

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Cotswold in Gloucestershire

January 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Cotswold on 27 June 2000.

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

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

- **in 22 of the 33 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 22 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 12 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 86-87) are that:

- **Cotswold District Council should have 44 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 28 wards, instead of 33 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 30 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of five, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 27 of the proposed 28 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Blockley and Cirencester, an increase in parish councillors for the parishes of Bourton-on-the-Water and Southrop, and new parish warding arrangements for Brimpsfield parish.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 January 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 5 March 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Ampney Coln	1	Ampneys ward (part - Ampney Crucis parish, Ampney St Mary parish and Ampney St Peter parish); Northleach ward (part - Coln St Dennis ward); Coln ward (part - Bibury parish, Barnsley parish, Winson parish)	Map 2
2 Avening	1	Avening ward (part - Avening parish, Ashley parish, Cherington parish and Long Newton parish); Thames Head ward (part - Rodmarton parish)	Map 2
3 Beacon Stow	2	Beacon ward (part - Bledington parish); Evenlode Vale ward (part - Evenlode parish, Adlestrop parish, Oddington parish, Mangersbury parish); Stow-on-the-Wold ward	Map 2
4 Blockley	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Maps 2 and A3
5 Bourton-on-the-Water	2	Bourton-on-the-Water ward; Fossehill ward (part - Cold Aston parish)	Map 2
6 Campden Vale	3	Campden ward; Mickleton ward; Vale ward	Map 2
7 Chedworth	1	Fossehill ward (part - Chedworth parish, Compton Abdale parish and Yanworth parish); Sandywell ward (part - Dowdeswell parish and Withington parish)	Map 2
8 Churn Valley	1	Churn Valley ward; Ermin ward (part - Coberley parish)	Map 2
9 Cirencester Beeches	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and Large map
10 Cirencester Chesterton	2	Cirencester Chesterton ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
11 Cirencester Park	2	Cirencester Abbey ward (part); Cirencester Chesterton ward (part); Cirencester Watermoor ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
12 Cirencester Stratton Whiteway	2	Cirencester Stratton ward; Cirencester Abbey ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
13 Cirencester Watermoor	2	Cirencester Watermoor ward (part); Cirencester Chesterton ward (part)	Large map

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
14 Ermin	1	Ermin ward (part - Brimpsfield parish, Cowley parish, Daglingworth parish, Duntisbourne Abbots parish, Duntisbourne Rouse, Cowley parish, Edgeworth parish, Elkstone parish, Syde parish and Winstone parish)	Maps 2 and A2
15 Fairford	2	Fairford ward; Coln ward (part - Hatherop parish and Quenington parish)	Map 2
16 Fosseridge	1	Fosseridge ward; Evenlode Vale ward (Broadwell parish and Donnington parish)	Map 2
17 Grumbolds Ash	1	Grumbolds Ash ward; Tetbury ward (part - Tetbury Upton parish); Avening ward (part - Shipton Moyne parish)	Map 2
18 Hampton	1	Hampton ward; Ampneys ward (part - Driffield parish)	Map 2
19 Kempsford Lechlade	2	Kempsford ward; Lechlade ward	Map 2
20 Moreton-in-Marsh	2	Moreton-in-Marsh ward	Map 2
21 Northleach	1	Northleach ward (part - Northleach with Eastington); Fossehill ward (part - Hampnett parish)	Map 2
22 Rissingtons	1	Beacon ward (part - Icomb parish, Great Rissington parish, Little Rissington parish, Upper Rissington, Westcote parish and Wick Rissington parish)	Map 2
23 Riversmeet	1	Sherborne Brook ward (part - Aldsworth parish, Coln St Aldwyns parish, Eastleach parish, Farmington parish, Barrington parish, Sherborne parish, Southrop parish and Windrush parish)	Map 2
24 Sandywell	1	Fossehill ward (part - Hazlton parish, Notgrove parish and Turkdean parish); Sandywell ward (part - Andoversford parish, Sevenhampton parish, Shipton parish and Whittington parish)	Map 2
25 Tetbury	3	Tetbury ward (part - Tetbury parish)	Map 2
26 Thames Head	1	Thames Head ward (part - Coates parish, Kemble parish and Sapperton parish)	Map 2
27 Three Rivers	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
28 Water Park	3	Water Park ward; Ampneys ward (part - Preston parish)	Map 2

Note: Cirencester is the only unparished part of the district and comprises the five wards indicated above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Cotswold

