LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUTURE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRISTOL

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

March 1998

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Bristol.

Members of the Commission are:

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Local Government Commission for England

31 March 1998

Dear Secretary of State

On 3 June 1997 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the City of Bristol under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in December 1997 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 229–230) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Bristol.

We recommend that Bristol City Council should be served by 70 councillors, representing 35 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to be elected by thirds.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Bristol on 3 June 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 December 1997, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 17 of the 34 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city;**
- **in three wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2002 the number of electors per councillor in 19 wards is expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average, three of which would vary by more than 20 per cent.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 229–230) are that:

- **Bristol City Council should have 70 councillors, compared to 68 at present;**
- **there should be 35 wards, one more than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 34 of the 35 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent.**
- **By 2002 the number of electors per councillor is forecast to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in all 35 wards.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 12 May 1998:

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

Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Ashley	2	Ashley ward (part), Redland ward (part)
2	Avonmouth	2	Avonmouth ward, Kingsweston ward (part)
3	Bedminster	2	Bedminster ward (part), Filwood ward (part), Southville ward (part), Windmill Hill ward (part)
4	Bishopston	2	Bishopston ward (part)
5	Bishopsworth	2	Bishopsworth ward, Bedminster ward (part)
6	Brislington East	2	Brislington East ward (part)
7	Brislington West	2	Brislington West ward (part), Brislington East ward (part), Stockwood ward (part)
8	Cabot	2	Cabot ward (part)
9	Clifton	2	Clifton ward (part)
10	Clifton East	2	Cabot ward (part), Clifton ward (part), Cotham ward (part)
11	Cotham	2	Cotham ward (part), Cabot ward (part), Redland ward (part)
12	Easton	2	Easton ward, Eastville ward (part)
13	Eastville	2	Eastville ward (part)
14	Filwood	2	Filwood ward (part), Knowle ward (part), Windmill Hill ward (part)
15	Frome Vale	2	Frome Vale ward (part), Hillfields ward (part)
16	Hartcliffe	2	Hartcliffe ward, Whitchurch Park ward (part)
17	Henbury	2	*Unchanged*
18	Hengrove	2	Hengrove ward (part)
19	Henleaze	2	Henleaze ward (part)
20	Hillfields	2	Hillfields ward (part), Frome Vale ward (part)
21	Horfield	2	Horfield ward, Bishopston ward (part)
22	Kingsweston	2	Kingsweston ward (part), Stoke Bishop ward (part)
23	Knowle	2	Knowle ward (part), Brislington West ward (part), Stockwood ward (part)

Figure 1 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
24	Lawrence Hill	2	*Unchanged*
25	Lockleaze	2	Lockleaze ward, Ashley ward (part)
26	Redland	2	Henleaze ward (part), Redland ward (part)
27	St George East	2	*Unchanged*
28	St George West	2	*Unchanged*
29	Southmead	2	*Unchanged*
30	Southville	2	Southville ward (part), Windmill Hill ward (part)
31	Stockwood	2	Stockwood ward (part)
32	Stoke Bishop	2	Stoke Bishop ward (part)
33	Westbury-on-Trym	2	*Unchanged*
34	Whitchurch Park	2	Whitchurch Park ward (part), Hengrove ward (part)
35	Windmill Hill	2	Filwood ward (part), Windmill Hill ward (part)

Notes: 1 The city of Bristol is unparished.

2 The proposed wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the city of Bristol. We have now reviewed all the unitary authorities in the former county of Avon as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England.

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

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

3 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 3 June 1997, when we wrote to Bristol City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. Our letter was copied to the Avon & Somerset Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Avon Association of Local Councils, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the city, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review, and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published notices in the local press, issued a press release and invited the City Council to publicise the review more widely. The closing date for receipt of initial representations was 15 September 1997.

5 At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations. We also held a public meeting in Bristol in order to seek further evidence from interested parties, in particular on the appropriate number of councillors on the City Council, the number of councillors per ward, and any significant factors which should be taken into account in determining ward boundaries. An independent assessor, Mr Barry Capon, was appointed to chair the meeting, which was held in the Council House on 13 October 1997. Mr Capon reported his findings to the Commission, which took account of them during its deliberations over the Bristol review. A note of the public meeting's proceedings is available from the Commission on request.

6 Stage Three began on 2 December 1997 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Bristol*, and ended on 2 February 1998. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

7 Bristol is the largest city in the south-west, and the eighth largest in the country. In the past, Bristol has been England's second city, and its history and prestige are reflected in its architecture and strong maritime associations. The city encompasses 110 square kilometres and has a population of over 374,000. There has been a reduction in population and electorate in Bristol over the past 20 years with around 6 per cent fewer electors than in 1979, although it is understood that this trend is now reversing.

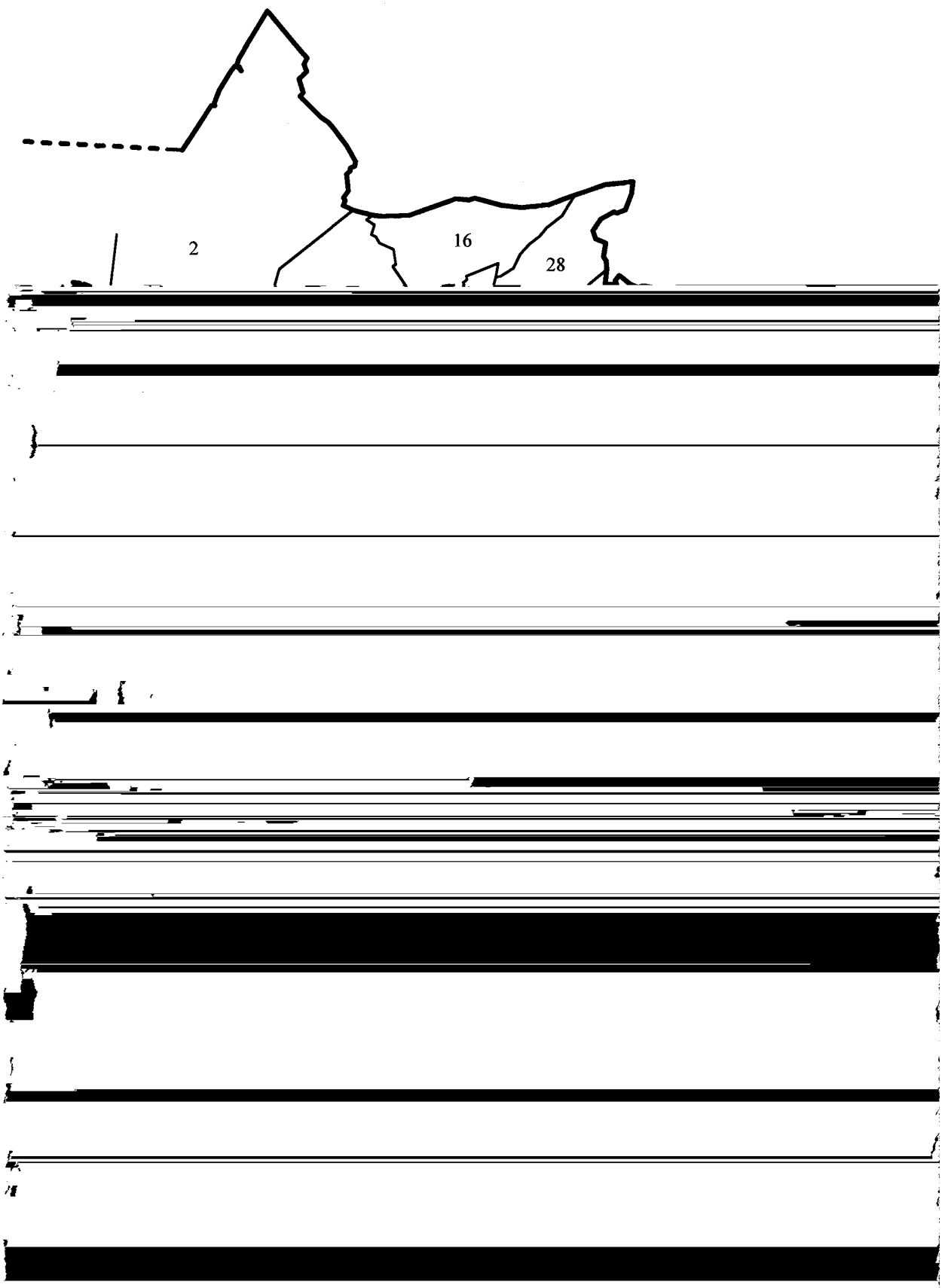
8 The city has good road and rail links with London, South Wales, the South West, the Midlands and the North, together with Bristol International Airport, which is seven miles from the city centre, and the port of Bristol at Avonmouth.

9 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the average for the city in percentage terms. In the report, this calculation may also be described as 'electoral variance'.

10 Bristol City Council has 68 councillors elected from 34 wards (Map 1 and Figure 2). Each of the 34 wards is represented by two councillors, and the Council holds elections by thirds. The electorate of the city is 291,749 (February 1997) and each councillor represents an average of 4,290 electors. The City Council forecasts that the electorate will increase by just over 1 per cent to 295,931 by the year 2002, which would change the average number of electors per councillor to 4,352 (Figure 2).

11 Since the last electoral review was completed in 1979 by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), changes in population and electorate have been unevenly spread across the city. There has been a recent expansion in the number of registered electors in the wards of Cabot, Clifton, Cotham and Redland, to the west of the city centre, where it is understood that a high proportion of students have registered as electors. There has also been considerable growth in Cabot ward due to the Harbourside development, and in Brislington East ward due to the Riverside development (both of which are still continuing). As a result, in 17 of the 34 wards the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city, and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The most significant electoral imbalances are in Cabot and Clifton wards where each councillor represents on average 24 per cent more electors than the city average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Bristol



	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25	Redland	2	9,987	4,994	16	10,009	5,005	15
26	St George East	2	8,431	4,216	-2	8,571	4,286	-2
27	St George West	2	8,142	4,071	-5	8,225	4,113	-6
28	Southmead	2	7,731	3,866	-10	7,850	3,925	-10
29	Southville	2	8,206	4,103	-4	8,228	4,114	-5
30	Stockwood	2	9,833	4,917	15	9,833	4,917	13
31	Stoke Bishop	2	10,242	5,121	19	10,418	5,209	20
32	Westbury-on-Trym	2	8,416	4,208	-2	8,472	4,236	-3
33	Whitchurch Park	2	7,776	3,888	-9	7,776	3,888	-11
34	Windmill Hill	2	10,070	5,035	17	10,128	5,064	16
	Totals	**68**	**291,749**	**—**	**—**	**295,931**	**—**	**—**
	Averages	**—**	**—**	**4,290**	**—**	**—**	**4,352**	**—**

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bristol City Council's submission.

*Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. /, in(199,1)]TJ*0. 384 Tw[electors inF*

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Representations Received

12 At the start of the review, we met with representatives of all three party groups on the Council and closely liaised with the Council's officers about the provision of current data and electorate forecasts. Although only 16 representations were received during Stage One, three – from the City Council, the Conservative Associations and the Liberal Democrat Group – provided details of city-wide proposals. A further submission, from Mr Phillips, represented – the Commission understands – the view of some Liberal Democrats, while other representations were primarily concerned with particular issues or areas.

13 Because conflicting views and evidence were put forward during Stage One, we held a public meeting at the Council's offices, chaired by Mr Barry Capon, an independent assessor appointed by the Commission. We invited all those whom we had notified of the review at the start of Stage One, together with those who had sent representations, and we placed public notices in the local press. We advertised the purpose of the meeting as providing the opportunity for further evidence, and perhaps consensus, to emerge on three issues: the broad number of councillors for the authority, the number of councillors per ward, and any significant factors that need to be taken into account in determining ward boundaries.

14 We found the meeting very helpful in clarifying the evidence on a number of issues, and we received nine subsequent representations which developed respondents' views. The Labour Group, which had not previously made a separate representation (it is the majority group on the City Council), put forward a scheme for our consideration *if* we should not put forward the City Council's proposal and instead consider that 'radical' change was necessary.

15 Thus three city-wide schemes were put forward in Stage One, with a fourth scheme put forward following the public meeting, as follows:

(a) the City Council proposed the retention of 68 members, representing 34 two-member wards, with changes to the majority of ward boundaries;

(b) the Conservative Associations proposed a new pattern of 72 single-member wards;

(c) the Liberal Democrat Group, while preferring a larger council, proposed a council of 70 members, comprising 35 two-member wards, and changes to the majority of ward boundaries;

(d) following the public meeting, the Labour Group, while retaining its support for the City Council's proposals, put forward an alternative submission for a council of 72 members, representing 24 three-member wards, in the event of the Commission considering that 'radical' change was necessary.

16 There were therefore two central issues of debate during Stage One: the overall council size and the number of councillors which should serve each ward.

Council Size

17 At Stage One we received two broad categories of representations on council size – first, from those proposing a significant increase in council size to around 80 members or more and, second, from those proposing no or relatively little change, with a council size of between 68 and 72.

18 Because a number of representations at Stage One, including the Liberal Democrats', made the point that they would have found it easier to produce a scheme had the Commission given them a lead on the size of the council that might be appropriate before inviting submissions, Mr Capon described the Commission's position at the public meeting:

> "The Commission ... considers the council size of each authority on a case by case basis. While proposals for increases in council size

will need to be justified, it acknowledges that there may be an argument for some modest increases to reflect the increased functional responsibilities of a new unitary authority. Its indicative size range for a unitary authority is between 40 and 80 councillors. The Commission is quite prepared to consider proposals for a council size within this range, although [proposals] beyond this range would require special justification. It would be particularly helpful if a local consensus emerged around what the appropriate council size should be in the light of Bristol's experience as a unitary authority over the last 18 months."

19 The case for a significantly larger council was well articulated at the public meeting and in some Stage One representations. Although it was not formally proposed by any of the political groups, a council of 80 members or more appeared to be preferred by some councillors in all three groups. The Liberal Democrats said that the Group might have made an entirely different submission at Stage One had it understood that the Commission might be open to a significant increase in council size. In our draft recommendations report we set out the main points that had been articulated in favour of such an increase.

(a) Historically, there has been a far higher number of elected representatives in Bristol. Before local government reorganisation in 1974, the City Council is understood to have had in excess of 100 councillors and aldermen. From 1973 to 1983, 118 councillors served Bristol (84 city councillors and 34 county councillors). From 1983 to the further reorganisation in 1996, there were 102 councillors (68 city councillors and 34 county councillors).

