

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Birmingham City

October 2002

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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
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

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

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of the electoral arrangements for Birmingham on 4 December 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us to complete the work of the LGCE.

- **This report summarises the submissions received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Birmingham:

- **in 13 of the 39 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the city and five wards vary by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to deteriorate, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 14 wards and by more than 20% in five wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 215–216) are that:

- **Birmingham City Council should have 120 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 40 wards, instead of 39 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and no wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 39 of the proposed 40 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the city in 2006.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 22 October 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**

- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 16 December 2002:

**Team Leader
Birmingham Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
1	Acock's Green	3	Part of Acock's Green ward; part of Fox Hollies ward	5
2	Aston	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Handsworth ward; part of Nechells ward	2 and 3
3	Bartley Green	3	Bartley Green ward; part of Harborne ward; part of Weoley ward	4
4	Billesley	3	Part of Billesley ward; part of Brandwood ward	5
5	Bordesley Green	3	Part of Nechells ward; part of Small Heath ward; part of Washwood Heath ward	3 and 5
6	Bournville	3	Part of Bournville ward; part of Northfield ward; part of Selly Oak ward	4 and 5
7	Brandwood	3	Part of Brandwood ward	5
8	Edgbaston	3	Part of Edgbaston ward	2, 4 and 5
9	Erdington	3	Part of Erdington ward; part of Stockland Green ward; part of Sutton Vesey ward	1 and 3
10	Hall Green	3	Part of Hall Green ward	5
11	Handsworth	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Handsworth ward; part of Sandwell ward; part of Soho ward	2
12	Harborne	3	Part of Edgbaston; part of Harborne ward; part of Ladywood ward	2 and 4
13	Hodge Hill	3	Part of Hodge Hill ward; part of Washwood Heath ward	3
14	King's Norton	3	Part of Bournville ward; part of Brandwood ward; part of King's Norton ward; part of Northfield ward	4 and 5
15	Kingstanding	3	Part of Kingstanding ward; part of Oscott ward; part of Stockland Green ward	1 and 3
16	Ladywood	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Edgbaston ward; part of Ladywood ward; part of Nechells ward	2
17	Longbridge	3	Part of Longbridge ward (including New Frankley in Birmingham parish); part of Northfield ward	4
18	Moseley	3	Part of Bournville ward; part of Moseley ward; part of Sparkhill ward	5
19	Nechells	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Ladywood ward; part of Nechells ward; part of Small Heath ward; part of Sparkbrook ward	2, 3 and 5
20	Northfield	3	Part of Bournville ward; part of Longbridge ward; part of Northfield ward	3 and 4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
21 Oscott	3	Part of Oscott ward; part of Perry Barr ward	1 and 2
22 Perry Barr	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Perry Barr ward	2 and 3
23 Quinton	3	Part of Harborne ward; Quinton ward	2 and 4
24 Sandwell	3	Part of Handsworth ward; part of Sandwell ward	2
25 Selly Oak	3	Part of Harborne ward; part of Selly Oak ward	4 and 5
26 Shard End	3	Part of Hodge Hill ward; Shard End ward	3
27 Sheldon	3	Part of Acock's Green ward; Sheldon ward; part of Yardley ward	3 and 5
28 Small Heath	3	Part of Edgbaston ward; part of Moseley ward; part of Sparkbrook ward; part of Sparkhill ward	3 and 5
29 Soho	3	Part of Aston ward; part of Ladywood ward; part of Soho ward	2
30 Springfield	3	Part of Billesley ward; part of Fox Hollies ward; part of Hall Green ward; part of Moseley ward; part of Small Heath ward; part of Sparkhill ward	5
31 Stechford	3	Part of Hodge Hill ward; part of Yardley ward	3 and 5
32 Stockland Green	3	Part of Erdington ward; part of Kingstanding ward; part of Stockland Green ward	3
33 Sutton Four Oaks	3	Part of Sutton Four Oaks	1
34 Sutton New Hall	3	Part of Sutton New Hall; part of Sutton Vesey ward	1 and 3
35 Sutton Trinity	3	Part of Sutton Four Oaks ward; part of Sutton New Hall ward	1
36 Sutton Vesey	3	Part of Erdington ward; part of Kingstanding ward; part of Sutton Vesey ward	1 and 3
37 Tyburn	3	Part of Erdington ward; Kingsbury ward; part of Stockland Green ward	3
38 Washwood Heath	3	Part of Nechells ward; part of Washwood Heath ward	3
39 Weoley	3	Part of Longbridge ward; part of Northfield ward; part of Selly Oak ward; part of Weoley ward	4
40 Yardley	3	Part of Acock's Green ward; part of Small Heath ward; part of Yardley ward	3 and 5

Notes:

- 1) *New Frankley in Birmingham is the only parish in Birmingham and forms part of Longbridge ward, indicated above.*
- 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: Draft recommendations for Birmingham

	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	Acock's Green	3	18,703	6,234	4	18,468	6,156	2
2	Aston	3	17,909	5,970	-1	17,736	5,912	-2
3	Bartley Green	3	18,663	6,221	3	17,784	5,928	-2
4	Billesley	3	18,786	6,262	4	18,638	6,213	3
5	Bordesley Green	3	19,588	6,529	8	19,285	6,428	6
6	Bournville	3	18,474	6,158	2	18,301	6,100	1
7	Brandwood	3	17,653	5,884	-2	18,982	6,327	4
8	Edgbaston	3	17,230	5,743	-5	17,468	5,823	-4
9	Erdington	3	17,995	5,998	0	17,828	5,943	-2
10	Hall Green	3	18,446	6,149	2	18,178	6,059	0
11	Handsworth	3	18,721	6,240	4	18,581	6,194	2
12	Harborne	3	17,403	5,801	-4	17,440	5,813	-4
13	Hodge Hill	3	18,051	6,017	0	17,849	5,950	-2
14	King's Norton	3	18,926	6,309	5	18,785	6,262	3
15	Kingstanding	3	16,735	5,578	-7	17,171	5,724	-6
16	Ladywood	3	12,649	4,216	-30	17,182	5,727	-5
17	Longbridge	3	18,081	6,027	0	17,911	5,970	-1
18	Moseley	3	18,754	6,251	4	18,683	6,228	3
19	Nechells	3	18,606	6,202	3	18,863	6,288	4
20	Northfield	3	18,710	6,237	4	18,500	6,167	2
21	Oscott	3	18,491	6,164	2	18,309	6,103	1
22	Perry Barr	3	17,202	5,734	-5	16,975	5,658	-7
23	Quinton	3	18,031	6,010	0	17,778	5,926	-2
24	Sandwell	3	18,910	6,303	5	18,652	6,217	3
25	Selly Oak	3	18,787	6,262	4	19,246	6,415	6
26	Shard End	3	18,706	6,235	4	18,418	6,139	1
27	Sheldon	3	17,406	5,802	-4	17,219	5,740	-5
28	Small Heath	3	19,239	6,413	7	18,873	6,291	4
29	Soho	3	16,687	5,562	-8	17,383	5,794	-4
30	Springfield	3	19,177	6,392	6	18,972	6,324	4

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 %
31 Stechford	3	18,315	6,105	1	18,018	6,006	-1
32 Stockland Green	3	16,692	5,564	-8	17,094	5,698	-6
33 Sutton Four Oaks	3	17,954	5,985	-1	18,557	6,186	2
34 Sutton New Hall	3	18,454	6,151	2	18,509	6,170	2
35 Sutton Trinity	3	17,813	5,938	-1	18,449	6,150	1
36 Sutton Vesey	3	18,181	6,060	1	18,057	6,019	-1
37 Tyburn	3	16,208	5,403	-10	17,431	5,810	-4
38 Washwood Heath	3	18,958	6,319	5	18,886	6,295	4
39 Weoley	3	18,070	6,023	0	17,815	5,938	-2
40 Yardley	3	18,996	6,332	5	18,913	6,304	4
Totals	120	722,360	-	-	727,187	-	-
Averages	-	-	6,020	-	-	6,060	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for Birmingham City, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven metropolitan districts 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 Birmingham. Birmingham's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (report no. 351)

3 In carrying out these metropolitan reviews we must have regard to:

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

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Birmingham is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fifth edition published in October 2001). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission 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 the parish council in the city.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the city 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 a 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 on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough 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 result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

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

10 Stage One began on 4 December 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Birmingham City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified West Midlands Police Authority, the Local Government Association, West Midlands Local Councils Association, New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, 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 Birmingham City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 April 2002.

11 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 22 October 2002 and will end on 16 December 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

13 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

14 Birmingham City Council is situated in the centre of the West Midlands. With a population of just over one million, it is by far the largest of any district authority in England. The current local government administrative area, which covers around 26,430 hectares, was determined on Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, with the incorporation of the former Royal Borough of Sutton Coldfield. The city is traversed by the M6 motorway with the M5 and M42 motorways in easy reach. It also contains a number of major rail routes serving the north and south, and contains Bourn Brook, the River Cole and the Birmingham Canal.

15 The electorate of the city is 722,360 (December 2001). The Council presently has 117 members who are elected from 39 wards, all of which are relatively urban. All wards are three-member wards and came into effect in 1982 following the last Electoral Review. It also has one parish council (New Frankley in Birmingham), which was established in April 2000 and comprises 0.8% of the city's total electorate.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 6,174 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 6,215 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 13 of the 39 wards varies by more than 10% from the city average, five wards by more than 20% and two wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Sutton New Hall ward, where each of the councillors represents 40% more electors than the city average. Moreover, the current allocation of councillors is incorrect. Under the existing council size of 117, Sutton Coldfield is entitled to 12 councillors, but is currently represented by nine councillors.

17 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 city 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 Birmingham

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Acock's Green	3	19,719	6,573	6	19,566	6,522	5
2	Aston	3	16,978	5,659	-8	16,937	5,646	-9
3	Bartley Green	3	16,129	5,376	-13	15,270	5,090	-18
4	Billesley	3	19,603	6,534	6	19,352	6,451	4
5	Bournville	3	18,412	6,137	-1	18,194	6,065	-2
6	Brandwood	3	18,703	6,234	1	20,105	6,702	8
7	Edgbaston	3	19,584	6,528	6	19,643	6,548	5
8	Erdington	3	18,518	6,173	0	18,424	6,141	-1
9	Fox Hollies	3	17,122	5,707	-8	16,911	5,637	-9
10	Hall Green	3	19,876	6,625	7	19,599	6,533	5
11	Handsworth	3	17,715	5,905	-4	17,550	5,850	-6
12	Harborne	3	17,288	5,763	-7	17,288	5,763	-7
13	Hodge Hill	3	18,390	6,130	-1	18,148	6,049	-3
14	Kingsbury	3	11,965	3,988	-35	13,218	4,406	-29
15	King's Norton	3	15,370	5,123	-17	15,224	5,075	-18
16	Kingstanding	3	18,293	6,098	-1	18,704	6,235	0
17	Ladywood	3	19,633	6,544	6	24,279	8,093	30
18	Longbridge	3	22,478	7,493	21	22,249	7,416	19
19	Moseley	3	17,321	5,774	-6	17,271	5,757	-7
20	Nechells	3	18,224	6,075	-2	18,495	6,165	-1
21	Northfield	3	18,138	6,046	-2	17,975	5,992	-4
22	Oscott	3	16,565	5,522	-11	16,414	5,471	-12
23	Perry Barr	3	17,766	5,922	-4	17,522	5,841	-6
24	Quinton	3	15,525	5,175	-16	15,297	5,099	-18
25	Sandwell	3	20,206	6,735	9	19,987	6,662	7
26	Selly Oak	3	21,690	7,230	17	22,178	7,393	19
27	Shard End	3	17,270	5,757	-7	17,002	5,667	-9
28	Sheldon	3	15,661	5,220	-15	15,494	5,165	-17
29	Small Heath	3	21,103	7,034	14	20,815	6,938	12
30	Soho	3	17,235	5,745	-7	17,629	5,876	-5

	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 %
31	Sparkbrook	3	17,783	5,928	-4	17,849	5,950	-4
32	Sparkhill	3	19,044	6,348	3	18,758	6,253	1
33	Stockland Green	3	17,812	5,937	-4	18,148	6,049	-3
34	Sutton Four Oaks	3	23,826	7,942	29	24,363	8,121	31
35	Sutton New Hall	3	25,931	8,644	40	26,724	8,908	43
36	Sutton Vesey	3	23,058	7,686	24	22,898	7,633	23
37	Washwood Heath	3	19,944	6,648	8	19,656	6,552	5
38	Weoley	3	15,315	5,105	-17	15,091	5,030	-19
39	Yardley	3	17,167	5,722	-7	16,960	5,653	-9
	Totals	117	722,360	-	-	727,187	-	-
	Averages	-	-	6,174	-	-	6,215	-

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

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Kingsbury ward were relatively over-represented by 35%, while electors in Sutton New Hall ward were relatively under-represented by 40%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

18 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to the LGCE giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Birmingham City Council and its constituent parish council.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. Sixty-six representations were received during Stage One, including city-wide schemes from the City Council, Birmingham Conservative Association and the Liberal Democrat Group, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council.

