

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire

Further electoral review

June 2005

Translations and other formats

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities, as directed by The Electoral Commission. As a result of the poor levels of electoral equality in South Gloucestershire under the existing arrangements, on 2 June 2004 The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to review the electoral arrangements of South Gloucestershire. The broad objective of this electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole.

Current electoral arrangements

The Council presently has 70 members who are elected from 35 wards. The district contains 46 parishes, but the Kingswood area is unparished. The electorate of the district is 194,952 (December 2003).

Due to underestimations in the forecast of electorate growth during the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 35 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 40%.

The table below outlines the four stages of the review.

| Stage | Stage starts | Description |
|--------------|---------------------|---|
| One | 3 August 2004 | Submission of proposals to us |
| Two | 30 November 2004 | Our analysis and deliberation |
| Three | 21 June 2005 | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four | 13 September 2005 | Final deliberation prior to our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission |

Submissions received

During Stage One we received 39 submissions. The Council, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group all put forward district-wide schemes. We received a number of submissions expressing general support or opposition to these proposals.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

During the last review South Gloucestershire Council predicted a 4.6% growth in electorate, from 183,260 in 1997 to 192,084 in 2002. By 2003, the electorate had actually grown by 6% from the 1997 figure to 194,952. The Council continues to predict substantial growth, chiefly in the urban 'north fringe' area to the south of the district. It is predicting almost 5% growth in electorate over the next five years, from 194,952 in 2003 to 204,751 by 2008.

Council size

The Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 70 and was supported in this by the Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group. In light of the evidence received we recommend a council size of 70 members.

General analysis

We are proposing recommendations based largely on the Council and the Conservative Group's proposals. However, we propose moving away from these in a number of areas, to adopt a mixture of our own proposals and those put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group. In particular, in the Yate, Dodington and Chipping Sodbury area we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals as we consider they provide the best reflection of community identity. In the other urban areas we have generally adopted the Council and Conservative Group proposals, subject to a few minor amendments to reflect community identity or improve electoral equality. We are also proposing two single-member rural wards in the Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach area as we consider that these reflect the community identity of these areas. However, we have rejected a number of other proposals for single-member rural wards elsewhere in the district as we did not consider that there was sufficient evidence of community identity and in some cases they provided significantly worse electoral equality.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire contained in the report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 12 September 2005. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not reached final conclusions on the electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire and welcome comments on our draft recommendations from interested parties. In particular, we found getting the balance right between our statutory criteria especially difficult in the case of the Frampton Cotterell and Charfield & Ladden Brook wards and also Bitton & Oldland Common ward. We would particularly welcome local views on those areas, backed up by well argued evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 Almondsbury | 1 | Compton and Almondsbury parish wards of Almondsbury parish. |
| 2 Bitton & Oldland Common | 3 | Parish of Bitton; Orchard and Willsbridge parish wards of Oldland parish. |
| 3 Boyd Valley | 2 | Unchanged. Parishes of Cold Ashton; Doynton; Dryham & Hinton; Marshfield; Pucklechuch and Wick & Abson. |
| 4 Bradley Stoke North | 3 | The proposed Manor Farm parish ward and existing Primrose Bridge and Woodlands parish wards of Bradley Stoke parish. Stoke Lodge parish ward of Patchway parish. |
| 5 Bradley Stoke South | 2 | The proposed Baileys Court, Lakeside and Meadowbank parish wards of Bradley Stoke parish. |
| 6 Charfield & Ladden Brook | 2 | Parishes of Charfield; Cromhall; Falfield; Rangeworthy; Tortworth; Tytherington and Wickworth. The existing Iron Acton East parish ward of Iron Acton Parish. |
| 7 Chipping Sodbury | 2 | South West and North East parish wards of Sodbury parish; North East parish ward of Dodington parish. |
| 8 Cotswold Edge | 1 | Parishes of Acton Turville; Badminton; Hawkesbury; Horton; Little Sodbury and Tormarton; Old Sodbury parish ward of Sodbury parish. |
| 9 Dodington | 2 | North West parish ward of Dodington parish. South parish ward of Yate parish. |
| 10 Downend | 3 | Unchanged. Bromley Heath East, Bromley Heath West, Downend East and Downend West parish wards of Downend & Bromley Heath parish. |
| 11 Emersons Green | 3 | Badminton, Blackhorse; Emersons Green and Pomphrey parish wards of Mangotsfield Rural parish; Leap Brook parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish. |
| 12 Filton | 3 | Unchanged. Charborough, Conygre and Northville parish wards of Filton parish. |

Table 1 (cont): Draft recommendations: Summary

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 13 Frampton Cotterell | 2 | Frampton Cotterell parish; Iron Acton West parish ward of Iron Acton parish. |
| 14 Frenchay and Stoke Park | 2 | University and South parish wards of Stoke Gifford parish; Winterbourne Frenchay parish ward of Winterbourne parish. |
| 15 Hanham | 3 | Existing Hanham ward; Unparished part of the existing Woodstock ward. |
| 16 Kings Chase | 3 | Part of the existing Kings Chase ward. |
| 17 Longwell Green | 2 | East parish ward of Hanham Abbots parish. The proposed Barrs Court and Longwell Green parish wards of Oldland parish. |
| 18 Parkwall | 2 | The proposed Cadbury Heath and Wraxall parish wards of Oldland parish. |
| 19 Patchway | 3 | Coniston, Callicroft and Hempton parish wards of Patchway parish. Cribbs Causeway parish ward of Almondsbury parish. |
| 20 Pilning & Severn Beach | 1 | Pilning and Severn Beach parish; Berwick parish ward of Almondsbury parish. |
| 21 Rodway | 3 | Springfield parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish; the existing Rodway ward (unparished). |
| 22 Severn | 1 | Unchanged. Parishes of Aust, Hill, Oldbury, Olveston and Rockhampton. |
| 23 Siston | 1 | Siston parish. Part of the existing Kings Chase ward (unparished). |
| 24 Staple Hill | 2 | Unchanged. The existing Staple Hill ward. |
| 25 Stoke Gifford | 3 | Stoke Brook parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish. Central and North parish wards of Stoke Gifford Parish. |
| 26 Thornbury North | 2 | The proposed Central West, North and North East parish wards of Thornbury parish. |

Table 1 (cont): Draft recommendations: Summary

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 27 Thornbury South & Alveston | 2 | The proposed Central East and South parish wards of Thornbury parish. Alveston parish. |
| 28 Westerleigh | 1 | Westerleigh parish and South parish ward of Dodington parish. |
| 29 Winterbourne | 2 | Winterbourne and Winterbourne Down & Harnbrook parish wards of Winterbourne parish. |
| 30 Woodstock | 3 | Existing Woodstock ward (unparished) and the unparished part of the existing Hanham ward. |
| 31 Yate Central | 2 | The proposed Central, South East and South West parish wards of Yate parish. |
| 31 Yate North | 3 | The proposed Part of North, North West and West parish wards of Yate parish. |

Notes:

1. The district comprises 46 parishes and the unparished area of Kingswood.
2. The maps at the back of this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
3. We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire – 2003 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Almondsbury | 1 | 2,341 | 2,341 | -16 |
| 2 Bitton & Oldland Common | 3 | 8,631 | 2,877 | 3 |
| 3 Boyd Valley | 2 | 5,635 | 2,818 | 1 |
| 4 Bradley Stoke North | 3 | 8,227 | 2,742 | -2 |
| 5 Bradley Stoke South | 2 | 6,028 | 3,019 | 8 |
| 6 Charfield & Ladden Brook | 2 | 5,878 | 2,939 | 6 |
| 7 Chipping Sodbury | 2 | 5,670 | 2,835 | 2 |
| 8 Cotswold Edge | 1 | 2,702 | 2,702 | -3 |
| 9 Dodington | 2 | 5,952 | 2,976 | 7 |
| 10 Downend | 3 | 8,515 | 2,838 | 2 |
| 11 Emersons Green | 3 | 8,441 | 2,814 | 1 |
| 12 Filton | 3 | 7,933 | 2,644 | -5 |
| 13 Frampton Cotterell | 2 | 5,682 | 2,841 | 2 |
| 14 Frenchay and Stoke Park | 2 | 3,280 | 1,640 | -41 |
| 15 Hanham | 3 | 8,442 | 2,814 | 1 |
| 16 Kings Chase | 3 | 8,028 | 2,676 | -4 |
| 17 Longwell Green | 2 | 5,660 | 2,830 | 2 |
| 18 Parkwall | 2 | 5,966 | 2,983 | 7 |
| 19 Patchway | 3 | 6,603 | 2,201 | -21 |
| 20 Pilning & Severn Beach | 1 | 3,045 | 3,045 | 9 |
| 21 Rodway | 3 | 8,892 | 2,964 | 6 |
| 22 Severn | 1 | 2,792 | 2,792 | 0 |
| 23 Siston | 1 | 2,574 | 2,574 | -8 |
| 24 Staple Hill | 2 | 5,565 | 2,783 | 0 |
| 25 Stoke Gifford | 3 | 8,970 | 2,990 | 7 |

Table 2 (cont.): Draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire – 2008 electorate

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2008) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Almondsbury | 1 | 2,900 | 2,900 | -1 |
| 2 | Bitton & Oldland Common | 3 | 8,731 | 2,910 | -1 |
| 3 | Boyd Valley | 2 | 5,777 | 2,889 | -1 |
| 4 | Bradley Stoke North | 3 | 8,823 | 2,941 | 1 |
| 5 | Bradley Stoke South | 2 | 6,093 | 3,047 | 4 |
| 6 | Charfield & Ladden Brook | 2 | 5,990 | 2,995 | 2 |
| 7 | Chipping Sodbury | 2 | 5,757 | 2,879 | -2 |
| 8 | Cotswold Edge | 1 | 2,760 | 2,760 | -6 |
| 9 | Dodington | 2 | 5,955 | 2,978 | 2 |
| 10 | Downend | 3 | 8,639 | 2,880 | -2 |
| 11 | Emersons Green | 3 | 9,016 | 3,005 | 3 |
| 12 | Filton | 3 | 8,433 | 2,811 | -4 |
| 13 | Frampton Cotterell | 2 | 5,750 | 2,875 | -2 |
| 14 | Frenchay and Stoke Park | 2 | 5,937 | 2,969 | 1 |
| 15 | Hanham | 3 | 8,636 | 2,879 | -2 |
| 16 | Kings Chase | 3 | 8,348 | 2,783 | -5 |
| 17 | Longwell Green | 2 | 5,815 | 2,908 | -1 |
| 18 | Parkwall | 2 | 6,045 | 3,023 | 3 |
| 19 | Patchway | 3 | 8,183 | 2,728 | -7 |
| 20 | Pilning & Severn Beach | 1 | 3,074 | 3,074 | 5 |
| 21 | Rodway | 3 | 8,906 | 2,969 | 1 |
| 22 | Severn | 1 | 2,871 | 2,871 | -2 |
| 23 | Siston | 1 | 3,012 | 3,012 | 3 |
| 24 | Staple Hill | 2 | 5,786 | 2,893 | -1 |
| 25 | Stoke Gifford | 3 | 8,988 | 2,996 | 2 |

Table 2 (cont.): Draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire – 2003 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 Thornbury North | 2 | 6,233 | 3,117 | 12 |
| 27 Thornbury South & Alveston | 2 | 5,987 | 2,994 | 7 |
| 28 Westerleigh | 1 | 2,954 | 2,954 | 6 |
| 29 Winterbourne | 2 | 5,770 | 2,885 | 4 |
| 30 Woodstock | 3 | 7,830 | 2,610 | -6 |
| 31 Yate Central | 2 | 5,869 | 2,935 | 5 |
| 32 Yate North | 3 | 8,847 | 2,949 | 6 |
| Totals | 70 | 194,592 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 2,785 | - |

Table 2 (cont.): Draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire – 2008 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2008) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 Thornbury North | 2 | 6,278 | 3,139 | 7 |
| 27 Thornbury South & Alveston | 2 | 6,106 | 3,053 | 4 |
| 28 Westerleigh | 1 | 2,986 | 2,986 | 2 |
| 29 Winterbourne | 2 | 5,830 | 2,915 | 0 |
| 30 Woodstock | 3 | 8,433 | 2,811 | -4 |
| 31 Yate Central | 2 | 5,973 | 2,987 | 2 |
| 32 Yate North | 3 | 8,920 | 2,973 | 2 |
| Totals | 70 | 204,751 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 2,925 | - |

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the Unitary Authority of South Gloucestershire, on which we are now consulting.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 The Electoral Commission agreed that The Boundary Committee should make on-going assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a Periodic Electoral Review (PER) has elapsed. It was agreed that the criteria for deciding which authorities should be investigated were that either:

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

3 The intention of the research was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances and assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of South Gloucestershire's electoral arrangements. South Gloucestershire's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1998. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 3 November 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2003.

5 In carrying out these reviews we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of South Gloucestershire is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by The Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

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

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. When electoral imbalances arise across an area, or between individual wards, that principle can become eroded if the imbalances are left uncorrected. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, providing that each councillor represents exactly the same number of electors is unachievable given geographic and other constraints, including the make up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. The Electoral Commission's *Guidance* to the Committee on this subject is quite clear. It is of paramount importance that any council size proposed to us has been developed and can be argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure. As intimated in its *Guidance*, The Electoral Commission does not allow for the decision on council size to be based purely on addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider the factor of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be ensuring that the authority's political management arrangements are best employed under the recommended council size, and that this can be shown to be so.

11 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size best allows the political management structures to be employed most effectively, achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

12 Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

| Stage | Stage starts | Description |
|-------|-------------------|---|
| One | 3 August 2004 | Submission of proposals to us |
| Two | 30 November 2004 | Our analysis and deliberation |
| Three | 21 June 2005 | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four | 13 September 2005 | Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations |

14 Stage One began on 3 August 2004, when we wrote to South Gloucestershire Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also wrote to Avon and Somerset Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Avon Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited South Gloucestershire Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 2004.

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

16 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 21 June 2005 and will end on 12 September 2005, involves publishing the draft proposals 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 these draft proposals.**

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

Equal Opportunities

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

- The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

National Parks, AONBs and the Broads

19 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

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

2 Current electoral arrangements

20 South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority was created in the last round of local government structural reviews and combines the now defunct Kingswood and Northavon councils. The south of the district comprises the northern fringes of Bristol, from which it is virtually indistinguishable, while the surrounding area is predominantly rural, with two towns of Yate and Thornbury. To the west the district is bounded by the River Severn, while the east borders the Cotswolds.

21 The Council presently has 70 members who are elected from 35 wards. The district contains 46 parishes, but the Kingswood area is unparished. The electorate of the district is 194,952 (December 2003).

22 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,785 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 2,925 by the year 2008 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to underestimations in electorate growth during the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 35 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 40%. As a result of the further research undertaken into the continuing levels of electoral inequality, The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of South Gloucestershire Council 2 June 2004.

23 The existing Siston ward has 42% more electors than the average. Given ongoing development, this situation is expected to worsen by 2008, with the ward having 47% more electors.

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

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire – 2003 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Almondsbury | 1 | 3,046 | 3,046 | 9 |
| 2 Alveston | 1 | 2,503 | 2,503 | -10 |
| 3 Bitton | 1 | 2,736 | 2,736 | -2 |
| 4 Boyd Valley | 2 | 5,635 | 2,818 | 1 |
| 5 Bradley Stoke Baileys Court | 1 | 3,188 | 3,188 | 14 |
| 6 Bradley Stoke Bowsland | 2 | 6,123 | 3,062 | 10 |
| 7 Bradley Stoke Sherbourne | 2 | 4,068 | 2,034 | -27 |
| 8 Charfield | 1 | 2,678 | 2,678 | -4 |
| 9 Chipping Sodbury | 2 | 5,199 | 2,600 | -7 |
| 10 Cotswold Edge | 1 | 2,972 | 2,972 | 7 |
| 11 Dodington | 2 | 5,385 | 2,693 | -3 |
| 12 Downend | 3 | 8,515 | 2,838 | 2 |
| 13 Filton | 3 | 7,933 | 2,644 | -5 |
| 14 Frampton Cotterell | 2 | 5,091 | 2,546 | -9 |
| 15 Hanham | 3 | 7,957 | 2,652 | -5 |
| 16 Kings Chase | 3 | 8,270 | 2,757 | -1 |
| 17 Ladden Brook | 1 | 2,887 | 2,887 | 4 |
| 18 Longwell Green | 2 | 5,822 | 2,911 | 5 |
| 19 Oldland Common | 2 | 5,282 | 2,641 | -5 |
| 20 Parkwall | 2 | 6,191 | 3,096 | 11 |
| 21 Patchway | 3 | 8,071 | 2,690 | -3 |
| 22 Pilning & Severn Beach | 1 | 2,775 | 2,775 | 0 |
| 23 Rodway | 3 | 7,788 | 2,596 | -7 |
| 24 Severn | 1 | 2,792 | 2,792 | 0 |
| 25 Siston | 3 | 11,877 | 3,959 | 42 |

