

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
OSWESTRY  
IN SHROPSHIRE

*Report to the Secretary of State for the  
Environment, Transport and the Regions*

*August 1999*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oswestry in Shropshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

Pamela Gordon

Robin Gray

Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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





## Local Government Commission for England

3 August 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 4 August 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Oswestry under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation. A further round of consultation in relation to part of the borough took place from 21 May 1999.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of those consultations. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some minor modifications have been made (see paragraphs 63-64) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Oswestry.

We recommend that Oswestry Borough Council should be served by 29 councillors representing 14 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Oswestry on 4 August 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 March 1999, after which we undertook a eight-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and offers our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Oswestry because:

- **in 10 of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in nine wards, and by more than 20 per cent in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 63-64) are that:

- **Oswestry Borough Council should be served by 29 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, one fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections for the whole council should continue to take place every four years.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In nine of the proposed 14 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average;**
- **By 2003 the number of electors per councillor is forecast to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in all but two wards, with no ward varying by more than 20 per cent.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Oswestry Town Council;**
- **revised warding arrangements for Oswestry Rural Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 14 September 1999:

**The Secretary of State  
Department of the Environment,  
Transport and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU**

*Figure 1:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Cabin Lane (in Oswestry)	2	Cambrian ward (part)
2	Cambrian (in Oswestry)	2	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part)
3	Carreg Llwyd (in Oswestry)	2	Victoria ward (part)
4	Castle (in Oswestry)	2	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part); Maserfield ward (part); Victoria ward (part)
5	Gatacre (in Oswestry)	2	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part); Maserfield ward (part)
6	Gobowen	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Selattyn & Gobowen)
7	Kinnerley	1	Kinnerley ward (the parishes of Meverley and Kinnerley); West Felton ward (part – the parish of Knockin)
8	Llanyblodwel & Pant	2	Llanymynech ward (the parish of Llanymynech & Pant); Llanyblodwel ward (the parish of Llanyblodwel)
9	Maserfield (in Oswestry)	2	Maserfield ward (part); Gatacre ward (part)
10	Ruyton & West Felton	2	Ruyton-XI-Towns ward (the parish of Ruyton-XI-Towns); West Felton ward (part – the parish of West Felton)
11	St Martin's	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of St Martin's)
12	Sweeney & Trefonen	3	Sweeney ward (Aston and Sweeney parish wards of Oswestry Rural parish); Trefonen ward (Llanforda, Sychtyn and Trefonen parish wards of Oswestry Rural parish)
13	Weston Rhyn	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Weston Rhyn)
14	Whittington	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Whittington)

*Notes: 1 The borough of Oswestry is entirely parished.*

*2 The proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, the maps at Appendix A and the large map at the back of the report.*

Figure 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Oswestry

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Cabin Lane (in Oswestry)	2	1,574	787	-19	1,939	970	-7
2 Cambrian (in Oswestry)	2	2,001	1,001	2	2,001	1,001	-4
3 Carreg Llwyd (in Oswestry)	2	1,876	938	-4	2,195	1,098	6
4 Castle (in Oswestry)	2	2,193	1,097	12	2,242	1,121	8
5 Gatacre (in Oswestry)	2	2,157	1,079	10	2,161	1,081	4
6 Gobowen	3	3,059	1,020	4	3,192	1,064	2
7 Kinnerley	1	1,122	1,122	15	1,182	1,182	14
8 Llanyblodwel & Pant	2	1,767	884	-10	1,862	931	-10
9 Maserfield (in Oswestry)	2	2,142	1,071	10	2,201	1,101	6
10 Ruyton & West Felton	2	1,704	852	-13	1,808	904	-13
11 St Martin's	2	2,036	1,018	4	2,233	1,117	8
12 Sweeney & Trefonen	3	2,849	950	-3	3,105	1,035	0
13 Weston Rhyn	2	1,898	949	-3	2,015	1,008	-3
14 Whittington	2	1,934	967	-1	1,981	991	-5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28,312</b>	—	—	<b>30,117</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>976</b>	—	—	<b>1,039</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oswestry Borough Council's submission.

Notes: 1 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.

2 These figures vary from those shown in our draft recommendations following further analysis by the Commission and Oswestry Borough Council.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oswestry in Shropshire. We have now reviewed the districts in Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin Council) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all principal local authority areas in England. (At the direction of the Secretary of State we undertook an electoral review of Telford & Wrekin Council, formerly The Wrekin, in 1996. We will be undertaking a PER of Telford & Wrekin at a later date).

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Oswestry. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 84). The electoral arrangements of Shropshire County Council were last reviewed in May 1980 (Report No. 382). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (updated in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so

on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

6 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the Shropshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. In view of these developments, we agreed to the request for an extension of four weeks to Stage One in Shropshire to allow local authorities and other interested parties to prepare schemes for our consideration.

7 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 August 1998, when we wrote to Oswestry Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Shropshire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the local authority associations, Shropshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Member of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We 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 7 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 2 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Oswestry in Shropshire*, and ended on 26 April 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. In the light of revised electorate projections provided by the Borough Council, we carried out a further period of consultation in relation to the most appropriate warding arrangements for the south-east part of the borough. On 21 May 1999 we wrote to the Borough Council, the relevant parish councils and other interested parties outlining two alternative options for that part of the borough and invited further evidence and submissions by 7 June 1999. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and further consultation, and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

9 Oswestry borough is situated in the north-west of Shropshire and is bounded by the Welsh border to the north and west, the district of North Shropshire to the east and the borough of Shrewsbury & Atcham to its south. Oswestry town is the social and administrative centre of the borough, and is the only sizeable urban area, comprising nearly half of the borough's total electorate. The population density for the whole borough is only 1.3 persons per hectare, as the remaining area is predominantly rural. Tourism has become a major part of the area's economic base in recent years, although Oswestry continues its role as an important market town, with thriving livestock and household markets. The greatest population expansion over the past 20 years has occurred on the eastern side of Oswestry town (the current Cambrian ward) and this expansion is predicted to continue over the next five years. The borough comprises 13 parishes, including a town council for Oswestry itself.