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ampney Coln	1	1,430	1,430	-1	1,476	1476	-1
2 Avening	1	1,433	1,433	-1	1,508	1508	1
3 Beacon Stow	2	2,767	1,384	-4	2,911	1456	-3
4 Blockley	1	1,489	1,489	3	1,565	1565	5
5 Bourton-on-the-Water	2	2,762	1,381	-4	2,814	1407	-6
6 Campden Vale	3	4,707	1,569	9	4,875	1625	9
7 Chedworth	1	1,409	1,409	-2	1,442	1442	-3
8 Churn Valley	1	1,377	1,377	-4	1,416	1416	-5
9 Cirencester Beeches	2	2,872	1,436	0	3,096	1548	4
10 Cirencester Chesterton	2	3,013	1,507	5	3,127	1564	5
11 Cirencester Park	2	2,733	1,367	-5	2,763	1382	-8
12 Cirencester Stratton Whiteway	2	2,754	1,377	-4	2,784	1392	-7
13 Cirencester Watermoor	2	3,162	1,581	10	3,226	1613	8
14 Ermin	1	1,420	1,420	-1	1,468	1468	-2
15 Fairford	2	3,150	1,575	9	3,221	1611	8
16 Fosseridge	1	1,509	1,509	5	1,538	1538	3
17 Grumbolds Ash	1	1,519	1,519	5	1,586	1586	6
18 Hampton	1	1,294	1,294	-10	1,399	1399	-6
19 Kempsford Lechlade	2	3,009	1,505	4	3,156	1578	6
20 Moreton-in-Marsh	2	2,499	1,250	-13	2,758	1379	-8
21 Northleach	1	1,497	1,497	4	1,521	1521	2
22 Rissingtons	1	1,430	1,430	-1	1,500	1500	0
23 Riversmeet	1	1,498	1,498	4	1,572	1572	5
24 Sandywell	1	1,417	1,417	-2	1,476	1476	-1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Tetbury	3	4,186	1,395	-3	4,241	1414	-5
26 Thames Head	1	1,449	1,449	1	1,497	1497	0
27 Three Rivers	1	1,543	1,543	7	1,617	1617	8
28 Water Park	3	4,078	1,359	-6	4,189	1396	-7
Totals	44	63,399	-	-	65,736	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,441	-	-	1,494	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Cotswold 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Cotswold in Gloucestershire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the six districts in Gloucestershire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Cotswold. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1977 (Report No. 261). The electoral arrangements of Gloucestershire County Council were last reviewed in May 1982 (Report No. 424). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

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

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

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

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

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Gloucestershire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the

Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Cotswold District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Gloucestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 2 October 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 9 January 2001 and will end on 5 March 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 Cotswold district encompasses some 117,000 hectares, more than 70 per cent of which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This includes 144 Conservation Areas. The district is located within an area bounded by the M4, M5 and M40 triangle and is largely rural in character. Two intercity rail lines cross the area with stations located near Cirencester, which is the largest settlement in the district, and Moreton-in-Marsh. Tourism is an important feature of the region, and contributes to the low unemployment levels in the area.

17 The district contains 115 parishes and is entirely parished. Cirencester town comprises 23 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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'.

19 The electorate of the district is 63,399 (February 2000). The Council presently has 45 members who are elected from 33 wards, four of which are relatively urban in character and the remainder being predominantly rural. One ward is represented by three councillors, 10 are each represented by two councillors and 22 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Cotswold district, with around 30 per cent more electors than two decades ago. The most notable increases have been in Kempsford and Lechlade wards.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,409 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,461 by the year 2005 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 22 of the 33 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Lechlade ward where the councillor represents 55 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Cotswold

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ampneys	1	1,006	1,006	-29	1,039	1,039	-29
2 Avening	1	1,459	1,459	4	1,488	1,488	2
3 Beacon	1	1,818	1,818	29	1,896	1,896	30
4 Blockley	1	1,489	1,489	6	1,565	1,565	7
5 Bourton-on-the-Water	2	2,564	1,282	-9	2,616	1,308	-10
6 Campden	2	2,250	1,125	-20	2,326	1,163	-20
7 Churn Valley	1	1,166	1,166	-17	1,203	1,203	-18
8 Cirencester Abbey	2	2,479	1,240	-12	2,509	1,255	-14
9 Cirencester Beeches	2	2,872	1,436	2	3,096	1,548	6
10 Cirencester Chesterton	2	3,991	1,996	42	4,105	2,053	41
11 Cirencester Stratton	2	1,959	980	-30	1,989	995	-32
12 Cirencester Watermoor	2	3,226	1,613	14	3,290	1,645	13
13 Coln	1	1,476	1,476	5	1,541	1,541	5
14 Ermin	1	1,631	1,631	16	1,681	1,681	15
15 Evenlode Vale	1	1,100	1,100	-22	1,117	1,117	-24
16 Fairford	2	2,588	1,294	-8	2,628	1,314	-10
17 Fossehill	1	1,367	1,367	-3	1,406	1,406	-4
18 Fossebridge	1	1,125	1,125	-20	1,144	1,144	-22
19 Grumbolds Ash	1	1,053	1,053	-25	1,091	1,091	-25
20 Hampton	1	1,175	1,175	-17	1,274	1,274	-13
21 Kempsford	1	823	823	-42	834	834	-43
22 Lechlade	1	2,186	2,186	55	2,322	2,322	59
23 Mickleton	1	1,319	1,319	-6	1,325	1,325	-9
24 Moreton-in-Marsh	2	2,499	1,250	-11	2,758	1,379	-6
25 Northleach	1	1,601	1,601	14	1,633	1,633	12
26 Sandywell	1	1,704	1,704	21	1,758	1,758	20

