

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Walsall

Report to The Electoral Commission

May 2003

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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
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
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.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Walsall in the West Midlands.

Summary

We began a review of Walsall's electoral arrangements on 4 December 2001. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 22 October 2002, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

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

- **in nine of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in nine wards and by more than 20% in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 70-71) are that:

- **Walsall Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified and two wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the borough in all wards in 2006.**

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 24 June 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Aldridge Central & South	3	Part of Aldridge Central & South ward; part of Hatherton Rushall ward; part of Streetly ward	2 and 4
2	Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	3	Part of Aldridge North & Walsall Wood ward	2
3	Bentley & Darlaston North	3	Part of Bentley & Darlaston North ward; part of Willenhall South ward	3
4	Birchills Leamore	3	Part of Birchills Leamore ward; part of Bloxwich West ward; part of St Matthew's ward	1 and 3
5	Blakenall	3	Blakenall ward; part of St Matthew's ward	1, 2, 3 and 4
6	Bloxwich East	3	Bloxwich East ward; part of Bloxwich West ward; part of Pelsall ward	1
7	Bloxwich West	3	Part of Bloxwich West ward	1
8	Brownhills	3	Part of Brownhills ward	2
9	Darlaston South	3	Part of Bentley & Darlaston North ward; Darlaston South ward; part of Willenhall South ward	3
10	Paddock	3	Part of Paddock Wood ward	4
11	Palfrey	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Palfrey ward)	3 and 4
12	Pelsall	3	Part of Brownhills ward; part of Hatherton Rushall ward; part of Pelsall ward	1 and 2
13	Pheasey Park Farm	3	Part of Aldridge Central & South ward; part of Hatherton Rushall ward; Pheasey ward; part of Paddock Wood ward	4
14	Pleck	3	Part of Birchills Leamore ward; part of Pleck ward	3
15	Rushall–Shelfield	3	Part of Hatherton Rushall ward; part of Pelsall ward	2 and 4
16	St Matthew's	3	Part of Hatherton Rushall ward; part of Pleck ward; part of St Matthew's ward	1 and 3
17	Short Heath	3	Part of Bentley & Darlaston North ward; part of Short Heath ward	3 and 4
18	Streetly	3	Part of Streetly ward	4
19	Willenhall North	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Willenhall North ward)	1 and 3
20	Willenhall South	3	Part of Bentley & Darlaston North ward; part of Willenhall South ward	3

Notes:

- 1 The whole borough is unparished.
- 2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.
- 3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Walsall

	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	Aldridge Central & South	3	10,327	3,442	9	10,006	3,335	7
2	Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	3	10,244	3,415	8	9,982	3,327	7
3	Bentley & Darlaston North	3	9,133	3,044	-4	8,881	2,960	-5
4	Birchills Leamore	3	9,399	3,133	-1	9,260	3,087	-1
5	Blakenall	3	9,072	3,024	-5	8,831	2,944	-5
6	Bloxwich East	3	9,186	3,062	-3	9,025	3,008	-3
7	Bloxwich West	3	9,811	3,270	3	9,520	3,173	2
8	Brownhills	3	9,582	3,194	1	9,330	3,110	0
9	Darlaston South	3	9,458	3,153	-1	9,559	3,186	2
10	Paddock	3	9,487	3,162	0	9,277	3,092	-1
11	Palfrey	3	9,857	3,286	4	9,617	3,206	3
12	Pelsall	3	9,019	3,006	-5	8,805	2,935	-6
13	Pheasey Park Farm	3	8,613	2,871	-9	8,407	2,802	-10
14	Pleck	3	9,493	3,164	0	9,534	3,178	2
15	Rushall–Sheffield	3	9,245	3,082	-3	9,004	3,001	-3
16	St Matthew's	3	9,258	3,086	-3	9,262	3,087	-1
17	Short Heath	3	9,132	3,044	-4	8,887	2,962	-5
18	Streetly	3	10,426	3,475	10	10,229	3,410	10
19	Willenhall North	3	9,616	3,205	1	9,353	3,118	0
20	Willenhall South	3	9,816	3,272	3	9,794	3,265	5
	Totals	60	190,174	-	-	186,563	-	-
	Average	-	-	3,170	-	-	3,109	-

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Walsall. We have now reviewed the seven metropolitan boroughs in the West Midlands as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Walsall. Walsall's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1978 (Report no. 310).

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:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Walsall was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. 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 and town councils in the borough.