(b) The affairs of the City Council make considerable demands on the time of elected members. We understand that there are currently nine main committees with a total of 121 seats, and 96 sub–committees, joint committees and panels with a total of 583 seats. The committee cycle for main committees is six-weekly, with a council meeting about eight times a year. In addition, members have appointments to outside bodies, plus group meetings and activities as ward representatives. With the increasing need for inter-agency working for local government, the demands on members are increasing, perhaps making it difficult to find candidates. If members are overloaded, then they are not able to read all their papers properly and engage in the necessary debate required to reach measured decisions.

(c) If councillors are to remain effective representatives of their local communities, then it is essential that the machinery of government is such that all sectors of the community are encouraged to put forward candidates. The point was made at the public meeting that the present workloads mean that some groups of people, such as mothers, young working people and those who want other interests in their lives, may not want to become councillors, since it has become nearly a full-time job.

(d) The City Council is the largest non-metropolitan unitary authority in England. It has a population approaching 400,000, with a current electorate of 292,000 and a projected electorate of 296,000 in 2002. While the number of registered electors has fallen since 1984 (309,000), there was a suggestion at the public meeting of a considerable number of unregistered voters. Compared with some of the smaller metropolitan districts, it would appear that Bristol has a relatively high number of electors per councillor (4,290): Bradford's 90 councillors each represent an average of 3,840 electors; Liverpool's 99 councillors each represent 3,550 electors; Manchester's 99 councillors each represent 3,150 electors; and Kirklees' 72 councillors each represent 4,080 electors (electorate figures, source OPCS 1994).

20 In its final recommendations report to the Secretary of State following the review of local government structure in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset (1993), the Commission recommended that the size of the City Council should remain unchanged, notwithstanding its recommendation for unitary status and the abolition of Avon County Council. It did so in the light of the Secretary of State's guidance for that review which stated that "where a new authority covers the area of an existing county or district ... the Commission should recommend that the wards or electoral divisions should be transferred to the new authority". The Commission added that electoral arrangements would be a matter for further consideration at the present periodic electoral review.

21 The arguments for no change in council size, or for only a relatively small increase, were put forward as follows.

(a) Notwithstanding the caveats applied to the Liberal Democrats' submission, representations for a council size in the range of 68 to 72 were put forward by the City Council and all three political groups.

(b) The City Council and the Labour Group argued that the current arrangements had served Bristol well; although it was said at the public meeting that the Labour Group would not oppose an increase in council size in principle, this would require particular justification.

(c) At the public meeting the Council Leader said that a relatively small increase in council size would not deal with councillor overload or recruitment: it might help in a small way but the issue needed to be looked at in a more fundamental way. We understand that proposals are in preparation for streamlining the Council to deal with concerns about councillor overload.

22 In our draft recommendations report we considered very carefully the arguments on council size. We were sensitive about the workload of councillors and the point made at the public meeting that the present arrangements could be a positive disincentive for people to put themselves forward for election. The present arrangements are clearly very demanding.

23 On the other hand, the Liberal Democrat Group and the Conservative Associations maintained their preference after the public meeting for a council size of 70 and 72 respectively, while the Labour Group put forward a proposal for a council size of 72 if we were not minded to adopt the City Council's proposal for no change. We were also mindful that active consideration is currently being given to the role of councillors and to the possibility of streamlining councillor involvement in the management of the Council. We welcomed this approach.

24 In our draft recommendations report, having regard to the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would be met by a council of 70 members.

The Number of Councillors per Ward

25 At Stage One alternative views were put forward in submissions, and at the public meeting, for a pattern of single-member, two-member or three-member wards for Bristol.

26 A pattern of *single-member* wards was put forward by the Conservative Associations, and articulated by a number of speakers at the public meeting. The Conservatives argued that two-member wards were confusing to the electorate, whereas single-member wards would provide clear lines of accountability, provide for a better understanding by electors about who their councillor is, potentially attract more councillors wishing to stand for election, and provide for a smaller geographical area for the councillor to represent. Against this, the Labour Group argued that a single-member pattern would: fragment the political pattern into a large number of unnecessarily small units; permit targeting of vulnerable councillors by small and unrepresentative groups, introducing instability and undermining proper democratic accountability; poorly reflect community identities because communities do not comprise equal units of 4,000 electors; make it difficult to draw convenient boundaries while maintaining electoral equality; and introduce further instability if it were to be associated with whole-council, four-yearly elections.

27 A preference for the retention of the present *two-member* pattern was put forward by the City Council and by the Liberal Democrats (together with Mr Phillips). It was argued that the present pattern has served Bristol well and that there was no need to change. Mr Phillips, for example, argued that, while single-member wards would be appropriate for communities with around 4,000 electors, "drawing the correct lines would become more difficult and accountability would be impaired because, even though elections are held by thirds, each ward would have an election in only one year of the four-year cycle. Electors are also better served by having two councillors to call upon, e.g. in the event of incapacity or heavy civic duties, and it is useful to electors to have two councillors sitting on a wider range of committees".

28 Finally, the Labour Group in its alternative proposal set out its view of the advantages of a

three-member scheme "if radical change is required". It argued that such a scheme would provide a more robust basis for political organisation, which is based on ward units, and thereby strenghen local democracy, bring Bristol into line with other large cities; facilitate annual elections by thirds, in line with present government policy, reduce the need for ward boundaries to cross perlimentary boundaries and so help bring local Members of Parliment into a consensus; make it easier to balance community identity (albeit with more than one identifiable local community within each ward) with arithmetical equality, and provide for better electoral representation by a team of councillors, for example, when some councillors are required to take on management responsibilities as well as their representational role.

29 There are advantages and disadvantages to both single-member and multi-member ward patterns. In our *Guidance* we stress that we will continue to have regard to local preferences. In Bristol such preferences are not straightforward but notwithstanding the views expressed by the Conservatives and at the public meeting, there was clearly not majority support among councillors for single-member wards. We were mindful that such a pattern does not characterise the larger towns and cities in England, where it is likely to be more difficult to avoid splitting communities between wards while achieving reasonable electoral equality.

30 We considered that the arguments between two- and three-member wards were finely balanced in Bristol. The Labour Group articulated the case for three-member wards persuasively in its 'alternative' submission. We stated that we would have expected to have received support locally for such a pattern in Bristol: 28 three-member wards existed in the city until 1983. However, the Labour Group's 'alternative' proposal was the only one to have put the case to us during the initial stages of the review and its preference at Stage One remained to retain the integrity of the present two-member pattern. During Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group and a number of other respondents also argued for the retention of the present two-member pattern; at the public meeting the Liberal Democrat Group's spokesperson said that the Group had not yet considered a pattern of three-member wards.

31 In our draft recommendations report we therefore proposed a continuation of the two-member ward pattern. While it was not the preference of all local interests, and as we noted, it does not lend itself perfectly to elections by thirds, we considered that it would meet many of the arguments which had been articulated for multi-member wards and had the support of both the City Council and the Liberal Democrat Group.

Summary of Main Considerations

32 In the initial stages of the review a number of considerations therefore emerged which informed our draft recommendations. First, the review had been generally welcomed. Respondents, including the City Council, Conservative Associations, Labour Group and Liberal Democrat Group, all made positive proposals for change to the present electoral arrangements.

33 Second, there was a measure of agreement on the preferred council size. As indicated above, the City Council, and all three Groups, put forward proposals for a council size of between 68 and 72 members at Stage One. In our draft recommendations report we agreed with this assessment and put forward a proposal for a council of 70 members. Although we are generally cautious about any increase in council size, we noted that the situation in Bristol is exceptional: it is the largest non-metropolitan authority and has suffered a reduction in representation following the abolition of Avon County Council.

34 Third, there was consensus in the City Council and Liberal Democrat submissions for 34 or 35 wards for the city. In our draft recommendations we proposed a council with 35 wards.

35 Fourth, most Stage One respondents preferred a continuation of the recent tradition of two-member wards in the city. We acknowledged this local preference and proposed that the existing pattern should be maintained.

36 Fifth, we welcomed the calls for an open and constructive debate on the electoral arrangements in the city. Representatives of the three political groups on the City Council, and others, contributed to a discussion on the electoral arrangements of the city at our public meeting on 13 October 1997. We found that meeting very helpful.

37 Sixth, respondents asked that we take into account established communities. We sought to achieve this, while also seeking electoral equality

across the city, taking into account the developments which are expected to occur. Generally, in this review, we have sought electoral equality on the basis of both present electorate and, where there appears to be some confidence about future increases in the electorate five-year forecasts.

38 Seventh, we noted that respondents put forward proposals which would secure some improvements in electoral equality. In relation to the main Stage One proposals for a pattern of two-member wards, both the City Council's and Liberal Democrat Group's proposals would have considerably improved electoral equality. While at present the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average in 17 wards (20 wards in 2002), this would reduce to just one ward under both schemes. By 2002 this would remain the case under the City Council's scheme, but reduce to zero under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. The number of wards with an electoral variance of over 5 per cent would reduce from 25 to five and two respectively under the City Council and Liberal Democrat schemes (four and zero by 2002).

39 Finally, the proposals put forward by the City Council and the Liberal Democrat Group at Stage One represented a degree of consensus in the city on the location of ward boundaries: although the precise boundaries put forward varied in most areas, these were not for the most part substantial. We concluded that some improvements in detail were possible in many areas, but in essence our proposals in the north, south and east of the city substantially reflected the Stage One submissions from the City Council and the Liberal Democrat Group. In the west of the city, where it is more difficult to assess electorate growth and where there was less agreement on the way forward, we built on the Liberal Democrats' proposal for an additional ward, represented by two councillors, to reflect the expected growth in the area.

The Commision's Provisional Conclusions

40 In the light of views and evidence received during Stage One and at the public meeting, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Bristol*. In the city as a whole we sought to balance good electoral equality with the need to secure effective and convenient local government and reflect local community interests and identities. We proposed that:

(a) the City Council should be served by 70 councillors, representing 35 wards maintaining the present pattern of two-member wards;

(b) the boundaries of 31 of the existing wards should be modified, with no change to three wards;

(c) a new Whiteladies ward should be created, comprising parts of the existing Cabot, Clifton and Cotham wards;

(d) elections should continue to be held by thirds.

Draft Recommendation

Bristol City Council should comprise 70 councillors, serving 35 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

41 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 34 of the 35 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the city average. Electoral equality was expected to improve further by 2002, when all 35 wards were projected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

42 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 524 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission.

Bristol City Council

43 The City Council stated that it did not intend to make any further submission. However, it submitted revised electorate figures for 2002 for the draft recommendations which it said had been provided to the three political groups.

Bristol Conservative Co-ordinating Committee

44 The Bristol Conservative Co-ordinating Committee ('the Conservatives') expressed disappointment that its single-member ward option had not been adopted, but stated that "given that we believe strongly in the smallest ward size possible ... we support the two-member ward proposal" and accepted, in broad terms, a council of 70 members. The Conservatives opposed any arrangement which involved a pattern of three-member wards. They agreed with the revised electorate forecasts provided by the City Council and submitted modifications to the proposed wards of Bishopston, Bishopsworth, Cotham, Easton, Eastville, Henleaze, Horfield, Lockleaze, Redland, Southmead, Westbury-on-Trym and Withywood, which they considered would better reflect local community identities. They also considered that the new warding arrangements should be implemented by an all-out election in 1999.

Bristol City Council Labour Group & Bristol Labour Party

45 The Labour Group on the City Council and the Bristol Labour Party ('the Labour Party') stated that its original submission for a "radical alternative" of 24 three-member wards in the city "would best recognise the Commission's objectives of general equality of electoral numbers, maintain community identities, provide efficient and accessible local government and a system which reflects accountability in terms of community". However, it proposed amendments to the draft recommendations and used the revised electorate data provided by the City Council.

46 The Labour Party proposed modifications to the boundaries of 23 wards: Ashley, Avonmouth, Brislington East, Brislington West, Cotham, Clifton, Easton, Eastville, Filwood, Frome Vale, Hengrove, Henleaze, Hillfields, Kingsweston, Knowle, Lockleaze, Redland, Southmead, Stockwood, Westbury-on-Trym, Whitchurch Park, Whiteladies and Windmill Hill.

Bristol City Council Liberal Democrat Group

47 The Liberal Democrat Group on the City Council supported the proposed council of 70 members, including the creation of a new ward in the Clifton area to address the relative under-representation in the city centre, and indicated that it had found the draft recommendations to have been "generally well received". However, the Group reiterated its view that the City Council's forecast electorate for Cabot ward is at least 700 electors short, and the Group had therefore included these additional electors in the Cabot area in its submission.

48 The Group submitted comments on proposed ward names: it noted that the name Whiteladies had received little support, and proposed that is should be renamed Clifton East; Ashley ward should be renamed Montpelier; and that Frome Vale ward should be renamed Fishponds as in the draft recommendations, arguing that Fishponds might appear to be an obvious name, but noting that it had received "a mixed response".

49 The Group proposed modifications to the wards of Cabot, Clifton, Cotham, Hartcliffe, Henleaze, Knowle, Southmead, Stockwood, Westbury-on-Trym, Whitchurch Park and Whiteladies. It supported the retention of the present cycle of elections by thirds.

Members of Parliament

50 We received two representations from Members of Parliament in response to our draft recommendations. Roger Berry, MP for Kingswood, opposed the proposed ward name of Fishponds since the existing Frome Vale ward comprises parts of Fishponds, Stapleton, Frenchay and Downend. He also suggested that the proposed boundary between Hillfields and Frome Vale should be modified to follow the middle of Fishponds Road from its junction with Lodge Causeway to the junction of Beechwood Road, then the middle of Beechwood Road and part of the middle of Radley Road and Forest Road and then follow the cycle path as at present. This would transfer fewer electors from Frome Vale to Hillfields than the draft recommendations and would in his view provide "a more balanced split of the communities".

51 Dr Doug Naysmith, MP for Bristol North West, stated that he had no substantive comments regarding the proposed re-warding arrangements for Lockleaze, Horfield, Southmead and Henbury, but he opposed the proposed boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston wards. He argued that it would divide the Lawrence Weston estate and that Shirehampton Road should form the boundary between the two wards.

