

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Worcester City

February 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for the City of Worcester 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 will set up a Boundary Committee for England which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee for England 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, as was previously the case with the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the City of Worcester'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 Worcester:

- **in nine of the 12 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and five 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 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main proposals for the City of Worcester's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 55-56) are that:

- **Worcester City Council should have 35 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, instead of 12 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 14 of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in no wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parish of Warndon;**

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, 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:

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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Arboretum	2	St Nicholas ward (ward); St Stephen ward (part)
2	Battenhall	2	St Peter ward (part)
3	Bedwardine	3	Bedwardine ward; St John ward (part)
4	City Centre	3	All Saints ward; St Nicholas ward (part); St Peter ward (part)
5	Claines	3	Claines ward (part); St Stephen ward (part)
6	Gorse Hill	2	Holy Trinity ward (part); St Martin ward (part)
7	Nunnery	3	Holy Trinity ward (part); Nunnery ward (part)
8	Old Warndon	2	St Martin ward (part)
9	Rainbow Hill	2	St Barnabas ward
10	St Clement	2	St Clement ward (part)
11	St John	3	St Clement ward (part); St John ward (part)
12	St Peter's Parish	2	St Peter ward (part)
13	St Stephen	2	Claines ward (part); St Stephen ward (part)
14	Warndon Parish North	2	Part of Warndon parish (the proposed Warndon North parish ward)
15	Warndon Parish South	2	Nunnery ward (part); Part of Warndon parish (the proposed Warndon South parish ward)

Notes: 1 The district is partially parished.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map inserted in the back of this report.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Worcester

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 Arboretum	2	4,259	2,130	3	4,511	2,256	6
2 Battenhall	2	4,190	2,095	1	4,322	2,161	1
3 Bedwardine	3	6,242	2,081	1	6,359	2,120	-1
4 City Centre	3	5,933	1,978	-4	6,653	2,218	4
5 Claines	3	6,335	2,112	2	6,440	2,147	0
6 Gorse Hill	2	4,224	2,112	2	4,226	2,113	-1
7 Nunnery	3	5,756	1,919	-7	5,940	1,980	-7
8 Old Warndon	2	3,857	1,929	-7	4,023	2,012	-6
9 Rainbow Hill	2	4,226	2,113	2	4,277	2,139	0
10 St Clement	2	4,720	2,360	14	4,402	2,201	3
11 St John	3	6,224	2,075	0	6,703	2,234	5
12 St Peter's Parish	2	4,311	2,156	4	4,370	2,185	2
13 St Stephen	2	4,072	2,036	-1	4,277	2,139	0
14 Warndon Parish North	2	3,892	1,946	-6	4,025	2,013	-6
15 Warndon Parish South	2	4,024	2,012	-3	4,289	2,145	0
Totals	35	72,265	-	-	74,817	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,065	-	-	2,138	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Worcester City 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the City of Worcester, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the eight 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 Worcester's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1976 (Report no. 171). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements later this year.

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 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 district.

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

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

10 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 Worcester City 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, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, 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 Worcester City 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 2002 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 and decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The City of Worcester is situated on the River Severn and has been an important centre of trade and industry since Roman times. Once famous for the glove trade, Worcester's attractive riverside location makes it an important tourist centre. The City covers an area of 3,327 hectares and has a population of 95,927.

16 The City contains two civil parishes, St Peter The Great County parish and Warndon parish but the rest of the area is unparished.

17 The electorate of the district is 72,265 (February 2001). The Council presently has 36 members who are elected from 12 wards, all of which are relatively urban in character. Each ward is represented by three councillors and the Council is elected by thirds.

18 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 district average. In the text which follows, this figure may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,007 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 2,078 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 nine of the 12 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, five wards by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in St Martin ward where councillors represent 106 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Worcester

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	All Saints	3	4,551	1,517	-24	5,105	1,702	-18
2	Bedwardine	3	5,446	1,815	-10	5,609	1,870	-10
3	Claines	3	5,399	1,800	-10	5,465	1,822	-12
4	Holy Trinity	3	4,254	1,418	-29	4,319	1,440	-31
5	Nunnery	3	5,068	1,689	-16	5,280	1,760	-15
6	St Barnabas	3	4,226	1,409	-30	4,277	1,426	-31
7	St Clement	3	6,469	2,156	7	6,526	2,175	5
8	St John	3	5,271	1,757	-12	5,329	1,776	-15
9	St Martin	3	12,431	4,144	106	12,904	4,301	107
10	St Nicholas	3	4,924	1,641	-18	5,375	1,792	-14
11	St Peter	3	8,917	2,972	48	9,110	3,037	46
12	St Stephen	3	5,309	1,770	-12	5,518	1,839	-11
	Totals	36	72,265	-	-	74,817	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,007	-	-	2,078	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Worcester City Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in St Martin ward were under-represented by 106 per cent, while electors in St Barnabas ward were over-represented by 30 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