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% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of the council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit to the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough/city ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough/city wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 December 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Walsall Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified West Midlands Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 April 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 22 October 2002 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Walsall*, and ended on 16 December 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

11 The borough of Walsall is bounded by Staffordshire to the north and by Birmingham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton to the south. The western part of the borough is made up of the older Black Country towns of Willenhall and Darlaston while the eastern part is more residential in nature. There is a wide range of traditional and new industries spread throughout the borough. The borough benefits from its position on the national motorway network and is within easy reach of both Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre.

12 The electorate of the borough is 190,193 (December 2001). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards.

13 At present each councillor represents an average of 3,170 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will decrease to 3,109 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 20 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and three wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Pheasey ward where each councillor represents 25% fewer electors than the borough average. Moreover, the current allocation of councillors is incorrect. Under the existing council size Pheasey ward is entitled to 2.25 councillors, but is currently represented by 3 councillors.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Walsall

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Wardname	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aldridge Central & South	3	9,956	3,319	5	9,706	3,235	4
2	Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	3	10,259	3,420	8	10,001	3,334	7
3	Bentley & Darlaston North	3	9,852	3,284	4	9,602	3,201	3
4	Birchills Leamore	3	9,622	3,207	1	9,367	3,122	0
5	Blakenall	3	7,799	2,600	-18	7,589	2,530	-19
6	Bloxwich East	3	8,422	2,807	-11	8,272	2,757	-11
7	Bloxwich West	3	11,238	3,746	18	10,971	3,657	18
8	Brownhills	3	9,586	3,195	1	9,338	3,113	0
9	Darlaston South	3	8,743	2,914	-8	8,848	2,949	-5
10	Hatherton Rushall	3	10,313	3,438	8	10,123	3,374	9
11	Paddock	3	10,892	3,631	15	10,653	3,551	14
12	Palfrey	3	9,860	3,287	4	9,626	3,209	3
13	Pelsall	3	11,503	3,834	21	11,221	3,740	20
14	Pheasey	3	7,135	2,378	-25	6,973	2,324	-25
15	Pleck	3	7,253	2,418	-24	7,312	2,437	-22
16	Short Heath	3	9,149	3,050	-4	8,907	2,969	-5
17	St Matthew's	3	8,318	2,773	-13	8,288	2,763	-11
18	Streetly	3	10,878	3,626	14	10,610	3,537	14
19	Willenhall North	3	9,616	3,205	1	9,355	3,118	0
20	Willenhall South	3	9,799	3,266	3	9,781	3,260	5
	Totals	60	190,193	-	-	186,543	-	-
	Average	-	-	3,170	-	-	3,109	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Pheasey ward were relatively over-represented by 25%, while electors in Pelsall ward were relatively under-represented by 21%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

15 During Stage One 11 representations were received, including borough-wide schemes from Walsall Borough Council and Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association, and representations from the Walsall Labour Party, Aldridge-Brownhills Liberal Democrats, St Matthew's Branch Labour Party, a borough councillor, a local committee and four local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Walsall*.

16 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, we proposed modifying the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas. We proposed that:

- Walsall Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors, representing 20 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries.

Draft recommendation

Walsall Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors, serving 20 wards.

17 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 15 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Walsall Borough Council.

Walsall Borough Council

19 The Borough Council generally supported our draft recommendations but proposed a boundary amendment between the proposed Pelsall and Rushall – Sheffield wards and between the proposed Aldridge Central & South and Pheasey wards. It also proposed a number of minor boundary amendments and two ward name changes.

Walsall Labour Local Government Committee

20 Walsall Labour Local Government Committee submitted alternative proposals for the St Matthew's area.

Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats

21 Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats proposed a boundary amendment between the proposed Pelsall and Rushall – Sheffield wards.

Aldridge Brownhills Conservative Association

22 Aldridge Brownhills Conservative Association objected to the proposed Aldridge Central & South ward and proposed that the existing boundary in the south be maintained.

