

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire in Wiltshire

Further electoral review

September 2006

Translations and other formats

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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. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)

Robin Gray

Joan Jones CBE

Ann M. Kelly

Professor Colin Mellors

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews 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 and town councils.

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of West Wiltshire is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, eight wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. Development in the wards of Westbury Ham and Trowbridge Park has led to particularly poor levels of electoral equality, with the councillors in these wards representing 34% and 26% more electors than the district average respectively.

This review was conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed a scheme based on an option in the rural areas that the District Council had consulted on, before submitting a different scheme to us. We proposed 24 wards, in a pattern of single and multi-member configurations. We attempted not to combine urban and rural areas although in Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon we combined a number of surrounding parishes with the towns to provide a better level of electoral equality. In the towns where no proposals were submitted to us we formed our own warding pattern which provided good levels of electoral equality.

Responses to consultation

We received 256 submissions during Stage Three. Alternative proposals of 37, 46 and 48 members were made for council size. We also received two new district-wide schemes. Our recommendations were broadly opposed where we had proposed combining parishes with parts of some towns. We received the most opposition to our proposed Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley wards.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The District Council projected a 10% increase in the electorate of West Wiltshire district between 2004 and 2009, which is the period over which we would seek to provide an improvement in the levels of electoral equality. The accuracy of this growth was questioned by respondents during Stage One. The District Council therefore provided some further information to support its projection and we were satisfied to use the figures when forming our recommendations. In Stage Three a local resident again questioned the figures used. The figures were subsequently updated by the council, giving a projected electorate of 102,938 by 2009.

Council size

During Stage One we proposed retaining the existing council size of 44. During Stage Three, the District Council and Trowbridge Town Council proposed an increase in council size from 44 to 48. A local resident proposed a council size of 46 and Councillor Hames (Holt ward) proposed a decrease to 37. We did not consider the arguments provided were persuasive enough to move away from our draft recommendations. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

General analysis

We note the strong opposition to combining parts of Trowbridge Town with Southwick and North Bradley parishes. However, we do not consider we received enough evidence to justify adopting alternative wards, as these would either have a significant knock-on effect in Trowbridge or result in poor electoral equality. We propose confirming our draft recommendations as final, with the exception of transferring Heywood Village parish ward to the proposed Ethandune ward and a ward boundary change between Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before **24 October 2006**. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667 Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

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

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall	1	The existing Atworth & Whitley ward (Atworth parish and the existing Shaw & Whitley parish ward of Melksham Without parish); part of the existing Manor Vale ward (South Wraxall parish)
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	The existing Bradford North ward and part of the existing Bradford South ward (the proposed Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon parish)
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	Part of the existing Manor Vale ward (Westwood parish); part of the Southwick & Wingfield ward (Wingfield parish); Part of the existing Bradford South ward (the proposed Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon parish)
4	Dilton	1	Part of the existing Dilton Marsh ward (the Chapmanslade parish; the Dilton Marsh parish; the Upton Scudamore parish)
5	Ethandune	1	Part of the existing Ethandune ward (Bratton parish, Coulston parish, Edington parish; existing Heywood Village parish ward); part of the existing Summerham ward (West Ashton parish)
6	Holt & Hilperton	3	The existing Holt ward (Broughton Gifford parish; Holt parish); part of the existing Paxcroft ward (Hilperton parish; Staverton parish)
7	Manor Vale	1	Part of the existing Manor Vale ward (Limpley Stoke parish; Monkton Farleigh parish; Winsley parish)
8	Melksham East	2	Part of the existing Melksham Woodrow ward and part of the existing Melksham North ward (the proposed Melksham East parish ward of Melksham Without parish)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
9 Melksham Spa	2	The existing Melksham Spa ward and part of the existing Melksham North ward (the proposed Melksham Spa parish ward of Melksham Without parish)
10 Melksham Without	3	The existing Melksham Without ward and part of the existing Melksham North ward (the proposed Melksham Without parish ward of Melksham Without parish)
11 Mid Wylde Valley	1	The existing Mid Wylde Valley ward; part of the existing Shearwater ward (Bishopstrow parish; Norton Bavant parish)
12 Shearwater	1	Part of the existing Shearwater ward; part of the existing Dilton Marsh ward (Corsley parish)
13 Summerham	1	Bulkington parish; Great Hinton parish; Keevil parish; Semington parish; Steeple Ashton parish
14 Trowbridge & North Bradley	1	Part of the existing Trowbridge Drynham ward (the proposed Trowbridge Bradley Road parish ward of Trowbridge parish); North Bradley parish
15 Trowbridge & Southwick	1	Part of the existing Trowbridge College ward (Trowbridge Whiterow parish ward of Trowbridge parish); Southwick parish
16 Trowbridge Central	2	Part of the existing Trowbridge Adcroft ward; Part of the existing Trowbridge Drynham ward; part of the existing Trowbridge John of Gaunt ward (the proposed Trowbridge Central)
17 Trowbridge East	3	Part of the existing Trowbridge Drynham ward; part of the existing Trowbridge Park ward (the proposed Trowbridge East ward)
18 Trowbridge North East	2	Part of the existing Trowbridge Adcroft ward; part of the existing Trowbridge Park ward (the proposed Trowbridge North East ward)

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
19	Trowbridge North West	1	Part of the existing Trowbridge John of Gaunt ward (the proposed Trowbridge North West ward)
20	Trowbridge South West	2	Part of the existing Trowbridge College ward; part Trowbridge John of Gaunt ward (the proposed Trowbridge South West ward)
21	Warminster East	3	The existing Warminster East ward
22	Warminster West	3	The existing Warminster West ward
23	Westbury Ham	2	The existing Westbury Ham parish ward; Heywood Storridge parish ward of Heywood parish
24	Westbury Laverton	3	The existing Westbury Laverton parish ward

Notes

- 1 The whole district is parished. The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
- 2 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final recommendations for West Wiltshire district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall	1	2,393	2,393	13	2,454	2,454	5
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	4,426	2,213	4	4,976	2,488	6
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	4,323	2,162	2	4,408	2,204	-6
4	Dilton	1	2,278	2,278	7	2,360	2,360	1
5	Ethandune	1	2,409	2,409	13	2,547	2,547	9
6	Holt & Hilperton	3	5,915	1,972	-7	6,905	2,302	-2
7	Manor Vale	1	2,480	2,480	17	2,518	2,518	8
8	Melksham East	2	4,615	2,308	8	4,752	2,376	2
9	Melksham Spa	2	4,615	2,308	8	4,684	2,342	0
10	Melksham Without	3	5,633	1,878	-12	7,456	2,485	6
11	Mid Wylve Valley	1	2,220	2,220	4	2,317	2,317	-1

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Shearwater	1	2,419	2,419	14	2,455	2,455	5
13 Summerham	1	2,272	2,272	7	2,382	2,382	2
14 Trowbridge & North Bradley	1	2,322	2,322	9	2,314	2,314	-1
15 Trowbridge & Southwick	1	2,246	2,246	6	2,260	2,260	-3
16 Trowbridge Central	2	4,477	2,239	5	4,770	2,385	2
17 Trowbridge East	3	5,136	1,712	-20	6,952	2,317	-1
18 Trowbridge North East	2	4,231	2,116	-1	4,467	2,234	-5
19 Trowbridge North West	1	2,169	2,169	2	2,190	2,190	-6
20 Trowbridge South West	2	4,437	2,219	4	4,629	2,315	-1
21 Warminster East	3	6,349	2,116	-1	6,832	2,277	-3
22 Warminster West	3	6,464	2,155	1	6,828	2,276	-3

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Westbury Ham	3	6,141	2,047	-4	6,917	2,306	-1
24 Westbury Laverton	2	3,621	1,811	-15	4,565	2,283	-2
Averages	–	–	2,127	–	–	2,340	–
Totals	44	93,591	–	–	102,938	–	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2004, electors in Westbury Laverton ward had 15% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while electors in Warminster West ward had 1% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the district of West Wiltshire.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make ongoing assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be a closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of West Wiltshire. The last review of West Wiltshire was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1999. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 22 October 1999 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2003.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of West Wiltshire is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful both in understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 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 any parish and town councils in the district. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the district or parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. 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.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as nearly as possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make-up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identities and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews, and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from another's. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, 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.

14 This review was conducted in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 12 July 2005 when we wrote to West Wiltshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Wiltshire Police Authority, the Wiltshire Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited West Wiltshire District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 October 2005.

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

17 Stage Three began on 21 February 2006 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire in Wiltshire*, and ended on 22 May 2006.

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

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The district of West Wiltshire contains the five towns of Trowbridge, Melksham, Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury and Warminster and 46 parishes. Significant growth is occurring in the district, particularly in and around the towns of Trowbridge and Westbury. Since the last review, electorate growth for the district as a whole exceeded what was projected for the five-year period between 1998 and 2003. A further 10% growth is expected between 2004 and 2009.

22 The electorate of the district is 93,591 (December 2004). The Council presently has 44 members who are elected from 25 wards. There are currently eight single-member wards, 15 two-member wards and two three-member wards. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a district average of 2,127 electors (93,591 divided by 44), which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,340 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (102,938 divided by 44).

