

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Tamworth in Staffordshire

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

October 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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



Local Government Commission for England

10 October 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 28 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Tamworth under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some minor modifications have been made (see paragraph 73) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Tamworth.

We recommend that Tamworth Borough Council should be served by 30 councillors representing 10 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

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

Yours sincerely

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Tamworth on 28 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

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

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 73 - 74) are that:

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

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

- **In all of the proposed 10 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by less than 8 per cent from the borough average.**
- **Electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 21 November 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

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

Notes: 1 The whole of Tamworth borough is unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Tamworth

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Amington	3	5,992	1,997	8	6,019	2,006	4
2 Belgrave	3	5,532	1,844	0	5,566	1,855	-4
3 Bolehall	3	5,413	1,804	-2	5,457	1,819	-5
4 Castle	3	5,068	1,689	-8	5,870	1,957	2
5 Glascote	3	5,879	1,960	6	5,909	1,970	2
6 Mercian	3	5,486	1,829	-1	5,513	1,838	-4
7 Spital	3	5,218	1,739	-6	5,506	1,835	-5
8 Stonydelph	3	5,729	1,910	4	5,759	1,920	0
9 Trinity	3	5,236	1,745	-5	6,080	2,027	5
10 Wilnecote	3	5,742	1,914	4	6,003	2,001	4
Totals	30	55,295	-	-	57,682	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,843	-	-	1,923	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tamworth in Staffordshire. We have now reviewed the eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Staffordshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Tamworth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations,

Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Tamworth in Staffordshire*, and ended on 3 July 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

Map 1: Existing Wards in Tamworth

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

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

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

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

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received two representations, one from Tamworth Borough Council and a joint submission from the Conservative Group on the Council and Tamworth Conservative Association. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Tamworth in Staffordshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and retained a pattern of three-member wards in the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting seven wards, in order to further improve electoral equality and to ensure that ward boundaries followed defined ground features. We proposed that:

- Tamworth Borough Council should be served by 30 councillors representing 10 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Tamworth Borough Council should comprise 30 councillors, serving 10 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 10 wards varying by less than 8 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 5 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

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

Tamworth Borough Council

22 The Borough Council generally supported our draft recommendations, subject to proposing amendments in four areas, affecting Belgrave, Castle, Mercian, Spital and Wilnecote wards, to “improve and assist the draft recommendations and reflect more nearly the identities and interests of the local communities within Tamworth”.

Tamworth Borough Council Conservative Group and Tamworth Conservative Association

23 The Conservative Group on the Council and Tamworth Conservative Association submitted a joint submission, stating that they accepted the draft recommendations in their entirety and understood the Commission’s reasoning for not adopting their Stage One proposals. They expressed the hope that the draft recommendations would be confirmed unaltered as final.

Tamworth Liberal Democrats

24 Tamworth Liberal Democrats stated that they supported the Borough Council’s Stage One submission, subject to proposing the inclusion of the area of new development between Lichfield Road and the River Tame in Mercian ward instead of Castle ward, which also formed part of the Borough Council’s Stage Three submission.

Other Representations

25 A further six representations were received from local residents in response to our draft recommendations.

26 We received five representations, including a petition with 98 signatories from residents of Foxglove in the existing Amington ward, opposing the proposed transfer of their area into Glascote ward.

27 We also received a borough-wide submission from a resident of Foxglove, which retained the Foxglove area in Amington ward and proposed significant changes to the boundaries of all

but one of the existing wards, arguing that these provided a better reflection of community identities and interests. The resident acknowledged, however, that these proposals had received no local consultation. The submission also queried the projected electorate figures provided by the Borough Council.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Tamworth is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

31 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

32 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 55,295 to 57,683 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in Castle and Trinity wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 At Stage Three a local resident queried the projected electorate figures provided by the Borough Council and used alternative figures. We asked officers at the Borough Council to comment further on the projected electorates and, in the light of their confirmed support for them, together with the absence of any significant evidence supporting a revision, we are content that the electorate projections continue to represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

35 Tamworth Borough Council is at present served by 30 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing council size.