St Matthew's Conservative Ward Committee

23 St Matthew's Conservative Ward Committee supported our draft recommendations.

Other representations

24 A further 10 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from a local committee, a councillor and eight residents. North Walsall Local Committee objected to our draft recommendations for reasons stated at Stage One. Councillor Longhi supported our proposals with regard to the Allens Lane area and submitted identical proposals to those of the Borough Council and Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats with regard to the proposed Pelsall and Rushall – Sheffield wards. A local resident submitted the results of a local consultation regarding the proposed Pheasey ward name, while another local resident submitted a petition regarding the proposed St Matthew's ward. Four local residents commented on the proposed Pheasey ward, while two other local residents commented on the proposed Pelsall ward.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

25 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Walsall is 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 within 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 approximately a 2.5% decrease in the electorate of Walsall borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a decrease in the electorate of approximately 2% from 190,193 to 186,543 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects a general decrease across the majority of the borough. 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. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council’s figures, accepted that they were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

30 We 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 Walsall Borough Council presently has 60 members. The Borough Council and the Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association both proposed a council of 60 members, and we received no alternative proposals regarding council size. The Borough Council stated that it had adopted a cabinet of 10 members, the maximum permitted, and that this would meet 13 times a year along with the possibility of special meetings being called. It stated further that cabinet members were responsible for at least one key council function and that they would also conduct regular meetings with members of staff, partners and stakeholders. In addition the Council stated that it had established five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, served by 10 members for

which Cabinet members are ineligible, a number of Regulatory Committees served by 14 members each and a Standards Committee, as set out in the constitution, which includes a further seven members. It also stated that seven district committees had been established on which all council members would serve and highlighted the other commitments of its members such as the West Midlands Joint Committee, West Midlands Police Authority, the West Midlands Local Government Association, health partnerships and their own surgeries.

32 Given the consensus as to the appropriate council size for Walsall Borough Council, the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

33 At Stage Three we received no specific comments with regard to council size and therefore confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 60 members as final.

Electoral arrangements

34 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we based our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further we proposed minor modifications to the Borough Council's proposals in the Bloxwich area and proposed a boundary amendment in the Aldridge area in order to better reflect community identity.

35 At Stage Three we received objections to our proposals in the St Matthew's area and received proposals for a number of boundary amendments.

36 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Bentley & Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Short Heath, Willenhall North and Willenhall South wards;
- b) Birchills Leamore, Blakenall, Bloxwich East and Bloxwich West wards;
- c) Paddock Wood, Palfrey, Pleck and St Matthew's wards;
- d) Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills, Hatherton Rushall, Pelsall, Pheasey and Streetly wards.

37 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Bentley & Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Short Heath, Willenhall North and Willenhall South wards

38 The five wards of Bentley & Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Short Heath, Willenhall North and Willenhall South are located in the west of the borough and currently have 4% more, 8% fewer, 4% fewer, 1% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average (3% more, 5% fewer, 5% fewer, equal to and 5% more than the borough average in 2006).

39 At Stage One the Borough Council and Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association both proposed an identical warding pattern for the area. They proposed that the current Willenhall North ward be maintained on its current boundaries and proposed a minor amendment between the current Short Heath and Willenhall South wards. They proposed a

minor boundary amendment between the proposed Short Heath and Willenhall South wards. They also proposed that the current Bentley & Darlaston North and Darlaston South wards be substantially maintained upon their current boundaries.

40 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that there appeared to be agreement as to the most appropriate warding arrangements for the area, that the proposals had also received the support of local committees in the area and that they would secure a good level of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore proposed adopting the proposals of the Borough Council and the Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association.

41 Under the draft recommendations the proposed Bentley & Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Short Heath, Willenhall North and Willenhall South wards would initially have 4% fewer, 1% fewer, 4% fewer, 1% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average (5% fewer, 2% more, 5% fewer, equal to the average and 5% more in 2006).

42 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed that the current boundary between the proposed Bentley & Darlaston North and Short Heath wards be retained arguing that this would maintain the unity of an area of open space within the proposed Short Heath.

43 We have carefully considered the proposal of the Borough Council and note that it would not have any effect on electors or electoral equality in the area. We have also been persuaded that this proposal would maintain the unity of the area of open space within the proposed Short Heath ward and have therefore decided that the current boundary between the proposed Bentley & Darlaston and Short Heath wards be maintained. The electoral variances would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

Birchills Leamore, Blakenall, Bloxwich East and Bloxwich West wards

44 The four wards of Birchills Leamore, Blakenall, Bloxwich East and Bloxwich West are located to the north of the centre of the borough and currently have 1% more, 18% fewer, 11% fewer and 18% more electors per councillor than the borough average (equal to, 19% fewer, 11% fewer and 18% more in 2006).

