

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wakefield

February 2003

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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. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. 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.

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Wakefield on 8 May 2002.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Wakefield:

- **in five of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and one ward varies by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in eight wards and by more than 20% in two wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 194-195) are that:

- **The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council should have 63 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each district councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 20 of the proposed 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the district average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Crofton, Featherstone and Normanton.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 11 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 7 April 2003:

**Team Leader
Wakefield Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
1	Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton	3	The parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick	Maps 2, 3, 5 and 6
2	Airedale & Ferry Fryston (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward, part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward, part of Knottingley ward	Maps 2 and 3
3	Altofts & Whitwood (part-parished)	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Ackton Pasture parish ward); part of Normanton parish (the proposed Altofts parish ward); part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
4	Castleford Central & Glasshoughton (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward; part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 2 and 3
5	Crofton, Ryhill & Walton	3	Part of Crofton parish (the proposed West parish ward); the parishes of Chevet, Havercroft with Cold Hiendley, Notton, Ryhill, Walton and Winterset	Maps 1, 2 and 5
6	Featherstone	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Central, East, North West and South parish wards); part of Crofton parish (the proposed East parish ward); Sharlston parish	Maps 2, 3 and 5
7	Hemsworth	3	The parishes of South Hiendley and Hemsworth	Maps 5 and 6
8	Horbury (unparished)	3	Part of Horbury ward; part of Ossett ward	Maps 1 and 4
9	Knottingley (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward; part of Knottingley ward	Map 3
10	Normanton	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Western Gales Way parish ward); part of Normanton parish (the proposed Normanton, Normanton Common and Woodhouse parish wards); the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
11	Ossett (unparished)	3	Part of Horbury ward; part of Ossett ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward	Map 1
12	Pontefract North (unparished)	3	Part of Knottingley ward; part of Pontefract North ward	Maps 2 and 3
13	Pontefract South (part-parished)	3	Part of Knottingley ward; part of Pontefract North ward; part of Pontefract South ward; the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick	Maps 3 and 6
14	South Elmsall & South Kirkby	3	The parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe	Map 6

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
15	Stanley & Outwood East (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield East ward	Maps 1 and 2
16	Wakefield East (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward	Map 1
17	Wakefield North (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward; part of Wakefield North ward	Map 1
18	Wakefield Rural	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley	Maps 1, 4 and 5
19	Wakefield South (unparished)	3	Part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward; part of Wakefield South ward	Maps 1, 4 and 5
20	Wakefield West (unparished)	3	Part of Ossett ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield North ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward	Map 1
21	Wrenthorpe & Outwood West (unparished)	3	Part of Ossett ward; part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield North ward	Map 1

Notes:

- 1) *There are two separate unparished areas in the north-west and north-east of the district, comprising 12 wards and part of two further wards, as indicated above.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Wakefield

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton	3	12,317	4,106	3	12,256	4,085	2
2	Airedale & Ferry Fryston	3	11,767	3,922	-1	11,638	3,879	-3
3	Altofts & Whitwood	3	11,244	3,748	-6	11,915	3,972	-1
4	Castleford Central & Glasshoughton	3	11,620	3,873	-3	11,719	3,906	-3
5	Crofton, Ryhill & Walton	3	11,912	3,971	0	11,969	3,990	-1
6	Featherstone	3	13,159	4,386	10	13,042	4,347	8
7	Hemsworth	3	11,724	3,908	-2	11,774	3,925	-2
8	Horbury	3	12,494	4,165	5	12,511	4,170	4
9	Knottingley	3	10,755	3,585	-10	10,605	3,535	-12
10	Normanton	3	11,719	3,906	-2	12,278	4,093	2
11	Ossett	3	12,357	4,119	3	12,550	4,183	4
12	Pontefract North	3	11,910	3,970	0	12,048	4,016	0
13	Pontefract South	3	12,313	4,104	3	12,109	4,036	0
14	South Elmsall & South Kirkby	3	13,287	4,429	11	13,867	4,622	15
15	Stanley & Outwood East	3	11,715	3,905	-2	11,793	3,931	-2
16	Wakefield East	3	11,180	3,727	-6	11,559	3,853	-4
17	Wakefield North	3	10,969	3,656	-8	11,468	3,823	-5
18	Wakefield Rural	3	13,008	4,336	9	12,978	4,326	8
19	Wakefield South	3	12,164	4,055	2	12,136	4,045	1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20 Wakefield West	3	11,363	3,788	-5	11,466	3,822	-5
21 Wrenthorpe & Outwood West	3	11,793	3,931	-1	11,533	3,844	-4
Totals	63	250,770	-	-	252,214	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,980	-	-	4,019	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council's submission.*

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the city of Wakefield, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five metropolitan districts in West Yorkshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wakefield. Wakefield's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1979 (Report no. 349).

3 In carrying out these metropolitan 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. 3692), 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.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Wakefield is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 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.

6 The broad objective of PERs 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 arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 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 no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. 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 electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan district ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan district wards currently return three councillors. 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.

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 8 May 2002, when we wrote to the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified West Yorkshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Yorkshire 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 Yorkshire Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 27 August 2002.

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

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 11 February 2003 and will end on 7 April 2003, 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.**

13 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 it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council is situated in the south-east of West Yorkshire, bordered by the metropolitan authorities of Leeds to the north, Kirklees to the west, Barnsley to the south and Doncaster to the south-east, and by the district of Selby in North Yorkshire to the east. The district contains 30 parishes, but the city of Wakefield and the towns of Castleford, Horbury, Knottingley, Ossett, Outwood, Pontefract, Stanley and Wrenthorpe are unparished.

15 In the following report, we have referred to the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council authority area as a 'district' to distinguish it from the city of Wakefield, which comprises 17.5% of the district's total electorate.

16 The electorate of the district is 250,770 (December 2001). The Council presently has 63 members who are elected from 21 wards, 11 of which are predominantly urban, while the remaining wards combine urban, semi-rural and rural areas. All wards are three-member wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,980 electors, which the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council forecasts will increase to 4,019 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 21 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, and one ward by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward where each councillor represents 27% more electors than the district average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Wakefield

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Castleford Ferry Fryston	3	9,657	3,219	-19	9,523	3,174	-21
2	Castleford Glasshoughton	3	10,781	3,594	-10	10,888	3,629	-10
3	Castleford Whitwood	3	10,031	3,344	-16	10,063	3,354	-17
4	Crofton & Ackworth	3	12,333	4,111	3	12,346	4,115	2
5	Featherstone	3	11,178	3,726	-6	11,718	3,906	-3
6	Hemsworth	3	10,933	3,644	-8	11,097	3,699	-8
7	Horbury	3	12,201	4,067	2	12,221	4,074	1
8	Knottingley	3	10,759	3,586	-10	10,609	3,536	-12
9	Normanton & Sharlston	3	12,858	4,286	8	13,397	4,466	11
10	Ossett	3	12,670	4,223	6	12,860	4,287	7
11	Pontefract North	3	13,224	4,408	11	13,384	4,461	11
12	Pontefract South	3	10,995	3,665	-8	10,769	3,590	-11
13	South Elmsall	3	11,662	3,887	-2	12,068	4,023	0
14	South Kirkby	3	10,884	3,628	-9	10,940	3,647	-9
15	Stanley & Altofts	3	14,108	4,703	18	14,544	4,848	20
16	Stanley & Wrenthorpe	3	15,158	5,053	27	15,099	5,033	25
17	Wakefield Central	3	11,549	3,850	-3	11,666	3,889	-3
18	Wakefield East	3	12,846	4,282	8	12,847	4,282	7
19	Wakefield North	3	11,413	3,804	-4	11,691	3,987	-1

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20	Wakefield Rural	3	13,008	4,336	9	12,978	4,326	8
21	Wakefield South	3	12,522	4,174	5	12,506	4,169	4
	Totals	63	250,770	-	-	252,214	-	-
	Averages	-	-	3,980	-	-	4,019	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.*

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Castleford Ferry Fryston ward were relatively over-represented by 19%, while electors in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward were relatively under-represented by 27%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 Submissions received

19 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 the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the BCFE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 37 representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council and a joint district-wide scheme from the District Council Conservative Group and local Conservative constituency associations. All of these submissions may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

21 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council ('the District Council') proposed to retain the existing 63-member council, serving 21 wards. It proposed amendments to all but two district wards.

22 Under the District Council's proposals, electoral equality would improve, with only one ward varying by more than 10% from the district average by 2006.

City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Conservative Group and Conservative Constituency Associations

23 The Conservative Group on the District Council, together with the Pontefract & Castleford, Hemsworth, Normanton and Wakefield constituency associations ('the Conservatives') proposed a council of 60 members, three fewer than at present, serving 20 wards. They proposed amendments to all but four district wards.

24 Under the Conservatives' proposals, electoral equality would improve, with only two wards varying by more than 10% from the district average by 2006.

Normanton Constituency Labour Party

25 Normanton Constituency Labour Party proposed a council of 66 members, three more than at present, serving 22 wards. It proposed to allocate an additional ward to the Normanton parliamentary constituency area to reduce the under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards.

Wakefield District Liberal Democrats

26 Wakefield District Liberal Democrats ('the Liberal Democrats') put forward proposals for the town of Pontefract and the south of the district. They also proposed that Wakefield Central ward be re-named 'Wakefield West'.

Members of Parliament

27 Three submissions were received from Members of Parliament. Yvette Cooper MP (Pontefract & Castleford) supported the District Council's proposal to retain the existing council size of 63 as well as its proposals for the north-east of the district, except those concerning the village of Wentbridge, for which she put forward alternative proposals. Bill O'Brien MP (Normanton) supported a 66-member council and put forward proposals identical to those of

Normanton Constituency Labour Party. Jon Trickett MP (Hemsworth) supported the District Council's proposed Crofton & Ackworth and Featherstone wards and commented upon other existing and proposed wards in the south of the district.

Parish and town councils

28 Representations were received from eight parish and town councils. In the north of the district, Featherstone Town Council supported the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward. However, this ward was opposed by Sharlston Parish Council, which preferred that the parish be included in a ward with either Crofton parish or Normanton parish. Normanton Town Council proposed that the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish be included in a ward with the rest of the Normanton urban area and enclosed a petition from local residents in support.

29 In the south of the district, Hemsworth Town Council proposed that Hemsworth ward include all of Hemsworth parish, part of which is currently in South Kirkby ward. South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council expressed a first preference for the retention of the existing South Kirkby ward and a second preference for the transfer of part of Hemsworth parish to Hemsworth ward, providing no further amendments were made to South Kirkby ward. Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council proposed the retention of the existing South Elmsall ward and suggested possible amendments in the south-east of the district. Crigglestone Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Wakefield Rural ward, as did Woolley Parish Council, subject to the transfer of a small part of Notton parish from Wakefield South ward.

Other representations

30 A further 22 representations were received from local political parties, local community groups and local residents. Normanton Central Branch Labour Party and a Normanton resident put forward proposals for the Normanton Common area identical to those of Normanton Town Council. The resident also proposed a further amendment in the east of the town similar to proposals by the District Council and the Conservatives. However, nine district residents and a Normanton town councillor opposed the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. The nine residents supported a 66-member council and put forward proposals broadly identical to those of Normanton Constituency Labour Party, while the town councillor proposed a reduction in council size to 60 members, reducing the representation of Castleford to two wards.

31 The District Council's revised Featherstone ward was supported by RCG Tenants & Residents Association (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), but opposed by Streethouse Village Community Group and a Sharlston resident. The resident put forward alternative proposals identical to those of Sharlston Parish Council. The Tenants & Residents Association also supported the District Council's proposed retention of a council size of 63. Elsewhere in the district, Upton & North Elmsall History Group proposed the retention of the existing South Elmsall ward, while Wrenthorpe Environmental Society proposed the retention of the Wrenthorpe community in a single ward. A Wentbridge resident put forward proposals for his area identical to those of Yvette Cooper MP, while a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish proposed the inclusion of a small area of the parish in Wakefield East ward.

