

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire County Council

Report to The Electoral Commission

*March 2004*

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# What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE  
Robin Gray  
Joan Jones CBE  
Ann M Kelly  
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the county of Wiltshire.



# Summary

We began a review of Wiltshire County Council's electoral arrangements on 9 July 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 28 May 2003, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

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

- **in 27 of the 47 divisions, each of which are currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10% from the county average and 11 divisions vary by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen with the number of electors forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 30 divisions and by more than 20% in 17 divisions.**

Our main final recommendations for Wiltshire County Council's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 145-148) are that:

- **Wiltshire County Council should have 49 councillors, two more than at present, representing 46 divisions, one fewer than at present.**
- **As the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the recent district reviews, the boundaries of all but Cricklade & Purton and Durrington would be subject to change.**

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

- **In 34 of the proposed 46 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the average for the county and a single division would vary by more than 20%.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 34 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the county and no division would vary by more than 20% by 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 13 April 2004. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Commission's final recommendations for Wiltshire: Summary

Division name (by district council area)		Number of councillors	Constituent district wards
<b>Kennet</b>			
1	Aldbourne & Ramsbury	1	Aldbourne ward; Ogbourne ward; Ramsbury ward; West Selkley ward
2	Avon & Pewsey	1	Netheravon ward; Pewsey ward; Pewsey Vale ward; Upavon ward
3	Bedwyn & Collingbourne	1	Bedwyn ward; Burbage ward; Collingbourne ward; Milton Lilbourne ward; Shalbourne ward
4	Bromham & Potterne	1	Bromham & Rowde ward; Cheverell ward; Potterne ward; Seend ward
5	Devizes North	1	Devizes East ward; Devizes North ward
6	Devizes South	1	Devizes South ward; Roundway ward
7	Lavington & Cannings	1	All Cannings ward; Bishops Cannings ward; Lavingtons ward; Urchfont ward
8	Marlborough	1	Marlborough East ward; Marlborough West ward
9	Tidworth & Ludgershall	1	Ludgershall ward; Tidworth, Perham Down & Ludgershall South ward
<b>North Wiltshire</b>			
10	Box, Colerne & Lacock	1	Box ward; Colerne ward; Lacock with Neston & Gastard ward
11	Calne	1	Calne Abberd ward; Calne Chilvester ward; Calne Lickhill ward; Calne Priestley ward
12	Calne & Without	1	Calne Marden ward; Calne Quemerford ward; Calne Without ward; Hilmarton ward
13	Central	1	Chippenham Audley ward; Chippenham Avon ward; Chippenham Redland ward
14	Chippenham North	1	Chippenham Hill Rise ward; Chippenham Monkton Park ward; Chippenham Park ward; part of Cepen Park ward (Cepen Park North parish ward of Langley Burrell Without parish)
15	Chippenham Pewsham	1	Chippenham London Road ward; Chippenham Pewsham ward
16	Chippenham West	1	Chippenham Allington ward; Chippenham Westcroft/Queens ward; part of Cepen Park ward (Cepen Park South parish ward of Chippenham Without parish)
17	Corsham	1	Corsham ward; Pickwick ward
18	Cricklade & Purton	1	Cricklade ward; Purton ward
19	Kington	1	Bremhill ward; Kington Langley ward; Kingston St Michael ward; Nettleton ward
20	Malmesbury	1	Malmesbury ward; St Paul Malmesbury Without & Sherston ward
21	Minety	1	Ashton Keynes & Minety ward; Brinkworth & The Somerfords ward
22	Wootton Bassett North	1	The Lydiards & Broad Town ward; Wootton Bassett North ward
23	Wootton Bassett South	1	Lyneham ward; Wootton Bassett South ward