45 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed minimal changes to the current Bloxwich East and Bloxwich West wards. However, in order to address the current imbalances in the area, it proposed transferring the area to the south of Reeves Street and Nursery Road to its proposed Birchills Leamore ward from the current Bloxwich West ward while transferring the area bounded by Somerfield Road, High Street and the eastern part of Nursery Road to its proposed Bloxwich East ward from the current Bloxwich West ward. It also proposed a number of alterations to the current Birchills Leamore ward. It proposed transferring an area north of Wolverhampton Road bounded by the disused Anson Branch Canal, Bentley Lane, Old Birchills and the Walsall Canal to its proposed Pleck ward. It further proposed that part of the current Bloxwich West ward, an area bounded by the Walsall-Hednesford railway line, Leamore Lane, the upper part of Green Lane and a line immediately to the south of Nursery Road, and part of the current St Matthew's ward, an area bounded by the Walsall Canal, the Wyrley & Essington Canal, Bloxwich Road and Stafford Street, Court Way, Blue Lane West and Wolverhampton Street be transferred to its proposed Birchills Leamore ward. It proposed enlarging the current Blakenall ward southwards to incorporate an area bounded by Littleton Street West, Stafford Street, Bloxwich Road (to Pratt's Bridge), the Wyrley & Essington Canal and the Walsall-Hednesford railway line from the current St Matthew's ward in order to address the current imbalance in the area.

46 The Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association proposed that the area bounded by Elmore Green Road and Croxstalls Road and southwards to the east of the railway line in the current Bloxwich West ward be transferred to its proposed Birchills Leamore ward. It

also proposed that the current Bloxwich East ward be maintained on its current boundaries, as well as a reconfigured Birchills Leamore ward and a new Blakenall ward that would include parts of High Heath and Sheffield.

47 We carefully considered the proposals received at Stage One. We were of the view that the Borough Council's proposals would generally reflect the statutory criteria better than the proposals of the Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association. Indeed, we noted that the proposals of the Conservative & Unionist Association would not secure as identifiable ward boundaries as those of the Borough Council, particularly with regard to the proposed Blakenall ward. However, we proposed boundary amendments to the Borough Council's proposed Bloxwich East ward and Bloxwich West and Birchills Leamore wards in order to secure an improved level of electoral equality in the area. We proposed that the area to the south of Reeves Street be transferred to the proposed Bloxwich East ward from the proposed Bloxwich West ward and that Irvine Road and Stuart Street in the proposed Birchills Leamore ward also be transferred to the proposed Bloxwich East ward.

48 Under the draft proposals the proposed Birchills Leamore, Blakenall, Bloxwich East and Bloxwich West wards would initially have 1% fewer, 5% fewer, 3% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average (1% fewer, 5% fewer, 3% fewer and 2% more in 2006).

49 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Bloxwich East and Pelsall wards to follow a water course. It also proposed that the current boundary between the proposed Blakenall and Rushall – Sheffield wards be maintained in order to avoid dividing existing industrial land.

50 We have carefully considered the proposals of the Borough Council. We are content to adopt its proposed boundary between the proposed Bloxwich East and Pelsall wards as we note that this is a minor alteration and would have no effect on electors in the area. However, we propose that the boundary be slightly amended in order to follow ground detail. We also note that its proposals for the proposed Blakenall and Rushall – Sheffield wards would not affect electors in the area, would avoid dividing industrial land and would provide for a more identifiable boundary. We have therefore decided to adopt this minor boundary amendment as part of our final recommendations. The electoral variances would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

Paddock Wood, Palfrey, Pleck and St Matthew's wards

51 The four wards of Paddock Wood, Palfrey, Pleck and St Matthew's are located in the centre and south of the borough and currently have 15% more, 4% more, 24% fewer and 13% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (14% more, 3% more, 22% fewer and 11% fewer in 2006).

52 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifying the current Pleck ward. It proposed that its northern boundary be extended to take in the residential area to the north of the Wolverhampton Road, bounded by the disused Anson Branch Canal, Bentley Lane, Old Birchills and the Walsall Canal. It also proposed transferring the mainly industrial/commercial area bounded by the Walsall Canal, running south from the Flour Mills to Rollingmill and by the railway line into Walsall town centre and Wolverhampton Street from the current Pleck ward to its proposed St Matthew's ward. Its proposed St Matthew's ward retained the current ward boundaries with Palfrey and Paddock Wood wards in the south and south-east of the ward. It further proposed that the boundary of the town centre area itself be revised in order that the commercial and industrial areas of the Premier and Town Wharf business parks, the newly built Crown Wharf retail park and the New Art Gallery and its environs be brought within the St Matthew's ward. The Council further proposed the transfer of the area to the north of Wolverhampton Street, Blue Lane West, Court Way and Littleton Street West to the proposed Birchills Leamore and Blakenall wards (mentioned previously) and the transfer of the area in the

current Hatherton Rushall ward lying south of the Walsall-Sutton Coldfield railway line. It argued that this area has an affinity to Walsall town centre and its facilities.