Other Representations

52 We received a further 518 representations in response to our draft recommendations.

53 Bristol North West Constituency Liberal Democrats expressed concern at the lack of coterminosity between parliamentary and district ward boundaries and considered that the scale of change proposed would require all-out elections and be disruptive. However, they reiterated their Stage One view that a council of 40 two-member wards would be the most appropriate solution for the city of Bristol, but did not submit any detailed boundaries at either Stage One or Stage Three.

54 Bristol West Liberal Democrats broadly supported the draft recommendations and opposed any scheme for three-member wards. They proposed alternative boundaries between the wards of Cabot and Cotham, Clifton and Whiteladies, Henleaze and Westbury-on-Trym, and Westbury-on-Trym and Southmead. They also proposed that Ashley ward be renamed Montpelier and Whiteladies renamed Clifton East. They considered that Clifton Down was an inappropriate alternative ward name, and that the other ward in the area should continue to be called Clifton.

55 The Bishopston Liberal Democrat Focus Team stated that local consultation had indicated opposition to the proposed boundary between Bishopston and Horfield wards. It was concerned that the proposal may result in some electors being transferred from Bristol West Parliamentary Constituency to Bristol North–West, and asked the Commission to reconsider the draft recommendations. However, the Commission is not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in undertaking electoral reviews.

56 Stockwood Labour Party proposed that Wootton Park should be transferred from Stockwood ward to Knowle ward on community identity grounds, and that the boundary between the two wards should run along West Town Lane.

57 Councillors Janke and Price, the members for Clifton ward, and five local residents, supported the draft recommendations for Clifton ward. Councillors Janke and Price proposed that the new Whiteladies ward be named Clifton Whiteladies and opposed the Labour Party's proposals for a north/south split of Clifton, as did the Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society, the Clifton Village Action Group and four local residents. Three of the residents proposed that Whiteladies ward be named Clifton East; one suggested St Johns.

58 Councillor Dr D Brown and Councillor Dr R Brown, the members for Henleaze ward, considered that the draft recommendation to transfer electors from the north-west of Henleaze ward to Westbury-on-Trym ward did not take account of community identity and proposed an alternative boundary. They said that if further changes were proposed then residents in the affected areas should be consulted, and considered that there had been a lack of consultation in the early part of the process. Alderman Fey and the Henleaze Society also opposed the proposed transfer of part of Henleaze ward to Westbury-on-Trym ward on community identity grounds and considered that electoral equality could be improved instead by transferring electors from the south of Henleaze ward to Redland ward. As a consequence, Alderman Fey also proposed the transfer of 830 electors from Redland to Cotham. Henleaze United Reformed Church, Westbury Council of Churches and the Westbury-

on-Trym Society also opposed the transfer of electors from Henleaze to Westbury-on-Trym on community identity grounds, as did 154 local residents. In response to a local campaign, these 154 residents argued that the proposed boundary between Henleaze and Westbury-on-Trym wards along Henleaze Road, would split the existing community.

59 Alderman Fey, Councillor Poole, member for Westbury-on-Trym ward, the Henleaze Society, the Westbury-on-Trym Society and 322 local residents all opposed the transfer of electors from the north-east of Westbury-on-Trym ward to Southmead ward on community identity grounds. These 322 residents, the majority of whom responded to a separate campaign, stated that the proposed boundary between Westbury-on-Trym and Southmead wards would not reflect local community identity. The large number of respondents in the Henleaze and Westbury-on-Trym areas indicated that there were concerns regarding the proposed wards and local communities.

60 Councillor Becker, member for Frome Vale ward, opposed the draft recommendation to rename the ward Fishponds, arguing that much of the area known locally as Fishponds would not be included in the proposed ward. He also proposed an alternative boundary between Frome Vale and Hillfields wards which would transfer fewer electors from Frome Vale to Hillfields than the draft recommendation. The Kingswood Labour Party also considered Frome Vale to be a more appropriate name than Fishponds and proposed the same modified boundary between the two wards as Councillor Becker.

61 Councillor Smith, member for Whitchurch Park ward, considered that the proposed boundaries for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards did not accurately reflect community identity in these areas, and that the Labour Group's Stage One proposal for a three-member ward pattern would better reflect local communities. He asked the Commission to reconsider the Labour Group's original proposal, but that if the draft recommendations are to be confirmed as final, Whitchurch Park ward should be renamed Teyfant or Hartcliffe East, with Hartcliffe ward being renamed Hartcliffe West. Community Networks proposed alternative boundaries for the wards of Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe to take more account of community identity.

62 Councillor Begley, member for Brislington East ward, and two residents of the ward proposed that polling district EBD should form part of Brislington West ward. Councillor Begley also proposed that polling district EBF should remain in Brislington East ward to reflect community identities. The Brislington West Labour Party also proposed alternative boundaries for the ward which reflected the Labour Party's Stage Three submission, and considered that this would better reflect community identity. Another resident of Brislington East ward opposed the transfer of the Hungerford estate.

63 Councillor Sutton, member for Eastville ward, considered that the draft recommendations failed to have regard to natural communities and that the initial consultation had been poorly publicised. He also expressed concern over the accuracy of the electorate forecast data for the whole city and considered that a three-member ward pattern would be the most appropriate for Bristol. He opposed the proposed boundary between Easton and Eastville wards, and favoured the retention of the existing boundary, but listed several possible alternatives. He opposed the transfer of the Greenbank area of Eastville to Easton on community identity grounds.

64 Three residents of Eastville ward supported a three-member ward pattern for the city and opposed the proposed boundary between Easton and Eastville wards in the Clay Hill and Clay Bottom area on community identity grounds. They added that if the draft recommendations were confirmed as final, then Napier Road should also be transferred into Eastville ward, and opposed any move to transfer the Greenbank area into Easton ward. Two of the three stated that they endorsed Councillor Sutton's comments.

65 Mr John Phillips had put forward a city-wide scheme during Stage One, reiterated his view that Bristol merits a much larger council size. However, he supported the draft recommendation for 35 two-member wards with an additional ward in the Clifton area. He opposed the Labour Group's original scheme for three-member wards and the Conservatives' original single-member ward proposal, and proposed modifications to the boundaries of Cabot and Cotham wards. He considered that Clifton should be included in the name of the proposed Whiteladies ward, and suggested the two wards in the area should be named Clifton East and Clifton West. He indicated that ward names such as Clifton Down and Clifton Village would be inappropriate.

66 The Bristol Civic Society proposed an expansion of the City Council's boundaries and a pattern of 120 single-member wards.

67 Two residents of Knowle ward considered that Wells Road, the existing boundary between Knowle and Brislington West wards, provides an identifiable and natural boundary between the wards and should be retained. Another Knowle resident and former councillor considered that the workload of local councillors was too high and that a three-member ward pattern would address this problem. He opposed the transfer of polling district KEB from Knowle to Filwood ward and the transfer of polling district WBD from Brislington West to Knowle ward on community identity grounds.

68 A resident of Horfield submitted a modification to the proposed boundary between Henbury and Southmead wards to provide a more coherent boundary between the two wards, and proposed the retention of the existing boundary between Bishopston and Horfield wards to reflect community identity. Regarding ward names, he proposed that Kingsweston should be renamed Blaise, Whiteladies as Clifton East, Clifton as Clifton West, and Ashley as Montpelier.

69 A resident of Westbury-on-Trym said that while he supported much of the draft recommendations, he considered that a more radical approach was required and proposed a council size of 80 members, serving 40 two-member wards. He opposed the proposal to transfer part of Ashley ward to Lockleaze ward on community identity grounds and supported elections by halves although he was aware that this is not currently legally possible.

70 Windmill Hill City Farm proposed an alternative boundary between Windmill Hill and Southville wards which would retain an additional 232 electors in Windmill Hill ward to reflect community identity.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

71 As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bristol is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

72 However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

73 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

74 In our March 1996 *Guidance*, we expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances ... and will have to be justified in full". However, as emphasised in our September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*, while we accept that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review.

Electorate Forecasts

75 At Stage One the City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an increase in the electorate of just over 1 per cent from 291,749 to 295,931 over the five-year period from 1997 to 2002. It expected most of the growth to be to the west of the city centre, particularly in the wards of Cabot and Clifton, although some growth is expected in other wards, including Brislington East. The City Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period, using enumeration districts as building blocks, and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

76 The Liberal Democrat Group expressed the view at Stage One that the City Council had under- estimated the expected growth in electorate in Cabot ward. The City Council commented to us on the assumptions made by the Liberal Democrats and explained the methodology that the City Council had applied. The Council maintained that its approach "provides the best estimate of the distribution of change over the five-year period to October 2001 (i.e. February 2002 [electoral register]) that can be achieved". The City Council also considered that the Liberal Democrats had named some developments "that do not yet have planning permission [and relate to sites which] do not necessarily satisfy the same criteria of availability as sites in the City Council's submission". In our draft recommendations report we stated that we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science, and having given consideration to the City Council's forecast electorates, assumed that its figures represented the best estimates that were available at the time.

77 During Stage Three the City Council provided the Commission with revised electorate figures for our draft recommendations which it considered were "better estimates than those upon which the recommendations are based" (i.e. the electorate data contained in the Liberal Democrats' submission). The Council provided its revised figures to all the political groups.

78 Councillor Sutton, member for Eastville ward, considered that the electorate data was inaccurate, particularly in the Ashley, Clifton and Cabot areas, and that "there is insufficient data to predict accurately future electorates".

79 The Labour Group and Conservatives adopted the City Council's revised figures in their Stage Three responses. However, the Liberal Democrat Group reiterated its view that the electorate figures for Cabot ward had been underestimated. The Group considered that "a combination of council policy and a trend towards living in the city centre will continue to apply upward pressure on the electorate in Cabot". It estimated that the increase in electors is more likely to be around 1,900, compared to the City Council's forecast of around 750. The City Council commented that several of the developments referred to in the Liberal Democrats' submission would not be completed by 2002, and that a consistent approach had to be taken across the whole city. Consequently, it still considered its projected electorate data to be the most accurate.

80 We have taken account of the various concerns raised, but we remain satisfied that the City Council's electorate forecasts provide the best estimates presently available.

The Commission's Approach

81 During Stage Three some respondents continued to express similar views to those they put forward at Stage One. The Labour Group stated that its "radical" pattern of three-member wards (which it had presented at Stage One, if the Commission did not accept the Council's proposal for a two-member ward pattern) would "offer the City of Bristol the most satisfactory system of local government". The Conservatives expressed disappointment that the Commission "appears to have dismissed the opportunity for councillors to represent communities rather than larger electoral units", alluding, it is assumed, to its Stage One proposition for a pattern of single-member wards. The Liberal Democrats (and Mr Phillips) maintained their support for a pattern of two-member wards. These views also found protagonists in other representations to the Commission.

82 However, we are gratified that our draft recommendations have provided a framework within which the review has significantly progressed during Stage Three. We consider that if any consensus is to be achieved around proposals which meet the need for electoral equality while reflecting the Commission's other statutory obligations, it is unlikely to be for proposals for single-member or three-member wards. Each political group adopted the draft recommendations as their starting point in proposing modifications to the detailed boundaries. We very much welcome this positive response from the political groups. It has meant that we are now able to concentrate on the detail of ward boundaries, rather than the principles which should underpin them. The Conservatives commented: "Given that we believe strongly in the smallest-sized ward possible, with the rejection of the single-member ward option, we support the two-member ward proposal. The proposed council size ... is very close to our own proposal and we therefore accept, in broad terms, the 70 member proposal with two-member wards". The Labour Group made proposals which were "designed to make a flawed scheme more workable and acceptable to the people of Bristol". The Liberal Democrat Group stated that it had consulted widely on the draft recommendations and "found them to be generally well received [and] as a result we have accepted the Commission's draft recommendations with very few amendments".

83 We have therefore drawn the following conclusions. First, there has been general agreement with the Commission's proposal for a council size of 70 – support from the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and acceptance by Labour. The only other representations on council size were from the Bristol Civic Society which proposed 120 single-member wards serving an enlarged city area, and Bristol North West Constituency Liberal Democrats and a resident of Westbury-on-Trym who both supported a council of 80 members. As indicated in Chapter 3, we considered alternative council sizes very carefully but we are content to maintain our conclusion that – having regard to the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received – the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 70 members.

84 Second, there has been widespread acceptance of – if not complete agreement with – our draft recommendation for a pattern of two-member wards. Again we set out our rationale in detail in our draft recommendations report. It was accepted by the Liberal Democrats, and "in broad terms" by the Conservatives. It was also put forward at Stage One by the City Council, although we acknowledge that at Stage Three the Labour Group subsequently appears to have become clearer in its preference for three-member wards. While the number of councillors per ward provided one of the more contentious issues at Stage One, it has not remained an issue for most respondents at Stage Three. We are therefore content to maintain our recommendation for a pattern of two-member wards.

85 Third, we again welcome the willingness of local interests to participate in an open debate about the electoral arrangements in the city. The number of representations received has been among the highest in our experience of electoral reviews. The great majority of representations made comments on particular boundaries, rather than the generality of our draft recommendations. Indeed, a high proportion were concerned with proposals for ward boundaries between Henleaze, Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym. We were concerned about some of the information distributed locally in this area which we considered to be misleading and served to misinform local residents: it was alleged that new warding arrangements would affect postal codes and house prices, for example. We sought to correct such misconceptions where possible. However, we are gratified that our draft recommendations received a good airing during Stage Three, increasing our confidence that we have the evidence available to make robust final recommendations to the Secretary of State.

86 Fourth, the Commission has given particular attention to the evidence provided by those respondents proposing that we should move away from our draft recommendations in particular locations. This evidence tended to reflect perceptions of local community identities and interests. The topography of Bristol is difficult, with rivers, motorways, railways, ravines and other features which ought to be taken into account in determining ward boundaries. Much was said at the public meeting held during Stage Two of the review about how current ward boundaries, or those proposed by other parties, cut through existing communities or incorporated communities with different characteristics. It was also said, however, that to deliver electoral equality as nearly as may be, and to ensure that wards represent clear communities, is not possible across a whole city since communities not only differ in style but in size as well. We have sought to reflect the further evidence we have received on local communities and good boundaries in modifying our proposals for the Secretary of State.

87 Fifth, in our draft recommendations report, we were sensitive to the importance of ward names and we invited views, if possible, following local discussions, during Stage Three. Some Stage Three representations have made specific proposals for ward names, and these are discussed in more detail under the specific ward headings.