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
27 Sherborne Brook	1	1,266	1,266	-10	1,330	1,330	-9
28 Stow-on-the-Wold	1	1,663	1,663	18	1,793	1,793	23
29 Tetbury	3	4,409	1,470	4	4,480	1,493	2
30 Thames Head	1	1,666	1,666	18	1,773	1,773	21
31 Three Rivers	1	1,543	1,543	10	1,618	1,618	11
32 Vale	1	1,138	1,138	-19	1,224	1,224	-16
33 Water Park	2	3,788	1,894	34	3,884	1,942	33
Totals	45	63,399	–	–	65,736	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,409	–	–	1,461	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Cotswold 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 2000, electors in Lechlade ward were relatively over-represented by 55 per cent, while electors in Kempford ward were relatively under-represented by 42 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Cotswold District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission 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 12 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and from Cotswold Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

Cotswold District Council

24 The District Council proposed a council size of 44 members, one less than at present, serving 28 wards, compared to the existing 33. The Council's proposals provided for a mixed pattern of 15 single-member wards, 10 two-member wards and three three-member wards. The Council's scheme achieved good electoral equality with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2005. However, although it did not formally propose it, the Council included a caveat in their submission requesting that the Commission consider including Preston parish in its proposed Hampton ward rather than its proposed Water Park ward. This would result in electoral inequality in both of the proposed wards exceeding 10 per cent.

Cotswold Liberal Democrats

25 The Cotswold Liberal Democrats, ("The Liberal Democrats"), also proposed a district wide scheme with a council size of 44. The Liberal Democrat scheme was intended to "add a community dimension to the scheme submitted by Cotswold District Council". The scheme achieved a good level of electoral equality and provided for a pattern of predominantly multi-member wards, which they argued would provide for increased accountability and back up when councillors are ill or absent. Under the Liberal Democrats' scheme no ward would vary by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2005.

Parish Councils

26 We received representations from five parish councils. South Cerney Parish Council proposed an alternative two member Water Park ward comprising the parishes of Poole Keynes, Somerford Keynes and South Cerney. Somerford Keynes Parish Council supported the status quo in relation to the existing Water Park ward, but stated that if change is essential it supported South Cerney Parish Council's proposed Water Park ward. Kempsford Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposals to combine Kempsford and Lechlade parishes in a two-member ward. It argued that Kempsford merited separate representation because of the strategic NATO

airfield within the parish. Blockley Parish Council requested a reduction in the number of parish councillors and revised parish warding arrangements. Brimpsfield Parish Council requested that Brimpsfield be split into two parish wards in order to provide separate representation for the two villages of Brimpsfield and Caudle Green.

Other Representations

27 We received a further five representations. Four local residents opposed the Council's proposals to combine Kempford in a ward with Lechlade, while one local resident made comments regarding the amendment of external parish boundaries. However, the Commission cannot consider external parish boundaries as part of this review.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

32 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 63,399 to 65,736 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the urban area of Cirencester, although there is some growth in the electorate throughout the district. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

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

Council Size

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

35 Cotswold District Council presently has 45 members. The District Council proposed a council of 44 members. The Council considered that such a council size would provide a fair balance of representation between the urban area of Cirencester and the remainder of the district and we have noted that the correct distribution would be achieved. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a council size of 44. Given the consensus for this council size, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 44 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 As mentioned earlier, we received two district-wide schemes at Stage One, which, although achieving a degree of consensus in some areas, differed significantly in their proposals for the rural areas of the district. While we note that the District Council and the Liberal Democrats made identical warding proposals for Cirencester, we note that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which were not consulted upon locally, provide for large multi-member wards in the rural areas, while the District Council has proposed mainly single-member wards. We consider that a pattern of single-member wards would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria and, in view of the good electoral equality which would result under the District Council's scheme, we have concluded that we should adopt the District Council's scheme without amendment as our draft recommendations. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Avening, Grumbolds Ash, Tetbury and Thames Head wards;
- (b) Cirencester Abbey, Cirencester Beeches, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Stratton and Cirencester Watermoor;
- (c) Ampneys, Hampton, Nothleach and Water Park wards;
- (d) Coln, Fairford, Kempsford, Lechlade and Sherborne Brook wards;
- (e) Churn Valley, Ermin, Fossehill and Sandywell wards;
- (f) Beacon, Bourton-on-the-Water, Evenlode Vale, Stow-on-the-Wold and Three Rivers wards;
- (g) Foseridge and Moreton-in-Marsh wards;
- (h) Blockley, Campden, Mickleton and Vale wards.

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

Avening, Grumbolds Ash, Tetbury and Thames Head wards

38 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Avening (comprising the parishes of Ashley, Avening, Cherington, Long Newton and Shipton Moyne), Grumbolds Ash (comprising the parishes of Beverstone, Boxwell with Leighterton, Didmarton, Kingscote, Ozleworth, and Westonbirt with Lasborough) and Thames Head (comprising the parishes of Coates, Kemble, Rodmarton and Sapperton) is 4 per cent above, 25 per cent below and 18 per cent above the district average respectively (2 per cent above, 25 per cent below and 21 per cent above in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Tetbury ward is 4 per cent above the average (2 per cent above in 2005).

39 The District Council proposed substantial modifications to each of the four wards in this area. It proposed that a single-member Grumbolds Ash ward should be enlarged to include the parishes of Tetbury Upton and Shipton Moyne, arguing that this provided for improved electoral equality. It proposed that the rural parish of Tetbury Upton should be combined with similarly rural areas rather than the urban area of Tetbury. The Council proposed Tetbury parish should stand alone as a three-member district ward due to its size and electorate. It proposed that Rodmarton parish should be combined with the remainder of the existing Avening ward to form a revised single-member Avening ward. The remaining parishes of Coates, Kemble and Sapperton would form a revised single-member Thames Head ward.