53 The Borough Council also proposed that the current Paddock Wood ward be reconfigured in order to facilitate its proposals for the area. It proposed that the residential Orchard Hills area be transferred to the proposed Pheasey ward. It also proposed that the current Palfrey ward be maintained on its current boundaries, arguing that the current arrangements reflected community identity.

54 The Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association proposed that St Matthew's ward remain largely unchanged. However, it proposed that an area in the north-west of the current Palfrey ward be transferred to a revised St Matthew's ward and proposed that a small area in the south-west of the current Birchills Leamore ward be transferred to its proposed Pleck ward. It also proposed that the Orchard Hills area of the current Paddock Wood ward be transferred to its proposed Pheasey ward.

55 The Walsall Labour Party objected to the Borough Council's proposals for the Paddock Wood and St Matthew's area. It proposed modifying the proposed St Matthew's and Paddock wards. It proposed that the area to the east of Lichfield Road, north of Buchanan Road, to the east of Princes Avenue and to the south of The Crescent be combined to form a modified Paddock ward, while the areas to the west and south of Lichfield Road, to the south of Buchanan Road, west of Princes Crescent and to the north of The Crescent be combined to form a modified St Matthew's ward. St Matthew's Branch Labour Party also proposed a new Town Centre ward which was almost identical to that of the Walsall Labour Party. North Walsall Local Committee supported the scheme in Appendix D, part of the Borough Council's consultation document which, it argued, left the North Walsall Local Committee's area intact.

56 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that there did not appear to be consensus on how best to ward the town centre area. However, we noted that the proposals of the Walsall Labour Party, St Matthew's Group Labour Party and North Walsall Local Committee isolated the northern and southern parts of the proposed Paddock ward and that there would be no direct links between them. We were of the view that this would not best reflect community identity in the area. While we conceded that the proposals of the Borough Council were not ideal, we stated that we could not view any area in isolation and must consider how the proposals received would affect the area as a whole. In the light of this, we were of the view that the Borough Council's overall proposal for Paddock, Palfrey, Pleck and St Matthew's wards would better reflect the statutory criteria in the area than the alternative proposals received.

57 Under the draft recommendations the proposed Paddock, Palfrey, Pleck and St Matthew's wards would initially have equal to, 4% more, equal to and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (1% fewer, 3% more, 2% more and 1% fewer in 2006).

58 At Stage Three Walsall Labour Local Government Committee proposed a new St Matthew's ward encompassing the town centre area. It proposed that the northern and eastern boundaries of the proposed St Matthew's ward be amended to run along Broadway North. It argued that the current boundary, which we had proposed retaining, divided communities and created planning problems, for example a mosque situated in one ward with car parking in another. It also argued that there was a strong empathy between the Chuckery area and St Matthew's councillors. North Walsall Local Committee stated that for 'reasons previously submitted' it was disappointed with our draft proposals. A local resident submitted a 137-signature petition proposing that the whole of the Chuckery area be included within St Matthew's ward and arguing that part of the area was currently deprived of funding.

59 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We note that Walsall Labour Local Government Committee's proposals would create a new ward centred

around the town centre area and would contain the whole of the Chuckery area within a single ward. However, while we can see the merit of creating a town centre ward that includes the whole of the Chuckery area we note that these proposals would have a significant effect on the neighbouring Paddock ward. As stated in our draft recommendations we noted that alternative options for the area created a Paddock ward comprising two areas with poor links to one another. While the new proposals slightly improve access between the areas we have not been persuaded that they would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We would seek where possible to avoid placing areas with poor links within the same ward and while we have some sympathy with the views of residents in the Chuckery area we cannot view any area in isolation and must look to securing the best arrangements for the area as a whole. We have therefore decided to confirm the proposed Paddock, Pleck, Palfrey and St Matthew's wards as final. The electoral variances would be the same as under our draft recommendations.

Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills, Hatherton Rushall, Pelsall, Pheasey and Streetly wards

60 The seven wards of Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills, Hatherton Rushall, Pelsall, Pheasey and Streetly are located in the east of the borough and currently have 5% more, 8% more, 1% more, 8% more, 21% more, 25% fewer and 14% more electors per councillor than the borough average (4% more, 7% more, equal to, 9% more, 20% more, 25% fewer and 14% more in 2006).

