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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Bromsgrove District Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
27 March 2012	Consultation on council size
20 June 2012	Information gathering – invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
29 August 2012	LGBCE’s analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
13 November 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
8 January 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Single-member ward review request

In February 2011, the Council wrote to the Commission requesting an electoral review and informed us that members had passed a resolution for a single-member ward review. There is a presumption in legislation that the Commission should agree to such requests and seek to provide a uniform pattern of single-member wards across the authority. The Commission agreed to the request and we have provided for such a pattern of wards as part of our draft recommendations.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Bromsgrove District Council has forecast an increase in electorate of approximately 7% across the district by 2018. The Council indicated some significant growth on the edge of Bromsgrove town, particularly the Perryfields development between the town and M5. The Council also indicated significant housing development in the Cofton area.

We are broadly satisfied that the electoral forecasts supplied are the best available at this time and these form the basis of our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove.

Council size

Bromsgrove District Council currently has a council size of 39 councillors. We received 20 submissions during our consultation on council size. The Conservative Group proposed a reduction to 31 members. The Labour Group on the Council supported an increase in council size to 43 or 44 members. Wythall Residents' Association favoured a reduction to 36 councillors.

We considered that sufficient evidence had been provided by the Council in support of a council size of 31. Therefore, we invited representations on warding arrangements based on a 31-member council. We later amended this to 32 councillors, in order to provide for a warding pattern for the district which results in a better balance between the statutory criteria.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during the consultation on warding pattern, we have developed proposals for our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove based on the submission from the District Council. However, in some areas of the district we have put forward our own proposals to better reflect our statutory criteria.

Our draft recommendations provide for a 32-member council with 32 single-member wards. Only one ward is forecast to have a variance of more than 10% from the district average by 2018.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comments on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove contained in the report. **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.** We will take into account all submissions received by **7 January 2013**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

Review Officer
Bromsgrove Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

You can also view our draft recommendations for the Bromsgrove District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review the electoral arrangements of Bromsgrove District Council, following a request by the Council and to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Bromsgrove District Council and other interested parties inviting the submission of proposals on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for the Council in spring 2013.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Bromsgrove?

6 We decided to conduct this review following the Council's request for a review in February 2011. Additionally, the latest electorate data shows that 13% of Bromsgrove's wards have electoral variances of more than 10% from the average for the district. Of these, the largest variances are in Charford and Furlongs wards, which have variances of 27% and -11%, respectively.

7 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allows a local authority that holds whole-council elections every four years to request an electoral review with the presumption of delivering single-member wards or divisions.

8 Bromsgrove District Council submitted a request that we undertake a single-member ward review. The Commission agreed to the request. The legislation makes clear that, when conducting such a review, we must continue to have regard to the statutory criteria that governs all electoral reviews, outlined in Chapter Two. This, in

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

effect, means that we are not required to recommend a uniform pattern of single-member wards if to do so would conflict with the statutory criteria.

How will the recommendations affect you?

9 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve in the district. They will also decide which ward you vote in and which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

10 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we therefore stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will accept comments and views until 7 January 2013. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations, which we are due to publish in spring 2013. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 19 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

11 You can also view our draft recommendations for the Bromsgrove on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

12 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

13 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove District Council ('the Council') we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

14 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector's vote being worth the same as another's. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

15 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

16 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

17 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between district wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single district ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

18 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Bromsgrove District or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

19 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited the Council and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 20 submissions relating to council size and five submissions during consultation on warding patterns, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

20 Bromsgrove District Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our recommendations. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% over this period.

21 Forecast growth varied by area but was particularly high in the area to the immediate west of Bromsgrove town and the Cofton area. The Council forecast a significant increase in electorate to the west of Bromsgrove town due to the Perryfields development. We have received details on this development including the full extent of planning permission and developers' plans. We are broadly satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove.