32 We also received a number of comments pertaining to the review as a whole. West Yorkshire Police Authority expressed a preference for any change to the existing wards in Wakefield to be kept to a minimum. Normanton Environment Society Together (NEST) commented upon the difficulty of producing five-year forecasts for use in this review, and considered it was not possible to fully reflect community identities and interests and achieve electoral equality across the district. A local resident commented upon the structure of government in the UK; as he made no specific proposal for electoral arrangements in Wakefield, we were unable to give their views further consideration.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

33 We have not finalised our recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Wakefield 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. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

34 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wakefield is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). 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'.

35 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.

36 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.

37 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.

Electorate forecasts

38 Since 1975 there has been a 14% increase in the electorate of Wakefield district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 250,770 to 252,214 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Featherstone, Normanton & Sharlston, South Elmsall and Stanley & Altofts wards, but also predicts a decline in six wards, most notably Castleford Ferry Fryston, Knottingley and Pontefract South. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

39 Normanton Environment Society Together (NEST) expressed concern at the accuracy of these forecasts. It considered that the difficulty of this task would be exacerbated by population movement, uneven development and the use of an 'aspirational' rather than a 'descriptive' unitary development plan. We note these comments and recognise that forecasting electorates is a difficult and inexact science. However, having considered the District Council's figures, we

accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council size

40 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council presently has 63 members. In May 2002, a new constitution setting out a leader and cabinet committee system of political management came into effect.

41 At Stage One, we received 16 representations in relation to council size, including three proposals for different council sizes. The District Council proposed to retain the existing 63-member council. It stated that 'being freed from the time-consuming committee structure has given members more time to focus on the communities they represent,' citing in this context the creation of Area Panels and the increased role of community groups. The District Council further considered that there had been a substantial increase in the representative role of councillors on external bodies as a result of new funding opportunities and the promotion of 'community involvement in local issues'.

42 Moreover, the District Council expressed the view that reducing the number of councillors 'would lead to an unnatural division of communities and a loss of direct access to members, who in more rural areas would represent areas of many square miles.' It also indicated that it had undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving parish and town councils, community groups and residents' associations and the general public. Yvette Cooper MP and the RCG Tenants & Residents Association (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), a Featherstone community group, supported the District Council's proposal to retain a 63-member council.

43 The Conservatives proposed a council size of 60 members, a reduction of three, considering that 'all organisations, whether modernising or restructuring, take the opportunity to "down-size".' In their view the new leader and cabinet committee system, which had introduced overview and scrutiny committees together with local Area Panels, had 'reduced considerably the amount of time consumed by the decision-making process'. The Conservatives also considered that a reduction in council size would 'reduce internal difficulties in the management of the Council,' referring in this context to reports by the District Auditor and the Social Services Inspectorate.

44 The Conservatives disagreed with the view of the District Council that a 60-member council would unnecessarily divide communities and create overly large rural wards, noting that none of its proposed wards would be larger than the existing Wakefield Rural ward. Based on anecdotal evidence by councillors they concluded that the reduction of the role of councillors in the internal management of the Council would ensure 'no appreciable change to the level of access to members,' should the council size be reduced. A 60-member council was also proposed by a Normanton town councillor, who argued that the Castleford urban area should be entitled to two three-member wards rather than three.

45 Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents proposed a council size of 66 members, an increase of three. Bill O'Brien MP considered that 'the work of the local councillor is ever increasing, with demands by the communities for more and better services.' He also expressed concern that larger wards would make it more difficult for electors to identify with their councillor. Supporters of a 66-member council proposed that an additional three-member ward be created in the Normanton parliamentary constituency area to resolve the under-representation of three wards and allocate the same number of district wards to the Normanton constituency as to the neighbouring seat of Pontefract & Castleford. It was considered that this proposal would better reflect community identities and interests in the area than the District Council's 63-member warding pattern.

46 Having carefully considered all proposals regarding council size received during Stage One, we decided that we required further argumentation and evidence as to how each proposal would secure effective and convenient local government for Wakefield. Accordingly, we requested additional information from the above respondents and received eight responses. The District Council provided further details of the representative roles of members in the community and on external bodies in support of its proposal to retain the existing 63-member council. It also suggested that the Committee should consider the time required for councillors' 'outside employment and the right to a private life.' RCG Tenants & Residents Association (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road) considered that the new political management structures had enabled Featherstone ward councillors to devote more time to their constituents, and that the existing council size should therefore be retained.

47 The Conservatives supplied details of how a 60-member council would function under the new management structures, highlighting increased delegation of work from members to officers and research staff. It also expressed scepticism concerning the take-up by members of posts on external organisations and its effect on their workload. Bill O'Brien MP considered that a 66-member council would provide 'the optimum councillor/elector ratio' and would be of average size for a metropolitan authority. He and a local resident also provided additional information on the current political management structures of the council. A number of respondents also referred to district warding proposals in the Normanton constituency area.

48 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. As explained in our *Guidance*, we take no preconceived view as to the most appropriate council size for Wakefield, but carefully consider the argumentation and evidence received. We consider in the first instance the number of councillors required to best provide effective and convenient local government, rather than issues pertaining to individual wards. Furthermore, we request that proposals for council size be developed in the context of changes to internal political management structures (in the case of Wakefield, the introduction of a leader and cabinet committee model) and the role of councillors in these new structures.

49 We examined Normanton Constituency Labour Party's proposal for a 66-member council. While we note that it obtained some local support, we are not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that a council size of 66 would best meet the needs of the authority as a whole under the new leader and cabinet committee model. Moreover, while we seek to recommend a council size that will provide the correct allocation of councillors for each part of the district, we do not seek to obtain an equal allocation of district wards between parliamentary constituencies. In practice, once new district ward boundaries for Wakefield are implemented, the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission will take them into account in its ongoing Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituencies. As a result, constituencies in Wakefield may change at some future point and we therefore take no account of their existing boundaries in recommending new district wards.

50 We therefore gave consideration to the proposals by the District Council and the Conservatives for 63-member and 60-member councils respectively. In comparison to the existing arrangements, we note that both schemes would secure a reduction in electoral variance and a more equitable allocation of councillors across the district. Further, we note that both had considered the effect of the new leader and cabinet committee system of political management on the role of members. Both the District Council and the Conservatives agreed that the modernisation of the council had led to a reduction in the policy-making and -scrutinising duties of non-executive members.

51 We note that the Conservatives did not agree with the view of the District Council that the time freed up as a result of the modernisation process had been spent by councillors on their representative role in local communities and on work on external bodies, resulting in no change to their overall workload. However, we do not consider that the Conservatives have provided substantive evidence in this respect, whereas the District Council have provided a number of

appropriate examples of the work of councillors in these fields. We also note in this context the additional information provided by RCG Tenants & Residents Association (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), suggesting that the quality of representation provided by members has significantly improved following the introduction of the new management structures, and we would not seek to jeopardise these gains.

52 We do not consider that modernisation necessarily implies a reduction in the number of elected members. Our *Guidance* states that ‘we have no particular view on whether the move towards new political management structures should result in increases, reductions or, indeed, no change in council size.’ We note the evidence provided by the Conservatives suggesting that a reduction to 60 members could be taken without adversely affecting the existing committee structure or dividing communities between wards more than is currently the case. Nonetheless, we are not convinced on the basis of this evidence that a reduction in council size would enable the council to function more effectively. We have also not been shown to our satisfaction how a reduction would resolve the difficulties in internal management referred to by the Conservatives.

53 We concur with the District Council that the response to its consultation on council size was broadly supportive of the retention of the existing 63-member council. We further note that there was little evidence of local support for a reduction to 60 members, apart from a Normanton town councillor, who commented on the allocation of councillors for Castleford rather than the needs of the council as a whole. 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 achievement of the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 63 members.

Electoral arrangements

54 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and the Conservatives. We note that both schemes would provide for improved levels of electoral equality, while the District Council had also undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving parish and town councils, community groups and local residents.

55 However, our *Guidance* states that council size is the starting point in periodic electoral reviews, since it determines the number of three-member wards to be proposed in metropolitan districts and the optimum councillor:elector ratio to be achieved across all wards. As a consequence of our decision to adopt the District Council’s proposed council size of 63, we were therefore only able to give limited further consideration to the proposals from the Conservatives, which were based on a council size of 60. Similarly, we could only give limited further consideration to proposals for the north of the district by Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O’Brien MP and nine local residents, which were based on a 66-member council.

56 In the north of the district (excluding the city of Wakefield) we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council’s proposals. We consider that they would generally achieve better electoral equality, better reflect community identities and interests and provide more effective and convenient local government than the existing arrangements. However, we are putting forward amendments to a number of the District Council’s proposed wards in this area to achieve a better balance between these criteria. In the south of the district we propose to place Hemsworth parish and the Havercroft/Ryhill area in single district wards, uniting communities that are divided under the existing warding pattern. While these amendments to some extent reflect representations made by the District Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Hemsworth Town Council, we have put forward revised wards for the remainder of the south of the district to continue to provide for good electoral equality.

57 In the city of Wakefield, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council’s proposals subject to a number of amendments. These changes were to some extent necessary

to accommodate the revised warding pattern in the south of the district while continuing to provide for good electoral equality in the city. Nonetheless, we consider that our proposals also better reflect community identities and interests in the City Centre, Lupset and Northgate areas. Finally, in order to follow existing ground detail, we are putting forward minor modifications to proposed boundaries.

58 Across the district, we acknowledge that the aim of achieving the best possible electoral equality and the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards have been constraining factors in securing a completely accurate reflection of the communities of Wakefield. This problem has been particularly acute in three areas: the town of Castleford; the south-east of the district; and part of the city of Wakefield to the south of the River Calder. Being unable to consider any single area in isolation, we have put forward draft recommendations that in our judgement provide the best balance between the statutory criteria for the whole of the district, based upon the information that has been made available. These recommendations would result in two wards (Knottingley and South Elmsall & South Kirkby) having an electoral variance over 10% by 2006, as opposed to one ward (Knottingley) under the District Council's proposals. We welcome further proposals for these areas and other parts of the district at Stage Three.

59 We note the view of West Yorkshire Police Authority that any changes proposed should be kept to a minimum to reduce disruption for residents and police officers, as the Police Authority has sought to make policing divisions coterminous with existing ward boundaries. Nonetheless, we consider that the changes proposed as part of our draft recommendations better meet our statutory criteria than the existing warding pattern.

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

The 'Five Towns'

- (a) Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston wards;
- (b) Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards;
- (c) Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards;

The south

- (d) Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards;
- (e) Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards;

The city of Wakefield

- (f) Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards;
- (g) Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards;

The north-west

- (h) Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards;
- (i) Horbury and Ossett wards.

61 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

The 'Five Towns'

(a) Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston wards

62 The wards of Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston are situated in the north and centre of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Featherstone ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name, which comprises the town of Featherstone and the villages of Ackton, North Featherstone, Old Snyderdale, Purston Jaglin, Snyderdale and Streethouse. Normanton & Sharlston ward comprises the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor, Sharlston and Warmfield cum Heath, together with the Normanton and Woodhouse parish wards of Normanton parish. Under the existing arrangements, Featherstone ward and Normanton & Sharlston ward have 6% fewer and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% fewer and 11% more than the average by 2006).

63 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new Normanton ward, which would include: the Normanton parish wards of Normanton, Normanton Common and Woodhouse; the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath; the Western Gales Way area of Featherstone parish; and a small part of the Castleford unparished area to the south of the M62 containing no electors. This proposal would provide for the transfer of the Normanton Common area (the part of Normanton parish to the north of Eastfield Grove and Gladstone Street) from the existing Castleford Whitwood ward. The District Council considered this area to be 'an integral part of Normanton' with 'a direct affinity' to the town. It also considered that residents of the Western Gales Way area, situated to the west of the A655 Normanton bypass and to the north of Snyderdale Road, use facilities in Normanton and 'have little, if any affinity with Featherstone.'