10 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated 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'.

11 The borough electorate is currently 28,312 and the Council currently has 29 councillors. These members are elected from 15 wards, four in Oswestry town and the remaining 11 from the more rural areas. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors, four by two councillors and the remaining six are each represented by a single councillor. The whole Council is elected every four years.

12 Since the last electoral review in 1975 the electorate of Oswestry borough has risen by 25 per cent from 22,650, with much of the recent growth being in Oswestry town. At present, each councillor represents an average of 976 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase

to 1,039 by the year 2003 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 10 of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in four wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Cambrian ward where each of the three councillors represents 54 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Oswestry



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Key to Wards

- |                |                   |                |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Cambrian     | 6 Llanymynech     | 11 Trefonen    |
| 2 Gatacre      | 7 Maserfield      | 12 Victoria    |
| 3 Gobowen      | 8 Ruyton-X1-Towns | 13 West Felton |
| 4 Kinnerley    | 9 St. Martin's    | 14 Weston Rbyn |
| 5 Llanyblodwel | 10 Sweeney        | 15 Whittington |

Figure 3:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Cambrian (in Oswestry)	3	4,503	1,501	54	4,868	1,623	56
2 Gatacre (in Oswestry)	3	2,447	816	-16	2,451	817	-21
3 Gobowen	3	3,059	1,020	4	3,192	1,064	2
4 Kinnerley	1	967	967	-1	1,009	1,009	-3
5 Llanyblodwel	1	638	638	-35	647	647	-38
6 Llanymynech	1	1,129	1,129	16	1,215	1,215	17
7 Maserfield (in Oswestry)	3	2,430	810	-17	2,518	839	-19
8 Ruyton-XI-Towns	1	727	727	-26	798	798	-23
9 St Martin's	2	2,036	1,018	4	2,233	1,117	8
10 Sweeney	2	1,595	798	-18	1,807	904	-13
11 Trefonen	1	1,254	1,254	28	1,298	1,298	25
12 Victoria (in Oswestry)	3	2,563	854	-12	2,902	967	-7
13 West Felton	1	1,132	1,132	16	1,183	1,183	14
14 Weston Rhyn	2	1,898	949	-3	2,015	1,008	-3
15 Whittington	2	1,934	967	-1	1,981	991	-5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28,312</b>	—	—	<b>30,117</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>976</b>	—	—	<b>1,039</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oswestry Borough Council's submission.

Notes: 1 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 1998, electors in Cambrian ward were relatively under-represented by 54 per cent, while electors in Llanyblodwel ward were relatively over-represented by 35 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 These figures vary from those shown in our draft recommendations following further analysis by the Commission and Oswestry Borough Council.



### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

13 During Stage One we received representations from Oswestry Borough Council, Oswestry Town Council, Kinnerley Parish Council, Oswestry Rural Parish Council, Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council and West Felton Parish Council. 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 Oswestry in Shropshire*.

14 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's scheme, which achieved improved electoral equality, provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria and maintained the present mix of single- and multi-member wards. We moved away from the Borough Council's scheme with only one minor boundary amendment in Oswestry town. We proposed that:

- (a) Oswestry Borough Council should be served by 29 councillors as at present;
- (b) there should be 14 wards, one fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (d) there should be new warding arrangements and a redistribution of councillors in Oswestry.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Oswestry Borough Council should comprise 29 councillors, serving 14 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

15 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, based on the electorate figures available at this time, with the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 14 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve by 2003.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

16 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, five representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Oswestry Borough Council and the Commission.

### Oswestry Borough Council

17 Oswestry Borough Council put forward slight amendments to our proposed warding arrangements for Oswestry town. It proposed that the properties between Middleton Road, College Road and Llys Road be transferred from Carreg Llwyd ward to Cabin Lane ward, and that the properties between Prince Charles Road, Cabin Lane and Middleton Road be transferred from Cabin Lane ward to Cambrian ward. It also supported our draft recommendation transferring Knockin parish to Kinnerley ward, stating that “Knockin has no social or geographical links with West Felton, let alone Ruyton-XI-Towns”. It made no comments regarding our draft recommendations for the remainder of the borough.

### Parish and Town Councils

18 At Stage Three we received responses from the sole town council in the borough, and three parish councils. Oswestry Town Council endorsed our draft recommendations of six three-member town council wards for Oswestry town. It also expressed support for the proposed ward names, and wished to sincerely thank the Commission for its co-operation. Oswestry Rural Parish Council supported our draft recommendation for a single borough ward coterminous with the parish, stating that it considered this to be “the solution which electors will be able to comprehend”.

19 Llanyblodwel Parish Council “reluctantly” agreed to our proposal combining the parishes of Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech & Pant within a single Llanyblodwel & Pant ward. Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council, however, opposed our proposed warding arrangement, stating that Llanyblodwel would receive a lower level of

representation. It also stated that there are no links between Llanyblodwel and Pant, and that they are physically separated by the A483, a busier road than the A5.