88 Sixth, Bristol at present elects by thirds. At Stage One this was supported by the Labour Group and Liberal Democrat Group, but the Conservative Association argued for whole-council elections. Mr Phillips argued that, where there are two councillors per ward, it would be easier and more understandable to have elections by halves within a four-yearly cycle, but this is not permitted by the present legislation. In our draft recommendations report we noted that there was clearly no local consensus for change to the present electoral cycle and that it is open to the City Council to resolve this itself by a two-thirds majority. However, at Stage Three all three political groups supported the present system of elections by thirds and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendation as final.

89 Finally, we noted that the views of each of the three political groups had moved on from those which had been expressed at Stage One. All broadly reflected the Commission's aim to achieve improved electoral equality, taking into account local circumstances. We are grateful for this contribution to our work.

Electoral Arrangements

90 Having considered all the representations received during Stages One and Three, we have given further consideration to our draft recommendations. In the text that follows, we review the draft recommendations, identify the views which have been expressed about them, and draw our conclusions for final recommendations. The final recommendations are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of the report. The

following areas, based upon the existing 34 wards, are considered in turn:

(a) Avonmouth, Kingsweston and Stoke Bishop;

(b) Henbury, Henleaze, Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym;

(c) Horfield and Bishopston;

(d) Ashley, Lockleaze and Redland;

(e) Cabot, Clifton and Cotham;

(f) Frome Vale and Hillfields;

(g) Easton and Eastville;

(h) St George East and St George West;

(i) Lawrence Hill;

(j) Brislington East, Brislington West and Stockwood;

(k) Hartcliffe, Hengrove and Whitchurch Park;

(l) Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Southville and Windmill Hill;

(m) Filwood and Knowle.

91 In our draft recommendations report, the electorate figures provided by the Liberal Democrats had been used, modified to follow the City Council's assumptions of growth in the Cabot area. At Stage Three the City Council stated that it had analysed the electorate data contained in the draft recommendations report and produced revised figures, and this revised data was accepted by the Labour Party and the Conservatives. However, the Liberal Democrats considered that the City Council's electorate data still did not take account of the level of development in Cabot ward, and therefore included an extra 700 electors in the Liberal Democrat Stage Three proposals. However, as confirmed earlier, we have adopted the City Council's revised electorate figures as a basis for our final recommendations.

92 In light of the representations received, we have decided to modify our draft recommendations in some areas. Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Avonmouth, Kingsweston and Stoke Bishop

93 At present, the wards of Avonmouth and Kingsweston are both relatively over-represented. The number of electors per councillor is 13 per cent below the city average in Avonmouth (12 per cent in 2002) and 16 per cent below in Kingsweston (15 per cent in 2002). To the south of Kingsweston ward lies Stoke Bishop ward, where the number of electors per councillor is 19 per cent above the city average (20 per cent in 2002).

94 At Stage One both the City Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed to transfer the Sea Mills area of Stoke Bishop to Kingsweston ward, using the boundary of the River Trym. The Liberal Democrats stated that the Sea Mills area (polling district SBA) "does not fit well with the rest of Stoke Bishop". They said that "the River Trym forms a clear boundary and [the Sea Mills area] has a quite separate community and different housing", and proposed the transfer of the Sea Mills area into Kingsweston ward "to unite the community divided by the current ward boundary". We adopted the City Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Stoke Bishop ward as part of our draft recommendations, under which the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average (1 per cent above in 2002).

95 The City Council proposed no change to the ward boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston, stating that "altering the boundary to take in part of the existing Kingsweston ward would not reflect existing community ties". The Liberal Democrats said that "Avonmouth ward can only expand into Kingsweston to increase its electorate". They proposed to transfer part of polling district KNC from Kingsweston ward to Avonmouth ward so that the boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston would run along Broxholme Walk, with Avonmouth ward incorporating both of the schools, and keeping the community on both sides of Kings Weston Lane together. The Liberal Democrats added that "since almost all of Avonmouth ward is Shirehampton, this may be a more appropriate name for the ward".

96 Because Kingsweston ward is divided by a hill, the Liberal Democrats said that "the Commission may consider making an exception to the general preference in Bristol for two-councillor wards in this case. This could make a Lawrence Weston ward in the north, and Coombe Dingle or Sea Mills ward in the south".

97 However, we did not propose to deviate from the pattern of two-member wards across the whole city, and while we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal for Stoke Bishop ward in our draft recommendations report, we proposed to modify

their proposed boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston, about which the Labour Group expressed some concerns. While we acknowledged the improved electoral equality which would result from the Liberal Democrats' proposal, we considered that a more coherent boundary, which would also follow an existing polling district boundary, would run along the middle of Kings Weston Lane as far as Kingsweston House, and then south-west along the track until it rejoins the existing boundary. This would transfer 1,525 electors (the whole of polling district KNC) from Kingsweston ward to Avonmouth ward. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the city average in Avonmouth (7 per cent above in 2002), and 10 per cent below the average in Kingsweston ward (7 per cent below in 2002).

98 At Stage Three the Labour Party supported the proposed Stoke Bishop ward, but sought to improve further the electoral equality in the wards of Avonmouth and Kingsweston by modifying their common boundary to follow Shirehampton Road. This would retain all of the Lawrence Weston Estate in Kingsweston ward, and would transfer the Sea Mills community south of Shirehampton Road to Avonmouth ward. It also proposed that the boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston wards be realigned to follow the new M49 motorway, which would not affect any additional electors but would provide "a more sensible boundary". In the Labour Party's Stage Three submission the number of electors per councillor in Avonmouth ward would be 5 per cent above the average in 2002 and 4 percent below in Kingsweston ward in 2002.

99 Dr Doug Naysmith, MP for Bristol North West, also opposed the proposal to modify the boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston wards, arguing that it would divide the Lawrence Weston Estate which is "a severely deprived location and which has a clear and distinctive identity". As an alternative he proposed that the boundary between the two wards should follow Shirehampton Road, which would achieve better electoral equality.

100 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed Avonmouth and Kingsweston wards, adding that "any attempt to move part of Sea Mills in with Avonmouth should be resisted to avoid splitting Sea Mills, and because Shirehampton and Sea Mills are clearly separate communities". The Group supported all of Sea Mills being transferred from Stoke Bishop to Kingsweston as an appropriate solution to the electoral imbalance. The Conservatives did not comment on these wards.

101 A resident of Horfield proposed that Kingsweston ward should be renamed Blaise, but we are not aware that this has any general support and we therefore do not propose to move away from the existing ward name.

102 We have considered the proposals for different ward boundaries in this area, and recognise that the proposal to use Shirehampton Road as a boundary would provide better electoral equality than the draft recommendations. However, we consider that this proposal may have an adverse effect on local communities, splitting Sea Mills between two wards, with the southern part of Sea Mills being detached from the rest of Avonmouth ward. Under the draft recommendations the whole of Sea Mills would be transferred from Stoke Bishop ward to Kingsweston ward, and we have not been persuaded to modify this proposal. In addition, we do not consider that modifying the existing boundary between Avonmouth and Kingsweston to follow the M49 motorway, as proposed by the Labour Party, would provide a significantly better boundary since the existing one already follows the M5 motorway. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for all three wards as final.

Henbury, Henleaze, Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym

103 The average number of electors represented by each of the two councillors for these wards is 10 per cent below the city average in Henbury (11 per cent in 2002), 7 per cent above in Henleaze (6 per cent in 2002), 10 per cent below in Southmead (11 per cent in 2002) and 2 per cent below in Westbury-on-Trym (3 per cent in 2002).

104 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that some 960 electors from the Charlton Road area in the north of Southmead ward (i.e. the part of polling district SOA north of the golf course, plus the few houses in the northern corner of polling district SOB) should transfer to Henbury ward, as this area is part of Brentry, and should join with the rest of Brentry in Henbury ward. A similar proposal was submitted by the City Council.

105 Southmead Development Trust said that "Southmead people have a very strong sense of community identity, which if tampered with, could

do immense damage to our aims involving the whole community, in the regeneration process we have embarked upon". It urged the Commission to "consider the implications of any upset to our area when considering boundary changes".

106 The Liberal Democrats also said that the area of polling district WTB around the lake, north of Eastfield Road and Southmead Road up to and including Cote Lea Park currently in Westbury-on-Trym ward, is separate from the rest of the ward, with the only road access to the rest of Westbury-on-Trym via Eastfield Road. They proposed that the 1,558 electors in this area should form part of Southmead ward. Under the City Council's scheme, a similar area would have been transferred from Westbury-on-Trym to Southmead.

107 Finally in this area, the Liberal Democrats proposed the transfer of 1,191 electors in all the roads west of Henleaze Road as far as and including both sides of Cavendish Road, into Westbury-on-Trym ward from Henleaze ward, because "this community considers itself to belong to Westbury-on-Trym" which they stated is also their postal

112 The Conservatives acknowledged the need to transfer some electors from Westbury-on-Trym ward to Southmead ward to improve the balance of representation, but proposed the transfer of a smaller area, comprising 1,316 electors in the roads from Delvin Road to Lake Road and Lakewood Road/Crescent. They argued that the roads west of this area are part of the Westbury-on-Trym community and should remain in that ward. The Conservatives stated that the draft recommendation for Henleaze ward would "completely divide a natural and homogenous community". The proposal to use Henleaze Road as a boundary would adversely affect local identity, particularly since Henleaze Road "acts as the spine of Henleaze". They therefore proposed to retain the existing boundary between Henleaze and Westbury-on-Trym wards, but to transfer 567 electors from the southern part of Henleaze ward to Redland ward, all of which would achieve better electoral equality. They did not comment on the proposed Henbury ward, but their proposals assumed that the Brentry area would be transferred from Southmead to Henbury ward.

113 The Henleaze Society, Henleaze United Reformed Church, the Westbury-on-Trym Society, Westbury Council of Churches and 154 residents of Henleaze opposed the proposal to transfer part of Henleaze ward to Westbury-on-Trym ward on community identity grounds. The Henleaze Society and several residents proposed instead that 567 electors should be transfered from the south of Henleaze ward to Redland ward. In addition, the Henleaze Society acknowledged the need for "a consequential adjustment" to the boundaries of Redland and Cotham wards.

114 Councillor Dr D Brown and Councillor Dr R Brown, members for Henleaze ward, described the shops and the park as "the main focus of an otherwise highly residential ward" and proposed that the draft recommendation be modified so that both sides of Henleaze Road together with Studland Court, Eastfield Inn, Cranford Court, Pinefield flats, the public park and Henleaze Terrace be retained in Henleaze ward, retaining 140 electors in Henleaze. They also said that they would support the retention of the area bounded by Brecon Road, Antrim Road, Henleaze Road, Cavendish Road and Westbury Road in Henleaze ward, adding a further 325 electors to Henleaze, which could be "counterbalanced" by the return of 390 electors in the area south of Coldharbour Road to Redland ward. They noted that if the whole of the affected area in the north–west of Henleaze were to be retained in the ward – as proposed by the Henleaze Society and several local residents – "this could only be accommodated by losses elsewhere in the ward", particularly from the south of Henleaze ward to Redland ward.

115 Bristol West Liberal Democrats also proposed that the draft recommendation be modified so that both sides of Henleaze Road, including Henleaze Terrace and the public park, be retained in Henleaze ward, affecting 140 electors. They considered that the west side of Henleaze Road includes most of the shops in the Henleaze "core community" and "must be retained as an integral part of that ward". They argued that Cote Lea Park and Pinewood Close, comprising 140 electors, form part of the Westbury-on-Trym community and should remain in that ward rather than be transferred to Southmead ward as proposed in the draft recommendations.

116 A resident of Horfield proposed that the boundary between Henbury and Southmead wards should go along the border of Pen Park Manor House and Filton Golf Course, to incorporate the golf course, Golf Course Cottages and the aircraft works into Henbury ward, and provide a more coherent boundary between the two wards.

117 We have carefully considered all the representations received in relation to these areas, and recognise the strong community arguments that have been expressed. However, we cannot consider one ward in isolation of the surrounding areas, and therefore propose to modify our draft recommendations for each of the four wards. While recognising the improved boundary which would result from the transfer of the Brentry area from Southmead to Henbury ward, we note that this would leave Southmead ward relatively over-represented if we were to adopt any of the proposed boundary modifications between Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym wards. The representations from the three political groups and Councillor Poole, one of the members for Westbury-on-Trym ward, all proposed transferring part of Westbury-on-Trym ward to Southmead ward, albeit a smaller area than was included in the draft recommendations. However, the Westbury-on-Trym Society, the Henleaze Society and 322 local residents opposed the transfer of any electors from Westbury-on-Trym ward to Southmead ward on community identity grounds. We have therefore concluded that the existing boundary between Henbury and Southmead wards should be retained.

118 In view of the arguments we have received regarding community identity, particularly in the Henleaze and Westbury-on-Trym areas, we have concluded that the need to achieve electoral equality having regard to the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining the wards of Henbury, Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym on their existing boundaries. As a consequence of retaining the existing boundary between Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze, Henleaze ward would be relatively under-represented. To address this, we propose to modify the boundary between Henleaze ward and Redland ward so that 393 electors from St Oswald's Road, Canowie Road and Manor Park should remain in Redland ward and not be transferred to Henleaze ward as proposed in the draft recommendations. The boundary between Henleaze and Redland should be amended to follow the middle of Clay Pit Road, the whole of Belvedere Road, The Glen and Blenheim Road and should meet the existing boundary at Coldharbour Road, and 985 electors in the south of Henleaze ward, should be transferred to Redland ward, similar to the proposals received from the Henleaze Society and the Conservatives.

119 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the average in Henbury (9 per cent in 2002), 2 per cent below in Henleaze (3 per cent in 2002), 7 per cent below in Southmead (both now and in 2002) and 1 per cent above in Westbury-on-Trym (equal to the average in 2002). While these proposals would result in not as good electoral equality as our draft recommendations, we are satisfied that they would better reflect community identities in the area, while still achieving a reasonable electoral balance.

Horfield and Bishopston

120 The average number of electors represented by each of the two councillors for these wards is 6 per cent above the average in Bishopston (5 per cent in 2002) and 8 per cent below the average in Horfield, both now and in 2002.