61 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed transferring the area to the east of Ford Brook in the current Pelsall ward to its proposed Hatherton Rushall ward. It also proposed that the agricultural land around Railswood Farm in the current Brownhills ward be transferred to its proposed Pelsall ward and that part of Pelsall Lane as far as and including Burton Avenue be transferred from the current Hatherton Rushall ward to its proposed Pelsall ward. It also proposed that the area to the south of the Walsall-Sutton Coldfield railway line be transferred from the current Hatherton Rushall ward to its proposed St Matthew's ward. It proposed that the current Hatherton Rushall ward name be reviewed in the light of the fact that its proposed ward would now largely cover the Rushall, Shelfield and High Heath areas. The Council proposed to substantially retain the current Brownhills ward subject to the transfer of the agricultural area to its proposed Pelsall ward. It proposed that the existing Aldridge North & Walsall Wood ward be retained on its current boundaries.

62 The Borough Council proposed a number of amendments to the current Aldridge Central & South ward in order to address imbalances in the neighbouring wards of Pheasey and Streetly. It proposed that the area bounded by Longwood Lane, Walsall Road, Bosty Lane, Barr Common, Longwood Road and Sutton Road be transferred to its proposed Pheasey ward while the area bounded by Foley Road West, Wood Lane and Chester Road be transferred from the current Streetly ward to its proposed Aldridge Central & South ward. As mentioned previously, the Borough Council proposed that the Orchard Hills area of the current Paddock Wood ward be transferred to the proposed Pheasey ward.

63 The Aldridge-Brownhills Conservative & Unionist Association proposed that the current Pheasey, Brownhills, Hatherton Rushall and Aldridge North & Walsall Wood wards be largely retained on their current boundaries. Its proposed Aldridge Central & South, Pheasey and Streetly wards were similar to those proposed by the Borough Council. However, it proposed that the southern boundary of the proposed Aldridge Central & South ward be maintained. The Aldridge-Brownhills Liberal Democrats proposed a number of alterations to the Borough Council's outline plans for the area and proposed that the new ward covering part of the current Hatherton Rushall ward be named Rushall–Shelfield ward and that the ward covering the Pheasey area be named Beacon ward. Councillor Longhi submitted a petition numbering 988 signatures objecting to any proposals that would result in the Allens Lane area not being part of

a proposed Pelsall ward. A local resident objected to the Borough Council's proposed Aldridge Central & South, Pheasey and Streetly wards.

64 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We noted that the proposals of the Borough Council achieved a good level of electoral equality and generally reflected the interests of local communities. We also noted that the Borough Council's proposals were amended in the light of the objections to its proposals in the Allens Lane area. We therefore base our draft recommendations in the area on the Council's proposals. However, we were not convinced that the Borough Council's proposed boundary between Aldridge Central & South and Pheasey wards would best reflect the statutory criteria in the area. We therefore proposed to align the boundary to run to the rear of the properties on the southern side of Walsall Road and Bosty Lane and to the rear of the properties on the western side of Barr Common Road and Longwood Road. We noted that electoral equality would worsen slightly in the proposed Aldridge Central & South ward but were persuaded that the statutory criteria would be better reflected by this proposal. We also proposed that the Red House Industrial Estate be wholly contained within the proposed Aldridge Central & South ward. We were also persuaded that the ward name Rushall–Shelfield would be more appropriate than the current Hatherton Rushall ward name but were not persuaded that the proposed Beacon ward name would be more reflective of the area than the current Pheasey ward name. We noted that the Borough Council's proposed Streetly ward would vary by 10% both initially and in 2006. However, we acknowledged that the area is somewhat isolated from the surrounding area and therefore considered that the Borough Council's proposals would best reflect the statutory criteria.

65 Under our draft proposals the proposed Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills, Pelsall, Pheasey, Rushall-Shelfield and Streetly wards would initially have 8% more, 8% more, 1% more, 8% fewer, 9% fewer, equal to and 10% more electors per councillor than the borough average (7% more, 7% more, equal to, 8% fewer, 9% fewer, 1% fewer and 10% more in 2006).