40 Under the Council's proposals Avening, Grumbolds Ash, Tetbury and Thames Head wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and equal to the average in 2005).

41 The Cotswold Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member South Cotswold ward and a three-member Tetbury ward which were identical to the Council's proposed Grumbolds Ash and Tetbury wards. They proposed combining the parishes of Ashley, Avening, Cherington, Coates, Daglingworth, Duntisbourne Abbots, Duntisbourne Rouse, Edgeworth, Long Newton, Rodmarton, Sapperton and Winstone to form a new two-member Daneway ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Kemble parish would be combined with the parishes of Poole Keynes, Siddington, Somerford Keynes and South Cerney in a revised Water Park ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Daneway, South Cotswold, Tetbury and Water Park wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillors than the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005).

42 We note that there is consensus on the warding arrangements for Grumbolds Ash and Tetbury and consider that the Council's proposals for these wards provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We consider that the Council's proposed single-member Avening and Thames Head wards would provide good electoral equality while allowing a more appropriate reflection of the statutory criteria than the Liberal Democrats proposed two-

member Thames Head ward, which combines 13 rural parishes in a geographically large ward. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for this area without amendment. Under our draft recommendations Avening, Grumbolds Ash, Tetbury and Thames Head wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and equal to the average by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Cirencester (five wards)

43 Cirencester is the largest urban area in Cotswold district and is situated in the south of the district. Cirencester comprises five two-member wards. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 12 per cent below the average in Cirencester Abbey ward (14 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in Cirencester Beeches (6 per cent above in 2005), 42 per cent above in Cirencester Chesterton (41 per cent above in 2005), 30 per cent below in Cirencester Stratton (32 per cent below in 2005) and 14 per cent above in Cirencester Watermoor (13 per cent above in 2005).

44 The District Council proposed substantial modifications to warding arrangements in Cirencester. It proposed retaining five two-member wards within Cirencester, but proposed major boundary changes to four of the five wards. The District Council proposed combining all the properties to the north of Abbey Way and Grove Lane, currently in Cirencester Abbey ward, with the existing Cirencester Stratton ward to form a new two-member Cirencester Stratton Whiteway ward. The remainder of Cirencester Abbey ward would be combined with all the properties to the north of Chesterton Lane and the west of Somerford Road that are currently in Cirencester Chesterton ward and all the properties to the west of Somerford Road and north of Querns Lane and Lewis Lane that are currently in Cirencester Watermoor ward to form a new two-member Cirencester Park ward. The remainder of the existing Cirencester Watermoor ward would be combined with all the properties to the west of Somerford Road that are currently in Cirencester Chesterton ward to form a revised two-member Cirencester Watermoor ward. The remainder of Cirencester Chesterton would form a new two-member Cirencester Chesterton ward. The Council proposed that there should be no change to Cirencester Beeches ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposals for Cirencester.

45 Under the Council's proposals Cirencester Chesterton and Cirencester Watermoor wards would have 5 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent and 8 per cent more than the average by 2005), while Cirencester Beeches, Cirencester Park and Cirencester Stratton Whiteway wards would have equal to, 5 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the average number of electors per councillor respectively (4 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer and seven per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

46 We note that there is consensus between the Council and the Liberal Democrats on the proposals for the urban area of Cirencester. We consider that these proposals provide for strong boundaries between distinct areas, while achieving a reasonable level of electoral equality (no

more than 8 per cent by 2005). We consider that to seek further improvements to electoral equality in this area would have an adverse impact on the statutory criteria in the area concerned. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for the wards of Cirencester Beeches, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Park, Cirencester Stratton Whiteway and Cirencester Watermoor as part of our draft recommendations, which are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Ampneys, Hampton, Northleach and Water Park wards

47 Ampneys (comprising the parishes of Ampney St Mary, Ampney St Peter, Ampney Crucis, Driffield and Preston), Hampton (comprising the parishes of Down Ampney, Maiseyhampton and Poulton), Northleach (comprising the parishes of Coln St Dennis and Northleach with Eastington) and Water Park (comprising the parishes of Poole Keynes, Siddington, Somerford Keynes and South Cerney) wards extend from the south, up towards the centre of the district. Ampney, Hampton and Northleach wards each elect one councillor, while Water Park ward elects two councillors. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 29 per cent below the average in Ampneys ward (29 per cent below in 2005), 17 per cent below in Hampton ward (13 per cent fewer in 2005), 14 per cent above in Northleach ward (12 per cent more in 2005) and 34 per cent above in Water Park ward (33 per cent more in 2005).

48 The District Council proposed combining Preston parish with the existing Water Park ward in a revised two-member Water Park ward. However, although it did not formally propose it, the Council included a caveat in their submission requesting that the Commission consider including Preston parish in the proposed Hampton ward rather than its proposed Water Park ward. This would result in the electoral variance in both of the proposed wards exceeding 10 per cent. It proposed that a modified single-member Hampton ward should include Driffield parish, while the remainder of Ampney ward (the parishes of Ampney St Mary, Ampney St Peter and Ampney Crucis) would be combined with the parishes of Barnsley, Bibury, Coln St Dennis and Winson in a new single-member Ampney Coln ward. Northleach with Eastington parish would be combined with Hampnett parish to form a revised single-member Northleach ward.