23 During the last review of West Wiltshire the District Council forecast there would be an increase of approximately 5,071 electors between 1998 and 2003. However, electorate growth since that time has resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the district average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that the electoral variances across the district met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in eight of the 25 wards (32%) varies by more than 10% from the district average. The worst imbalance is in Westbury Ham ward where the councillor represents 34% more electors than the district average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of West Wiltshire District Council on 12 May 2005.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Atworth & Whitley	1	2,044	2,044	-4	2,093	2,093	-10
2	Bradford-on-Avon North	2	3,631	1,816	-15	3,859	1,930	-17
3	Bradford-on-Avon South	2	3,888	1,944	-9	4,281	2,141	-8
4	Dilton Marsh	2	4,292	2,146	1	4,371	2,186	-6
5	Ethandune	1	2,074	2,074	-2	2,113	2,113	-9
6	Holt	1	1,952	1,952	-8	2,069	2,069	-11
7	Manor Vale	2	3,780	1,890	-11	3,842	1,921	-18
8	Melksham North	2	4,332	2,166	2	4,666	2,333	0
9	Melksham Spa	2	4,374	2,187	3	4,443	2,222	-5
10	Melksham Without	2	4,154	2,077	-2	5,702	2,851	22
11	Melksham Woodrow	1	2,003	2,003	-6	2,081	2,081	-11
12	Mid Wylye Valley	1	2,019	2,019	-5	2,102	2,102	-10

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 Paxcroft	2	4,709	2,355	11	5,592	2,796	20
14 Shearwater	1	2,049	2,049	-4	2,094	2,094	-10
15 Southwick & Wingfield	1	1,747	1,747	-18	1,763	1,763	-24
16 Summerham	1	1,861	1,861	-13	2,060	2,060	-12
17 Trowbridge Adcroft	2	3,937	1,969	-7	4,402	2,201	-5
18 Trowbridge College	2	4,066	2,033	-4	4,250	2,125	-9
19 Trowbridge Drynham	2	4,866	2,433	14	5,110	2,555	10
20 Trowbridge John of Gaunt	2	4,027	2,014	-5	4,104	2,052	-12
21 Trowbridge Park	2	5,211	2,606	22	6,800	3,400	46
22 Warminster East	3	6,349	2,116	-1	6,832	2,277	-2
23 Warminster West	3	6,464	2,155	1	6,828	2,276	-2

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Westbury Ham	2	5,711	2,856	34	6,486	3,243	39
25 Westbury Laverton	2	4,051	2,026	-5	4,995	2,498	7
Averages	–	–	2,127	–	–	2,329	–
Totals	44	93,591	–	–	102,938	–	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2004, electors in Westbury Laverton ward had 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while electors in Westbury Ham ward had 34% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 22 submissions were received. We received partial schemes from the District Council and a local resident, Mr Morland. The District Council proposed an increase in council size of four, from 44 councillors to 48 councillors. The Council stated that due to time constraints it had been unable to produce complete proposals for the towns of Trowbridge, Warminster, Westbury and Melksham and the parish of Melksham Without. For these areas the Council allocated a number of councillors and requested that the Boundary Committee recommend its own warding arrangements. Mr Morland submitted two partial schemes based on the existing council size of 44 members.

26 We also received representations from 13 parish councils, two town councils, four councillors and the West Wiltshire District Council Labour group. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire in Wiltshire*.

27 In the absence of a district-wide scheme that was proposed locally, we formed our own draft recommendations in West Wiltshire taking into account the scheme the Council had considered under a council size of 44. We proposed a pattern of district wards that provided a good level of electoral equality across the district. We proposed that:

- West Wiltshire District Council should be served by 44 councillors, the same as at present, representing 24 wards, one fewer than at present.
- The boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries.
- There should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Melksham to reflect the proposed district wards. We also proposed a revised allocation of councillors between the existing Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton parish wards.

28 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 24 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average in 2004. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average by 2009.

4 Responses to consultation

29 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 257 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the District Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

West Wiltshire District Council

30 The District Council broadly objected to our proposals, which it considered paid little attention to community identity. However, during the consultation on the draft recommendations report, the District Council did not propose any alternative warding arrangements. Instead it endorsed Trowbridge Town Council's representation, which included a district-wide scheme and stated would better reflect community identities. The District Council objected to our proposal of a council size of 44.

Parish and town councils

31 Representations were received from 13 parish and town councils. Trowbridge Town Council proposed a district-wide scheme under a council size of 48. North Bradley and Southwick parish councils opposed the draft recommendations for the proposed wards of Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley and proposed a three-member ward comprising of Southwick, North Bradley, Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh, Upton Scudamore and Corsley parishes. However, they both conceded that a two-member ward would be more appropriate to rural areas. Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parish councils both supported the proposed arrangements for their respective areas. Wingfield Parish Council supported the proposed arrangements for the Bradford-on-Avon South ward. Holt and Broughton Gifford parish councils both opposed the proposed Holt & Hilperton district ward. Broughton Gifford Parish Council proposed a ward comprising of Holt and Broughton Gifford parishes, while Holt Parish Council proposed a ward comprising of Holt, Broughton Gifford, Atworth and Staverton parishes. Melksham Without Parish Council objected to the proposed arrangements and proposed alternative arrangements which included a detached ward. Melksham Without Parish Council also proposed a change to the parish electoral arrangements for the parish. Steeple Ashton and West Ashton parish councils objected to the proposed arrangements for their respective areas. Westbury Town Council supported the proposed arrangements for Westbury Town. Heywood Parish Council objected to Heywood Village parish ward being included in the proposed Westbury Ham & Heywood ward.

Other representations

32 A further 233 representations were received from councillors, local residents and other interested parties. A local resident, Mr Morland, refuted the electorate figures used in the draft recommendations. Mr Morland proposed a council size of 46 and under this scheme proposed some alternative warding arrangements. Councillor Hames (Holt ward) proposed a district-wide scheme based on a council size of 37 and argued that the proposed arrangements did not sufficiently observe community identities.

33 Two parish councillors from Southwick Parish Council, Councillor Conley (Dilton Marsh ward), Councillor Bower (Dilton Marsh ward) and Mr Robin Fewings of the North Bradley Scout Group all opposed the proposed arrangements for North Bradley and Southwick parishes. Two hundred and sixteen residents from Southwick and North Bradley parishes also opposed the proposed arrangements. Councillor Hewson (Bradford-on-Avon division) opposed the proposed arrangements for Bradford-on-Avon and proposed that Wingfield be included with Trowbridge rather than the proposed Bradford-on-Avon South ward. Councillor Clark (Paxcroft ward) opposed the proposed arrangements for the proposed Holt & Hilperton district ward and endorsed Trowbridge Town Council's submission for this area. Councillor Swabey (Ethandune ward) opposed the proposed arrangements and argued that West Ashton parish should be included in Ethandune ward.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

34 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire.

35 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for West Wiltshire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972

36 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'. 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 clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

37 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

38 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 should also be taken into account, and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

39 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries. We are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Electorate figures

40 As part of the previous review of West Wiltshire District Council, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 6% between 1998 and 2003. However, since the start of the previous review in 1998 and the start of this review (2005) the electorate has increased by 11%. There has been significant growth in Trowbridge and Westbury. This has resulted in a knock-on effect across the district, with many wards having substantially fewer electors per councillor than the district average. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecast figures for

the district for the year 2009 projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 10% from 93,591 to 102,497 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. It expected most of the growth to be in Melksham, Melksham Without, Staverton, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury.

41 During Stage One the Labour Group and a local resident, Mr Morland, stated that they considered the projected electorate figures were inaccurate. Mr Morland considered that the projected 2009 figures were too high and that the figures he had produced would be more accurate. The Labour Group considered that given the difficulty in projecting accurate forecasts it would be better to use existing electorate data.

42 We asked West Wiltshire District Council to respond to Mr Morland's concerns regarding the electorate forecasts. It stated that it had re-examined its calculations and that the slight arithmetical errors would not affect the figures used by the District Council as the areas where minor errors were found were background information and not used in the council's forecasting methodology.

43 We noted the concerns of both the Labour Group and Mr Morland with regard to the forecast figures and acknowledged the Labour Group's proposal to use only December 2004 data for the review. However, as stated in our *Guidance*, in reaching conclusions on its recommendations, the Boundary Committee for England is required by Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act to have regard not only to the current electorate of an area but also to changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over the next five years. This ensures that our recommendations do not relate to a single point in time, but take account of expected population movements in the short to medium term. We therefore used the District Council's figures when forming our draft recommendations.

44 During Stage Three, Mr Morland again queried the figures for both 2004 and 2009 in four existing wards, Atworth & Whitley, Melksham North, Trowbridge Drynam, Trowbridge Park, and Westbury Town. Mr Morland stated that 15 electors from the existing Atworth & Whitley ward had been included in error in the existing Melksham North ward and that approximately an additional 150 electors had been included in error in the existing Trowbridge Park ward whereas this number of electors should have been included in the existing Trowbridge Drynam ward. Mr Morland also stated that 'on the basis of the District Council's methodology, the addition of 209 dwellings at Westbury Laverton adds 410 [electors] to the 2009 forecast electorate for the town of Westbury'. We therefore requested further information from the District Council on the accuracy of the figures supplied.

45 The District Council confirmed that Mr Morland's calculations were indeed correct and supplied us with revised figures which we have used in forming our final recommendations. The revised figures vary only slightly in Trowbridge and around Melksham and, with the exception of the electorate forecast for Westbury Laverton ward where 409 electors have now been added, these would have no impact on variances of the proposed wards in our draft recommendations. However, the draft recommendation variance of Westbury Laverton ward deteriorates from 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2009 to 7% more electors than the district average by 2009.