Table 4 (cont): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire – 2008 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2008) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 Almondsbury | 1 | 3,608 | 3,608 | 23 |
| 2 Alveston | 1 | 2,521 | 2,521 | -14 |
| 3 Bitton | 1 | 2,786 | 2,786 | -5 |
| 4 Boyd Valley | 2 | 5,777 | 2,889 | -1 |
| 5 Bradley Stoke Baileys Court | 1 | 3,188 | 3,188 | 9 |
| 6 Bradley Stoke Bowsland | 2 | 6,123 | 3,062 | 5 |
| 7 Bradley Stoke Sherbourne | 2 | 4,698 | 2,349 | -20 |
| 8 Charfield | 1 | 2,696 | 2,696 | -8 |
| 9 Chipping Sodbury | 2 | 5,289 | 2,645 | -10 |
| 10 Cotswold Edge | 1 | 3,035 | 3,035 | 4 |
| 11 Dodington | 2 | 5,385 | 2,693 | -8 |
| 12 Downend | 3 | 8,639 | 2,880 | -2 |
| 13 Filton | 3 | 8,433 | 2,811 | -4 |
| 14 Frampton Cotterell | 2 | 5,150 | 2,575 | -12 |
| 15 Hanham | 3 | 8,151 | 2,717 | -7 |
| 16 Kings Chase | 3 | 8,590 | 2,863 | -2 |
| 17 Ladden Brook | 1 | 2,948 | 2,948 | 1 |
| 18 Longwell Green | 2 | 5,977 | 2,989 | 2 |
| 19 Oldland Common | 2 | 5,332 | 2,666 | -9 |
| 20 Parkwall | 2 | 6,270 | 3,135 | 7 |
| 21 Patchway | 3 | 9,651 | 3,217 | 10 |
| 22 Pilning & Severn Beach | 1 | 2,802 | 2,802 | -4 |
| 23 Rodway | 3 | 7,788 | 2,596 | -11 |
| 24 Severn | 1 | 2,871 | 2,871 | -2 |
| 25 Siston | 3 | 12,907 | 4,302 | 47 |

Table 4 (cont): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire – 2003 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 Staple Hill | 2 | 5,565 | 2,783 | 0 |
| 27 Stoke Gifford | 3 | 8,768 | 2,923 | 5 |
| 28 Thornbury North | 2 | 5,490 | 2,745 | -1 |
| 29 Thornbury South | 2 | 5,155 | 2,578 | -7 |
| 30 Westerleigh | 1 | 2,684 | 2,684 | -4 |
| 31 Winterbourne | 3 | 8,216 | 2,739 | -2 |
| 32 Woodstock | 3 | 8,541 | 2,847 | 2 |
| 33 Yate Central | 2 | 5,316 | 2,658 | -5 |
| 34 Yate North | 2 | 5,588 | 2,794 | 0 |
| 35 Yate West | 2 | 4,845 | 2,423 | -13 |
| Totals | 70 | 194,952 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 2,785 | - |

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire – 2008 electorate

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2008) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 26 Staple Hill | 2 | 5,786 | 2,893 | -1 |
| 27 Stoke Gifford | 3 | 8,824 | 2,941 | 1 |
| 28 Thornbury North | 2 | 5,535 | 2,768 | -5 |
| 29 Thornbury South | 2 | 5,274 | 2,637 | -10 |
| 30 Westerleigh | 1 | 2,711 | 2,711 | -7 |
| 31 Winterbourne | 3 | 10,931 | 3,644 | 25 |
| 32 Woodstock | 3 | 9,144 | 3,048 | 4 |
| 33 Yate Central | 2 | 5,361 | 2,681 | -8 |
| 34 Yate North | 2 | 5,696 | 2,848 | -3 |
| 35 Yate West | 2 | 4,874 | 2,437 | -17 |
| Totals | 70 | 204,751 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 2,925 | - |

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

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

3 Submissions received

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

26 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met officers and members from the Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 39 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and the Conservative Group on the Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Council.

South Gloucestershire Council

27 The Council proposed retaining a council of 70 members, the same as at present. It put forward a favoured Option One scheme, based on a mixture of 34 single-, two- and three-member wards. However, in parts of the Central Rural, Kingswood North, Severn Vale and Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington areas it provided a 'fallback' option (Option Two). It proposed these as 'fallback' options in areas where we might not support its 'favoured' option.

Political groups

28 The Conservative Group on the Council put forward proposals based largely on the Council's scheme. In the areas where the Council put forward alternative proposals (Option Two) the Conservative Group supported these.

29 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council put forward entirely different proposals from the Council and Conservative Group, except in the South Kingswood area where its proposals were identical to the Council's, with the exception of Bitton and Oldland Common wards, which it proposed combining. It proposed a mixture of 34 single-, two- and three-member wards.

30 The Labour Group on South Gloucestershire Council expressed support for the Council's Option One proposals.

Members of Parliament

31 We received four submissions from Members of Parliament. Roger Berry MP expressed support for a council size of 70 members, but requested that the boundaries of the original Kingswood and Northavon Councils be retained. In addition to this he commented on the Kingswood North and Kingswood South areas. Steve Webb MP queried the extent of the Council's consultation on the proposals that it submitted and objected to its proposals in a number of areas. Doug Naysmith MP expressed support for the Council's proposals. Dan Norris MP expressed support for the Council's Oldland Common ward and the comments of Bitton & District Labour Party.

Councillors

32 We received seven representations from councillors. Councillor Hope (Cotswold Edge ward) also questioned the Council's consultation stating that its submission did not reflect the scheme it consulted on and expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals. Councillor Fox (Alveston ward) and Councillor Fardell (Thornbury North ward) objected to the Council's proposals to include Alveston parish in a ward with Thornbury town. Councillor Tyzack (Pilning & Severn Beach ward) objected to proposals for a two-member Almondsbury, Pilning & Severn Beach ward and expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group proposal. Councillor Gawler (Ladden Brook ward) questioned the Council's consultation procedure and specifically its proposals for Ladden Brook ward. He objected to the proposal to transfer part of Iron Acton parish to a ward with Frampton Cotterell. Councillors Mead (Chipping Sodbury ward) and Lawrance (Yate North ward) both expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals. Councillor Mead expressed particular objections to the Council's proposal to divide the high street in Chipping Sodbury.

Parish and town councils

33 In the North Fringe area, Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne parish councils expressed support for the Council's proposals. Patchway Town Council requested three district wards covering the parish, as existed under the former Northavon District Council. It also objected to the proposal to transfer an area of the parish to the east of the A38 to a Bradley Stoke ward, arguing that despite the road it had good community links with the remainder of the parish. It added that local people had rejected a similar proposal in 1993. In the Severn Vale area, Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council argued that the parish had sufficient electors to justify a single councillor, while Rockhampton Parish Council requested that it remain part of Severn ward. In the Eastern & Southern Rural area Pucklechurch Parish Council objected to the Council's proposals for a two-member Boyd Valley ward. Marshfield and Tormarton parish councils put forward proposals for an alternative two-member ward, citing shared objectives under the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plan. In the Yate area Sodbury and Yate town councils both expressed support for the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee's proposals. Councillor Olver (Dodington Parish Council) objected to the Council's proposal to transfer the rural part of Dodington parish to a rural parish with Westerleigh parish, arguing that the area has strong links with Yate. In the Kingswood North area Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council objected to the Council's proposals to transfer part of the parish to the Council's proposed Emersons Green ward. In the Kingswood South area Bitton Parish Council requested no change to the existing electoral arrangements. Oldland Parish Council put forward parish warding amendments, but made no comments on the district ward arrangements.

Others

34 Wansdyke Constituency Labour Party and Kingswood Constituency Labour Party both expressed support for the Council's proposals. In the Severn Vale area, Thornbury Liberal Democrats objected to the Council's proposals to include Alveston parish in a ward with Thornbury town. The Joint Parishes Consultative Committee put forward identical proposals for the Yate area to those submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group. In the Kingswood North area Labour South West expressed support for the Council's

proposal. A local resident proposed a ward solely comprising Siston Parish. Another local resident objected to the inclusion of the properties on Rodway Hill Road in Rodway ward, as per the proposals supported by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups. In the Kingswood South area Bitton & District Labour Party expressed support for the Council's Option One proposal. A local resident put forward comments about structural changes to local authorities, but did not make specific comments about this review. Another local resident put forward comments about under-representation in parts of the district.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

35 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found getting the balance right between our statutory criteria especially difficult in the case of the Frampton Cotterell and Charfield & Ladden Brook wards and also Bitton & Oldland Common ward. We would particularly welcome local views on those areas, backed up by well argued evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Electorate figures

41 As part of the previous review of South Gloucestershire, the Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 4.6% between 1997 and 2002. By 2003, the electorate had actually grown by 6% from the 1997 figure to 194,952.

42 The Council predicts that the electorate will continue to grow substantially, chiefly in the urban 'north fringe' to the south of the district. It is predicting almost 5% growth in electorate over the next five years, from 194,952 in 2003 to 204,751 by 2008.

43 The Council provided limited supporting evidence for this, stating that it had considered: notes on housing completions; expected house completions (to 2008); electors per household at census day (29 April 2001); young adults at census day; and migration.

44 During Stage One the Council amended its electorate figures in Winterbourne ward (polling district WIB) to reflect local development. We did not receive any other comments on the electorate figures.

45 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and remain satisfied that the Council has provided the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

46 The Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 70 and was supported in this by the views of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups and by Roger Berry MP.

47 The Council explained the changing role of councillors under the new political management structure, arguing that councillors have lost their traditional role and continue to have a variety of new and demanding responsibilities. It emphasised the pressure of their representative role and argued that the current council size would enable them to fulfil this function.

48 It outlined its current leader and cabinet model of executive arrangements: an executive of nine members (the cabinet); five Select Committees with overview and scrutiny functions; various council committees discharging non-executive functions; five area forums; the Standards Committee; and various topic forums. It also outlined the role of councillors, stating '[they] are fully involved in the Council's constitutional structures and also participate in many outside bodies to which the Council makes appointments. Councillors also sit on school governing bodies, liaise with parish councils and get involved in community issues and local partnerships'.

49 It also cited a recent Audit Commission report that stated that the Council's Corporate Governance was awarded a 'top overall performance assessment score of 4'. It cited another Audit Commission 'Corporate Assessment' that concluded that 'The council is well managed, with an effective cabinet and working arrangements for scrutiny. [...] The constitution and scheme of delegation work well to ensure councillors and officers are clear about their responsibilities and accountabilities. Partners, local people and staff are overwhelmingly positive [...]. The addition of area forums to the political process has strengthened capacity in allowing the council to better connect with

local areas and to find local solutions to area based priorities. Through these effective arrangements [...] the council is able to achieve much with the resources at its disposal'.

50 It argued against any reduction in council size, stating '[it would] impose greater and unrealistic burdens on individual councillors, could weaken the current successful governance arrangements and also would be a disincentive to people being prepared to stand for election or re-election'.

51 These views were broadly supported and reflected in the comments of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups.

52 The Conservative Group 'endorse[d] the Council's submission with respect to retaining a Council of 70 members', adding that a reduction in the number of councillors would lead to increased ward size. It also argued that the continuing growth in electorate of South Gloucestershire creates 'an in-built progressive cut in representation [...] equivalent [to a] cut of five Councillors compared with the time of the previous review'.

53 The Liberal Democrat Group expressed support for a Council of 70 members. It argued that the mix of urban and rural populations requires 'the need to make a manageable ward [size] for the least densely populated part of the Council area', citing that this is done in the creation of Westminster constituencies. It also outlined the role of the councillor, arguing that they have a number 'of roles, developing a specialist expertise in their chosen scrutiny/executive areas, but also having a focused knowledge and awareness of the way the entire spread of council activity affects their ward' adding that this includes 'setting strategic direction, policy, budget and overall priorities; evaluating the effectiveness of policy implementation; reviewing the effectiveness of service delivery; representing accurately the political diversity of the area; acting as an advocate for the interests of residents; representing the council externally in partnerships; and representing the community to the council and council to community'.

54 It also highlighted councillors' role as a link with parishes stating 'they are the visible face of the council, present at parish council meetings and at community meetings/events', adding that 'this is a difficult and time-consuming task', particularly in wards like Cotswold Edge that comprises seven parishes. It argued that the current council 'enables South Gloucestershire to avoid mixed urban/rural wards ensuring there is a rural as well as urban voice', adding that 'rural wards bring particularly high workloads in some areas'.

55 Finally, while it argued that the 'least disruptive solution' would be to provide Siston ward with an extra councillor and make minor adjustments elsewhere adding that this would give it a councillor:elector ratio in line with other unitary authorities, it supported the argument to retain 70 members.

56 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note that a council size of 70 members draws support from the Council, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Groups. We also note from the evidence that members have exacting demands placed on their time and that under the new constitution they will continue to carry out many roles, including the important role of 'community champions'. We would concur with the view that a reduction in council size would make this task harder and

that retaining the existing council size will allow the Council to continue operating effectively.

57 We note that there are some references to workload, particularly in rural areas and would point out that we cannot have consideration for issues of rural sparsity.

58 However, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by the retention of the existing council of 70 members.

Electoral equality

59 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. Therefore, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific proposals we will look to improve electoral equality seeking a number of electors per councillor as close to the district average as possible. It is the Committee's aim to reduce all levels of under or over-representation providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities or effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would support such imbalances in terms of our other statutory criteria referred to above. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

General analysis

60 We note that for the purposes of this review, the Council based its proposals on seven generally discrete areas: Central Rural; Eastern & Southern Rural; Kingswood North; Kingswood South; North Fringe; Severn Vale; and Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington.

61 The other two district-wide schemes from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups also broadly adopted these areas, although we note that the Liberal Democrat Group had fundamental objections to the Council's assumptions for the Frampton Cotterell/Winterbourne boundary (discussed below) in the North Fringe area. As a result the Liberal Democrat Group have allocated a different number of councillors to the North Fringe area from the Council and Conservative Group.

62 However, despite the differences in this area, all parties are broadly agreed on the division of the district into these areas. Therefore, for the purposes of this review, in relation to the district-wide submissions and all others, we propose discussing our recommendations while having consideration for these areas.

63 The Liberal Democrat Group contends that the viability of its proposals depends on the adoption of its proposals in the Frampton Cotterell/Winterbourne area of the North Fringe. Indeed, the Liberal Democrat Group put forward comments on the Council's proposals in the event that its own were rejected. We also note that the Council and Conservative Group proposals consider the treatment of this area to be important. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that Frampton Cotterell should be placed in the Council's North Fringe area and that this 'enables a least change model to be adopted'.

64 We concur with the Liberal Democrat Group that the recommendations for the Frampton Cotterell area are important and that they have a knock-on effect in the remainder of the North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale areas. However, we cannot view this area in isolation and do not concur with view that the proposals for the North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale areas should hinge solely on our decision for Frampton Cotterell and have given consideration to the different proposals across this whole area. We do, however, concur that once certain decisions have been made on the North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale areas, the knock-on effects make it impossible to adopt elements of the other proposals in this area (with the exception of the issue of creating one two-member ward or two single-member wards in the Severn Vale and Central Rural areas). Indeed, the Liberal Democrat Group's submission of amendments to the Council's proposals, in the event of the rejection of its own proposals, goes some way to reflecting the fact that the different schemes are not sufficiently 'interchangeable' to enable adoption of parts of the different schemes in these areas.

65 We have examined the arguments from the Council and Conservative Group and from the Liberal Democrat Group in the Bradley Stoke and Stoke Gifford parishes area. While both sets of proposals put forward propositions based on community identity for the wards in these areas, we note that this evidence is often unclear and occasionally contradictory. We have not been convinced that either set of proposals provides better electoral arrangements in these areas. Therefore, we have identified a number of areas where there are major differences, including Frampton Cotterell, Thornbury and Patchway and have taken these into account in reaching our draft recommendations for the North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale. As stated above, our proposals in these areas have a significant knock-on effect to the surrounding areas and are discussed later.

66 We note that there have been several areas of disagreement between respondents in this area, including the difference in the allocation of councillors to the North Fringe area. We have sought to achieve a balance between the sometimes contradictory evidence and based some of our decisions on our tour of the area, which confirmed or dispelled certain assertions by respondents. In the rural area we have sought to secure electoral equality, except in those cases, such as Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach where there was sufficient evidence of community identity to persuade us to reflect this. Therefore, on balance, we are basing our recommendations for this area on the Council's proposals.

67 Unlike the North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale areas, the different proposals for the Eastern & Southern Rural, Kingswood North, Kingswood South and Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington areas can be considered discrete as all parties agree on these broad areas' boundaries.

68 In the Eastern & Southern Rural area we consider that the Council's proposals provide a better reflection of community identity, while securing effective and convenient local government and good levels of electoral equality.

69 In the Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington area the Council put forward alternative proposals (Option One and Option Two). The Conservative Group expressed support for Option One, and additionally provided proposals for the division of the six members for Yate. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward alternative proposals for the Yate area supported by the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee, Yate Town Council and Sodbury Town Council. We have a particular concern over the Council and Conservative Group's proposal to divide Chipping Sodbury town centre. Following our tour of the area we consider this boundary to be an arbitrary division in the centre of the High Street and note the knock-on effects each scheme has over a relatively small area. We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal in their entirety for this area.

70 In the Kingswood North we propose adopting the Council's Option One, subject to a minor amendment.

71 In the Kingswood South area the Council's proposals secure good electoral equality while producing boundaries that reflect communities. However, we also note a parish ward anomaly that has forced us to move away from the Council's Woodstock ward (discussed later). We also propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to combine Bitton and Oldland Common wards as it secures a minor improvement in electoral equality and do not consider there was sufficient evidence to suggest that this would adversely affect community identity.