49 Under the Council's proposals Ampney Coln, Hampton and Water Park wards would have 1 per cent, 10 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005), while Northleach would have 4 per cent more than the average (2 per cent more by 2005)

50 The Liberal Democrats proposed including Kemble parish in a revised three-member Water Park ward. They proposed combining the existing wards of Ampneys and Hampton with the parishes of Bibury, Winson and Barnsley to form a new two-member Ampney Brook ward. They proposed combining the existing Northleach ward in a single-member ward with the parishes of Aldsworth, Barrington, Clapton, Compton Abdale, Farmington, Hampnett, Sherborne, Turkdean, Windrush and Yanworth.

51 Under the Liberal Democrats proposals Ampney Brook and Northleach wards would have 1 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005), while Water Park ward would have 5 per cent more than the average (4 per cent by 2005).

52 South Cerney Parish Council proposed combining the parishes of Poole Keynes, Somerford Keynes and South Cerney to form a two-member Water Park ward. Somerford Keynes Parish Council stated that it supported no change and opposed proposals to combine the existing Water Park parishes with Preston parish. However, it also stated that, if change was inevitable, then it supported South Cerney Parish Council's proposed two-member Water Park ward.

53 Having carefully considered the representations received we consider that the Council's proposals provide the best available balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We recognise that there is some local opposition to the inclusion of Preston parish in a Water Park ward, but we do not consider the case outlined by the Council for including Preston parish in the proposed Hampton ward justifies the resulting level of electoral inequality (13 per cent in the proposed Water Park ward and 14 per cent in the proposed Hampton ward by 2005). Furthermore, we note that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, although not including Preston in a Water Park ward, are not compatible with our proposed warding arrangements elsewhere in the district. On balance, therefore, in order to achieve a good scheme throughout the district we are adopting the Council's proposals for the wards of Ampney Coln, Hampton, Northleach and Water Park without amendment in this area.

54 Under our draft recommendations Ampney Coln, Hampton and Water Park wards would have 1 per cent, 10 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005), while Northleach would have 4 per cent more than the average (2 per cent more by 2005)

Coln, Fairford, Kempford, Lechlade and Sherborne Brook wards

55 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Coln (comprising the parishes of Barnsley, Bibury, Coln St Aldwyns, Hatherop, Quenington and Winson), Sherborne Brook (comprising the parishes of Aldsworth, Barrington, Eastleach, Farmington, Sherborne, Southrop and Windrush), Kempford and Lechlade (each covering the parish of the same name) is 5 per cent above, 10 per cent below, 42 per cent below and 55 per cent above respectively (5 per cent above, 9 per cent below, 43 per cent below and 59 per cent above in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Fairford ward (covering Fairford parish) is 8 per cent below the average (10 per cent below in 2005).

56 As discussed previously, the District Council proposed combining the parishes of Barnsley, Bibury and Winson with the parishes of Ampney St Peter, Ampney St Mary, Ampney Crucis and Coln St Dennis in a new single-member Ampney Coln ward, while the parishes of Quenington and Hatherop would be combined with Fairford parish in a revised two-member Fairford ward.

The remaining parish in Coln ward, Coln St Aldwyns, would be combined with the existing Sherborne Brook ward to form a new two-member Riversmeet ward. The council also proposed that Kempsford ward should be combined with Lechlade ward to form a new two-member Kempsford Lechlade ward.

57 Under the Council's proposals Fairford, Kempsford Lechlade and Riversmeet wards would have 9 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent more by 2005), while Ampney Coln ward would have 1 per cent fewer than the average (1 per cent fewer by 2005).

58 As discussed previously, the Liberal Democrats proposed combining the parishes of Barnsley, Bibury and Winson with the existing Ampneys ward and Hampton ward to form a new two-member Ampney Brook ward. The remainder of the existing Coln ward would be combined with Fairford ward and Kempsford ward in a revised three-member Coln ward. They proposed combining the parishes of Eastleach and Southrop with the existing Lechlade ward in a new two-member Leach ward. They proposed that the remainder of the existing Sherborne Brook ward and the parishes of Compton Abdale, Hampnett, Turkdean and Yanworth should be included in a revised two-member Northleach ward. The Liberal Democrats argued that "the geographical arrangement makes it totally illogical for Kempsford to be included with Lechlade in a new ward since travel between the two involves passing through Fairford". They argued that the air base in Kempsford parish is a shared interest between Kempsford and Fairford, while Lechlade has more in common with the parishes of Eastleach and Southrop.

59 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Ampney Brook, Coln, Leach and Northleach wards would have 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 8 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillors than average respectively (1 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

60 Kempsford Parish Council opposed the Council's proposals to combine the parish of Kempsford with the more urban Lechlade, arguing that Kempsford would not be adequately represented if warded with Lechlade and that Kempsford was a special case as there was a NATO airbase within the parish. Moreover, it argued, Kempsford is geographically isolated from Fairford and Lechlade. Four local residents also opposed the Council's proposals to combine Kempsford and Lechlade in one ward, expressing similar arguments to Kempsford Parish Council.