46 The revised 2009 electorate total for the district is 102,938, which is 441 more than the figures initially supplied by the District Council and used in our draft recommendations. Four hundred and nine of these electors will be in the proposed Westbury Laverton ward, with the remainder in Holt parish. The new figures for Trowbridge and around Melksham do not have any impact on the total figures for either town as the amendments relate to changes within the town.

47 During Stage Three, North Bradley and Southwick parish councils both queried the electorate forecast for Trowbridge Town on the basis that further development plans for the expansion of Trowbridge are currently at the planning stage and should therefore be included in the projected figures. Having considered the information the District Council has provided in support of its forecast figures, we are satisfied that the projected electorate figures submitted are the most accurate figures at this stage.

48 We recognise that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the District Council's revised figures, accept that they are the best estimates that could reasonably be made. We are reliant on the local authority to provide projected figures and consider that the District Council has identified and provided evidence to support the likely changes between 2004 and 2009 based on firm evidence and realistic expectations. We recognise the difficulties and potential for inaccuracies, whichever source the electorate data comes from, and acknowledge that the errors highlighted and subsequently rectified have achieved further accuracy in the revised figures used in forming our final recommendations. We also note that the errors highlighted by Mr Morland were due to incorrect calculations rather than the District Council not taking sufficient account of development throughout the District as suggested by North Bradley and Southwick parish councils. We consider that the District Council, in conjunction with information provided by the County Council has taken into account likely development expected to be completed within the five-year period between 2004 and 2009 and are satisfied to use its figures when preparing our final recommendations for West Wiltshire.

Council size

49 West Wiltshire District Council presently has 44 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed a council of 48 members, four more members than at present. In its initial submission it noted that council members had been invited to complete a questionnaire detailing their preference for council size. Council officers then prepared three different schemes based on council sizes of 44, 46 and 48. These schemes were then distributed for consultation across the district. As a result of the consultation the District Council considered that the scheme based on a council size of 48 should be submitted to the Boundary Committee for consideration (with some amendments).

50 Six parish councils and two parish councillors supported various council sizes that the District Council had prepared as part of its consultation in Stage One. However, support for a particular council size was due to respondents considering that the resultant warding pattern would best reflect community identity rather than the council size being considered as an appropriate council size in the context of the District Council's political management system. Mr Morland considered that the District Council had not provided sufficient justification to increase the council size and proposed two options for part of the district based on the existing council size of 44.

51 As stated in our *Guidance*, the establishment of council size is the starting point in a review as it determines the optimum councillor:elector ratio to be achieved across the wards within the district. We expect proposals for council size to be developed in the context of a review of internal political management structure and the role of councillors under that structure. We noted that the method used by West Wiltshire District Council in making a case for an increase in council size did not consider either of these points. We therefore requested that the District Council provide further justification in support of its proposed council size.

52 In its response the District Council stated that the basic reason for 48 councillors centres around 'high councillors workloads as evidenced by comparator statistics relating to ratios in other authorities... continuing population growth... [and] a need to ensure that wards do not grow any further in geographical size'. However, as noted in our *Guidance* we do not take into account comparisons with neighbouring authorities and specifically do not consider that growth in the electorate is necessarily justification for an increase in council size.

53 The District Council also considered that the 'developing community leadership and scrutiny role for backbench members... counter-balances the reduced committee workload'. It stated that its 'over-riding view expressed by our members is that the elector ratios are about right and need to be maintained'.

54 Retaining the current councillor:elector ratio and retaining wards of the same geographical size, while being preferred by the council is not in our view sufficient justification to justify increasing the council size.

55 Given the lack of evidence supporting an increase in council size, and the lack of any evidence that a decrease would better meet our statutory criteria, we therefore looked at retaining the existing council size of 44. We looked at the allocation of councillors under a council size of 44 between the towns and rural areas. We considered that there are a number of areas in West Wiltshire where the more urban towns are well linked to areas of urban overspill or neighbouring villages in parishes that generally have a more rural nature. We considered that in some of these areas those neighbouring settlements could be included in wards with the urban areas.

56 We therefore proposed to retain the existing council size of 44 members, noting that in order to achieve a satisfactory level of electoral equality it would be necessary to include some of the more rural parishes with some towns.

57 At Stage Three we received three proposals for council size. As with the District Council's Stage One proposal, these were largely based on retaining the current councillor:elector ratio and avoiding combining towns with rural parishes rather than being in the context of the District Council's internal political management structure. The District Council maintained its Stage One proposal of an increase in council size from 44 to 48. This was also the proposal of Trowbridge Town Council. Mr Morland proposed a council size of 46 and Councillor Duncan Hames (Holt ward) proposed a decrease to 37.

58 The District Council provided little evidence to support an increase in council size to 48 and reiterated its Stage One argument that our proposal for no change would result in an increase in the councillor:elector ratio. The District Council endorsed the submission of Trowbridge Town Council in providing a case for an increase.

Southwick and North Bradley parish councils both endorsed the District Council's increase in council size to 48 but neither provided any argument or evidence to support this.

59 Trowbridge Town Council opposed the council size of 44 and considered that the warding under such a size of council would not reflect community identity, as it combined urban and rural areas. It therefore proposed a district-wide scheme during Stage Three based on a council size of 48 which it considered would recognise 'the importance of the rural/urban split in community identity and the workload of members on both town and district councils'.

60 Trowbridge Town Council stated that an increase in council size was justified due to an increase in member workload. However, the Town Council argued that member workload beyond that undertaken for the district, i.e. District Councillors who also serve as Town Councillors, should be taken into consideration. The Town Council stated that as 'Nine members of the Town Council are also members of the District, including a number of cabinet members, workload should not be judged only on the work they undertake as District Councillors... We therefore require members to attend a large number of Council and committee meetings, as well as consultation meetings and meetings as representatives on other bodies.' We do not consider this a persuasive argument as workload outside the remit of district councillors, such as town councillor responsibilities for those members that undertake both roles, cannot be taken into consideration when considering the council size of the District Council.

61 The Town Council opposed our proposal for a council size of 44 as it resulted in 'mixed parish and town wards in four of the five towns in the district – Melksham Town with Melksham Without parish, Bradford-on-Avon with Westwood parish and Wingfield parish, Trowbridge with North Bradley parish, Trowbridge with Southwick parish and Westbury with the whole of Heywood parish. In all these cases there is clearly an attempt to create wards where no common identity between the urban parts and the rural parts is evident.'

62 Mr Morland's proposal of a council size of 46 members was also based on providing a good allocation of councillors to the towns in the district, thereby avoiding combining urban and rural areas. He did not provide evidence or argument in support of his proposals in terms of the political management structure of the council. Mr Morland stated that a council size of 44 would result in the number of councillors in Trowbridge Town being rounded down to 10 which was 'an outcome at odds with Trowbridge Town Council's aspirations'. In addition, he did not propose a district-wide scheme under this revised council size.

63 Councillor Hames provided some evidence to support his proposal to reduce the council size to 37. Councillor Hames said that in line with Gershon efficiency targets in the context of current District Councillor workloads, an argument could be made for a reduction in council size. In support of this argument, Councillor Hames added that the proportion of planning applications decided by officers and not at a council committee had increased in recent years and that the workload of district councillors would not necessarily be reduced by an increase in its number.

64 In addition, Councillor Hames noted that 'as the town and parish councillors [of West Wiltshire] have, in their own distinct ways, become more active and taken new responsibilities, local government in the area is better described as three-tier than

two-tier', further supporting his argument for a reduction in council size. However, we do not consider this part of the argument to be in the context of the District Council's internal political management structure.

65 Councillor Hames' proposal addressed the internal political management structure of the council and he had considered the role of councillors within the cabinet. However, though we consider there is some merit in Councillor Hames' proposal, it lacked sufficient evidence and justification to warrant us adopting it at this late stage in the review when a significant reduction in council size has not been consulted on. We therefore do not propose adopting a council size of 37 in our final recommendations.

66 We do not consider the other respondents provided sufficient argument to justify moving away from a council size of 44 as we consider their submissions are broadly based on seeking to retain the existing councillor:elector ratio and not combining urban and rural areas. While we acknowledge those views, we do not consider they provide us with sufficient argument to move away from the council size of 44. We therefore propose to confirm a council size of 44 as final.

Electoral equality

67 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

68 The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district, 102,938, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 44 under our final proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,340.

General analysis

69 Overall, we are extremely disappointed with the level of evidence provided during this review, in the context of both council size and community identity. While a large number of respondents have engaged with the review, with only a few making notable exceptions, little account appears to have been taken of the guidance provided to us by the Electoral Commission and the factors we are obliged to take into account in reaching conclusions on our final recommendations. There has been

much assertion about the linkages (or lack of them) between different communities in West Wiltshire but little in the way of persuasive argumentation and evidence. This has made our task far more difficult and forced us to rely on the achievement of electoral equality far more than in the reviews of other areas.

70 Having established that a council size of 44 should be retained, we developed a scheme in the rural areas of West Wiltshire using the option that the District Council had consulted on in Stage One. In the rural areas of the district we proposed to adopt five of the wards that the Council had considered as part of this option. In the remaining rural areas and in the towns where the Council had not put forward a scheme, either under its submitted scheme with a council size of 48 or in the scheme it consulted on with a council size of 44, we put forward our own warding arrangements. These wards would provide good levels of electoral equality by 2009 and combine parishes which we considered would be better linked than in the Council's consultation scheme under a 44-member council. We noted that in the towns of Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury, Trowbridge and Melksham we combine the parishes from outside of the town which the council also considered including with these towns in its Stage One proposal.