121 At Stage One the Liberal Democrats stated that "much of what the local community would call Horfield is currently in Bishopston ward", including the area south of Wellington Hill, west of Gloucester Road, including Hughenden Road, Rozel Road and Church Road, but excluding Maple Road. They proposed that this area, comprising 579 electors, be transferred from Bishopston ward to Horfield ward. This was similar to the proposal from the City Council, which was opposed by a resident of Bishopston ward who considered that the residents in this area "relate to the shops in Gloucester Road, as with the rest of Bishopston ward, and have no natural focus with Horfield ward".

122 In our draft recommendations report we proposed to consult on the Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards, which achieved improved electoral equality and provided identifiable boundaries. The number of electors per councillor in Bishopston would be 2 per cent above the average (1 per cent in 2002) and 1 per cent above the average in Horfield, both now and in 2002.

123 While the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Group supported our proposed Bishopston and Horfield wards, the Liberal Democrats noted that the proposed boundary between the two wards would not be as good as the current boundary. However, they stated that the proposal "moves a small cohesive group of roads" and therefore considered it to be "a good solution to the imbalance between the two wards".

124 The Conservatives argued that the proposed transfer of electors from Bishopston to Horfield did not reflect the identities and interests of local communities since the affected area "has nothing in common with the current community of Horfield", and that electors look to Gloucester Road for amenities. They proposed to retain Horfield ward on its existing boundary, with the result that it would be relatively over-represented by 6 per cent. The Conservatives noted that if Bishopston ward was also retained on its existing boundary it would be relatively under-represented by 7 per cent, but that if the Commission wanted to improve electoral equality, 650 electors in the roads around the Memorial Ground should be transferred from Bishopston to Lockleaze ward. They stated that this would "unite the communities on either side of the top of Muller Road, as they were with[in] the ward boundaries prior to 1983".

125 Bishopston Liberal Democrat Focus Team said that it had carried out a survey in Bishopston ward and found "an overwhelming majority" against the draft recommendation, and requested no change for the ward. It also noted that Horfield ward is in Bristol North West Parliamentary Constituency, whereas Bishopston ward is in Bristol West, and considered that this might create confusion. A resident of Horfield also opposed the draft recommendation for the ward.

126 Having considered all the available evidence, we remain satisfied that our proposals would achieve a high degree of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, and receive some support locally. We therefore confirm them as final.

Ashley, Lockleaze and Redland

127 The average number of electors represented by each of the two councillors for these wards is 2 per cent below the city average in Ashley (3 per cent in 2002), 15 per cent below in Lockleaze (both now and in 2002) and 16 per cent above in Redland (15 per cent in 2002).

128 At Stage One the Liberal Democrats said that 708 electors in polling district AYE have little in common with the rest of Ashley ward, but more in common with the community in the south-east of Lockleaze ward. Therefore they proposed to transfer this area to Lockleaze ward. The City Council also proposed the same ward boundary along the railway line.

129 The Liberal Democrats also said that the community in polling district RDD, currently in Redland ward, "is split between those close to the Gloucester Road shops and those in the Chesterfield Road area". They proposed to move the boundary of Redland ward westwards so that those electors east of Effingham Road, including Leopold Road, Burghley Road, Chesterfield Road and Windsor Road, together with part of Belvoir Road and Cromwell Road, should form part of Ashley ward, which they proposed to rename Montpelier. Part of Redland ward would also be transferred to Henleaze ward, as described earlier. This latter area was similar to that proposed by the City Council.

130 We noted that these proposals would improve the balance of representation in the area and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although we proposed retaining the existing ward name of Ashley. Under our proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in Ashley, 4 per cent below in Lockleaze and 4 per cent above in Redland (4 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 2 per cent above respectively in 2002).

131 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed boundary of the railway line between Ashley ward and Lockleaze ward, and noted that the area transferred from Redland to Ashley ward under the draft recommendations was necessary to achieve electoral equality in the area. Again the Group proposed that Montpelier would be a more appropriate ward name than Ashley, particularly since the existing name is more associated with Ashley Down which is in the neighbouring Bishopston ward. Bristol West Liberal Democrats also supported the proposed boundaries for Ashley ward and stated that local opinion supported the revised name of Montpelier.

132 As a consequence of its proposals for the boundary between Henleaze and Redland wards, the Labour Party proposed that the boundary between Ashley and Redland wards be modified to reduce the number of electors being transferred to Ashley, and proposed that the boundary between the two should run along the rear of the properties on Windsor Road and Leopold Road. The Labour Party also proposed that the M32 should form part of the boundary between Lockleaze ward and Easton ward, affecting electors on Napier Road.

133 A resident of Westbury-on-Trym opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Ashley ward to Lockleaze ward because he considered that "it has no community of interest with most of Lockleaze ward and is on the opposite side of Muller Road which marks the constituency boundary".

134 In addition to our proposed boundary between Henleaze and Redland wards, detailed earlier, we propose to confirm the boundary between Ashley and Redland as included in our draft recommendations. We are content that our proposals for Ashley ward would provide the best available solution, having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final, including retaining the existing ward name of Ashley as there does not appear to be a consensus for change and Ashley is already identified with locally.

135 With regard to Lockleaze ward, at Stage Three the Liberal Democrats argued that Napier Road, which lies west of the M32 in the area of the former Eastville Stadium, only has access to Stapleton Road which lies east of the M32, and should therefore remain in Easton ward and not be transferred to Lockleaze ward as proposed by the Labour Party at Stage Three. Dr Doug Naysmith, MP for Bristol North West, stated that he had no comments to make regarding the proposals for Lockleaze ward. As detailed above, a resident of Westbury-on-Trym opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Ashley ward to Lockleaze ward on community identity grounds.

136 While we recognise that under our proposals there would be a degree of under-representation in Lockleaze ward (4 per cent), we remain satisfied that our proposals would provide the best available solution for both the ward and the area as a whole, and therefore confirm our draft recommendation for Lockleaze ward as final.

137 As a result of the effect of changes in the Henleaze area on Redland ward, the Conservatives proposed that 832 electors be transferred to Cotham ward from Redland ward polling district RDB. The Labour Party submitted a similar proposal for this area, with the boundary between Redland and Cotham wards modified to follow Redland Road, running behind the properties on Chapel Green Road, along Lower Redland Road and then east as far as Redland Road.

138 As detailed earlier, we propose to modify our draft recommendation in this area so that 393 electors from St Oswald's Road, Canowie Road and Manor Park should remain in Redland ward and not be transferred to Henleaze ward, but that the boundary between Henleaze and Redland be amended to follow the middle of Clay Pit Road, including the whole of Belvedere Road, The Glen and Blenheim Road in Redland ward, and should meet the existing boundary at Coldharbour Road. This would transfer 985 electors from the south of Henleaze ward to Redland ward.

139 Even with the proposed inclusion of the southern part of the existing Henleaze ward, Redland ward would still be relatively under-represented while the neighbouring ward of Cotham would be relatively over-represented. To improve electoral equality in these wards we propose to modify the boundary between them to run along the middle of Redland Hill and Redland Road, transferring 1,104 electors from Redland to Cotham. Under our final recommendations the average number of electors per councillor in Redland ward would be 7 per cent above the city average (4 per cent in 2002). Cotham ward is described below.

Cabot, Clifton and Cotham

140 The average number of electors per councillor for these wards is 24 per cent above the city average in Cabot (31 per cent in 2002), 24 per cent above in Clifton (26 per cent in 2002) and 17 per cent above in Cotham (15 per cent in 2002).

141 To address the relative under-representation in the area, the Liberal Democrats proposed to create an additional ward. They stated that the community to the west of Whiteladies Road consider themselves as living in Clifton, and focus on the library and shops on Whiteladies Road. Consequently, they proposed to create a new ward to be called Clifton Whiteladies. They said that a revised Clifton ward would be based around the shops and library in Clifton village, and that both wards would have separate schools. The eastern boundary of Clifton was similar to that proposed by the City Council.

142 The proposed Clifton Whiteladies ward would comprise polling district CMA (from the existing Cotham ward), that part of polling district CTC west of Whiteladies Road (from Cabot ward) and polling district CNC (from Clifton ward). The Liberal Democrats said that the community in polling district CTA is really part of Cotham rather than Kingsdown, which is currently in Cabot ward, and therefore proposed its transfer to the revised Cotham ward. They also proposed the transfer of that part of polling district CTC which lies to the east of Whiteladies Road, and to the north of West Park (excluding West Park itself), currently in Cabot ward, to Cotham ward.

143 The Liberal Democrats recognised that the electorate in their proposed Cabot ward would initially be significantly below the average for the city (18 per cent). However, they stated that with the growth in electorate which they forecast over the five-year period due to development projects such as Harbourside, the conversion of Frogmore Street Entertainment Centre and the Living Above The Shop scheme, the electoral variance in the revised Cabot ward would be only 2 per cent in 2002. They added: "It should also be noted that the electorate in these four wards will increase as the undergraduate population at the two universities in Bristol increases".

144 We sought advice from the City Council on the Liberal Democrats' electorate forecasts which would provide for an additional 720 electors over and above the City Council's forecast growth of 300 electors in Cabot ward by 2002. The City Council recognised that electorate forecasts can only reflect information regarding development available at the time, and considered its approach as providing the "best estimate of the distribution of change over the five-year period". Therefore we did not include these 720 electors in our calculations.

Consequently, we calculated that the number of electors per councillor in the Liberal Democrats' proposed Cabot ward would be 10 per cent below the average in 2002 (not 2 per cent as stated in the Liberal Democrats' submission).

145 The Labour Group disagreed with the boundaries proposed by the Liberal Democrats for this area. The Labour Group said that "if it is necessary to divide Clifton in two, in our view it makes more sense in community terms to run the boundary from east to west rather than from north to south. The shape of the suggested East Clifton or Whiteladies ward is curious to say the least," but the Group did not submit an alternative to the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary.

146 In our draft recommendations report we proposed to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards subject to two amendments. First, we proposed to call the new ward 'Whiteladies' – a clear and concise name, not to be confused with Clifton ward. Second, we considered that the electoral imbalance could be improved by amending the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the wards of Cabot and Cotham. The Liberal Democrats proposed that part of the boundary between these two wards should follow the existing boundary between Cabot ward polling districts CTA and CTB. However, we considered that a more clearly defined boundary was achievable, having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore proposed that the boundary should run in a north-easterly direction along the centre of Nugent Hill and south-east along the middle of Arley Hill until it meets the existing boundary at Cheltenham Road. This would retain an additional 468 electors in Cabot ward, and as a result the number of electors per councillor in Cabot ward would be 12 per cent below the city average (4 per cent in 2002). The number of electors per councillor in the revised Clifton ward would be 5 per cent below the average (4 per cent in 2002), 3 per cent below in the new Whiteladies ward (2 per cent in 2002) and 5 per cent below in the revised Cotham ward (6 per cent in 2002).

147 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the proposal for a new ward in the Clifton area to address the relative under-representation that currently exists in the city centre; – this proposal also reflected the Group's Stage One proposal. The Liberal Democrats considered that there is much support for the creation of a new ward in the Clifton area, as included in the draft recommendations. However, they submitted a modified southern ward boundary to follow Queens Road, arguing that the electors in the area west of Pembroke Road and north of Queens Road should form part of the modified Clifton ward. The Liberal Democrats maintained their view that the forecast electorate figures for Cabot ward should be considerably higher and therefore included an additional 700 electors in Cabot ward as part of their Stage Three submission, and reiterated their Stage One proposal to transfer the whole of polling district CTA from Cabot ward to Cotham ward. However, as detailed earlier in this chapter, we have concluded that the City Council's forecast electorate figures provide the best available estimates at this time, and therefore base our final recommendations on them. On this basis the Liberal Democrats proposed Cabot ward would be significantly over-represented.

148 The Labour Party supported the draft recommendation for Cabot ward and the Conservatives made no further comment. Mr Phillips submitted modified boundaries for Cabot and Cotham wards. He proposed that, for reasons of geography, Cabot polling district CTA should not be split between Cabot and Cotham wards as proposed in the draft recommendations, but that all of CTA should be included in Cotham ward. He did, however, propose a minor change to the proposed boundary between Cabot and Cotham so that it would go from Cotham Brow along Fremantle Road to Kingsdown Parade, then to the south-west and south-east of Fremantle Square to Ninetree Hill, affecting 468 electors.

149 However, in the light of the fact that we propose to adopt the City Council's electorate data, and the projected over-representation which would exist in the ward, we are unwilling to further reduce the size of Cabot ward. We are satisfied that the draft recommendation for Cabot ward is the best which can be achieved for the area as a whole, and we propose to confirm our draft recommendation for Cabot ward as final.

150 As stated earlier, the Labour Party proposed to realign the boundary between Cotham and Redland wards to follow Redland Road, going behind the properties on Chapel Green Road, along Lower Redland Road and then east until it reaches Redland Road. In addition the Labour Party considered that the proposed Whiteladies ward "does little to reflect community identity",

and submitted an alternative warding arrangement for the area covered by the proposed Clifton and Whiteladies wards which would result in a north/south division of the area, with the northern ward called Clifton Down and the southern ward called Clifton & Hotwells. The proposed boundary between the two wards would start at the Clifton Suspension Bridge, going south of the park along Suspension Bridge Road to Clifton Down Road, south to Mortimer Road, along to Lansdown Road, up Richmond Park Road, down Pembroke Road and east along Queens Road as far as Whiteladies Road. Under the Labour Party's proposal the number of electors per councillor would be no more than 4 per cent from the average in the wards of Clifton Down, Clifton & Hotwells and Cotham.

151 The Conservatives were concerned at the 10 per cent electoral variance which would exist in the proposed Cotham ward under the draft recommendations, and therefore proposed a reconfiguration of wards including the transfer of 832 electors from Redland ward (polling district RDB) to Cotham ward. Under their proposal the number of electors per councillor in Cotham ward would be equal to the average. They did not submit any further proposals for the wards in this area.

152 Councillors Price and Mrs Janke, members for Clifton ward, considered that the Labour Party's proposals for a north/south division of Clifton ward were based on a boundary which is "arbitrary and divisive of existing well-established communities", and would split Clifton village, creating an upper and lower Clifton which would not reflect real communities. They considered Clifton town centre to be the focal point for shopping and services in the area west of Pembroke Road, and that Pembroke Road forms "a clear boundary which is widely accepted and reflects existing communities". However, they said that "there appears to be broad support for the concept of a new Whiteladies ward as a proposal, which is more sympathetic to existing communities. However, the view has been expressed that Clifton should be included in the name".