Warding arrangements

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

- a North Fringe area: Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway; Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards (page 37)
- b Severn Vale area: Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury South and Thornbury North wards (page 44)
- c Central Rural area: Charfield; Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards (page 50)
- d Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area: Chipping Sodbury; Dodington; Yate Central; Yate North and Yate West wards (page 54)
- e Kingswood North area: Downend; Kings Chase; Rodway; Siston and Staple Hill wards (page 62)
- f Kingswood South area: Bitton; Hanham; Longwell Green; Oldland Common; Parkwall and Woodstock wards (page 69)
- g Eastern & Southern Rural area: Boyd Valley; Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards (page 73)

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

North Fringe area: Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway; Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards

74 The North Fringe area comprises Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway, Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards. Table 5 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 5: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Bradley Stoke Baileys Court | Baileys Court parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish | 1 |
| Bradley Stoke Bowsland | Primrose Bridge parish ward and Woodlands parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish | 2 |
| Bradley Stoke Sherbourne | Lakeside parish ward and Manor Farm parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish | 2 |
| Filton | Filton parish | 3 |
| Patchway | Patchway parish | 3 |
| Stoke Gifford | North parish ward and South parish ward of Stoke Gifford parish | 3 |
| Winterbourne | Winterbourne parish; University parish ward of Stoke Gifford parish | 3 |

75 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Bradley Stoke Central ward, single-member Bradley Stoke North ward, two-member Bradley Stoke South ward, three-member Filton ward, two-member Frenchay & Stoke Park ward, three-member Patchway ward, three-member Stoke Gifford ward and two-member Winterbourne ward. The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council.

76 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward proposals for a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, three-member Central Stokes ward, three-member Filton ward, three-member Patchway ward, three-member Stoke Gifford ward and two-member Winterbourne ward.

77 We have identified two fundamental differences between the Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in Patchway and the Watley's End area of Winterbourne parish. While we acknowledge that there are other differences between the sets of proposals, we do not consider the arguments for the remaining areas to be

as persuasive or sufficiently different to those put forward in Patchway and Watley's End.

78 The Council stated that it had considered transferring the Watley's End area of Winterbourne parish to address the lower than the district average number of electors in Frampton Cotterell. However, it stated that 'the natural and clear boundary between Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell should not be crossed'. It added, 'This is reinforced by the existence of the Green Belt and the fact that [...] Watley's End is the northern part of Winterbourne village and looks to the village centre (a short distance away) for its community facilities'.

79 The Conservative Group argued in favour of keeping Winterbourne separated from Frampton Cotterell. Referring specifically to the Watley's End area it stated 'they look to Winterbourne for their facilities such as the rank of shops in Park Avenue and the Greenfield Community Centre also in Park Avenue. The Greenfield Centre is the core of the Winterbourne Community in providing community meeting rooms, just as the Brockridge Centre is for Frampton Cotterell'. It added, 'Frampton Cotterell tends to look to the north and Iron Acton, whereas Winterbourne tends to look to the south down Winterbourne Hill to the Ring Road and Hambrook'. Finally, it pointed out that under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals Winterbourne parish would require re-warding.

80 Winterbourne Parish Council also objected to any proposals that would join Frampton Cotterell and Watley's End, arguing that the two areas are divided by 'the Green Belt, known locally as "The Horseshoe"', adding that the division was further highlighted when 'Frampton Cotterell Councillors and residents recently strongly objected to any suggestion that they could use Winterbourne Post Office'. It cited that this division was reflected in the review of parliamentary boundaries.

81 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that Frampton Cotterell parish should be included in the Council's North Fringe area. However, as stated earlier, we do not consider the issue of Frampton Cotterell should be the deciding factor for the whole district. We have therefore considered the Liberal Democrat Group proposals on the evidence they put forward for Frampton Cotterell's links with its neighbours. It argued for the inclusion of Watley's End in a ward with Frampton Cotterell. It included aerial photography to argue that 'Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne are contiguous, and form one community within the Green Belt', adding they are 'physically integrated with no space between, both parishes clustered around the secondary school to which they both feed. It argued that 'Watley's End is the northern part of Winterbourne village and like the immediately adjoining Frampton Cotterell community looks to the same places as the west ward of Frampton Cotterell for all its community facilities – library, post office, health and other facilities', adding 'The residents in Frampton Cotterell and Watley's End both look to Winterbourne for facilities'.

82 In the Patchway area, the Council acknowledged that Patchway Town Council objected to its proposals to split the parish between Patchway and Bradley Stoke North wards. However, the Council argued 'whilst accepting that the Stoke Lodge area [of Patchway parish ...] includes the original part of Patchway, the area is effectively cut off from the rest of Patchway and its town centre, by the A38 dual carriageway', adding 'Stoke Lodge has a distinct residential character and directly adjoins the neighbouring housing estates of Bradley Stoke'. It also argued that its proposals to include 'most of the airfield and the adjoining commercial/industrial area and regional shopping centre as

well has neighbouring current and new residential areas, in one ward, will strengthen the ability to represent the complex and related arising issues’.

83 The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council’s proposals for Patchway ward, arguing that it ‘would have extremely powerful boundaries – M5 Motorway, A38 dual carriageway and the Bristol City boundary’, adding that the A38 has minimal crossing points and therefore separates the Patchway and Stoke Lodge communities. It argued that ‘its children attend different schools: Patchway children attend Coniston or Callicroft primary schools, rather than the schools the A38 separates them from’, adding that ‘at secondary level Patchway children attend Patchway Secondary School, whereas Stoke Lodge children are securing places at the new Bradley Stoke School and can look to Filton School’.

84 It also argued that the new Patchway ward would combine ‘all the commercial and retail community into a single ward’, adding ‘The Mall and The Venue are major retail and leisure venues and generate a massive impact on Patchway, especially in terms of transport [...] Patchway Councillors regularly raise concerns about the impact the Mall has on traffic in Patchway. As well as this it would locate all the industrial and commercial parts of the otherwise rural Almondsbury ward into a similar ward [...] which will enable a much improved alignment between community interests’.

85 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council’s Patchway ward and put forward its own alternative. It objected to the proposal to transfer part of Almondsbury parish into a ward with part of Patchway parish arguing that the area has ‘easy access along the A4018’ to the remainder of the ward, adding ‘they have no immediate link to the residential areas of Patchway, being separated from them by the massive retail and entertainment complex at Cribbs Causeway’. Additionally it argued that the ‘people living along the A4018 send their children to entirely different primary and secondary schools, use different doctors, different shops, are members of entirely different social and community groups’.

86 The Liberal Democrat Group also objected to the Council’s proposals arguing that its proposals deliberately leave the new Patchway ward with too few electors in 2008 in a ‘foolish’ attempt to accommodate the further development planned for the area by 2011. It argued that, given the further planned development, the Council’s attempt would be in vain, making further boundary changes inevitable. It argued that its own proposals would mean that ‘a simple and relatively non-disruptive solution can be found’. Finally, it argued that it believed that the Council’s ‘proposal over-plays the importance of the A38 as a community boundary. There is easy vehicular access across the A38, children from both sides of it attend the same secondary school, use the same library and community facilities and share many community groups’. It added, ‘some parts of Stoke Lodge have now moved their focus towards schools and community facilities such as libraries, community buildings and shops in Bradley Stoke, but the western part of Stoke Lodge continues to be inextricably linked with the rest of Patchway’.

87 Patchway Town Council requested the creation of ‘three wards in Patchway [...] as was the situation under Northavon District Council’. It objected to the Council’s proposal to transfer the Stoke Lodge area into a ward with Bradley Stoke arguing that ‘Stoke Lodge does not identify with Bradley Stoke but is an integral part of Patchway’, adding ‘The Patchway Common area (the north part of Stoke Lodge ward) is the original village of Patchway’.

88 Doug Naysmith MP expressed support for the Council's proposed new Patchway ward with an eastern boundary at the A38.

89 We acknowledge that the electoral arrangements for these two areas to have considerable impact on the proposal we adopt for the entire North Fringe, Central Rural and Severn Vale areas. We also consider that in terms of the North Fringe area itself, the differences between the Council and Conservative Group's proposals and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals are most evident and clearly argued.

90 We note the comments of the Liberal Democrat Group and, based on our tour of the area, would concur with its argument that the division of Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell by the Green Belt is unclear. Indeed we also note Watley's End's proximity to Frampton Cotterell. We note that the Liberal Democrat Group contend that Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell share community facilities between them, but then acknowledge that both areas share links with Winterbourne too. We note that the Council, Conservative Group and Winterbourne Parish Council put forward argument that contradicts the Liberal Democrat Group's first assertion, arguing that the Watley's End area looks south into the remainder of Winterbourne parish. We do not consider that either side has put forward particularly strong evidence of what the community links between the areas are, and note that their respective positions are somewhat contradictory. However, on balance, given the Liberal Democrat Group's acknowledgement that both Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell look south towards Winterbourne, we consider the Council's proposal better reflects community identity. In addition to this, we also favour this proposal as it avoids unnecessary parish warding of Winterbourne parish and secures marginally better electoral equality.

91 We have given careful consideration to the arguments over Patchway ward. As with the arguments for the Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne area, we note that both sets of proposals provide some contradictory argument. We note the Conservative Group's argument that some residents in Stoke Lodge now look towards Bradley Stoke for school and while the Liberal Democrat Group contradicted this, arguing that residents from both sides of the A38 use facilities in Patchway and cited the use of secondary schools, the Liberal Democrat Group also contradicted itself by acknowledging that some residents in Stoke Lodge are now focused towards Bradley Stoke for community facilities. From our tour of the area, we consider the A38 to be a strong barrier with minimal crossing points and while the area of Stoke Lodge to the east of the dual carriageway may have historical links to Patchway, we consider that the links towards Bradley Stoke are now sufficiently significant to favour the Council's proposals. We also note the comments about the lack of access that the Cribbs Causeway area has to the rest of the ward, but we consider it to have good access and certainly better access than it does to the remainder of Almondsbury parish, which lies to the north of the M5. We therefore consider that the Council's proposals provide the best electoral arrangements in this area

92 In addition to this, while we acknowledge the Liberal Democrat Group's concerns over links of the residents around the A4108 to Patchway, we note that this area does have road links into Patchway, albeit via the commercial and retail area. In addition to this, we concur with the Conservative Group's argument that placing most of the commercial and retail area in a single area will enable local councillors to have input on issues that affect their electorate. We consider it appropriate to place this area in a

single urban ward, rather than be divided, with part of it in the more rural Almondsbury parish. Finally, we also note the Liberal Democrat Group's arguments that its proposals would provide a better solution for warding arrangements beyond 2008. Unfortunately, we are unable to give consideration to possible electoral variances beyond the five years laid out in both the legislation and the Electoral Commission's Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews. We therefore consider the Council and Conservative Group's proposals provide the best electoral arrangements in this area.

93 Given that we propose adopting the Council's proposals for Patchway and Winterbourne wards, this has a knock-on effect to what we can consider in the remainder of the North Fringe area. However, we have still had regard for comments put forward in the Liberal Democrat Group's submission for this area.

94 In the remainder of this area the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Bradley Stoke Central ward, single-member Bradley Stoke North ward, two-member Bradley Stoke South ward, three-member Filton ward, two-member Frenchay & Stoke Park ward and two-member Winterbourne ward.

95 The Council did not put forward any arguments for its proposals for Bradley Stoke Central, Bradley Stoke North or Bradley Stoke South wards. However, the Conservative Group, who supported the Council's proposals for these wards, did put forward some arguments. It argued that its proposed Bradley Stoke North ward is distinct from the remainder of Bradley Stoke, as it is the only part to contain industry and commerce. It added that the ward would have clear boundaries, including the A38, M5, M4, Bradley Stoke Way and Bowsland Way. It argued that residents 'would shop at Bradley Stoke Pavilions rather than the shops on the other side of the perilously busy Bradley Stoke Way', while 'Woodlands provide[s] many informal community facilities such as the pub of New Leaze'. It argued that its Bradley Stoke Central ward sought to keep 'Stoke Lodge [...] together as a distinct and united ward', adding that it 'is therefore of critical importance that the ward to which Stoke Lodge transfers should not be too large as this would only exacerbate concerns about community identity and the relative position of Bradley Stoke'. However, it argued that it also sought to 'stress the community interests between Bradley Stoke and the whole of Stoke Lodge', including schools and community facilities. It also rejected any proposal that would join the proposed Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards as 'inappropriate because it would result in Stoke Lodge being swamped by a much larger Bradley Stoke conurbation. It would also forcibly marry two parts of Bradley Stoke, which are distinct as recognised by existing Town Council boundaries'.

96 The Conservative Group argued that its Bradley Stoke South ward comprises largely residential roads that 'share common educational links' around several primary schools and whose residents shop in the Tesco retail centre off Savages Road. The Conservative Group stated that the 'central core of [its Stoke Gifford] ward is Stoke Gifford Village [which] includes the primary school, shops, pubs, community facilities, park and church', adding that it 'has extremely strong links with Little Stoke. Both are older communities, which are significantly affected by the growth of Bradley Stoke, not least the traffic generated by Bradley Stoke [...] Little Stoke uses amenity spaces in Stoke Gifford [and] there is a cross over between children attending primary schools in these areas and that look towards Filton for secondary schools and not Bradley Stoke'. It added that its proposals transferred the Steanbridge Estate, which is part of Bradley Stoke parish to its Stoke Gifford ward, as the 'area is separated from Bradley Stoke

[and] children from these roads are regularly allocated places in Little Stoke Primary because it is their nearest school', adding 'since the closure of Bailey's Court Post Office they would naturally look to the post office in Little Stoke'. Finally it argued that separating 'the remainder of the [parish] south of the main London railway line provides a very powerful boundary', adding 'there is only one road linking north and south of the railway line, along the Hatchet Road, in the entire parish'.

97 The Conservative Group expressed support for the existing Filton ward, arguing that it secures good electoral equality and has powerful boundaries that are coterminous with the parish boundaries.

98 The Conservative Group also expressed support for the Council's Stoke Park & Frenchay ward, arguing that 'this is an area, which has a clearly defined interest in development and transportation covering major growth areas, areas threatened with development, the ring road and major employers like Frenchay Hospital, MOD, AXA insurance and large superstores'. It added 'almost all ward work in this area is centred upon the challenges of new development or dealing with issues associated with existing development. It stated that 'Frenchay is intimately associated with Stoke Park as the only communities sandwiched between the ring road and Bristol City boundary'. It also cited some school links, adding that 'Frenchay has always been distinct from the remainder of Winterbourne parish [and] it is some considerable distance from the bulk of Winterbourne'.

99 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council's proposal to include the area of Winterbourne parish (polling district WIF) to the south of the A4174 in Winterbourne ward. It argued that 'These two wards are completely indistinguishable, vote in the same ballot box in the same polling station (Frenchay village hall)'. It acknowledged that this would worsen electoral equality.

100 As highlighted above, the Conservative Group also expressed support for the Council's Winterbourne ward.

101 As stated earlier, the Liberal Democrat Group put forward a number of amendments to the Council's proposals in the event that its proposals for the Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne areas were rejected. It considered that the Council had created an 'artificially small Patchway ward leaving scope for further development on the Northfield site', but that this would be insufficient to accommodate the predicted growth by 2011. It requested 'the creation of a [Patchway] ward with 0% deviance in 2008, but retaining part of Patchway Stoke Lodge within the Patchway ward', arguing that 'locally the A38 is not seen as a barrier [and] Residents in Patchway Stoke Lodge [...] are well integrated into Patchway. It did not, however, specify which part of Patchway Stoke Lodge should be retained.

102 The Liberal Democrat Group also objected to the Council's proposals for the Bradley Stoke area, particularly 'the artificial creation of a single-member ward [as it] constructs artificial boundaries between the residents of Bradley Stoke'. It therefore proposes 'removing the artificial boundary [...] between Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central'.

103 The Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Filton ward were identical to the Council's. It stated 'the residential communities of Filton are poorly located in relation to

any other residential community [and] no other residential area is sufficiently close to easily conjoin to create greater electoral equality in this zone [as] at present’.

104 Stoke Gifford Parish Council expressed support for the Council’s proposals and put forward similar argument to the Conservative Group. It argued that Stoke Gifford has ‘long existing ties’ with Little Stoke, including community space like Mead Park, ‘cross-over’ between schools and ‘shops or other local amenities’. It added that ‘the centre of the two communities is the [Stean Bridge] roundabout area at the northern end of Hatchet Road. Adjacent to this is the oldest part of Bradley Stoke; Stean Bridge and its offshoots [...]. These communities are not part of the Bradley Stoke development [and] links directly to Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke’. It also argued that the railway line provides a clearly defined boundary and that the area to the south ‘comprises the commercial centre of the parish and is centred on the ring road [and] includes major employers like AXA Sun Life, large superstores, the University, Hewlett Packard and various communities’. It added ‘all these share a common interest in the ring road and traffic issues particularly. Development is also a central issue for these residents including new halls of residence and UWE, the new housing at Hewlett Packard and the perennial threat of development of Harry Stoke’. It also highlighted the lack of good links across the railway line.

105 Winterbourne Parish Council stated that ‘Frenchay has always been a distinct part of the parish [and] is largely separated from the rest of Winterbourne’, adding ‘it is linked strongly with the Stoke Park area [and] Stoke Park children are allocated places at Frenchay Primary School by the Council’. It also highlighted shared concerns, including ‘traffic flowing into Frenchay Park Road, Stoke Lane and Coldharbour Lane’.

106 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We consider that the Council’s proposals for Patchway and Winterbourne provide good electoral arrangements that most closely reflect our statutory criteria. Given the knock-on effect of adopting these wards we are unable to consider the remainder of the Liberal Democrat Group’s proposals for the North Fringe area. However, we have given consideration to its proposed amendments to the Council’s proposals, as well as the other submissions that we received.

107 We note that all groups expressed support for the existing Filton ward. In light of the support, good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries that this ward will have, we propose retaining this as part of our draft recommendations.

108 We note the Council’s proposal for Bradley Stoke and consider there to be some good community identity argument for its proposals. However, we have a concern over its proposals for Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards, around Bowsland Way. We note that the Liberal Democrat Group expressed concerns about an ‘artificial boundary’ and we concur that the Council’s decision to separate the electors to the south of Bowsland way from those to the north does not reflect community identity. We note that the only link that the electors to the south of Bowsland Road have to Bradley Stoke Central ward is through the Patchway Brook Roundabout. We acknowledge the Council’s particular objection to the creation of a three-member ward for this area, arguing that it does not want Stoke Lodge to feel like it is ‘swamped’ by Bradley Stoke. However, on balance we consider the issue of access across the Patchway Brook Roundabout to be a more significant barrier to community identity. We

therefore propose combining the Council's Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards.