Birmingham City Council

20 Following an extensive consultation exercise involving two schemes (based on council sizes of 120 and 123), Birmingham City Council formally submitted a city-wide scheme based on a council size of 123 (an increase of six members). This scheme maintained the current boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham but contained limited argumentation in support of the proposals.

21 The Council's submission stated that a degree of cross-party support had been received for its scheme. A total of 94 members were present and participated in the vote on the Council's proposals. A total of 68 members supported the Council's submission, which consisted of 58 Labour, eight Liberal Democrat, and two People's Justice Party members. Twenty-three Conservative members voted against the 123-member scheme. Under the Council's proposals for a 123-member scheme, three wards would vary by more than 10% from the city average initially, with one ward varying by more than 10%, (Nechells ward at 12%) by 2006.

Liberal Democrat Group

22 Birmingham City Council Liberal Democrat Group (the Liberal Democrats) submitted a city-wide scheme based on a council size of 120. The scheme was subject to limited local consultation and provided for minimal change throughout the city as well as maintaining the Sutton Coldfield boundary.

23 The Liberal Democrats noted that there were a number of changes that could be made to their proposed boundaries in order to improve electoral equality and provide stronger boundaries. Limited argumentation was provided in support of these proposals, with reference being made to the historical boundaries of 1934, 1949 and 1962. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for a 120-member scheme, only one ward would vary by more than 10% from the city average initially, with no wards varying by more than 10% by 2006.

Birmingham Conservative Association

24 Birmingham Conservative Association (the Conservatives) submitted a city-wide scheme based on a council size of 120. The scheme was subject to limited consultation and had the support of the 11 individual Conservative Associations within the City of Birmingham and the Conservative Councillors' Group on Birmingham City Council.

25 The Conservatives' proposals broadly retained the boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham and sought to utilise strong boundaries such as the M6 motorway and railway lines. No detailed evidence or argumentation was submitted in support of these proposals. Under the Conservatives' proposals, one ward would vary by more than 10% initially, with only one ward varying by more than 10% (Bartley Green ward at 11%) by 2006.

Other representations

26 A further 63 representations were received from community-based groups and local residents. Three submissions were received in relation to the Balsall Heath area. Balsall Heath Forum put forward proposals for a ward which encompassed the neighbourhood area of Balsall Heath and, in addition, proposed that the council size be reduced from 117 to 96 to facilitate a scheme based around the 96 neighbourhoods in Birmingham. St Paul's Community Project expressed the view that the whole of Balsall Heath should be contained within the same city ward due to the strong community links which exist. A local resident also proposed a modification in this area.

27 Two representations were received in relation to the Moseley area. A joint submission was received from Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society, which proposed a revised Moseley ward which, it stated, comprised the distinct area of Moseley. This proposal was based on the existing council size of 117. A local resident also proposed a modification in the Moseley area.

28 Three representations were received in relation to the Oscott area, generally arguing for no, or minimal change. Oscott North Neighbourhood Forum expressed support for the existing Oscott ward to be retained. However, it proposed alternative boundaries to be utilised if changes had to be made. It expressed support for the use of the M6 motorway as a natural boundary in the city. Kingstanding Neighbourhood Police Initiative proposed that the current boundaries of Oscott ward be retained. It accepted that changes will need to be made to Oscott ward in order to improve electoral equality, but requested that these be kept to a minimum, putting forward some possible amendments. West Midlands Pensioners Convention Perry Barr & Kingstanding Branch also proposed that the existing boundaries of Oscott ward be retained.

29 Billesley Residents' Association opposed changes to the existing Billesley ward which would result in an amalgamation with Sparkhill ward. Handsworth Wood Residents' Association proposed some amendments in relation to the existing Handsworth and Sandwell wards, expressing opposition to the inclusion of part of Handsworth Wood in the proposed Handsworth ward. It also expressed support for the City Council's 123-member scheme. A local resident proposed a revised Quinton ward.

30 Three representations were received from local residents and West Midlands Police. These submissions were largely based on general issues relating to the review, including issues such as postcodes, historical ward names and parliamentary constituency boundaries, but offered no specific proposals. West Midlands Police made some general points about the review and the fact that it is of benefit to have coterminosity between wards and police administrative boundaries. They also raised the issue of devolved governance and changes to the external boundaries of the city.

31 Finally, 49 representations were received from local residents in the Sutton Coldfield area. Strong concern was expressed over any proposals which would breach the current boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham. Two residents suggested that Sutton Coldfield area should be represented by four rather than three wards, while another resident included a petition containing 86 signatures in support of their submission.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

32 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Birmingham and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

33 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Birmingham 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'.

34 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

35 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.

36 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate forecasts

37 Since 1975 there has been approximately a 6% decrease in the electorate of Birmingham City. However, between 1994 and 2001 there has been a 0.2% decrease in electorate overall. The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of just under 1% from 722,360 to 727,187 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Ladywood ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Brandwood and Kingsbury wards. However, the majority of wards will be static or see a slight decline in electorate. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

38 At Stage One, the Conservatives questioned the City Council's electorate projections in relation to polling district ACH in Bartley Green ward. They stated that 'The City Council's projection failed to take into account a development of around 500 new homes, the construction of which is due to commence in the near future'. While this had been acknowledged by the City

Council, for the sake of consistency, the Conservatives proposed basing their recommendations on the original total electorate figure for 2006 of 727,187. They did, however, express concern that as this error is in a confined area, it will have a significant effect.

39 We sought further clarification from the City Council in relation to this issue. It acknowledged that upon further analysis, it was apparent that in a number of redevelopment estates (such as that in polling district ACH), electors had been deducted from some housing due for demolition when they were in fact already empty. This accounted for the low electorate forecasts in these particular areas. It was not, therefore, the case that the new replacement housing had been omitted.

40 In the City Council's submission, it acknowledged that since the publication of the projected electorate figures in December 2001, more up-to-date information had become available, which indicated that the 2006 forecasts might have been underestimated in a few wards. However, it stated that this would not affect the total, which was based on the Office for National Statistics population projections and the effect was therefore negligible. In addition to this, the City Council was conscious of the fact that these figures had been published and had already been used by interested parties during the formulation of schemes. It therefore made the decision that, on balance, it would be in the best interest not to republish these figures so that all submissions received by The Boundary Committee were considered on a consistent basis, and it confirmed its original forecasts as the best estimates currently available.

41 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the City Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We note that there have been a few issues regarding electorate projections at Stage One, but are satisfied that the figures produced by the City Council provide for a viable estimate. We do however, welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

Council size

42 Birmingham City Council presently has 117 members. At Stage One, the City Council consulted on two proposed council sizes, of 120 and 123 members. Following this consultation it submitted a scheme based on a council size 123. This proposal, the Council contended, reflected the representational roles of councillors and also took into account the council sizes of other metropolitan districts. In addition, it was argued that this proposed increase of six councillors would address the high level of under-representation which currently exists in the Sutton Coldfield area.

43 The Liberal Democrats also proposed an increase in council size. Their proposals, which were largely based on minimal change, provided for an increase of three councillors, to 120. The Liberal Democrats were strongly opposed to any reduction in council size and argued that the fact that Birmingham wards are the biggest in the country 'drives the need to have a substantial number of councillors'. Again, largely from a representational perspective, they argued that, 'the need for democratic accountability and communication with the citizens requires a large number of councillors'. In addition, the Liberal Democrats advocated minimal change, especially in relation to the boundary between Sutton Coldfield and rest of the city. Therefore, they stated that 120 councillors would facilitate this approach and address the under-representation in the Sutton Coldfield area.

44 The Conservatives also proposed an increase in council size of three councillors to 120. They stated that they had compared Birmingham with other metropolitan councils and with shire unitary authorities and that, based on this comparison, the number of councillors should be dramatically increased. However, they accepted that this was not a viable option and, having spoken to councillors regarding workload and establishing a target electorate of around 18,000 electors per ward, concluded that their proposals should be based on a council size of 120.

45 We received two further submissions regarding council size. Balsall Heath Forum proposed a council of 96 councillors. This proposal was based on the number of neighbourhoods which exist within the city, and the Forum proposed that ward boundaries be redrawn to reflect these neighbourhoods. It was argued that this proposal would provide for the reinforcement of natural neighbourhoods, real local issues being more highly considered with party political matters counting for less and increased voter turnout.

46 Finally, Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society submitted joint proposals for the Moseley area, based on the assumption that the existing council size of 117 would be retained.

47 We considered the proposals submitted by Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society and Balsall Heath Forum. However, we were not persuaded that a case had been presented for either of these options to be viable as they were supported by limited argumentation and evidence, particularly in relation to the proposed internal operations of the City Council. Moreover, we received no evidence of any local consultation on these proposed council sizes nor of any widespread local support, particularly for a significant reduction to 96.

48 We therefore looked closely at the two proposed council sizes of 120 and 123. We considered that while the argumentation and evidence put forward for these proposed council sizes was helpful, it was insufficient to enable us to reach a judgement on the most suitable council size for Birmingham. Therefore, the three respondents who had proposed council sizes of 120 or 123 members, namely the City Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives were written to on two occasions requesting further evidence and information on why the existing council size of 117 would not provide for effective and convenient local government for the electors in Birmingham, and why the proposed council sizes of either 120 or 123 should be adopted for the basis of the draft recommendations. Emphasis was placed on the City Council's internal political management structure, the role of councillors in the new structure under the respective council size proposals, and the impact that the Council's proposed devolved governance initiative would have on the proposed council sizes.

49 Further evidence was duly received from each of the respondents. The City Council addressed the issues on which we had sought further detail, identifying a number of points in support of its proposed council size of 123. Much emphasis was put on the need to increase the number of wards from three to four in the Sutton Coldfield area, asserting that this approach had received widespread support locally. The view was also asserted that an extra three councillors in the rest of the city would provide for a balance between electoral equality and the recognition of the workload of councillors which, it was argued was perceived 'to be more onerous than the other more leafy wards'. In relation to devolved governance, the City Council outlined how the role of the councillor would be affected. It stated that, 'all indicators are that the council size should increase to strengthen local democracy as opposed to remaining at the same or being decreased'.

50 The Liberal Democrats based their evidence on the need to maintain the current boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham and on a strong opposition to any proposed reduction in council size. They also asserted the community-based links between the councillor and the electorate and how too few councillors could have a negative effect on this relationship.