Council size

22 The Council currently has 39 councillors elected from eight single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and one three-member ward. At the beginning of the review, we met Council officers and elected members to discuss council size. The Conservative Group on the Council made a submission for a council size of 31 while the Labour Group on the Council proposed a council size of either 43 or 44. Wythall Residents' Association proposed a council size of 36. Having considered the evidence received, we consulted on the basis of reducing the council size to 31 members.

23 Neither the Labour Group nor Wythall Residents' Association supported a reduction to 31 members. The Labour Group and the Residents' Association made a joint submission to this consultation but provided no alternative council size. In their joint submission they note that the scrutiny function of the council had changed recently, with several boards being combined. They were concerned that the increased workload for members on the scrutiny boards would mean that only a small number of councillors would have the time to sit on these boards.

24 Bromsgrove Liberal Democrats proposed a 36-member council, made up of 18 two-member wards. They favoured two-member wards on the principle that they could allow for a back-up if one councillor was unwell, and to give constituents an alternative point of contact.

25 Councillor Scurrall (Hagley) stated that members have ‘onerous’ workloads presently. He considered that reducing the membership of the Council would increase member workloads further, and dissuade people from standing for election. He favoured retaining the existing number of councillors.

26 Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council was concerned that a reduction in council size and a uniform pattern of single-member wards would result in the parish being included in a larger ward than at present. The Parish Council considered this might impact on members effectively representing parishes. The parish supported a reduction in council size but wanted to preserve the system of multi-member and single-member wards.

27 Alvechurch Parish Council did not favour a reduction to 31 members. It highlighted the increased workload for district councillors due to the Localism agenda as a reason that such a reduction would not be in the parish’s best interests. The parish supported a smaller reduction of up to four members. The parish also opposed single-member wards, on the grounds that the parish’s link with the district council could be weakened if there was only one councillor covering the ward.

28 Wythall Parish Council and Bournheath Parish Council both supported the proposed reduction in council size to 31 members. Wythall Parish Council argued that district councillors could easily communicate with their increased ward size due to modern communications technology.

29 We also received submissions from eleven local residents, and from a local organisation. The local residents were generally in favour of our proposed reduction – three residents favoured a reduction to 23, with a single member to represent each of the Council’s existing 23 wards. One local resident proposed a smaller reduction, to 37 members, while another favoured having only single-member wards because of the ‘confusing’ nature of multi-member wards, and highlighted the money that could be saved and spent better in other places by reducing the council size. Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum favoured the reduction to 31 members.

30 Having considered the evidence received, we were minded to adopt a council size of 31 and invited proposals for warding patterns based on this number of councillors.

31 We explained to all interested parties from the outset that the council size figure adopted at this stage of the review provided context for local stakeholders to submit their views on the wider electoral arrangements. We also explained that this council size figure could be slightly adjusted in order to provide for warding patterns that provide a better balance between the statutory criteria.

32 The Council’s proposed warding pattern was for 32 members, and provided for 30 single-member wards and one two-member ward. We investigated whether a warding pattern based on 32 members rather than 31 provided for a warding pattern which better met our criteria. We considered that a warding pattern based on 32 members resulted in a better allocation of councillors between Bromsgrove town and the rural area and would provide for a scheme which would better meet our statutory criteria.

33 We are of the view that such a council size would not impact adversely on the governance arrangements outlined under a council size of 31. Therefore, our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District are based on a council size of 32 members.

Electoral fairness

34 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

35 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we calculate the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (73,133 in 2011 and 78,077 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council – 32 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,285 in 2011 and 2,440 by 2018.

36 Under the draft recommendations, only one of our proposed wards (Romsley) will have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove.

General analysis

37 We received five submissions during the information gathering stage. The Council proposed a wholly uniform pattern of single-member wards apart from a two-member ward, in Rubery, and proposed increasing the council size by one to 32. The other submissions came from a district councillor and three local residents. All of these submissions focused on local areas.