109 We have given careful consideration to the Council's proposals for Stoke Gifford ward and note the support that they received from the Conservative Group and Stoke Gifford Parish Council. We consider that there is good evidence for the links between Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke, including education links and shared access to other amenities. From our tour of the area we would concur with the view that the railway line forms a strong boundary with only limited crossing points. We therefore propose adopting the Council's Stoke Gifford ward.

110 We have also examined the Council's Frenchay & Stoke Park ward and note the support it receives from the Conservative Group and Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne parishes. We concur that the development that this area faces may create specific local pressures and it would be best served by the creation of a ward that contains these pressures in a single area. We do, however, share the Liberal Democrat Group's concerns about the boundary between the proposed Frenchay & Stoke Park and Winterbourne wards. We acknowledge that this follows the parish boundary, but are concerned that this means that the properties to the south of the A4174 are in Winterbourne ward and therefore separated from those properties in Frenchay & Stoke Park ward that they clearly neighbour. We have examined the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to address this and would concur with its community identity argument. However, we also note that this proposal would result in high opposing variances of Stoke Gifford ward (7%) and Winterbourne ward (-6%). It would also require the creation of a parish ward for 309 electors in a parish of 7,292. On balance, we do not consider there to be sufficient evidence of communities to justify these variances and the creation of such a small parish ward and propose adopting the Council's Frenchay & Stoke Park ward. Unfortunately, this anomaly is the result of a poor existing parish boundary and would best be addressed by a parish boundary review, which cannot be considered as part of this review. South Gloucestershire Council can conduct one following the conclusion of this Further Electoral Review

111 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 - 11 and 12 - 15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Bradley Stoke North, Bradley Stoke South, Filton, Frenchay & Stoke Park, Patchway, Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 3 and Map 4 at the back of this report.

Severn Vale area: Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards

112 The Severn Vale area comprises Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards. Table 6 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 6: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Almondsbury | Almondsbury parish | 1 |
| Alveston | Alveston parish | 1 |
| Pilning & Severn Beach | Pilning & Severn Beach parish | 1 |
| Severn | Aust, Hill, Oldbury-upon-Severn, Olveston and Rockhampton parishes | 1 |
| Thornbury North | Falfield parish; North East parish ward and North West parish ward of Thornbury parish | 2 |
| Thornbury South | Tytherington parish; Central parish ward and South parish ward of Thornbury parish | 2 |

113 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach, single-member Severn, two-member Thornbury North and two-member Thornbury South & Alveston ward. It also put forward a ‘fallback’ Option Two for its two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, which it argued could create two single-member wards, Almondsbury ward and Pilning & Severn Beach ward. The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council’s proposals.

114 We have identified a number of fundamental differences between the Council and Liberal Democrat Group’s proposals in the Thornbury town area.

115 The Council argued that its proposal for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward provided a solution to accommodating ‘increase in the Almondsbury electorate arising from the Hortham development’. It had explored a two-member Almondsbury & Alveston ward, but concluded that ‘although sharing main road links (the A38) and geographical proximity on the Severn Ridge [it] produced a very long and narrow ward with very tenuous community identity links’, adding that ‘there was strong opposition from the parish councils to this option’. It argued that it favoured its proposal as ‘in community identity terms, the neighbouring parishes share local road links and geographical characteristics [...] they also share development pressures [and] concerns about the environment arising from the nearby industrial complex of Severnside’.

116 The Council also put forward argument for its ‘fallback’ option, stating that its single-member Almondsbury ward is ‘centred on the village of Almondsbury and its associated rural area and settlements’. It argued that its single-member Pilning & Severn Beach ward maintains good electoral equality.

117 It argued for the retention of the existing Severn ward, stating that it covers five sparsely populated parishes and that representations had been received to say that none of them should be added to the Thornbury town area to solve imbalances there.

118 Referring to its Thornbury North and Thornbury South & Alveston wards, the Council argued that it had removed the rural parishes of Falfield and Tytherington and exchanged them for Alveston parish and a minor boundary amendment in the centre of Thornbury town. It argued that 'Tytherington is a small village and rural community on the other side of the Severn Ridge from Thornbury and is separated from the town by a hill, the A38 a quarry and the M5 motorway', while 'Alveston village is on the same side of the A38 as Thornbury and at the top of Thornbury Hill, [and] is its closest neighbour. The town and village share leisure, educational and cultural facilities. Alveston looks toward Thornbury, with children from Thornbury going to school in Alveston and vice versa and with Alveston people playing a central part in many Thornbury groups and looking to Thornbury for shopping and other services'.

119 The Conservative Group also supported the Council's proposals. It argued that the two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward combined 'existing wards [that] share a great deal in common [and] are both significantly affected by flooding and agricultural issues [and] both are intimately affected by issues relating to the industrial development at Severnside and Avonmouth'. It added that 'this area is bonded by major issues where the communities have [...] campaign[ed] against a proposed airport at the heart of this new ward', while 'the plans to develop Severnside into a major new development intimately affect the whole area in terms of flooding, transport and environmental impact'. It also highlighted schooling and transport links between the areas.

120 The Conservative Group also objected to any proposal to transfer the Hortham Hospital development site to a ward with Alveston. It argued that 'children from the area attend Almondsbury Primary [school]', adding that 'Hortham is in very close proximity to the main Almondsbury Village, whereas it is divided from Alveston by vast tracts of open fields'. It also argued that the size of the development 'means that it would be completely impossible to transfer the entirety of this hamlet [and] the new homes would be in Almondsbury ward, but only able to get to this by driving through Alveston ward'. It also highlighted that a similar proposal put forward by the Council during its consultation was opposed by local parish councils. It also stated that 'Almondsbury Parish Council [...] acknowledged that it may be necessary for the ward to merge and [...] stated a clear preference for merging with Pilning & Severn Beach'.

121 The Conservative Group expressed support for the existing Severn ward, stating 'this rural community is very distinct from its neighbours comprising the villages and hamlets west of the A38 and Thornbury and north of the rough alignment of the M4, the Severn and Gloucestershire Council boundary'. It also highlighted that the area covers 'five parish councils all of which share similar rural interests including [...] planning matters in a small village or hamlet context'.

122 In the Thornbury area the Conservative Group acknowledged that the area currently has too few electors, and is an issue that needs addressing. It stated that 'Tytherington had only at the last review been included with Thornbury, which was an anomaly as it is a small village separated from Thornbury by the M5 and the A38 [and] there are also concerns that a relatively small village like Tytherington might have its interests dwarfed by the much larger town and ward of Thornbury'. It added that 'in comparison to Tytherington, Alveston is much more clearly identified with Thornbury South [and] represents a better village to include in Thornbury than Tytherington or Falfield due to its size [and] would represent an equal partner in a marriage with

Thornbury South', adding 'Alveston looks to Thornbury rather than south to Almondsbury'. It also argued that this would enable the ward boundary within Thornbury parish to be 'tidied up'. The Conservative Group therefore expressed support for the proposal to include Alveston parish in a ward with Thornbury South.

123 The Conservative Group stated that its Thornbury North ward 'would represent the majority of the town of Thornbury including the high street and main residential areas'. It also argued that 'Falfield has sat uncomfortably with Thornbury North, separated as it is by some considerable distance from Thornbury by open fields and countryside', adding that 'Falfield [...] tends to look north towards Gloucestershire [and] Falfield children go to school in Totworth, not Thornbury'. It argued that its ward 'creates a more unified Thornbury ward, addressing the anomaly created by the last review and tidies up the boundary in the town'.

124 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council's proposal to transfer Alveston parish into a ward with part of Thornbury parish and instead proposed single-member Alveston, Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach wards. It also proposed the retention of the existing single-member Severn ward. It proposed two two-member wards in Thornbury.

125 As stated above, the Liberal Democrat Group strongly objected to the Council's proposal for Alveston parish. It argued that 'Alveston is an independent and vital community' and that under the Council's proposals it 'would become part of a large town ward, and may therefore lose any independent representation' adding that 'whilst this is inevitable for smaller rural communities, Alveston is large enough to deserve its own voice'. It therefore put forward proposals for a single-member Alveston ward comprising Alveston parish, highlighting that the parish contains sufficient electors for one member. It also proposed transferring '311 electors at Woodhouse Down to Alveston, but to include the whole of the Hortham Hospital development in Almondsbury'. It also argued for the inclusion of Tytherington within a Thornbury ward stating, 'Whilst Tytherington does have the usual village groups, for larger community groups and services it looks to Thornbury, whereas Alveston as a bigger community has a far higher level of independence from Thornbury', adding 'this scale difference creates a different level of integration, with Tytherington more closely linked with Thornbury in terms of the frequency with which people go into Thornbury'. It also rejected the Council's argument of geographical proximity, stating 'Tytherington is not separated from Thornbury by a hill and the A38 [and] the hamlets on the edge of Thornbury and Tytherington completely interconnect'. It did, however, state that 'of course there are more people in Alveston, and therefore more of them involved in Thornbury community groups, but our research indicates that per capita there is far greater level of participation in Thornbury events from Tytherington'.

126 It also stated that it had considered the possibility of a two-member Almondsbury & Alveston ward, but rejected this as it 'undermines the distinctiveness of these communities', adding that 'Almondsbury and Alveston are each substantial and self contained communities with schooling and complete social networks. Alveston looks towards Thornbury (which it almost adjoins – with children from Thornbury going to school in Alveston and vice versa) with Alveston people playing a central part in many Thornbury groups, looking to Thornbury for shopping and other services'.

127 Under its proposals, the Liberal Democrat Group recommended the retention of the existing Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards, subject to a minor boundary amendment. It stated 'the current wards have worked exceptionally well. Although separate parishes, both Tytherington and Falfield include properties which merge into the edge of Thornbury. They look to Thornbury for facilities from schooling, through to health care and social infrastructure'. It acknowledged that the existing wards have too few electors, but argued that this was acceptable given the electoral variances proposed elsewhere.

128 The Liberal Democrat Group, as with the Council and the Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing Severn ward.

129 In the event of the rejection of its favoured proposals, the Liberal Democrat Group also put forward comments and amendments to the Council's proposal. In the Severn Vale area, it objected to the Council's proposal for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, instead favouring two single-member wards. It stated that the Council's proposals sought to combine very different communities and that 'we do not feel the marginal advantage in pure [electoral equality] terms is justified'. It highlighted a number of differences between the two areas, including schooling and geography. It stated 'Pilning & Severn Beach is very much a community dominated by the levels and the river – the fields are flat, low, with drainage rhines alongside them. Almondsbury on the other hand is on the hill top, along the busy A38 – its properties are large, its population affluent, older with a significant retired population'. It added that the 'dominant issues for their councillors are different [...] Pilning & Severn Beach has been coping with the Second Severn Crossing, the new power station, the future of the major chemical and heavy industrial sites [...] In contrast Almondsbury is a cluster of communities within the green belt, secure from further residential development, with concerns focused upon the heavy commuter traffic along the A38 and the impact of the Cribbs Causeway retail area'.

130 Councillor Fox (Alveston ward) also objected to the Council's proposal and requested that Alveston parish be served by a single councillor. He stated 'Alveston is a distinct village and is not considered locally to be part of Thornbury. Geographically it is separated by fields and a steep hill [...] and these provide the natural boundary between the two communities', adding 'Alveston has its own parish council; in addition it has its own Post Office, shops, churches, community hall, play areas, twinning associations'.

131 Councillor Fardell (Thornbury North ward) also objected to the Council's proposals to include Alveston parish in a ward with Thornbury parish. She argued that the inclusion of Tytherington and Falfield parishes in Thornbury South and Thornbury North respectively 'has worked very well indeed', adding 'Thornbury is "their" town and there are extremely strong social links between them. The boundaries in the rural areas between them are not at all well defined'. She also argued that Alveston is 'a remarkably self contained, village parish. It has its own shops, churches and social structure. Its boundary with Thornbury is clear and well defined'.

132 Councillor Tyzack (Pilning & Severn Beach ward) expressed support for the Liberal Democrat proposal and put forward particular objections to the Council's proposals for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward. He stated that 'the Pilning & Severn Beach area is very different to that of Almondsbury [...] Pilning & Severn Beach is entirely on the floodplain of the River Severn [and] the area therefore

interacts directly with the river [and] involves me directly as a representative to the Environment Agency's Flood Defence Committee [and other related groups]'. He added that 'this is vastly different to the concerns of the hinterland'.

133 Thornbury Liberal Democrats objected to the Council's proposals to combine Alveston parish in a ward with part of Thornbury parish stating it 'would artificially combine two communities which have always seen themselves as completely separate'.

134 Rockhampton Parish Council requested that the existing single-member Severn ward be retained. Although it acknowledged that it has some links with Thornbury, it argued that at the last review parishioners had 'vigorously opposed' any plan to include it in a ward with Thornbury parish. It stated that the existing arrangement is 'most satisfactory', adding 'all of the Severn ward parishes have the same rural interests in planning matters in and around our villages, the maintenance of country roads, school accessibility and transport arrangements'. Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council argued that the parish contains sufficient electors to justify a single councillor.

135 We have given careful consideration to the representations received. We note the strong objections to the Council's proposal to include Alveston parish in a ward with the southern part of Thornbury parish. The Liberal Democrat Group and Councillors Fox and Fardell put forward some evidence highlighting the separation of Alveston parish from Thornbury parish. However, we also note that in rejecting its own suggestion of a two-member Almondsbury & Alveston ward, the Liberal Democrat Group acknowledges that Thornbury and Alveston also share strong links with 'Alveston people playing a central part in many Thornbury groups, looking towards Thornbury for shopping and other services'. In addition to this, we do not consider the evidence for linking Tytherington and Falfield parishes to Thornbury parish to be as strong. We consider the needs of the rural Falfield and Tytherington parishes would be better reflected by being combined with similar parishes. In addition, from our tour of the area, we consider that Alveston has marginally better geographical connections to Thornbury than either Falfield and Tytherington parishes, particularly as Tytherington is separated from Thornbury by the M5 motorway.

136 In addition to this, we have a particular concern about the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to transfer the Woodhouse Down area of Almondsbury parish to a ward with Alveston parish. We note that the road links along the A38 between Woodhouse Down and Alveston parish actually run outside of the proposed ward (through Severn ward). We also consider that its proposals would leave the electors in the Hortham Hospital development cut off from their nearest neighbours at Woodhouse Down and also from the remainder of Almondsbury parish, which lies to the south of the M4 and M5.

137 We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposal for two two-member Thornbury South & Alveston and Thornbury North wards, subject to a minor boundary amendment to transfer the electors in The Paddock to Thornbury North ward as we consider they access out this way and we consider that this reflects community identity. In addition to this, given the support from all respondents and the excellent levels of electoral equality, we propose retaining the existing Severn ward.

138 We have given consideration to the Council's proposals for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward. We notice some direct contradictions between the

Conservative Group's evidence for a two-member ward and the Liberal Democrat Group's evidence for two single-member wards. Although there are some shared issues, we consider there also to be a number of distinct issues, particularly relating to Pilning & Severn Beach's proximity to the River Severn and the related flood plain issues. Indeed, we note Councillor Tyzack's reference to the very particular flood plain issues. We would concur with the Liberal Democrat Group that these issues are very different to those faced by Almondsbury, including the traffic along the A38.

139 We note that the proposals for two single-member Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach wards provides marginally worse electoral equality than the 2% more electors than the district average for the Council's two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, with 1% fewer and 5% more electors than the district average respectively. However, in light of the evidence received, we consider that there is sufficient evidence of differences between the two communities to persuade us to accept this level of electoral equality. We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's amendment to the Council's proposals by recommending two single-member wards.

140 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9-11 and 12-15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Almondsbury, Pilning & Severn Beach, Severn, Thornbury North and Thornbury South & Alveston wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 2 and Map 3 at the back of this report

Central Rural area: Charfield; Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards

141 The Central Rural area comprises Charfield; Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards. Table 7 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 7: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| Charfield | Charfield, Cromhall and Tortworth parishes | 1 |
| Frampton Cotterell | Frampton Cotterell parish | 2 |
| Ladden Brook | Iron Acton, Rangeworthy and Wickwar parishes | 1 |

142 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Frampton Cotterell ward and two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. It also put forward a 'fallback' Option Two for its two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward, which it argued could create two single-member wards, Charfield and Ladden Brook wards.

143 The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council's favoured option for the Central Rural area.

144 The Liberal Democrat Group argued for the inclusion of Frampton Cotterell in the North Fringe area. However, as outlined earlier, we concur with the Council's proposals that Frampton Cotterell should be considered as part of the Central Rural area, and as such will be considered during the following discussions. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements for this area. However, in the event of the rejection of its proposals it also put forward a number of amendments to the Council's favoured proposal.

145 Under both of its options, the Council stated that 'Iron Acton parish ward of Iron Acton parish was excluded as this was seen as providing the solution to the unacceptable level of electoral equality in Frampton Cotterell to the south'. It also said that it had considered objections to the inclusion of Tytherington and arguments against two-member rural wards. However, the Council expressed a preference for the single two-member ward arguing that 'this results in the best possible electoral equality' and that 'the area shares a common geography, transportation links, rural interests and issues', adding 'it is acknowledged that access to larger "town" services [...] is generally from Thornbury and Yate [but that the] distinct rural identity [...] can be effectively represented within a new two-member ward'.