71 Our proposals had a combination of single, two and three-member wards. In the towns we proposed a combination of single and multi-member wards which we considered provided good electoral equality while using strong boundaries.

72 We noted that there are five towns in the district of West Wiltshire and this made it difficult to achieve a pattern of wards which did not combine urban and rural areas. This was due to the varying size and distribution of electors in these areas. We sought to avoid combining town areas with other parishes but in Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Melksham and Westbury this was necessary in order to achieve satisfactory levels of electoral equality.

73 During Stage Three a number of respondents opposed our draft recommendations as they combined a number of parishes with town areas, which respondents considered did not reflect community identity. This was most notable in responses regarding Southwick and North Bradley parishes where respondents wholly opposed the proposed wards of Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley.

74 However, we noted that many of the concerns raised by respondents in Southwick and North Bradley were outside the scope of the review, such as the impact the warding pattern would have on planning applications and council tax.

75 Throughout the district, our proposals were generally opposed where it had been necessary to combine towns with other parishes. However, with the exception of Heywood Village Parish ward we did not consider that sufficient evidence of community identity had been received to warrant moving away from our draft recommendations by avoiding combining towns with other parishes. We note that due to the nature of West Wiltshire, with the varying size and distribution of electors in the five towns of the district, it is necessary to combine towns with more rural parishes under a council size of 44 if a good level of electoral equality is to be achieved.

76 While combining towns with other parishes could have been avoided with an increase in council size, we have decided on retaining a council size of 44. We

received insufficient evidence in the context of the internal political management structure of the council to support an increase.

77 We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final with the exception of Heywood Village Parish ward now being included in Ethandune ward rather than the Westbury Ham & Heywood ward as proposed in our draft recommendations. We note that due to the revised projected electorate total in Westbury Town, received from the District Council in Stage Three, it has also been necessary to amend the ward boundary between Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton to achieve good electoral equality in the area.

Warding arrangements

78 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- Atworth & Whitley, Bradford-on-Avon North, Bradford-on-Avon South, Manor Vale and Southwick & Wingfield wards (page 34)
- Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park wards (page 37)
- Melksham North, Melksham Spa, Melksham Without and Melksham Woodrow wards (page 40)
- Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards (page 44)
- Dilton Marsh, Ethandune, Holt, Mid Wylke Valley, Paxcroft, Shearwater and Summerham wards (page 47)

79 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Atworth & Whitley, Bradford-on-Avon North, Bradford-on-Avon South, Manor Vale and Southwick & Wingfield wards

80 Under the existing arrangements Atworth & Whitley ward comprises the parish of Atworth and the Shaw & Whitley parish ward of Melksham Without parish; Bradford-on-Avon North ward comprises the parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon North of Bradford-on-Avon parish; Bradford-on-Avon South ward comprises the parish ward of Bradford-on-Avon South of Bradford-on-Avon parish. Manor Vale ward comprises the parishes of Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall, Westwood and Winsley. Southwick & Wingfield ward comprises the parishes of Southwick and Wingfield. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

81 We received very few representations in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed broadly retaining the two two-member wards that cover the town of Bradford-on-Avon. However, it proposed slightly amending the boundary between the existing Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South wards to improve the level of electoral equality in both wards.

82 In the rural areas surrounding Bradford-on-Avon, the District Council proposed a Manor Vale ward comprising Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall Westwood, Wingfield and Winsley parishes. Westwood Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed Manor Vale ward. Wingfield Parish Council supported the option that the Council considered under a council size of 44 which linked Bradford-on-Avon and the parishes of Limpley Stoke, Westwood, Wingfield and Winsley parishes.

83 Mr Morland proposed two options for district-wide schemes. Option one combined Bradford-on-Avon North ward, Bradford-on-Avon South ward, Monkton Farleigh and South Wraxall parishes and part of Winsley parish. Option two combined Bradford-on-Avon North ward, Bradford-on-Avon South ward and part of Winsley parish. Option two also included a ward comprising the existing Southwick & Wingfield ward and the parishes of North Bradley and Westwood.

84 Councillor Chivers stated that he wished for the existing Atworth & Whitley ward to be retained and for the area to be represented by a single member.

85 Having carefully considered the representations received and in the absence of detailed community identity evidence for the area, we proposed our own warding arrangements. We noted that it is not possible to provide a good level of electoral equality in Bradford-on-Avon without including neighbouring parishes. We therefore proposed to include a number of the surrounding parishes with Bradford-on-Avon to provide a good level of electoral equality. We proposed including the parishes of Westwood and Wingfield in the town and dividing the area to form two two-member wards which both provided good levels of electoral equality. We proposed using the river in Bradford-on-Avon to divide the town between the two two-member wards. The area to the north of the river in Bradford-on-Avon would form a revised Bradford-on-Avon North ward and the area to the south of the river, combined with the parishes of Westwood and Wingfield, would form a revised Bradford-on-Avon South ward.

86 Because of our decision to link Westwood and Wingfield parishes with Bradford-on-Avon our options in the remainder of the north west of the district were limited. We considered that Limpley Stoke, Monkton Farleigh and Winsley parishes are of a similar rural nature and that uniting them in a Manor Vale ward would facilitate our proposals for both Bradford-on-Avon and the majority of the rest of the north of the district. We also proposed a single-member Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall ward. This would combine the existing Atworth & Whitley ward with South Wraxall parish.

87 During Stage Three we received specific representations in relation to this area from Councillor Hewson (Bradford-on-Avon division) and Wingfield Parish Council. Mr Morland also proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area in his representation. Trowbridge Town Council proposed warding arrangements for this area under its district-wide proposal of 48.

88 Mr Morland proposed two alternative options for which parishes should combine with Bradford-on-Avon parish under his proposal for a council size of 46; either Westwood parish alone or Monkton Farleigh and South Wraxall parishes together. However, no community identity evidence was provided in support of the proposals.

89 Trowbridge Town Council proposed that the existing two-member Bradford-on-Avon North and two-member Bradford-on-Avon South wards be retained with one amendment. It proposed transferring the area north of Holt Road in the existing Bradford-on-Avon South ward to the Bradford-on-Avon North ward. The Town Council also proposed a two-member Manor Vale ward comprising the existing Manor Vale ward and Wingfield parish. Under a council size of 44, Trowbridge Town Council's proposed Bradford-on-Avon North, Bradford-on-Avon South and Manor Vale wards would have poorer levels of electoral equality than our draft recommendations, with 13% fewer, 13% fewer and 12% fewer electors than the district average respectively. The Town Council provided no argument or evidence in support of its proposed warding arrangements in this area.

90 The draft recommendations for Bradford-on-Avon were opposed by Councillor Hewson (Bradford-on-Avon division), who argued that Wingfield parish should be included in the proposed Trowbridge & Southwick ward rather than Bradford-on-Avon. He noted that the school catchment area includes Wingfield with Trowbridge.

91 In support of his assertion that Wingfield looks to Trowbridge rather than Bradford-on-Avon town, Councillor Hewson also argued that Wingfield parish is included in the Trowbridge Community Area rather than that of Bradford-on-Avon. Councillor Hewson states that 'these arrangements have been in place for many years and those that argue that Wingfield looks towards Bradford rather than Trowbridge need to explain why there has been no campaign to change the Community Areas'.

92 Wingfield Parish Council, however, supported the draft recommendation to be included in a ward with part of Bradford-on-Avon town. Councillor Hewson also proposed that Church Street and Silver Street of the proposed Bradford-on-Avon North ward be moved to the proposed Bradford-on-Avon South ward. Councillor Hewson considered the river, which we used as a boundary in our draft recommendations, as 'arbitrary'.

93 We note Councillor Hewson's proposal that Wingfield parish be included in a ward with the proposed Trowbridge & Southwick ward. However, we have received support from Wingfield Parish Council for our draft recommendations and do not consider we have received sufficient evidence to move away from our proposals. Councillor Hewson's proposal that two streets north of the boundary between the proposed Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South wards be transferred to the south ward, is also unsupported by evidence and we consider the river between the proposed Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South wards to be a strong boundary. We therefore do not propose to alter the boundary between our proposed Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South wards. Our proposals for this area achieve good electoral equality and we have received no evidence to warrant moving away from them. Under our council size of 44, Trowbridge Town Council's proposals for this area provided poor electoral equality and we were not persuaded to adopt its proposed warding arrangements.

94 Having considered the representations received and the proposals for warding arrangements in the area we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Bradford-on-Avon North; Bradford-on-Avon South; and Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall wards as final.

95 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Bradford-on-Avon North; Bradford-on-Avon South; and Atworth, Whitley & South Wraxall wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 3a accompanying this report.

Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park wards

96 Under the existing arrangements each of these wards comprises the parish wards of the same name. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

97 During Stage One we received representations in relation to Trowbridge from the District Council, North Bradley, Southwick and Hilperton parish councils and Councillors Phillips and Conley. The District Council did not submit full proposals for Trowbridge town but instead proposed that the town be allocated 11 councillors (under a council size of 48) and, in order to provide an acceptable level of electoral equality, proposed that part of the town be included in a ward with the parish of Southwick. The Council proposed that the remaining wards in the town should be multi-member but did not provide any justification for this proposal.