20 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 Worcester City Council and its constituent parish councils.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven submissions during Stage One, including a city-wide scheme from the City Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

Worcester City Council

22 The City Council consulted on three different schemes prior to submitting proposals to us: Option A, which provided for a 35-member council; Option B, which provided for a 37-member council; and Option C, which provided for a 34-member council. After consultation, the Council proposed Option A as its formal submission, providing for a council size of 35, one fewer than at present, serving 15 wards, compared to the existing 12.

23 The Council proposed that the west side of the River Severn be allocated eight councillors, representing three wards, and the east side be allocated 27 councillors, representing 12 wards. It also submitted alternative warding arrangements for the west side of the city for consideration. The Council further proposed the warding of Warndon Parish for district ward purposes.

Members of Parliament

24 Michael Foster MP proposed a city-wide scheme based on 35 members that mirrored the City Council's proposals on the east side of the river, but provided for alternative warding arrangements on the west side that differed slightly from the Council's alternative option.

Parish Councils

25 Warndon Parish Council suggested alternative names for the City Council's proposed district wards that would cover the parish.

Other Submissions

26 We received a further four submissions from local political parties and local residents. Worcester City Liberal Democrats proposed a 34-member council representing 15 wards. Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines supported the City Council's proposals. One local resident partially supported the City Council's proposals, while another local resident proposed a 36-member council.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

27 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Worcester 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.

28 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Worcester 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”.

29 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.

30 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.

31 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

32 Since 1975 there has been a 33 per cent increase in the electorate of Worcester. The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3 per cent from 72,265 to 74,817 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects the growth to be evenly distributed throughout the city. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council Size

34 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.

35 Worcester City Council presently has 36 members. The City Council proposed a council of 35 members which would comprise 27 members from the east side of the river and eight members from the west side, based on Option A of its local consultation document. The Liberal Democrats proposed a 34-member council representing 15 wards, generally based on Option C of the Council's consultation document. They proposed that 25 councillors represent the east side of the city, thereby under-allocating by one councillor its entitled representation, and that nine councillors represent the west side of the city, thereby over-allocating by one councillor its entitled representation. A local resident proposed the retention of a 36-member council, with a mixture of two- and three-member wards but over-allocated the number of councillors for the west side of the city and under-allocated the number of councillors for the east side.

36 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 35 members.

Electoral Arrangements

37 We have considered all the representations received during Stage One. The Liberal Democrat's scheme, although resulting in some improvements in electoral equality, was based on a 34-member council that did not achieve the correct allocation of councillors between different parts of the city. Nor did it achieve acceptable electoral equality in all areas. Consequently, we are not adopting the Liberal Democrat's scheme as the basis of our draft recommendations. The 36-member scheme proposed by a local resident also misallocated councillors and as a result we have not adopted these proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

38 In view of the near-unanimous support given to the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise that it undertook with interested parties, we have based our recommendations on the City Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to further improve electoral equality and bearing in mind local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the City Council's proposals in four areas. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) East of the River Severn – the wards of All Saints, Claines, Holy Trinity, Nunnery, St Barnabas, St Martin, St Nicholas, St Peter and St Stephen.
- (b) West of the River Severn – the wards of Bedwardine, St Clement and St John.

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

East of the River Severn

The wards of All Saints, Claines, Holy Trinity, Nunnery, St Barnabas, St Martin, St Nicholas, St Peter and St Stephen.

40 These three-member wards lie on the eastern side of the River Severn. St Martin ward includes Warndon parish and St Peter ward covers the parish of St Peter The Great County. The remaining area is unparished. All Saints ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 24 per cent (18 per cent by 2006), Claines ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 10 per cent (12 per cent by 2006), Holy Trinity ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 29 per cent (31 per cent by 2006) and Nunnery ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 16 per cent (15 per cent by 2006). St Barnabas ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 30 per cent (31 per cent by 2006), St Martin ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 106 per cent (107 per cent by 2006), St Nicholas ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 18 per cent (14 per cent by 2006), St Peter ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 48 per cent (46 per cent by 2006) and St Stephen ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 12 per cent (11 per cent by 2006).