### Further Consultation

20 In the light of the revised electorate projections, we concluded that we would need to move away from our draft recommendations on the most appropriate warding arrangements for the south-east of the borough. We therefore undertook further consultation and on 21 May 1999 wrote to Oswestry Borough Council, Mr Owen Patterson MP, the relevant borough councillors and Kinnerley, Knockin, Meverley, Ruyton-XI-Towns and West Felton parish councils seeking any views and evidence on this matter by 7 June 1999. As part of this further consultation, we received six representations. Oswestry Borough Council, Kinnerley Parish Council, Knockin Parish Council, Meverley Parish Council and one borough councillor all supported our draft recommendations placing Knockin parish in Kinnerley ward. West Felton Parish Council expressed a preference for the parish boundary being coterminous with a single-member borough ward boundary.



## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>21</sup> As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Oswestry is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

<sup>22</sup> In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

<sup>23</sup> It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for 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.

<sup>24</sup> Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over

should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

### Electorate Forecasts

<sup>25</sup> At Stage One, Oswestry Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of 10 per cent from 28,259 to 31,233 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council argued that the projected electorate figures for Llanymynech and Llanyblodwel wards “were very much supposition as the local plan does not have any capacity for large growth in either parish, so it is more likely to assume that there will be very little difference in the figures”. In our draft recommendations report we accepted the Borough Council’s figures, although we invited the Council to give further consideration to their forecasted electorates.

<sup>26</sup> At the end of Stage Two the Borough Council stated that its Forward Planning Section had discussed the electorate projections with Shropshire County Council and the Borough Council had agreed that their initial projections over-estimated the number of housing completions over the period from 1998 to 2003. It advised us that it considered that an electorate of 29,983, representing an increase of 6 per cent over the period from 1998 to 2003 (rather than the increase of 10 per cent which was originally proposed), represented its best estimate of the borough’s electorate in 2003. We were content that these revised forecasts formed a more realistic assessment of growth patterns and accepted them. However, the revised figures were not available at the time of our draft recommendations report going to press. Therefore the revised figures were distributed to all parish and town councils and other interested parties by the Borough Council at Stage Three.

<sup>27</sup> During Stage Four of the review, after some

further analysis by the Commission's and the Borough Council's officers, a number of further amendments were made to the existing and forecast electorates for the borough. As a result of this analysis, a final existing electorate of 28,312 and a projected electorate of 30,117 were ascertained, representing a 6 per cent increase in electorate over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. We have examined in detail the evidence received from the Borough Council on electorate projections and the locations of new housing developments. We accept that projecting electorates is an inexact science, and having given consideration to the Council's forecast electorates, are content that they represent the best estimate that can reasonably be made at this time.

## Council Size

28 Our *Guidance* indicates that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough or district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

29 Oswestry Borough Council is the sixth smallest principal local authority in England in population terms. Due largely to its size, it is represented by 29 councillors, just outside our indicative range. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that there should be no change in council size. In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 29 members.

30 At Stage Three we received no further comments on council size and remain content that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 29 members.

## Electoral Arrangements

31 In view of the thorough consultation exercise undertaken by the Borough Council on its scheme, and the resulting levels of electoral equality, we were content to base our draft recommendations on its proposals. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current

arrangements, based on a 29-member council representing 14 wards.

32 As outlined above, the Council revisited its electorate projections at Stage Two. The resulting electorate projections, while improving electoral variances in some areas, led to a deterioration in others. We therefore indicated to the Borough Council that we would need to revisit our draft recommendations in light of the new evidence. In response to our draft recommendations and the new evidence available, the Borough Council proposed alternative warding arrangements for Oswestry town in order to improve electoral equality, and supported our draft recommendations for Kinnerley ward.

33 In light of the evidence on electorate projections available at that time, we consulted further on the most appropriate warding arrangements for the south-east of the borough. On 21 May 1999 we wrote to the Borough Council, the relevant parish councils and other interested parties indicating that due to worsening levels of electoral equality we were minded to move away from our draft recommendations. We outlined two alternative options for the area and welcomed further evidence and submissions by 7 June 1999.

34 Further analysis at Stage Four resulted in subsequent modifications to current and forecast electorates. These modifications indicated that there would be less significant changes to electoral variances in the south-east of the borough than we had previously assumed, but suggested worsening levels of electoral equality in parts of Oswestry town.

35 We have therefore reviewed our draft recommendations in light of the further evidence and representations received both during Stage Three and our further consultation period. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Oswestry (four wards);
- (b) Gobowen, St Martin's, Weston Rhyn and Whittington wards;
- (c) Sweeney and Trefonen wards;
- (d) Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech wards;
- (e) Kinnerley, Ruyton-XI-Towns and West Felton wards.

Details of our final recommendations are set out in

Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, the maps at Appendix A and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Oswestry (four wards)**

36 The town of Oswestry is the only town in the borough and is its administrative centre. It comprises the four wards of Cambrian, Gatacre, Maserfield and Victoria, which are each represented by three councillors. Cambrian ward, in the east of the town, has been the area of most growth in the borough since the last review and currently has 54 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average. Gatacre, Maserfield and Victoria wards, on the other hand, currently have 16 per cent, 17 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average.