153 Bristol West Liberal Democrats supported the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal, submitted at Stages One and Three, that all of Cabot polling district CTA should be transferred to Cotham ward. They said that "the local geographic conditions of a steep hill make this logical". They also supported the Liberal Democrats' proposal that the boundary between the wards of Clifton and Whiteladies should be modified to run along Queens Road, instead of Clifton Park, Lansdown Road and Lansdown Place, to provide a "more realistic and recognised boundary in terms of established communities". They said that they had consulted locally on the question of ward names, and found support for Clifton being retained in the name of the new ward, particularly Clifton East. Clifton Down was considered to be unsuitable, and they stated that the other ward should be called Clifton.

154 In his Stage Three submission Mr Phillips supported the proposal for an additional ward in the Clifton area, but suggested that a more suitable name for the proposed Whiteladies ward would be Clifton East, with the modified Clifton ward to be renamed Clifton West.

155 Clifton Village Action Group and Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society both supported the draft recommendation for the wards of Clifton and Whiteladies to represent the Clifton area, and opposed any proposal to split Clifton into two wards on a north/south divide. We received representations from a further five local residents who all supported the draft recommendation for a new Whiteladies ward. Two of the residents proposed that the new ward be called Clifton East or St Johns, while a third also proposed Clifton East, as did a resident of Horfield.

156 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have to consider the area as a whole since modifying the boundary of one ward will have a knock-on effect on neighbouring wards. We have concluded that our draft recommendation for a new ward in the Clifton area should be confirmed, but that it should be called Clifton East – a name which appears to have some local support – and the other ward called Clifton. We do not consider that the Labour Party's proposal for an alternative north/south split of the area would achieve better electoral equality than under our draft recommendations or accurately reflect local identities. We do not propose to modify the boundary between Clifton and Clifton East, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, since the level of electoral equality which would result would not be as good as under the draft recommendations. Therefore we confirm our draft recommendations for the Clifton area as final, subject to the revised ward name of Clifton East.

157 As detailed earlier, we propose to modify our proposed boundary between Cotham and Redland wards to run along the middle of Redland Hill and

Redland Road. This would improve the balance of representation in the two wards and provide a clear boundary. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the average in Cotham (3 per cent in 2002).

Frome Vale and Hillfields

158 The average number of electors per councillor in these wards is 8 per cent above the city average in Frome Vale and 6 per cent below the average in Hillfields (9 per cent above and 8 per cent below in 2002).

159 To improve electoral equality in these wards, at Stage One the City Council and the Liberal Democrats submitted a similar proposal to transfer part of Frome Vale ward to Hillfields ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed that 888 electors in the area north of the cycle path, south of Staplehill Road and east of Forest Road, should be transferred from Frome Vale ward to Hillfields ward. They said that although the affected area "has more cohesion with Frome Vale, it is an isolated community, and this change is necessary for electoral equality". They added that "Frome Vale is a name that only exists as a ward name. Fishponds could be considered to be a more appropriate name for the ward".

160 In our draft recommendations report we proposed to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards while making a minor modification so that the boundary between the proposed Fishponds and Hillfields wards would follow the cycle track, and consult on the revised ward name of Fishponds. The number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in Fishponds and 7 per cent above the average in Hillfields (1 per cent above and 6 per cent above respectively in 2002).

161 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats supported the proposed boundary in this area, which reflected their Stage One submission, noting that the area for transfer, bounded by Forest Road and Staplehill Road, "has more cohesion with Fishponds rather than Hillfields. However, it is an isolated community, and the change suggested by the Commission is necessary for electoral equality".

162 The Labour Party considered that better electoral equality could be achieved by modifying the boundary between the two wards to follow the middle of Fishponds Road from its junction with Lodge Causeway as far as the junction with Beechwood Road, along the middle of Beechwood Road, part of Radley Road and Forest Road and then follow the cycle path as at present. This would transfer 554 electors to Hillfields ward, 334 less than under the draft recommendations. The Labour Party also opposed the proposal to rename Frome Vale as Fishponds as it did not reflect local opinion.

163 Roger Berry, MP for Kingswood, also argued that the Frome Vale name should be retained as the ward covers "the Frome Valley and comprises parts of Fishponds, Stapleton, Frenchay and Downend". He proposed the same boundary as the Labour Party, which he stated would "produce a more balanced split of the communities". Councillor Becker, member for Frome Vale ward, and Kingswood Labour Party also favoured the retention of the name Frome Vale, since much of the area known as Fishponds would not be included in the proposed ward, and proposed to transfer a smaller area from the existing Frome Vale to Hillfields ward, using the same boundary as the Labour Party and Mr Berry. Under this alternative proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the average in Frome Vale and 2 per cent above the average in Hillfields, both at 2002.

164 The Conservatives did not comment on these wards at Stage Three. While we recognise that the balance of representation would be marginally better under the Labour Party's proposal, which was also put forward by a number of other respondents, the improvement would only be by 1 per cent, and we do not consider that this improvement in electoral equality outweighs the clearer boundary provided by our draft recommendation. However, in view of the representations received regarding the ward name, we propose that the existing ward name of Frome Vale be retained. Subject to this, we are confirming our draft recommendation for Frome Vale and Hillfields wards as final.

equality in these wards they proposed to transfer 998 electors from the area south of the cycle path in polling district EED, currently in Eastville ward, to Easton ward.

167 Although the Labour Group said that "the suggested extension to the existing Easton ward is unsatisfactory [and that] there are better alternatives", it did not submit an alternative to the Liberal Democrats' boundary. We adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal as part of our draft recommendations because of the improved electoral equality which would be achieved. The number of electors per councillor in the revised Easton ward would be 3 per cent above the city average both now and in 2002, and 4 per cent below in Eastville (1 per cent in 2002).

168 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats supported the proposal to transfer the Clay Hill community, which they argued is "isolated from the rest of Eastville by the cycle path", to Easton ward to achieve electoral equality. This also reflected their Stage One proposal. They added that Napier Road lies to the west of the M32 and only has access to Stapleton Road which is east of the M32, and should therefore remain in Easton ward as in the draft recommendations, and not be transferred to Lockleaze ward.

169 The Labour Party proposed that the M32 should form part of the boundary for Easton ward, thereby transferring 41 electors in Napier Road from Easton ward to Lockleaze ward, and considered that the draft recommendations had "missed an opportunity to use the natural boundary to the north of Easton to dramatically improve the community identity of both of these wards". It considered that Rose Green and Greenbank Cemetery already constitute community boundaries, and proposed that the boundary between Easton and Eastville wards should run along the north of Rose Green and Crofts End playing field, and along the south and west of Greenbank Cemetery (Greenbank Road) and across the land behind Robertson Road, thereby transferring all of Robertson Road into Easton ward.

170 The Conservatives also considered that the proposed boundary did not take account of the community identity of the Clay Hill and Rose Green areas, which they considered look to Eastville for their community activities and amenities. They also noted that the proposed Easton ward would be a "peculiar shape and the councillors would have to represent several diverse communities". The Conservatives argued that the roads around Robertson Road and Greenbank Road form part of the lower Easton community and that this area should be transferred to Easton ward and Clay Hill should remain in Eastville ward (this is similar to the Labour Party's Stage Three proposal). The Conservatives also regarded the 41 electors in Napier Road as rather isolated under both the present arrangements and the draft recommendations, and proposed that they be transferred from Easton ward to Eastville ward.

171 Councillor Sutton, member for Eastville ward, considered that a three-member ward solution was the most appropriate for Bristol and queried the electorate forecasts for the whole city. He stated that the draft recommendations failed to have regard to natural communities in the city, and opposed the proposals for Easton and Eastville wards on community identity grounds, preferring no change for the two wards. However, if change was necessary, he outlined what he considered to be better alternatives. He proposed that the Eastville Stadium site and adjoining areas be transferred from Easton ward to Eastville ward. He noted that Napier Road only has access to Robertson Road which is in Eastville ward, and therefore opposed the use of the M32 as the boundary, instead proposing that Napier Road should either be retained in Easton ward or transferred to Eastville ward. He considered that a more appropriate boundary would be along Greenbank Road and then St Mark's Road as far as the railway line, which would include the Eastville Stadium and the terraces between Greenbank and Robertson Road, comprising some 270 electors, in Eastville ward.

172 Councillor Sutton opposed the Labour Party's and Conservatives' proposal to transfer the Greenbank area from Eastville to Easton ward, instead of the Clay Bottom area. He considered that the boundaries of Easton and Lawrence Hill wards "needed to be considered as part of an overall review of the Bristol East/Kingswood boundary split". However, we cannot review boundaries between principal authority areas as part of a periodic electoral review.

173 We also received responses from three residents of Eastville ward. Two of them supported Councillor Sutton's comments regarding the accuracy of projected electorate data, and all three supported the transfer of the Napier Road/Eastville Stadium area to Eastville ward, and opposed the transfer of the Greenbank area to Easton ward.

174 Having carefully considered the representations which have been expressed to us, while continuing to achieve electoral equalities, we propose to amend our draft recommendations for the Easton and Eastville wards to reflect community identities which have been expressed to us, whilst continuing to achieve electoral equality. We propose to retain the Clay Hill and Rose Green areas in Eastville ward, and propose instead that the Greenbank area should be transferred from Eastville ward to Easton ward and that the boundary between the two wards should run along the middle of Thurlow Road and to the rear of the properties on Robertson Road, as proposed by the Conservatives and which is similar to the Labour Party's proposal. We propose that Napier Road and the Eastville Stadium area should remain in Easton ward, because we understand that road access from this area is via Easton ward. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the average in Easton both now and in 2002, and 2 per cent above in Eastville (4 per cent in 2002).

St George East and St George West

175 The number of electors per councillor in these wards is 2 per cent below the city average in St George East and 5 per cent below in St George West. These electoral variances are expected to remain unchanged in 2002.

176 In their Stage One submission the Liberal Democrats noted that the electorate forecasts indicate that St George East ward would be larger than the average ward size, while St George West ward would be smaller, by a similar number of electors. Consequently, they proposed that the Whiteway community in polling district WGD north of Bell Hill Road, currently in St George West ward, which "forms part of a larger community including Burchells Green and Twomile Hill", should be transferred to St George East ward. Further to improve electoral equality, they proposed that the White Hills community, currently in St George East ward, should form part of St George West ward. This would consist of polling district EGC and the western part of polling district EGB below Nags Head Hill, up to and including both sides of Rossiters Lane, White's Hill, Preddy's Lane and Maybec Gardens.

177 In its Stage One submission the City Council proposed to retain St George East ward on its existing boundaries, and to include part of Easton ward in a modified St George West ward. The Labour Group considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposed ward boundary between St George East and St George West "is strange and looks contrived". We examined the electorate figures for the area and considered that if these wards were left unchanged, the number of electors per councillor, based on a council of 70 members, would be 1 per cent above the city average in St George East and 2 per cent below the average in St George West. The electoral equality is expected to be maintained in 2002. We were satisfied that good equality in these wards would be maintained under a council of 70 members on their existing boundaries, and therefore proposed no change to the two wards as part of our draft recommendations.

178 At Stage Three both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, supported the draft recommendation for no change to the two wards. In view of the existing good electoral equality, and in the absence of any views to the contrary, we are confirming our draft recommendation for no change to St George East and St George West wards as final.

Lawrence Hill

179 The number of electors per councillor for Lawrence Hill ward is equal to the city average (1 per cent above in 2002). The Liberal Democrats said that the ward "has a cohesive community within well–defined boundaries" and that there is no pressure to amend the boundary between Lawrence Hill and any adjacent wards. Consequently, they proposed no change for Lawrence Hill ward at Stage One. Based on a council of 70 members, a reasonable balance of representation would be retained, with the number of electors per councillor for Lawrence Hill being 3 per cent above the city average (4 per cent in 2002). Therefore we proposed no change for Lawrence Hill ward as part of our draft recommendations.

180 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party both supported the proposal for no change to Lawrence Hill ward. Councillor Sutton, member for Eastville ward, considered that Lawrence Hill ward does not have a "cohesive community within well-defined boundaries" due to "the current major subdivision by main traffic routes, rail routes, and the cycle path". He also considered that the Easton and Lawrence Hill ward boundaries "needed to be considered as part of an overall review of the Bristol East/Kingswood boundary split". However as stated earlier, we are unable to review the boundaries between local authorities as part of a periodic electoral review.

181 In the light of the representations received and the good electoral equality, we are confirming our draft recommendation for no change to Lawrence Hill ward as final.

Brislington East, Brislington West and Stockwood

182 The number of electors per councillor is 11 per cent above the city average in Brislington East, 3 per cent below in Brislington West and 15 per cent above in Stockwood (14 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 13 per cent above respectively in 2002).

183 At Stage One the Liberal Democrats considered that Wells Road "forms an excellent boundary to the west of Stockwood both in terms of community ... and being well defined. Equally, the River Avon to the north of Brislington West and Brislington East is both a boundary for the communities and a clear ward boundary". However, they considered that polling district WBD, currently in the west of Brislington West ward, "is separate from the rest of Brislington West". They stated that the community is centred around the Knowle shopping centre, and "not only is it vertically separated from the rest of Brislington West, only one steep road connects it". Consequently, they proposed to transfer 2,515 electors in polling district WBD to Knowle ward, which was similar to the City Council's proposal in this area.

184 The Liberal Democrats also noted that "the eastern half of [polling district] SWA around West Town Lane, up to but not including Sturminster Road, is joined to the rest of Stockwood ward only by West Town Lane. It forms a separate community with the southern half of [polling district] EBE below Bath Road. This part of Brislington East is separated from the rest of Brislington East ward by the Brislington Trading Estate," and they added that "the community currently split between two wards should be united and moved into Brislington West". The proposed ward boundary between Brislington East and Brislington West would follow Bath Road. The area around West Town Lane currently in Stockwood ward, and that part of Brislington East ward south of the Bath Road, would form part of Brislington West ward. The City Council proposed an almost identical boundary between Brislington West and Stockwood wards, and also proposed using the Bath Road as an identifiable boundary. Both the City Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed to transfer the area around Salisbury Road from Brislington East to Brislington West.