64 Under the District Council's proposals the existing Featherstone ward would be subject to two further amendments. First, it would include Sharlston parish from the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward. The District Council considered that this would reflect existing social ties between Sharlston and Featherstone, although it noted the opposition of Sharlston Parish Council and the geographical and social links between the villages of Crofton and Sharlston. Second, the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish to the north of the M62 would be transferred to a new Altofts & Whitwood ward. The District Council indicated that, while this area currently contains only 164 electors, substantial new residential development is expected to result in a forecast electorate of 800 electors by 2006. It considered that these new electors would identify with Castleford rather than with Featherstone town.

65 Under the District Council's proposals, Featherstone ward (comprising the parish of Sharlston and all of Featherstone parish except the proposed Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (7% more by 2006). Normanton ward (comprising the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor, Warmfield cum Heath, all of the parish of Normanton except the existing Altofts parish ward, the proposed Western Gales Way ward of Featherstone parish and part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006).

66 We received 23 further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based upon a council size of 60, including Featherstone and Normanton wards similar to those put forward by the District Council. They concurred with the District Council's proposal to include Sharlston parish in Featherstone ward, considering that Sharlston village is connected to Featherstone by the A645 Pontefract to Wakefield road and 'has a greater affinity and closer links with Featherstone and the Snyderdale settlement, than it has with Normanton.' The Conservatives also agreed with the view of the District Council that the Western Gales Way area identified with Normanton rather than with Featherstone and should be included in a new Normanton ward, although they put forward their own revised ward

boundary in this area. However, unlike the District Council, the Conservatives' proposed Featherstone ward would also include: the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish from the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward, which they considered to be 'an intrinsic part of Sharlston'; the Huntwick area of Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell parish, also from the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward; and part of Warmfield cum Heath parish containing no electors.

67 Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents put forward proposals based upon a council size of 66. They proposed that a sixth ward be created in the Normanton parliamentary constituency area (the existing wards of Horbury, Normanton & Sharlston, Ossett, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe) to resolve the under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards. Full details of proposed wards were not provided, but it was considered that the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish (currently in Castleford Whitwood ward) and the village of Snyderdale (part of Featherstone parish) should be added to wards in the Normanton constituency area. Respondents stated that Snyderdale identified more closely with Normanton than with Featherstone.

68 Yvette Cooper MP, Normanton Town Council, Normanton Central Branch Labour Party and a Normanton resident supported the proposed inclusion of the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish in a new Normanton ward. The Town Council also forwarded two petitions from a total of 63 residents in support of this proposal. It was generally considered that Normanton Common residents made use of shops, schools and other services in Normanton, while the M62 formed a well-defined boundary between Normanton and Castleford. The Normanton resident and a Normanton town councillor also supported the inclusion of the Western Gales Way area of Featherstone parish in a ward with the rest of the Normanton urban area.

69 Jon Trickett MP, Featherstone Town Council and the RCG Tenants & Residents Association, (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), a community group in Featherstone, supported the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward. It was generally considered by these respondents that the Featherstone area was defined to the north by the M62 and by the A655 Normanton bypass to the west. Jon Trickett MP also stated that 'the Sharlston communities as former mining villages have far more in common with the communities that make up the Featherstone ward than they do with ... the rest of the Normanton ward.' Yvette Cooper MP supported the District Council's proposed transfer of the Ackton Pasture area to the north of the M62 to a new Altofts & Whitwood ward, considering that the affected electors identified with Castleford rather than Featherstone. However, Streethouse Village Community Group stated that it opposed all changes to the existing Featherstone ward.

70 Sharlston Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward, considering that the village had no 'natural ties' with the town of Featherstone. It expressed a preference for being placed in a ward with the parish of Crofton, noting that not only was it closer to Crofton than to Featherstone, but that the two villages were linked by the provision of secondary schooling, medical services and other social ties. The Parish Council noted that ties had also developed between Sharlston and Normanton town in the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward. Further, it drew the attention of The Boundary Committee to the Birkwood Avenue area, which is geographically part of Sharlston village but administratively part of Crofton parish. It A Sharlston resident supported the views expressed by the Parish Council, while Bill O'Brien MP considered that Normanton and Sharlston should be retained in the same ward, arguing that they 'identified with each other'. Finally, a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish proposed that a small number of properties in the parish on the A638 Doncaster Road adjoining the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas of Wakefield city would be 'better serviced' if they were included in Wakefield East ward.

71 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One and are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's

proposals, which we consider would best meet our statutory criteria, based upon the available evidence. We further note that the proposed Normanton and Featherstone wards have received some local support and would resolve the forecast under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward by 2006. As a result of our recommendation to retain a 63-member council, we have only been able to give limited further consideration to proposals by the Conservatives and Normanton Constituency Labour Party, which were based on 60-member and 66-member councils respectively.

72 We are adopting the District Council's proposed Normanton ward without amendment. We note that the existing boundary between Castleford Whitwood and Normanton & Sharlston wards separates Normanton Common parish ward from the remainder of the town of Normanton, with which it is contiguous. We further note that the existing boundary divides Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk between the two wards. In contrast, Normanton Common and the Whitwood area of Castleford are separated by the M62 and an industrial estate. Further noting the evidence provided by local interested parties to suggest that residents of Normanton Common identify with the rest of Normanton rather than with Castleford, we consider that the District Council's proposed Normanton ward would better reflect community identities and interests in the town than the current arrangement. We are similarly content on the basis of evidence received that electors in the Western Gales Way area of Featherstone parish to the west of the A655 Normanton bypass identify with Normanton and should accordingly be included in the new Normanton ward.

73 Similarly, we are adopting the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward, subject to one minor amendment proposed by the Conservatives. We note the apparent consensus that the interests of the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish are best served by its inclusion in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward with the western part of Castleford. We further note that the current ward boundary divides a residential area, which we consider to form part of the Castleford urban area, that is separated from the town of Featherstone by open country and the M62. We therefore conclude that this proposal would better reflect community identities and interests than the existing arrangement.

74 We note the lack of consensus on the District Council's proposal to include Sharlston parish in a revised Featherstone ward. Opponents of this proposal, including Sharlston Parish Council and Bill O'Brien MP, have indicated that Sharlston's ties with Crofton and Normanton are stronger than those with Featherstone. While we acknowledge the concerns expressed, we have been unable to identify an alternative proposal that would enable Sharlston and Crofton to be placed in a single district ward providing good electoral equality without affecting proposals for surrounding wards. Similarly, we have received no proposals based on a 63-member council that would reduce the forecast under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward (which would worsen following the inclusion of the Normanton Common area) apart from the transfer of Sharlston parish to Featherstone ward. We note that the District Council, the Conservatives and Jon Trickett MP have suggested that Featherstone and Sharlston are linked socially, and further note that Sharlston village is close to the villages of Streethouse and Old Snyderdale, which form part of Featherstone parish. We have therefore decided to put forward the District Council's proposal to transfer Sharlston parish to Featherstone ward as part of our draft recommendations.

75 However, we note the comments of the Conservatives and Sharlston Parish Council concerning the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish, which geographically forms part of Sharlston village. We concur with the view of the Conservatives that it would better reflect local community identities for this area to be included in the same ward as Sharlston. We have therefore decided to adopt their proposal to include this part of Crofton parish be included in a revised Featherstone ward. The new ward boundary would run from the A645 Weeland Road as far south as Birkwood Grange Farm on West Lane, and extend as far west as Birkwood House Farm.

76 We note that our proposals would result in the creation of relatively over-represented Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way wards of Featherstone parish and a similarly over-represented East ward of Crofton parish, although substantial electoral growth is forecast in Ackton Pasture parish ward by 2006. However, the District Council has indicated that it intends addressing the issue of parish boundary anomalies in a parish review following the completion of this PER. We are therefore content to put forward these amendments as part of our draft recommendations to provide in our view the best available reflection of community identities and interests in the affected areas. Such a parish review may also consider the status of Newland with Woodhouse Moor parish, which contains no electors, or proposals to modify the boundaries of parishes in areas with few electors. It is possible that the amendment put forward by a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish could be addressed as part of this process.

77 Under our draft recommendations, Featherstone ward (comprising Sharlston parish, the proposed East parish ward of Crofton parish and all of Featherstone parish except the proposed Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards) would have 10% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006). Normanton ward (comprising the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath, all of Normanton parish except Altofts parish ward, the proposed Western Gales Way parish ward of Featherstone parish and part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

(b) Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards

78 The town of Castleford lies in the north-east of the district, to the north of the M62 and is unparished. It is represented by three three-member wards: Castleford Ferry Fryston ward, situated in the east of the town; Castleford Glasshoughton ward, in the centre of the town; and Castleford Whitwood ward, to the west. Castleford Whitwood ward also includes the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish. Castleford Ferry Fryston and Castleford Whitwood wards are currently over-represented, with 19% and 16% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21% fewer and 17% fewer by 2006). Castleford Glasshoughton ward has 10% fewer electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2006.

79 At Stage One, the District Council put forward revised Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards, to be renamed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward, Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward and Altofts & Whitwood ward respectively. The proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would comprise the western part of Castleford, subject to amendments as outlined below; the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish (comprising the village of Altofts, currently in Stanley & Altofts ward), and the Ackton Pasture area (part of Featherstone parish to the north of the M62 and currently in Featherstone ward). As previously discussed, the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish (currently in Castleford Whitwood ward) would be transferred to a new Normanton ward.

80 Under the District Council's proposals, all of the existing Altofts & Whitwood ward to the east of (and including) Barnes Road and Beaucroft Road, to the east of the A655 Albion Street and Wood Street, and to the south of the A6032 Saville Road, would be transferred to Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward. Further south, the ward boundary would be adjusted to follow the line of the planned link road, transferring a small number of properties on Flass Lane and the A639 Leeds Road from Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward to Altofts & Whitwood ward.

81 The District Council also proposed to transfer to Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward all of the existing Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward to the east of (and including) Redhill Drive, together with Park View, Spital Hardwick Lane, and Nos 199-221 and the Airedale Hotel on the B6136 Holywell Lane. It also proposed to resolve the current division of the Healdfield Road

area between these two wards by placing all of it in Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward. Finally, the District Council proposed to adjust the boundary between Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward and the existing Knottingley ward to follow the planned A1 link road. This would result in the transfer of a small number of properties on Fryston Lane to Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward.

82 The District Council noted the over-representation of the Castleford area and the under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards to the west. It considered that its proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would facilitate improved electoral equality in the north of the district by transferring the village of Altofts from the under-represented area to the over-represented area. The District Council also indicated that the proposed boundary between Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton wards was the outcome of local consensus-building discussions.

83 Examining its proposals for the village of Altofts, the District Council considered that, 'whilst the residents of the village look to Normanton for some facilities, Altofts tends to be fairly self-contained and insular. It is partially isolated by motorways and rivers, even though it is part of the civil parish of Normanton.' Similarly, it noted the separation of Altofts from the remainder of the existing Stanley & Altofts ward (the Stanley and Outwood unparished area) by the River Calder and the Aire & Calder Navigation canal. Within the existing ward there is only one crossing point, situated in the village of Stanley Ferry. Finally, it noted suggestions arising from its local consultation that Normanton and Altofts could be included together in one or two district wards, but it considered that these proposals would not provide good electoral equality. The District Council stated that it had 'been anxious to avoid the splitting of established communities.' Whilst seeking to improve electoral equality, it therefore stated that it had 'attempted, in a tight urbanised area, to keep clear defined boundaries, that will be in place for many years to come.'

84 Under the District Council's proposals, Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton wards (both comprising part of the Castleford unparished area) would each have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6% fewer and 3% fewer by 2006). Altofts & Whitwood ward (comprising the western part of Castleford, the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish and the proposed Ackton Pasture parish ward of Featherstone parish) would have 4% fewer electors per councillor than the average (1% more by 2006).