146 The Council also put forward argument for its two single-member wards. Its single-member Charfield ward would comprise Charfield, Cromhall, Falfield and Tortworth parishes. It stated this would combine 'the four rural parishes at the northern central [area] in one ward', adding 'the B4509 links Falfield to Charfield and the rest of the area when it joins the B4058'. Its Ladden Brook ward would comprise Rangeworthy, Tytherington and Wickwar parishes and the East parish ward of Iron Acton parish. It stated, 'this provides excellent electoral equality [and] the inclusion of Tytherington parish brings together the parishes and villages of a rural area with common geographical characteristics, transportation network, rural interests and issues'.

147 The Council referred back to its arguments around the Watley's End area for its proposals for the Frampton Cotterell area, which, under existing arrangements, has significantly fewer electors than the district average. It addressed this by transferring the Iron Action parish ward of Iron Acton parish to its Frampton Cotterell ward. It stated that it had considered transferring Coalpit Heath parish ward of Westerleigh parish to Frampton Cotterell ward, but rejected this as it contained too many electors. It argued that Frampton Cotterell and Iron Acton are linked by the B4058. It also considered a request to retain the whole of Iron Acton in Ladden Brook ward, but rejected this as it worsened electoral equality.

148 The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council's two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. It highlighted school links between the constituent parishes and supported the move away from the existing arrangements that link Falfield and Tytherington parishes to Thornbury parish. It argued that Wickwar and Charfield parishes are linked by the main road from Chipping Sodbury to Wotton-under-Edge and that Tortworth, Cromhall, Bagstone and Rangeworthy are linked by the same road, which then links them to the Engine Common (East parish ward) part of Iron Acton parish. It added that, although Iron Acton and Engine Common are in the same parish,

they have 'very little connection', adding 'Iron Acton has its own school and facilities and its residents would have no reason to go to Engine Common'.

149 The Conservative Group also reiterated its earlier argument that Frampton Cotterell is distinct from Winterbourne parish to the south and also argued against addressing the imbalance in the existing Frampton Cotterell with the Coalpit Heath parish ward of Westerleigh parish. It argued that the inclusion of Iron Acton parish ward in a ward with Frampton Cotterell reflects local 'ties[,] being deeply interested in Green Belt issues relating to both of their large rural hinterlands'. It also cited the proximity of the two villages along the B4058.

150 As stated in the discussion of the proposals for the Severn Vale area, the Liberal Democrat Group requested the broad retention of the two existing Thornbury wards and Charfield and Ladden Brook wards. However, for the reasons discussed above, we have decided not to adopt its proposals for the Thornbury area. As a consequence we cannot consider its favoured proposals for the Central Rural area further as this excludes Falfield and Tytherington parishes. However, we are able to consider its 'fallback' amendments to the Council's proposals.

151 The Liberal Democrat Group favoured two single-member wards in place of the Council's two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. However, it did not favour the Council's Option Two proposal, but rather put forward completely different electoral arrangements. It proposed a single-member Charfield ward comprising Charfield, Falfield, Tortworth and Tytherington parish and single-member Ladden Brook ward comprising Cromhall, Rangeworthy and Wickwar parishes and the East parish ward of Iron Acton parish. It argued against the creation of a large rural ward, stating it 'is a common fallacy amongst those who do not live in rural areas to lump them all together as "the same" – but in rural communities the differences of emphasis, cultural and community ties are acute'. It argued that this proposal would prevent the creation of a ward that 'looked to both Thornbury and Yate at the same time, and therefore did not fit the Area Forum model'.

152 The Liberal Democrat Group stated that 'having spoken with residents (and parish councillors) in the parishes concerned [...] Cromhall and Wickwar should be together in an east facing ward [and] Tytherington should be in a west facing ward'. They acknowledged that this would create a 'crescent shaped' Charfield ward, but argued that 'Tytherington and Falfield are integrally linked along the A38 and along the back lanes', adding 'they both look towards Thornbury [whilst] Tortworth and Charfield belong together'. They cited the 'reason for strongly preferring [this] scheme [...] is simply that locals in Tytherington and in Rangeworthy/Iron Acton/Wickwar that [they] have consulted all agree that Tytherington does not belong with these eastern facing villages'. It added Tytherington's 'primary identity is with Thornbury, but that it would fit with Falfield'.

153 The Liberal Democrat Group also put forward a minor amendment to the boundary between Iron Acton and East parish wards of Iron Action parish.

154 Councillor Gawler (Ladden Brook ward) objected to the Council's two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward and the Council's 'fallback' proposals. Instead he expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to retain the existing electoral arrangements. He argued that his existing Ladden Brook ward 'is almost

exactly the right size', adding that the constituent parishes (Iron Acton, Rangeworthy and Wickwar) 'look towards Yate for schooling, doctors, library [and] leisure centre[s]. Whilst the Charfield ward looks towards Thornbury'. He also cited the amendments that this would require to the existing Area Forums.

155 Councillor Gawler also objected to the proposal to transfer Iron Acton parish ward of Iron Acton parish to a ward with Frampton Cotterell. He stated that 'this is not sensible as there are one and a half miles of green fields between them [and] Frampton Cotterell is basically relatively modern and urban whilst Iron Acton is old and a conservation area'. He added that the electors from Iron Acton would be 'swamped' by Frampton Cotterell and argued that Iron Acton Parish Council objected to this proposal in its submission to the Council.

156 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that, in a number of instances, proposals are supported or objected to on the basis of their impact on Area Forums. We cannot give consideration to the composition of existing Area Forums, except in instances where moving away from them clearly and demonstrably goes against prevailing community identity and effective and convenient local government. We do not consider that the submission received provided sufficient evidence of detrimental effect of our proposals on the local area forums.

157 We note the Council's proposals for a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward and the good level of electoral equality that it secures (2% more electors than the district average). We also note that it has provided limited community identity evidence to support this. We also note that the Conservative Group has provided limited evidence to support the two-member ward, outlining the road links between the areas.

158 We also note the Council's Option Two 'fallback' proposal, comprising two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards (6% more and 1% fewer electors than the district average, respectively). We note that this proposal secures significantly worse electoral equality than its two-member proposal and is also supported by limited evidence. However, we do not consider that the Council has provided sufficient evidence of community identity to persuade us to adopt this proposal in the light of its Option One proposal, which secures better electoral equality.

159 We have given consideration to the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for revised single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards (4% more and 1% fewer electors than the district average respectively). We note that it has provided limited evidence and, while there is some logic in the argument that Falfield and Tytherington both have some links with Thornbury. However, as argued earlier, we consider the needs of Falfield and Tytherington would be better represented in a ward with parishes of a similar rural nature. In addition to this, we can see no justification for a ward containing Tytherington and Charfield parishes, but that excludes Cromhall parish, which provides links between the two. In addition to this, when weighed against the worse level of electoral equality we have decided not to adopt its proposals.

160 We have also given consideration to Councillor Gawler's proposals to retain the existing wards. While we note that Ladden Brook has good electoral equality (1% more electors than the district average), we also note that the existing Charfield ward has poor electoral equality (8% fewer electors than the district average). We do not consider

these variances acceptable, particularly given that the Council's proposed two-member ward secures significantly better electoral equality.

161 We do, however, have some concern over the splitting of Iron Acton parish under the Council's Option One and have considered transferring the whole of Iron Acton parish to Frampton Cotterell ward. This would leave the two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward with 5% fewer electors than the district average, while the revised Frampton Cotterell ward would have 6% more electors. However, we do not propose adopting this as part of our draft recommendations given the fact that Councillor Gawler argued that Iron Acton village looks towards Yate town and not Frampton Cotterell village and the Conservative Group argued that there is 'very little connection' between the two wards of Iron Acton parish. However, we would welcome comments on this proposal from local people. This proposal worsens electoral equality, we would therefore seek good support and evidence to persuade us to adopt it.

162 We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for this area without amendment. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9-11 and 12-15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Charfield & Ladden Brook and Frampton Cotterell wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 at the back of this report

Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area: Chipping Sodbury; Dodington; Yate Central; Yate North; and Yate West wards

163 The Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area comprises Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central, Yate North and Yate West wards. Table 8 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 8: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| Chipping Sodbury | North East parish ward of Dodington parish; North East parish ward and South West parish ward of Sodbury parish | 2 |
| Dodington | North West parish ward of Dodington parish; South parish ward of Yate parish | 2 |
| Yate Central | South East parish ward and South West parish ward of Yate parish | 2 |
| Yate North | East parish ward and North parish ward of Yate parish | 2 |
| Yate West | North West parish ward and West parish ward of Yate parish | 2 |

164 At Stage One the Council's Option One put forward a single-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. In the Yate parish area, it did not put forward any electoral arrangements, but allocated the area six councillors. Table 9 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Its Option Two proposal gave the area a two-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. It also created a two-member Yate Central ward and three-member Yate North ward.

Table 9: Council's proposals for the Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance (2008) |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Chipping Sodbury | North East parish ward of Sodbury parish; Part of North West parish ward of Sodbury parish to the north of Barnhill Quarry, west of Brook Street and Horseshoe Lane and south of Kennedy Way. | 1 | 3,072 | 5 |
| Dodington | Dodington North West and Dodington North East parish wards of Dodington parish | 2 | 5,975 | 2 |
| Yate wards | East, North, North West, South, South East and West parish wards of Yate parish; Part of North West parish ward of Sodbury parish to the south of Barnhill Quarry, east of Brook Street and Horseshoe Lane and north of Love Lane and Kennedy Way. | 6 | 17,556 | 0 |

165 The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals for Chipping Sodbury and Dodington wards to the Council's Option One. However, it also put forward specific proposals for the Yate area. It proposed a single-member Sodbury & West Ridge ward, three-member Yate North ward and two-member Yate South ward. Table 10 (below) outlines the constituent areas of the Conservative Group's proposals for these three wards.

Table 10: Conservative Group's proposals for Yate

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance (2008) |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yate South | South East parish ward of Yate parish; part of South West parish ward of Yate parish to the south of The Common and east of Village Close, Lyndale Road and the south end of Westerleigh Road | 2 | 5,712 | -2 |

Table 10: Conservative Group's proposals for Yate (continued)

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance (2008) |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yate North | North West and West parish wards of Yate parish; part of East parish ward of Yate parish to the west of Goose Green Way and Link Road; part of South West parish ward of Yate parish to the north of The Common and west of Village Close, Lyndale Road and the south end of Westerleigh Road | 3 | 8,970 | 2 |
| Sodbury West & The Ridge | Part of East parish ward of Yate parish to the east of Goose Green Way and Link Road; part of North ward of Yate parish to the south of Peg Hill, east of Gravel Hill Road and Cornwall Crescent; part of North West parish ward of Sodbury parish specifically the properties to the south of Barnhill Quarry, east of Brook Street and Horseshoe Lane and north of Love Lane and Kennedy Way. | 1 | 2,988 | 2 |

166 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward proposals for a two-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. It also put forward proposals for a two-member Yate Central ward and three-member Yate North ward. Table 11 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward.

Table 11: The Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chipping Sodbury | North East parish ward of Dodington parish; North East and South West parish wards of Sodbury parish; Part of North West parish ward of Dodington parish to the east of the rear of the properties on Slimbridge Close | 2 | 5,757 | -2% |

Table 11: The Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington (continued)

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dodington (or Rodford) | South parish ward of Yate parish; Part of North West parish ward of Dodington parish to the west of the rear of the properties on Slimbridge Close; Part of South East parish ward of Yate parish specifically the electors in Chatcombe, Dovecote, Glenfall and Hatherley; Part of South West parish ward of Yate parish, specifically electors in Longford | 2 | 5,955 | +2% |
| Yate Central | Part of East parish ward of Yate, specifically electors in Station Road, Andrew Millman Court, Bennetts Court, Firgrove House, Southwold House and Woodleaze House; Part of West parish ward of Yate parish, to the south of the rear of the properties on Milton Road; Part of South East parish ward of Yate parish specifically excluding Chatcombe, Dovecote, Glenfall and Hatherley; part of South West parish ward of Yate specifically excluding the electors in Longford | 2 | 5,974 | +2% |
| Yate North | North and North West parish wards of Yate parish; Part of West parish ward of Yate parish specifically excluding Home Orchard, The Leaze Poole Court, Mow Barton and Station Road properties; Part of East parish ward of Yate parish specifically excluding the electors in Station Road, Andrew Millman Court, Bennetts Court, Firgrove House, Southwold House and Woodleaze House | 3 | 8,920 | +2% |

167 The Council stated that it 'concluded that it was important to create a single-member Chipping Sodbury ward and a two-member Dodington ward (fully within parish boundaries) to recognise and strengthen parish and community identities', adding a 'single-member Chipping Sodbury ward will provide for a separate voice for the distinct

Sodbury community and its issues, which can be increasingly dominated by its larger neighbour Yate'. It argued that its Chipping Sodbury ward 'focuses on the historic centre of the town and does not rely on bringing into the ward new residential areas in the neighbouring Dodington parish'. Its Dodington ward 'keeps the whole built-up area of north Dodington together, thereby affirming the identity of Dodington parish as distinct from its larger neighbour of Yate. As stated above, beyond allocating it six members, the Council did not provide any specific recommendations for the Yate parish area.

168 The Council also put forward an Option Two 'fallback' proposal. It argued that it provided good electoral equality, but provided very limited evidence of community identity. It stated that its two-member Chipping Sodbury ward 'enables the whole of Chipping Sodbury to be the focus of one ward', while its Dodington ward 'provides for a continuing "Dodington" identity'. It stated that its two-member Yate Central ward 'creates a ward with a community of interest in town centre issues and issues relating to residential areas in and adjoining a town centre'. Its Yate North ward 'creates a ward covering the northern residential area of Yate'.

169 The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's Option One, but also provided electoral arrangements for the Yate area. It argued that its Dodington ward has 'exceptionally powerful boundaries. It is bounded to the west and south by the railway line, and to the north and east by the Rodford Way dual carriageway and the Kennedy Way dual carriageway'. It argued that, under the existing arrangements and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, 'part of the modern Dodington estate has rather uneasily been placed in the same ward as the medieval and historic Chipping Sodbury, despite being separated by the fast Kennedy Way dual carriageway'. It added 'in order to sustain this absurdity the current Dodington ward has to compensate by crossing the major Rodford Way dual carriageway and taking in part of Yate Town Council's area. This area is separate and distinct from Dodington with its own facilities'.

170 The Conservative Group stated that 'it has been the conclusion of South Gloucestershire Council that the distinctive nature of Chipping Sodbury is such that it justifies being a single-member ward tightly focused on the area starting at the High Street and including everything east of it'. It highlighted that the number of electors in this part of Sodbury parish required either the transfer in of part of Dodington or Yate parishes in a two-member ward, or the exclusion of part of Chipping Sodbury and the creation of a single-member ward. It stated that under the Council's proposals 'core of Chipping Sodbury[,] its High Street and Broad Street with shops, pubs, Library and police station [and] the main residential areas [...] much of [which] is very historic and not like the modern housing found in the new towns of Yate and Dodington'. It added 'the areas, which would leave are significantly different from the core of Chipping Sodbury' and that 'the area around Bowling Hill has less in common with a medieval town [and] it borders a huge REXAM packaging plant and includes various industrial plants on a business park, a large commercial animal feed centre and extensive modern blocks'. It argued that 'there is a physical divide with a ramp in the road between Rounceval Street and the High Street, marking the start of Chipping Sodbury Town Centre scheme and traffic-calming scheme'.

171 However, the Conservative Group did acknowledge that 'in some places it has been argued that a single member ward should not be accepted because it would "divide" a conservation area', but added 'this is of course not a factor for many conservation areas are divided between wards'. It argued that the only way to create a

two-member Chipping Sodbury ward 'is to take in yet more of a 1960s housing estate separated from the town by a dual carriageway and parish boundary'.

172 The Conservative Group argued that the creation of its Sodbury West & The Ridge ward keeps the electors from Chipping Sodbury parish that were removed from its Chipping Sodbury ward 'together', adding 'the area they most identify with is part of Yate known as The Ridge'. It added that '[The Ridge] is clearly divided from Yate core by the main road along Goose Green Way [and] has always felt distinct from Yate, sandwiched as it is between Chipping Sodbury and Yate. [It] shares many common facilities with the remainder of the Sodbury Town Council area such as the community centre'. It stated that 'additional electors are clearly required to make a single-member ward' and that 'Continuing to use the powerful Goose Green Way boundary[,] the most logical section to be included are the electors living off Greenways Road and East of Goose Green Way'. It stated that 'these electors share a community interest' in terms of schools and 'a popular rank of shops, which serve both sets of residents'.

173 The Conservative Group stated that its two-member Yate South ward 'would utilize exceptional ward boundaries by being encompassed by four of Yate's major roads in a compact identifiable community', adding 'it would also enable the Yate South ward to consist of Yate Town Council's areas and end the absurd position of the current ward losing part of its core to Dodington'. It outlined a number of school links, but stressed the importance of the easily identifiable boundaries that its proposals would secure stating, 'We would argue that major roads like Rodford Way, Scott Way, Kennedy Way and Westerleigh Road do more to divide communities than unify them'.

174 Its three-member Yate North ward 'would encompass the Yate Town Centre, the main Yate superstores, Yate Leisure Centre and the majority of housing in Yate', adding 'It would use very strong boundaries; the railway line, Station Road (except those roads south of it which flow into it), Kennedy Way, Goose Green Way and the end of Gravel Hill Road'. It also highlighted a number of links between residential areas and local schools.