185 The number of electors per councillor in the revised Brislington East ward would be 1 per cent below the city average (4 per cent above in 2002), 3 per cent below in the revised Brislington West ward (4 per cent in 2002) and 5 per cent above in the revised Stockwood ward (3 per cent in 2002). Although the Labour Group considered that further improvements could be made to Brislington West ward, we were satisfied at the improved electoral equality and good boundaries which would be achieved by the Liberal Democrats' proposals and included them as part of our draft recommendations.

186 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendation for Brislington East and Brislington West wards, which would involve the inclusion of the whole of the Knowle area, part of which is currently in Brislington West ward, in the modified Knowle ward. In addition they proposed that the few properties on Wootton Park that are currently in Stockwood ward should form part of Knowle ward, in line with the rest of the road.

187 The Labour Party also proposed that the 32 electors in Wootton Park should be transferred from Stockwood ward to Knowle ward on community identity grounds. However, it considered that the proposed Brislington West ward "is geographically too elongated and splits the Sandy Park area between east and west" and instead proposed that the Hungerford Estate remain in Brislington East ward and that the boundary between the two Brislington wards, currently along Wick road, is moved eastwards". It also proposed to incorporate Wick Crescent, Hill Lawn, Sherwell Road and Hollywood Road and all the houses between these streets and Wick Road into Brislington West from Brislington East, and considered that this would provide "better community identity ... as well as more geographically compact wards".

188 Brislington West Labour Party also considered that the proposed ward boundaries in the area did not reflect local communities, and proposed instead that the Sandy Park area be united in Brislington West ward, and that the Hungerford Estate remain within Brislington East. A resident of Knowle ward opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Brislington West ward to Knowle ward, and two residents of Brislington East ward proposed that polling district EBD be transferred from Brislington East to Brislington West. One resident of Brislington East opposed the draft recommendation to transfer the Hungerford Estate from Brislington East to Stockwood ward. In fact, the proposal was to transfer the estate to Brislington West ward.

189 Stockwood Labour Party generally supported the draft recommendation for the ward, but proposed a modification to the boundary between Stockwood and Knowle wards in order to provide a more coherent boundary. It proposed that the new northern boundary of Stockwood ward should continue westwards from the bottom of Sturminster Road, along West Town Lane to the junction with Wells Road, thereby transferring Wootton Park and the Imperial Sports Ground to Knowle ward.

190 Having considered all representations received, we propose to modify our draft recommendation for Stockwood ward so that Wootton Park is transferred from Stockwood ward to Knowle ward. The boundary should run to the rear of Wootton Park, and the Imperial Sports Ground should remain in Stockwood ward. We have not been persuaded to modify our proposed boundary between Brislington East and Brislington West wards, which would provide a much improved balance of representation than the existing arrangements and utilise the identifiable boundary of Bath Road. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to the minor boundary modification between Stockwood and Knowle wards, around Wootton Park.

Hartcliffe, Hengrove and Whitchurch Park

191 The number of electors per councillor is 11 per cent below the city average in Hartcliffe (13 per cent below in 2002), 15 per cent above in Hengrove (16 per cent in 2002) and 9 per cent below in Whitchurch Park (11 per cent in 2002).

192 At Stage One the Liberal Democrats proposed to retain Wells Road as the boundary between Hengrove ward and Stockwood ward. They also considered that Airport Road and Hengrove Way, which form the boundary between Hengrove ward and Filwood ward, "provide a similarly desirable boundary in terms of community and clear border".

193 The Liberal Democrats stated that the part of polling district HVE which lies to the east of East Dundry Road and south of Whitchurch Lane, currently in Hengrove ward, "is part of the Whitchurch community", and proposed to transfer the affected 1,165 electors into Whitchurch Park ward. The City Council proposed that the southern part of Hengrove ward should form part of a modified Whitchurch Park ward, although a different boundary was submitted.

194 To retain electoral equality, the Liberal Democrats said that "part of Whitchurch Park must be moved into Hartcliffe". They proposed that 836 electors from the northern half of polling district WPA in Whitchurch Park ward, up to and including the northern side of Fulford Road, should be transferred to Hartcliffe ward, as this is "the best area to move since it is in itself a cohesive community". This proposal was similar to that proposed by the City Council.

195 At Stage One we also received a representation from Community Networks, representing residents in the Hartcliffe, Highridge and Withywood areas. They stated that, following local consultation, there was currently confusion as to which ward people lived in. Therefore they proposed separate wards for each of the two estates of Hartcliffe and Withywood, stating that "the majority local view appears to strongly support a change so that as near as possible the whole of Hartcliffe is within one ward and as near as possible the whole of Withywood is within another". No detailed boundaries were submitted by Community Networks.

196 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal for this area, noting the good electoral equality that would be achieved. The number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the city average in the revised Hartcliffe ward (2 per cent below the average in 2002), 5 per cent above in the revised Hengrove ward (5 per cent in 2002) and 3 per cent below in the revised Whitchurch Park ward (2 per cent in 2002).

197 At Stage Three we received comments from five respondents regarding these wards. The Liberal Democrats supported the proposed boundaries between Hengrove and Whitchurch Park wards, and between Whitchurch Park and Hartcliffe wards which reflected their Stage One proposals. However, they proposed a further boundary amendment so that both sides of Moxham Drive would be included in Whitchurch Park, instead of split between two wards as at present.

198 The Conservatives considered that the draft recommendations would "perpetuate the present arbitrary and unjustifiable division of the Withywood and Bishopsworth communities in south Bristol". They said that the Hartcliffe community runs west–east, but the boundaries run north–south, "dividing areas with a shared identity and parcelling them off with districts with which

they have no affinity". The Conservatives agreed with Community Networks' Stage One submission that "there is much local dissatisfaction with the current (and proposed) ward boundaries which cut across Withywood and the neighbouring Hartcliffe communities" and said that the proposed single-member Withywood and Hartcliffe wards contained in the Conservatives' Stage One submission "best reflects local topography and community identity and meets local needs." They also considered that the boundaries of Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe wards require re–drawing in line with their Stage One submission.

199 The Labour Party proposed no change to the draft recommendation for Hartcliffe ward, but proposed that the boundary between Hengrove ward and Whitchurch Park ward be modified so that Hengrove Park is transferred to Whitchurch Park ward. The proposed boundary between the two wards would run north-east along Hengrove Way, south-east along Bamfield Road as far as Pinkhams Twist, along the northern edge of the open space to Fortfield Road, then along Fortfield Road until it meets the existing boundary at Whitchurch Lane.

200 In their Stage Three submission Community Networks said that at this stage they did not consider that it would be realistic to ask for "wide-ranging changes ... that would allow Hartcliffe to be in one ward and Withywood in another" and accepted that the different number of electors in each of the communities "make such an accurate representation of community interests and identities unlikely". However, they considered that an east–west boundary, rather than a north–south boundary through the area currently covered by Hartcliffe ward and Bishopsworth ward, would better meet the statutory criteria and local preferences. Consequently, they proposed the creation of a new ward for the southern parts of the existing Hartcliffe and Bishopsworth wards, and a new ward for the northern parts of these wards. They suggested that local consultation should be carried out to decide on names for these wards.

201 Councillor Smith, member for Whitchurch Park ward, considered that the Labour Group's Stage One submission for three-member wards was the most appropriate for this area. He acknowledged that the three-member ward scheme would not unite Whitchurch in one ward, but considered that it would incorporate the whole of Withywood and Bishopsworth into a three-member Bishopsworth ward, and the whole of Hartcliffe in a three-member Hartcliffe ward. He was disappointed with the draft recommendations for the Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park ward boundaries, and argued that the ward names bear little relation to the communities they represent. He suggested that if the Commission was to confirm its draft recommendations, then Whitchurch Park should be renamed Hartcliffe East (with Hartcliffe being renamed Hartcliffe West) or Teyfant.

202 In the light of the representations received, while we accept that the proposed warding arrangements may not best reflect local community identities, we consider that this would be difficult to do within a pattern of two–member wards, and achieve as good electoral equality as under the draft recommendations. Consequently, we do not propose to modify our draft recommendations for these three wards and confirm them as final.

Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Southville and Windmill Hill

203 The number of electors per councillor in Bedminster is equal to the city average (1 per cent below in 2002), 17 per cent below the average in Bishopsworth (both now and in 2002), 4 per cent below in Southville (5 per cent in 2002) and 17 per cent above in Windmill Hill (16 per cent in 2002).

204 At Stage One the Liberal Democrats said that Bedminster Down community is currently split between the wards of Bedminster and Bishopsworth, and proposed to reunite the community by transferring 1,343 electors in polling district BRD, currently in Bedminster ward, to Bishopsworth ward. The City Council also proposed to include the Bedminster Down area in Bishopsworth ward, although it submitted a slightly different boundary.

205 The Liberal Democrats considered that the Malago (stream) is "both a clear natural boundary and marks a community boundary", and proposed that the community to the west of the Malago in polling district WLF, currently in Windmill Hill ward, together with the few houses currently in the north-west corner of Filwood ward, in polling district FDA, should be transferred to Bedminster ward. This proposal also formed part of the City Council's scheme.

206 The Liberal Democrats argued that polling district WLC and the northern part of polling district WLA, currently in Windmill Hill ward, are

"separated from the rest of Windmill Hill ward by the railway line", and that "only two roads pass from this community to the rest of Windmill Hill for the mile-long border". They did not consider that a similar division of community occurs as a result of the current ward boundary between Windmill Hill and Southville, along East Street. They therefore proposed to include polling district WLC and part of polling district WLA in Southville ward.

207 In addition, they stated that the current boundary between Windmill Hill and Filwood wards "is arbitrarily splitting the two sides of Lynton Road, and splits this community". They proposed to include the south-eastern part of polling district WLF, east of the Malago and south of and including Marksbury Road, in Filwood ward, "to keep the community together".

208 However, the Liberal Democrats acknowledged that, without any further boundary amendments, these proposals would not achieve good electoral equality across the area. They considered that the boundary along the southern tip of polling district SEA in Southville ward "is currently arbitrary making no distinction between communities", and proposed to modify this boundary to include both sides of Irby Road and Foxcote Road in Bedminster ward. They added that "there is no clear community boundary here, but there is no reasonable alternative".

209 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the city average in the revised Bedminster ward (2 per cent above in 2002), 2 per cent above in the revised Bishopsworth ward (2 per cent in 2002), 1 per cent above in Southville ward (2 per cent below the average in 2002) and 1 per cent below in the revised Windmill Hill ward (2 per cent in 2002). In view of the good electoral equality which would be achieved by these proposals, we put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

210 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for all four wards, which reflected their Stage One proposal.

211 The Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for Bedminster, Bishopsworth and Southville wards, but proposed modifications to Windmill Hill ward. They considered that the draft recommendations would divide the Bedminster (Marksbury Road) Estate between Filwood and Windmill Hill wards "in a manner detrimental to community identity, and without regard to natural geography ..." and that " ... the steep escarpment behind Torpoint Road is one of the most distinctive geographical features in Bristol". Consequently, the Labour Party proposed that the boundary between Windmill Hill and Filwood wards should be amended to run along the cliff edge at the rear of the properties on Kingswear Road.

212 As stated earlier, the Conservatives considered that the draft recommendations would continue to divide the Bishopsworth and Withywood communities, both of which run east to west, whereas the ward boundaries run north to south. They stated that Bishopsworth ward is centred on the old village of Bishopsworth, with the main shopping and service centres in Highridge Road and Church Road, with the latter split between Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe wards under the present arrangements. However, the Conservatives did not propose specific ward boundaries in this area.

213 As described earlier, Community Networks noted that the different number of electors in each of the communities in this area "make such an accurate representation of community interests and identities unlikely". However, they considered that an east–west division of the area currently covered by Hartcliffe ward and Bishopsworth ward would better reflect the statutory criteria and local preferences. Therefore they proposed a new ward to cover the southern part of Hartcliffe and Bishopsworth wards, and another new ward to cover the northern parts of these wards.

214 As stated earlier, Councillor Smith, member for Whitchurch Park ward, considered that the Labour Group's Stage One submission for three-member wards was the most appropriate for the area covered by Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards. He recognised that even a three-member ward scheme would be unable to unite Whitchurch, but considered that it had incorporated the whole of Withywood and Bishopsworth into a three-member Bishopsworth ward.

215 Windmill Hill City Farm was concerned that the proposed boundary between Southville and Windmill Hill wards would separate the farm from the local community and the adjacent housing in Windmill Hill ward. It proposed that the northern boundary of Windmill Hill ward should follow

York Road, Bedminster Parade and Malago Road, rejoining the existing boundary of the railway line at Whitehouse Street. They considered that their proposal which would retain a further 232 electors in Windmill Hill ward, rather than transfer them to Southville ward, would better reflect local identity.

216 Having confirmed our final recommendations for retaining a pattern of two-member wards throughout the city, we consider that the draft recommendations would achieve good electoral equality and find some local support, and we are therefore confirming them as final for the wards of Bedminster, Bishopsworth and Southville. For Windmill Hill ward, however, we propose to endorse the Labour Party's modified boundary between the wards of Windmill Hill and Filwood in order to better reflect local identities and the natural geography of the area. The number of electors per councillor in Windmill Hill would be 1 per cent below the city average (equal to the average in 2002).

Filwood and Knowle

217 At present, Filwood and Knowle wards are both relatively over-represented. The number of electors per councillor in Filwood ward is 23 per cent below the city average both now and in 2002, and 15 per cent below the average in Knowle (16 per cent in 2002).

218 As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed to transfer polling district WBD, currently in Brislington West ward, to Knowle ward, and part of polling district WLF, currently in Windmill Hill ward, to Filwood ward. The Liberal Democrats considered that "there is no clear division of community between Filwood and Knowle. The current boundary is poor both in terms of splitting the community and making a clear boundary". They proposed to transfer the southern part of polling district KEB up to and including the south side of Ilminster Avenue, currently in Knowle ward, to Filwood ward in order to improve electoral equality and provide a clear boundary. The Liberal Democrats said that although "it is a better community boundary than the current one, it is not ideal". The City Council put forward a similar proposal.

219 However, the Labour Group said that the Liberal Democrats' proposed Filwood ward "fails to tackle the division in the present ward caused by the steep escarpment which rises behind Lynton Road and Torpoint Road, which separates Knowle West and Bedminster council estates". The Labour Group considered that a better solution would be to extend the boundary of Filwood ward to the south-east to incorporate part of the existing Hengrove ward.