36 In its Stage One submission the Conservative Group proposed a reduction in council size to 28, with a pattern of 14 two-member wards across the borough.

37 In our draft recommendations report we noted that Tamworth has a long history of a three-member ward pattern following reviews in both the 1970s and 1980s, and that the Borough Council's scheme continued this trend. We also noted that the Conservatives proposed some fairly significant changes and that there was an absence of cross-party agreement for, or detailed argument in favour of, a reduction in council size or for two-member wards. We therefore proposed to retain the existing council size of 30, which we considered would continue to reflect existing communities and facilitate the achievement of good electoral equality.

38 During Stage Three we received no representations directly relating to council size. The Conservative Group on Tamworth Borough Council, however, stated that they accepted our draft recommendations in their entirety. We therefore confirm as final our draft recommendation that Tamworth should be served by 30 councillors representing 10 wards.

Electoral Arrangements

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Conservatives. In looking at these two proposals, we noted that a three-member ward pattern has a long history in Tamworth, having been recommended by our predecessor (the LGBC) in both 1975 and 1984, and that the Borough Council proposed continuing this trend. The Conservatives put forward a pattern of 14 two-member wards. However, the Group did not provide significant evidence as to how its proposed pattern of two-member wards would actually better reflect communities within the borough, or how the current pattern failed to meet the statutory criteria. We therefore based our draft recommendations on a pattern of 10 three-member

wards as supported by the Borough Council. As a consequence we could not adopt any part of the Conservatives' scheme as our draft recommendations. However, we requested all participants to provide evidence during the consultation stage on the extent to which three-member wards actually reflect community identities within the borough.

40 In our draft recommendations report we stated that we recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the Borough Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, proposing alternative boundary changes between Castle, Mercian and Spital wards, and between Amington and Glascote wards. Elsewhere, where defaced or undefined ward boundaries existed, we proposed minor amendments to ensure that they followed ground features.

41 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations but proposed alternative boundary changes in four areas, affecting Belgrave, Castle, Mercian, Spital and Wilnecote wards. The Conservative Group on the Borough Council and Tamworth Conservative Association accepted the draft recommendations in their entirety. Tamworth Liberal Democrats expressed support for the Borough Council's Stage One submission, proposing one modification in order to include the area of new development between the River Tame and Lichfield Road in Mercian rather than Castle ward.

42 At Stage Three a borough-wide scheme was also received from a local resident. This scheme, which, as stated, utilised different electorates, proposed substantial changes to the boundaries of existing wards in Tamworth. With regard to the resident's detailed proposals for changes to ward boundaries which would retain Foxglove in Glascote ward, we note that such a modification was proposed alongside a number of modifications affecting the wider area. However, we are unable to look at any single area in isolation but must consider the impact which any such changes would have upon our proposals for the wider area. Moreover, the proposals had not been subject to local consultation and would have constituted a significant departure from our draft recommendations. Furthermore, the current overall level of electoral equality secured under these alternative proposals would be worse than under our draft recommendations. We therefore continue to consider that the proposals contained in our draft recommendations would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests. Moreover, given the general consensus in favour of our draft recommendations, we have not been persuaded to adopt this resident's proposals as part of our final recommendations.

43 We have therefore reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the other representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Castle, Mercian and Spital wards;
- (b) Amington and Glascote wards;
- (c) Belgrave and Bolehall wards;
- (d) Stonydelph, Trinity and Wilnecote wards.

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

Castle, Mercian and Spital wards

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

46 To achieve a better balance of representation in this area, the Borough Council proposed that 990 electors from polling districts TJ and TK should be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward. It also proposed that 360 electors from polling district TM of Castle ward should be included in a modified Spital ward. No further changes were proposed in this area under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 14 per cent below the borough average in Castle (6 per cent in 2004), 8 per cent above in Mercian (7 per cent in 2004) and 8 per cent below in Spital (unchanged in 2004).