38 The Council's submission was the only one we received which covered the entire district. The submission proposed a two-member ward for Rubery, despite the Council's earlier request for a review that would deliver a uniform pattern of single-member wards.

39 Councillor Scurrall (Hagley) argued that Hagley should comprise a two-member ward or two or three single-member wards and not include the rural area of Clent.

40 Two local residents also referred to Hagley in their submissions. One resident recommended a change to the proposed council size, from 31 to 30, and a system of 15 two-member wards. This was so that Hagley could then comprise a two-member ward. The other local resident also proposed a two-member Hagley ward covering the town, and leaving Clent as a single-member ward.

41 We received and agreed to the Council's request to undertake a review that would deliver a uniform pattern of single-member wards. This, therefore, has been the starting point in the development of our draft recommendations. However, as previously indicated, we are prepared to move away from our draft recommendations

where it can be demonstrated, on a ward-by-ward basis, that a different configuration of wards would better reflect the statutory criteria.

42 Our draft recommendations are for 32 councillors representing 32 single-member wards. A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 23–25) and the map accompanying this report.

43 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly in Bromsgrove town and in the parishes that we propose to split between district wards. We also particularly welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

44 This section of the report details the submissions received, our consideration of them and our draft recommendations for each area of Bromsgrove. The following areas are considered in turn:

- Bromsgrove town (pages 9–11)
- North and West Bromsgrove (pages 11–12)
- Central Bromsgrove (pages 12–13)
- East and South Bromsgrove (pages 13–14)

45 In Bromsgrove we have made significant changes to the Council's proposals in order to have a pattern of wards which would achieve good levels of electoral equality. We have largely based our draft recommendations for the rest of the district on the Council's proposals, and have achieved a uniform pattern of single-member wards for the entire district.

46 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 23–25 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Bromsgrove town

47 Bromsgrove is the major settlement in the district, and sits in the centre of the district with the M5 to its west and M42 to its north. The Council proposed that there should be 11 single-member wards based on the town, which is unparished.

48 The Council's scheme included six wards which were proposed to have electoral variances greater than 10% from the district average by 2018, including one, Perryfields, which would have 24% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. We have therefore made significant amendments to the Council's proposed scheme in the town in order to propose a pattern of wards which meet our statutory criteria.

49 In the south of the town, our draft recommendations are for a Rock Hill ward that is bound to the south-east partly by the A38 and to much of its north-east by Austin Road. The ward also includes some properties from across the B4091, to provide for good electoral equality. This ward has good internal communication links throughout and would have 6% more electors than the district average by 2018.

50 To the north of Rock Hill, our draft recommendations are for a Charford ward. This ward is identical to the one proposed by the Council. It is bound to the south by Austin Road and to the east by the A38, providing two strong boundaries with neighbouring wards. The ward would have good electoral equality, with 2% more electors than the district average by 2018, and would reflect existing community identities.

51 To the east of Charford, our draft recommendations are for an Aston Fields ward. This ward is bound to its east by a railway line and to its west by the A38, which we consider to be strong boundaries. To ensure good electoral equality for this ward we have included an area of housing which would appear to be part of the Slideslow community. This area comprises Fulton Close, Paxton Close and Roslin Close. This would result in our Aston Fields ward having 8% more electors than the district average by 2018.

52 To the north of Aston Fields, our draft recommendations are for a Slideslow ward. This ward is bound by the railway in the east, the A38 to the west and part of the A448 dual carriageway to the north. This would result in our Slideslow ward having 10% more electors than the district average by 2018.

53 In the middle of the town, our draft recommendations are for a Bromsgrove Central ward. This ward is partly bound to its east by the A38. However, to ensure good electoral equality between this ward and our Aston Fields ward, we have included areas on both sides of the A38 in our Bromsgrove Central ward. We propose including Warwick Hall Gardens, Stonehouse Road, Old Station Road and part of Wellington Road in our Bromsgrove Central ward, to ensure good levels of electoral equality. Our Bromsgrove Central ward would cross the A38. However, given the road layout in this part of the town, our Bromsgrove Central ward would have internal communication links throughout and would have 3% more electors than the district average by 2018.