98 North Bradley, Southwick and Hilperton parish councils all objected to being included in a ward with any part of Trowbridge town. North Bradley and Southwick parish councils supported a ward which would comprise Southwick, West Ashton, Steeple Ashton, North Bradley and Wingfield parishes. Councillors Phillips and Conley considered that the parishes of West Ashton, Southwick, Wingfield and North Bradley should be united in one ward but provided no evidence of community identity or linkages which might persuade us to support this recommendation. They also stated that there was local resistance to combining other parishes with Trowbridge.

99 Having carefully considered the representations received we proposed our own recommendations for Trowbridge town. We did not receive any proposals for ward boundaries for the town and we therefore proposed wards which would have good levels of electoral equality by 2009 and which, where possible, used strong boundaries. Under a council size of 44 the town is entitled to 10.6 councillors (calculated by dividing the total electorate of the existing six town wards in 2009 by the district average). We therefore allocated the town 11 councillors and also included the parishes of Southwick and North Bradley with parts of the town to ensure a satisfactory level of electoral equality across the town.

100 We acknowledged that both Southwick and North Bradley parish councils objected to their respective parishes being included in a ward with Trowbridge. However, neither parish council provided evidence to justify our adopting the ward, which would comprise only rural parishes, that they proposed.

101 In our draft recommendations we proposed a Trowbridge & Southwick ward comprising Southwick parish and part of Trowbridge around Whiterow Park; the proposed Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward. The proposed Trowbridge & North Bradley ward would comprise North Bradley parish and an area broadly to the east of Bradley Road around Wiltshire Drive, the proposed Trowbridge Bradley Road parish

ward. In the remainder of Trowbridge Town, we proposed five wards. These were one three-member ward, three two-member wards and one single-member ward in the main area of the town using the railway line as a boundary between the east and west of the town.

102 During Stage Three we received six specific representations in relation to this area from North Bradley and Southwick parish councils, parish councillors Gaynor and Dave Polglase (Southwick), councillors Bower and Conley (Dilton Marsh) and Mr Fewings of North Bradley Scout Group. A further 217 representations were received from local residents. All the above respondents opposed Trowbridge being combined with Southwick and North Bradley. Mr Morland also proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area in his representation. Trowbridge Town Council proposed warding arrangements for this area under its district-wide proposal of 48 councillors.

103 Mr Morland proposed changing the existing Trowbridge Park ward from a two-member ward to a three-member ward under his proposed council size of 46 which would retain the allocation of 11 councillors in Trowbridge Town. However, Mr Morland did not provide any supporting evidence for his proposal. Nor did he specify warding arrangements for the remainder of the town.

104 With the exception of Trowbridge Town Council, we did not receive any representations from respondents in Trowbridge Town. Trowbridge Town Council allocated the town 12 councillors in a pattern of four three-member wards of near equal size under its proposed council size of 48. Under a council size of 44, Trowbridge Town Council's proposed wards would each have 12% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. This proposal was broadly based on the existing arrangements for Trowbridge Town and did not include Southwick or North Bradley parishes. While the Town Council's proposed wards would avoid a rural and urban mix, no evidence was provided explaining why such a mix was undesirable. Additionally, as we had received insufficient evidence in support of an increase in council size and therefore proposed to retain the council size of 44, we were unable to adopt this proposal as it incorrectly allocated 12 councillors to the town when under a council size of 44 it is entitled to 11.

105 222 submissions were received from residents, councillors and Southwick and North Bradley parish councils opposing the draft recommendations for the proposed wards of Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley. In most of the representations respondents only stated their opposition to the inclusion of the two parishes with Trowbridge and did not make proposals for alternative warding arrangements. We note that many of the concerns raised by respondents in Southwick and North Bradley were also outside the remit of the review, such as the effect warding would have on planning applications and council tax.

106 However, some respondents opposed combining part of Trowbridge town with Southwick and North Bradley parishes on the grounds that the areas had little in common. Respondents considered there was no shared community identity between the respective parishes and Trowbridge Town.

107 North Bradley and Southwick parish councils and Trowbridge Town Council proposed an alternative ward in order to avoid combining the parishes with Trowbridge. They proposed a ward comprising Southwick, North Bradley, Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh, Upton Scudamore and Corsley parishes which would

have 25% more electors than the district average by 2009. This ward was based on the existing ward of Dilton Marsh but also included Southwick parish. North Bradley and Southwick parish councils considered this proposal would better reflect community identity and avoid a rural/urban mix. However, no evidence of shared community identity or linkages between all the constituent parishes was provided. In particular we received no information regarding the parishes to the south of this proposed ward indicating what links they might have with the parishes of North Bradley and Southwick. It should also be noted that Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parish councils both supported the draft recommendations for the proposed Dilton ward which would be affected by this proposal. We also note that the inclusion of Corsley parish would have an impact in the proposed Shearwater ward, giving this ward a poorer level of electoral equality, with 20% fewer electors than the district average by 2009.

108 Nine residents made specific proposals for a Southwick & North Bradley district ward comprising only these two parishes.

109 We received some argument and evidence in support of such an option. Respondents described shared community activities in the parishes of Southwick and North Bradley. These included the Southwick & North Bradley Scout and Guide Band, and a respondent stated that the vicar of St Thomas Church in Southwick is also responsible for St Nicholas Church in North Bradley. North Bradley and Southwick parish councils also noted that the hamlet of Yarnbrook and Brokerswood falls over the boundary between the two parishes and gave further examples of connections with each other via youth groups and churches. This proposal for a single-member ward based on the parishes of Southwick and North Bradley would have resulted in 25% more electors than the district average by 2009.

110 Having considered the opposition to combining Southwick and North Bradley parishes in a ward with Trowbridge Town, we investigated other options which might avoid such a mix of urban and rural areas, and which would provide a better level of electoral equality than the locally proposed schemes described above.

111 We considered a two-member ward combining Southwick, North Bradley, Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parishes. This ward would have 12% more electors than the district average by 2009. This is a slight variation of the proposal made by North Bradley and Southwick parish councils and Trowbridge Town Council, but which would not include Corsley parish and would therefore have no knock-on effect on any surrounding wards.

112 We also considered a ward combining our proposed wards of Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley. This two-member ward would have 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. There would be no knock-on effect on the remaining areas of the district under this option.

113 We are of the view that none of the alternatives to our draft recommendations, whether locally generated or otherwise, is sufficiently well evidenced to justify the poor levels of electoral equality that would result. In addition, for each of the proposals that would separate North Bradley and Southwick parishes from Trowbridge town, revised warding of Trowbridge town itself would be required. We do not consider we have received sufficient evidence to justify further consultation on the ward boundaries in Trowbridge. We note that the only respondents who made

comments regarding the boundaries within the town were Trowbridge Town Council. It did not detail specific opposition to the ward boundaries, but only provided an alternative which would not include other parishes with the town.

114 We note that a two-member ward combining Southwick, North Bradley, Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parishes would have a not totally unreasonable level of electoral equality (12% more than electors than the district average) and would avoid combining Southwick and North Bradley parishes with Trowbridge town. However, during Stage Three, both Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parish councils supported our draft recommendations for a Dilton ward and we would therefore be reluctant to adopt an alternative. In addition, we have no evidence to suggest shared community identity between the five constituent parishes of this alternative ward. We also note that it would require revisiting of the wards in Trowbridge town which, as discussed above, we do not consider we have sufficient evidence to propose.

115 We acknowledge that combining our proposed Trowbridge & Southwick and Trowbridge & North Bradley wards in a two-member ward would achieve 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. However, the two areas of Trowbridge would be separated by other parts of the town. Furthermore, we have not received any evidence that this option would reflect community identity.

116 Having considered these options, we do not consider there is sufficient evidence of community identity linkages between Southwick and North Bradley parishes to justify combining them under any of the options explored above when the impact in the surrounding areas is so significant. We consider that respondents are more concerned with not linking parishes with Trowbridge than combining with each other.

117 Having considered the representations received and the various options for warding arrangements in the area we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Trowbridge & North Bradley, Trowbridge & Southwick, Trowbridge Central, Trowbridge East, Trowbridge North East, Trowbridge North West and Trowbridge South West wards.

118 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Trowbridge & North Bradley, Trowbridge & Southwick, Trowbridge Central, Trowbridge East, Trowbridge North East, Trowbridge North West and Trowbridge South West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3b accompanying this report.

Melksham North, Melksham Spa, Melksham Without and Melksham Woodrow wards

119 Under the existing arrangements Melksham North ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham North; Melksham Spa ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham Spa; and Melksham Without ward comprises the parish ward of Melksham Woodrow. These three wards form the parish of Melksham. Melksham Without ward comprises the Beanacre & Bowerhill parish ward of Melksham Without parish. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which

the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

120 During Stage One we received three representations in relation to this area. For both Melksham and Melksham Without parishes the District Council stated that due to time constraints it had not been able to develop proposals and was therefore requesting the Boundary Committee to form its own proposals for the area. Under a council size of 48 it allocated Melksham town five councillors. Similarly, in the neighbouring parishes of Melksham Without, Broughton Gifford and Atworth the Council did not make full proposals but allocated the area four councillors, noting that the area could be represented by either two two-member wards or four single-member wards.

121 Melksham Without Parish Council supported a council size of 48 but did not provide any evidence to justify this increase. It stated that 'the parish warding which exists in Melksham Without is at present far from satisfactory'. It stated that the area known as Bowerhill should become a separate parish ward. The Parish Council also noted the development of Melksham Town which is occurring now in areas of Melksham Without and proposed that it should also become a separate parish ward so that in future reviews 'it could... be transferred as a complete unit to the town'. It proposed that it should be called Snarlton parish ward. The Parish Council also proposed that these two parish wards be combined and form a two-member district ward and that the remaining area of Melksham Without parish should form a more rural Berryfield & Beanacre parish ward.