175 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the proposals put forward by the Council and Conservative Group and put forward proposals which also reflect the views of the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee. In the Chipping Sodbury area it argued 'it is not possible to create a single-member Chipping Sodbury ward, without drawing an arbitrary line through the High Street/Rounceval Street area, which would divide the conservation area and the core of what makes Chipping'. It added 'it would make a nonsense of all the work being done to solve the problems of the historic town centre of Sodbury' and would be strongly opposed by the parish council. It expressed particular concerns about the Council's proposal to transfer the area of Sodbury parish around Rounceval Street and The Elms 'into an overwhelmingly Yate ward'. It argued that the residents in this area 'use different surgeries, different libraries and belong to different community groups'. It added, 'Chipping Sodbury has a thriving community and voluntary sector [...] many of [which] are led by people who live in the part of Chipping Sodbury which is now to be excluded' under the Council and Conservative Group's proposals. It added that its proposals only require 'a modest tidy up at the south western corner to include the last two streets which have Chipping Sodbury addresses in the Chipping Sodbury ward [and] unite the entire "Birds" estate into one ward'.

176 The Liberal Democrat Group acknowledged that the 'Chipping Sodbury question cannot be seen in isolation', but pointed out that its proposals for this area reflected the views of the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee (discussed below). It stated that 'the Joint Parishes did look at the option of having a two-member ward representing Dodington parish urban wards [as] this would make sense for Dodington, but Dodington Parish Council decided that the knock on effects for Yate and Chipping Sodbury were [...] unacceptable'. It expressed strong support for the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee's 'holistic approach' to find a solution for the area'.

177 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that its Dodington ward sought to combine 'those parts of [Yate parish] which tend to share schooling, retail facilities and community facilities' with the urban part of Dodington parish. These include the South parish ward of Yate Town Council, the properties in Glenfall, Chatcombe, Hatherley and Dovercote roads that are part of the South East parish ward of Yate Town Council. It also proposed transferring Longford and Deerhurst Road area to its Dodington ward. It stated that 'Rodford Way [is] the unifying factor [and] the dividing line then becomes the spine footpaths/open space gap through the development'. It expressed some reservation about the proposed ward name, stating the Yate Town Council wished it to be 'a short, and neutral name', while Dodington parish wanted its name to be included to 'enhance parish identity'. The Liberal Democrat Group suggested it be called either Rodford ward, Abbotswood ward or Dodington Ward.

178 The Liberal Democrat Group stated that in the past Station Road has traditionally been seen as the divide. However, in its proposal, it proposed the creation of a Yate Central ward, 'which has Station Road and issues central to the town centre as its focus', adding that 'the area shares a strong core of common issues, focused around being both the local neighbourhood for residents, but also the service centre for the town and wider rural communities'. It added that residents 'also share extensive road traffic problems, Yate not having a by-pass and therefore facing huge town centre congestion/heavy lorry issues'. It stated 'seeing Station Road and the town centre as the focal point for a ward, rather than as a dividing line is a new way of thinking about the town, but one the parish councils have warmly embraced, bringing together areas that have a huge amount in common'.

179 The Liberal Democrat Group stated that its Yate North ward is a 'ward of the northern suburbs of Yate [which] is entirely residential, with only pubs [and] very small suburban parades of shops', adding that 'this mirrors' its Dodington ward.

180 Councillor Mead (Chipping Sodbury ward) objected to the Council and Conservative Group's proposal to divide the Chipping Sodbury area at the High Street and put forward a suggestion reflected by the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals. Councillor Lawrence (Yate North ward) also objected to the Council and Conservative Group's proposal to divide the Chipping Sodbury area at the High Street and argued that it would not reflect community identity to transfer part of Chipping Sodbury to a ward with part of Yate. He expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals.

181 The Joint Parishes Consultative Committee put forward identical proposals to the Liberal Democrat Group. Both groups put forward almost identical community identity argument. The Joint Parishes Consultative Committee's comments are therefore

covered by the discussion above of the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area.

182 Yate Town Council expressed full support for the proposals put forward by the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee and the Liberal Democrat Group and objected to the Council's proposals. Sodbury Town Council put forward identical proposals to the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee and Liberal Democrat Group.

183 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note that there is particular concern over the proposals for the Chipping Sodbury area. We also note that it is not possible to adopt a combination of the Council/Conservative Group proposals and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals as once we adopt one element of a scheme it has a significant knock-on effect to our ability to create boundaries that secure good electoral equality and reflect local communities in surrounding area. Finally, we note the significant levels of support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for this area from local parishes and councillors.

184 We share the Liberal Democrat Group's concerns about the Council and Conservative Group's proposal to divide Chipping Sodbury in the High Street area. While we acknowledge that this has been done to facilitate a single ward containing the three urban parish wards of Dodington parish, we do not consider this can be justified if it then necessitates the division of the Chipping Sodbury High Street area. Although we acknowledge that the Council and Conservative Group have sought to divide this area where it becomes Rounceval Street, our visit has led us to confirm that Rounceval Street continues to be the centre of the Chipping Sodbury area, lined with parades of shops. We therefore concur with the Liberal Democrat Group that this boundary does not reflect community identity.

185 We note that the Conservative Group argued that its single-member Sodbury West & The Ridge ward comprised the part of Sodbury parish (that it removed from its Chipping Sodbury ward) that looks towards The Ridge area of Yate parish. This, however, is in direct contradiction to the Liberal Democrat Group, which argued that this area of Sodbury parish has strong links with the rest of Chipping Sodbury. While there is some merit in the Conservative Group's argument that Goose Green Way separates The Ridge from Yate, there is less argument that the area of Chipping Sodbury has links to The Ridge. Indeed, we consider that the Liberal Democrat Group has put forward good evidence for the links between this area of Chipping Sodbury and its proposed Chipping Sodbury ward.

186 We do, however, have some concerns about the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to include part of Dodington parish in its two-member Chipping Sodbury ward. However, we note that this is the case under the existing arrangements and that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal has drawn local support, except from the Council and the Conservative Group. We note that the Liberal Democrat Group argued that its proposals unite areas with 'Chipping Sodbury addresses'. While we cannot consider issues of postcodes or addresses, we also note that it stated that its proposals unite the whole of the Birds Estate in a single ward. We concur with the view that uniting this area of housing in a single ward would best reflect community identity. Therefore, on balance, we consider that the Liberal Democrat Group's Chipping Sodbury ward provides the best electoral arrangements, securing good electoral equality and reflecting community identity.

187 In the remainder of the area, no respondents put forward as compelling levels of evidence as they did for the Chipping Sodbury area. However, we cannot review the Chipping Sodbury area in isolation and have also given consideration to the proposals for the remainder of this area. Although, as highlighted above, it is not possible to consider elements of the different proposals for this area given the knock-on effects they have.

188 In the Yate parish area, we consider the fundamental difference between the Council and Conservative Group's proposals and those put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group to be the balance between strong boundaries and community identity. The Conservative Group argued about the strong boundaries that its Yate South and Yate North wards provided and cited limited evidence of school links. However, it did not provide any significant evidence beyond this. The Liberal Democrat Group also put forward limited evidence. However, it did argue that it had proposed a Yate Central ward focused on the issues that the town centre area faces and a Yate North ward focused almost exclusively on the residential area. Although it stated that this was a new and different approach from the existing arrangements that divide the town centre between wards, we would concur with its view that it produces electoral arrangements that most accurately reflect the different community identities.

189 We note that in the Dodington area the Conservative Group put forward proposals that argued that Rodford Way acts as a barrier between communities and not a focus. We also note that this argument is in direct contradiction to that put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group. We do have some concerns about whether Rodford Way forms the focus of the local community and would seek additional evidence of community identity in this area from local people during the consultation on our draft recommendations.

190 However, on balance and given the evidence for the remainder of the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the other areas (discussed above), we consider that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals provide the most suitable electoral arrangements and we are therefore adopting its proposals. We note the Liberal Democrat Group's discussion over ward names for Dodington, and, while not having a strong view on what this should be, propose naming it Dodington ward.

191 We therefore propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal in their entirety for this area. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 - 11 and 12 - 15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central and Yate North wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 at the back of this report

Kingswood North area: Downend; Kings Chase; Rodway; Siston; and Staple Hill wards

192 The Kingswood North area comprises Downend, Kings Chase, Rodway, Siston and Staple Hill wards. Table 12 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the

variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 12: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| Downend | Bromley Heath East parish ward, Bromley Heath West parish ward, Downend East parish ward and Downend West parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish | 3 |
| Kings Chase | (unparished) | 3 |
| Rodway | (unparished) | 3 |
| Siston | Leap Brook parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish; Mangotsfield Rural parish; Siston parish | 3 |
| Staple Hill | (unparished) | 2 |

193 At Stage One the Council put forward two options in this area, with both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group expressing support for its Option Two. Option Two was also supported by Labour South West. Under both options, all respondents agreed that Downend and Staple Hill wards should remain unchanged. Option One and Option Two are almost identical, except for their proposals in three areas around Morley Avenue, Lees Hill and Fireworks Hill.

194 Under its Option One, the Council put forward plans for an Emersons Green ward as 'Emersons Green is a new and recognisably distinct community still developing in the Mangotsfield Rural parish'. It pointed out that this area is set to continue expanding long beyond the five year forecast period that we consider as part of this review, but acknowledged that this cannot be taken into consideration.

195 It stated that it sought to address the electoral inequality in its existing Rodway ward by transferring Springfield parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish. It stated 'this is an older area and shares the same community identity characteristics of the adjacent unparished area of Mangotsfield in Rodway ward', adding 'both areas focus on Mangotsfield Village Centre (in Rodway ward) where shopping, community and church facilities are located'. It stated that its Siston ward 'gives Siston parish and its developing and expanding communities a local identity, with the ability to represent issues arising in a more focused way and over a smaller area than has been the case in the past'. It added 'it also takes into account the possibility of the residential development in the Siston Hill area being greater than currently forecast'.

196 It stated that it had given consideration to, but subsequently rejected, the proposal from Downend & Bromley Heath parish that Leap Brook parish ward be included in Downend ward given the 10% variances that this would produce by 2008. It added that this would create 'complications in achieving good electoral equality in Emerson's Green and Rodway'. As stated above, the existing Staple Hill, Kings Chase

and Downend wards all have good levels of electoral equality and the Council therefore recommended no change.

197 The Council also put forward an alternative option. Option Two proposed no change for the existing Staple Hill, Kings Chase and Downend wards, which all have good levels of electoral equality (for these wards Options 1 and 2 are identical). However, in Option Two, Emerson's Green ward would be the same as its Option One Emerson's Green ward, but excluding part of Pomphrey parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish to the south of Pomphrey Hill, which it proposed transferring to its Rodway ward. It put this proposal forward in an attempt to address the 'long standing confusing boundary issue' of access for the electors around Morley Road in Pomphrey parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish. The Council argued that this small area of 151 electors has a 'common identity' with the unparished Mangotsfield Village area in Rodway ward. However, under the existing arrangements and its Option One proposal, the parishing arrangements mean that the area has 'insufficient electors [...] to form a viable parish ward' and must therefore remain part of Emerson's Green ward. As part of its Option Two it argued that 'by taking advantage of a narrow lane to the rear of Colliers Break (Mangotsfield Rural parish), it is possible to join the Springfield parish ward' with the Morley Road area to form a single new Springfield parish ward. It argued that this enables the resulting larger Springfield parish ward, which includes the Morley Avenue area, to join the Rodway ward. It stated 'this alternative proposal produces an unusual [parish] ward shape similar to an hourglass [but] by adopting an innovative solution, this longstanding issue can be resolved'.

198 Its Option Two Rodway ward would therefore be the same as its Option One ward, but additionally including the Morley Road area of Pomphrey parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish. It also proposed a minor revision to the boundary between Rodway and Kings Chase wards, but provided no evidence for this.

199 The Council also proposed a minor amendment to its Option One Siston ward to transfer the unparished area around Fireworks Close of the existing Kings Chase ward (to the east of the Ring Road) to its Siston ward. It stated that the area 'share[s] Warmley community facilities with Warmley residents currently in the Siston ward [and that] the adjustment [...] will place the Warmley Community Centre with the community of Warmley'.

200 The Council stated that its Option Two remained its 'fallback option because [...] it will reduce the ability of the new Siston ward to accommodate likely increased levels of residential development without detriment to acceptable levels of electoral equality, requires consequential boundary changes in the Lees Hill area, which is a long established part of Rodway [and] results in the unnecessary inclusion of an unparished area (Fireworks Farm) into a ward which covers a single parish (Siston)'.

201 As set out above, the Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's Option Two in this area. It expressed support for the existing Downend and Staple Hill wards. It argued that Emerson's Green & Blackhorse ward would encompass a number of the different areas that are all going through substantial residential development. It stated that 'Leap Brook, Badminton and Blackhorse share strong community ties [and that] The Westons Hill area provides a park area for Leap Brook, Badminton and Blackhorse. Blackhorse provides the only playing fields for the same area. The shops in Dibden Road Blackhorse offer the main shops for the area'. It also argued that Leap

Brook must be retained in its Emersons Green & Blackhorse ward since it contains 'approximately 1000 electors' and transferring it to Downend ward would significantly worsen electoral equality. It supported the Council's Option Two proposal to transfer the Morley Road area of Pomphrey parish ward to Rodway ward. It requested that 'owing to its strong influence it is proposed that the ward should be named Emerson's Green and Blackhorse'.

202 The Conservative Group also supported the Council's Option Two proposal for Rodway ward which involves the transfer of Springfield parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish to Rodway ward and the inclusion of the 151 electors from the Morley Road area at the south of Pomphrey ward.

203 It put forward similar argument to the Council for the inclusion of this area of Pomphrey parish ward in Rodway ward. It stated 'the anomaly has become more evident since' Springfield parish ward has been transferred to Rodway ward leaving 'an isolated few roads in Mangotsfield [parish] completely detached from the rest of Mangotsfield village'. It acknowledged that 'as a small area with only 151 electors it would be undesirable to make this a parish ward. However a more sensible solution can be achieved by utilising the physical link between this area and the Springfield parish ward [...] there is a well used and lit lane which goes from Richmond Road along the back of Elmleigh Close and Elmleigh Avenue. The strip of land then continues to join Cossham Street'. It concluded 'this solution enables better community identity, cleaner boundaries and no need to recourse to creating a small parish ward'.

204 However, the Conservative Group argued that the resulting ward would 'have a projected surplus of voters' and therefore supported the Option Two proposal to address this by transferring a small area at the south of the ward to Kings Chase ward. It stated that the 'tail of Rodway sits uneasily with the remainder. Lees Hill and the roads off it flow [...] down the [...] hill into New Cheltenham Road' adding 'children living in this area attend either St Stephen's or Falconside, not Deerswood [to the north]. At secondary level the choice would be Kingsfield rather than Mangotsfield'. Finally, it argued that the 'using the Pound Road as a boundary [...] would be much clearer'.

205 It also expressed support for the Council's Option Two Siston ward, stating 'recent projected growth in Siston parish now makes it possible for this area to select its own Councillor [...] This area includes the villages of Siston and Warmley along with the hamlets of Siston Park, Webbs Heath, Bridgegate and the new development planned for Siston Hill [...] and reflects the shared interests of the rural communities within the parish and the main heart of the parish in Warmley with its Church, Post Office and chemist'. It queried whether some of the proposed development would actually happen, thus querying the creation of a ward with a 'relatively high minus variance'. However, its main concern was that under Option One the Council excluded 'Firework Farm and Baden Road', adding 'Baden Road, whilst having no population [...] includes the Warmley Community Centre, which is an important hub for community life, hosting numerous shows, amateur dramatics, Warmley Church fetes as well as its social club'. It stated 'Firework Farm itself is now separated from King's Chase by the Ring Road [and] using the brook rather than the Ring Road creates an unseen boundary'.

206 The Conservative Group also expressed support for the Option Two King's Chase, Downend and Staple Hill wards. As stated above, it argued that the Ring Road should be used as the boundary with Siston ward, but acknowledged that this worsened

electoral equality in King's Chase. It therefore recommended transferring the Lees Hill area from Rodway ward. It expressed support for the retention of the existing Downend ward, stating 'any attempt to change it would be contrary to community identity for to bring something in would require a historic part to come out'. Finally, it expressed support for the existing Staple Hill ward. It stated that it has a 'strong community identity [and is] centred around the very successful and vibrant Staple Hill shopping centre which is the heart of the ward'.

207 The Liberal Democrat Group also expressed support for the Council's Option Two proposal for this area. It stated it 'produces greater numerical equality, and unless there is a strong case based on community links for an alternative model, we consider that the [Committee] should go for the model that delivers greater electoral equality'. It added 'we have seen no credible arguments for saying Option [One] is sufficiently preferable in community terms to justify this scale of greater electoral inequality'. It only provided any specific community identity evidence for the Siston ward, stating Option Two 'brings into Siston ward areas that have been separated from their current wards by the Ring Road which has been constructed since the last boundary review. In both cases, all road access is from Warmley High Street and roads leading off it. Both areas share Warmley Community facilities with Warmley residents currently in Siston ward'.

208 Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council objected to the Council's proposal under both Option One and Option Two to include Leap Brook parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish in Emersons Green ward. It argued that the parish was only formed in May 2003 following a local referendum and that the inclusion of Leap Brook parish ward as a result reflects its community links. It requested that the Downend ward boundaries be coterminous with the parish boundaries.

209 Labour South West expressed support for the Council's Option One. It concurred with the Council's view that in light of the good levels of electoral equality, Downend, Kings Chase and Staple Hill wards should remain unchanged, adding the wards 'are long established and widely known and understood in these localities'. It also supported the Council's proposal to transfer Springfield parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath ward to Rodway ward, stating 'at present, a number of roads are split between the two wards, and this area is clearly one community'. It argued that Siston ward needs 'a negative variance as it is certain to experience continued population growth', while the Emersons Green & Blackhorse makes a 'tidy' ward with good electoral equality.

210 A local resident argued in favour of a 'single member [Siston] ward [...] created based on the [...] Siston parish boundaries', adding 'we do not identify readily with the adjoining districts of Kingswood, Mangotsfield, Pucklechurch, Wick & Cadbury Heath from which we are separated by well defined natural and traditional features'.