41 The City Council proposed that the existing All Saints ward should form a new three-member City Centre ward with those parts of the existing St Nicholas ward that comprise the MD and ME polling districts. It would also include part of KD polling district, generally the area around Bath Road, from the existing St Peter ward. The Council further proposed that the existing Claines ward be modified slightly to include part of the existing St Stephen ward, that part of polling district EB generally around the Barbourne Brook and Bilford Road area, to form a new three-member Claines ward. The Council also proposed that the existing Holy Trinity ward be divided between a new two-member Gorse Hill ward and a modified three-member Nunnery ward. The whole of the existing Holy Trinity ward, except the HD polling district, would join part of the existing St Martin ward, that part generally between Windermere Drive and Cotswold Way, in the proposed Gorse Hill ward. The proposed Nunnery ward would comprise the whole of the existing Nunnery ward and, as mentioned previously, part of the existing Holy Trinity ward, the whole of HD polling district, generally the area around the western end of Newtown Road.

42 The City Council proposed that the existing St Barnabas ward retain its current boundaries but be renamed Rainbow Hill ward and be represented by two-members. The Council further proposed that the existing St Martin ward be divided between four new wards: Gorse Hill ward (as mentioned above), Old Warndon ward, Warndon Villages North ward and Warndon Villages South ward. The proposed two-member Old Warndon ward would comprise the unparished part of the existing St Martin ward to the east of Warndon parish and to the north of Brickfields Road, while the parish of Warndon would be divided between two district wards: a two-member Warndon Villages North ward, and a two-member Warndon Villages South ward. Trotshill Lane West and Trotshill Lane East would generally form the boundary between these two wards. As mentioned above, it is proposed that part of the existing St Nicholas ward form part of the proposed City Centre ward. The remaining part of St Nicholas

ward would then form part of the proposed two-member Arboretum ward with part of the existing St Stephen ward, generally the area between St Georges Lane North and Sunnyside Road. The Council finally proposed for this area that the existing St Peter ward be divided between a new two-member St Peter's Parish ward and a new two-member Battenhall ward. The proposed St Peter's Parish ward would be coterminous with the parish of St Peter the Great County, while the proposed Battenhall ward would comprise the remaining part of the existing St Peter's Parish ward less, as previously mentioned, those parts being transferred to the proposed City Centre ward.

43 The Liberal Democrats proposed a scheme for the east of the river based on a council size of 34 but under-allocated the number of councillors for this area. Michael Foster MP put forward a scheme which mirrored that of the City Council's, while Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines supported the Council's scheme. A local resident submitted a proposal based on a council size of 36 that did not provide for a correct allocation of councillors for this area, while another local resident supported the Council's scheme for this area.

44 Warndon Parish Council proposed that Warndon Villages North ward be renamed Warndon Parish North ward and that Warndon Villages South ward be renamed Warndon Parish South ward.

45 After careful consideration we are adopting the City Council's scheme for this area as part of our draft recommendations, with minor modifications in three areas to improve electoral equality and community identity. We propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Claines ward and the proposed St Stephen ward so that it would run to the west of the Blackpole Industrial Estate. We also propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Gorse Hill ward and the proposed Old Warndon ward so that it would run parallel to the eastern side of Elbury Mount School northwards to Windermere Drive. We further propose modifying the southern boundary of the proposed Warndon South Parish ward to include the northern tip of the proposed Nunnery ward north of Newtown Road and the area west of Linksvie Crescent. We are also adopting Warndon Parish Council's alternative ward names of Warndon Parish North ward and Warndon Parish South ward.

46 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Arboretum ward would be 3 per cent above the city average (6 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent above the city average in Battenhall ward (no change by 2006), 4 per cent below the city average in City Centre ward (4 per cent above the city average by 2006), 2 per cent above the city average in Claines ward (equal to the city average by 2006), 2 per cent above the city average in Gorse Hill ward (1 per cent below the city average by 2006) and 7 per cent below the city average in Nunnery ward (no change by 2006). The number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the city average in Old Warndon ward (6 per cent by 2006), 2 per cent above the city average in Rainbow Hill ward (equal to the city average by 2006), 4 per cent above the city average in St Peter's Parish ward (2 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent below the city average in St Stephen ward (equal to the city average by 2006), 6 per cent below the city average in Warndon Parish North ward (no change by 2006) and 3 per cent below the city average in Warndon Parish South ward (equal to the city average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

West of the River Severn

The wards of Bedwardine, St Clement and St John.

