

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Redditch in Worcestershire

*February 2002*

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



# WHAT IS THE 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 on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission:

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 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, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission has set up a Boundary Committee which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Redditch's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001.

- **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 Redditch:

- **in six of the 11 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main proposals for Redditch's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 62-63) are that:

- **Redditch Borough Council should have 29 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 12 wards, instead of 11 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In ten of the proposed 12 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This 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 7 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 26 February 2002. 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, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from**

**1 April 2002 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 decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2002:

**Review Manager  
Redditch Review  
LGCE  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU**

**Fax: 020 7404 6142**

**E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)**

**Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

*Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Centre	2	part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
2	Crabbs Cross	2	part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of Feckenham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
3	Crest	2	part of Batchley ward; part of Central ward; part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
4	East	3	part of Matchborough ward; Winyates ward	Map 2 and Large Map
5	Northern	2	part of Abbey ward; part of Batchley ward; part of Central ward	Map 2 and Large Map
6	North East	3	part of Abbey ward; Churchill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
7	North West	3	part of Batchley ward	Map 2 and Large Map
8	Ridge	3	part of Central ward; part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of Greenlands ward; part of Lodge Park ward; part of West ward	Map 2 and Large Map
9	South Central	3	part of Greenlands ward; part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
10	South East	2	part of Matchborough ward	Map 2 and Large Map
11	South West	2	Feckenham parish; part of Crabbs Cross ward	Map 2 and Large Map
12	West	2	part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of West ward	Map 2 and Large Map

*Notes: 1 The parish of Feckenham is the only parish in Redditch and is contained within the proposed South West ward.*

*2 In addition to the amendments we have made to the Borough Council's proposals detailed in the report, we have also made a further four amendments to its proposals, affecting no electors.*

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

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Redditch

	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	Centre	2	3,909	1,955	-7	4,059	2,030	-6
2	Crabbs Cross	2	4,377	2,189	4	4,377	2,189	1
3	Crest	2	4,121	2,061	-2	4,298	2,149	-1
4	East	3	6,724	2,241	7	6,736	2,245	4
5	Northern	2	4,149	2,075	-1	4,149	2,075	-4
6	North East	3	6,463	2,154	3	6,342	2,114	-3
7	North West	3	4,693	1,564	-26	6,264	2,088	-4
8	Ridge	3	6,945	2,315	10	6,975	2,325	7
9	South Central	3	6,149	2,050	-2	6,094	2,031	-6
10	South East	2	4,707	2,354	12	4,625	2,313	7
11	South West	2	4,363	2,182	4	4,381	2,191	1
12	West	2	4,326	2,163	3	4,600	2,300	6
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>60,926</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>62,900</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,169</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Redditch in Worcestershire, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the six districts in Worcestershire 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 expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Redditch. Redditch's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 356). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

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 councils in the borough.

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

7 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 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. 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 assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, 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 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.

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

*Table 3: Stages of the Review*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half of 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 wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states 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 current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when we wrote to Redditch Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the local authority associations, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils, the parish council in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Redditch Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 22 October 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 26 February 2001 and will end on 22 April 2002, 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.**

14 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 decide when any changes come into effect.



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The Borough of Redditch is situated in east Worcestershire and was designated a “New Town” in 1964. Redditch covers an area of 5,435 hectares and is bounded to the north by the district of Bromsgrove, in the east by the district of Stratford-on-Avon and in the south by the district of Wychavon. Redditch has a population of 77,023 and is predominantly urban in character. The Borough contains one parish, Feckenham, in the south west.