37 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the town should comprise six two-member wards. It proposed that a new Castle ward be formed from the area to the west of the disused Gobowen to Llanyblodwel railway line, currently part of Victoria and Cambrian wards, except at Plas Ffynon where planning permission has been granted for a new development, together with a small section of Maserfield ward. The remainder of the current Victoria ward, to the east of the railway line, would be renamed Carreg Llywd ward. The remainder of the current Cambrian ward would be divided into two wards – Cambrian and Cabin Lane – with the boundary between the two reflecting that between the more established and newer housing developments. The boundary between Cambrian and Gatacre wards would also follow the railway line, resulting in the part of Gatacre ward to the east of the railway transferring to a revised Cambrian ward. Maserfield and Gatacre wards would remain largely unchanged, with the Park Drive area transferring to Maserfield ward from Gatacre ward and the area bounded by Vyrnwy Road and York Street transferring from Maserfield ward to Gatacre ward. Oswestry Town Council supported the Borough Council's proposals, with the exception of two ward names.

38 We endorsed the Borough Council's scheme for the town, with only one minor boundary amendment between Gatacre and Maserfield wards, on the basis that while current electoral equality would remain poor in some wards, the ongoing and projected development over the next five years would lead to a reasonable level of

electoral equality in all six wards. The minor boundary change we proposed as part of our draft recommendations was that the boundary between Gatacre and Maserfield wards should run to the rear of the properties on the east side of Oakhurst Road, thereby uniting the whole of this street within Maserfield ward. On the basis of the evidence on current and projected electorates available at that time, three wards would have had variances in excess of 10 per cent from the average initially but no ward would have a variance in excess of 7 per cent from the borough average by 2003.

39 At Stage Three we received only two comments regarding our proposals for the town of Oswestry. In the light of revised electorate forecasts, the Borough Council proposed that the area between Cabin Lane, Middleton Road and Prince Charles Road be transferred from Cabin Lane ward to Cambrian ward, and that the area between Middleton Road and Llys Road be transferred from Carreg Llwyd to Cabin Lane ward. Oswestry Town Council supported our draft recommendations for the town council arrangements.

40 Further analysis at Stage Four resulted in subsequent modifications to current and forecast electorates for our proposed wards in Oswestry town. In the light of this evidence we gave further consideration to our draft recommendations. In particular, our proposed Gatacre ward would have a variance in excess of 20 per cent from the borough average and four wards would have variances of equal to or greater than 10 per cent from the average in 2003 (as detailed at Appendix B). On the basis of this new evidence, our proposed Cabin Lane, Carreg Llwyd and Maserfield wards would have 19 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (10 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent by 2003), while Cambrian, Castle and Gatacre wards would have 3 per cent, 9 per cent and 26 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer, 11 per cent and 14 per cent more by 2003).

41 As a result of this further analysis, we do not consider that it would be appropriate to put forward the Borough Council's proposed modifications to our draft recommendations, the impact of which would be to increase the level of over-representation in Carreg Llwyd ward. In addition, these proposals would not counter the

significant level of under-representation evident from our further analysis in the proposed Gatacre ward.

42 In order to counter the significant level of electoral equality in our proposed Gatacre ward, we recommend a number of boundary amendments to the three proposed wards in west Oswestry. These changes would have the effect of giving the three western wards similar electorates, but would still mean that west Oswestry is somewhat under-represented in comparison to east Oswestry. However, the majority of new housing developments are in the east of the town, so over time this imbalance will diminish. We propose that all the properties currently in Gatacre ward on Oak Street including Glanaber which has access on to Oak Street, Vyrnwy Road, Denham Drive, Findon Drive, Cranbrook Drive, Thornhurst Avenue and South View be transferred to Maserfield ward. We consider that this proposal would ensure that communities with similar interests are retained within a single ward, while improving the balance of electoral equality between the two wards. We also propose that Castle Street, to the east of Oak Street, should be united within Castle ward and are therefore proposing that the boundary between Castle and Gatacre wards run to the rear of the properties on the north side of Castle Street. In order to improve electoral equality in Carreg Llwyd ward, we recommend transferring the Plas Ffynon area from our proposed Castle ward. This warding arrangement would maintain the railway line as the boundary between wards for the whole of Oswestry.

43 Our resulting final recommendations would provide for improved electoral equality in the town of Oswestry. Under our proposals Cabin Lane and Carreg Llwyd wards would have 19 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Cambrian, Castle, Gatacre and Maserfield wards would have 3 per cent, 11 per cent, 11 per cent and 9 per cent more respectively. These levels of electoral equality are forecast to improve, with none of the six wards having variances of more than 7 per cent by 2003.

### **Gobowen, St Martin's, Weston Rhyn and Whittington wards**

44 These four wards are situated in the north of the borough, to the north and east of Oswestry town. Weston Rhyn, St Martin's and Whittington wards are each represented by two councillors, while Gobowen ward is represented by three members. Each ward is coterminous with the corresponding parish council, and currently no ward has a variance

of more than 4 per cent from the borough average. In 2003 Gobowen and St Martin's wards would have 2 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while Weston Rhyn and Whittington wards would have 3 per cent and 5 per cent fewer respectively.

45 At Stage One we received only one submission, from the Borough Council, proposing no change to these wards, on the basis that the existing ward boundaries provide for a reasonable level of electoral equality, both now and in 2003. We were content to retain the current arrangements for these four wards in our draft recommendations, given the reasonable levels of electoral equality both now and in five years time, and that the existing wards reflect community ties and parishing arrangements.

46 At Stage Three we received no comments regarding these wards. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final, resulting in the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Gobowen, St Martin's, Weston Rhyn and Whittington wards by 4 per cent, 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 8 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent in 2003).