51 The Conservatives submitted additional evidence based on the case for achieving councillor:elector ratios closer to those of other metropolitan authorities, the impact of the 'cabinet' style of governance on the workload of councillors and on the likely effects of a significant reduction in the number of councillors.

52 Having considered all the representations and the further evidence received, we note that a large amount of information has been provided in order to inform us in relation to the issue of

council size, and we are grateful to all those who have contributed. We recognise that given its council size and electorate, Birmingham is unique in terms of local authority electoral arrangements. We note that within the evidence supplied, reference is made to other metropolitan authorities as a means of justifying an increase in the number of councillors for Birmingham. However, as outlined in the *Guidance*, we do not take this approach when considering council size and are of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits. If our approach were to seek equality of representation between local authority areas, Birmingham would be entitled to many more councillors.

53 The two main areas which appear to be paramount are the need to address the under-representation in the Sutton Coldfield area and the strong opposition by the City Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to any potential decrease in the number of councillors serving the city. Having considered the information made available, we do not consider that a decrease in council size would provide for the achievement of effective and convenient local government. Nor would it receive local support.

54 We have therefore considered the proposed council sizes of 120 and 123 members, with particular regard to securing the best allocation of councillors across the city as a whole. Under the existing council size of 117, the Sutton Coldfield area is significantly under-represented by 2006, being entitled to 12 councillors and having only nine. Furthermore, the rest of the city is over-represented, being entitled to 105 councillors and having 108. Under a council size of 120, the Sutton Coldfield area would be entitled to 12.2 councillors and have 12, while the rest of the city would be entitled to 107.7 councillors and have 108. Under a council size of 123, the Sutton Coldfield area would be entitled to 12.5 councillors and have 12, while the rest of the city would be entitled to 110.4 councillors and have 111. Therefore, in comparing both the 120 and 123 council sizes, bearing in mind the need for a uniform pattern of three-member wards, we are aware that both council sizes would address the imbalance of representation between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham. However, under a council size of 123, Sutton Coldfield would be under-represented by 0.5 of a councillor, while the rest of the city would be over-represented by 0.6 of a councillor.

55 We have noted, therefore, that the significant imbalance of representation in the city, and the incorrect allocation of councillors between Sutton Coldfield and the remainder of the city, could be addressed under each of the increased council sizes. With this in mind, we therefore agree with the view that the most appropriate way to address the under-representation in Sutton Coldfield would be to create an additional ward in that area, therefore increasing its representation by three councillors, particularly as this would be supported locally. However, having considered the allocation of councillors under both the proposed council sizes, as detailed above, we note that the best balance of representation between Sutton Coldfield and the remainder of the city would be achieved under a council size of 120. In the light of this, together with the information and evidence provided, we have not been persuaded that the case has been made for an increase in council size of six councillors to 123.

56 In conclusion, and having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the other statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 120 members.

Electoral arrangements

57 The fundamental starting point in relation to this review was determining the correct council size. Having reached a conclusion on this, we were unable to facilitate the Council's official submission, which was based on a council size of 123. However, we had available to us a copy of the Council's 120-member consultation scheme. We therefore considered the Conservatives' scheme and the Liberal Democrats' scheme, together with the Council's 120-member consultation scheme. No evidence or argumentation to support the proposals was provided

under the Council's consultation scheme or the Conservatives' scheme, while the Liberal Democrats provided limited argumentation in support of their proposals. Based on this information, we took the approach of devising a scheme for Birmingham based on areas of consensus between the three schemes, electoral equality, and strength of boundaries.

58 All three schemes had merit, providing for much improved levels of electoral equality and, on the whole, utilising strong boundaries. It was apparent from an early stage that within the city of Birmingham there are a number of geographical features (major roads, railways, rivers, etc), which could ideally be used as boundaries. However, in order to formulate a uniform three-member ward scheme for Birmingham as a whole, it was not possible for every one of these boundaries to be used in their entirety and we were conscious that we needed to take a consistent approach in relation to this issue. Officers from the Committee visited the city and looked closely at the areas either side of these significant barriers and checked crossing/access points in order to ascertain which of these geographical features should be respected.

59 We acknowledge that in a large urban expanse such as Birmingham, given the need to maintain a pattern of three-member wards, it would often be the case that wards would contain disparate communities. The lack of significant community-based evidence during Stage One reinforced our approach to formulating draft recommendations, which were based on electoral equality, strength of boundaries and areas of consensus. However, this is very much a consultation document and we are keen to encourage the submission of local views and community-based evidence at Stage Three.

60 We propose basing our draft recommendations on a combination of the Council's consultation and the Conservatives' schemes. There is a measure of consensus between these two schemes in relation to ward patterns and the use of significant geographical features, such as the M6 motorway. We do, however, propose adopting elements of the Liberal Democrats' proposals, together with some of our own proposals. We have also been able to broadly reflect the views of a number of respondents who wrote to us at Stage One. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall and Sutton Vesey wards;
- b) Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland Green wards;
- c) Erdington and Kingsbury wards;
- d) Hodge Hill and Shard End wards;
- e) Nechells and Washwood Heath wards;
- f) Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards;
- g) Ladywood and Soho wards;
- h) Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards;
- i) Moseley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill wards;
- j) Acock's Green, Sheldon and Yardley wards;
- k) Billesley, Brandwood, Fox Hollies and Hall Green wards;
- l) Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards;
- m) King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards.

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

Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall and Sutton Vesey wards

62 The existing wards of Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall and Sutton Vesey cover Sutton Coldfield in the north-eastern part of the city council area. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements all three wards are notably under-represented with Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall and Sutton Vesey wards containing 29%, 40% and 24% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (31%, 43% and 23% more than the average by 2006).

63 At Stage One, the proposals for this area were identical under the City Council's consultation scheme, the Conservatives' scheme and the Liberal Democrats' scheme, with one exception in relation to the Conservatives' proposed Sutton Vesey ward. All three schemes in this area provided for the creation of four three-member wards. A revised Sutton Four Oaks ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly to the south-east of Little Sutton Lane, Little Sutton Road and Wyvern Road. The remaining part of the existing Sutton Four Oaks ward would form part of a new Sutton Trinity ward (Sutton Maney under the Liberal Democrats' proposals), together with part of the existing Sutton New Hall ward, the area broadly to the north-west of Alfred's Way, Stephens Road, Fairfax Road, Wyatt Road and Lindridge Road. The remaining part of the existing Sutton New Hall ward would be combined with part of the existing Sutton Vesey ward, the area surrounding Walmley Golf Course, broadly to the east of the railway line and south of Station Road and Wylde Green Road, to form a revised Sutton New Hall ward. Under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the remaining part of the existing Sutton Vesey ward would form a revised Sutton Vesey ward. The Conservatives' proposed Sutton Vesey ward provided for an amendment to the southern boundary, resulting in Fossey Drive being transferred to their proposed Erdington ward, as discussed later.

64 Under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the proposed Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall, Sutton Trinity (Sutton Maney) and Sutton Vesey wards would contain 1% fewer, 3% more, 1% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2%, 2%, 2% and 1% more by 2006). Under the Conservatives' proposals, the proposed Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall, Sutton Trinity and Sutton Vesey wards would contain 1% fewer, 3% more, 1% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2%, 2% and 2% more and equal to the average by 2006).

65 A further 49 representations were received from local residents in the Sutton Coldfield area. Strong concern was expressed over any proposals which would breach the historical boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham, specifically in relation to the Banners Gate area of the existing Sutton Vesey ward. Two residents suggested that the Sutton Coldfield area should be represented by four rather than three wards, while another resident included a petition containing 86 signatures in support of their submission.

66 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the identical proposals submitted to us for new Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall and Sutton Trinity (Sutton Maney) wards under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. We propose basing our proposals for the revised Sutton Vesey ward on the Conservatives' proposals as we consider that there is merit in Fossey Drive forming part of the proposed Erdington ward from where its access is served.

67 We note that there was a significant level of consensus regarding the revised warding arrangements in the Sutton Coldfield area and that each of the proposed wards would provide for a much improved level of electoral equality and, on the whole, utilise strong boundaries. In addition, the proposals put to us reflected the views expressed by 49 local residents, including a petition. We propose a number of minor amendments in this area in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries, ensuring that defaced and undefined boundaries are no longer used. On the whole, these amendments are minor and involve the transfer of a minimal number of electors. The more notable changes include the transfer of properties 1–97 Kirkwood Avenue, 36–40 Beech Road and 29–45 Sycamore Road from the proposed Sutton Vesey ward to the proposed Erdington ward and properties 12–86 Berwood Farm Road from the proposed Sutton New Hall ward to the proposed Erdington ward. Finally, in relation to ward names, we note that at Stage One alternatives of Sutton Trinity and Sutton Maney were submitted for the additional ward in this area. Based on the fact that there was agreement between the City

Council and the Conservatives in relation to the name of Sutton Trinity, we propose putting this forward as part of our draft recommendations. We would welcome views on this at Stage Three.

68 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton New Hall, Sutton Trinity and Sutton Vesey wards would contain 1% fewer, 2% more, 1% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% more, 2% more, 1% more and 1% fewer by 2006).

Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland Green wards

69 The existing wards of Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland are situated in the north-west of the city to the south of Sutton Coldfield. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland Green wards contain 1%, 11% and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to, 12% fewer and 3% fewer than the average by 2006).

70 At Stage One, the proposals for this area were identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, providing for the creation of three revised three-member wards. A revised Oscott ward would be largely based on the existing ward, with an amendment in the south in order to utilise the M6 motorway as a boundary and in the east to utilise Kingstanding Road as a boundary. A revised Kingstanding ward would again be broadly based on the existing ward, less the area broadly bounded by Marsh Hill and Black Hill Road (surrounding Witton Lakes), and with the inclusion of the areas to the east of Kingstanding Road from the existing Oscott ward, and broadly between Perry Common Recreation Ground and Turfpitts Lane from the existing Stockland Green ward. Finally, a revised Stockland Green ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly to the north of Short Heath Road (including the area broadly between Perry Common Recreation Ground and Tufpitts Lane), and bounded by Wheelwright Road and the A5127, and including the areas broadly bounded by Marsh Hill and Black Hill Road (surrounding Witton Lakes) from the existing Kingstanding ward and broadly bounded by Erdington Hall Road and the A4040 from the existing Erdington ward. The remaining parts of the existing Stockland Green ward would form part of the proposed Erdington and Tyburn wards, as discussed later.

71 Under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, the proposed Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland Green wards would contain 7% fewer, 2% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% fewer, 1% more and 6% fewer by 2006).

72 The Liberal Democrats also proposed three revised three-member wards in this area. They proposed a new Great Barr ward (alternative name of Great Barr & Oscott ward) which would comprise the existing Oscott ward, less the areas to the north of King's Road and surrounding Warren Hill Road, together with the Perry Beeches area from the existing Perry Barr ward. A revised Kingstanding ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly to the south of Witton Lodge Road, together with the areas to the north of King's Road and surrounding Warren Hill Road from the existing Oscott ward. It was stated that following consultation in this area, it was felt that 'moving all of Kingstanding into one ward is a good idea'. Finally, a revised Stockland Green ward would contain the existing ward, less the areas containing South Road and Hunton Road and bounded by George Road and Park Road (surrounding Brookvale Park and the western end of Tyburn Road), together with the area to the south of Witton Lodge Road from the existing Kingstanding ward. It was stated, 'the boundaries need some smoothing'. The remaining parts of the existing Stockland Green ward would form parts of the proposed Erdington, Aston and Kingsbury wards, as discussed later.

73 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Great Barr, Kingstanding and Stockland Green wards would contain 2% more, 1% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the city

average respectively (equal to the average, equal to the average and 1% fewer than the average by 2006).