122 Using these proposed parish wards as building blocks, Melksham Without Parish Council proposed two alternative district warding patterns. Both patterns would result in detached wards due to the proposed Snarlton and Bowerhill parish wards separating the remaining parts of Melksham Without parish from each other.

123 We noted that the District Council did not consider the option of combining parts of Melksham Town with Melksham Without. Mr Morland considered that Melksham and the area surrounding it did not require changes to the existing boundaries.

124 We carefully considered the representations received during Stage One and proposed our own wards in this area. We noted the proposal from Mr Morland to retain the same boundaries in this area. However, given that the existing Melksham Without ward is forecast to have 22% more electors than the district average by 2009 we are not persuaded to retain the existing boundaries. Bearing in mind our guidance from the Electoral Commission that detached wards should only be considered in the most exceptional of circumstances, we were not persuaded to adopt Melksham Without Parish Council's proposal as we considered there were alternative patterns that would not involve a detached ward but which would provide good electoral equality. We received no other proposals for this area and therefore proposed wards which would provide good levels of electoral equality and use strong boundaries, where possible.

125 We looked at ways of combining the areas that are in effect overspill from Melksham town but lie in Melksham Without parish with Melksham town in order that the more rural areas would not be combined with urban areas. However, it would be necessary to form parish wards in the areas of overspill, and the Snarlton area does

not currently contain a sufficient number of electors to justify forming a parish ward at this stage. For similar reasons we did not adopt the proposed Bowerhill parish ward as this would result in an area to the west also requiring parish warding. We therefore combined the existing Melksham Without ward, which contains both built-up and more rural areas, with part of Melksham town. We proposed a revised three-member Melksham Without ward comprising the two polling districts north of the River Avon in Melksham town with all of the existing Melksham Without ward. In the town of Melksham itself we proposed two two-member wards with good levels of electoral equality. We proposed a Melksham Spa ward comprising the existing Melksham Spa ward plus part of the existing Melksham North ward, the area broadly south of Thackeray Crescent and Pembroke Road. Our proposed Melksham East ward comprised the remainder of Melksham North ward and all of the existing Melksham Woodrow ward.

126 We noted that our proposals in this area were not ideal and combined areas which might not best reflect community identity. However, given the difficulties that the development around the town has created we considered that the area to the north of the River Avon was the most appropriate part of Melksham town to transfer out, as the river is a strong boundary that divides this area from the rest of the town and this area has direct links to the north of Melksham Without parish.

127 During Stage Three we received representations in relation to this area from Melksham Without Parish Council and Councillor Petty (Melksham Without Parish Council). Mr Morland also made comments on this area in his representation. Trowbridge Town Council proposed warding arrangements for this area under its district-wide proposal for 48 councillors.

128 Trowbridge Town Council's district-wide scheme proposed a slight change to the existing warding arrangements for Melksham town. In Melksham Without parish, Trowbridge Town Council proposed a Shaw, Whitley & Beanacre ward, a Bowerhill West & Berryfield ward and a Bowerhill East & Snarlton ward, all of which would have 3% fewer electors than the district average. The Town Council's proposals assumed a council size of 48 members. No evidence was provided in support of its proposals but the Town Council stated that its proposed wards in Melksham Without would 'retain [the] integrity of the parish'.

129 Mr Morland queried the electorate figures provided by the District Council and used in our draft recommendations for existing wards in the district for both 2004 and 2009. Mr Morland considered that errors had been made in the figures for various wards including the existing Melksham North. He stated that 15 electors in the existing Atworth & Whitley ward should have been included in the existing Melksham North ward. We therefore requested further information from the District Council on the accuracy of the figures supplied.

130 The District Council confirmed that Mr Morland's calculations were indeed correct and supplied us with revised figures which we have used in forming our final recommendations. The revised figures vary only slightly around Melksham and would have no impact on the variances of the proposed wards in our draft recommendations.

131 Under his proposed council size of 46, Mr Morland proposed that Melksham town retain the existing five district councillors. He did not provide any evidence or argument for his proposal.

132 Melksham Without Parish Council submitted a scheme based on a council size of 44 during Stage Three. The Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations as it considered our proposals did not reflect community identity due to urban and rural mixes. It also argued that our proposals would 'split up the Melksham Community Area which has been established for many years under the umbrella organisation Melksham Area Community Trust Ltd, to assist community development'.

133 Melksham Without Parish Council proposed three wards for the parish. It proposed a single-member Bowerhill, The Spa & Snarlton Lane ward, a two-member Atworth, South Wraxhall, Shaw and Whitley ward and a single-member Broughton Gifford, Beanacre, Sandridge, Redstocks and Berryfield ward. These proposed wards would have 7% fewer, 5% more and 10% fewer electors, respectively than the district average by 2009. The proposed Broughton Gifford, Beanacre, Sandridge, Redstocks and Berryfield ward would be a detached ward, combining part of the parish with Broughton Gifford parish. Broughton Gifford parish is part of the Melksham Community Area and Melksham Without Parish Council's proposal sought to reflect this in its proposed warding arrangements.

134 Melksham Without Parish Council and Councillor Petty also proposed parish electoral arrangements which are discussed in paragraph 187.

135 The Parish Council stated that its proposal sought to retain the Melksham Community Area intact, reflect community identity and maintain the distinction between rural and urban communities. The Parish Council's proposal would leave the existing Melksham parish entitled to five district councillors and would provide good electoral equality across both Melksham Without and Melksham parishes.

136 While we acknowledge that our proposals in this area are not ideal and combine areas which may not best reflect community identity and result in a rural and urban mix, we do not consider the alternative proposals received during Stage Three a basis for a modified warding pattern.

137 Having considered the representations received and the various options for warding arrangements in the area we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Melksham East, Melksham Spa and Melksham Without wards as final.

138 We did not consider the evidence provided by Melksham Without Parish Council to be sufficient to warrant the creation of a detached ward. As previously indicated, we would not normally recommend a detached ward, other than in exceptional circumstances. We also note that under the Parish Council's proposals it would be necessary to recommend a new pattern of warding for Melksham Town. We have not received sufficient evidence regarding Melksham Without to justify recommending a new pattern of warding in Melksham which has not been consulted on locally.

139 Trowbridge Town Council provided no evidence of community identity to support its proposed warding for us to move away from our draft recommendations in this area, which would provide good electoral equality. Therefore we are not persuaded to adopt Trowbridge Town Council's proposed warding in Melksham Town.

140 We are satisfied that our proposals provide good electoral equality and in the absence of substantive evidence in relation to community identity linkages we are not persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations.

141 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Melksham East, Melksham Spa and Melksham Without wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 2 accompanying this report.

Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards

142 Under the existing arrangements Warminster East comprises the parish ward of Warminster East of Warminster parish; Warminster West comprises the parish ward of Warminster West of Warminster parish. Westbury Ham ward comprises the parish ward of Westbury Ham of Westbury parish and the parish ward of Heywood Storridge in Heywood parish. Westbury Laverton comprises Westbury Laverton parish ward of Westbury parish. Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

143 During Stage One the District Council submitted two options for Warminster under a council size of 48. Its first option was to retain the existing three-member Warminster East ward and a revised four-member Warminster West ward which would comprise the existing Warminster West ward plus Upton Scudamore and Corsley parishes. Its second option combined these two rural parishes with just part of the town of Warminster in a single-member ward. The existing three-member Warminster East ward would be retained and the remainder of Warminster would form a three-member ward.

144 Corsley Parish Council objected to both of the options that the District Council put forward as it did not wish to be included with Warminster town and stated that it was happy with the existing arrangements. Upton Scudamore Parish Council also objected to both the District Council's options. Councillor Bower objected to the option that combined Warminster West with the two parishes. His preferred option was to combine part of Warminster with the two parishes although considered this would still not be ideal. Mr Morland considered that the existing wards in Warminster should be retained.

145 During Stage One we received a number of representations in relation to the town of Westbury. The District Council proposed five single-member wards in Westbury. Westbury Town Council proposed that the existing ward boundaries be retained but that the representation of Westbury Ham ward be increased from two members to three members to take account of the development forecast for the area. It also proposed revised electoral arrangements for the town council. Councillors

John and Marion Clegg proposed that the town be represented by multi-member wards.

146 The Labour Group on the District Council supported using single-member wards in Westbury. The Labour Group also proposed amendments to the District Council's proposals. It proposed transferring electors between proposed wards which would initially improve the electoral equality of the wards.

147 Heywood Parish Council opposed being included in a ward with Westbury Town. It stated that its preferred option would be for the whole parish to be included in Ethandune ward. It also provided an alternative option. This provided for the existing Heywood StorrIDGE parish ward to remain in a ward with part of Westbury Town but the existing Heywood Village parish ward would remain in Ethandune ward. Mr Morland provided two proposals for warding in Westbury Town and the surrounding parishes. He did not provide community identity evidence in support of his proposals.

148 We carefully considered the representations received during Stage One for these areas. In Warminster we proposed to retain the existing three-member Warminster East and Warminster West wards as they would provide excellent levels of electoral equality by 2009.