54 To the north of our Bromsgrove Central ward, our draft recommendations are for Lowes Hill and Norton wards. Our Lowes Hill ward is bound on the west by the B4091, while our Norton ward would include the suburban village of Lickey End and is bound to the north by the M42. In seeking to balance the statutory criteria, and use strong, recognisable boundaries for these wards and other nearby wards, we have proposed that the boundary between these two wards runs between Walton Road and Barnsley Road. We recognise that this is not an ideal boundary. However, given the constraints of achieving good electoral equality while also proposing a single-member ward pattern, we have been unable to find a viable alternative. Our proposed wards of Lowes Hill and Norton would have 9% more and 9% more electors than the district average by 2018, respectively.

55 To the west of Lowes Hill, our draft recommendations are for a Sidemoor ward. This ward is bound by the B4091 to the east and south-east. The ward consists mainly of residential streets, as well as Bromsgrove Meadows First School and Parkside Middle School. The ward would have 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

56 To the west of the town centre, our draft recommendations are for a Sanders

Park ward. This ward includes the main pedestrianised shopping area in the town centre, as well as a number of residential streets. We have proposed including some streets north of the A448 in our Perryfields ward to provide for good levels of electoral equality. Our Sanders Park ward would have a number of electors equal to the district average by 2018.

57 To the north of Sanders Park, our draft recommendations are for a Perryfields ward. This area is forecast to have a significant amount of growth in the next six years. The Council forecast that up to 1,307 more electors will be living in this ward by 2018. We also understand that further development will occur on this site beyond 2018. We have been assured by the Council that the Perryfields development has been given full planning consent and we have seen the plans of the developer. As such we are proposing a ward that includes this projected development. Our proposed Perryfields ward would have 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

58 To the south of Sanders Park, our draft recommendations are for a Hill Top ward. This ward mainly consists of streets to the north of Rock Hill road, and a small area to the north of Worcester Road. The ward would have 2% more electors than the district average by 2018.

59 Overall, our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove town are for single-member wards of Aston Fields, Bromsgrove Central, Charford, Hill Top, Lowes Hill, Norton, Perryfields, Rock Hill, Sanders Park, Sidemoor, and Slideslow. None of our proposed wards would have a variance greater than 10% by 2018.

North and West Bromsgrove

60 This area of the district runs from the edge of Bromsgrove town to Hagley in the north-west, to Rubery on the edge of Birmingham.

61 Our draft recommendations are for a Woodvale ward which includes the parishes of Dodford with Grafton and Bournheath, as well as part of Belbroughton parish. The ward covers a rural area, and our ward is identical to the one proposed by the Council. The ward has good communication links throughout, and would have 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

62 To the north-west of Woodvale, our draft recommendations are for a Belbroughton & Clent ward. The Council's proposal for this ward would have had 16% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. This is a higher electoral variance than we would ordinarily recommend, and so we have proposed different warding arrangements to the Council.

63 Our proposed ward has good communication links, with the main north-south access provided by the A491, as well as some minor roads connecting the villages with each other. It would have 8% more electors than the district average by 2018.

64 We received three submissions regarding Hagley and its surrounding area, all of which proposed a two-member ward for Hagley. Councillor Scurrrell (Hagley) favoured keeping the village in one ward, and not having any part of it in a ward with Clent, to the south. However, given the spread of electors in the north-west of the

district, and the need to achieve good electoral equality in neighbouring Belbroughton & Clent, we have proposed two single-member wards in Hagley which result in part of Hagley, to the south-east of Worcester Road (the A456), being included in our Belbroughton & Clent ward. Our proposed Hagley East and Hagley West wards would have 8% fewer and 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2018, respectively.