85 We received 15 further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals for Castleford based upon a council size of 60, which differed substantially from those put forward by the District Council. Our recommendation to retain a 63-member council meant that we were only able to give these proposals limited further consideration. However, we note that, like the District Council, the Conservatives proposed an 'Altofts & Whitwood' ward comprising the village of Altofts and the western part of Castleford, although this ward would also include that part of the Stanley unparished urban area broadly to the east of the A642 Aberford Road.

86 Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents put forward proposals based upon a council size of 66. They proposed that an additional ward be created in the Normanton constituency area to resolve the existing under-representation of Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards. Although full details of warding proposals were not provided, respondents did not support the inclusion of Altofts village in a ward with the western part of Castleford town. It was considered that the village 'is undeniably identified with the town of Normanton, and in no way ... with the town of Castleford,' and that the M62 divided communities in this area. Respondents considered that, since the District Council and the Conservatives proposed to broadly retain the existing Knottingley ward despite its slight over-representation (as described in the following section) a similar exception could be made in this area to ensure the best reflection of community identities and interests.

87 Yvette Cooper MP supported the District Council's proposals in this area. She noted that the District Council's proposed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward would unite the Airedale estate in a single district ward. Yvette Cooper MP also considered that the Europort and neighbouring commercial developments by the M62 linked Altofts with the Whitwood area of Castleford and that these links are stronger than those with Stanley in the existing Stanley & Altofts ward. She expressed the view that the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would better reflect community identities and interests in this part of the district than the further division of the Normanton urban area between district wards.

88 Normanton Town Council noted the concerns of town councillors representing Altofts as to whether the village would have any affinity with the other area with which it would be combined for district warding purposes. A Normanton town councillor opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward, considering that the M62 and the Europort commercial area separated the two areas and that Altofts residents looked to Normanton rather than Whitwood for shops, services, schools and social activities. The councillor therefore proposed a reduction in Castleford's representation at district level to two wards, so as not to require the inclusion of an area outside the town such as Altofts in a ward with part of Castleford. Alternatively, the councillor proposed that an exception be made for the Normanton and Altofts area to allow for greater electoral inequality while better reflecting community identities and interests.

89 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One. As a result of our proposal to retain a 63-member council, we have only been able to give limited further consideration to 60-member proposals by the Conservatives and 66-member proposals by Normanton Constituency Labour Party and others. We firstly examined the problem of over-representation in the existing wards of Castleford Ferry Fryston and Castleford Whitwood. Assuming that the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish is transferred to Castleford for district warding purposes (see previous section for details), we note that on a council size of 63 the town is entitled to 7.5 councillors now and 7.6 councillors in 2006. Since in practice we can only recommend three-member wards in metropolitan authorities, to provide good electoral equality we must propose a ward that includes an area that is not part of Castleford town. We note that this would remain the case under Normanton Constituency Labour Party's proposed council size of 66.

90 We note that the M62 separates Castleford town from the rest of the district except the existing Knottingley ward to the east, comprising Knottingley town. However, we note that on a council size of 63 the towns of Castleford and Knottingley are entitled to 10.2 councillors now and in 2006. We therefore conclude that there is no means of providing good electoral equality in this area without putting forward a district ward that crosses the M62. While we acknowledge the view of a number of respondents that the motorway divides communities in this area, we note that towns and villages to the north and south – including Altofts and Castleford – are linked by major roads and railway lines. As discussed in the following section, we have adopted proposals by the District Council and the Conservatives to broadly retain the existing Knottingley ward, subject to minor amendments.

91 We therefore examined those areas to the south of the M62 to assess their suitability for inclusion in a ward with part of Castleford. We concluded that the transfer of any part of the Featherstone, Normanton or Pontefract urban areas would neither reflect community identities nor prove effective and convenient for the affected electors, since it would result in a ward comprising fragments of two larger urban areas. Indeed, we note that this is currently the case in Castleford Whitwood ward, which includes the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish, and have adopted a proposal put forward by the District Council and others to transfer this area to a new Normanton ward, as previously discussed. However, we note that the village of Altofts could be included in a ward with part of Castleford to reduce the over-representation of the town without dividing the village between wards. We are therefore adopting the District Council's proposal to include Altofts with the Whitwood area of Castleford in a new Altofts & Whitwood ward.

92 We have received evidence from respondents arguing that Altofts' primary social and commercial ties are with Normanton rather than Castleford, and note that it forms part of Normanton parish. Having visited the area, we acknowledge these links and concede that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward does not provide an optimal reflection of the village's identity and interests. However, we are not convinced that the services and social arrangements to which they refer would necessarily be disrupted by the District Council's proposal, particularly as Altofts is currently in a different district ward to the remainder of Normanton (Stanley & Altofts ward). We also note the view of the District Council that Altofts is a discrete community separated from Normanton town by the Wakefield to Castleford railway line, and having visited the area would add that there is good road access between Altofts and the western part of Castleford.

93 We are unable to consider any area in isolation and take the view that the linkage of Altofts and Whitwood would make a significant contribution to improving electoral equality across the north of the district, given the under-representation of a number of existing wards to the west such as Stanley & Altofts, and the current over-representation of the Castleford area. Further, while we note the comments of Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and others, we take no account of existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new district wards. In practice, once new district ward boundaries for Wakefield are implemented, the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission will take them into account in its ongoing Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, as a result of which constituencies in Wakefield may change at some future point.

94 Having accepted the linkage of Altofts and Whitwood, we have decided to put forward the District Council's proposals for Castleford as part of our draft recommendations, noting the support of Yvette Cooper MP and the local consensus-building consultation undertaken. However, we are proposing the following amendments to provide a more equitable distribution of electors between the three wards. We propose that all of the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward to the east of Bryan Close and to the north of the Wakefield to Castleford railway line be transferred to the proposed Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward, affecting a mixed residential and industrial area centred on the A6032 Methley Road. Further to the east, we also propose that the following roads be transferred to the proposed Airedale & Ferry Fyston ward from the proposed Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward: Quarrydene Drive; Redhill Mount; Redhill Road; Towers Paddock; West Mead; and West View Avenue. Having visited these areas we consider that the above amendments would improve electoral equality in Castleford while providing for well-defined ward boundaries.

95 We are also proposing revised boundaries between the proposed wards of Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton, and the proposed wards of Airedale & Ferry Fyston and Knottingley, where the District Council proposed that these follow planned link roads. We are required to adhere to existing ground detail where possible and have therefore put forward alternative boundaries that broadly follow the intention of the District Council, although we propose to include all properties on Flass Lane and no. 80 Leeds Road in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward and to retain all properties on Fyston Lane in Knottingley ward. Finally, we have also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which affect no electors.

96 Under our draft recommendations, Airedale & Ferry Fyston ward and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward (each comprising part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 1% and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (both 3% fewer by 2006). Altofts & Whitwood ward (comprising the western part of Castleford, the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish and the proposed Ackton Pasture parish ward of Featherstone parish) would have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the average (1% fewer by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

(c) Knottingley ward, Pontefract North ward and Pontefract South ward

97 The towns of Knottingley and Pontefract are situated in the north-east of the district and are unparished. Knottingley is situated to the east of Castleford and to the north of the M62 and is represented by a single three-member ward of the same name. Pontefract is situated to the south of Castleford and the motorway and is represented by three-member Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards, with Pontefract South ward also including the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick. Under existing arrangements, Knottingley ward has 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2006 (12% fewer by 2006). Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards have 11% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively (11% more and 11% fewer by 2006).

98 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Knottingley ward subject to the following minor amendments. It considered that Knottingley ward, situated in the north-east corner of the district, has clearly defined boundaries in the form of the M62 to the south and the A1 and Ferrybridge Power Station to the west. The District Council expressed the view that the Knottingley community has its own identity and interests, which in its view would be best reflected by the retention of the existing ward despite the slight over-representation forecast by 2006. It therefore proposed that the western and southern ward boundaries be adjusted to follow the planned A1 link road and the M62 respectively, resulting in the transfer of a small number of electors on Fryston Lane to the proposed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward (as discussed in the previous section) and two properties on Grovehall Lane to a revised Pontefract South ward.

99 The District Council proposed to improve electoral equality in Pontefract by transferring to a revised Pontefract South ward all of the existing Pontefract North ward to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line and to the south of Baghill Lane, affecting an area known as 'Harewood Park'. It also proposed to include in Pontefract South ward a rural part of Ackworth parish to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line (currently in Crofton & Ackworth ward). The District Council stated that this would provide a clearly defined ward boundary, and that the few electors in this area looked towards 'Pontefract for major facilities and to East Hardwick for more social amenities.'

100 Finally, the District Council proposed uniting the village of Wentbridge by transferring that part of the village in Darrington parish to a revised South Elmsall ward. Wentbridge is currently divided between three parishes; Darrington parish is in Pontefract South ward, while North Elmsall and Thorpe Audlin parishes are in South Elmsall ward. The District Council stated that proposals had been made to unite the village in either district ward, and that neither would significantly affect electoral equality in this area. However, it considered that the inclusion of all of Wentbridge in South Elmsall ward reflected local preferences, as expressed in a previous petition by local residents to the District Council.

101 Under the District Council's proposals, Knottingley ward (comprising the Knottingley unparished area) would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12% fewer by 2006). Pontefract North ward (comprising the northern part of the Pontefract unparished area) would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in 2006. Pontefract South ward (comprising the southern part of the Pontefract unparished area, the parish of East Hardwick, all of Darrington parish except the Wentbridge area, and the eastern part of Ackworth parish) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the average by 2006).

102 We received six further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a council size of 60. While our recommendation to retain a 63-member council meant that we were only able to give these proposals limited further consideration, we note that they proposed to retain Knottingley ward on its existing boundaries, expressing similar views to those of the District Council. They concurred with the District

Council's proposal to include part of Ackworth parish in a revised Pontefract South ward, although they put forward their own revised ward boundary in this area.

103 However, the Conservatives did not support the District Council's proposed transfer of the Harewood Park area to Pontefract South ward from Pontefract North ward, which they proposed to retain on its existing boundaries. They considered that this amendment went 'too far' given 'significant individual community identities within the North and South wards.' Unlike the District Council, the Conservatives proposed to resolve the division of Wentbridge village by the inclusion in Pontefract South ward of Thorpe Audlin parish and the relevant part of North Elmsall parish, both currently in South Elmsall ward.

104 The Liberal Democrats proposed an amendment between Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards similar to that put forward by the District Council. Under their proposals all of Pontefract North ward to the south of Baghill Lane and east of the Sheffield to York railway line would be transferred to Pontefract South ward, except an area to the south of Grove Road, west of Churchbalk Lane and north of Swanhill Lane. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards would both have 1% more electors per councillor than the district average (2% more and 1% fewer than the average by 2006).

105 Yvette Cooper MP generally supported the District Council's proposals for this area, and expressed similar views concerning Knottingley ward to those of the District Council. However, she did not support the District Council's proposals for the village of Wentbridge, considering that village residents identified with Darrington and Pontefract and that there was no suitable natural boundary to the north of the village. She therefore proposed that Wentbridge be wholly included in Pontefract South ward, and that the B6474 West Edge Road form the new southern ward boundary.

106 A Wentbridge resident supported Yvette Cooper MP's proposals in this area, considering that the village's historical, religious and social ties were with Darrington, but otherwise generally supported the District Council's proposals. The resident expressed scepticism as to the representative character of the petition submitted to the District Council regarding Wentbridge. Jon Trickett MP supported the District Council's proposal to transfer the eastern part of Ackworth parish to Pontefract South ward, which he considered would unite the East Hardwick community. Finally, Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group supported the retention of the existing South Elmsall ward, but did not specifically comment on Wentbridge.

107 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One, and have decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals subject to minor amendments. We note the apparent consensus on the approximate retention of the existing Knottingley ward and concur with the view of respondents that the town of Knottingley possesses clearly defined boundaries and forms a community distinct from Castleford and Pontefract. Noting that Knottingley ward would be over-represented by 2006, we examined alternative proposals to improve electoral equality. However, we considered that the inclusion of any part of Castleford or Pontefract in a ward with Knottingley would neither reflect community identities nor prove effective and convenient for the affected electors, as it would result in the division of a larger urban area. While Knottingley ward also borders Darrington parish in Pontefract South ward, we note that Darrington village stands in close proximity to Pontefract and is partly contiguous with the Carleton area of the town.