66 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed that Pelsall Lane, including Heathbridge Close and Burton Avenue be transferred to the proposed Rushall–Shelfield ward and that the area to the north of Mill Road and to the west of and including Field Lane be maintained within a Pelsall ward. It proposed that the southern boundary of Aldridge Central & South ward be maintained. It also proposed that Rushall–Shelfield ward be renamed Rushall/Hatherton/Shelfield ward and that the proposed Pheasey ward be renamed Beacon ward. Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats and Councillor Longhi proposed identical boundary amendments to the proposed Pelsall and Rushall–Shelfield wards as those of the Borough Council. Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats received support locally for these proposals, which it argued backed its assertion that 'Pelsall Lane – Burton Avenue residents have strong ties with Rushall and that the residents of the Fordbrook Lane – West Way area have exceptionally strong ties with Pelsall'. It also proposed that Pheasey ward be renamed Pheasey Orchard Hills ward. A local resident, as part of the Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats consultation exercise, also stated that as a Burton Avenue resident they had never felt part of Pelsall and were part of the Rushall community. Aldridge Brownhills Conservative Association proposed that the current boundary between the proposed Aldridge Central & South and Pheasey wards be used. A local resident forwarded the results of a local consultation which showed a majority supporting the proposal that Pheasey ward be renamed Pheasey Park Farm ward.

67 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We note that the proposals of the Borough Council, Aldridge Brownhills Liberal Democrats and Councillor Longhi for Pelsall and Rushall–Shelfield wards have been consulted upon and have secured local support. We also note that, if accepted, the proposals would not significantly affect electoral equality in the area. We have therefore decided to adopt the proposed amendment to the proposed Pelsall and Rushall–Shelfield wards. We have also carefully considered the proposals for the proposed Aldridge Central & South and Pheasey wards and agree that the current

boundary between the wards would provide a more identifiable boundary than that proposed as part of our draft recommendations. We have also considered the proposal that Pheasey ward be renamed Pheasey Park Farm ward. Given the level of local support for this name change, we have decided to adopt it as part of our final recommendations. Conversely, we do not consider that the Borough Council's proposal that the proposed Rushall–Shelfield ward be renamed Rushall/Hatherton/Shelfield would secure local support.

68 Under our final recommendations the proposed Aldridge Central & South, Aldridge North & Walsall Wood, Brownhills, Pelsall, Pheasey Park Farm, Rushall – Shelfield and Streetly wards would initially have 9% more, 8% more, 1% more, 5% fewer, 9% fewer, 3% fewer and 10% more electors per councillor than the borough average (7% more, 7% more, equal to, 4% fewer, 10% fewer, 3% fewer and 10% more in 2006).

Electoral cycle

69 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all metropolitan borough/cities have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

70 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse those draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose minor boundary amendments between the proposed Bentley & Darlaston North and Short Heath, Bloxwich East and Pelsall and Blakenall and Rushall–Shelfield wards;
- we propose boundary amendments to the proposed Pelsall and Rushall–Shelfield and Aldridge Central & South and Pheasey wards;
- we propose that Pheasey ward be renamed Pheasey Park Farm ward.

71 We conclude that, in Walsall:

- there should be a council size of 60, the same as at present;
- there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified.

72 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 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	3,170	3,170	3,109	3,109
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	9	0	9	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	3	0	2	0

73 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from nine to none. This level of electoral equality would continue by 2006, with no wards varying by more than 10% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

Walsall Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Map 2: Final recommendations for Walsall

6 What happens next?

74 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Walsall 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).

75 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 24 June 2003.

76 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**

Fax: 020 7271 0505

**Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk
(This address should only be used for this purpose)**

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Walsall: **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Walsall area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for Walsall.

Map A1: Final recommendations for Walsall: key map

Appendix B

Guide to interpreting the draft of the Statutory Instrument

Preamble

This describes the process by which the Statutory Instrument will be made, and under which powers. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.

Citation and Commencement

This defines the name of the Statutory Instrument and sets the dates on which it will come into force.

Interpretation

This defines terms that are used in the Statutory Instrument.

Wards of the Borough of Walsall

This abolishes the existing wards, and defines the names and areas of the new wards, in conjunction with the map and the Schedule.

Elections of the council of the Borough of Walsall

This sets the date on which a whole council election will be held to implement the new wards, and the dates on which councillors will retire.

Maps

This requires Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

Electoral Registers

This requires Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council to adapt the electoral register to reflect the new wards.

Revocation

This revokes the Statutory Instrument that defines the existing wards, with the exception of any articles that established the system of election by thirds.

Explanatory Note

This explains the purpose of each article. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.

Appendix C

First draft of the electoral change Order for Walsall

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2003 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND

The Borough of Walsall (Electoral Changes) Order 2003

Made - - - - 2003

Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England(a), acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992(b), has submitted to the Electoral Commission(c) recommendations dated May 2003 on its review of the borough(d) of Walsall.