### **Sweeney and Trefonen wards**

47 Sweeney and Trefonen wards lie to the south and west of Oswestry town, together reflecting Oswestry Rural parish, and are represented by two and one councillors respectively. Sweeney ward currently has 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while Trefonen ward has 28 per cent more. By 2003 electoral equality is forecast to improve marginally in both wards, which would have 13 per cent fewer and 25 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively.

48 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Sweeney and Trefonen wards combine to form a three-member ward, reflecting the current boundaries of Oswestry Rural parish. Oswestry Rural Parish Council supported this proposal during the consultation period.

49 We considered that the Borough Council's proposals would reflect community identity by being coterminous with the parish boundary, and provide improved levels of electoral equality. We did consider alternative warding arrangements because of the geographical size of the proposed ward, but without local support for the creation of

parish wards we were content to put forward this enlarged Sweeney & Trefonen ward in our draft recommendations.

50 At Stage Three we received only one representation in relation to this area. Oswestry Rural Parish Council stated that it “ appreciates and welcomes the adoption of the proposals for ward-name changes ... and accepts the formation of one borough council ward to correspond to the parish area”. We are therefore content to endorse our draft recommendation creating a new Sweeney & Trefonen ward as final, which would have 3 per cent fewer electors than the average currently, and equal to the average in 2003.

### **Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech wards**

51 Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech wards are each represented by a single councillor and lie in the south-west of the borough. Currently, Llanyblodwel ward has 35 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average while Llanymynech ward has 16 per cent more. Electoral equality is not forecast to change substantially over the next five years, with 38 per cent fewer and 17 per cent more electors than the average in these two wards respectively in 2003.

52 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed creating a two-member Llanymynech, Llanyblodwel & Pant ward. Llanyblodwel & Pant Parish Council queried the growth projections predicted by the Borough Council, and argued for no change to the current warding arrangement as the parishes of Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech & Pant are “disparate and a large land mass lies between them”. Oswestry Rural Parish Council, however, argued that this statement was misleading as over half the population of Llanyblodwel live closer to Pant than elsewhere in the parish.

53 As part of our draft recommendations we considered that the current level of electoral inequality should be addressed as part of this review. We received no alternative warding arrangements that would provide acceptable levels of electoral equality, and considered that the Borough Council’s proposal to merge Llanyblodwel and Llanymynech wards provided the best balance between the need to improve electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We proposed that this new two-member ward be named Llanyblodwel & Pant, as including all the main settlements in the ward title would be unwieldy.

54 At Stage Three we received two representations

in relation to this area. Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations on the grounds that the smaller settlement, Llanyblodwel, would not be adequately represented, that the Llanyblodwel community has never looked to Pant, and that the communities would be split by the busy A483 road. Llanyblodwel Parish Council viewed our draft recommendations “with some concern”, although it was prepared to reluctantly agree to the merge of Pant, Llanymynech and Llanyblodwel in a new Llanyblodwel & Pant ward. It did, however, stress that the parish boundaries should remain unchanged in order to protect local identity.

55 We have carefully considered the representations received regarding Llanymynech and Llanyblodwel wards. While we have some sympathy with the arguments put forward by Llanymynech & Pant Parish Council, we have received no suggestions for alternative warding arrangements and we consider that the current level of electoral inequality is too high to retain the wards on their existing boundaries. Given that our draft proposal was based on the Borough Council’s scheme, and has been accepted by Llanyblodwel Parish Council, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. The resulting ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors than the borough average both now and in 2003.

### **Kinnerley, Ruyton-XI-Towns and West Felton wards**

56 These three single-member wards lie to the south-east of Oswestry town. Currently, while Kinnerley and Ruyton-XI-Towns wards have 1 per cent and 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average, West Felton ward has 16 per cent more than the borough average.

57 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed combining the Ruyton-XI-Towns and West Felton wards, with the exception of Knockin parish which it proposed should be combined with Kinnerley ward. It argued that “Knockin parish has far more affinity to Kinnerley, not only in distance between the villages, but in being physically separated from West Felton by the very busy A5 trunk road”. The resulting two-member Ruyton & West Felton ward would have 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average both now and in 2003. Kinnerley ward would have 15 per cent more electors per councillor both now and in 2003 based on the figures provided by the Borough Council at that time.

58 Given the relatively high resulting levels of

electoral inequality under the Borough Council's scheme, we considered alternative warding arrangements for these wards. However, in the absence of support for these alternative proposals, and given the support that we received for the Borough Council's proposals, we adopted these as our draft recommendations, and stated that we would welcome views from interested parties at Stage Three.

59 After the publication of our draft recommendations we received revised electorate figures which resulted in a deterioration in electoral equality for Kinnerley ward to 15 per cent from the average now and 20 per cent in 2003. During Stage Three the only comment that we received regarding this area was from the Borough Council, who formally requested that Knockin parish be transferred to Kinnerley ward, despite the deterioration in electoral equality. It stated that "the Commission should not impose what they may see as a tidy numerical solution, in the face of the cultural reality of the situation" and urged the Commission to make this case an exception to the usual criteria.