108 Noting finally that the retention of the existing Knottingley ward would not affect the achievement of electoral equality elsewhere in the district due to its isolated position in the north-east, we are content that this proposal would provide the best available balance between the statutory criteria. However, as previously discussed, we are putting forward a revised western ward boundary to follow existing ground detail that broadly follows the intention of the District Council, but retains all electors on Fryston Lane in Knottingley ward.

109 We note that under the existing arrangements Pontefract North ward is slightly under-represented, while Pontefract South ward is forecast to be slightly over-represented by 2006. We note the views of the Conservatives concerning community identities in the town, but consider that the District Council's proposed amendment between Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards would improve electoral equality in both wards while allowing for the use of the Sheffield to York railway line as a stronger boundary than either the existing arrangements or the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We are also putting forward a minor amendment to the south of the M62 to ensure that the proposed boundary in this area between the wards of Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South adheres to ground detail.

110 However, we note that there is no agreement on the most appropriate warding arrangement for the village of Wentbridge, which is currently divided between three parishes and two district wards. We can only propose dividing a parish between different district council wards if we divide that parish into parish wards. We are also mindful of the District Council's intention to conduct a parish review following the completion of the PER. In view of the conflicting evidence on local preferences we are reluctant to adopt district ward proposals for this area that may pre-empt a decision on which parish should include the entire village. After careful consideration we are therefore proposing to retain the existing district ward boundary in this area. Following a parish review, consequential district warding changes to place the village in a single ward may be requested of the Electoral Commission.

111 We note that the rural area of Ackworth parish to be included in Pontefract South ward under the District Council's proposals contains only 100 electors and would require the creation of a substantially over-represented Ackworth parish ward. We are not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that this amendment would provide effective and convenient local government. We are therefore proposing no change to the existing boundary of Pontefract South ward in this area, although we welcome further evidence from interested parties at Stage Three.

112 Under our draft recommendations, Knottingley ward (comprising the Knottingley unparished area) would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12% fewer by 2006). Pontefract North ward (comprising part of the Pontefract unparished area) would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in 2006. Pontefract South ward (comprising part of the Pontefract unparished area, and the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the average by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

The south

(d) Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards

113 Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards are situated in the south and south-east of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Hemsworth ward comprises all of Hemsworth parish (including Hemsworth town and the villages of Fitzwilliam and Kinsley) except the South parish ward, together with the parishes of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley and South Hiendley. South Kirkby ward comprises South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish and the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish. Under existing arrangements, Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards have 8% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively both now and in 2006.

114 At Stage One, the District Council stated that electors in the South parish ward of Hemsworth, situated to the west of the B6273 Southmoor Road/Market Street and south of Barnsley Road, identify with Hemsworth rather than South Kirkby. Similarly, it noted that Hemsworth residents used town centre facilities situated in the South parish ward. It therefore

considered that the transfer of this area to Hemsworth district ward would best reflect community identities and interests in this area and provide effective and convenient local government. However, the District Council noted that the removal of this part of Hemsworth from the existing South Kirkby ward would lead to it being substantially over-represented, with 29% fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006. The revised Hemsworth ward would also be slightly under-represented, with 11% more electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2006.

115 The District Council stated that it had therefore examined the possibility of further alterations to the warding pattern in the south of the district, to improve electoral equality in revised Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards. This would entail the transfer of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley parish to a revised Crofton & Ackworth ward and further unspecified amendments with revised South Elmsall and South Kirkby wards. However, the District Council considered that these amendments would have a 'dramatic effect on other communities', which would be 'wholly unacceptable to the District Council, the Town Councils in the area, and particularly the residents and electors.'

116 The District Council therefore concluded that it was not possible to put forward proposals for Hemsworth ward that would meet all of The Boundary Committee's statutory criteria (the achievement of electoral equality, the reflection of community identities and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government). Nonetheless, it considered that the Committee 'ought to be persuaded by the evidence' to include the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish in a revised Hemsworth district ward without further amendments to the existing South Kirkby ward or to existing wards elsewhere in the south of the district to improve electoral equality.

117 The District Council noted that the adjacent settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill (in the parishes of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley and Ryhill) were divided by the boundary of the existing Crofton & Ackworth and Hemsworth wards, and that it had received representations on this subject during its own local consultation. However, it stated that it did not wish to make proposals for change in this area until suitable warding arrangements for Hemsworth had been put forward.

118 We received six further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a council size of 60, which substantially differed from those of the District Council. While our recommendation to retain a 63-member council meant that we were only able to give these proposals limited further consideration, we note that the Conservatives concurred with the view of the District Council that the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish should be included in Hemsworth district ward (although they proposed to transfer the Fitzwilliam parish ward of Hemsworth parish to a new Ackworth & Upton ward). Since this amendment would result in the over-representation of South Kirkby ward (as under a 63-member council), the Conservatives proposed a new Kirkby & Elmsall ward combining South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish with South Elmsall parish and the southern part of North Elmsall parish, currently in South Elmsall ward. They considered that the communities of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe had 'effectively merged', with many residents using shops and services in both areas.

119 We further note that the Conservatives proposed to transfer Ryhill parish (currently in Crofton & Ackworth ward) to their proposed Hemsworth ward to unite it with the adjacent village of Havercroft. The Liberal Democrats also put this amendment forward on a 63-member council, and under their proposals, Hemsworth ward would have 10% more electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006. Jon Trickett MP concurred with the view expressed by the District Council that it would be difficult in the south-east of the district, particularly in Hemsworth, to reconcile the achievement of electoral equality with the reflection of community identities and interests. He considered that The Boundary Committee would 'need to pay particular attention to this problem,' but did not put forward any proposals in relation to this area.

120 Hemsworth Town Council supported the District Council's proposals for this area, expressing similar views regarding community identities in Hemsworth town. It expressed the view that 'local ties, township boundaries and electoral wishes' should take precedence over the achievement of electoral equality in the revised wards of Hemsworth and South Kirkby, and that further changes would 'damage other communities ... their cohesiveness and identity.' The Town Council stated that as the revised Hemsworth ward would contain parish and town councillors as well as district councillors, electors would not be disadvantaged by its under-representation. It also cited the support of two Hemsworth district ward councillors for the District Council's proposals (as expressed in the District Council's local consultation process) and noted that there were geographically larger existing wards in Wakefield than the revised Hemsworth ward.

121 South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council supported the retention of the existing South Kirkby ward. It noted that the existing ward provided acceptable electoral equality and 'allows the township of Hemsworth ... representation from six district councillors, instead of the normal three.' The Town Council supported as a second preference the District Council's proposals for the south-east of the district. It expressed concern that further changes to improve electoral equality in Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards would lead to a reduction in the number of rural wards and economic imbalance between the urban and rural areas of the district. The Town Council also stated that the communities of South Kirkby and Moorthorpe have 'a passionate bond and would not welcome any division [between district wards].'

122 As discussed in the following section, both Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group generally supported the retention of the existing South Elmsall ward, which borders the existing Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards. However, the Parish Council suggested possible amendments that it considered would not adversely affect South Elmsall ward. These amendments included: the inclusion of a larger part of Hemsworth parish in a revised South Kirkby ward; the transfer to the existing South Elmsall ward of the Moorthorpe parish ward of South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish; and a new ward comprising the parishes of Hemsworth and Ackworth, as the Parish Council considered that 'these areas already identify [with one another] through school catchment areas and traditional links.'

123 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One, and are putting forward our own proposals for this part of the district. Having visited the area, we consider that the existing division of Hemsworth parish between district wards does not reflect community identities and interests or provide effective and convenient local government. We therefore propose to transfer the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish to a revised Hemsworth ward, as suggested by the District Council, the Conservatives and Hemsworth Town Council. We are not convinced on the basis of the evidence received by South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council's view that Hemsworth electors currently obtain more effective and convenient representation from two district wards.

124 We propose that the revised Hemsworth ward comprise the parishes of Hemsworth and South Hiendley. We note that both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed uniting Havercroft with Cold Hiendley parish with the contiguous community of Ryhill by including Ryhill parish in a revised Hemsworth ward. However, we note that this would result in the further under-representation of the revised Hemsworth ward. We therefore propose that the parish of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley be transferred to a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, as described in the following section.

125 Our *Guidance* states that we require particular justification for an electoral variance of over 10% in any ward, with imbalances of 20% and over arising only in exceptional circumstances and requiring the strongest justification. We note the comments received from the District Council and other respondents opposing further change to the warding pattern in the south-east of the district. However, we do not consider that we have received sufficient substantive evidence to justify an over-representation of 29% in a revised South Kirkby ward,

comprising only South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish, following the transfer of the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish to Hemsworth district ward. We therefore examined alternative warding options for this part of the district, seeking to improve electoral equality in South Kirkby ward in a manner consistent with the reflection of community identities and interests.

126 We consider that this aim would best be achieved by the transfer of part of the existing South Elmsall ward to South Kirkby ward. Having visited the area, we concur with the view of the Conservatives that South Elmsall parish and the Minsthorpe area of North Elmsall parish (both currently in South Elmsall ward) form a single urban area with South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish. We further note the view of the Conservatives that residents of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe both make use of local shops and services in both parishes.

127 We are therefore proposing a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward comprising the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe. We note that this ward would be slightly under-represented, with a forecast electoral variance of 15% by 2006, but consider that this compares favourably with the 29% variance both now and in 2006 that South Kirkby ward would provide following the removal of the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish. While we considered the possibility of dividing South Elmsall parish between district wards to further improve electoral equality, we would not seek to correct the inappropriate division of Hemsworth parish between district wards by recommending a similar arrangement elsewhere in the district. Moreover, we were unable to identify a clearly defined point at which the parish could be divided that would also provide for good electoral equality in both wards.

128 While the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward thus to some extent reflects the Conservatives' proposals, it would not include any part of North Elmsall parish. While the Minsthorpe area of North Elmsall parish forms part of the South Elmsall/South Kirkby urban area, we note that its inclusion would increase the under-representation of the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward. We also note that North Elmsall parish also contains the village of North Elmsall and a significant part of the large village of Upton further to the north, and that the parishes of North Elmsall and Upton form a grouped parish council. We therefore consider that there is evidence to suggest that the Minsthorpe community identifies with these areas to the north, and that its exclusion from the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward would not adversely effect the provision of effective and convenient local government.

129 We acknowledge that the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards has been a constraining factor in achieving the best electoral equality and the best reflection of community identities and interests in this area. Nonetheless, by facilitating the inclusion of all of Hemsworth parish and the settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill in single district wards we consider that our draft recommendations for this area provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than either the existing arrangements or the District Council's proposals. We also consider in particular that our proposals would provide unified representation for the South Elmsall/South Kirkby urban area.

130 Under our draft recommendations, Hemsworth ward (comprising the parishes of Hemsworth and South Hiendley) and South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward (comprising the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe) would have 2% fewer and 11% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% fewer and 15% more by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

(e) Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards

131 The wards of Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall are situated in the south and south-east of the district, broadly to the north of Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards, and are each represented by three councillors. Crofton & Ackworth ward comprises the parishes of Ackworth, Crofton, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, Ryhill, West Hardwick and Winterset. South Elmsall ward comprises the parishes of Badsworth, North Elmsall, South

Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin and Upton. Under existing arrangements, Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards have 3% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% more and equal to the average by 2006).

132 At Stage One the District Council proposed to retain the existing Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards subject only to two minor amendments. It noted that both wards would provide good electoral equality and that this was forecast to continue by 2006. The District Council stated that it had examined alternative proposals for this area which would facilitate the inclusion of the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish in a revised Hemsworth ward and of the Ryhill/Havercroft communities in Crofton & Ackworth ward while providing for good electoral equality across the south of the district. However, as previously discussed, it considered that these proposals would not sufficiently reflect community identities and interests in the existing Crofton & Ackworth, South Elmsall and South Kirkby wards.