16 The electorate of the Borough is 60,926 (February 2001). The Council presently has 29 members who are elected from 11 wards, ten of which are urban in character, the other being rural. Four of the wards are each represented by two councillors and seven are each represented by three councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,101 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,169 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 11 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, three wards by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Crabbs Cross ward where each councillor represents 40 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Redditch*

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	Abbey	2	4,273	2,137	2	4,218	2,109	-3
2	Batchley	3	5,681	1,894	-10	7,252	2,417	11
3	Central	3	5,366	1,789	-15	5,543	1,848	-15
4	Church Hill	2	5,284	2,642	26	5,217	2,609	20
5	Crabbs Cross	2	5,863	2,932	40	5,854	2,927	35
6	Feckenham	2	5,048	2,524	20	5,066	2,533	17
7	Greenlands	3	6,583	2,194	4	6,500	2,167	0
8	Lodge Park	3	5,120	1,707	-19	5,298	1,766	-19
9	Matchborough	3	6,486	2,162	3	6,404	2,135	-2
10	West	3	6,278	2,093	0	6,591	2,197	1
11	Winyates	3	4,944	1,648	-22	4,957	1,652	-24
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>60,926</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>62,900</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,169</b>	<b>-</b>

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Batchley ward were relatively over-represented by 10 per cent, while electors in Crabbs Cross ward were relatively under-represented by 40 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Redditch Borough Council and its constituent parish council.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 13 submissions during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Redditch Conservative Association, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

#### **Redditch Borough Council**

21 The Borough Council proposed a council size of 29, as at present, representing 12 wards, one more than at present. The Council's scheme provided for a pattern of two- and three-member wards, as at present. The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of all wards across the borough to improve electoral equality. The Council also stated that none of the ward names put forward in its submission are "fixed" and can be "the subject of later discussion". However, the Borough Council argued that "inclusive names should be selected over exclusive ones". The Borough Council undertook a consultation exercise, prior to the submission of its proposals, which attracted nine representations, copies of which were included in its submission.

22 Under the Borough Council's proposals one of the proposed 12 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006 no ward is expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

#### **Redditch Conservative Association**

23 The Conservatives proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a council size of 30, an increase of one. It proposed 12 wards, an increase of one, and the retention of two- and three-member wards. The Conservatives proposed modifications to all but one of the wards in the borough and several ward names changes. Under the Conservatives' proposals no ward is forecast to have an electoral variance above 10 per cent from the borough average by 2006.

#### **Other Submissions**

24 We received a further 11 submissions during Stage One from local residents in the Ipsley area, each opposing the Borough Council's proposal to divide the community of Ipsley between two wards and requesting that the Commission retains the community in one ward.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

**25 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Redditch and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.**

26 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Redditch is 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 of 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”.

27 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 maintaining local ties.

28 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.

29 Our *Guidance* states that 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**

30 Since 1979 there has been a 44 per cent increase in the electorate of Redditch borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3 per cent from 60,926 to 62,900 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the Batchley area due to significant development proposals in this area. 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.

31 The Conservatives submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4 per cent from 60,926 to 63,164 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. They stated that the variation between the Borough Council’s projected electorate and their projected electorate is due to the fact that while the “areas of projected growth in electorate may be identified from the Local Plan, the specific areas of a ward where

the electorate is expected to reduce are not identified". We therefore asked officers at the Borough Council to revisit their projections for the whole borough; they indicated that they remained satisfied that their original projections represent the best estimates in electorate over the five-year period.

32 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the Borough Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## **Council Size**

33 As explained earlier, we start by assuming 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.

34 Redditch Borough Council presently has 29 members. The Borough Council proposed retaining the current council size which, together with its proposals for new warding arrangements, would provide for an improved level of electoral equality. In preparing its proposals, it consulted locally, outlining its proposed council size. The Conservatives proposed an increase of one in council size from 29 to 30 stating that an improvement in electoral equality could be achieved with a ratio of one councillor for every 2,100 electors.

35 We note that the Borough Council had consulted locally on its proposed council size. The Conservatives' scheme did not provide detailed evidence or argumentation in support of their proposed increase in council size from 29 to 30, nor has it been consulted on locally. 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 electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 29 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

36 We have considered carefully the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Council and the Conservatives. From these representations some considerations have emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations.

37 We note that both borough-wide schemes would provide for a significant improvement in the level of electoral equality for the borough as a whole. The primary differences between the two schemes relates to the warding arrangements in the Headless Cross and Ipsley areas and in the town centre. In particular, while the Borough Council proposed dividing the community of Ipsley between its proposed Centre and South East wards, the Conservatives proposed retaining the community in one ward. In relation to the Headless Cross area, the Borough Council proposed a three-member ward incorporating the community of Headless Cross, while the Conservatives proposed a two-member ward comprising the Headless Cross area. The Borough Council and the Conservatives each proposed two wards covering the town centre. However, where the Borough Council have sought to use firm and easily identifiable boundaries, the Conservatives' wards straddle the Alvechurch Highway.