61 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. We do not consider that the extremely high level of electoral inequality resulting from a separate Kempsford ward (43 per cent by 2005) is acceptable. While we note that there are specific concerns relating to the NATO airbase in Kempsford parish and the extra burden which its personnel place upon the councillor for the area, in conducting this review we are only able to take into account the 2000 and 2005 electorates having regard to the statutory criteria. Whilst the Liberal Democrats propose warding Kempsford separately from Lechlade and provide for a

reasonable level of electoral equality their proposals involve combining Kempford with three other parishes including the more urban Fairford. Moreover, the Liberal Democrats' proposals are not compatible with our draft recommendations in other areas. We consider that the District Council's proposals provide for good electoral equality whilst facilitating a good scheme throughout the district and have found that, because of the small electorates and rural nature of the neighbouring parishes, any alternative arrangements would have a consequential effect in terms of worsening electoral equality in the surrounding areas. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposed Kempford Lechlade ward as part of our draft recommendations.

62 We consider that the Council's proposed Ampney Coln, Fairford and Riversmeet wards group together parishes of similar interest whilst providing for an improved level of electoral equality. Furthermore, we do not consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which provide for large multi-member wards, offer the best reflection of the statutory criteria in this area. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations Fairford, Kempford Lechlade and Riversmeet wards would have 9 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent by 2005), while Ampney Coln ward would have 1 per cent fewer than the average (1 per cent fewer by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Churn Valley, Ermin, Fossehill and Sandywell wards

63 The number of electors represented by each of the councillors for the single-member wards of Churn Valley (comprising the parishes of Bagendon, Baunton, Colesbourne, North Cerney and Rendcomb), Ermin (comprising the parishes of Brimpsfield, Coberley, Cowley, Daglingworth, Duntisbourne Abbots, Duntisbourne Rouse, Edgeworth, Elkstone, Syde and Winstone), Fossehill (comprising the parishes of Chedworth, Cold Aston, Compton Abdale, Hampnett, Hazleton, Notgrove, Turkdean and Yanworth) and Sandywell (comprising the parishes of Andoversford, Dowdeswell, Sevenhampton, Shipton, Withington and Whittington) is 17 per cent below, 16 per cent above, 3 per cent below and 21 per cent above the district average (18 per cent below, 15 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 20 per cent above in 2005).

64 The District Council proposed only minor changes to Ermin ward, transferring Coberley parish from Ermin ward to Fossehill ward, but proposed more substantial changes to Churn Valley, Fossehill and Sandywell wards. It proposed combining the parishes of Dowdeswell and Withington (currently in Sandywell ward) with the parishes of Chedworth, Compton Abdale and Yanworth in a new single-member Chedworth ward. As mentioned earlier, Hampnett parish would be combined with Northleach with Eastington parish in a single-member Northleach ward, while Cold Aston parish would be combined with the parishes of Bourton-on-the-Water and Clapton to form a revised two-member Bourton-on-the-Water ward. The remainder of the existing Fossehill and Sandywell wards would be combined in a new single-member Sandywell ward. The Council argued that these modifications in terms of revised parish groupings were necessary to ensure a reasonable level of electoral equality.

65 Under the Council's proposals Bourton-on-the-Water, Chedworth and Ermin wards would have 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005), while Fosseridge and Rissingtons wards would have 5 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005).

66 The Liberal Democrats proposed significant change in this area. As discussed previously they proposed combining the parishes of Daglingworth, Duntisbourne Abbots, Duntisbourne Rouse, Edgeworth and Winstone with the parishes of Ashley, Avening, Cherington, Coates, Long Newton, Rodmarton, and Sapperton to form a new two-member Daneway ward, while the remainder of the existing Ermin ward would be combined with the existing Churn Valley ward and the parish of Chedworth in a new two-member Churn ward. They proposed that the existing Sandywell ward should be combined with the parishes of Cold Aston, Guiting Power, Hazleton, Naunton, Notgrave and Temple Guiting to form a revised two-member Three Rivers ward, while the remainder of the existing Fossehill ward would be combined with the parishes of Aldsworth, Barrington, Clapton, Coln St Dennis, Farmington, Northleach with Eastington, Sherborne and Windrush in a revised two-member Northleach ward.

67 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Daneway, Churn and Northleach wards would have 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillors than the district average respectively (1 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent fewer by 2005), while Three Rivers ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent more by 2005).

68 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. In particular we consider that the Council's proposals group together parishes of a similar nature whilst providing for good electoral equality. We note that the Liberal Democrats' proposals reflect their general preference for multi-member wards, but again consider that in these sparsely populated rural areas the Council's proposals more appropriately reflect the statutory criteria. Furthermore, the Liberal Democrats' proposals are not compatible with our draft recommendations elsewhere in the district. We are therefore adopting the Council's scheme in this area as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations Bourton-on-the-Water, Chedworth and Ermin wards would have 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005), while Fosseridge and Rissingtons wards would have 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005).