133 The District Council therefore proposed to only transfer a small rural part of Ackworth parish to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line from Crofton & Ackworth ward to a revised Pontefract South ward, and to transfer part of Darrington parish from Pontefract South ward to South Elmsall ward to unite the village of Wentbridge in a single district ward (see the section on the proposed warding arrangements in Knottingley and Pontefract for further details). While it noted that the adjacent settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill were currently divided by the existing Crofton & Ackworth/Hemsworth ward boundary, it stated that it did not wish to make proposals for change in this area until suitable warding arrangements for Hemsworth had been put forward. Finally, the District Council also referred to the Boundary Committee a proposal to include in a revised Crofton & Ackworth ward the Hare Park area of Walton parish, as discussed in the following section.

134 Under the District Council's proposals, Crofton & Ackworth ward (comprising the parishes of Crofton, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, Ryhill, West Hardwick and Winterset, and part of the parish of Ackworth) would have 2% more electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006. South Elmsall ward (comprising the parishes of Badsworth, North Elmsall, South Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin and Upton, and the Wentbridge area of Darrington parish) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the average (1% more by 2006).

135 We received seven further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a council size of 60, which substantially differed from those of the District Council. While our recommendation to retain a 63-member council meant that we were only able to give these proposals limited further consideration, we note that the Conservatives supported the District Council's proposed transfer of part of Ackworth parish to Pontefract South ward. Having proposed a new Kirkby & Elmsall ward comprising the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby and the southern part of North Elmsall parish, it was also proposed that Thorpe Audlin parish and a further part of North Elmsall parish be transferred to a revised Pontefract South ward to unite Wentbridge village in a single district ward.

136 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the remainder of the existing South Elmsall ward (the parishes of Badsworth and Upton and part of North Elmsall parish) would form a new Ackworth & Upton ward together with the parishes of Hessle & Hill Top and West Hardwick, and parts of the parishes of Ackworth, Hemsworth and Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell. The Conservatives also proposed to include all of Crofton parish except the Birkwood Avenue area in a new Wakefield East & Crofton ward, Ryhill parish in a revised Hemsworth ward and Winterset parish in a revised Wakefield South ward. As previously discussed, they proposed to include the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish and the remainder of Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell parish in a revised Featherstone ward.

137 As discussed in the previous section, the Liberal Democrats proposed that Ryhill parish be transferred from the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward to a revised Hemsworth ward, in order

to unite the Ryhill/Havercroft urban area in a single district ward. To retain good electoral equality in Crofton & Ackworth ward, they also proposed that the parishes of Badsworth and Thorpe Audlin and the part of Wentbridge village in North Elmsall parish be transferred from South Elmsall ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, based on a 63-member council, Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards would have 5% and 12% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6% and 9% fewer by 2006).

138 Jon Trickett MP supported the District Council's proposed Crofton & Ackworth ward, considering Ackworth and Crofton to be linked by a common mining history, the A638 Wakefield to Doncaster road, the Nostell estate and the fact that residents of both parishes commuted to larger towns and cities in the district. As previously discussed, he also supported the proposed transfer of the eastern part of Ackworth parish to a revised Pontefract South ward. However, he expressed the view that Walton parish in Wakefield South ward is 'a former mining community and has more in common with Crofton and other villages to the east than it does with Sandal [part of Wakefield city in Wakefield South ward] and other areas of the city of Wakefield.' Yvette Cooper MP and a Wentbridge resident opposed the District Council's proposals for Wentbridge village and proposed instead that those parts of the village in North Elmsall and Thorpe Audlin parishes be included in a revised Pontefract South ward.

139 Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group proposed to retain the existing South Elmsall ward, which they noted would provide good electoral equality both now and in 2006. The Parish Council considered that North Elmsall, South Elmsall and Upton were linked by commercial and family ties, schooling arrangements and funding for social projects, and it expressed concern that these ties could be disrupted by changes to the warding pattern. The History Group also noted that a joint church and joint burial board linked Upton and North Elmsall. The Parish Council considered that if changes to South Elmsall ward were necessary, it would prefer that the ward gain the Moorthorpe parish ward of South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish or lose Badsworth and Thorpe Audlin parishes. It also stated that the parishes of North Elmsall and Upton had nothing in common with the town of Ackworth to the north-west and would oppose any proposal to place them all in a single ward. The Parish Council considered that a ward comprising Hemsworth and Ackworth parishes would better reflect school catchment areas and 'traditional links.'

140 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One, and are putting forward our own proposals in this area. As discussed in the previous section, we are proposing a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward comprising South Elmsall parish and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish, to facilitate the inclusion of all of Hemsworth parish in a revised Hemsworth ward. While we note the comments received from the District Council and other respondents opposing changes to South Elmsall ward, we consider on the basis of the available evidence that our proposals for the parishes of Hemsworth, South Elmsall and South Kirkby would provide the best available balance between the statutory criteria in this part of the district.

141 However, we note that the remainder of the existing South Elmsall ward (the parishes of Badsworth, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin and Upton) would be significantly over-represented at district level without further amendment. We therefore examined alternative warding options to improve electoral equality and concluded that the only available option was to combine these parishes with Ackworth parish to the north-west. Consequently, we are proposing a new Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward comprising the parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessele & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick. This ward to some extent reflects the Conservatives' proposed Ackworth & Upton ward, allowing for the difference in proposed council size and our adoption of different proposals elsewhere in the district. As previously discussed, we are not adopting the District Council's proposal to transfer part of Ackworth parish to a revised Pontefract South ward or any of the proposals to unite Wentbridge village in a single ward.

142 We note the view of Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council that the parishes of Upton and North Elmsall have no ties with Ackworth and acknowledge these concerns. However, we are unable to consider any area in isolation from the rest of Wakefield and consider that the proposed ward would facilitate the achievement of electoral equality and a better reflection of community identities in the south-east of the district, as described above. We further note that the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward would link parishes situated on or near the A638 Doncaster to Wakefield road. The three parishes of Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell and West Hardwick form a grouped parish council containing only 189 electors, and we consider that their inclusion in this ward reflects their proximity to the town of Ackworth Moor Top.

143 While the Minsthorpe area of North Elmsall parish forms part of the South Elmsall/South Kirkby urban area, we also note that its inclusion would increase the under-representation of the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward. As the parishes of North Elmsall and Upton form a grouped parish council, we also consider that there is evidence to suggest that the Minsthorpe community identifies to some extent with these areas to the north. We therefore conclude that the inclusion of Minsthorpe in the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward with the rest of North Elmsall parish will adequately reflect its community identity and interests and provide effective and convenient local government, while enabling a better level of electoral equality in the new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward than would otherwise be the case.

144 We propose that the remainder of the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward, the parishes of Crofton (except the Birkwood Avenue area), Ryhill and Winterset, form a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, together with the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton from the existing Wakefield South ward and Havercroft with Cold Hiendley parish from the existing Hemsworth ward. While we note the evidence of the District Council and Jon Trickett MP in support of the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward, we consider that our proposed ward would provide good electoral equality both now and in 2006, would unite the Havercroft/Ryhill area, would reflect those links between Walton and Crofton indicated by Jon Trickett MP and would separate the rural and urban areas of the existing Wakefield South ward. As previously discussed, we are proposing to adopt the Conservatives' proposal to transfer the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish to a revised Featherstone ward.

145 We acknowledge that the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards has been a constraining factor in achieving the best reflection of community identities and interests in this area. We further acknowledge that our proposals in this area were affected by our proposals for a revised Hemsworth ward and a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward. Nonetheless, we are unable to consider any area in isolation and consider in the context of these constraints that our proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton and Crofton, Ryhill & Walton wards would provide the best available balance between the statutory criteria in this area.

146 Under our draft recommendations, Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward (comprising the parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006). Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward (comprising the parishes of Chevet, Havercroft with Cold Hiendley, Notton, Ryhill, Walton and Winterset and the proposed West parish ward of Crofton parish) would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (1% fewer by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

The city of Wakefield

(f) Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards

147 The wards of Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South are situated in the south-west of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Wakefield Rural ward comprises the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley, while Wakefield South ward comprises the southern part of the city of Wakefield, together with the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton. Under existing arrangements, Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards have 9% and 5% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% and 4% more by 2006).

148 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards, subject to one significant amendment. It proposed that all of Wakefield South ward to the north of the Wakefield to Doncaster railway line be transferred to a revised Wakefield East ward, to unite the Agbrigg community in a single ward. The District Council considered that Agbrigg forms part of the Wakefield urban area and should therefore be included in a wholly urban ward, rather than the 'mainly rural' Wakefield South ward. In contrast, it stated that it had initially thought that there was little opportunity for change to the existing Wakefield Rural ward, since it is situated in the south-west corner of the district and bounded in the north by the River Calder, while those parishes adjoining the Wakefield urban area (Crigglestone and Sitlington) have an identity separate to that of the city. However, during its local consultation two amendments were suggested; in the absence of local consensus it referred them to The Boundary Committee without recommendation.

149 First, it was suggested that Woolley parish be transferred to Wakefield South ward to improve electoral equality in Wakefield Rural ward and link the parishes of Woolley and Notton, which were felt to be similar in character. Second, it was also suggested that the Newmillerdam area of Crigglestone parish be transferred from Wakefield Rural ward to Wakefield South ward to unite the Newmillerdam community and further improve electoral equality. The District Council also referred to The Boundary Committee four possible minor amendments to Wakefield South ward: the inclusion in Wakefield Central ward of Newlyn Drive to reflect access from Milnthorpe Lane (north); the transfer from Wakefield Central ward of Castle Farm on Milnthorpe Lane (south); the inclusion in a revised Crofton & Ackworth ward of the Hare Park area of Walton parish to reflect access from Crofton village; the inclusion in Wakefield Rural ward of a small number of properties in Notton parish on the A61 Barnsley Road and Seckar Lane.

150 Under the District Council's proposals, Wakefield South ward (comprising the southern part of the city of Wakefield unparished area and the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (3% fewer by 2006). Wakefield Rural ward (comprising the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006).

151 We received four further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a council size of 60, which were similar in this area to those of the District Council. They proposed to broadly retain both Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards, considering that both wards reflected community identities and interests in the area and provided good electoral equality. The Conservatives concurred with the District Council's proposed transfer of part of the existing Agbrigg area from Wakefield South to Wakefield East ward and the additional minor amendments to Wakefield South ward referred to The Boundary Committee by the District Council (except the proposed transfer of Castle Farm to Wakefield South ward), subject to local consultation in affected parishes where appropriate. However, they opposed the inclusion of Woolley parish and the Newmillerdam area of Crigglestone parish in

Wakefield South ward, considering that Newmillerdam residents played 'an active role' on the Parish Council and in other local groups.

152 Jon Trickett MP noted the division of the Agbrigg community between the existing Wakefield East and Wakefield South wards and suggested that consideration be given to uniting Agbrigg in a single ward. He also expressed the view that Walton parish, 'a former mining community ... has more in common with Crofton and other villages to the East' than with the Sandal area of the city of Wakefield, part of Wakefield South ward. In turn, he considered that Sandal had more in common with the rest of the city than with the remainder of the south of the district.

153 Woolley Parish Council opposed the transfer of the parish from Wakefield Rural ward to Wakefield South ward, which had been suggested during the District Council's local consultation. It stated that Woolley had 'very strong' links with West Bretton parish, as demonstrated by the close co-operation between their churches, which did not exist with Notton parish, the only adjoining part of the existing Wakefield South ward. It therefore proposed that the existing Wakefield Rural ward be retained except for the inclusion of a small part of Notton parish, as suggested by the District Council. Crigglestone Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Wakefield Rural ward without amendment, considering that it currently provided good electoral equality.