74 Three further representations were received in relation to the Oscott area. Oscott North Neighbourhood Forum expressed support for the existing Oscott ward to be retained, however, it proposed alternative boundaries to be utilised if changes had to be made. It expressed support for the use of the M6 motorway as a natural boundary in the city and also proposed an alternative eastern boundary for Oscott ward in order to utilise Kingstanding Road. Kingstanding Neighbourhood Police Initiative proposed that the current boundaries of Oscott ward be retained. It accepted that changes will need to be made to Oscott ward in order to improve electoral equality, but requested that these are kept to a minimum. It put forward some alternative proposals, which were broadly similar to those proposed by Oscott North Neighbourhood Forum. West Midlands Pensioners Convention Perry Barr & Kingstanding Branch also proposed that the existing boundaries of Oscott ward be retained.

75 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the identical proposals submitted under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals. Based on our approach to this review, as discussed earlier, we analysed the proposals based on areas of consensus and strength of boundaries. Having visited the area we identified some key boundaries, which on the whole were reflected in the City Council consultation/Conservative scheme. The most significant of these was the M6 motorway, which would be breached under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. The use of the M6 motorway as a boundary was also advocated by the Oscott North Neighbourhood Forum and would be broadly supported by Kingstanding Neighbourhood Police Initiative. Having reached this conclusion, we are of the view that the City Council consultation/Conservatives' proposals facilitate a stronger scheme in this area, utilising more identifiable boundaries.

76 We were not persuaded that the proposals put forward by the Liberal Democrats would provide for a satisfactory reflection of community identity. As mentioned earlier, we concur with the views expressed under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives that the M6 motorway forms a significant boundary and that the Perry Beeches area has stronger links with the areas to its south. We also consider that Kingstanding Road forms a stronger northern boundary for the proposed Oscott ward than King's Road as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, with the Wandsworth Road area having stronger links to its south. We also looked at the use of Witton Lodge Road as a boundary and consider that the areas either side share links and are similar in character. Finally, we consider that there is merit in the retention of Hawthorn Road as a boundary, with the areas surrounding Warren Hill Road remaining part of Oscott ward.

77 Under our draft recommendations Kingstanding, Oscott and Stockland Green wards would contain 7% fewer, 2% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (6% fewer, 1% more and 6% fewer by 2006).

Erdington and Kingsbury wards

78 The existing wards of Erdington and Kingsbury are situated in the north-east of the city to the south of Sutton Coldfield. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Erdington and Kingsbury wards contain equal to the average and 35% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1% fewer and 29% fewer than the average by 2006).

79 At Stage One, the proposals for this area under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals were broadly similar, and both provided for the creation of two three-member wards. The City Council's consultation scheme provided for a revised Erdington ward which comprised the existing ward less the areas to the south-west of the A4040 and

containing Hollydale Road, together with the area broadly to the north of Short Heath Road (but not including the area broadly between Perry Common Recreation Ground and Tufpitts Lane) from the existing Stockland Green ward. The City Council also proposed a new Tyburn ward, which would comprise the existing Kingsbury ward, together with the areas surrounding Hollydale Road, and bounded by Erdington Hall Road and Wheelwright Road from the existing Erdington ward, and the area bounded by Wheelwright Road and the A5217 from the existing Stockland Green ward.

80 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Erdington and Tyburn wards would contain 3% and 10% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% and 4% fewer by 2006).

81 The Conservatives proposed a broadly similar revised Erdington ward to that put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme, with a marginally different northern boundary (to include Fossey Drive) and a marginally different eastern boundary in the Hollydale Road area. The Conservatives proposed Tyburn ward was also broadly identical to that proposed by the City Council, subject to a marginally different western boundary in the Hollydale Road area.

82 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Erdington and Tyburn wards would contain 3% and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% and 2% fewer by 2006).

83 The Liberal Democrats also put forward broadly similar proposals in this area. Their proposed Erdington ward would comprise the existing ward less the area bounded by Kingsbury Road and Wheelwright Road and including the areas surrounding South Road and Hunton Road from the existing Stockland Green ward. A revised Kingsbury ward would comprise the existing ward together with the area bounded by Kingsbury Road and Wheelwright Road from the existing Erdington ward, and the area containing the western end of Tyburn Road from the existing Stockland Green ward.

84 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Erdington and Kingsbury wards would contain 3% more and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% more and 3% fewer by 2006).

85 Having considered the representations received during Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted under the City Council's consultation scheme. However, we propose adopting elements of the proposals submitted by the Conservatives, together with some of our own proposals. As discussed earlier, we are of the view that there is merit in the proposal that Fossey Drive should form part of the proposed Erdington ward, as proposed by the Conservatives. In addition, as also detailed earlier, we propose some minor amendments to the boundary between Sutton Coldfield and the rest of Birmingham and these have a minor affect on the proposed Erdington ward.

86 We note that there is broad consensus in this area, with all three city-wide schemes proposing to retain the M6 motorway as a southern boundary of the proposed Tyburn ward (Kingsbury ward under the Liberal Democrats' proposals) and we concur with this view. However, based on levels of consensus and strength of boundaries, coupled with our proposals for surrounding wards, we consider that the City Council's proposals under its consultation scheme provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, concluded that all three city-wide schemes have merit, however, we are not persuaded that elements of the Liberal Democrats' and the Conservatives' proposals provide for the best reflection of community identity. We looked at the strength of Court Lane as a boundary, as would be the case under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, and are of the view that the areas either side are similar in nature and should form part of the same city ward. We also consider that the Conservatives proposed eastern boundary of Erdington ward is somewhat arbitrary, while the boundary under the City Council's consultation scheme is more clearly identifiable.

87 Under our draft recommendations, Erdington and Tyburn wards would contain equal to the average and 10% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% and 4% fewer by 2006).

Hodge Hill and Shard End wards

88 The existing wards of Hodge Hill and Shard End are situated in the east of the city to the south of the M6 motorway. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Hodge Hill and Shard End wards contain 1% and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3% and 9% fewer than the average by 2006).

89 At Stage One, the proposals in this area were identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, providing for two revised three-member wards. A revised Hodge Hill ward would contain the existing ward, less the area broadly to the south of the River Cole, together with the area bounded by Washwood Heath Road and the railway line from the existing Washwood Heath ward. A revised Shard End ward would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Bushbury Road (south of the River Cole) from the existing Hodge Hill ward. The remaining part of the existing Hodge Hill ward would form part of the proposed Stechford ward, as discussed later.

90 Under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, Hodge Hill and Shard End wards would contain equal to the average and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer and 1% more than the average by 2006).

91 The Liberal Democrats proposed broadly retaining the existing wards in this area. They proposed a revised Hodge Hill ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding Teesdale Avenue, together with the area surrounding Treadford Lane from the existing Washwood Heath ward. A revised Shard End ward would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Teesdale Avenue from the existing Hodge Hill ward. The Liberal Democrats acknowledged that there were limited re-warding options in this area and identified the railway line and the M6 motorway as significant boundaries.

92 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Hodge Hill and Shard End wards would contain 5% and 3% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% and 1% more than the average by 2006).

93 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the proposals submitted under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives for this area as part of our draft recommendations. We note that there was consensus between these two schemes and consider that the proposals reflect the statutory criteria. We are of the view that the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats, which broadly retain the existing wards in this area, have merit. However, based on our proposals elsewhere in the city and the fact that the proposals put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives utilise stronger boundaries such as major railways and the River Cole, we were not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposals offered the most appropriate revised warding pattern.

94 Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we were not persuaded by the Liberal Democrats' proposal to unite areas either side of the River Cole, which in addition are separated by a large expanse of land, in the same city ward. We consider that in this case, the river forms a stronger boundary than the railway line, which we identified as having a number of crossing points. We also looked at the strength of Bromford Lane as a boundary as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. While we acknowledge that this could be considered as a strong boundary, we are of the view that the areas either side are similar and that it could be argued

that Bromford Lane is as much a focus as a divide. In addition, not using Bromford Lane as a boundary facilitates a better warding pattern for this area as a whole.

95 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Hodge Hill and Shard End wards would contain equal to the average and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer and 1% more by 2006).

Nechells and Washwood Heath wards

96 The existing wards of Nechells and Washwood Heath are situated in the centre of the city, to the south of the M6 and to the east of the city centre. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Nechells and Washwood Heath wards contain 2% fewer and 8% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1% fewer and 5% more than the average by 2006).

97 At Stage One, the proposals for this area were identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' scheme, providing for two revised three-member wards. The revised Nechells ward would contain the existing ward, less the areas to the south-east of Princip Street and Bagot Street and to the north-east of Snow Hill Station and the areas bounded by the railway line and Bordesley Green Road and surrounding the Saltley area. It would include the area to the east of the Aston Expressway from the existing Aston ward, together with part of the existing Ladywood ward, the area broadly to the east of Bristol Street (A38), and the area broadly to the north of Highgate Middleway (A4540) and Small Heath Highway (A45) from the existing Sparkbrook ward. Finally, the revised Nechells ward would also contain part of the existing Small Heath ward, the area broadly bounded by Coventry Road and Cattell Road (B4128).

98 The revised Washwood Heath ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area bounded by Washwood Heath Road and the railway line, as discussed earlier, and the Alum Rock area, to the south of the railway line, together with the Saltley area from the existing Nechells ward, as detailed above. The remaining parts of the existing Nechells ward would form part of the revised Aston, Ladywood and Bordesley Green wards, while the remaining part of the existing Washwood Heath ward would form part of a revised Bordesley Green ward, all of which are discussed later.

99 Under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, Nechells and Washwood Heath wards would contain 2% and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3% and 4% more by 2006).

100 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Nechells ward and broadly retaining the existing Washwood Heath ward. The revised Washwood Heath ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding Treaford Lane, as detailed above, together with the area surrounding Birmingham Heartlands Hospital from the existing Small Heath ward.

101 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Nechells and Washwood Heath wards would contain 1% and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% and 3% more by 2006).

102 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the proposals submitted under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives for this area as part of our draft recommendations. We note that there was consensus between these two schemes and consider that the proposals reflect the statutory criteria. However, we do propose a minor amendment to the eastern boundary of the proposed Nechells ward in order to provide for an improved level of electoral equality for the neighbouring Bordesley Green

ward. We propose that properties 240-388 Charles Road, 338-356 Green Lane and 193-223 Bordesley Green be transferred to the proposed Nechells ward.

103 Having considered the alternative proposals in this area we are of the view that the proposed Nechells ward put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives utilises strong boundaries such as major roads and railway lines. While we acknowledge that this ward covers a large geographical area, we consider that this is justified due to the nature of the area of the city that this ward covers. The area is mainly industrial/commercial and it is therefore necessary to create a ward which encompasses this area together with enough residential parts in order to obtain an acceptable level of electoral equality.

104 While we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals have merit, we have not been persuaded that they utilise such strong boundaries, with, for example, their proposed Washwood Heath ward straddling the railway line and uniting areas which have limited transport links between them.

105 Under our draft recommendations, Nechells and Washwood Heath wards would contain 3% and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% and 4% more by 2006).

Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards

106 The existing wards of Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell are situated in the west of the city broadly to the north of the city centre. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards contain 8% fewer, 4% fewer, 4% fewer and 9% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (9% fewer, 6% fewer, 6% fewer and 7% more than the average by 2006).

107 At Stage One, the proposals in this area were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, providing for the creation of four revised three-member wards. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised Perry Barr ward that would comprise the existing ward, less the area to the north of the M6 motorway, as discussed earlier, together with the area bounded by Witton Lane, Aston Expressway (A38) and the M6 motorway, from the existing Aston ward and the area to the north of Aston Lane/Wellington Road (A4040) from the existing Handsworth ward. A revised Sandwell ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Murdock Road, and part of the Handsworth Wood area, broadly to the east of Handsworth Wood Road/Hamstead Hill (B4124).