Beacon, Bourton-on-the-Water, Evenlode Vale, Stow-on-the-Wold and Three Rivers ward

69 The number of electors represented by each of the councillors for the single-member wards of Beacon (comprising the parishes of Bledington, Great Rissington, Little Rissington, Icomb, Westcote, Wick Rissington and Upper Rissington), Evenlode Vale (comprising the parishes of Adlestrop, Broadwell, Donnington, Evenlode, Mangersbury and Oddington), Stow-on-the-Wold (comprising Stow-on-the-Wold parish) and Three Rivers (comprising the parishes of Cutsdean, Guiting Power, Lower Slaughter, Naunton, Swell, Temple Guiting and Upper Slaughter) is 29 per cent above, 22 per cent below, 18 per cent above and 10 per cent above than the district average respectively (30 per cent more, 24 per cent below, 23 per cent above and 11 per cent above respectively in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Bourton-on-the-Water ward (comprising the parishes of Bourton-on-the-Water and Clapton) is 9 per cent below the district average (10 per cent below by 2005).

70 The District Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Three Rivers ward on its existing boundaries, but proposed substantial change elsewhere in this area. It proposed combining Stow-on-the-Wold with the parishes of Adlestrop, Bledington, Evenlode, Mangersbury and Oddington in a new two-member Beacon Stow ward, arguing that a single ward for the town of Stow-on-the-Wold cannot be substantiated in terms of electoral equality, hence the need to combine it with adjacent rural parishes. The remainder of the existing Beacon ward would form a new single-member Rissingtons ward, while the remainder of the existing Evenlode Vale ward would be combined with the existing Fosserridge ward in a revised two-member Fosserridge ward. The existing Bourton-on-the-Water ward would be combined with Cold Aston parish to form a revised two-member Bourton-on-the-Water ward, as described earlier.

71 Under the Council's proposals Beacon Stow, Bourton-on-the-Water, Fosserridge and Rissingtons wards would have 4 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005).

72 As detailed earlier, the Liberal Democrats proposed combining the parishes of Guiting Power, Naunton and Temple Guiting with the parishes of Andoversford, Cold Aston, Dowdeswell, Hazleton, Notgrove, Sevenhampton, Shipton, Whittington and Withington in a revised two-member Three Rivers ward. They proposed combining the parishes of Lower Slaughter and Upper Slaughter with the existing Bourton-on-the-Water ward in a new two-member Bourton ward, while Swell parish would be combined with Stow-on-the-Wold ward and the parishes of Bledington, Mangersbury and Oddington in a new two-member Stow ward. The remainder of the existing Beacon ward would form a single-member Rissington ward, as proposed by the Council. Cutsdean parish would be combined with the existing Fosserridge and Moreton-in-Marsh wards and the parishes of Adlestrop, Broadwell, Donnington and Evenlode in a new three-member Moreton ward.

73 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals Bourton, Moreton, Rissington, Stow and Three Rivers wards would have 3 per cent fewer, equal to, 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, equal to, 1 per cent more and 3 per cent more than the average by 2005).

74 We note that there is consensus on the Council's proposed Rissingtons ward and that the Council's proposals provide for reasonable electoral equality whilst having regard to community identity and interest. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for a new Rissington ward as part of our draft recommendations. Elsewhere we note that both schemes provide for reasonable electoral equality whilst grouping parishes of a similar nature. However, we consider that the smaller single-member wards, as proposed by the Council, provide for a more appropriate reflection of the statutory criteria than the Liberal Democrats' proposals, and moreover, the Liberal Democrats proposals are not compatible with our draft recommendations in other areas of the district. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for this area without amendment. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

75 Under our draft recommendations Beacon Stow, Bourton-on-the-Water, Fosseridge and Rissingtons wards would have 4 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005).

Fosseridge and Moreton-in-Marsh wards

76 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member Fosseridge ward (comprising the parishes of Batsford, Bourton-on-the-Hill, Condicote, Longborough, Sezincote and Todenham) is 20 per cent fewer than the district average (22 per cent fewer in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Moreton-in-Marsh ward (comprising the parish of Moreton-in-Marsh) is 11 per cent fewer than the district average (6 per cent fewer by 2005).

77 The District Council proposed no change to Moreton-in-Marsh ward, arguing that it was appropriate as Moreton-in-Marsh is the largest settlement in the north of the district and this would reflect local community identities and interests. It proposed combining the existing Fosseridge ward with the parishes of Donnington and Broadwell. Under the Council's proposals Moreton-in-Marsh and Fosseridge wards would have 13 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

78 As detailed earlier, the Liberal Democrats proposed combining the existing Moreton-in-Marsh ward with the existing Fosseridge ward and the parishes of Adlestrop, Broadwell, Cutsdean, Donnington and Evenlode in a three-member Moreton ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor in Moreton ward would be equal to the average (3 per cent more by 2005).

79 Having considered the views which we have received in this area, we recognise that the Liberal Democrats' proposals provide for good electoral equality. However, we consider that the urban Moreton-in-Marsh is a distinct community that merits separate representation. Therefore, we consider that the Council's proposals provide a more appropriate reflection of community identity whilst still providing for a reasonable and improving level of electoral equality. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

80 Under our draft recommendations Moreton-in-Marsh and Fossebridge wards would have 13 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005).