38 We consider that the community of Ipsley should be retained in one ward rather than divided between two wards. While we recognise the need for improved electoral equality, we consider that dividing Ipsley would not provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the case of Headless Cross we have not been persuaded by the evidence received to propose as part of our draft recommendations a ward based solely on Headless Cross. In relation to the town centre wards, we would seek, where possible, to use firm and easily identifiable boundaries. The highways that feature in Redditch offer firm boundaries to local communities and the potential to provide clear ward boundaries.

39 As previously stated, we noted that the Borough Council included evidence of local consultation in its submission; we also noted the absence of evidence of local consultation in the Conservatives' scheme. As a result of these considerations, our draft recommendations for Redditch are based largely on the Borough Council's scheme, which reflects parts of the Conservatives' scheme in the south west of the borough. However, to provide an improved reflection of local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the Borough Council's proposals in four areas. In particular, we propose boundary modifications in the south east and in the west of the borough. We also propose two minor amendments in the south and in the east of the borough in order to provide for boundaries which are tied to firm ground detail. In its submission the Borough Council put forward several ward names for each of its proposed wards. For the purpose of this consultation we have opted for the first name proposed for each ward. However, we are not persuaded that these ward names necessarily reflect community identities and interests and invite alternative suggestions. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill wards;
- (b) Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates wards;
- (c) Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West wards.

40 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 map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill wards**

41 The existing wards of Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill are situated in the north of the borough. Abbey and Church Hill wards are currently represented by two councillors and have 2 per cent and 26 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 20 per cent more by 2006). Batchley is a three-member ward and currently contains 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (11 per cent more by 2006).

42 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area to provide for improved levels of electoral equality in the Batchley and Church Hill wards. The Borough Council put forward a revised three-member ward in the Church Hill area and stated that the large electorate in the Church Hill ward "forces a subdivision" of the Church Hill estate in order to improve electoral equality. The Borough Council also stated that its preference would be to make, what it termed as, "the least objectionable split" in the north west of the ward. The Borough Council therefore proposed one boundary amendment to the existing Church Hill ward to take in the properties to the east of Paper Mill Drive, affecting

1,179 electors. The Borough Council argued that this amendment would “maintain the connection with areas previously part of Abbey ward, while at the same time achieve a more unified Church Hill ward”, and proposed renaming it North East ward.

43 The Borough Council put forward a further two wards based on the existing Abbey and Batchley wards. It stated that significant growth is anticipated in the Batchley area over the next five years, adding an estimated 1,571 electors to the area. It proposed a revised three-member ward in this area, substantially based on existing boundaries albeit with two amendments: the eastern boundary would follow Hewell Road north and continue eastwards to the rear of the industrial units situated on Windsor Road and then northwards along the railway line to the borough boundary; an amendment to the southern boundary would affect no electors. The Council proposed renaming the ward North West. Finally, the Borough Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Abbey ward, plus an area of the existing Batchley ward containing 987 electors and an area containing 68 electors from the Central ward, be transferred to a new two-member Northern ward. Under the Borough Council’s proposals Northern and North West ward would contain 1 per cent fewer and 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2006). North East ward would contain 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (3 per cent fewer by 2006).

44 The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. Our proposals, however, are based on a council size of 29 and we have, therefore, been unable to adopt the Conservatives’ scheme as part of our draft recommendations.

45 We have considered carefully the representations received during Stage One and note the absence of local opposition to the Borough Council’s proposals. We also note that the Borough Council’s proposals are largely based on existing ward boundaries and provide for an improved level of electoral equality. We have, therefore, decided to adopt the Borough Council’s scheme in this area in its entirety subject to our previous comments regarding proposed ward names.

46 Under our draft recommendations Northern ward would be represented by two councillors and would contain 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent fewer by 2006). North East and North West wards would each be represented by three councillors and would contain 3 per cent more and 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2, and the large map at the back of the report.