149 In Westbury and Heywood we proposed retaining the existing two-member Westbury Laverton ward as this would provide a good level of electoral equality. We also proposed an amended three-member Westbury Ham & Heywood ward which would also provide a good level of electoral equality following the growth in the town. This ward would comprise the existing Westbury Ham ward and the remainder of Heywood parish.

150 During Stage Three we received specific representations in relation to this area from Westbury Town Council, Heywood Parish Council and five local residents. Mr Morland also proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area. Trowbridge Town Council proposed warding arrangements for this area under its district-wide proposal for a council size of 48.

151 We did not receive any specific representations regarding the proposed arrangements for Warminster East and Warminster West wards.

152 Trowbridge Town Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Warminster Town and Westbury. However, it proposed that an additional member be added to Westbury Town but did not provide any evidence for either proposal. Under a council size of 44, Trowbridge Town Council's proposed Westbury Laverton and Westbury Ham wards would each have 5% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. The Town Council's proposed Warminster West and Warminster East wards would each have 3% fewer electors than the district average by 2009.

153 Westbury Town Council supported the proposed Westbury Ham & Heywood and Westbury Laverton wards. However, Heywood Parish Council provided some evidence to support its Stage One argument that the rural Heywood Village parish ward would be more appropriately combined with Ethandune ward. The Parish Council stated that 'Heywood Village parish ward is separated from the town by agricultural land and has a distinct and different identity from that of Westbury.

Heywood Village parish ward comprises four “hamlets” (Hawkeridge Village, Heywood Village, Norleaze and Dursley), a number of smaller and rather more isolated rural groupings outside the identifiable hamlets and the major part of the West Wilts Trading Estate’.

154 Mr Morland proposed creating an additional single-member ward in Westbury in the context of his proposal for a council size of 46 but did not provide any supporting evidence.

155 The five local residents who made representations opposed our draft recommendations. Two residents opposed the use of multi-member wards in the area and three residents considered that the residents of Heywood Village parish ward would be disenfranchised, as Westbury Town’s views would be represented rather than those of Heywood Village parish ward. We received little or no evidence to support either argument.

156 Having considered the representations received during Stage Three we propose to make one modification. In light of the evidence received from Heywood Parish Council, we consider we have received sufficient evidence to justify the slight decrease in electoral equality to 9% more electors than the district average. We are therefore adopting Heywood Parish Council’s proposal to transfer Heywood Village parish ward to the proposed Ethandune ward. As a consequence, we propose to rename Westbury Ham & Heywood ward as Westbury Ham ward.

157 We did not receive evidence from Trowbridge Town Council or Mr Morland in support of their alternative warding arrangements. The five residents who made representations also provided insufficient evidence to persuade us to move away from our proposed warding arrangements. We therefore confirm our other draft recommendations for this area as final.

158 We have reconsidered the warding pattern in Westbury in light of the revised electorate forecast for Westbury Laverton ward, with an increase of 409 electors, provided by the District Council following queries by Mr Morland. The proposed transfer of Heywood Village parish ward to the proposed ward of Ethandune and the increase in the electorate forecast figures in Westbury Laverton would result in poorer levels of electoral equality in both wards by 2009. Westbury Ham ward would have 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2009 while Westbury Laverton would have 7% more than 2009. We have therefore sought to improve this level of electoral inequality and have amended the boundary between Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards by transferring 430 electors from Westbury Ham ward to Westbury Laverton ward. We propose transferring the area around part of Leigh Road and part of Warminster Road. We consider this will provide a strong boundary and provide an excellent level of electoral equality in both wards by 2009 (1% fewer electors and 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2009 respectively).

159 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 4 and 5 accompanying this report.

Dilton Marsh, Ethandune, Holt, Mid Wylve Valley, Paxcroft, Shearwater and Summerham wards

160 Table 5 details the constituent parts of the existing wards in these areas:

Table 5: Existing arrangements

Ward	Constituent areas
Dilton Marsh	Chapmanslade, Corsley, Dilton Marsh, North Bradley and Upton Scudamore parishes
Ethandune	Bratton, Coulston and Edington parishes and Heywood Village parish ward of Heywood parish
Holt	Broughton Gifford and Holt parishes
Mid Wylve Valley	Boyton, Chitterne, Codford, Heytesbury, Knook, Sherrington, Stockton and Upton Lovell parishes
Paxcroft	Hilperton, Semington and Staverton parishes
Shearwater	Bishopstrow, Brixton Deverill, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill, Norton Bavant and Sutton Veny parishes
Summerham	Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, Steeple Ashton and West Ashton parishes

161 Table 4 (page 20) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

162 During Stage One the District Council proposed a new single-member Dilton & Chapmanslade ward comprising Dilton Marsh and Chapmanslade parishes and an Ethandune ward identical to the existing ward of the same name. It proposed a Hilperton, Staverton & Holt ward comprising the parishes of Hilperton, Holt and Staverton. The District Council proposed a Mid Wylve Valley ward and Shearwater ward, both identical to the existing wards of the same names. It proposed a Summerham ward comprising the parishes of Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, North Bradley, Semington, Steeple Ashton and West Ashton. The submission put forward by the Council used these names but stated that they had not been consulted on or approved by full council and were therefore for information only.

163 Mr Morland, under his Option One scheme, proposed to retain the existing Holt and Ethandune wards. He proposed a two-member ward comprising Hilperton and Staverton parishes and a two-member ward comprising Summerham ward and North Bradley and Semington parishes. He also proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Dilton Marsh, Chapmanslade, Corsley, Upton Scudamore, Heywood Storridge parish ward and part of Westbury parish. Under his Option Two scheme Mr Morland proposed a two-member ward comprising Hilperton and Semington parishes and a two-member ward comprising Holt ward and the parishes of Staverton, Monkton Farleigh, South Wraxall, Limpley Stoke and Winsley North. He proposed a single-member ward comprising Summerham ward and Coulston parish and a single-member ward comprising Dilton Marsh parish and Chapmanslade parish.

164 Broughton Gifford Parish Council stated that it would object to any proposal that would split the parish between two different district wards. Steeple Ashton Parish Council proposed to retain the existing Summerham ward and opposed rural and urban areas being combined in one ward. Hilperton Parish Council stated that it supported the District Council's proposal to form a new ward comprising Hilperton, Holt and Staverton parishes.

165 We carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One in this area. We used the scheme the District Council had consulted on, based on a council size of 44, as a basis for our proposals in these areas. In the rural areas in the north west of the district we made some amendments to the Council's consultation scheme which in part reflect the scheme the Council proposed under a council size of 48.

166 In the south of the district we proposed five rural wards, all of which were identical to those the Council had consulted on under a council size of 44. We proposed a Dilton ward comprising Chapmanslade, Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parishes; a Holt & Hilperton ward comprising Holt, Hilperton, Broughton Gifford and Staverton parishes; and a Summerham ward comprising Bulkington, Great Hinton, Keevil, Semington and Steeple Ashton parishes. We also proposed an Ethandune ward comprising Bratton, Coulston, Edington and West Ashton parishes and a Shearwater ward comprising Brixton Deverill, Corsley, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill and Sutton Veny parishes. Finally, we proposed a Mid Wylde Valley ward comprising the existing Mid Wylde Valley ward plus the parishes of Bishopstrow and Norton Bavant. These wards would all have good levels of electoral equality by 2009.

167 During Stage Three we received nine specific representations in relation to our proposed wards of Holt & Hilperton, Summerham, Ethandune and Dilton from Dilton Marsh, Upton Scudamore, Holt, Broughton Gifford and Hilperton parish councils and Councillors Clark (Paxcroft) and Swabey (Ethandune). Mr Morland also proposed alternative warding arrangements for this area in his representation. Trowbridge Town Council proposed warding arrangements for this area under its district-wide proposal for a council size of 48.

168 We received no specific representations in relation to our proposed Mid Wylde Valley or Shearwater wards.

169 Mr Morland supported the use of single-member wards in principle and specifically supported the draft recommendation for Dilton ward and the existing Ethandune ward with or without Heywood Storridge parish ward.

170 Trowbridge Town Council proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Shearwater, Mid Wylde Valley, Ethandune and Summerham wards which under a council size of 44 would have 11% fewer, 11% fewer, 10% fewer and 12% fewer electors than the district average by 2009 respectively. The Town Council proposed that the existing Dilton ward include Southwick parish. That would result in the ward having 17% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. It also proposed that a new Chalfield ward comprising Broughton Gifford, Holt, Staverton and Atworth parish wards be created. This would have 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. A ward based on the existing Paxcroft ward less Staverton was also proposed.

The Town Council did not provide evidence of community identity in support of its proposed warding arrangements in this area.

171 Holt and Broughton Gifford parish councils opposed the proposed three-member Holt & Hilperton ward comprising Holt, Hilperton, Broughton Gifford and Staverton parishes, again due to the rural and urban mix. Both parish councils submitted alternative proposals but provided no evidence to support them. Broughton Gifford Parish Council proposed dividing the three-member ward into a single-member ward comprising Holt and Broughton Gifford parishes (12% fewer electors than the district average by 2009) and a two-member ward comprising Staverton and Hilperton parishes (3% more electors than the district average by 2009). We note that there would be no knock-on effect upon surrounding wards under this proposal. However, Broughton Gifford Parish Council did not provide any evidence to justify adopting two wards which would have poorer levels of electoral equality than the proposed Holt & Hilperton ward, which would have 2% fewer electors than the district average by 2009.