Blockley, Campden, Mickleton and Vale wards

81 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Blockley, Mickleton (each covering the parish of the same name) and Vale (comprising the parishes of Aston Subedge, Saintbury, Weston Subedge and Willersey) is 6 per cent above, 6 per cent below and 19 per cent below the district average respectively (7 per cent above, 9 per cent below and 16 per cent below in 2005). The number of electors in the two-member Campden ward (comprising the parishes of Campden and Errington) is 20 per cent below the district average (20 per cent below in 2005).

82 The District Council proposed no change in Blockley ward and proposed combining the existing wards of Campden, Mickleton and Vale in a new three-member Campden Vale ward. The Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area were identical to those put forward by the Council. Under the Council's proposals Blockley ward would have 3 per cent more electors than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005), while Campden Vale ward would have 9 per cent more electors than the district average both now and in 2005.

83 We note that there is a degree of consensus on warding arrangements in this area and are content that the Council's and Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area represent the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the absence of alternative proposals, we therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

84 Under our draft recommendations Blockley ward would have 3 per cent more electors than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005), while Campden Vale ward would have 9 per cent more electors than the district average both now and in 2005.

Electoral Cycle

85 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 45 to 44;
- there should be 28 wards;
- the boundaries of 30 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of five wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

87 Our draft recommendations would involve modifications to all but three of the existing wards in Cotswold district. As already indicated, we have adopted the District Council's proposals as our draft recommendations without amendment.

88 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	45	44	45	44
Number of wards	33	28	33	28
Average number of electors per councillor	1,409	1,441	1,461	1,494
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	22	1	22	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	0	12	0

89 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Cotswold District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 22 to one. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

Cotswold District Council should comprise 44 councillors serving 28 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

90 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it 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 Cirencester to reflect the proposed district wards and we are also proposing new parish warding arrangements in the parishes of Blockley, Bourton-on-the-Water, Brimpsfield and Cirencester.

91 The town of Cirencester is currently served by 10 councillors representing the five town wards of Cirencester Abbey, Cirencester Beeches, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Stratton, and Cirencester Watermoor. In our draft recommendations we propose modifying the boundaries of Cirencester Abbey, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Stratton and Cirencester Watermoor and renaming Cirencester Abbey and Cirencester Stratton wards as Cirencester Park and Cirencester Stratton Whiteway wards. In order to reflect revised district warding arrangements we propose that the boundaries of Cirencester Abbey, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Stratton and Cirencester Watermoor parish wards are amended and that Cirencester Abbey ward and Cirencester Stratton wards are renamed as Cirencester Park ward and Cirencester Stratton Whiteway ward, while Cirencester Beeches ward would remain unchanged.

Draft Recommendation

Cirencester Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Cirencester Beeches ward (returning three councillors), Cirencester Chesterton ward (returning three councillors), Cirencester Park ward (returning three councillors), Cirencester Stratton Whiteway ward (returning three councillors) and Cirencester Watermoor ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map in the back of this report.

92 The parish of Blockley is currently served by 15 councillors representing the three parish wards of Aston Magna (three councillors), Blockley (nine councillors) and Paxford (three

councillors). At Stage One, Blockley Parish Council requested a reduction in the number of parish councillors from 15 to 11 and revised parish ward boundaries to more accurately reflect the three distinct areas. The District Council supported Blockley Parish Council’s proposals.

93 We have carefully considered Blockley Parish Council’s request for a reduction in parish councillors and revised warding arrangements. We consider the request to be reasonable and therefore propose that Blockley Parish Council should have 11 parish councillors representing three revised parish wards.

Draft Recommendation
Blockley Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, four fewer than at present, representing three wards: Aston Magna ward (returning two councillors), Blockley ward (returning seven councillors) and Paxford ward (returning two councillors). The new parish warding arrangements are illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

94 The parish of Brimpsfield is currently served by seven councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One, Brimpsfield Parish Council, in agreement with the District Council, requested that Brimpsfield parish be divided into two parish wards in order to provide separate representation for the two villages of Brimpsfield and Caudle Green. They requested that their proposed Brimpsfield parish ward should be represented by five councillors and that their proposed Caudle Green parish ward should be represented by two councillors.

95 We have carefully considered Brimpsfield parish council’s request for parish warding and consider it to be reasonable. Our district warding arrangements would be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward the Parish Council’s proposal for consultation.

Draft Recommendation
Brimpsfield Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Brimpsfield ward (returning five councillors) and Caudle Green ward (representing two councillors). The proposed parish warding arrangements for Brimpsfield are illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A

96 The parish of Bourton-on-the-Water is currently represented by nine councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One, the District Council, in agreement with Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council, proposed an increase in the number of parish councillors from nine to 11. Our district warding arrangements would be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward the District Council’s proposal for consultation.

Draft Recommendation

Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, two more than at present.

97 The parish of Southrop is currently represented by seven councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One, the District Council, in agreement with Southrop Parish Council, proposed a reduction in the number of councillors from seven to five. Our district warding arrangements would be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward the District Council's proposal for consultation.

98 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

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

99 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Cotswold and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, 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.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Cotswold

5 NEXT STEPS

100 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 5 March 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

101 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Cotswold: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Cotswold area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Brimpsfield parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Blockley parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Cirencester.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Cotswold: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Brimpsfield Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Blockley Parish

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

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

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

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

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

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