211 Two local residents put forward comments about the Morley Road area that effectively reflected the Council's Option Two proposals to transfer this area to its Rodway Hill ward. They stated 'as long standing residents of Mangotsfield we have always identified with the rest of Mangotsfield, which is in the Rodway ward', rather than the existing Siston ward which they are currently in. They added 'Rodway provides all our facilities; the shops in St James Place, the Church, the Post Office in Cosham Street'. They also stated that 'we have very little in common with the new community of Emersons Green, which is naturally more based around the Ring Road and its own different divergent interests'. Finally, they stated 'the area we live in has so much in

common with Rodway and the two parts of Mangotsfield separated by this arbitrary boundary are indistinguishable’.

212 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that all respondents, apart from Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council, support the retention of the existing Downend and Staple Hill wards, arguing that they both secure good electoral equality and represent established communities.

213 We do note the concerns of Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council and acknowledge its frustrations at the proposals to separate Leap Brook parish ward from the recently created parish for warding purposes. However, we also note that Leap Brook parish ward contains 1,040 electors and transferring it to Downend ward significantly worsen electoral equality in the area. By 2008 Downend ward would have 10% more electors than the district average and Emersons Green ward would have 9% fewer electors than the district average. We do not consider that the Parish Council has put forward sufficient evidence of community links to justify this variance. In addition to this, given the support and evidence from other respondents for the links between Leap Brook and Blackhorse and Badminton we do not propose adopting the Parish Council’s amendment. In light of the evidence received we propose retaining the existing Downend and Staple Hill wards.

214 In the remaining area we note that the major difference between the Council’s Option One and Option Two proposals is the treatment of the Morley Road area. In addition to this there are concerns over the Warmley and Lees Hill areas.

215 We acknowledge the concerns about the links in the Morley Road area and concur that while the properties on Louise Avenue, Morley Avenue and Manor Grove are part of Mangotsfield Rural parish, they clearly have strong links into the neighbouring Rodway ward. However, we also note, that, as respondents themselves highlight, this area does not contain sufficient electors (151 electors in a parish of over 9,000 electors) to justify a parish ward and be represented by one of the parish’s 16 councillors.

216 We have examined the Option Two proposals favoured by the Council, Conservative Group and a number of other respondents that seeks to resolve this parish warding issue by linking the Morley Road area in Mangotsfield parish with Springfield parish ward (also in Mangotsfield Rural parish) to create a modified Springfield parish ward. We note that in order to effect this join between the two areas, Option Two relies on a tree-lined pedestrian path creating an ‘hourglass parish ward’. We have sought confirmation from the Council that this route does not offer vehicular access. As a result we have very serious reservations about the effectiveness of this pedestrian link and conclude that this proposal effectively joins two detached areas. The Electoral Commission’s Guidance states, ‘We have some concerns over the use of detached wards. They lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas that lack community identity and which may owe more to purely political considerations than to community identity and interest. Accordingly, we take the view that the use of detached wards, other than to recognise the particular circumstances of, for example, offshore islands, is undesirable, and that the BCFE should not normally recommend them’. While we are not suggesting that this has been proposed for ‘political considerations’ and note the cross party support this proposal received, we do not consider that this proposal reflects the community identity of the two areas concerned. Therefore, while we can

concur with the principle behind Option Two for the district wards and acknowledge that there are good links between the Morley Road area and Rodway ward, we do not propose adopting this proposal.

217 Unfortunately, this anomaly is the result of a very poor existing parish boundary and would best be addressed by a parish boundary review, which cannot be considered as part of this review. South Gloucestershire Council can conduct one following the conclusion of this Further Electoral Review. We acknowledge the efforts put forward to circumvent this problem, but as stated above, we do not consider that adopting these proposals results in the most suitable electoral arrangements. We therefore propose adopting the Option One Emersons Green ward.

218 Adopting Option One's Emersons Green ward has a knock-on effect to the Rodway ward. We have examined the issues raised for the Lees Hill area, but note that as a result of adopting Option One for the remainder of Rodway ward, this would actually worsen electoral equality for Rodway and Kings Chase wards, with both wards having 4% fewer and 3% more electors than the district average by 2008, compared to 2% fewer and 1% more electors than the district average respectively, under the Council's Option One. Although this still provides reasonable electoral equality, we do not consider there to be sufficient community identity evidence to justify the lower levels and note that the Council considers this proposal a 'fallback' option and stated that Lees Hill is part of Rodway Hill.

219 Finally, we have also given consideration to the Warmley area. We note that the Council has put forward contradictory evidence for this area. On the one hand it argued that Option One avoids the 'unnecessary inclusion of an unparished area (Fireworks Farm) into a ward which covers a single parish (Siston)', but also argues that Option Two reflects the fact that area 'share[s] Warmley community facilities with Warmley residents currently in the Siston ward [and that] the adjustment [...] will place the Warmley Community Centre with the community of Warmley'. We also note that the Council was seeking to leave Siston ward with fewer electors than the district average in order to build in longevity to its scheme in the event of further development in Siston beyond the five year forecast period. However, we are unable to consider variances beyond the five year forecast period, particularly when there is good community identity evidence for proposals that move away from this.

220 We note that there was strong support from a number of other respondents for Option Two in this area, that also stressed the importance of putting the whole Warmley community in the same ward as its community centre and local facilities. We would concur with the view that the Warmley Brook boundary of Siston ward divides the Warmley community in two and the proposal to move the boundary to the A4174 Ring Road creates a far stronger boundary that reflects local communities. We agree that this area to the east of the A4174 and the Brook has clear links, including the community centre, with the remainder of Warmley that lies in Siston parish.

221 Adopting just this aspect of Option Two in the Kingswood North Area would marginally worsen electoral equality in Kings Chase ward (-5%), while marginally improving it in Siston ward (3%). While we acknowledge that these levels of electoral equality are worse than those put forward for the Lees Hill amendment (discussed above), we consider the evidence for this amendment to be substantially stronger.

222 It should be noted that the problem in this area is effectively another parish boundary anomaly resulting from the creation of the new A4174. It is not dissimilar to the anomaly identified in the Morley Road and Rodway ward area, except that in this instance the area in question is unparished and can be transferred to a new ward without having regard for parish warding arrangements (albeit it against the wishes of the Parish Council). South Gloucestershire Council can conduct a parish review following the conclusion of this Further Electoral Review

223 We therefore propose adopting the Council's Option One proposals for this area, subject to the amendment to the Kings Chase and Siston boundary identified above. Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 - 11 and 12 - 15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Downend, Emersons Green, Rodway, Siston and Staple Hill wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 5 at the back of this report

Kingswood South area: Bitton; Hanham; Longwell Green; Oldland Common; Parkwall and Woodstock wards

224 The Kingswood South area comprises Bitton, Hanham, Longwell Green, Oldland Common, Parkwall and Woodstock wards. Table 13 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 13: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| Bitton | Willsbridge parish ward of Oldland parish; South parish ward of Bitton parish | 1 |
| Hanham | Hanham parish; West parish ward of Hanham Abbots parish | 3 |
| Longwell Green | East ward of Hanham Abbots parish; Barrs Court parish ward and Longwell Green parish ward of Oldland parish | 2 |
| Oldland Common | North Common parish ward and Oldland Common parish ward of Bitton parish | 2 |
| Parkwall | Cadbury Heath parish ward and Wraxall parish ward of Oldland parish | 2 |
| Woodstock | Cock Road Ridge parish ward of Oldland parish; an unparished area | 3 |

225 At Stage One the Council put forward a single option for a single-member Bitton, three-member Hanham, two-member Longwell Green, two-member Oldland Common, two-member Parkwall and three-member Woodstock wards. Of these, Bitton would have 5% fewer electors than the district average, while the remainder would have no variances of more than 2% from the district average. Its proposals were identical to the Conservative Group's proposals and were supported by Bitton & District Labour Party and Bitton Parish Council.

226 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward broadly similar proposals, except in Bitton and Oldland Common wards which it proposed combining into a three-member ward. It argued that this would avoid Bitton parish being divided between two wards.

227 The Council put forward a minor amendment to the existing Woodstock ward, transferring part of the unparished area around Footshill Drive and to the south of The Wynstones and west of Coberley to its Hanham ward. It argued that it provides a clearer boundary 'with properties within Hanham postal addresses becoming part of Hanham ward'.

228 It also proposed amendments to the existing Longwell Green, Oldland Common and Parkwall wards. It proposed transferring the electors in Orchard Boulevard area of the existing Parkwall ward and the electors in the California Road area of the existing Longwell Green ward to a modified Oldland ward. It stated 'there has been a longstanding concern, in particular, that Oldland Parish Church area has been in the Longwell Green ward. It pointed out that the proposal received the support of Oldland Parish Council, but was rejected by Bitton Parish Council.

229 The Council's Parkwall ward would be the same as the existing ward, but less the electors in the Orchard Road area and less the electors in the St Stephen's Drive area. It stated 'it [...] creates a more logical boundary for the residents of Stephen's Drive', adding it 'is currently divided down the centre of the road into two wards'. Its Longwell Green ward would comprise the existing ward, less the electors in the California Road area, but including those in the St Stephen's Drive area.

230 Finally, it proposed the retention of the existing Bitton ward, stating it 'achieves good electoral equality', adding 'the southern part of Bitton parish would continue to form the majority [of the] ward [...] which shares community and educational facilities, with the A431 Bath Road being the main transport route through the urban and rural parts of the area'. It stated that it had considered the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to create a three-member ward combining Bitton and Oldland Common wards to 'give united representation across Bitton parish'. However, it rejected this proposal stating the areas have 'distinct local identities, with their respective communities using schools, local services and facilities with their own areas', adding 'the substantial rural parts of the Bitton ward could become dominated by the large urban areas to the west and north west if included in a single ward'.

231 The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals for this area. It argued that 'Woodstock and Hanham [wards] have extremely powerful boundaries encompassing both of them; the Bristol City Boundary, the A420 High Street, the Ring Road and the River Avon' adding '[but] the boundary between the two [wards] is not as clearly defined'. It argued that the Council's amendment to transfer the Footshill Drive area from Woodstock to Hanham ward reflects local communities. It

stated 'Footshill Drive clearly flows into the Hanham ward through Tabernacle Road and straight to Hanham High Street'. Consequently, it also supported the new Hanham ward, stating it would have 'excellent community identity based around the Hanham High Street. Children would share local schools'.

232 It also expressed support for the Council's Parkwall ward, stating 'Parkwall is based around the twin communities of Barrs Court (which it shares with Longwell Green) and Cadbury Heath', adding that they 'are interlinked and share local facilities; Cadbury Heath primary school for example being based in Barrs Court'. It supported the Council's efforts to address the issues in the St Stephen's Drive area, stating this 'causes problems and confusion for electors', adding 'by transferring the whole of St Stephen's Drive the whole of this anomaly can be resolved [...] and a clearer ward boundary established'. It also supported the Council's proposal to transfer the Orchard Boulevard area to Oldland Common ward, stating it 'is completely detached from the main Cadbury Heath area and has no links at all with Barrs Court [and] flows into Oldland Common down California Road and into Court Road'. In Longwell ward to counter balance the addition of the electors in the St Stephen's Drive area it supported the transfer of the area of Longwell ward that includes Oldland Parish Church to Oldland parish.

233 The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposal to retain Oldland Common and Bitton as separate wards. It argued that Oldland Common ward has always represented the 'urban part of Bitton parish'. It argued for the retention of the existing Bitton ward. It stated 'the ward includes very diverse areas' and argued that Swineford, Beach, Upton Cheyney and Bitton Villages 'tend to gravitate towards Bath', while 'Willsbridge has a high concentration of deprivation and generates a requirement for particularly dedicated ward work'. It also argued that Bitton Parish Council 'identified that the rural Bitton part of the parish is radically different from the urban Oldland and North Common parts'. Finally, it objected to combining these two wards, since the Council's proposal to include parts of Oldland parish within its Oldland Common ward would consequently mean part of Oldland parish in a ward with Bitton parish.

234 The Liberal Democrat Group only put forward comments on the Oldland Common and Bitton wards, arguing that they should be combined to create a three-member ward. It stated 'currently the parishes of Oldland and Bitton contain a mix of urban and rural communities', adding 'the current warding has both Oldland and Bitton parishes split between [...] wards'. It argued that this situation would remain with the Willsbridge area of Oldland parish in Bitton ward. It stated that its proposals would resolve this, as well as improving electoral equality.

235 Dan Norris MP expressed support for the Council's proposals for Oldland Common ward and endorsed the comments of Bitton & District Labour Party. Bitton & District Labour Party also expressed support for the Council's proposals for Oldland Common ward. It supported the proposals to transfer the areas of Parkwall and Longwell Green wards (discussed above) to Oldland Common ward. It cited links between these areas and Oldland Common and highlighted the anomaly of Oldland Parish Church currently being in Longwell Green ward. Finally, it rejected any proposal that would combine Oldland Common and Bitton wards. It stated 'Oldland Common ward is [...] a densely populated urban ward [on] the very edge of the built up area. Bitton ward consists of a very large rural ward stretching from the River Avon in the south to Landsdown and the edge of Wick'. It added, 'we also believe that the ward [...]

would be very large and would lack any obvious identity or community interest that each of the two separate wards has'. Bitton Parish Council argued that the existing Oldland Common and Bitton wards 'seem [to be] within the acceptable variances of the average number of electors for the area'.

236 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. In general we consider that the Council's proposals provide good electoral arrangements that secure good electoral equality and provide strong boundaries. We note the support that they received from the Conservative Group. However, we do have a number of concerns. We also note the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to combine Oldland Common and Bitton wards.

237 We would concur with the Council's proposal to amend the boundary between Woodstock and Hanham wards in the Footshill Drive area. In addition to this, we concur with its amendment to Parkwall and Longwell Green boundary on St Stephen's Drive. Taking the boundary around the back of the houses should help avoid the confusion for local electors that can sometimes arise when a boundary runs down the centre of the road. Finally, we concur with its proposals to transfer small areas of Parkwall and Longwell Green to its Oldland Common. We note that this improves the access for these electors, as well as addressing the anomaly of placing Oldland Parish Church in Longwell Green ward.

238 However, we note that under the existing arrangements, Cock Road Ridge parish ward of Oldland Common is in Woodstock ward. While we would concur that this reflects local communities and acknowledge that the electors on Cock Road clearly have links with Woodstock ward, we note that Cock Road Ridge parish ward only contains 226 electors. Oldland parish contains over 10,000 electors, which means that we do not consider that Cock Road Ridge parish ward contain a sufficient proportion of the parishes electors to secure effective and convenient local government. We must therefore propose the transfer of Cock Road Ridge parish ward from Woodstock ward back to Parkwall ward. This would marginally worsen electoral equality, with both wards having 4% few and 3% more electors than the district average, respectively.

239 As with the anomalies identified in Siston and Mangotsfield Rural parishes, this anomaly would be best addressed by a parish review, but cannot be considered as part of this review. South Gloucestershire Council can conduct a parish review following the conclusion of this Further Electoral Review.

240 Finally, we have also examined the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to combine Bitton and Oldland Common wards. We note that this proposal secures a minor improvement in electoral equality in comparison with the Council's proposals. In addition to this, we do not consider that the evidence is sufficiently strong to split these different communities between two wards. Therefore, on balance and in light of the improvement in electoral equality, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal. However, we would particularly welcome comments on this proposal from local people during the consultation on our draft recommendations.

241 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 - 11 and 12 - 15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Bitton & Oldland Common, Hanham, Longwell Green, Parkwall and Woodstock. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 5 at the back of this report

Eastern & Southern Rural area: Boyd Valley; Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards

242 The Eastern & Southern Rural area comprises Boyd Valley, Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards. Table 14 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 22 - 25) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 14: Existing electoral arrangements

| Name of ward | Constituent areas | Councillors |
|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| Boyd Valley | Cold Ashton, Doynton, Dyrham & Hinton, Marshfield, Pucklechurch and Wick & Abson parishes | 2 |
| Cotswold Edge | Acton Turville, Badminton, Hawkesbury, Horton, Little Sodbury and Tormarton parishes; South parish ward of Dodington parish; Old Sodbury parish ward of Sodbury parish | 1 |
| Westerleigh | Westerleigh parish | 1 |

243 The Council put forward proposals for a single-member Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards and proposed retaining the existing two-member Boyd Valley ward. Table 15 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals for this area.

Table 15: Council's proposals for the Eastern and Southern Rural area

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cotswold Edge | Current ward, less Dodington South parish ward of Dodington | 1 | 2,760 | -6 |
| Westerleigh | Current ward plus Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish | 1 | 2,986 | 2 |
| Boyd Valley | Current ward, unchanged | 2 | 5,777 | -1 |

244 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward alternative proposals for this area. It put forward proposals for single-member Pucklechurch, Westerleigh and Wick & Marshfield wards. It also expressed support for the Council's proposed Cotswold Edge ward. Table 16 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward.

Table 16: Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the Eastern and Southern Rural area

| Proposed Ward Name | Constituent Parts | Number of councillors | Number of electors | Electoral Variance |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cotswold Edge | Current ward less Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish | 1 | 2,760 | -6 |
| Westerleigh | Current ward, unchanged | 1 | 2,711 | -7 |
| Pucklechurch | Pucklechurch parish; Dyrham & Hinton parish; Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish; Part of Doynton parish to the north of the A420 | 1 | 2,924 | 0 |
| Wick & Marshfield | Cold Ashton parish; Marshfield parish; Wick & Abson parish; part of Doynton parish to the south of the A420 | 1 | 3,129 | +7 |

245 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for new Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards. It highlighted that by 2008, the existing Cotswold Edge ward would have 4% more electors than the district average, while the neighbouring Westerleigh ward would have 7% fewer electors. It therefore proposed addressing this by transferring Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish from Cotswold Edge ward to Westerleigh ward. It stated that 'the new Westerleigh ward would cover the rural area to the south of Yate and north of the M4 motorway', adding 'Westerleigh village would be roughly at the geographical centre of the new ward, with shared west/east road links between Coalpit Heath, Westerleigh and Dodington villages'. It said that it had also considered and rejected proposals to retain the existing arrangements on the grounds of electoral equality and also a proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Pucklechurch ward given the 'barrier created by the M4 motorway'.