172 Holt Parish Council supported Trowbridge Town Council's proposal for the area to create a two-member ward comprising Atworth, Broughton Gifford, Holt and Staverton parishes which would have 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. However, it did not provide any evidence to justify the ward in terms of community identity or the knock-on effect that it would have on the surrounding area. Hilperton Parish Council supported the proposed Holt and Hilperton ward but suggested a 'generic' name be used though it did not make any specific proposal for a new name.

173 Steeple Ashton and West Ashton parish councils both opposed the draft recommendations for the proposed Summerham and Ethandune wards. West Ashton Parish Council argued that it should be placed in the Summerham ward due to 'strong links with Steeple Ashton' but provided no evidence of what those links were. Steeple Ashton Parish Council also argued that the parish should be included in the Summerham ward with other rural parishes but, again, no evidence was provided to support this.

174 Councillor Swabey (Ethandune ward) also opposed West Ashton parish being included in the proposed Ethandune ward. She argued that the parish has 'close ties with Steeple Ashton and Keevil villages' but provided no evidence in support of this contention.

175 Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parish councils both supported our proposed Dilton ward. Upton Scudamore stated that its support was based on the ward being kept rural. We note that North Bradley and Southwick parish councils and Trowbridge Town Council proposed a two-member ward comprising Dilton Marsh, Upton Scudamore, North Bradley, Southwick, Chapmanslade and Corsley parishes. Given that Dilton Marsh and Upton Scudamore parish councils both supported the draft recommendations for its area, we included this in our consideration of our proposals regarding Southwick and North Bradley parishes. As discussed above, in light of the support for the proposed Dilton ward from Upton Scudamore and Dilton Marsh parish councils, we were persuaded not to move away from our draft recommendations for Southwick and North Bradley parishes.

176 Having considered the representations received and the various options for warding arrangements in the area we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Holt & Hilperton, Summerham, Dilton, Mid Wyllye Valley and Shearwater wards, with only one modification to our draft recommendation for Ethandune ward. The modification to Ethandune ward is the transfer of Heywood Village parish ward from Westbury Ham & Heywood ward to Ethandune. We considered we had sufficient argument to adopt this amendment, as discussed in paragraph 156.

177 We do not consider that the proposals from Steeple Ashton and West Ashton parish councils provide any evidence of community identity in support of their proposals and we note that their proposed Summerham ward would have 20% more electors than the district average by 2009.

178 In light of the good level of electoral equality that our proposed Holt & Hilperton ward would provide in this area and the lack of evidence to justify adopting wards with poorer levels of electoral equality, we propose to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final. As we have not received a specific proposal for a new ward name, we propose to retain the name Holt & Hilperton.

179 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Dilton, Ethandune, Holt & Hilperton, Mid Wyllye Valley, Shearwater and Summerham wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

180 Table 6 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 6: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	44	44	44	44
Number of wards	25	25	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,127	2,340	2,127	2,340
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	8	11	7	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	2	4	0	0

181 As shown in Table 6 our final recommendations for West Wiltshire District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from eight to seven. By 2009 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain the existing council size and are recommending a council size of 44 members.

Final recommendation

West Wiltshire District Council should comprise 44 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

182 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the District Council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the District Council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

183 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the

Boundary Committee, lies with district councils.² If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

184 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 district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Melksham and Westbury to reflect the proposed district wards.

185 During Stage One we received proposals to make amendments to the number of parish councillors in Staverton parish. Staverton Parish Council proposed to increase its representation from seven to 11. The Parish Council noted that in the five-year period between 2004 and 2009 development is anticipated in the parish which is forecast to increase the electorate of the parish from 348 to 1,337. It considered that four additional councillors would be 'essential in order to enable them to plan for the future'. However, as this development has not yet taken place we do not consider it appropriate to increase its representation at this stage. However, once the development has taken place, the District Council may wish to undertake a review carried out under section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 to consider the electoral arrangements, including the number of parish councillors of Staverton Parish Council.

186 The parish of Melksham Without is currently divided into two parish wards, Shaw & Whitley (returning three councillors) and Beanacre & Bowerhill (returning 10 councillors). During Stage One Melksham Without Parish Council proposed three new parish wards in Melksham Without. It proposed that the area known as Bowerhill should become a parish ward and that an area which is forecast to contain approximately 1,000 electors by 2009 form a new Snarlton parish ward. It proposed that the remaining area of Melksham Without parish should form a more rural Berryfield & Beanacre parish ward. However, our proposed district warding arrangements would result in no change to this area and we were not persuaded to amend the existing electoral arrangements in Melksham Without parish.

187 During Stage Three, Melksham Without Parish Council proposed that the parish of Melksham Without be split into four separate wards and that the parish council be increased by two councillors to 15. The parish council proposed a Berryfield parish ward with two parish councillors, that Shaw and Whitley be combined with Beanacre as a separate parish ward with four parish councillors, that Snarlton Lane, Sandridge and Redstocks form a parish ward of two parish councillors and that Bowerhill become a separate parish ward with seven parish councillors. Councillor Petty also proposed that Bowerhill become a separate parish ward.

188 We were not persuaded by the Parish Council's proposal, which would require parish warding in areas where there are currently insufficient electors to form a parish

² Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

ward. We propose to retain the existing parish electoral arrangements for Melksham Without.

189 The parish of Winsley is currently not warded and is represented by 11 parish councillors. To reflect his proposed district warding Mr Morland proposed re-warding the parish. However, as we have not adopted Mr Morland's proposals at the district ward level we do not propose to amend the parish's electoral arrangements. We received no further representations regarding Winsley parish's electoral arrangements during Stage Three and therefore propose to retain the existing electoral arrangements for Winsley parish.

190 The parish of Westbury is currently divided into two parish wards, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton, each parish ward being represented by eight councillors.

191 During Stage One Westbury Town Council and Councillors John and Marion Clegg proposed that the existing boundaries of both parish wards should be retained but that Westbury Ham parish ward should be served by nine councillors, instead of the current eight, and that Westbury Laverton parish ward should be served by seven councillors, instead of the current eight. This would retain 16 councillors on the Town Council. The Labour Group proposed reducing the number of councillors of Westbury Town Council from 16 to 15. It proposed three new parish wards, each coterminous with the new district wards that it proposed, with five members representing each new parish ward.

192 In our draft recommendations, we proposed district warding arrangements that would result in no change to the boundaries of the district wards and received no proposals to alter Westbury parish ward boundaries. Therefore the only amendment we made to Westbury parish's electoral arrangements was to adopt the Town Council's proposal to increase its representation.

193 At Stage Three we received no further comments relating to Westbury parish's electoral arrangements. However, as a result of our revised district warding and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Westbury parish.

Final recommendation

Westbury Town Council should comprise 16 parish councillors: Westbury Ham parish ward (returning nine councillors) and Westbury Laverton parish ward (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 4 at the back of this report.

194 The parish of Melksham is currently divided into three parish wards, Melksham North, Melksham Spa and Melksham Woodrow, represented by six, six and three councillors, respectively.

195 During Stage One Melksham Without Parish Council proposed that Melksham should be represented by five district wards, each returning one district councillor and three town councillors. It did not state what the boundaries of these wards would be and we are therefore not proposing to adopt this proposal.

Final recommendation

Melksham Town Council should comprise 15 town councillors: Melksham East parish ward (returning seven councillors), Melksham Spa parish ward (returning six councillors) and Melksham North parish ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 2 at the back of this report.

196 The parish of Trowbridge is currently divided into five parish wards, each of which is coterminous with the district ward of the same name and is represented by four parish councillors: Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge College, Trowbridge Drynham, Trowbridge John of Gaunt and Trowbridge Park.

197 We received no proposals for the electoral arrangements of Trowbridge but as a result of our revised district warding arrangements and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we are proposing seven new parish wards in the town.

198 During Stage Three Trowbridge Town Council opposed our draft recommendations for parish warding in the town due to the variation in the size of the proposed parish wards. However, there is no requirement to provide equality of representation between parish wards and Trowbridge Town Council did not provide an alternative proposal. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Trowbridge Town Council should comprise 20 parish councillors, the same as at present: Trowbridge Central parish ward (returning four councillors), Trowbridge East parish ward (returning five councillors), Trowbridge North East parish ward (returning three councillors), Trowbridge North West parish ward (returning two councillors), Trowbridge South West parish ward (returning four councillors), Trowbridge Bradley Road parish ward (returning one councillor) and Trowbridge Whiterow Park parish ward (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 3b at the back of this report.

199 The parish of Bradford-on-Avon is currently divided into two parish wards, Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward and Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward, each represented by six councillors.

200 We received no proposals for new parish electoral arrangements in this area. However, as a result of our revised district warding and the need to comply with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Bradford-on-Avon parish.

Final recommendation

Bradford-on-Avon Town Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, the same as under the existing arrangements: Bradford-on-Avon North parish ward (returning six councillors) and Bradford-on-Avon South parish ward (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries shown on Map 3a at the back of this report.

6 What happens next?

201 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in West Wiltshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.³

202 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before **24 October 2006**, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

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

³ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for West Wiltshire

204 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for West Wiltshire district.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for West Wiltshire district, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Melksham and Melksham Without.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3a** illustrates the proposed wards in Bradford-on-Avon.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3b** illustrates the proposed wards in Trowbridge.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in Westbury and Heywood.
- **Sheet 5, Map 5** illustrates the proposed wards in Warminster.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
The Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
The Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the district
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single district enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision-making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories: a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the district average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.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 comply with this requirement.
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.