220 We proposed to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, recognising that they would provide better electoral equality than the existing arrangements, and identifiable boundaries. The number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the city average in the revised Filwood ward (3 per cent in 2002) and 3 per cent above in the revised Knowle ward (2 per cent in 2002).

221 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats supported the proposed boundary between Filwood and Knowle wards, which adopted their Stage One proposal, and commented that although the boundary is not a good one, "there is no better boundary and a boundary must be made for electoral equality".

222 The Labour Party proposed that the boundaries between the wards of Filwood, Knowle and Windmill Hill be re–aligned to take account of the community identity and "natural geography". As stated earlier, they considered the steep escarpment behind Torpoint Road to be one of the most distinctive geographical features in Bristol, which should be reflected in the ward boundaries. They considered that the most satisfactory solution would be for the boundary between Windmill Hill and Filwood wards to be amended to run along the cliff edge at the back of Kingswear Road and rejoin the existing boundary east of the City of Bristol College, then run to the north of Wingfield Road and south along Redcatch Road until it rejoins the existing boundary. The boundary between Filwood ward and Knowle ward should be modified to run to the west of Stockwood Crescent, along Daventry Road, Newquay Road and Throgmorton Road until it meets the existing boundary at the A4174 Ring Road.

223 As confirmed earlier, we propose to adopt the proposal put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group, the Labour Party and Stockwood Labour Party that the 32 electors in Wootton Park should be transferred from Stockwood ward to Knowle ward, on community identity grounds.

224 Two residents of Knowle urged the retention of Wells Road as the boundary between Knowle ward and Brislington West ward, and considered it to be a natural boundary, easily identifiable by local residents. One of the two supported three-member wards, and considered that the whole of Knowle Park should be united in one ward. However, he accepted that this was not feasible and supported the retention of the status quo for the area.

225 Having considered all representations received, we propose to modify our draft recommendations for Filwood and Knowle wards in accordance with the Labour Party's proposal (subject to one slight modification), in order, we believe, to take better account of local community identity and the natural geography of the area. We propose that the boundary between Filwood and Knowle should run to the north of Throgmorton Road, so that all the electors in Throgmorton Road should be included in Filwood ward. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Filwood ward would be 1 per cent above the city average (both now and in 2002), and 1 per cent below the average in Knowle (4 per cent in 2002).

Electoral Cycle

226 Bristol at present elects by thirds. This was supported at Stage One by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group, while the Conservative Associations argued for whole-council elections. Mr Phillips argued that, where there are two councillors per ward, it would be easier and more understandable to have elections by halves within a four-yearly cycle. However, as we stated, this is not permitted by the present legislation.

227 We considered that there was no local consensus for change to the present electoral cycle and noted that it is open to the City Council to resolve this itself by a two-thirds majority vote of the Council. We therefore did not put forward a draft recommendation for change to the electoral cycle, but welcomed further evidence.

228 At Stage Three a resident of Westbury-on-Trym considered that Mr Phillips' proposal for elections by halves would be more logical, but was aware that this was not currently legally possible. No other representations were received regarding the electoral cycle, and we confirm our draft recommendation for no change to the present system of elections by thirds, as final.

Conclusions

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

(a) retention of the existing boundary between Henbury and Southmead wards;

(b) retention of the existing boundary between Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym wards;

(c) retention of the existing boundary between Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze wards;

(d) the boundary between Henleaze and Redland wards should follow Clay Pit Road, then run to the north of Belvedere Road, The Glen and Blenheim Road;

(e) the boundary between Redland and Cotham wards should follow Redland Hill and Redland Road;

(f) the boundary between Easton and Eastville wards should follow Greenbank Road and Thurlow Road, and then run to the north of Robertson Road;

(g) the boundary between Knowle and Stockwood wards should run to the south of the properties on Wootton Park;

(h) the boundary between Filwood and Knowle wards should run to the west of Stockwood Crescent, along Daventry Road, Newquay Road and north of Throgmorton Road;

(i) the boundary between Filwood and Windmill Hill wards should run along the cliff edge to the rear of the properties on Kingswear Road, then north of Wingfield Road and along Redcatch Road.

230 We have concluded that there should be 70 councillors, two more than at present; there should be 35 wards, one more than at present; the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified; and elections should continue to be held by thirds. Our proposed ward boundaries are all illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

231 Figure 3 (overleaf) shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1997 and 2002 electorate figures.

Figure 3:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

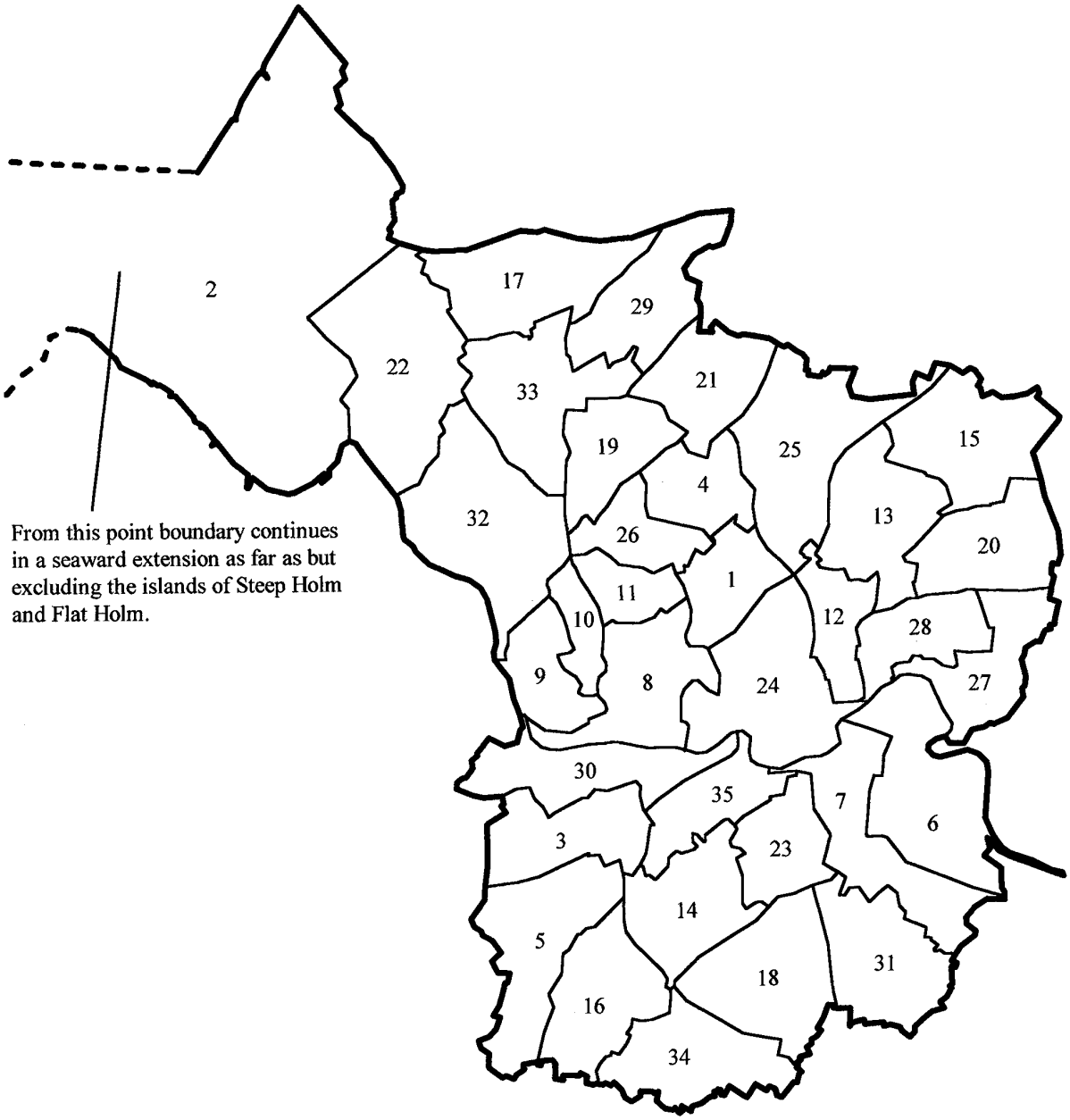
	1997 electorate		2002 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	**Final recommendations**	**Current arrangements**	**Final recommendations**
Number of councillors	68	70	68	70
Number of wards	34	35	34	35
Average number of electors per councillor	4,290	4,168	4,352	4,228
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	17	1	19	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	3	0

232 As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with electoral variances of more than 10 per cent from 17 to one, reducing further to none by 2002. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Bristol City Council should comprise 70 councillors serving 35 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated on the large map in the back of the report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bristol



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Key to Wards

1 Ashley
2 Avonmouth
3 Bedminster
4 Bishopston
5 Bishopsworth
6 Brislington East
7 Brislington West
8 Cabot
9 Clifton
10 Clifton East
11 Cotham
12 Easton
13 Eastville
14 Filwood
15 Frome Vale
16 Hartcliffe
17 Henbury
18 Hengrove
19 Henleaze
20 Hillfields
21 Horfield
22 Kingsweston
23 Knowle
24 Lawrence Hill
25 Lockleaze
26 Redland
27 St George East
28 St George West
29 Southmead
30 Southville
31 Stockwood
32 Stoke Bishop
33 Westbury-on-Trym
34 Whitchurch Park
35 Windmill Hill

Figure 4:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bristol

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashley	2	8,642	4,321	4	8,822	4,411	4
2	Avonmouth	2	9,016	4,508	8	9,083	4,542	7
3	Bedminster	2	8,627	4,314	3	8,634	4,317	2
4	Bishopston	2	8,499	4,250	2	8,519	4,260	1
5	Bishopsworth	2	8,461	4,231	2	8,613	4,307	2
6	Brislington East	2	8,266	4,133	-1	8,778	4,389	4
7	Brislington West	2	8,119	4,060	-3	8,086	4,043	-4
8	Cabot	2	7,340	3,670	-12	8,088	4,044	-4
9	Clifton	2	7,940	3,970	-5	8,135	4,068	-4
10	Clifton East	2	8,119	4,060	-3	8,620	4,310	2
11	Cotham	2	9,014	4,507	8	8,704	4,352	3
12	Easton	2	8,175	4,088	-2	8,260	4,130	-2
13	Eastville	2	8,476	4,238	2	8,796	4,398	4
14	Filwood	2	8,418	4,209	1	8,547	4,274	1
15	Frome Vale	2	8,350	4,175	0	8,570	4,285	1
16	Hartcliffe	2	8,437	4,219	1	8,290	4,145	-2
17	Henbury	2	7,698	3,849	-8	7,733	3,867	-9
18	Hengrove	2	8,720	4,360	5	8,896	4,448	5
19	Henleaze	2	8,210	4,105	-2	8,203	4,102	-3
20	Hillfields	2	8,923	4,462	7	8,969	4,485	6
21	Horfield	2	8,460	4,230	1	8,552	4,276	1
22	Kingsweston	2	7,544	3,772	-10	7,875	3,938	-7
23	Knowle	2	8,257	4,129	-1	8,138	4,069	-4
24	Lawrence Hill	2	8,620	4,310	3	8,810	4,405	4
25	Lockleaze	2	7,983	3,992	-4	8,075	4,038	-5

Figure 4 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bristol

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26	Redland	2	8,912	4,456	7	8,825	4,413	4
27	St George East	2	8,431	4,216	1	8,571	4,286	1
28	St George West	2	8,142	4,071	-2	8,225	4,113	-3
29	Southmead	2	7,731	3,866	-7	7,855	3,928	-7
30	Southville	2	8,392	4,196	1	8,256	4,128	-2
31	Stockwood	2	8,712	4,356	5	8,710	4,355	3
32	Stoke Bishop	2	8,359	4,180	0	8,535	4,268	1
33	Westbury-on-Trym	2	8,433	4,217	1	8,464	4,232	0
34	Whitchurch Park	2	8,105	4,053	-3	8,279	4,140	-2
35	Windmill Hill	2	8,218	4,109	-1	8,415	4,208	0
	Totals	**70**	**291,749**	**—**	**—**	**295,931**	**—**	**—**
	Averages	**—**	**—**	**4,168**	**—**	**—**	**4,228**	**—**

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bristol City Council's submission.

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

6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Bristol: Detailed Mapping

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the city of Bristol.

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Bristol

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 5, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations only in respect of Cotham, Easton, Eastville, Filwood, Henbury, Henleaze, Knowle, Redland, Southmead, Stockwood, Westbury-on Trym and Windmill Hill wards, where our draft proposals were as follows:

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Cotham	2	Cotham ward (part), Cabot ward (part)
Easton	2	Easton ward, Eastville ward (part)
Eastville	2	Eastville ward (part)
Filwood	2	Filwood ward (part), Knowle ward (part), Windmill ward (part)
Henbury	2	Henbury ward, Southmead ward (part)
Henleaze	2	Henleaze ward (part), Redland ward (part)
Knowle	2	Knowle ward (part), Brislington West ward (part)
Redland	2	Redland ward (part)
Southmead	2	Southmead ward (part), Westbury-on-Trym ward (part)
Stockwood	2	Stockwood ward (part)
Westbury-on-Trym	2	Westbury-on-Trym ward (part), Henleaze ward (part)
Windmill Hill	2	Windmill Hill ward (part)

Note: In our final recommendations we also propose that Frome Vale ward should not be renamed Fishponds.

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Cotham	2	7,910	3,955	-5	7,944	3,972	-6
Easton	2	8,610	4,305	3	8,714	4,357	3
Eastville	2	8,041	4,021	-4	8,342	4,171	-1
Filwood	2	8,042	4,021	-4	8,164	4,082	-3
Henbury	2	8,658	4,329	4	8,701	4,351	3
Henleaze	2	8,397	4,`199	1	8,404	4,202	-1
Knowle	2	8,604	4,302	3	8,604	4,302	2
Redland	2	8,638	4,319	4	8,660	4,330	2
Southmead	2	8,329	4,165	0	8,372	4,186	-1
Stockwood	2	8,744	4,372	5	8,744	4,372	3
Westbury-on-Trym	2	8,066	4,033	-3	8,122	4,061	-4
Windmill Hill	2	8,215	4,108	-2	8,273	4,137	-2

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bristol City Council's submission.