47 In arriving at our draft recommendations we acknowledged the Council's attempts to improve electoral equality in this area. However, having visited the area, we considered that the level of electoral equality could be further improved, while still reflecting the statutory criteria. We therefore proposed the following boundary changes: that a smaller part of polling district TJ (comprising 206 electors) be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward, with the remainder being included in Spital ward; that only Lichfield Road Industrial Estate (part of polling district TK) be transferred from Castle ward to Mercian ward, with Bradford Street, Meadow Park, Park Street and Swanmote (comprising 305 electors) remaining in Castle ward; that only 42 electors in Rosy Cross and Albert Road (nos. 2–31) be transferred to Spital ward, together with the remaining electors from polling district TJ (less Aldergate); and that 304 electors from polling district TD be transferred from Spital ward to Mercian ward.

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

49 At Stage Three the Borough Council put forward proposals for alternative boundary changes between these three wards, proposing the transfer of The Leys area (including Freville Close, Prospect Street, Barbara Street and Alfred Street) from Mercian and Spital wards to Castle ward, and the area of new development between the River Tame and Lichfield Road from Castle ward to Mercian ward, arguing that these modifications would better reflect community identity. The latter modification was also proposed by the Liberal Democrats. The Borough Council also proposed that the area around Shakespeare Close should be transferred from Mercian ward to

Spital ward in order to improve electoral equality. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the borough average in Castle ward (14 per cent above in 2004), 8 per cent below the average in Mercian ward (2 per cent below in 2004) and 18 per cent below the average in Spital ward (19 per cent below in 2004).

50 We have carefully considered the representations received, and have noted the consensus between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats for the inclusion of the Lichfield Road development in Mercian ward. However, in the absence of supporting evidence from either party which would show how this change would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria, together with the worse electoral equality which would result, we are not persuaded to adopt this amendment as part of our final recommendations. With regard to the other alternative boundaries proposed by the Borough Council in this area, we note that they would also result in worse electoral equality than under our draft recommendations and, again, we are not persuaded that they provide a better reflection of community identities and interests within the area than our draft recommendations. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Castle, Mercian and Spital wards as final.

51 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Castle ward (2 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent below in Mercian ward (4 per cent below in 2004) and 6 per cent below in Spital ward (5 per cent below in 2004). The final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Amington and Glascote wards

52 These two wards are situated in the north-east of the borough and are served by three councillors each. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 18 per cent above the borough average in Amington ward (14 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Glascote ward (7 per cent in 2004).

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

54 In our draft recommendations report we stated that, having considered the Council's proposals, we noted that its proposed Glascote ward would comprise two areas, with a somewhat narrow link between them. In our view, the area concerned is not large enough to combine the two parts of the ward and this proposal would not secure effective and convenient local government, and we therefore did not endorse the Council's proposals in this area. Instead, we proposed that Foxglove (285 electors), Greenhart (219 electors) and Sheepcote Lane nos 102–154 (50 electors) be transferred from Amington ward to Glascote ward. To provide a clear boundary,

we proposed that Woodhouse High School should also be transferred to Glascote ward. Similarly, in the south of the ward, we proposed that the existing boundary should be moved to the newly built A5, affecting no electors.

55 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average in Amington ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Glascote ward (2 per cent in 2004).

56 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for Amington and Glascote wards, as did the Conservative Group on the Council. However, we received five representations from local residents, including a petition signed by 98 residents, objecting to the transfer of Foxglove from Amington to the proposed Glascote ward, citing house prices, and contending that the proposal would change their postal addresses, as their principal arguments. We also received a borough-wide scheme from a resident of Foxglove which facilitated the retention of Foxglove in Amington ward and proposed amendments to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards, arguing that these provided a better reflection of community identities and interests. It was acknowledged, however, that these proposals had received no local consultation.

57 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in respect of this area. We note the opposition of residents to the proposed transfer between Glascote and Amington wards, but also note that to retain the Foxglove area in Glascote ward would lead to substantial electoral inequalities in these and surrounding wards. Moreover, post code addresses do not alter as a consequence of electoral area or boundary changes. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Amington and Glascote wards as final.