### **Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates wards**

47 The existing wards of Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates are situated in the east of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. The wards of Greenlands and Matchborough currently contain 4 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average and 2 per cent fewer by 2006). Lodge Park and Winyates wards currently contain 19 per cent and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (19 per cent and 24 per cent fewer by 2006).

48 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining four wards in this area based on revised boundaries. The Borough Council put forward a new three-member East ward in the Winyates area. In order to achieve electoral equality in the proposed East ward, the Council proposed transferring an area known as Winyates Green containing 1,779 electors from the existing Matchborough ward to East ward. The Borough Council also stated that although the “arguments may not be particularly strong in linking Winyates Green to the other Winyates areas” in the East ward the proposal does provide for improved electoral equality. On receipt of several requests, as part of its consultation, the Borough Council investigated the feasibility of a single-member Winyates Green ward but found that the electorate was too small to warrant a single-member ward. In the Matchborough area the Borough Council proposed a new two-member South East ward dividing the community of Ipsley between two wards. The Borough Council stated that its proposal to divide Ipsley was done for electoral equality purposes only and considered that Ipsley’s community of interest and identity lay within the Matchborough ward.

49 The Borough Council proposed a new two-member Centre ward substantially based on the existing Lodge Park ward. However, it proposed transferring from Lodge Park an area to the south of the Warwick Highway, containing 951 electors, and an area to the west of the Alvechurch Highway, containing 96 electors, from the existing Lodge Park ward to its proposed South Central and Ridge wards respectively. It also proposed an amendment to the eastern boundary of Lodge Park ward affecting no electors. The Borough Council also proposed a new three-member South Central ward based on the existing Greenlands ward, albeit with an amended western boundary resulting in the transfer of 1,385 electors to its proposed Ridge ward (discussed in more detail below). Under the Borough Council proposals, Centre, East, South Central and South East ward would contain 1 per cent more, 7 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more respectively (1 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer by 2006).

50 The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, put forward an alternative configuration of wards in this area, with no ward having an electoral variance in excess of 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. Our proposals are based on a council size of 29 and we have, therefore, been unable to adopt the Conservatives’ scheme as part of our draft recommendations. However, we note that under the Conservatives’ proposals, the community of Ipsley is retained in one ward.

51 We received a further 11 submissions relating to this area at Stage One. Eleven local residents opposed the Borough Council’s proposal to divide the community of Ipsley between its proposed Centre and South East wards.

52 We have considered carefully the representations received during Stage One. We note that the Borough Council’s proposals provide for an improved level of electoral equality and are based on existing wards. We have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council’s proposals as part of our draft recommendations, subject to three amendments. While we note the good electoral equality in the Borough Council’s proposed Centre and South East wards, we also note the Borough Council’s comments regarding Ipsley and the level of local opposition to the proposals in this area. We have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that dividing the community of Ipsley provides the best reflection of the statutory criteria. While we have been unable to adopt the Conservatives’ 30-member scheme, we find

merit in their proposal to retain Ipsley within one ward. We therefore propose that the whole community of Ipsley be retained in the Borough Council's proposed South East ward. We also propose two minor boundary amendments, affecting no electors, in the Borough Council's proposed Centre and East wards and South Central ward to better reflect firm ground detail. We also invite further comments at Stage Three regarding ward names.

53 Under our draft recommendations Centre and South East wards would each be represented by two councillors and would contain 7 per cent fewer and 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more by 2006). East and South Central wards would each be represented by three councillors and would contain 7 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2, and on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West wards**

54 The existing wards of Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West are situated in the west and south-west of the borough. Crabbs Cross and Feckenham wards are each represented by two councillors and currently contain 40 and 20 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (35 per cent and 17 per cent more by 2006). Central and West wards are each represented by three councillors and currently contain 15 per cent fewer and equal to the average electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (15 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2006).