108 A revised Handsworth ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas to the north of Aston Lane/Wellington Road (A4040) and broadly to the east of Birchfield Road (A34), together with part of the Handsworth Wood area and the Murdock Road area from the existing Sandwell ward, as detailed above, the area broadly to the north of Nursery Road/Gerrard Street from the existing Aston ward and the area broadly bounded by Soho Road and Holly Road from the existing Soho ward. Finally, a revised Aston ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas to the east of the Aston Expressway, bounded by Witton Lane, Aston Expressway (A38) and the M6 motorway, and broadly to the north of Nursery Road/Gerrard Street, as discussed earlier, and the area surrounding Jewellery Quarter railway station. The revised ward would include part of the existing Handsworth ward, the area broadly to the east of Birchfield Road (A34) and part of the existing Nechells ward, the area to the south-east of Princip Street and Bagot Street, as discussed earlier. The remaining part of the existing Aston ward would form part of the revised Soho ward, as discussed later.

109 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards would contain 4% fewer, 16% more, 1% fewer and 9% fewer electors per

councillor than the city average respectively (6% fewer, 14% more, 3% fewer and 10% fewer by 2006).

110 The Conservatives' proposals in relation to the revised Perry Barr ward were identical to those put forward by the City Council under its consultation scheme, as detailed earlier. The revised Sandwell ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding Murdock Road and Brunswick Road, together with a small area to the north of Wellington Road (A4040) from the existing Handsworth ward. A revised Handsworth ward would comprise the existing ward, less the small area to the north of Wellington Road, the area to the north of Wellington Road/Aston Lane (A4040) and the area broadly to the east of Birchfield Road (A34). The revised ward would contain the areas surrounding Murdock Road and Brunswick Road from the existing Sandwell ward, the area broadly to the north of Nursery Road/Gerrard Street from the existing Aston ward and the area broadly bounded by Soho Road (A41) and Holly Road from the existing Soho ward.

111 Finally, a revised Aston ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas to the east of the Aston Expressway, bounded by Witton Lane, Aston Expressway (A38) and the M6 motorway, and broadly to the north of Nursery Road/Gerrard Street, all discussed earlier, and the area surrounding Jewellery Quarter railway station. The revised ward would include part of the existing Handsworth ward, the area broadly to the east of Birchfield Road (A34) and part of the existing Nechells ward, the area to the south-east of Princip Street and Bagot Street, as discussed earlier. The remaining part of the existing Aston ward would form part of the revised Ladywood ward, as discussed later.

112 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards would contain 2% fewer, 1% more, 1% fewer and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3% fewer, 1% fewer, 3% fewer and 3% more by 2006).

113 The Liberal Democrats also proposed four revised three-member wards in this area, largely based on the existing arrangements. They proposed a new Perry Hall ward (alternative name of Perry Barr ward), comprising the existing Perry Barr ward, less the Perry Beeches area, as discussed earlier, together with part of the Handsworth Wood area, broadly to the north-east of Handsworth Wood Road and Hamstead Hill from the existing Sandwell ward. The revised Sandwell ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly to the north-east of Handsworth Wood Road and Hamstead Hill, as detailed earlier, together with the areas surrounding Handsworth Park and Denewood Avenue from the existing Handsworth ward and the area broadly bounded by Soho Road and Holly Road from the existing Soho ward, with the Liberal Democrats identifying Soho Road as a strong boundary.

114 The revised Handsworth ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Handsworth Park and Denewood Avenue, together with the area surrounding Hall Road from the existing Soho ward. Finally, the revised Aston ward would comprise the existing ward with an amendment to the northern boundary to include the area bounded by George Road and Park Road (surrounding Brookvale Park) from the existing Stockland Green ward, as discussed earlier.

115 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Aston, Handsworth, Perry Hall (Perry Barr) and Sandwell wards would contain 1% fewer, 4% fewer, 1% more and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2%, 5%, 1% and 4% fewer by 2006).

116 We received one further representation in relation to this area. Handsworth Wood Residents' Association proposed some amendments in relation to the existing Handsworth and Sandwell wards, expressing opposition to the inclusion of part of Handsworth Wood in the proposed Handsworth ward under the City Council's consultation scheme.

117 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals, encompassing elements of the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrat scheme. We note that there is consensus regarding the proposed Perry Barr ward under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals and given our conclusions regarding the use of the M6 motorway as a boundary, as discussed earlier, we are content to put this ward forward as part of our draft recommendations. However, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed southern boundary, which utilises the railway line. We are of the view that this provides for a more clearly identifiable boundary than that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives, linking the area immediately south of the railway line with the areas by which it is accessed.

118 We note that the proposals in the Sandwell area are significantly different under each of the three city-wide schemes and, having carefully considered these, we are of the view that the Conservatives' proposals provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. This is largely based on their decision to retain part of the Handsworth Wood area in the revised Sandwell ward. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, and given the views expressed by Handsworth Wood Residents' Association, we concur with the view expressed by the Conservatives that this part of Handsworth Wood has little in common with Handsworth and would be better represented in a ward with Sandwell. Based on this conclusion, together with our proposed Perry Barr ward, we propose basing our proposals for Aston, Handsworth and Sandwell wards on the Conservatives' proposals. However, we do propose amendments to the northern boundaries of the proposed Handsworth and Aston wards (with Perry Barr ward) in order to utilise the railway line, as detailed earlier.

119 Under our draft recommendations, Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Sandwell wards would contain 1% fewer, 4% more, 5% fewer and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer, 2% more, 7% fewer and 3% more by 2006).

Ladywood and Soho wards

120 The existing wards of Ladywood and Soho are situated broadly in the west of the city. The commercial and main shopping centre of the city is contained within Ladywood ward. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Ladywood and Soho wards contain 6% more and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (30% more and 5% fewer than the average by 2006).

121 At Stage One, the proposals in this area were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, both of which provided for two revised three-member wards. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised Soho ward comprising the existing ward, less the area bounded by Soho Road and Holly Road, as discussed earlier, together with the area surrounding Jewellery Quarter railway station from the existing Aston ward and the area broadly bounded by Portland Road and Gillott Road from the existing Ladywood ward. The revised Ladywood ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly bounded by Portland Road and Gillott Road and broadly to the east of Bristol Street (A38), as detailed earlier, and the area broadly between Portland Road and Hagley Road (A456), together with the area to the north-east of Snow Hill Station from the existing Nechells ward and the area broadly surrounding Waterworks Road from the existing Edgbaston ward. The remaining part of Ladywood ward would form part of the revised Harborne ward, as discussed later.

122 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Ladywood and Soho wards would contain 23% and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% and 1% fewer by 2006).

123 The Conservatives proposed a revised Soho ward comprising the existing ward, less the area bounded by Soho Road and Holly Road, as discussed above, together with the area broadly bounded by Gillott Road and Fountain Road/Wadhurst Road (surrounding The George Dixon Schools), from the existing Ladywood ward. The revised Ladywood ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly bounded by Gillott Road and Fountain Road/Wadhurst Road (surrounding The George Dixon Schools), and broadly to the east of Bristol Street (A38), as detailed earlier, and the area broadly between Hagley Road (A456) and Fountain Road/Wadhurst Road. It would include the area to the north-east of Snow Hill Station from the existing Nechells ward and the area surrounding Jewellery Quarter Station from the existing Astron ward. The remaining part of Ladywood ward would form part of the revised Harborne ward, as discussed later.

124 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Ladywood and Soho wards would contain 33% and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (9% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

125 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Soho ward comprising the existing ward, less the area broadly bounded by Soho Road and Holly Road, as discussed earlier, together with the area surrounding Edgbaston Reservoir from the existing Ladywood ward. The revised Ladywood ward would be broadly based on the existing ward, less the area surrounding Edgbaston Reservoir, as detailed previously, and the area broadly between Shenstone Road and Hagley Road (A546), together with the area broadly to the north of Hagley Road (A546) from the existing Edgbaston ward. The remaining part of Ladywood ward would form part of the revised Harborne ward, as discussed later.

126 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Ladywood and Soho wards would contain 19% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% and 1% more by 2006).

127 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals, which were broadly similar to those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme. We consider that these proposals utilise strong boundaries and facilitate our proposals elsewhere in the city. They also bear elements of similarity with the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We do however propose two amendments in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary and an improved level of electoral equality. We propose adopting the City Council's consultation scheme's southern boundary for the proposed Soho ward which, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider to be stronger than the alternatives put forward by the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats, although we do consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary has some merit. While the use of Portland Road as a boundary (as proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme) would appear to dissect Stanmore Road, we note that the part of Stanmore Road to the north of Portland Road is different in character to that to the south of Portland Road. Therefore, on balance, we are of the view that Portland Road provides for the most viable boundary option in this area. We would however, welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

128 Based on our proposals to the north and east of this area, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Ladywood ward. However, under the Conservatives' proposals, Ladywood ward would contain 9% fewer electors per councillor than the city average by 2006. We are of the view that this level of electoral equality can be improved upon and consequently propose an amendment. We propose that the area broadly to the north of Noel Road and the reservoir be transferred to the proposed Ladywood ward from the proposed Edgbaston ward.

129 Under our draft recommendations, Ladywood and Soho wards would contain 30% and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% and 4% fewer by 2006).

Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards

130 The existing wards of Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton are situated in the west of the city, broadly to the south-west of the city centre. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards contain 6% more, 7% fewer and 16% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% more, 7% fewer and 18% fewer than the average by 2006).

131 At Stage One, the proposals in this area were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, both of which provided for the creation of three revised three-member wards. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised Edgbaston ward, which would be largely based on the existing ward, less the area surrounding Waterworks Road, as discussed earlier. The revised Harborne ward would also be largely based on the existing ward, less the areas broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course and surrounding Bottetourt Road, together with the area to the south of Portland Road from the existing Ladywood ward, as discussed earlier, and the area broadly to the south-east of Croftdown Road from the existing Quinton ward. Finally, the revised Quinton ward would again be broadly based on the existing ward, less the area broadly to the east of Croftdown Road and including the area broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course from the existing Harborne ward. The remaining part of the existing Harborne ward would form part of a revised Bartley Green ward, as discussed later.

132 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards would contain 2% fewer, 3% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer, 2% more and 6% fewer by 2006).

133 The Conservatives proposed broadly retaining the existing Edgbaston ward, subject to the inclusion of the area bounded by Pershore Road and Raglan Road in the proposed Small Heath ward, as discussed later. The Conservatives' revised Harborne ward would also be largely based on the existing ward, less the area broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course, together with the area broadly between Hagley Road (A456) and Fountain Road/Wadhurst Road, as discussed earlier. Finally, the revised Quinton ward would comprise the existing ward, together with the area broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course from the existing Harborne ward.

134 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards would contain 1% more, 3% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1% more, 4% fewer and 2% fewer by 2006).

135 The Liberal Democrats' new Edgbaston & Selly Park ward would comprise the existing Edgbaston ward, less the areas broadly to the north of Hagley Road (A546), as discussed earlier, and bounded by Pershore Road and Raglan Road, together with the Selly Park area, south of Bourn Brook from the existing Selly Oak ward. The remaining part of Edgbaston ward would form part of the proposed Balsall Heath & Sparkbrook ward, as discussed later. The revised Harborne ward would contain the existing ward, less the areas to the south of Bourn Brook and broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course, together with the area broadly between Shenstone Road and Hagley Road (A546) from the existing Ladywood ward, as discussed earlier. The remaining parts of the existing Harborne ward would form parts of the proposed Bartley Green and Selly Oak wards, as discussed later. Finally, the Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Quinton ward, which would comprise the existing ward, together with the area broadly to the west of Harborne Golf Course from the existing Harborne ward.

136 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Edgbaston & Selly Park, Harborne and Quinton wards would contain 3%, 2% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer, equal to the average and 4% fewer by 2006).