60 We conducted a further consultation focussing on Knockin parish from 21 May 1999 to 7 June 1999 outlining two alternative options to our draft recommendations. Oswestry Borough Council, Kinnerley Parish Council, Knockin Parish Council, Melverley Parish Council and Councillor Bruce supported our draft recommendations to include Knockin parish in a revised Kinnerley ward. West Felton Parish Council preferred a single-member ward for the parish. In the light of the revised electorate figures together with the support that we received for our draft recommendations during the period of further consultation, we are content to endorse our draft recommendations for Kinnerley and Ruyton & West Felton wards as final. This would result in the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 15 per cent and 13 per cent in each ward respectively (14 per cent and 13 per cent in 2003).

## Electoral Cycle

61 In the initial stage of the review we did not receive any proposals for change to the Borough Council's electoral cycle. In our draft recommendations report, therefore, we proposed that the present system of whole-council elections every four years in Oswestry be retained.

62 At Stage Three no comments were received to

the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## Conclusions

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

(a) minor boundary amendments between Carreg Llwyd, Castle, Gatacre and Maserfield wards in Oswestry town.

64 We conclude that, in Oswestry:

- (a) a council of 29 members should be retained;
- (b) there should be 14 wards, one fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

65 Figure 4 (opposite) shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

66 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 10 to five, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. The level of electoral equality is projected to further improve in the five-year period to 2003 so that only two wards would have variances of more than 10 per cent from the borough average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### Final Recommendation

Oswestry Borough Council should comprise 29 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Maps A1 and A2 at Appendix A and the large map inside the back cover. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Figure 4 :  
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	29	29	29	29
Number of wards	15	14	15	14
Average number of electors per councillor	976	976	1,039	1,039
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	10	5	9	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	5	0

## Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

67 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for parishes to reflect the proposed borough wards.

68 In our draft recommendations we proposed that the parish of Oswestry should continue to be warded for town council purposes, and that the boundaries of the parish wards be coterminous with the proposed borough wards. Oswestry Town Council supported the Borough Council's proposed six borough wards for the town and agreed that the proposed town and borough Council wards should be coterminous. It considered, however, that "in recognition of the significant population growth of the town and its ongoing development", aligned to the extensive economic and tourism developments taking place, it should in future be represented by 18 town councillors instead of 16. We proposed putting forward this increase as part of our draft recommendations.

69 At Stage Three we received full support from Oswestry Town Council regarding the number of wards, councillors and ward names proposed in our draft recommendations. Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendations as final.

### Final Recommendation

Oswestry Town Council should be represented by 18 councillors representing six wards. The town council wards of Cabin Lane, Cambrian, Carreg Llwyd, Castle, Gatacre and Maserfield should be coterminous with the proposed Borough Council wards of the same name, and should each be represented by three town councillors. These changes are illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A and the large map at the back of the report.

70 In its Stage One submission Oswestry Rural Parish Council requested that its parish wards should be renamed to better reflect local community identities. It argued that the parish wards "have rural area names although the population centres are villages ... [so] that village inhabitants do not readily relate to the parish ward". We were content to put forward such a change as part of our draft recommendations.

71 At Stage Three Oswestry Rural Parish Council stated that it “appreciates and welcomes the adoption of the proposals for ward-name changes in the parish”. We are therefore content to endorse our draft recommendations as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Oswestry Rural Parish should continue to comprise five wards and be represented by 15 councillors. We propose that Aston ward should be renamed Maesbury with Aston ward; Sweeney ward should be renamed Morda with Sweeney ward; Trefonen ward should be renamed Trefonen with Treflach ward; Llanforda ward should be renamed Rhydygroesau with Llanforda ward. There should be no change to the ward name for Sychtyn parish ward or to the level of representation for each ward.

72 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the Borough Council.

Map 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Oswestry





## 6. NEXT STEPS

73 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Oswestry and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

74 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

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

The Secretary of State  
Department of the Environment,  
Transport and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