55 The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the four wards in this area resulting in an increase of one ward. It proposed a new two-member Crest ward comprising part of the existing Central ward and 164 electors transferred from the existing Lodge park ward. It also proposed transferring a large area of the existing Central ward, south of the Bromsgrove Highway and containing 1,341 electors, to a new three-member Ridge ward. In the remainder of the current Central ward the Borough Council proposed transferring an area containing 68 electors to its proposed Northern ward (as previously discussed). The Borough Council proposed a revised two-member West ward, broadly similar to the Conservatives' proposed Webheath ward and stated that growth of 313 electors is predicted over the next five years. The Borough Council stated that it endeavoured to achieve an electoral variance not exceeding 5 per cent more or 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average in urban areas. However, it argued that the "slightly higher than desirable" electoral variance in its proposed West ward was due to strong community identity issues in this area. The Borough Council also argued that the Alvechurch and Bromsgrove Highways made it difficult to achieve better electoral equality. The Borough Council therefore proposed transferring an area containing 1,836 electors from the existing West ward to its new Ridge ward.

56 The Borough Council put forward a revised two-member Crabbs Cross ward which was broadly similar to the Conservatives' proposed Walkwood ward. It proposed transferring an area containing 446 electors from the north, and 1,725 electors from the east of the existing Crabbs Cross ward to its proposed Ridge ward and an area containing 53 electors (The Slough) from the existing Crabbs Cross to its proposed South West ward. The Borough Council also proposed transferring an area containing 575 electors from the north, and 163 electors from the north-east of the existing Feckenham ward to the revised Crabbs Cross

ward. Finally, the Borough Council put forward revised warding arrangements for the Feckenham area which were broadly similar to the Conservatives' proposed Feckenham & Astwood ward. It proposed a two-member South West ward based on the existing ward boundaries, less the areas in the north of the ward, as described above.

57 Under the Borough Council proposals Crabbs Cross, Crest, Ridge, South West and West wards would each contain 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 1 per cent more and 10 per cent more by 2006).

58 The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. Our proposals, however, are based on a council size of 29 and we have, therefore, been unable to adopt the Conservatives' scheme as part of our draft recommendations.

59 We have considered carefully all the representations received during Stage One. We note that the Borough Council's proposals provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We also note the evidence of local consultation included in the Borough Council's scheme and the absence of local opposition to its proposals. We have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals, which reflect parts of the Conservatives' scheme in this area, as part of our draft recommendations subject to one minor boundary amendment to the proposed West ward. We propose transferring an area containing 116 electors from the proposed West ward to the proposed Ridge ward to better reflect community identity. We also invite further comment at Stage Three regarding ward names.

60 Under our draft recommendations Crabbs Cross, Crest, South West and West wards would each be represented by two councillors and would contain 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006). Ridge ward would be represented by three councillors and would contain 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 7 per cent more by 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

61 At Stage One we did not receive any comments relating to the electoral cycle of the borough. We therefore make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

## Conclusions

62 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 29 members should be retained;
- there should be 12 wards;
- the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and no ward should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- in the east of the borough we propose two boundary amendments: one on the grounds of community identity; and one to better reflect ground detail, which has no effect on electoral equality;
- in the west of the borough we propose one minor boundary modification on the grounds of community identity;
- in the south of the borough we propose a minor boundary amendment to better reflect ground detail, which has no effect on electoral equality;
- for the purpose of this consultation we have put forward the Borough Council's proposed ward names. However, we are not content that these ward names reflect community identity and have, therefore, invited further comment at Stage Three.

64 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect 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 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	29	29	29	29
Number of wards	11	12	11	12
Average number of electors per councillor	2,101	2,101	2,169	2,169
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	2	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	1	2	0

65 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Redditch Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from six to two. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

**Draft Recommendation**

Redditch Borough Council should comprise 29 councillors serving 12 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

**Parish Council Electoral Arrangements**

66 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 states 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.

67 The parish of Feckenham is currently served by seven councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the warding arrangements of Feckenham. We received no other representations at Stage One in relation to the parish council arrangements in Feckenham, and as a result propose no change to the current arrangements.

**Draft Recommendation**

Feckenham Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present. The parish boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

68 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of the parish council in the borough.

**Draft Recommendation**

Parish council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the borough ward of which they are part.

*Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Redditch*



## 5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

69 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Redditch contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

70 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

71 In the light of responses 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

### 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](http://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. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission 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: LGCE 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.