137 We received one further representation in relation to this area. A local resident proposed a revised Quinton ward, based on the need for Tennial Road to be contained wholly within a single city ward.

138 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals. However, we propose a number of amendments based on proposals put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrats scheme, together with some of our own proposals. We consider that all the proposals in this area have merit, and are broadly similar in nature. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified some key boundaries and with this in mind, together with the alternative proposals received, we determined a set of proposals for this area which best reflected the statutory criteria.

139 In relation to the proposed Quinton ward, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposals in full. All three schemes were broadly similar in relation to this proposed ward and we based our decision largely on strength of boundaries and areas of consensus. We also consider that part of the Conservatives' eastern boundary provides for a better reflection of community identity, with Queen's Park Road being in the same ward as Queen's Park. In addition, a local resident would broadly support the proposals, with the majority of Tennial Road being contained within a revised Quinton ward. In relation to the proposed Harborne ward we propose basing our proposals on the Conservatives' proposals. However, based on our proposals in the Soho area, as discussed earlier, we propose adopting the City Council's northern boundary for Harborne ward. As mentioned above, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified some key boundaries, one of which was Bourn Brook. We consider that there are limited crossing points at this part of the brook and in addition, the areas either side are somewhat different in character. We therefore propose that the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary of Bourn Brook should be used as the southern boundary for Harborne ward. We propose one further amendment to the proposed Harborne ward in order to provide for an improved level of electoral equality. We propose that the area surrounding Roman Way and Underwood Close should be transferred to the proposed Harborne ward from the proposed Edgbaston ward. We welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

140 Finally, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Edgbaston ward, subject to the amendments with Ladywood and Harborne wards as detailed above. The proposals for this ward are again broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme, continuing the use of Bourn Brook as a boundary, which we note, is breached under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We are of the view that the brook forms a strong boundary in this area and that the area to the south has better links with the areas to its south.

141 Under our draft recommendations, Edgbaston, Harborne and Quinton wards would contain 5% fewer, 4% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4%, 4% and 2% fewer by 2006).

Moseley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill wards

142 The existing wards of Moseley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill are situated broadly to the south and east of the city centre. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Moseley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill wards contain 6% fewer, 14% more, 4% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7% fewer, 12% more, 4% fewer and 1% more than the average by 2006).

143 At Stage One, the proposals for this area were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals. Under the City Council's consultation scheme, the proposed Moseley ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas bounded by Wyke Green Road and Swanshurst Lane and bounded by Mary Street, Edward Street and the River Rea, together with the area surrounding King's Heath Park from the existing Bournville

ward, the area to the north of Howard Road from the existing Brandwood ward, and the area broadly to the south of Woodstock Road from the existing Sparkhill ward. The remaining parts of the existing Moseley ward would form part of the proposed Small Heath and Springfield wards. The revised Small Heath ward would comprise the existing Sparkbrook ward, less the area broadly to the north of Highgate Middleway (A4540) and Small Heath Highway (A45), together with the area bounded by Mary Street, Edward Street and the River Rea from the existing Moseley ward and the area broadly bounded by Woodstock Road and Durham Road (surrounding Balsall Heath Park) from the existing Sparkhill ward.

144 A new Springfield ward would comprise the existing Sparkhill ward, less the area broadly to the south of Woodstock Road, the area broadly bounded by Woodstock Road and Durham Road (surrounding Balsall Heath Park), as detailed previously, together with the area bounded by Wyke Green Road and Swanshurst Lane from the existing Moseley ward, the area bounded by Shaftmoor Lane and Olton Boulevard West from the existing Fox Hollies ward, the area bounded by Weston Lane and Warwick Road (A41) from the existing Small Heath ward, the area bounded by Yardley Wood Road and Brook Lane from the existing Billesley ward and the area broadly to the west of the River Cole from the existing Hall Green ward. Finally, under the City Council's consultation scheme a new Bordesley Green ward was proposed, which would comprise the existing Small Heath ward, less the area to the south of Coventry Road, surrounding Small Heath Park, and the area broadly to the west of Charles Road and Muntz Street, together with the areas to the south of the railway line (less the area surrounding Bachelors Farm Recreation Ground) from the existing Nechells and Washwood Heath wards, as discussed earlier. The remaining parts of the existing Small Heath ward would form part of the proposed Stechford and Yardley wards, as discussed later.

145 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Bordesley Green, Moseley, Small Heath and Springfield wards would contain 9% more, 7% more, 5% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (7% more, 6% more, 3% more and 3% fewer by 2006).

146 The Conservatives' revised Moseley ward would be the same as the proposals put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme. However, they proposed broadly retaining the southern boundary, therefore not incorporating the area to the north of Howard Road from the existing Brandwood ward. The Conservatives' revised Small Heath ward would also be broadly similar to that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to an alternative western boundary, whereby that area between Raglan Road and Pershore Road would be transferred from the existing Edgbaston ward, as detailed earlier and a marginally different southern boundary. The proposed Springfield ward would also be broadly similar to that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to an alternative southern boundary whereby the area surrounding Vimy Road would also be transferred from the existing Billesley ward. Finally, the Conservatives also proposed a new Bordesley Green ward, which was identical to that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to the breaching of the River Cole as part of the eastern boundary.

147 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Bordesley Green, Moseley, Small Heath and Springfield wards would contain 7%, 4%, 7% and 9% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5%, 3%, 4% and 7% more by 2006).

148 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Moseley & King's Heath ward, which was broadly similar to the proposed Moseley ward put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, subject to the retention of the southern boundary and a marginally different boundary in the north-east. They proposed a new Balsall Heath & Sparkbrook ward, based on the existing Sparkbrook ward, less the areas broadly bounded by Glovers Road and Jenkins Street and the area surrounding Walford Road, together with the area bounded by Pershore Road and Raglan Road from the existing Edgbaston ward, the area broadly bounded by Mary Street, Edward Street and the River Rea from the existing Moseley

ward, and the area surrounding Nelson Mandela School from the existing Sparkhill ward. They proposed a revised Sparkhill ward, which would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly to the west of Woodstock Road and surrounding Nelson Mandela School, together with the area surrounding Walford Road from the existing Sparkbrook ward, the area surrounding Golden Hillock Secondary School from the existing Small Heath ward, the area bounded by Wyke Green Road and Swanshurst Lane from the existing Moseley ward and the area surrounding Dovey Road from the existing Hall Green ward. Finally, the Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Small Heath ward, largely based on the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, as discussed earlier, and the areas surrounding Golden Hillock Secondary School, Birmingham Railway Museum and Havelock Road, together with the area broadly bounded by Glovers Road and Jenkins Street from the existing Sparkbrook ward, as detailed earlier. The remaining part of the of the existing Small Heath ward would form part of the proposed Acock's Green and Fox Hollies wards, as discussed later.

149 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Balsall Heath & Sparkbrook, Moseley & King's Heath, Small Heath and Sparkhill wards would contain 4%, 2%, 6% and 6% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3%, 1%, 4% and 4% more than the average by 2006).

150 Three submissions were received in relation to the Balsall Heath area. Balsall Heath Forum put forward proposals for a ward which encompassed the neighbourhood area of Balsall Heath. St Paul's Community Project expressed the view that the whole of Balsall Heath should be contained within the same city ward due to the strong community links which exist. A local resident also proposed a modification in this area. He argued that residents in the Alder Road, Birchwood Road and Newport Road areas have more in common with Balsall Heath.

151 Two representations were received in relation to the Moseley area. A joint submission was received from Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society, which proposed a revised Moseley ward, which it stated comprised the distinct area of Moseley. A local resident also proposed a modification in the Moseley area, requesting that the ward be extended northwards to take in the area finishing at the northern end of Church Road.

152 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, largely based on our conclusions elsewhere in the city, coupled with the level of consensus achieved between these two sets of proposals.

153 We propose adopting the City Council's consultation scheme's Bordesley Green ward, which is identical to that proposed by the Conservatives, subject to an alternative eastern boundary. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified the River Cole as a strong boundary and we consider that the Conservatives' proposal to breach the river in this area would not provide for the best reflection of community identity. We do however propose an amendment between the proposed Bordesley Green and Nechells wards, as detailed earlier. Having identified the River Cole as a strong boundary in this area, we looked at the possibility of utilising it as a southern boundary for Bordesley Green ward, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. However, this would result in the proposed Bordesley Green ward containing 17% more electors per councillor than the city average by 2006 and we are not of the view that there is sufficient justification in this case to accept such a high level of electoral inequality for an urban area such as Birmingham.

154 We propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Moseley ward, which is broadly similar to that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrat scheme, but provides for a better level of electoral equality than the proposals under the City Council's consultation scheme. It would also be supported by a local resident and broadly supported by Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society. Officers from

the Committee having visited the area, we consider that the proposals in this area utilise strong boundaries. We are also of the view that King's Park should form part of the revised Moseley ward as proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives. We did look at the possibility of incorporating the area broadly to the south of Woodlands Road in the proposed Moseley ward as proposed by Central Moseley Neighbourhood Forum and The Moseley Society. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are of the view that there would be merit in this area forming part of Moseley ward, however, this would involve the transfer of a large number of electors and have a significantly negative impact on electoral equality. We are therefore not minded to put this forward as part of our draft recommendations.

155 Largely based on our conclusions elsewhere in the city, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Small Heath ward. This ward is broadly similar to that proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme, utilises strong boundaries and would be broadly supported by Balsall Heath Forum, St Paul's Community Project and a local resident. We would welcome further views on this proposal at Stage Three.

156 Finally, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Springfield ward, subject to some minor amendments in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries. We propose that the area surrounding The Hurst be transferred from the proposed Springfield ward to the proposed Billesley ward from which its access is served. We also propose an amendment to the eastern boundary of the proposed Springfield ward in order for the River Cole to be used as a boundary. This results in properties 278–426 Sarehole Road being transferred from the proposed Springfield ward to the proposed Hall Green ward.

157 These proposals for Springfield ward were broadly similar to those under the City Council's consultation scheme and, on the whole, utilised strong boundaries. However, we did look closely at two aspects of this proposed ward. Firstly, the Liberal Democrats maintain the use of the River Cole in this area while the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals breach it. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are content that the river can be breached, with the areas either side being somewhat similar in nature and linked by Forman's Road. As discussed earlier, there are a number of strong boundaries in Birmingham and it would not be possible to utilise all of them in their entirety. Therefore, in taking a consistent approach to this issue, on balance, we are of the view that the identities and interests of the local community would not be adversely affected if the river were to be breached in this case, as it facilitates a better scheme overall. The other area we looked at was surrounding Vimy Road. Under the Conservatives' proposals, this area is combined with areas to its north, while the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrats locate it with areas to its south. As already outlined, we propose basing our proposed Springfield ward on the Conservatives' proposals, therefore combining the Vimy Road area with areas to its north, however, we welcome further views on this recommendation, particularly from local residents, at Stage Three.

158 Under our draft recommendations, Bordesley Green, Moseley, Small Heath and Springfield wards would contain 8%, 4%, 7% and 6% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (6%, 3%, 4% and 4% more by 2006).

Acock's Green, Sheldon and Yardley wards

159 The existing wards of Acock's Green, Sheldon and Yardley are situated in the east of the city. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Acock's Green, Sheldon and Yardley wards contain 6% more, 15% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% more, 17% fewer and 9% fewer than the average by 2006).

