD be transferred from Spital ward to Mercian ward. These proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

42 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Castle ward (2 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent below in Mercian ward (4 per cent below in 2004) and 6 per cent below in Spital ward (5 per cent below in 2004).

Amington and Glascote wards

43 These two wards are situated in the north-east of the borough, served by three councillors each. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 18 per cent above the borough

average in Amington ward (14 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Glascote ward (7 per cent in 2004).

44 To improve electoral equality, the Borough Council proposed that polling district TS (696 electors) should be transferred from Amington ward to Glascote ward, and that part of polling district TW (197 electors from Brookweed and Briar) should be transferred from Glascote ward to Amington ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the average in Amington ward and 5 per cent above in Glascote ward (5 per cent and 1 per cent in 2004 respectively).

45 Having considered the Council's proposals, we note that its proposed Glascote ward would comprise two areas, with a somewhat narrow link between them, which appeared to separate one area from the other. In our view, this does not secure effective and convenient local government, and we are therefore not proposing to endorse the Council's proposals in this area. Instead, we propose that Foxglove (285 electors), Greenhart (219 electors) and Sheepecote Lane nos 102–154 (50 electors) be transferred from Amington ward to Glascote ward. To provide a clear boundary, we also propose that Woodhouse High School should also be transferred to Glascote ward. Similarly, in the south of the ward, we propose that the existing boundary should be moved to the newly built A5, affecting no electors. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average in Amington ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Glascote ward (2 per cent in 2004). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Belgrave and Bolehall wards

46 These two wards are located in the centre of the borough, each served by three councillors. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 1 per cent above the borough average in Belgrave ward and 2 per cent below in Bolehall ward (3 per cent below and 5 per cent below in 2004 respectively).

47 The Borough Council did not propose any change to either ward, as the current arrangements would continue to secure good electoral equality.

48 While we acknowledge the Council's proposal for no change to either ward, given the good electoral equality in these wards, we propose amending the Belgrave/Wilnecote ward boundary to follow Glascote Lane and Watling Street, providing a clearer boundary and transferring 17 electors to Belgrave ward. We also propose that the undefined Bolehall/Amington ward boundary in the north should follow the side of properties, Whitley Avenue and the railway line (affecting no electors). Under our draft recommendations the variances would remain at 1 per cent in Belgrave ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 2 per cent in Bolehall ward (5 per cent in 2004).

Stonydelph, Trinity and Wilnecote wards

49 These wards are each served by three councillors and are located in the south of the borough. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 4 per cent above the average in Stonydelph ward (equal to the average in 2004), 5 per cent below in Trinity ward (5 per cent

above in 2004 due to major development) and 3 per cent above in Wilnecote ward (4 per cent above in 2004).

50 The Borough Council did not propose any change to these wards, as they would retain good levels of electoral equality.

51 Having considered the Council's proposal for no change to these wards, we are generally including them as part of our draft recommendations, subject to adjusting the boundary of Wilnecote ward with Belgrave ward (as stated above), and running the boundary between Wilnecote and Stonydelph wards along the newly built A5 dual-carriageway in order to provide a more clearly identifiable boundary. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Wilnecote ward (unchanged in 2004). The remaining two wards would retain the same variances as under the existing arrangements.

Electoral Cycle

52 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

53 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 30 members should be retained;
- there should be 10 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

54 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose that 554 electors and Woodhouse High School be transferred from Amington ward to Glascote ward;
- we propose that 812 electors be transferred from Castle ward to Spital ward; and that 206 electors be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward;
- we propose that 304 electors be transferred from Spital ward to Mercian ward;
- the boundary between Belgrave and Wilnecote wards should run along the length of Glascote Lane, transferring 17 electors to Belgrave ward;

- elsewhere, we propose that defaced or undefined ward boundaries should follow ground features; and in particular, that the newly built A5 dual-carriageway should be used as the ward boundary in the south-east of the borough (between Stonydelph and Wilnecote wards, and between Glascote and Belgrave wards).