65 To the east of Hagley, our draft recommendations are for a Romsley ward. This ward would contain the parishes of Romsley, Hunnington, Frankley and part of the parish of Belbroughton. It would have 11% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. We investigated whether the electoral equality of this ward could be further improved. We considered that the Clent Hills provide a natural barrier with the proposed Belbroughton & Clent ward, and the A491 is also a strong barrier. To the south-east of the ward runs the M5 motorway, and there is no direct access to the Rubery area from Romsley. Accordingly, we were unable to find a suitable way of improving electoral inequality while adhering to our other statutory criteria.

66 Overall, our draft recommendations for North and West Bromsgrove are single-member Belbroughton & Clent, Hagley East, Hagley West, Romsley and Woodvale wards. Only one of our proposed wards would have a variance greater than 10% by 2018.

Central Bromsgrove

67 Rubery is effectively a suburb of Birmingham, and is unparished. It is split by the A38 dual carriageway. The Council proposed a two-member ward here, a departure from its requested single-member ward review request. We consider that it is possible to create two single-member wards in Rubery which would meet our statutory criteria.

68 Our draft recommendations are for single-member wards of Rubery North and Rubery South. The A38 forms part of the boundary between them, but to ensure good electoral equality we propose a warding pattern which crosses the A38. We propose that part of the area immediately north of the A38 is included in a Rubery South ward. This boundary would result in our Rubery North and Rubery South wards having 10% more and 1% more electors than the district average by 2018, respectively.

69 To the south of Rubery the Council proposed a Cofton ward, which would have 20% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. Our draft recommendations are for a different ward for Cofton which will provide for a better balance between the criteria. Our proposed ward would comprise the parish of Cofton Hackett, as well as part of Lickey Hills and part of Lickey to the north of the B4096, in Lickey & Blackwell parish.

70 The ward is forecast to have an increase of 428 electors by 2018. This is based on a housing development on the site of the former Longbridge vehicle works. We are satisfied that the development is likely to occur. Our proposed Cofton ward would have 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

71 To the south-west of Cofton, our draft recommendations are for a Lickey Hills

ward which is different from that proposed by the Council. These modifications are in a large part due to the need to provide for good levels of electoral equality in our Cofton ward. We note that the M42 runs through this ward, but consider that it does not impact on communication links, as Linthurst Road goes over the motorway and connects the ward. Our Lickey Hills ward would have 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

72 In the area of Catshill, our draft recommendations are for single-member wards of Catshill North and Catshill South. Aside from a small adjustment in the north of Catshill North ward, these wards are the same as the wards proposed by the Council. The wards would be bordered to the west by the M5 and to the south by the M42. We consider these to be very strong boundaries. Our Catshill North and Catshill South wards would have 6% fewer and 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2018, respectively.

73 To the east of Catshill, our draft recommendations are for a Marlbrook ward. This ward also is almost identical to that proposed by the Council. The ward's southern boundary is the M42, and it contains parts of Bournheath, Catshill & North Marlbrook and Lickey & Blackwell parishes. The ward would have a number of electors equal to the district average by 2018.

74 Overall, our draft recommendations for Central Bromsgrove are single-member Catshill North, Catshill South, Cofton, Lickey Hills, Marlbrook, Rubery North and Rubery South wards. None of our proposed wards would have a variance greater than 10% by 2018.

East and South Bromsgrove

75 The area to the east of Bromsgrove town is divided by the M42 motorway, which provides a strong boundary for some of the proposed wards in this part of the district. This area is made up of mostly rural parishes.

76 We have adopted the Council's proposed Barnt Green & Hopwood ward as part of our draft recommendations. The ward contains the parish of Barnt Green and part of the parish of Alvechurch. It is bound to the south by the M42 motorway and its north-east boundary is with the edge of the district. The ward has good internal communication links between the main areas of population, and would have a number of electors equal to the district average by 2018.