# APPENDIX A

## Final Recommendations for Oswestry: Detailed Mapping

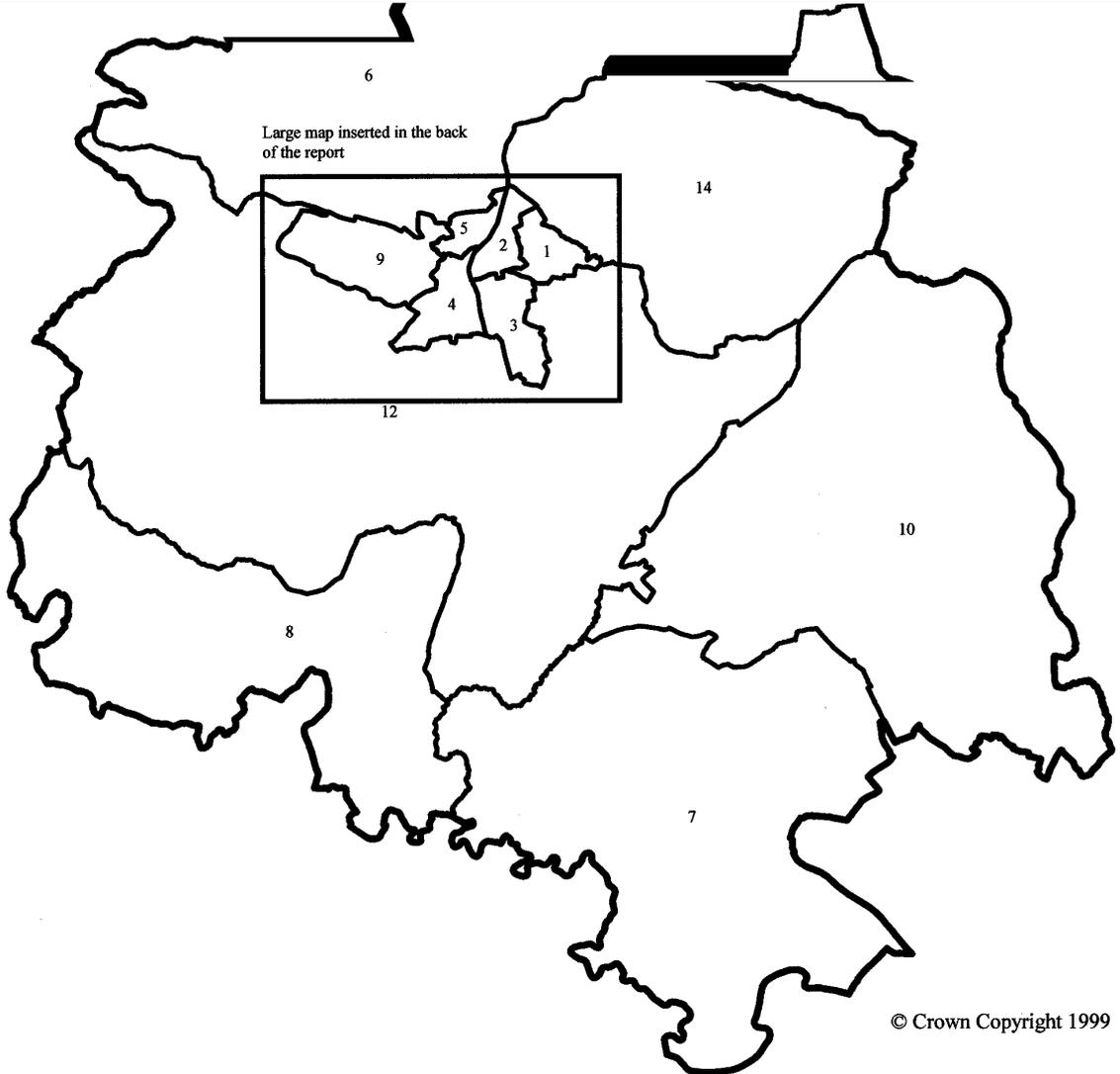
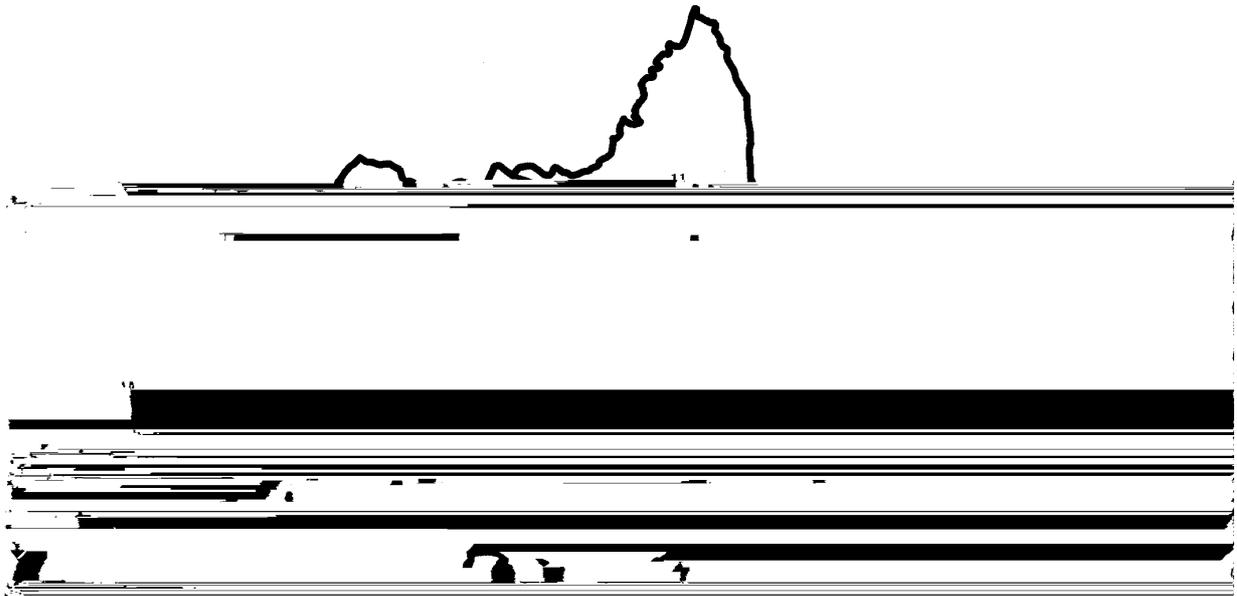
The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Oswestry area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the area which is shown in more detail on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

