

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Worcester City

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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



## WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Worcester.



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of the City of Worcester's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 February 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing 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 city 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 58-59) are that:

- **Worcester City Council should have 35 councillors, one fewer 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 city councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 13 of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in no wards expected to vary by more than 6 per cent from the average for the city in 2006.**

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

- **Revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parish of Warndon.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 10 September 2002:

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

*Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
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	Cathedral	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	Rainbow Hill	2	St Barnabas ward
9	St Clement	2	St Clement ward (part)
10	St John	3	St Clement ward (part); St John ward (part)
11	St Peter's Parish	2	St Peter ward (part)
12	St Stephen	2	Claines ward (part); St Stephen ward (part)
13	Warndon	2	St Martin 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 Worcester 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: Final 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	Cathedral	3	5,933	1,978	-4	6,653	2,218	4
5	Claines	3	6,335	2,112	2	6,550	2,183	2
6	Gorse Hill	2	4,224	2,112	2	4,226	2,113	-1
7	Nunnery	3	5,756	1,919	-7	6,222	2,074	-3
8	Rainbow Hill	2	4,226	2,113	2	4,277	2,139	0
9	St Clement	2	4,663	2,332	13	4,352	2,176	2
10	St John	3	6,281	2,094	1	6,753	2,251	5
11	St Peter's Parish	2	4,311	2,156	4	4,370	2,185	2
12	St Stephen	2	4,072	2,036	-1	4,167	2,084	-3
13	Warndon	2	3,857	1,929	-7	4,023	2,012	-6
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	4,007	2,004	-6
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>72,265</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>74,817</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,065</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,138</b>	<b>-</b>

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 City. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Worcester. The six districts in Worcestershire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Worcester's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1976 (Report no.171). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Worcester City was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so 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.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Worcester City is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Worcester City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the district, the Member of Parliament with a constituency in the district, the Members of the

European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It 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 representations, the end of Stage One, was 22 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 February 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Worcester City* and ended on 22 April 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 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.

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

12 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.

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

14 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 and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 12 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city 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 city average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Worcester*

Table 3: 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
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72,265</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>74,817</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,007</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,078</b>	<b>-</b>

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 relatively under-represented by 106 per cent, while electors in St Barnabas ward were relatively over-represented by 30 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received seven representations, including a city-wide scheme from Worcester City Council, and representations from Worcester City Liberal Democrats, an MP, a parish council, Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines and two local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Worcester City*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on Worcester City Council's proposals, which improved electoral equality, and provided a mix of two-member and three-member wards for the city. However, it moved away from the City Council's scheme in a number of areas. It proposed that:

- Worcester City Council should be served by 35 councillors, compared with the current 36, representing 15 wards, three more than at present;
- the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundary;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Warndon parish.

**Draft Recommendation**

Worcester City Council should comprise 35 councillors, serving 15 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 15 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2006.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received ten representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Worcester City Council.

### **Worcester City Council**

19 The City Council generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed four minor modifications.

20 It proposed that those electors in the Blackpole Industrial Estate should remain part of Claines ward rather than transfer to St Stephen ward, and reiterated its proposed Stage One boundary between Warndon Parish South ward and Nunnery ward. It also proposed that the whole of Comer Road should be placed in St John ward, and that City Centre ward and Old Warndon ward should be renamed as Cathedral ward and Warndon ward respectively.

### **Members of Parliament**

21 Michael Foster MP generally supported the draft recommendations but opposed proposals for Battenhall ward. He also proposed that the area to the west of the river be represented by four wards.

### **Parish Councils**

22 Warndon Parish Council supported the draft recommendations but proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Warndon Parish South and Nunnery ward. It also proposed an increase in parish council representation for North parish ward from three councillors to four councillors.

### **Other Representations**

23 A further seven representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations from local political groups, councillors and residents. Worcester Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations but suggested that the Blackpole Industrial Estate remain part of Claines ward. Worcester City Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations for the existing All Saints ward and the proposed Battenhall ward. Worcester Constituency Labour Party generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the area to the west of the river be represented by four wards.

24 Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines, in a joint submission, generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed that those electors in the Blackpole Industrial Estate area remain in Claines ward. Councillor Rowden generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the existing boundary between Warndon Parish South ward and Nunnery ward remain as proposed by the Council, while the Blackpole Industrial Estate should remain in Claines ward. He also proposed that the whole of Comer Road should be part of St John ward and that the wards of City Centre and Old Warndon be renamed as Cathedral ward and Warndon ward respectively. One local resident opposed the proposals for the Blackpole Industrial Estate, while one local resident opposed the transfer of part of St Peter's ward to City Centre ward.



## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

25 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Worcester is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

26 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

27 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.

28 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be 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**

29 Since 1975 there has been a 33 per cent increase in the electorate of Worcester. At Stage One 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. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

30 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### **Council Size**

31 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

32 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted the Council's proposal for a 35-member council given its near-unanimous support and its achievement in meeting the statutory criteria in a satisfactory manner.

33 During Stage Three no detailed comments were received in relation to council size and we therefore confirm the draft recommendation as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

34 As set out in the draft recommendations report, the LGCE carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council proposals, and the exemplary consultation exercise which it undertook, the LGCE concluded that it should base the draft recommendations on the City Council's scheme. However, in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would better adhere to the statutory criteria, the LGCE proposed moving away from the City Council's proposals with regards to the proposed wards of Claines, Gorse Hill, Nunnery, Old Warndon, St Clement, St John, St Stephen and Warndon Parish South.

35 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. 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.

36 Details of our final 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.**

37 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).

38 At Stage One the City Council proposed that the existing All Saints ward should form a new three-member City Centre ward with part of the existing St Nicholas ward. The Council further proposed that the existing Claines ward should be modified slightly to include part of the existing St Stephen ward to form a new three-member Claines ward. The Council also proposed that the existing Holy Trinity ward should be divided between a new two-member

Gorse Hill ward and a modified three-member Nunnery ward. The proposed Nunnery ward should comprise the whole of the existing Nunnery ward and, as mentioned previously, part of the existing Holy Trinity ward.

39 The City Council also proposed that the existing St Barnabas ward should 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, Old Warndon ward, Warndon Villages North ward and Warndon Villages South ward. As mentioned above, it proposed that part of the existing St Nicholas ward should 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. The Council finally proposed for this area that the existing St Peter ward should 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 should be coterminous with the parish of St Peter the Great County, while the proposed Battenhall ward should 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.

40 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.

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

42 After careful consideration the LGCE adopted the City Council's scheme for this area as part of its draft recommendations, with minor modifications in three areas to improve electoral equality. The LGCE proposed 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 which would then be included in St Stephen ward. The LGCE also proposed 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. The LGCE further proposed 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 in Warndon South Parish ward. The LGCE also adopted Warndon Parish Council's alternative ward names of Warndon Parish North ward and Warndon Parish South ward.

43 Under the LGCE's 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 (1 per cent above 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 (7 per cent below 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 (6 per cent below by 2006) and 3 per cent below the city average in Warndon Parish South ward (equal to the city average by 2006).

44 At Stage Three the City Council supported the draft recommendations for this area but was opposed to the modifications made to its initial scheme by the LGCE. The Council further proposed that City Centre ward and Old Warndon ward should be renamed as Cathedral ward and Warndon ward respectively to better reflect community identity.

45 Worcester City Liberal Democrats generally opposed the draft recommendations, particularly the modification of the existing All Saints and Battenhall wards. Worcester Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations but proposed that Blackpole Industrial Estate remain in Claines ward. Worcester Constituency Labour Party generally supported the draft recommendations but opposed proposals to move part of Battenhall ward, the area around Woolhope Road and Bolton Road, to City Centre ward. It also endorsed the City Council's ward renaming proposals.

46 Warndon Parish Council supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the boundary between Warndon Parish South ward and Nunnery ward be modified so that it runs along Newtown Road rather than through Linksvie Crescent. Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines also supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the Blackpole Industrial Estate remain in Claines ward. Councillor Rowden supported the draft recommendations but also proposed that Blackpole Industrial Estate remain in Claines ward, and that City Centre ward and Old Warndon ward be renamed Cathedral ward and Warndon ward respectively. Michael Foster MP generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed that the area around Woolhope Road and Bolton Road remain in Battenhall ward. One local resident generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed that Blackpole Industrial Estate remain in Claines ward, while another local resident opposed the transfer of part of the existing St Peter's ward to the City Centre ward.