154 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One and have decided to retain the existing Wakefield Rural ward without amendment, but to put forward our own proposals for a revised Wakefield South ward. As discussed in the previous section, our proposals for the south of the district included a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, which would include the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton from the existing Wakefield South ward. We note that this would leave the remainder of Wakefield South ward, comprising the southern part of Wakefield city, substantially over-represented and we are therefore putting forward amendments to improve electoral equality.

155 First, we gave consideration to the suggested amendment between the existing Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards in the Newmillerdam area of Crigglestone parish, which had been presented to The Boundary Committee by the District Council but not endorsed by them due to the absence of local consensus on this issue. We note that the Chapelthorpe, Crigglestone and Newmillerdam areas of Crigglestone parish in Wakefield Rural ward are contiguous with residential areas in Wakefield South ward. However, we consider that an arbitrary division of the parish would be required to transfer sufficient electors to provide for good electoral equality in the revised Wakefield South ward. Examining the smaller Newmillerdam area in isolation, we note that its removal from Wakefield Rural ward would require the creation of an over-represented parish ward in Crigglestone parish while failing to resolve the high electoral variance of the revised Wakefield South ward. We are also not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that this amendment would reflect community identities and interests in Newmillerdam. We therefore propose no change to the existing ward boundary in this area.

156 We were also unable to give further consideration to the suggested transfer of Woolley parish to Wakefield South ward, as the parish would no longer border this ward under our proposals for a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward. Further, we consider on the basis of the evidence received that retaining the parish in Wakefield Rural ward would best reflect the identity and interests of the Woolley community.

157 We have therefore decided to provide for good electoral equality in the revised Wakefield South ward by recommending the inclusion of the Portobello area from the existing Wakefield Central ward and the northern part of the Agbrigg area from the existing Wakefield East ward. We propose that Wakefield South ward include all of the city to the south of the junction of the A61 Barnsley Road and Portobello Road, to the south of the Sugar Lane

allotment gardens, Wakefield City Cemetery, Regent Street, Wakefield Trinity Rugby League Football Ground and 186-190 Doncaster Road, and to the west of the A638 Doncaster Road and Charles Avenue. Under our proposals the north-west boundary of Wakefield South ward would be adjusted to follow the River Calder south to the existing boundary with Wakefield Rural ward.

158 We note that the revised Wakefield South ward would comprise areas of Wakefield city that are different in character. However, we concur with the view of Jon Trickett MP that the unparished area of the existing Wakefield South ward has more in common with the rest of the city than it does with Chevet, Notton and Walton parishes. We consider that as a result of the proposed transfer of these parishes to the new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, Wakefield South ward would acquire a more urban character, to which the affected areas to the north could reasonably be added.

159 Further, we consider that the current warding arrangement, under which the Agbrigg community is divided between district wards and the Portobello area is separated from the rest of the existing Wakefield Central ward by the River Calder, neither reflects community identities or interests nor provides effective and convenient local government. We note that there is support from the District Council, the Conservatives and Jon Trickett MP for the inclusion of Agbrigg in a single district ward. Having visited the area we are content that our proposed Wakefield South ward is based on whole city communities, including Agbrigg and Portobello, and consider that the revised Wakefield South ward would best meet our statutory criteria within the context of our proposals for the south of the district as a whole.

160 We note that our proposals for Wakefield South ward would resolve the first two of the four minor amendments suggested by the District Council by placing both sides of Milnthorpe Lane (north) and Milnthorpe Lane (south) in the same district ward. However, we are not proposing to adopt the remaining two amendments affecting the parishes of Notton and Walton. We note that both areas contain very few electors and their transfer to another ward would require the creation of two highly over-represented parish wards, as we have no power to recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes.

161 Under our draft recommendations, Wakefield South ward (comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 2% more electors per councillor than the district average (1% more by 2006). Wakefield Rural ward (comprising the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

(g) Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards

162 The three-member wards of Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North comprise all of the city of Wakefield not included in Wakefield South ward, and are primarily situated to the north of the River Calder. Under existing arrangements, Wakefield Central and Wakefield North wards have 3% and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% and 1% fewer by 2006). Wakefield East ward currently has 8% more electors per councillor than the average (7% more by 2006).

163 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to retain the existing warding pattern in this area subject to the following amendments. As described in the previous section, it proposed that Wakefield East ward include part of the existing Wakefield South ward to the north of the Wakefield to Doncaster railway line, which it noted would unite the Agbrigg community in Wakefield East ward. As this would result in Wakefield East ward becoming slightly under-represented, the District Council put forward changes to ward boundaries in the city centre area to improve electoral equality. Under its proposals, part of the existing Wakefield East ward to the south of Westgate, west of Saw Yard and Rodney Yard, and north of George Street would

be transferred to Wakefield North ward. Directly to the south, that part of Wakefield East ward to the south of George Street and to the west of Kirkgate would be transferred to Wakefield Central ward. The city centre area would thus be divided between all three proposed wards, which the District Council considered would reflect usage of its facilities by electors from a large catchment area.

164 The District Council also proposed a number of further minor amendments, affecting a small number of electors. It proposed that 137-155 Wakefield Road (the A638) be transferred from the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward to Wakefield North ward to reflect road access, and that a small part of the existing Ossett ward to the east of the M1 between Wakefield Road and Queens Drive be transferred to Wakefield North ward. Under the District Council's proposals, Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards (each comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 1% fewer, 10% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% fewer than, 9% more than and equal to the average by 2006).

165 We received three further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a 60-member council, which differed substantially from those of the District Council. Our recommendation to retain a 63-member council meant that we were only able to give these proposals limited further consideration. However, we note that they proposed to unite the Northgate North area in the north-east of the town by including in a new Wakefield North ward all of the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward broadly to the south of the Fieldhead Hospital and west of the A642 Aberford Road.

166 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Wakefield Central ward be renamed 'Wakefield West', considering that this 'best reflects the positioning of the current ward ... none of the area that could be considered to make up the centre of Wakefield ... lie[s] within the boundaries of Ward 4 [Wakefield Central ward].' Finally, as previously discussed, a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish proposed that a small number of properties in the parish on the A638 Doncaster Road adjacent to the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas of Wakefield be included in Wakefield East ward.

167 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One. We are putting forward our own proposals in this area, based on the existing warding pattern, which the District Council proposed to substantially retain. In the preceding section we proposed to transfer the Agbrigg area of the existing Wakefield East ward and the Portobello area of the existing Wakefield Central ward to a revised Wakefield South ward. In light of this, we have put forward a number of consequential amendments to Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards to improve electoral equality in the city and better reflect community identities and interests in the city centre, Lupset and Northgate North areas. We have also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which affect no electors. Finally, since our proposed Wakefield Central ward would not contain any part of the city centre, we are adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposal to re-name this ward 'Wakefield West'.

168 We propose first to adopt the Conservatives' proposal to unite the Northgate North area in Wakefield East ward, subject to amendments. We are not convinced that residential properties to the north of the Pinderfields General Hospital look to Wakefield rather than settlements to the north. We are therefore proposing to transfer to Wakefield East ward only those properties to the south and west of (and including) the hospital. This would affect Eastmoor Road, roads immediately to the north of this street and residential development in the grounds of the Stanley Royd Hospital. We consider that electors in this area are likely to identify with adjacent residential streets to the south rather than areas further to the north from which they are separated by three hospitals, a prison officers' training school and open space.

169 Second, we propose to improve electoral equality in Wakefield West ward by including in our proposed ward that part of the existing Wakefield North ward to the south of the A638 Dewsbury Road/Wakefield Road. We consider that this amendment would unite the Lupset community in a single district ward while making use of the A638 as a well-defined boundary in the west of the city. We also propose to include in Wakefield West ward a small part of the existing Ossett ward to the east of the M1 between Wakefield Road and Queens Drive, and 137-155 Wakefield Road (currently in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward), rather than Wakefield North ward as proposed by the District Council, due to the proximity of residential properties in Wakefield West ward.

170 To improve electoral equality in Wakefield North ward, we have also put forward further amendments. Firstly, we propose that Wakefield North ward include that part of the existing Wakefield East ward to the west of the A61 Marsh Way, broadly comprising the city centre area. We note the view of the District Council that the proposed division of the city centre between district wards would reflect the usage of its facilities by electors from the surrounding wards. However, we consider that representation in a single ward would be more effective and convenient for residents of this area, and that the Marsh Way ring road forms a well-defined boundary to the east. To the west of the city centre, we also propose that Wakefield North ward include from Wakefield West ward an area to the east of the A642 Horbury Road, to the north of (and including) Brighton Street and Claremont Terrace, and to the north of Park Avenue and that part of Lawefield Lane which borders Clarence Park.

171 To the north-west of the city, we propose that the revised Wakefield North ward also include the Willow Lane estate to the south of the Alverthorpe Beck, the proposed residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site, Tyrell Court and 10 and 37-45 Flanshaw Lane, from the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward. We are finally proposing a number of minor amendments to the northern ward boundary of Wakefield North to reflect road access and ground detail. These amendments would entail the inclusion of all of Gentian Court in a new Wrenthorpe & Outwood East ward, as described in the following section, the inclusion of all of Whitehill Rise in Wakefield North ward, and the transfer of Newton Gardens and several commercial properties on the A61 Leeds Road in the Newton Hill area to a new Stanley & Outwood East ward to reflect access. Finally, we note that the District Council has indicated that it intends addressing the issue of parish boundary anomalies in a parish review following the completion of this PER. It may be that the amendment proposed by a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish could be addressed as part of this process.

172 Under our draft recommendations, Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards (each comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 6% fewer, 8% fewer and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4%, 5% and 5% fewer by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

The north-west

(h) Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards

173 The three-member Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards represent a number of small- to medium-sized towns and villages to the north and north-east of the city of Wakefield, broadly divided into three areas: a western unparished area between the M1 and the A650 Wakefield to Bradford road, comprising Alverthorpe, Kirkhamgate, Wrenthorpe and other smaller settlements; a central unparished area between the A650 and the River Calder, comprising the generally contiguous settlements of Bottom Boat, Lee Moor, Lofthouse Gate, Newton Hill, Outwood, Stanley, Stanley Ferry; and Altofts village to the east of the River Calder, which forms the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish. The existing Stanley & Altofts ward comprises the village of Altofts and the eastern part of the central unparished area, while the

existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward comprises the western unparished area and the western part of the central unparished area. Currently both wards are under-represented, with Stanley & Altofts ward and Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward having 18% and 27% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (20% and 25% more by 2006).

174 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards, subject to a number of amendments to improve electoral equality. Under its proposals the wards would also be re-named 'Stanley & Outwood East' and 'Wrenthorpe & Outwood West' respectively, in order to better reflect community identities in the revised wards. The District Council proposed first to transfer the village of Altofts to a new Altofts & Whitwood ward to resolve the under-representation of this area and the over-representation of Castleford town (please see the previous section on warding arrangements for Castleford for further information).

175 The District Council also put forward a revised boundary between its proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards to provide for good electoral equality in both wards. It proposed that the boundary follow the A61 Leeds Road as far north as the junction of Edward Drive, before heading west to the north of Edward Drive, Charles Avenue, Chandlers Close, Clayton Rise and Railway Terrace and then north-west to the boundary with the city of Leeds along the Wakefield to Leeds railway line. This amendment would result in the transfer to Stanley & Outwood East ward of all of Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward to the east of the A61 (affecting the Outwood area), and a further area to the west of the A61 and to the north of Edward Drive (affecting the Lofthouse Gate area).

176 The District Council received a number of suggestions for this area as part of its own local consultation. It stated that it had been persuaded by the view of the Stanley Labour Party and councillors representing Stanley & Altofts ward that it was not possible to unite the Outwood area in a single district ward and that the area was therefore best divided where possible along the 'clear recognisable boundary' of the A61. As discussed in the previous section, the District Council also proposed to transfer a small number of properties on the A638 Wakefield Road from Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward to a revised Wakefield North ward. It also proposed that the Low Laithes area to the east of the M1 in the existing Ossett ward be transferred to Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward.