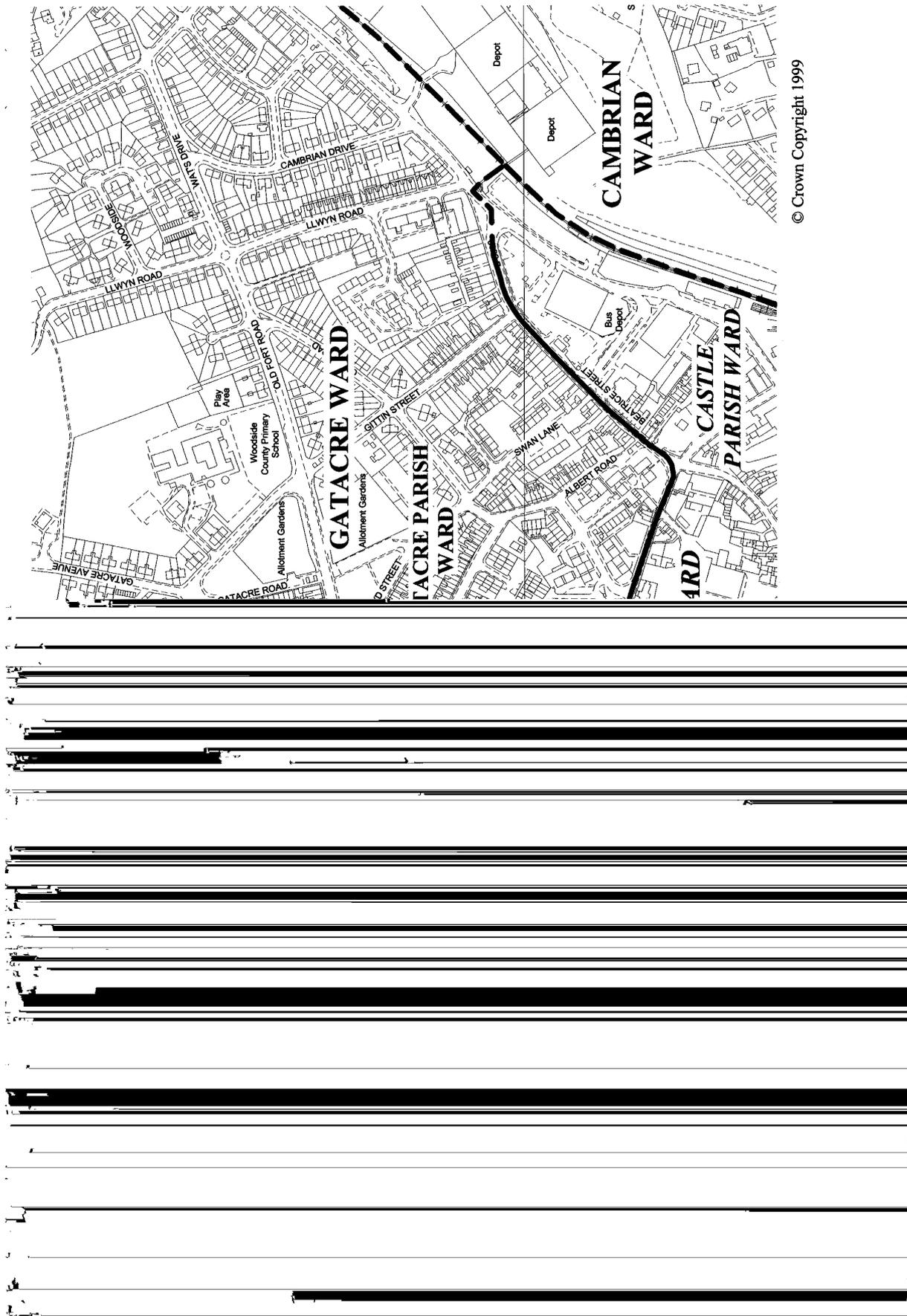
**Map A2** illustrates the proposed boundary between Gatacre and Maserfield wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Oswestry town.

Map A1:  
Final Recommendations for Oswestry: Key Map



Map A2:  
Proposed Boundary Between Gatacre and Maserfield Wards



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# APPENDIX B

## Draft Recommendations for Oswestry

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of a number of wards, for which our draft proposals are set out below.

*Figure B1:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
Cabin Lane (in Oswestry)	Cambrian ward (part)
Castle (in Oswestry)	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part); Maserfield ward (part); Victoria ward (part)
Cambrian (in Oswestry)	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part)
Carreg Llwyd (in Oswestry)	Victoria ward (part)
Gatacre (in Oswestry)	Cambrian ward (part); Gatacre ward (part); Maserfield ward (part)
Maserfield (in Oswestry)	Maserfield ward (part); Gatacre ward (part)

Figure B2:

*The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Cabin Lane (in Oswestry)	2	1,574	787	-19	1,939	970	-10
2 Cambrian (in Oswestry)	2	2,019	1,010	3	2,019	1,010	-6
3 Carreg Llwyd (in Oswestry)	2	1,876	938	-4	1,976	988	-8
4 Castle (in Oswestry)	2	2,128	1,064	9	2,396	1,198	11
5 Gatacre (in Oswestry)	2	2,464	1,232	26	2,468	1,234	14
6 Gobowen	3	3,059	1,020	4	3,192	1,064	-1
7 Kinnerley	1	967	967	-1	1,027	1,027	-5
8 Llanyblodwel & Pant	2	1,767	884	-10	1,862	931	-14
9 Maserfield (in Oswestry)	2	1,882	941	-4	1,941	971	-10
10 Ruyton & West Felton	2	1,859	930	-5	1,963	982	-9
11 St Martin's	2	2,036	1,018	4	2,233	1,117	4
12 Sweeney & Trefonen	3	2,849	950	-3	3,105	1,035	-4
13 Weston Rhyn	2	1,898	949	-3	2,015	1,008	-7
14 Whittington	2	1,934	967	-1	1,981	991	-8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28,312</b>	—	—	<b>30,117</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>976</b>	—	—	<b>1,039</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Oswestry Borough Council's submission.

Notes: 1 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.

2 These figures differ from those shown in our draft recommendations following further analysis by the Commission and Oswestry Borough Council.