246 It also recommended the retention of the existing Boyd Valley ward. It argued that 'the geographical configuration of towns and villages in Boyd Valley make it very difficult to separate it into two single-member wards'. It added 'views have been expressed indicating that there is a perception that having two councillors covering such a large area does not result in good representation'. However, it concluded that 'the population sparsity of the rural area between the two major settlements, and the parish areas existing there, make it impossible to create the necessary viable parish wards'. Finally, it stated that it had considered the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal 'for two wards – Pucklechurch and Marshfield and Wick', but noted that it 'was reliant on creating a parish ward in Doynton parish with only 35 electors' and rejected this 'as it would produce gross electoral inequality at parish level'.

247 The Conservative Group on the Council expressed support for the Council's proposals. It supported the Council's proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish from Cotswold Edge ward to a revised Westerleigh ward. It stated

‘this would provide a much more coherent ward boundary for Cotswold Edge than currently exists by allowing the A46 to be utilised more than it is now’. It acknowledged that the electoral variance of its Cotswold Edge ward would be ‘higher than we would like’, but added that this is ‘justified by the restrictive nature of the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire County borders, the unrivalled geographical size and sparse [...] population and the [...] very high numbers of parish councils at seven for a single councillor’.

248 The Conservative Group supported the Council’s Westerleigh ward stating ‘very clear boundaries [would] be established for the new ward, essentially the A46, the railway line south of Yate, the M4 and the existing parish boundary to the west’, adding ‘it would mean Westerleigh itself would cease to be at the extremity of the ward and be placed at the centre’. It argued that the ‘ward shares a powerful spine along the Westerleigh Road/B4465’, adding that ‘residents in both Westerleigh and Dodington very much look towards Yate for their facilities’. It argued that children in this ward attend schools in Yate, while ‘children living south of the M4 in Boyd Valley have their own primary schools and are allocated secondary schools in the Kingswood area’.

249 Finally, the Conservative Group expressed support for the Council’s Boyd Valley ward, pointing out that it secures ‘excellent electoral equality’. It stated that ‘the ward has a grid of roads linking the various villages [and] two councillors can easily cover the six Parish Councils within the ward, certainly more easily than the single Cotswold Edge Councillor can cover their eight Parish Councils’. It added ‘the villages all share common interests [and are] allocated schools in the Kingswood area[,] look to Kingswood for their main facilities be it shops in Kingswood itself, Longwell Green or Emersons Green, Healthcare in Cossham Hospital in Kingswood and other facilities’. It acknowledged there were proposals to divide the ward into two single-member wards, but concluded ‘it would require slicing historic parishes apart and creating tiny parish wards which are unsustainable and undesirable’.

250 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Council’s proposal to remove Dodington South parish ward of Dodington ward from Cotswold Edge ward, acknowledging that the existing ward contains too many electors. However, it objected to the Council’s proposals to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Westerleigh ward and proposed transferring it to Pucklechurch ward (discussed below).

251 The Liberal Democrat Group also objected to the Council’s proposal to retain the two-member Boyd Valley ward. It argued that ‘this was universally unpopular at consultation with the parishes – every parish from Boyd Valley wanted a divorce from the other’, adding ‘the ward is a combination of three large parishes, each accustomed and expecting its own voice, with a smattering of small rural parishes in between’. It acknowledged that it is ‘impossible to deliver the parish[es]’ aspirations’, but argued that ‘it is possible to deliver at least part of their aspiration[s]’.

252 It proposed the creation of a single-member Pucklechurch ward comprising Pucklechurch, Dryham & Hinton, part of Doynton parish (to the north of the A420) and Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish and a single-member Wick & Marshfield ward comprising Cold Ashton, Marshfield and Wick & Marshfield wards and the Tracey Park area of Doynton parish.

253 It stated that ‘Pucklechurch has always sat uneasily with the A420 communities, not being part of the A420 corridor and looking far more towards Yate to the north than

to the A420 communities'. It also stated that the eastern end Dodington South parish ward 'has strong links to both Cotswold Edge and Dryham & Hinton – being A46 Cotswold communities', while 'the western end [...] lies on the edge of Westerleigh village, within sight of Pucklechurch'. It concluded that 'the one ward which both ends would comfortably fit is with Pucklechurch, Dryham & Hinton'. Finally, it proposed the division of Doynton parish in order to transfer the north part to its Pucklechurch ward and the Tracey Park area to the south of the A420 to its single-member Wick & Marshfield ward. It argued that the Doynton Village area to the north of the A420 'is very linked to Pucklechurch socially, in terms of primary schooling [and] public transport', while 'the outlying community around Tracey Park links much more to Wick on a similar basis'. It did, however, acknowledge that its Pucklechurch ward would have a lower level of electoral equality than other wards in South Gloucestershire. It also argued that while the 'M4 motorway runs through the ward, as with most of South Gloucestershire [it] is not in any sense a divide'.

254 The creation of the Tracey Park parish ward enables the Liberal Democrat Group to create its Wick & Marshfield ward by joining Cold Ashton and Wick & Marshfield parishes along the A420 as it runs through Tracey Park. It acknowledged that the parish ward for the Tracey Park area would 'be a small single-member parish ward, with 47 electors', but argued that this would create 'a ward focused upon Tracey Park Community[,] giving them a chance to elect "their" voice on the parish Council', adding that this reflected one fifth of the parish.

255 As stated above, the Liberal Democrat Group argued against the Council's proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Westerleigh. It proposed the retention of the existing Westerleigh ward, as it is 'within the green belt [and] its key problems relate to the problems of commuter traffic flows from Yate Sodbury area through its villages'.

256 Marshfield Parish Council objected to the Council's proposals for a two-member Boyd Valley ward, arguing that 'the rural parishes [...] make up exactly one third of the electorate in this ward [and are therefore] at a disadvantage'. It therefore put forward proposals for an alternative two-member ward comprising the existing Cotswold Edge ward and Marshfield, Dryham & Hinton, Cold Ashton and Doynton parishes. Its two-member ward would have 11% fewer electors than the district average. However, it argued that 'throughout South Gloucestershire [...] the urban wards dominate [and] rural representation on key committees [...] is very low and we feel that our views and concerns are not fully represented'. It added, the proposed ward 'would give the rural parishes a real voice at Council and an opportunity to work together effectively to fulfil the objectives of the Cotswold AONB Management Plan'. Tomarton Parish Council expressed support for Marshfield Parish Council's proposals

257 Pucklechurch Parish Council also objected to the proposals for a two-member Boyd Valley ward. It argued Boyd Valley was too large for rural ward and 'believes it received more effective local government as a single-member ward prior to the formation of Boyd Valley'.

258 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the proposals put forward by the Council and the support that they received from the Conservative Group. We also note the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals.

259 We note that the Council, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group all agree with the composition of Cotswold Edge ward and agree that it was necessary to transfer Dodington South parish ward elsewhere to improve electoral equality. We also note that this would secure acceptable levels of electoral equality.

260 We have also considered the alternative proposals put forward by Marshfield and Tomarton parish councils and note that their proposed ward would secure worse electoral equality, with 11% fewer electors than the district average. We note that they argued for this ward on the basis of its rural nature and the objective of giving 'the rural parishes a real voice'. While we note these proposals and their aim to give the rural area representation, our Guidance states, 'There is no provision in legislation for the BCFE to apply such a weighting in reaching recommendations. Nevertheless, we accept that attempts simply to even out the numbers between urban and rural areas can result in increasing the size of already very large rural wards. This may not satisfy elements of the statutory criteria: it may undermine, rather than enhance the effectiveness and convenience (to electors) of local government; and it also might fail to recognise and have regard to the identities and interests of local communities'. In this instance we note that Marshfield Parish Council's proposals provide only limited evidence of the specific links between the communities in the proposed ward. The proposal also secures relatively poor levels of electoral equality despite the allocation of two councillors, particularly in relation to the electoral equality secured by either the Council or Liberal Democrat Group's proposal. In addition to this, while the knock-on effect of its proposals could be accommodated in the Westerleigh parish area by adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's Westerleigh ward (discussed below), the knock-on effect in the Pucklechurch and Wick & Abson parish area cannot be contained. These two parishes contain 3,865 electors which is too many to merit a single councillor and too few to merit two councillors. We therefore do not propose adopting Marshfield Parish Council's proposal for a two-member ward.

261 We have examined the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals to create two single-member wards in place of the Council's proposed two-member Boyd Valley ward and its proposal to retain the existing Westerleigh ward. We note that its argument that the area covers three large parishes 'each accustomed and expecting its own voice, with a smattering of small rural parishes in between'. However, as it acknowledges, given the resulting electoral variance it is 'impossible to deliver the parish[']s aspirations'. It also argued that the east end of Dodington South parish ward has links towards Dryham & Hinton and Cotswold Edge, while the west end of the parish ward is 'within sight of Pucklechurch'. However, we also note that it stated that the west end of Dodington South parish ward 'lies on the edge of Westerleigh village'. We consider that Dodington South parish ward has much stronger links into Westerleigh along the B4465, than south to Pucklechurch, which lies on the other side of the motorway. Although the Liberal Democrat Group argued that the motorway does not present a barrier to communications, we consider the Council's proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Westerleigh ward better reflects community identity. It also addresses the issue of the existing Westerleigh ward having 7% fewer electors than the district average. Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals Westerleigh ward would continue to have 7% fewer electors than the district average, while the Council's modified Westerleigh ward would have 2% more electors than the district average.

262 In addition to this, we also note that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals secure worse electoral equality for its two single-member Pucklechurch and Wick &

Marshfield wards. Finally, while the Liberal Democrat Group provides some evidence of community identity for its Pucklechurch ward, it provides very limited evidence for its Wick & Marshfield ward. We have particular concerns over its proposal to divide Doynton parish. We do not consider that this proposal in anyway reflects the links for this community and has only been proposed to provide a link between Cold Ashton and Wick & Abson parishes in its Wick & Marshfield ward. In addition to this, although it acknowledges that its proposals create a parish ward with only 47 electors, we do not consider this to provide effective and convenient local government. Although they argue that this is one fifth of the parish's electorate, we do not consider that recommending such a small parish ward would reflect effective and convenient local government.

263 We acknowledge the Liberal Democrat Group's efforts to try to create single member wards in this area. However, this must be balanced against the need to secure electoral equality and reflect community identity across the area. On balance, we do not consider that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals provide sufficiently good electoral equality or represent community identity in comparison with the Council's proposals and do not therefore propose adopting them. The Council's two-member Boyd Valley ward secures reasonable community identity and electoral equality so we are adopting it.

264 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 - 11 and 12 - 15, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Boyd Valley, Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 at the back of this report.

Conclusions

265 Table 17 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2003 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2008.

Table 17: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

| | Current arrangements | | Draft recommendations | |
|--|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | 2003 | 2008 | 2003 | 2008 |
| Number of councillors | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| Number of wards | 35 | 35 | 32 | 32 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 2,785 | 2,925 | 2,785 | 2,925 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average | 5 | 7 | 4 | 0 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 |

266 As shown in Table 17, our draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from five to four. By 2008 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain the council size and are recommending a council size of 70 members.

Draft recommendation:

South Gloucestershire Council should comprise 70 councillors serving 32 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps at the back of this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

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

268 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Committee, lies with district councils. Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997. If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements order made by either the Secretary of State or The Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

269 During Stage One we received proposals for revised parish council electoral arrangements from South Gloucestershire Council, Oldland Parish Council and Patchway Town Council. These are discussed below.

270 The parish of Hanham Abbots is currently served by 13 councillors, representing two wards: East (returning six councillors) and West (returning seven). In its Stage One submission, the District Council proposed to revise the electoral arrangements for the parish, in consultation with the Parish Council. Both proposed that the number of councillors representing each ward be amended in order to reflect the electorate size in each ward.

271 Our proposed district warding arrangements would result in no change to the parish ward boundaries in this parish and we are content to put forward the District and Parish Council's proposals for consultation.

Draft recommendation:

Hanham Abbots Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East (returning four councillors), and West (returning nine).

272 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Almondsbury, Bradley Stoke, Dodington, Mangotsfield Rural, Oldland, Patchway, Stoke Gifford, Thornbury and Yate to reflect our proposed district wards.

273 The parish of Almondsbury is currently served by 13 councillors, representing two wards: Almondsbury (returning seven councillors) and Henbury (returning six). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Almondsbury Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Almondsbury (returning eight councillors), Berwick (returning one councillor), Compton (returning two councillors) and Cribbs Causeway (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

274 The parish of Bradley Stoke is currently served by 15 councillors, representing five wards: Baileys Court, Lakeside, Manor Farm, Primrose Bridge and Woodlands (each returning three councillors). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Bradley Stoke Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Baileys Court (returning two councillors), Lakeside (returning two councillors), Manor Farm (returning one councillor), Meadowbank (returning two councillors), Primrose Bridge (returning four councillors), Stoke Brook (returning one councillor) and Woodlands (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

275 The parish of Dodington is currently served by 15 councillors, representing three wards: North East (returning four councillors), North West (returning eight councillors) and South (returning three councillors). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Dodington Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North East (returning four councillors), North West (returning eight councillors) and South (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

276 The parish of Mangotsfield Rural is currently served by 16 councillors, representing five wards: Badminton (returning four councillors) and Blackhorse, Emersons Green, Pomphrey and Springfield (each returning three councillors). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Mangotsfield Rural Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Badminton (returning four councillors), Blackhorse (returning three councillors), Emersons Green (returning three councillors), Pomphrey (returning three councillors) and Springfield (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

277 The parish of Oldland is currently served by 19 councillors, representing six wards: Barrs Court (returning three councillors), Cadbury Heath (returning seven councillors), Cock Road Ridge (returning one councillor), Longwell Green (returning four councillors), Willsbridge (returning one councillor) and Wraxall (returning three councillors).

278 During Stage One, the District and Parish Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Oldland parish. They proposed reducing the number of councillors from 19 to 15, and re-allocating those councillors among the wards in the parish. As detailed above, we are content to adopt proposals for revised parish electoral arrangements which come from the Parish and District Councils concerned, and we therefore recommend a reduction of parish councillors from 19 to 15.

279 However, as detailed previously in the report, we have made our own amendments to the district ward boundaries proposed by the District Council, and this in turn impacts on the parish ward boundaries. We considered that the existing Cock Road Ridge parish ward to be too small in relative terms to justify the allocation of a parish councillor when considering the size of the parish. We do not consider that this will provide effective and convenient local government and have therefore combined this ward with parts of Cadbury Heath and Wraxall parish wards. We have also proposed amendments to the other parish wards as a consequence of our draft recommendations for district wards in the area and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Oldland Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, four less than at present, representing six wards: Barrs Court (returning two councillors), Cadbury Heath (returning three councillors), Longwell Green (returning three councillors), Orchard (returning one councillor), Willsbridge (returning one councillor) and Wraxall (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

280 The parish of Patchway is currently served by 15 councillors, representing three wards: Callicroft (returning six councillors), Coniston (returning five) and Stoke Lodge (returning four).

281 During Stage One, the Town Council proposed transferring some electors between the town wards of Callicroft and Stoke Lodge, and to have all three town council wards represented by five town councillors. However, as a consequence of our revised district warding arrangements for this parish, we propose that Patchway is represented by three wards, to reflect our proposed boundaries. We have allocated town councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward. We acknowledge that our proposals do not reflect the Town Council's favoured proposals and would welcome comments from local people. However, any comments must also give consideration to the district wards, which must be coterminous with parish ward boundaries.

Draft recommendation:

Patchway Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Callicroft (returning eight councillors), Coniston (returning four councillors) and Stoke Lodge (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

282 The parish of Stoke Gifford is currently served by 12 councillors, representing three wards: North (returning five councillors), South (returning six) and University (returning one). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Stoke Gifford Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Central (returning one councillor), North (returning three councillors), South (returning five councillors) and University (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

283 The parish of Thornbury is currently served by 16 councillors, representing four wards: Central, North East, North West and South (each returning four councillors). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Thornbury Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Central East (returning two councillors), Central West (returning two councillors), North East (returning five councillors), North West (returning three councillors) and South (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

284 The parish of Yate is currently served by 22 councillors representing seven wards: East, North West and South West (each returning three councillors), North, South East and West (each returning four councillors) and South (returning one councillor). We propose changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated town councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

Draft recommendation:

Yate Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Central (returning two councillors), North (returning six councillors), North West (returning three councillors), South (returning three councillors), South East (returning three councillors), South West (returning two councillors) and West (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

5 What happens next?

285 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 12 September 2005. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

286 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found getting the balance right between our statutory criteria especially difficult in the case of the Frampton Cotterell and Charfield & Ladden Brook wards and also Bitton & Oldland Common ward. We would particularly welcome local views on those areas, backed up by well argued evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

287 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

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

289 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 Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the electoral change Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for South Gloucestershire: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for South Gloucestershire.

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

Sheet 2, Map 2 illustrates the proposed boundaries in Thornbury.

Sheet 3, Map 3 illustrates the proposed wards for Bradley Stoke, Patchway and Stoke Gifford area.

Sheet 4, Map 4 illustrates the proposed in the Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area.

Sheet 5, Map 5 illustrates the proposed wards in the Kingswood area.

Appendix A

Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

Table A1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

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