177 Under the District Council's proposals, Stanley & Outwood East ward (comprising the unparished areas of Stanley and Outwood [part]) and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West (comprising the unparished areas of Wrenthorpe and Outwood [part]) would both have 2% more electors per councillor than the district average (4% and 1% more by 2006).

178 We received 15 further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a 60-member council, which differed substantially in this area from those of the District Council. As previously discussed, they proposed to include the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish and part of the Stanley unparished area to the east of the A642 Aberford Road in a proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. The Conservatives also proposed to unite the remainder of the Stanley/Outwood unparished area in a single Stanley ward, resolving 'the arbitrary division of the Stanley community.' This arrangement would be facilitated by the inclusion of the Northgate North area in a revised Wakefield North ward, parts of which would in turn be transferred to a new Wrenthorpe ward. However, as a result of our proposal to retain a 63-member council, we have only been able to give limited further consideration to the Conservatives' proposals.

179 Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine local residents put forward proposals based upon a council size of 66. As previously discussed, it was proposed that an additional ward be created in the Normanton constituency area (the existing wards of Horbury, Normanton & Sharlston, Ossett, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe) to resolve the existing under-representation of Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and

Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards. Although full details of warding proposals were not provided, respondents did not support the inclusion of Altofts village in a ward with the western part of Castleford town to provide for good electoral equality. They considered that an exception should be made for this area to ensure the best reflection of community identities and interests. However, as a result of our proposal to retain a 63-member council, we have only been able to give limited further consideration to these proposals.

180 As previously discussed, Normanton Town Council noted the concerns of town councillors representing Altofts as to whether its identity and interests would be reflected under new district warding arrangements. A town councillor wrote separately to oppose the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward on these grounds, proposing that an exception should be made for the Normanton and Altofts area to allow for greater electoral variance while better reflecting community identities and interests. Finally, Wrenthorpe Environmental Society proposed that the entire Wrenthorpe area, bounded by the A650 Wakefield to Bradford road, Brandy Carr Road, Batley Road and the Wrenthorpe and Alverthorpe Meadows open space, continue to be included in a single district ward.

181 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One, and are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals, subject to a number of amendments. We have set out our reasons for adopting the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward in a previous section of this report, detailing our draft recommendations for the Castleford area. We acknowledge that our objective of achieving electoral equality and the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards have been constraining factors in achieving the best reflection of community identities and interests in this area. In particular, we note that the current division of the Outwood area would continue under the District Council's proposals. However, we consider that in a 63-member council there are too many electors in the unparished area between the A650 and the River Calder to form a single district ward providing good electoral equality. Moreover, we consider that the transfer of any part of this area (apart from Northgate North) to another ward to the east or south would not reflect the identity and interests of affected electors.

182 Examining the District Council's proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards, we concur with its view that the A61 Leeds Road provides an easily recognisable boundary in the Outwood area. We therefore consider that the increased use of the A61 as a ward boundary would provide for a more rational division of the area while providing for improved electoral equality in both wards. We further note that the District Council's proposed Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward would meet the criteria set out by Wrenthorpe Environment Society for the inclusion of the entire Wrenthorpe community in a single district ward. We are content to recommend the inclusion in this ward of the Low Laithes area of the existing Ossett ward, in order that the ward boundary follows the M1 motorway.

183 However, we are departing from the District Council's proposals in a number of areas, as discussed in the previous section on warding arrangements for the city of Wakefield. We are proposing to improve electoral equality in a revised Wakefield North ward by transferring from Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward the Willow Lane estate to the south of the Alverthorpe Beck and the proposed residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site, together with Tyrell Court and a number of properties on Flanshaw Lane. We are also proposing to transfer the Northgate North area from Stanley & Outwood East ward to Wakefield East ward, in part reflecting proposals by the Conservatives. We further propose a number of smaller amendments between the wards of Wakefield North and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West to reflect ground detail and road access in Gentian Court, Newton Gardens and Whitehall Rise.

184 We are proposing one additional amendment between the wards of Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West. We note that under the District Council's proposals a small number of properties on the western part of Lingwell Nook Lane are accessed from Castle

Head Lane in Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward, yet are to be transferred to Stanley & Outwood East ward, to which they have no direct road access. We therefore propose a slight adjustment to the proposed boundary to include these properties in Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward. We have also put forward a number of minor amendments to reflect ground detail, which affect no electors.

185 Under our draft recommendations, Stanley & Outwood East ward (comprising the unparished areas of Stanley and Outwood [part]) and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward (comprising the unparished areas of Wrenthorpe and Outwood [part]) would have 2% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% and 4% fewer by 2006).

(i) Horbury and Ossett wards

186 The three-member Horbury and Ossett wards are situated to the west of the M1 and to the north of the River Calder and are unparished. Horbury ward comprises the town of Horbury and the southern part of the town of Ossett, while Ossett ward comprises the remainder of the town of Ossett. Under existing arrangements, Horbury and Ossett wards have 2% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% more and 7% more by 2006).

187 At Stage One the District Council proposed to retain the existing Horbury ward without amendment, and put forward only minor changes to the existing Ossett ward. It stated that it had considered transferring the Storrs Hill area from Ossett to Horbury to improve electoral equality in both wards, but had concluded that this would not reflect strong community ties in this part of the district. The District Council therefore proposed no changes to the existing warding arrangements except for adjustments to the eastern boundary of Ossett ward, to ensure that it followed the M1 throughout its course. This would entail the transfer of the Low Laithes area to the proposed Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward. A small area between the M1, the A638 Wakefield Road and Queens Drive would also be transferred to a revised Wakefield North ward.

188 Under the District Council's proposals, Horbury ward (comprising the Horbury unparished area and part of the Ossett unparished area) and Ossett ward (comprising part of the Ossett unparished area) would have 2% and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% and 6% more by 2006).

189 We received 12 further representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives put forward proposals based upon a council size of 60, which included Horbury and Ossett wards identical to those put forward by the District Council. Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents put forward a 66-member scheme for the north of the district; as previously discussed they did not provide any detailed warding proposals, but suggested that both Horbury and Ossett wards remain generally unchanged. A resident supported the minor amendments to Ossett ward proposed by the District Council.

190 We have given careful consideration to the representations which we have received at Stage One, and are broadly adopting the District Council's proposal to retain the existing warding pattern in this area, noting that this has obtained general support. We note that Ossett and Horbury wards possess well-defined boundaries with other wards in the form of the M1 to the east and the River Calder/Calder & Hebble Navigation to the south. We therefore concur with the District Council's proposal to tie the eastern boundary of Ossett ward fully to the motorway, resulting in the transfer of two small areas to other wards as discussed above.

191 However, we propose to obtain a more equitable distribution of electors between the proposed wards of Horbury and Ossett by means of a minor amendment in the South Ossett area of Ossett town. This would entail the transfer to Horbury ward of Audrey Street, Dunstan Close, Hilda Street, King Street, Lionel Street, 15-75 Manor Road and 164-252 Station Road

(the B6128). We note that this proposal would enable the use of Green Park and adjoining playing fields as a natural boundary in this part of the town, and would also unite all electors on Manor Road in a single ward. We have also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which would affect no electors.

192 Under our draft recommendations, Horbury ward (comprising the Horbury unparished area and part of the Ossett unparished area) and Ossett ward (comprising part of the Ossett unparished area) would have 5% and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4% and 4% more by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Electoral cycle

193 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan districts have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 63 members should be retained;
- there should be 21 wards;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

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

- in the south of the district, we propose putting forward our own warding arrangements to ensure that Hemsworth parish and the Havercroft/Ryhill area are each contained within a single ward, reflecting to some extent proposals by the District Council, the Conservatives, Hemsworth Town Council and the Liberal Democrats;
- this would entail the retention of Wakefield Rural ward, revised Hemsworth and Wakefield South wards and the creation of a new Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward, a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward and a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward;
- in the city of Wakefield and the north-west of the district we propose a number of boundary amendments between the wards of Horbury, Ossett, Stanley & Outwood East, Wrenthorpe & Outwood West, Wakefield East, Wakefield North, Wakefield South and Wakefield West, to improve electoral equality while better reflecting community identities in a number of areas;
- in the north-east, we propose a number of boundary amendments between the wards of Airedale & Ferry Fryston, Altofts & Whitwood, Castleford Central & Glasshoughton, Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South to improve electoral equality in Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward and to provide for more effective and convenient ward boundaries;
- we are adopting the Conservatives' proposal to include in Featherstone ward the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish, which forms part of the village of Sharlston;
- we propose renaming Wakefield Central ward 'Wakefield West', as proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

196 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	63	63	63	63
Number of wards	21	21	21	21
Average number of electors per councillor	3,980	3,980	4,019	4,019
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	1	8	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	1	0	2	0

197 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from five to one. By 2006 only two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%, as opposed to eight wards under the existing arrangements.

Draft recommendation

The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

198 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 Crofton and Featherstone to reflect the proposed district wards. We also propose minor amendments to warding arrangements in Normanton parish.

199 Featherstone Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing four parish wards: Central ward, East ward, North West ward and South ward, each represented by three councillors. At Stage One the District Council recognised that its proposal to include the Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way areas of Featherstone parish in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood and Normanton district wards respectively would require the creation of two new parish wards. The District Council indicated that it intended to review parish boundaries following the completion of the PER. However, it did not put forward detailed proposals for electoral arrangements for Featherstone parish, nor did we receive such proposals from Featherstone Town Council or from any other respondent.

200 In the light of our draft recommendation to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area, we are proposing to create two new parish wards, Ackton Pasture ward and Western Gales Way ward, to facilitate the division of Featherstone parish between district wards. The boundary between the two new parish wards and the revised North West parish ward should reflect the new district ward boundaries in the affected areas. We propose that the new parish wards of Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way each be represented by one town councillor.

201 This would entail a consequential reduction of the representation of Central and East parish wards – the two wards with the next smallest electorates – to two town councillors each. We note that the new Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards would be significantly over-represented, although extensive forecast residential development to the north of the M62 would ensure that Ackton Pasture would be entitled to a single councillor by 2006. However, as previously discussed we note the District Council’s intention to address parish boundary anomalies by means of a parish review following the completion of the PER and are therefore content to put forward these proposals as an interim measure. We welcome views on our proposals for Featherstone parish at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Featherstone Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: North West and South (each returning three councillors), Central and East (each returning two councillors) and Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way (each returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 2.

202 The parish of Crofton is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations, we are proposing to create two new parish wards, East ward and West ward, to reflect the division of the parish between the proposed Crofton, Ryhill & Walton and Featherstone district wards. The boundary between the proposed East and West parish wards should reflect the revised district ward boundary. We propose that the new East ward return one councillor and the proposed West ward return 12 councillors.

203 We note that the new East ward would be significantly over-represented. However, as previously discussed, we note the District Council’s intention to address parish boundary anomalies by means of a parish review following the completion of the PER, and are therefore content to put forward these proposals as an interim measure. We welcome views on our proposals for Crofton parish at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Crofton Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East (returning one councillor) and West (returning 12 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 2.

204 Normanton parish is currently served by 22 councillors and is divided into four town wards: Altofts, represented by seven councillors, Normanton, represented by seven councillors, Normanton Common, represented by two councillors, and Woodhouse, represented by six councillors.

205 We note that Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk are currently divided between Normanton and Normanton Common parish wards (and the existing Castleford Whitwood and Normanton & Sharlston district wards). In our light of our draft recommendation to adopt the District Council’s proposed Normanton ward, which would include both parish wards, we have retained the existing parish ward boundary in this area, subject to a minor amendment to include all of Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk in Normanton Common parish ward, together with Moorhouse Close and The Dairies, which are accessed from Eastfield Grove. We welcome views on our proposals for Normanton parish at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Normanton Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Altofts (returning seven councillors), Normanton (returning seven councillors), Normanton Common (returning two councillors) and Woodhouse (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 2.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Wakefield

5 What happens next?

206 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Wakefield contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 7 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

207 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
Wakefield Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

208 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 Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Wakefield: detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wakefield area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas that are shown in more detail on the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Wakefield.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Wakefield: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. 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 B1: 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 consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	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.