47 These three-member wards lie on the unparished western side of the River Seven. Bedwardine ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 10 per cent (no change by 2006), St Clement ward is currently under-represented with an electoral variance of 7 per cent (5 per cent by 2006) and St John is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 12 per cent (15 per cent by 2006).

48 The City Council proposed that the existing Bedwardine ward join part of the existing St John ward, generally that part south-west of the Hereford-Worcester railway line (part of AE polling district), in a new three-member Bedwardine ward. The Council's proposed St John ward would comprise those parts of the existing St John ward that would not form part of the new Bedwardine ward and those parts of the existing St Clement ward south of Oldbury Road and west of Comer Road. It also proposed a new two-member St Clement ward, comprising the remainder of St Clement ward. These proposals formed part of the Council's Option A scheme and under them the number of electors per councillor in Bedwardine ward would be 1 per cent above the city average (1 per cent below the city average by 2006), 5 per cent above the city average in St Clement ward (5 per cent below the city average by 2006) and 6 per cent above the city average in St John ward (10 per cent by 2006).

49 The City Council also submitted an alternative proposal for this area, providing for four two-member wards. The existing Bedwardine ward would form a modified Bewardine ward, minus CD polling district that would be included in a new St John East ward. The proposed St John East ward would also comprise part of the existing St Clement ward, generally to the north of the Hereford-Worcester railway line, and part of the existing St John ward to the south of the railway line. The remaining part of the existing St John ward would form part of a new St John West ward, together with those parts of the existing St Clement ward generally to the west of Hampton Close and Laugherne Road. The remaining part of St Clement ward would form a new College ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the city average in Bedwardine ward (4 per cent by 2006), 3 per cent above the city average in St John East ward (1 per cent by 2006), 7 per cent in St John West ward (10 per cent by 2006) and 2 per cent above the city average in College ward (7 per cent below the city average by 2006).

50 The Liberal Democrats proposed a scheme for this area based on a council size of 34 but over-allocated the number of councillors for this area. Michael Foster MP supported proposals for four two-member wards for the west side, while Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines supported the City Council's Option A scheme for this area. A local resident submitted a proposal based on a council size of 36 that did not provide for a correct allocation of councillors for this area, while another local resident supported the Council's alternative scheme for this area.

51 After careful consideration we are adopting the City Council's Option A scheme for this area as part of our draft recommendations, with one minor modification to improve electoral equality and community identity.

52 We consider that the Council's Option A provides for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The alternative scheme does not provide for acceptable electoral equality and we were concerned that it did not command the same degree of support as Option A. Nevertheless, we propose modifying slightly the proposed boundary between the proposed wards of St Clement and St John. After visiting the area we propose that the Hereford-Worcester railway line should form the south-eastern boundary of St Clements ward, while its western boundary should fall south of Comer Avenue and adjacent to the Recreation Ground. This would provide for improved electoral equality and a more identifiable boundary.

53 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bedwardine ward would be 1 per cent above the city average (1 per cent below the city average by 2006), 14 per cent above the city average in St Clement ward (3 per cent by 2006) and equal to the city average in St John ward (5 per cent above the city average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 36 to 35;
- there should be 15 wards;
- the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- we propose that the boundaries between the proposed Claines ward and the proposed St Stephen ward, and the proposed Gorse Hill ward and the proposed Old Warndon ward be modified.
- we further propose that the boundaries between the proposed St Clement ward and the proposed St John ward, and the proposed Warndon Parish South ward and the proposed Nunnery ward be modified.
- the proposed wards of Warndon Villages North and Warndon Villages South should be renamed Warndon Parish North ward and Warndon Parish South ward.

57 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	36	35	36	35
Number of wards	12	15	12	15
Average number of electors per councillor	2,007	2,065	2,078	2,138
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	1	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	4	0

58 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Worcester City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation
 Worcester City Council should comprise 35 councillors serving 15 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inside the back cover.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

59 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. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parish of Warndon to reflect the proposed district wards.

60 The parish of Warndon is currently served by seven councillors and is unwarded. The City Council proposed that the parish be warded to reflect the proposed city ward boundaries. We concur with this proposal and propose the creation of a new North parish ward and a new South parish ward.

Draft Recommendation

Warndon Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North ward (returning three councillors) and South ward (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed city ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map inserted inside the back of this report.

61 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the city.

Draft Recommendation

Parish council elections should continue to take place at the same time as elections for the city ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Worcester

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

62 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Worcester 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 District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

63 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Worcester City 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

www.lgce.gov.uk

64 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, 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 A: 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.