160 At Stage One, the proposals in this area were broadly identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, providing for the creation of three three-

member wards. Both schemes were identical in relation to a revised Sheldon ward, which would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Gilbertstone Recreation Ground from the existing Yardley ward and the area broadly bounded by Church Road and Coventry Road (A45) from the existing Acock's Green ward. The proposals were also identical with regard to the proposed Yardley ward which would be largely based on the existing Acock's Green ward, less the areas bounded by Church Road and Coventry Road (A45) and broadly bounded by Stockfield Road, Cambridge Way and the southern edge of Yardley Cemetery. The proposed ward would include the area bounded by Bordesley Green East and Station Road from the existing Yardley ward and the area broadly to the south of Coventry Road from the existing Small Heath ward. The remaining part of the existing Acock's Green ward would form part of a revised Acock's Green ward, as discussed later.

161 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the existing Yardley ward would largely form the basis for a new Stechford ward which would comprise the existing Yardley ward, less the areas surrounding Gilbertstone Recreation Ground and broadly bounded by Bordesley Green East and Station Road, together with the area broadly to the south of the River Cole from the existing Hodge Hill ward and the area surrounding Bachelors Farm Recreation Ground, from the existing Washwood Heath ward.

162 The City Council's consultation scheme proposals were the same as this, subject to the retention of the River Cole as a western boundary.

163 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Sheldon, Stechford and Yardley wards would contain 3% fewer, 1% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% fewer, 1% fewer and 4% more by 2006).

164 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Sheldon, Stechford and Yardley wards would contain 3% fewer, 3% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% fewer, 1% more and 4% more by 2006).

165 The Liberal Democrats proposed broadly retaining the existing three-member wards in this area. The revised Acock's Green ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly bounded by Moor Road and Wash Lane, together with the area surrounding Birmingham Railway Museum from the existing Small Heath ward. The revised Yardley ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding Outmore Road, together with the area broadly bounded by Moor Road and Wash Lane from the existing Acock's Green ward. Finally, a revised Sheldon ward would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Outmore Road from the existing Yardley ward. The Liberal Democrats acknowledged that the wards in this area are constrained by the railway line, River Cole, the City boundary and Warwick Road.

166 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Acock's Green, Sheldon and Yardley wards would contain 1%, 2% and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3%, 4% and 3% fewer by 2006).

167 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals. The proposed Sheldon and Yardley wards were identical under both proposals, utilise strong boundaries and provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality. This, coupled with our proposals for surrounding wards, lead us to conclude that, on balance, these proposals provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. However, we do propose one minor amendment in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary. We propose that properties 39-79 Moat Lane be transferred from the proposed Sheldon ward to the proposed Stechford ward. As mentioned earlier, we did look at the possibility of utilising the River Cole as a boundary in this area (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats), however it would have resulted in unacceptably high levels of electoral inequality,

particularly in the case of the proposed Bordesley Green ward, which we do not consider to be justified in this case.

168 In relation to the proposed Stechford ward, we note that again the proposals are identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, subject to an alternative western boundary. As mentioned in relation to the proposed Bordesley Green ward, we concur with the proposal put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme that the River Cole forms a strong boundary in this area. We consider that the Conservatives' proposed boundary would not provide for the best reflection of community identity.

169 While we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals in this area have merit, we were not persuaded that they provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. However, they have broad similarities to the City Council's and the Conservatives' proposals, particularly in relation to the use of the River Cole and railway lines as boundaries.

170 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Sheldon, Stechford and Yardley wards would contain 4% fewer, 1% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (5% fewer, 1% fewer and 4% more by 2006).

Billesley, Brandwood, Fox Hollies and Hall Green wards

171 The existing wards of Billesley, Brandwood, Fox Hollies and Hall Green are situated in the south-east of the city. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Billesley, Brandwood, Fox Hollies and Hall Green wards contain 6% more, 1% more, 8% fewer and 7% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% more, 8% more, 9% fewer and 5% more than the average by 2006).

172 The proposals in this area were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals. Under both schemes, the existing Fox Hollies ward would form the basis of a revised Acock's Green ward, less the area broadly bounded by Shaftmoor Lane and Olton Boulevard West, together with the area broadly bounded by Stockfield Road, Cambridge Way and the southern edge of Yardley Cemetery from the existing Acock's Green ward, as detailed above. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed broadly retaining the existing Hall Green ward, subject to an amendment to the western boundary to include the area to the west of the River Cole in the proposed Springfield ward, as detailed above, and to include that area surrounding Trittiford Mill Park from the existing Billesley ward. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised Billesley ward, largely based on the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Trittiford Mill Park and bounded by Yardley Wood Road and Brook Lane, together with the area surrounding Wheeler's Lane from the existing Brandwood ward.

173 Finally, the City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised Brandwood ward, largely based on the existing ward, less the areas to the north of Howard Road, surrounding Wheeler's Lane and surrounding Baldwin Road.

174 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Acock's Green, Billesley, Brandwood and Hall Green wards would contain 4% more, 2% more, 5% fewer and 6% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% more, equal to the average, 1% more and 4% more by 2006).

175 The Conservatives' proposals were the same for Hall Green ward as those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to the amendment involving the Trittiford Mill Park area, therefore retaining the River Cole as a boundary. The Conservatives' proposals for Billesley ward were identical to those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to the retention of the eastern boundary (River Cole) and the transfer of the

area surrounding Vimy Road to the proposed Springfield ward. Finally, the Conservatives' proposals for Brandwood ward were identical to those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme, subject to the retention of the existing northern boundary. Under both of these city-wide schemes, the remaining part of Brandwood ward would form part of the proposed King's Norton ward, as detailed below.

176 Under the Conservatives' proposals Acock's Green, Billesley, Brandwood and Hall Green wards would contain 4% more, 2% more, 2% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% more, 1% more, 4% more and 1% fewer by 2006).

177 The Liberal Democrats proposed broadly retaining the existing wards in this area. They proposed a revised Fox Hollies ward, based on the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Havelock Road from the existing Small Heath ward. The revised Hall Green ward would again be based on the existing ward, less the area surrounding Dovey Road. The revised Billesley ward would be based on the existing ward, less Chesterwood Road, while the revised Brandwood ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding Lindsworth Road, together with Chesterwood Road from the existing Billesley ward. The remaining part of Brandwood ward would form part of the revised King's Norton ward, as detailed below.

178 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Billesley, Brandwood, Fox Hollies and Hall Green wards would contain 6% more, 6% fewer, 1% fewer and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% more, 1% more, 2% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

179 We received one further representation in relation to this area. Billesley Residents' Association opposed changes to the existing Billesley ward which would result in an amalgamation with Sparkhill ward.

180 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals, which were broadly similar to those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and in part, the Liberal Democrats. These proposals utilise strong boundaries and provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality. However, we do propose two minor amendments in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries, as discussed earlier. We propose that the area surrounding The Hurst be transferred from the proposed Springfield ward to the proposed Billesley ward, from which its access is served. We also propose an amendment to the eastern boundary of the proposed Springfield ward in order for the River Cole to be used as a boundary. This results in properties 278–426 Sarehole Road being transferred to the proposed Hall Green ward from the proposed Springfield ward.

181 The proposed Acock's Green ward was identical under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals and, on balance, we have been persuaded that it provides for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. We did note, however, that in the north of the ward the railway line is breached and we were keen to ensure that there were adequate crossing points at this part of the railway line. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are aware of a number of crossing points that could be accessed by road or foot and we are therefore content to put this proposal forward as part of our draft recommendations.

182 We note that the proposed Hall Green ward was broadly similar under each of the city-wide schemes submitted at Stage One. Based on our conclusions elsewhere in the city, we were unable to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals in full. We were also not persuaded by elements of the City Council's consultation scheme proposals, particularly in relation to the southern part of the western boundary where it moves away from the use of the River Cole. We concur with the views expressed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats that the River Cole provides for a strong boundary in this area, and therefore propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Hall Green ward, subject to the minor amendment with Springfield ward, as detailed earlier.

183 Based on our conclusions regarding the use of the River Cole as a boundary in this area and our proposals to the north, we propose basing our draft recommendations for Billesley ward on the Conservatives' proposals, which again were broadly similar to those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Liberal Democrats. However, we do propose an amendment to the northern boundary with Springfield ward as mentioned earlier. We note the concerns of Billesley Residents' Association with regard to the proposed Billesley ward. While under existing arrangements Billesley ward contains an acceptable level of electoral equality, we are unable to look at any one area in isolation and in order to facilitate a scheme for the whole of the city, all the wards require an element of change. In addition, having visited the area, we do not consider that the Billesley and Sparkhill areas are significantly different in nature and are of the view that it would not be too detrimental to include parts of those areas in the same city ward.

184 Finally, largely based on our conclusions in surrounding wards, we propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Brandwood ward. Again, all three of the city-wide schemes are similar in relation to this proposed ward, particularly those put forward under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the Conservatives.

185 Under our draft recommendations, Acock's Green, Billesley, Brandwood and Hall Green wards would contain 4% more, 4% more, 2% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% more, 3% more, 4% more and equal to the average by 2006).

Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards

186 The existing wards of Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley are situated in the south-west of the city. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards contain 13% fewer, 1% fewer, 17% more and 17% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (18% fewer, 2% fewer, 19% more and 19% fewer than the average by 2006).

187 At Stage One, the proposals for this area were significantly different under each of the three city-wide schemes. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised three-member Bartley Green ward which would comprise the existing ward, together with the area bounded by Burnel Road and Bourn Brook (surrounding Bottetourt Road) from the existing Harborne ward, and the areas broadly to the south of California Way and broadly to the west of Shenley Lane and north of Brook Lane (surrounding Ley Hill Recreation Ground) from the existing Weoley ward. A revised three-member Weoley ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly to the south of California Way and broadly to the west of Shenley Lane and north of Brook Lane (surrounding Ley Hill Recreation Ground) as detailed earlier, together with the area broadly to the south-west of Weoley Avenue and Weoley Park Road from the existing Selly Oak ward, the area surrounding Fitzroy Road, to the north of Beeches Road from the existing Longbridge ward, as detailed later and the Park View Road area from the existing Northfield ward, as detailed later.

188 A revised three-member Selly Oak ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area so the south-west of Weoley Avenue and Weoley Park Road, as detailed above, and the area broadly to the south of Selly Oak Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the railway). Finally, a revised three-member Bournville ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding King's Heath Park, as detailed earlier, and the area to the south of Middleton Hall Road (B4121) and Barron Road, as detailed later, together with the area broadly to the south of Selly Oak Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the Railway) from the existing Selly Oak ward, as detailed earlier, and the area north of Church Road/Bunbury Road (surrounding Victoria Common) from the existing Northfield ward, as detailed later. The remaining parts of the existing Bournville ward would form part of revised King's Norton and Northfield wards, as detailed later.

189 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards would contain 5% more, 7% more, equal to the average and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (1% fewer, 5% more, 3% more and 4% fewer by 2006).

190 The Conservatives proposed a revised three-member Bartley Green ward which would be based on the existing ward, together with the areas broadly bounded by Shenley Lane and Shenley Hill (and including Ley Hill Recreation Ground) and broadly to the south of California Way from the existing Weoley ward. A revised three-member Weoley ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly bounded by Shenley Lane and Shenley Hill (and including Ley Hill Recreation Ground) and broadly to the south of California Way, as detailed earlier. It would also include the area bounded by Brushwood Road and Witherford Way (surrounding Valley Parkway Cricket Ground) from the existing Selly Oak ward, the area surrounding Fitzroy Road, to the north of Beeches Road from the existing Longbridge ward, the area surrounding the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital from the existing Bournville ward and the area surrounding Park Hill Road from the existing Northfield ward.

191 A revised three-member Selly Oak ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area bounded by Brushwood Road and Witherford Way (surrounding Valley Parkway Cricket Ground), as detailed earlier, the area broadly to the south of Selly Oak Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the railway) and the area broadly to the south of Dogpool Lane. Finally, a revised three-member Bournville ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area surrounding King's Heath Park, the area surrounding the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, the area broadly to the north of St Laurence Road, to the south of the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and the area broadly bounded by the railway line and B4121 (surrounding Longfellow Road and Ingoldsby Road). It would include the areas broadly to the south of Selly Oak Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the railway) and the area broadly to the south of Dogpool Lane from the existing Selly Oak ward, as detailed earlier and the area surrounding Claine's Road from the existing Northfield ward, as detailed later.