77 To the east of Barnt Green & Hopwood, our draft recommendations are for Wythall West and Drakes Cross wards. These wards are very similar to the wards proposed by the Council, but we have made a slight adjustment to the boundary between the wards in order for it to follow the county division boundary. These wards would have a number of electors equal to the district average, and 5% more electors than the district average respectively by 2018.

78 In the north-east of the district, our draft recommendations are for Hollywood and Wythall East wards. These wards are identical to those proposed by the Council and would have a number of electors equal to the district average, and 1% more electors than the district average respectively by 2018.

79 We are proposing that the village of Alvechurch be split between two wards under our draft recommendations. The Council proposed wards of Alvechurch Village and Alvechurch South. Our draft recommendations are broadly similar to those proposed by the Council in this part of the district. However, we have proposed an amendment to the Council's boundary between the wards. We propose the boundary run along part of Bear Hill as a boundary, which would be a recognisable boundary between the wards. The rural parish of Beoley is also included in the Alvechurch South ward. Our proposed Alvechurch South and Alvechurch Village wards would have 5% fewer and 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2018, respectively.

80 To the east of Bromsgrove town, our draft recommendations are for a Tardebigge ward which contains the parishes of Bentley Pouncefoot, Finstall and Tutnall & Cobley, as well as a small part of the unparished area of Bromsgrove. The area of Bromsgrove town we have included in this ward lies on the other side of the railway line from our Aston Fields ward. Our Tardebigge ward would have 4% fewer electors by 2018.

81 To the west of Tardebigge, our draft recommendations are for an Avoncroft ward which is different to that proposed by the Council for this area. This is mainly due to the modifications we have made to the Council's proposals for Bromsgrove town. Our proposed Avoncroft ward contains much of the parish of Stoke, and contains part of the urban area of Bromsgrove. Although this ward contains both urban and rural elements, we consider that the B4091 Hanbury Road provides a good internal communication link within the ward. Our Avoncroft ward would have 3% more electors than the district average by 2018.

82 Overall, our draft recommendations for East and South Bromsgrove are single-member Alvechurch South, Alvechurch Village, Avoncroft, Barnt Green & Hopwood, Drakes Cross, Hollywood, Tardebigge, Wythall East and Wythall West wards. None of our proposed wards would have a variance greater than 10% by 2018.

Conclusions

83 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2011 and 2018 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2011	2018
Number of councillors	32	32
Number of wards	32	32
Average number of electors per councillor	2,285	2,440
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	12	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Draft recommendation
 Bromsgrove District Council should comprise 32 councillors serving 32 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

84 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

85 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority division arrangements. However, the respective principal authority (the district or borough council in the area) has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

86 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Alvechurch, Belbroughton, Catshill & North Marlbrook, Clent, Hagley, Lickey & Blackwell, Stoke and Wythall. We would particularly welcome comments on these proposals from both the parish councils concerned and local residents during this consultation stage.

87 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Alvechurch parish.

Draft recommendation

Alvechurch Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Alvechurch Village (returning seven members), Hopwood (returning two members) and Rowney Green & Bordesley (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

88 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Belbroughton parish.

Draft recommendation

Belbroughton Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Belbroughton (returning six members), Bell Heath (returning two members) and Fairfield (returning six members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

89 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Catshill & North Marlbrook parish.

Draft recommendation

Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Barley Mow (returning three members), Catshill South (returning five members), Catshill Village (returning three members) and Marlbrook (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

90 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Clent parish.

Draft recommendation

Clent Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Clent East (returning six members) and Clent West (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

91 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Hagley parish.

Draft recommendation

Hagley Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Hagley East (returning six members), Hagley South (returning one member) and Hagley West (returning six members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

92 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Lickey & Blackwell parish.

Draft recommendation

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Lickey (returning one member), Lickey Grange (returning two members) Lickey Monument (returning one member), Linthurst (returning three members) and Shepley (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

93 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Stoke parish.

Draft recommendation

Stoke Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stoke Heath (returning four members), and Stoke Prior (returning eight members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

94 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Wythall parish.