47 We have carefully considered the submissions received at Stage Three and are pleased to note the general support the draft recommendations received. Given the views of local people we concur that the Blackpole Industrial Estate should remain in Claines ward to better reflect community identity. We have also been persuaded that the boundary between the wards of Nunnery and Warndon Parish South should be modified. This would have a minimal impact on the good electoral equality achieved by the draft recommendations, resulting in an electoral variance of 6 per cent for Warndon Parish South ward by 2006, and would enhance community identity. We have not been persuaded, though, to modify the draft recommendations in respect of the proposed Battenhall and City Centre wards given that no evidence was sent in support of the proposals and the lack of consultation behind them. We do concur, however, that City Centre ward be renamed Cathedral ward and Old Warndon ward be renamed Warndon ward in the light of comments received.

48 Given the general level of support the draft recommendations received at Stage Three, we are generally confirming the draft recommendations as final save for the modifications outlined above. The levels of electoral equality for the Arboretum, Cathedral, Gorse Hill, Rainbow Hill, St Peter's Parish, Warndon and Warndon Parish North wards would remain the same as under the draft recommendations. However, the number of electors per councillor in the modified Claines ward would be 2 per cent above the city average (2 per cent above the city average by 2006), 7 per cent below the city average in Nunnery ward (3 per cent by 2006), 1 per cent below the city average in St Stephen ward (3 per cent by 2006) and 3 per cent below the city average in Warndon Parish South ward (6 per cent below the city average by 2006). Our final recommendations 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.**

49 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).

50 At Stage One the City Council proposed an enlarged Bedwardine ward comprising the whole of the existing ward and part of St John ward in a new three-member Bedwardine ward. The Council also proposed that the remainder of St John ward would then form part of a modified St John ward with 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 one of the Council's initial consultation schemes 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). Councillors Drinkwater, Jones and Staines supported the City Council's scheme for this area.

51 At Stage One 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 Bedwardine 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 and part of the existing St John ward. The remaining part of the existing St John ward would form part of a new St John West ward, together with parts of the existing St Clement ward. 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). Michael Foster MP and a local resident also supported proposals for four two-member wards for the west side.

52 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. 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.

53 After careful consideration the LGCE adopted the City Council's official scheme for this area as part of its draft recommendations, with one minor modification to improve electoral equality and community identity. The LGCE proposed modifying the boundary between the proposed wards of St Clement and St John.

54 Under the 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.

55 At Stage Three the City Council supported the draft recommendations for this area but proposed that the whole of Comer Road should form part of St John ward rather than St

Clement ward for community identity reasons. Both the Worcester Constituency Labour Party and Michael Foster MP reiterated proposals for four wards for the west side of the city.

56 We have carefully considered the submissions received at Stage Three and are pleased to note the general support the draft recommendations received. We concur that the whole of Comer Road should be form part of St John ward given that the proposal affects only around 50 electors and would not significantly worsen electoral equality. However, we have not been persuaded to move to a pattern of four wards given that no new evidence was presented in support of this proposal at Stage Three.

57 Given the general level of support the draft recommendations received at Stage Three, we are generally confirming the draft recommendations as final save for the modification outlined above. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bedwardine ward would be 1 per cent above the city average in Bedwardine ward (1 per cent below the city average by 2006), 13 per cent above the city average in St Clement ward (2 per cent by 2006) and 1 per cent above the city average in St John ward (5 per cent by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

58 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

## **Conclusions**

59 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose that the boundaries between the proposed Claines ward and the proposed St Stephen ward, the proposed Nunnery ward and the proposed Warndon Parish South ward and the proposed St Clement ward and St John ward be modified;
- we further propose that the wards of City Centre and Old Warndon should be renamed Cathedral ward and Warndon ward.

60 We conclude that, in Worcester:

- 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.

61 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

*Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final 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	5	0	4	0

62 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to one, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the city average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

**Final 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 in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover.

## **Parish Council Electoral Arrangements**

63 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable 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 should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Warndon parish to reflect the proposed city wards.

64 The parish of Warndon is currently served by seven councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One the City Council proposed that the parish be warded to reflect the proposed city ward boundaries. The LGCE concurred with this proposal and proposed the creation of a new North parish ward (to be represented by three councillors) and a new South parish ward (to be represented by four councillors).

65 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, Warndon Parish Council proposed that North parish ward be represented by four councillors. No further comments were received in relation to parish warding matters.

66 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed city wards in the area, we confirm, with one minor modification, the draft recommendation for warding Warndon parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Warndon Parish Council should comprise eight councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: North ward (returning four 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.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Worcester*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

67 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Worcester and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

68 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 10 September 2002.

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

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**