192 Under the Conservatives' proposals, Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards would contain 6% fewer, equal to the average, 7% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (11% fewer, 1% fewer, 8% more and 3% fewer by 2006).

193 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised three-member Bartley Green ward which would comprise the existing ward, together with the area bounded by Burnel Road and Bourn Brook from the existing Harborne ward and the areas to the north of Weoley Castle (Alwold Road area) and west of Shenfield Lane (north of Ley Hill Recreation Ground) from the existing Weoley ward. In addition, they stated that 'This should really be called Weoley West ward, but that would really confuse people'. A new three-member Northfield ward would comprise the existing Weoley ward, less the areas to the north of Weoley Castle and west of Shenfield Lane (north of Ley Hill Recreation Ground), as detailed above, together with the area broadly to the north of Quarry Lane, Park View Road and the railway line from the existing Northfield ward and the areas bounded by Norman Road and Bunbury Road and surrounding Hole Farm Road from the existing Bournville ward.

194 A revised three-member Selly Oak ward would comprise the existing ward, less the Selly Park area, south of Bourn Brook, as detailed above, and the area broadly to the south of Selly Oak Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the railway line), together with the area to the south of Bourn Brook (surrounding Reservoir Road) from the existing Harborne ward. Finally, the Liberal Democrats proposed a revised three-member Bournville ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the areas bounded by Norman Road and Bunbury Road and surrounding Hole Farm Road, as detailed above, together with the area broadly to the south of Selly Oak

Hospital (bounded by Bristol Road and the railway line) from the existing Selly Oak ward, as detailed above.

195 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Bartley Green, Bournville, Northfield and Selly Oak wards would contain 5% more, 5% more, 4% more and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to the average, 3% more, 2% more and 5% fewer by 2006).

196 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on a combination of each of the city-wide schemes that were submitted at Stage One. We note that there is minimal consensus between each of the city-wide schemes, and based on the fact that we have received limited community-based evidence we are minded to devise a scheme largely based on strength of boundaries and acceptable levels of electoral equality. We have, however, identified any areas of consensus between the three schemes in order to assist us in our proposals.

197 During their visit to this area, officers from the Committee looked carefully at each of the city-wide schemes, and identified some key boundaries such as Bristol Road/Bristol Road South, Weoley Avenue/Weoley Park Road, Bourn Brook and the railway line. Having identified these, we were able to locate where these boundaries had been respected under each of the city-wide schemes.

198 We therefore propose a revised three-member Bartley Green ward based on the proposals submitted by the Liberal Democrats, with an amendment based on the proposals submitted by the Conservatives, together with our own amendment. We note that there was consensus between all three schemes that Bourn Brook be used as a northern boundary for this revised ward, and we concur with this view. We also consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to transfer the Alword Road area to the proposed Bartley Green ward provides for a good reflection of community identity. However, we propose adopting the Conservatives' eastern boundary, which we consider provides for a better reflection of community identity and a more clearly identifiable boundary, uniting the whole of the Spiceland Road area in the same city ward. We also propose transferring properties 17-23 Merrit's Hill from the proposed Bartley Green ward to the proposed Weoley ward in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary.

199 We propose basing the revised three-member Selly Oak ward on elements of each of the three city-wide schemes. It therefore comprises the City Council's consultation/Conservatives' northern boundary (subject to an amendment to the western part to utilise Bourn Brook as proposed by the Liberal Democrats), the City Council's consultation scheme's western boundary, the Conservatives' southern boundary, and an eastern boundary which was identical under each of the city-wide proposals. The proposed ward, in our view, utilises strong boundaries and provides for an acceptable level of electoral equality.

200 Our proposed three-member Weoley ward would be predominantly based on the Conservatives' proposals but would again encompass part of the City Council's consultation scheme and the Liberal Democrats' scheme. Based on our conclusions regarding the surrounding wards, coupled with our view that Bristol Road/Bristol Road South forms a strong boundary, we consider that our proposed ward provides for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. The revised Weoley ward would therefore comprise the Conservatives' western and southern boundaries, the City Council's consultation scheme's northern boundary and an eastern boundary based on elements of each of the schemes, resulting in the use of Bristol Road/Bristol Road south.

201 Finally, a revised three-member Bournville ward would be largely based on the Conservatives' proposals, with an amendment to the western boundary to utilise Bristol Road/Bristol Road South as proposed under the City Council's consultation scheme and by the

Liberal Democrats. We consider that on the whole this proposed ward utilises strong boundaries such as Bristol Road/Bristol Road South and the railway line and provides for an acceptable level of electoral equality. As mentioned below, in relation to the proposed King's Norton ward, we looked at the possibility of utilising the railway line in its entirety as a boundary in this area. However, this would result in Bournville ward containing 11% more electors per councillor than the city average by 2006 and we do not consider that this level of electoral inequality can be justified in a dense urban area such as Birmingham.

202 Under our draft recommendations, Bartley Green, Bournville, Selly Oak and Weoley wards would contain 3% more, 2% more, 4% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (2% fewer, 1% more, 6% more and 2% fewer by 2006).

King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards

203 The existing wards of King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield are situated in the far south of the city. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards contain 17% fewer, 21% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the city average respectively (18% fewer, 19% more and 4% fewer than the average by 2006).

204 At Stage One, the proposals for this area under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals were broadly similar, providing for the creation of three three-member wards. The City Council's consultation scheme proposed a revised King's Norton ward, which would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Baldwin Road from the existing Brandwood ward and the area to the south of Middleton Hall Road (B4121) from the existing Bournville ward. The revised Northfield ward would be based on the existing ward, less the areas to the north of Church Road/Bunbury Road (surrounding Victoria Common) and broadly bounded by Tessall Lane, Josiah Road and Beeches Road (to the east of North Worcestershire Golf Course), together with the area surrounding Thurlestone Road (to the east of the railway line from the existing Longbridge ward and Baron Road from the existing Bournville ward. Finally, the revised Longbridge ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Thurlestone Road (to the east of the railway line) and the area surrounding Fitzroy Road, to the north of Beeches Road, as detailed above, together with the area broadly bounded by Tessall Lane, Josiah Road and Beeches Road, less the Park View Road area (to the east of North Worcestershire Golf Course) from the existing Northfield ward.

205 Under the City Council's consultation scheme, King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards would contain 2% fewer, 2% more and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3% fewer, equal to the average and 2% more by 2006).

206 The Conservatives' revised King's Norton ward would comprise the existing ward, together with the area surrounding Baldwin Road from the existing Brandwood ward, the area broadly bounded by the railway line and B4121 (surrounding Longfellow Road and Ingoldsby Road) from the existing Bournville ward and the area bounded by Lilley Lane and Alvechurch Road from the existing Northfield ward. The revised Northfield ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas bounded by Lilley Lane and Alvechurch Road, broadly bounded by Tessall Lane, Josiah Road and Beeches Road (to the east of North Worcestershire Golf Course) and surrounding Claines Road, together with the areas surrounding Thurlestone Road (to the east of the railway line and Kemshead Avenue from the existing Longbridge ward and the area broadly to the north of St Laurence Road, to the south of the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital from the existing Bournville ward. Finally, the revised Longbridge ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Thurlestone Road (to the east of the railway line), Kemshead Avenue and surrounding Fitzroy Road, to the north of Beeches Road, together with the area broadly bounded by Tessall Lane, Josiah Road and Beeches Road, less the Park View Road area (to the east of North Worcestershire Golf Course) from the existing Northfield ward.

207 Under the Conservatives' proposals, King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards would contain 5% more, equal to the average and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (4% more, 1% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

208 The Liberal Democrats proposed the creation of three three-member wards in this area and identified the railway line as a key boundary. The existing King's Norton ward would be broadly retained, together with the area surrounding Lindsforth Road from the existing Brandwood ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Longbridge ward, which would encompass a significant part of the existing Northfield ward, the area broadly to the south-east of the railway line, together with the area broadly to the east of Cliff Rock Road (surrounding Cofton Park) from the existing Longbridge ward. The remaining part of the existing Longbridge ward, together with part of the existing Northfield ward, the area broadly bounded by the railway line, Tessall Road, Josiah Road and Beeches Road, would combine to form a new Frankley ward.

209 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, Frankley, King's Norton and Longbridge wards would contain 2% more, 2% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the city average respectively (equal to the average, 4% fewer and 1% fewer by 2006).

210 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals, which were broadly similar to those put forward by the City Council under its consultation scheme. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, and given our conclusions for surrounding wards, we are of the view that the Conservatives' proposals provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria.

211 In relation to the proposed King's Norton ward, we concur with the view expressed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats that the railway line provides for a strong northern boundary. However, we are unable to use the railway in its entirety as proposed by the Liberal Democrats due to the impact that this would have on electoral equality. We therefore propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed ward. As a consequence of this, we also propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed Northfield ward. This ward reflects the statutory criteria and, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are content that it is formed by strong boundaries.

212 One of the key issues relating to this area was regarding the proposals surrounding the existing Longbridge ward. The proposals were broadly similar under the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, but the Liberal Democrats' proposals were significantly different. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we were able to identify some significant boundaries, the key ones being Bristol Road South, Beeches Road and the railway line. Based on this conclusion, we have not been persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposals provide for the best reflection of community identity, being largely based on less-defined boundaries. While the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals both utilise these boundaries, we consider that the City Council's consultation scheme's eastern boundary is not as strong as that proposed by the Conservatives as it isolates Kemshead Avenue from the rest of Northfield ward, from which it is accessed.

213 Under our draft recommendations, King's Norton, Longbridge and Northfield wards would contain 5% more, equal to the average and 4% more electors per councillor than the city average respectively (3% more, 1% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

Electoral cycle

214 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan boroughs have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

215 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 117 to 120;
- there should be 40 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward.

216 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on a combination of the City Council's consultation scheme and the Conservatives' proposals, but propose to depart from this in the following areas:

- We propose basing the revised Bartley Green ward on the Liberal Democrats' proposals;
- We propose an amendment between the proposed Aston and Perry Barr wards and Handsworth and Perry Barr wards in order to utilise the railway line as a boundary as proposed by the Liberal Democrats;
- We propose an amendment between the proposed Billesley and Springfield wards and Sheldon and Stechford wards in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries;
- We propose amendments between the proposed Nechells and Bordesley Green, Edgbaston and Ladywood and Edgbaston and Harborne wards in order to provide for a better level of electoral equality;
- We propose an amendment between the proposed Hall Green and Springfield wards in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary
- We propose utilising Bourn Brook as a southern boundary of the proposed Harborne ward as proposed by the Liberal Democrats;
- We propose revised Selly Oak and Weoley wards based on elements of each of the city-wide schemes received at Stage One;
- We propose a number of minor amendments throughout the city in order to ensure that existing and proposed boundaries adhere to ground detail and are easily identifiable.

217 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	117	120	117	120
Number of wards	39	40	39	40
Average number of electors per councillor	6,174	6,020	6,215	6,060
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	13	1	14	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	5	1	5	0

218 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Birmingham City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 13 to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Birmingham City Council should comprise 120 councillors serving 40 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Parish Council electoral arrangements

219 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different city wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the city. However, our draft recommendations would not require any consequential warding of New Frankley in Birmingham parish and we therefore do not propose any change to its electoral arrangements.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Birmingham

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

220 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Birmingham contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 16 December 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

221 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
Birmingham Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

222 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft recommendations for Birmingham: Detailed mapping

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

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

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Birmingham.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Birmingham: Key map

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.