Draft recommendation

Wythall Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Drakes Cross (returning four members), Grimes Hill (returning two members), Headley Heath (returning one member), Hollywood (returning four members), Trueman's Heath (returning two members) and Wythall Heath (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

95 There will now be a consultation period of eight weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove District Council contained in this report. We will fully take into account all submissions received by 7 January 2013. Any submissions received after this date may not be taken into account.

96 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangement. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during our consultation on these draft recommendations. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

97 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Bromsgrove Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, consultation.lgbce.org.uk

98 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations made during consultation will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Bromsgrove District Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

99 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, irrespective of whom they are from.

100 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and 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 the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

101 After the publication of our final recommendations, the review will be implemented by order subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. When made, the draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Bromsgrove District Council in 2015.

102 These draft recommendations have been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Bromsgrove

103 The following map illustrates our proposed ward boundaries for Bromsgrove District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed ward boundaries for Bromsgrove.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove on our interactive maps at consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alvechurch South	1	2,316	2,316	1%	2,327	2,327	-5%
2	Alvechurch Village	1	2,142	2,142	-6%	2,291	2,291	-6%
3	Aston Fields	1	2,645	2,645	16%	2,645	2,645	8%
4	Avoncroft	1	2,524	2,524	10%	2,524	2,524	3%
5	Barnt Green & Hopwood	1	2,279	2,279	0%	2,444	2,444	0%
6	Belbroughton & Clent	1	2,626	2,626	15%	2,626	2,626	8%
7	Bromsgrove Central	1	2,484	2,484	9%	2,503	2,503	3%
8	Catshill North	1	2,295	2,295	0%	2,295	2,295	-6%
9	Catshill South	1	2,201	2,201	-4%	2,351	2,351	-4%
10	Charford	1	2,498	2,498	9%	2,498	2,498	2%
11	Cofton	1	1,829	1,829	-20%	2,257	2,257	-7%

Table A1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Drakes Cross	1	2,552	2,552	12%	2,552	2,552	5%
13	Hagley East	1	1,865	1,865	-18%	2,235	2,235	-8%
14	Hagley West	1	2,309	2,309	1%	2,312	2,312	-5%
15	Hill Top	1	2,050	2,050	-10%	2,498	2,498	2%
16	Hollywood	1	2,434	2,434	7%	2,434	2,434	0%
17	Lickey Hills	1	2,331	2,331	2%	2,331	2,331	-4%
18	Lowes Hill	1	2,648	2,648	16%	2,648	2,648	9%
19	Marlbrook	1	2,439	2,439	7%	2,439	2,439	0%
20	Norton	1	2,077	2,077	-9%	2,671	2,671	9%
21	Perryfields	1	948	948	-59%	2,255	2,255	-8%
22	Rock Hill	1	2,588	2,588	13%	2,588	2,588	6%
23	Romsley	1	2,162	2,162	-5%	2,162	2,162	-11%
24	Rubery North	1	2,696	2,696	18%	2,696	2,696	10%

Table A1 (cont.): Draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25	Rubery South	1	2,476	2,476	8%	2,476	2,476	1%
26	Sanders Park	1	2,437	2,437	7%	2,437	2,437	0%
27	Sidemoor	1	2,348	2,348	3%	2,349	2,349	-4%
28	Slideslow	1	2,683	2,683	17%	2,683	2,683	10%
29	Tardebigge	1	1,997	1,997	-13%	2,334	2,334	-4%
30	Woodvale	1	1,815	1,815	-21%	2,302	2,302	-6%
31	Wythall East	1	2,332	2,332	2%	2,474	2,474	1%
32	Wythall West	1	2,107	2,107	-8%	2,440	2,440	0%
	Totals	32	73,133	–	–	78,077	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,285	–	–	2,440	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bromsgrove District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward 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.

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral

	reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward

	they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council