58 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average in Amington ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Glascote ward (2 per cent in 2004). The final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Belgrave and Bolehall wards

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

60 At Stage One the Borough Council did not propose any change to either ward, as it considered that the current arrangements would continue to secure good electoral equality.

61 In our draft recommendations report we stated that, while we acknowledged the Council's proposal for no change to either ward, given the good electoral equality in these wards, we

proposed amending the Belgrave/Wilnecote ward boundary to follow Glascote Lane and Watling Street, providing a clearer boundary and transferring 17 electors to Belgrave ward. We also proposed that the undefined Bolehall/Amington ward boundary in the north should follow the side of properties, Whitley Avenue and the railway line (affecting no electors). Under our draft recommendations the variances would remain at 1 per cent in Belgrave ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 2 per cent in Bolehall ward (5 per cent in 2004).

62 At Stage Three the Conservative Group supported our draft recommendations, as did the Borough Council, with the exception of our proposed amendment to the boundary between Belgrave and Wilnecote wards. The Borough Council proposed a return to the existing boundary in this area. The retention of this boundary was also proposed by the Liberal Democrats. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Belgrave ward (4 per cent below in 2004) and 2 per cent below in Bolehall ward (5 per cent below in 2004).

63 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three, and in light of evidence received are persuaded by the view of the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats that the retention of the existing boundary between Belgrave and Wilnecote wards would better reflect local community identities and interests. Given the general support for our draft recommendations for the rest of this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Belgrave and Bolehall wards as final, subject to this modification affecting only 43 electors.

64 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Belgrave ward (4 per cent below the average in 2004), and 2 per cent below in Bolehall ward (5 per cent below in 2004). The final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Stonydelph, Trinity and Wilnecote wards

65 These wards are each served by three councillors and are located in the south of the borough. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 4 per cent above the average in Stonydelph ward (equal to the average in 2004), 5 per cent below in Trinity ward (5 per cent above in 2004 due to major development) and 3 per cent above in Wilnecote ward (4 per cent above in 2004).

66 At Stage One the Borough Council did not propose any change to these wards, as they would retain good levels of electoral equality.

67 Having considered the Council's proposal for no change to these wards, we decided to include them as part of our draft recommendations, subject to adjusting the boundary between Wilnecote ward and Belgrave ward (as stated above), and running the boundary between Wilnecote and Stonydelph wards along the newly built A5 dual-carriageway in order to provide a more clearly identifiable boundary. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors

per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Wilnecote ward (unchanged in 2004). The remaining two wards would retain the same variances as under the existing arrangements.

68 At Stage Three the Borough Council and Tamworth Conservatives supported our draft recommendation in this area, with the exception of the Borough Council's proposed amendment to the boundary between Belgrave and Wilnecote wards (discussed above).

69 In the light of the general support for our draft recommendations in this area, we propose confirming them as final, subject to the modification to the boundary of Wilnecote ward.

70 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Wilnecote ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average, remaining the same in 2004. The remaining two wards would retain the same variances as under the existing arrangements. The final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

71 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

72 At Stage Three no comments on council size were received to the contrary. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- We propose that the existing boundary between Belgrave and Wilnecote wards should be retained and that the 43 affected electors should remain in Wilnecote ward.
-

74 We conclude that, in Tamworth:

- the current council size of 30 should be retained;
- there should be 10 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of nine of the 10 existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

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

76 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from two to zero. By 2004, all wards are still forecast to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the borough. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Tamworth Borough Council should comprise 30 councillors serving 10 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Tamworth

6 NEXT STEPS

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

78 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 21 November 2000.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Tamworth

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

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Belgrave	Belgrave ward; Glascote ward (part); Wilnecote ward (part)
Wilnecote	Wilnecote ward (part); Stonydelph ward (part)

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Belgrave	3	5,575	1,858	1	5,609	1,870	-3
Wilnecote	3	5,699	1,900	3	5,960	1,987	3

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

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