55 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	30	30	30	30
Number of wards	10	10	10	10
Average number of electors per councillor	1,843	1,843	1,923	1,923
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	2	0	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	1	0

56 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Tamworth Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from two to zero. By 2004, all wards are forecast to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Tamworth Borough Council should comprise 30 councillors serving 10 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

57 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tamworth and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for Tamworth

5 NEXT STEPS

58 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Tamworth. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 3 July 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

59 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Tamworth Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

60 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Tamworth Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council in seven wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure A1: Tamworth Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Amington	Amington ward (part)
Belgrave	<i>Unchanged</i>
Castle	Castle ward (part)
Glascote	Glascote ward; Amington ward (part)
Mercian	Mercian ward; Castle ward (part)
Spital	Spital ward; Castle ward (part)
Wilnecote	<i>Unchanged</i>

Figure A2: Tamworth Borough Council's Proposals: 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 %
Amington	3	6,047	2,016	9	6,076	2,025	5
Belgrave	3	5,558	1,853	1	5,592	1,864	-3
Castle	3	4,736	1,579	-14	5,409	1,803	-6
Glascote	3	5,824	1,941	5	5,851	1,950	1
Mercian	3	5,966	1,989	8	6,192	2,064	7
Spital	3	5,070	1,690	-8	5,289	1,763	-8
Wilnecote	3	5,716	1,905	3	5,977	1,992	4

Source: Electorate figures are based on Tamworth Borough Council's submission.

Tamworth Conservatives' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

We have included the Conservatives' proposals in their entirety, as they were based on a council size of 28, with two-member wards throughout the borough.

Figure A3: Tamworth Conservatives' Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Amington	Amington ward (part); Bolehall ward (part)
Amington Heath	Amington ward (part); Bolehall ward (part); Glascote ward (part)
Belgrave	Belgrave ward (part); Bolehall ward (part); Glascote ward (part); Wilnecote ward (part)
Bolehall	Bolehall ward (part); Amington ward (part); Castle ward (part)
Castle	Castle ward (part); Bolehall ward (part)
Dosthill	Trinity ward (part)
Glascote Heath	Glascote ward (part)
Hockley	Wilnecote ward (part)
Kettlebrook	Belgrave ward (part); Trinity ward (part)
Mercian	Mercian ward (part); Spital ward (part)
Pennine	Glascote ward (part); Stonydelph ward (part); Wilnecote ward (part)
Riverside	Castle ward (part); Mercian ward (part); Spital ward (part)
Spital	Spital ward (part)
Stonydelph	Stonydelph ward (part); Glascote ward (part)

Figure A4: Tamworth Conservatives' Proposals: 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 %
Amington	2	3,948	1,974	0	3,965	1,983	-4
Amington Heath	2	3,876	1,938	-2	3,896	1,948	-5
Belgrave	2	3,882	1,941	-2	3,915	1,958	-5
Bolehall	2	3,795	1,898	-4	3,816	1,908	-7
Castle	2	3,949	1,975	0	4,125	2,063	0
Dosthill	2	4,056	2,028	3	4,759	2,380	16
Glascote Heath	2	3,806	1,903	-4	3,826	1,913	-7
Hockley	2	4,024	2,012	2	4,057	2,029	-2
Kettlebrook	2	3,846	1,923	-3	4,006	2,003	-3
Mercian	2	4,013	2,007	2	4,038	2,019	-2
Pennine	2	4,011	2,006	2	4,252	2,126	3
Riverside	2	4,061	2,031	3	4,782	2,391	16
Spital	2	3,998	1,999	1	4,196	2,098	2
Stonydelph	2	4,030	2,015	2	4,049	2,025	-2
Totals	28	55,295	-	-	57,682	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,975	-	-	2,060	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Tamworth Conservatives' submission.

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

(f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

(g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

(h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

10 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.