And whereas the Electoral Commission have decided to give effect [with modifications] to those recommendations:

And whereas a period of not less than six weeks has expired since the receipt of those recommendations:

Now, therefore, the Electoral Commission, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by sections 17(e) and 26(f) of the Local Government Act 1992, and of all other powers enabling them in that behalf, hereby make the following Order:

Citation and commencement

- 1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Borough of Walsall (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order shall come into force –
 - (a) For the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on 6th May 2004, on 15th October 2003;

(a) The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.

(b) 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

(c) The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992, to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).

(d) The metropolitan district of Walsall has the status of a borough.

(e) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.

(f) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

- (b) for all other purposes, on 6th May 2004.

Interpretation

2. In this Order –

“borough” means the borough of Walsall;

“existing”, in relation to a ward, means the ward as it exists on the date this Order is made; and

any reference to the map is a reference to the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Walsall (Electoral Changes) Order 2003”, of which prints are available for inspection at –

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
(b) the offices of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council.

Wards of the borough of Walsall

3.—(1) The existing wards of the borough(a) shall be abolished.

- (2) The borough shall be divided into twenty wards which shall bear the names set out in the Schedule.
- (3) The wards shall comprise the areas designated on the map by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by red lines; and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward shall be three.
- (4) Where a boundary is shown on the map as running along a road, railway line, footway, watercourse or similar geographical feature, it shall be treated as running along the centre line of the feature.

Elections of the council of the borough of Walsall

4.—(1) Elections of all councillors for all wards of the borough shall be held simultaneously on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004(b)(c).

- (2) The councillors holding office for any ward of the borough immediately before 10th May 2004 shall retire on that date and the newly elected councillors for those wards shall come into office on that date.
- (3) Of the councillors elected in 2004, one shall retire in 2006, one in 2007 and one in 2008.
- (4) Of the councillors elected in 2004 –
- (a) the first to retire shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), be the councillor elected by the smallest number of votes; and
- (b) the second to retire shall, subject to those paragraphs, be the councillor elected by the next smallest number of votes.
- (5) In the case of an equality of votes between any persons elected which makes it uncertain which of them is to retire in any year, the person to retire in that year shall be determined by lot.
- (6) If an election of councillors for any ward is not contested, the person to retire in each year shall be determined by lot.
- (7) Where under this article any question is to be determined by lot, the lot shall be drawn at the next practicable meeting of the council after the question has arisen and the drawing shall be conducted under the direction of the person presiding at the meeting.

(a) See the Borough of Walsall (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1472).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by articles 8 and 9(7) of S.I. 1979/1472.

(c) For the ordinary day of election of councillors of local government areas, see section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2), amended by section 18(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c.50) and section 17 of, and paragraphs 1 and 5 of Schedule 3 to, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c.29).

Maps

5. Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Walsall (Electoral Changes) Order 2003” available for inspection at its offices by any member of the public at any reasonable time.

Electoral registers

6. The Electoral Registration Officer(a) for the borough shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

Revocation

7. The Borough of Walsall (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979(b) is revoked, save for articles 8 and 9(7).

Signed by the members of the Electoral Commission

Date *Pamela Gordon*
Commissioner

Date *Glyn Mathias*
Commissioner

Date *Neil McIntosh*
Commissioner

Date *Karamjit Singh*
Commissioner

Date *Sam Younger*
Commissioner

Date *Graham Zellick*
Commissioner

(a) As to electoral registration officers and the register of local government electors, *see* sections 8 to 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2).
(b) S.I. 1979.1472.

SCHEDULE

article 3

NAMES OF WARDS

<i>Name of Ward</i>
Aldridge Central and South
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood
Bentley and Darlaston North
Birchills Leamore
Blakenall
Bloxwich East
Bloxwich West
Brownhills
Darlaston South
Paddock
Palfrey
Pelsall
Pheasey Park Farm
Pleck
Rushall–Shelfield
St Matthew's
Short Heath
Streetly
Willenhall North
Willenhall South

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

This Order gives effect, [with modifications], to recommendations by the Boundary Committee for England, a committee of the Electoral Commission, for electoral changes in the borough of Walsall.

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

The changes have effect in relation to local government elections to be held on and after 6th May 2004.

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the borough and provides for the creation of 20 new wards. That article and the Schedule also make provision for the names and areas of, and numbers of councillors for, the new wards.

Article 4 makes provision for a whole council election in 2004 and for reversion to the established system of election by thirds in subsequent years.

Article 6 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 7 revokes the Borough of Walsall (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979, with the exception of articles 8 and 9(7).

The areas of the new borough wards are demarcated on the map described in article 2. Prints of the map may be inspected at all reasonable times at the offices of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.