<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
<b>Salisbury</b>		
24 Alderbury	1	Alderbury & Whiteparish ward; Winterslow ward
25 Amesbury	1	Amesbury East ward; Amesbury West ward
26 Bourne & Woodford Valley	1	Laverstock ward; Upper Bourne, Idmiston & Winterbourne ward; part of Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward (the parishes of Durnford, Wilsford cum Lake and Woodford)
27 Chalke & Nadder	1	Chalke Valley ward; Donhead ward; Fonthill & Nadder ward; part of Knoyle ward (the parishes of Chicklade, Fonthill Gifford and Hindon); part of Tisbury & Fovant ward (the parishes of Ansty, Fovant, Sutton Mandeville and Swallowcliffe); part of Wilton ward (the parish of Burcombe Without)
28 Downton & Ebble Valley	1	Downton & Redlynch ward; Ebble ward
29 Durrington & Bulford	1	Bulford ward; Durrington ward
30 Mere & Tisbury	1	Western & Mere ward; part of Knoyle ward (the parishes East Knoyle, Sedgehill & Semley and West Knoyle); part of Tisbury & Fovant ward (the parishes of Tisbury and West Tisbury)
31 Salisbury East	2	Bishopdown ward; St Edmund & Milford ward; St Mark & Stratford ward
32 Salisbury South	2	Fisherton & Bemerton Village ward; Harnham East ward; Harnham West ward; St Martin & Milford ward
33 Salisbury West	1	Bemerton ward; St Paul ward
34 Wilton & Wylde	1	Till Valley & Wylde ward; part Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward (the parishes of Great Wishford and South Newton); part of Wilton ward (the parishes of Quidhampton and Wilton)
<b>West Wiltshire</b>		
35 Bradford-on-Avon	1	Bradford-on-Avon North ward; Bradford-on-Avon South ward
36 Holt & Paxcroft	1	Holt ward; Paxcroft ward
37 Manor Vale	1	Atworth & Whitley ward; Manor Vale ward
38 Melksham & Without	1	Melksham Spa ward; Melksham Without ward
39 Melksham Central	1	Melksham North ward; Melksham Woodrow ward
40 Trowbridge East	2	Trowbridge Adcroft ward; Trowbridge Drynham ward; Trowbridge Park ward
41 Trowbridge West	1	Trowbridge College ward; Trowbridge John of Gaunt ward
42 Warminster East & Wylde	1	Mid Wylde Valley ward; Warminster East ward; part of Shearwater ward (the parishes of Bishopstrow and Norton Bavant)
43 Warminster West	1	Warminster West ward
44 Westbury Ham & Dilton	1	Westbury Ham ward; part of Dilton Marsh ward (the parish of Dilton Marsh)
45 Westbury Laverton & Shearwater	1	Westbury Laverton ward; part of Dilton Marsh ward (the parishes of Chapmanslade, Corsley, Upton Scudamore); part of Shearwater ward (the parishes of Brixton Deverill, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill and Sutton Veny)

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
46 Whorwellsdown Hundred	1	Ethandune ward; Southwick & Wingfield ward; Summerham ward; part of Dilton Marsh ward (the parish of North Bradley)

*Notes:*

1. *The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the four Wiltshire districts which were completed in 1999. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*
2. *The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above and the maps in Appendix A illustrate some of the proposed boundaries in more detail.*

Table 2: Final recommendations for Wiltshire

	Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
<b>Kennet</b>								
1	Aldbourne & Ramsbury	1	6,852	6,852	1	6,921	6,921	-2
2	Avon & Pewsey	1	7,224	7,224	6	7,478	7,478	5
3	Bedwyn & Collingbourne	1	7,003	7,003	3	7,021	7,021	-1
4	Bromham & Potterne	1	6,528	6,528	-4	6,502	6,502	-8
5	Devizes North	1	6,737	6,737	-1	6,875	6,875	-3
6	Devizes South	1	4,676	4,676	-31	6,018	6,018	-15
7	Lavington & Cannings	1	7,033	7,033	3	7,009	7,009	-1
8	Marlborough	1	6,156	6,156	-10	6,445	6,445	-9
9	Tidworth & Ludgershall	1	7,236	7,236	6	7,677	7,677	8
<b>North Wiltshire</b>								
10	Box, Colerne & Lacock	1	7,274	7,274	7	7,704	7,704	9
11	Calne	1	6,806	6,806	0	7,846	7,846	11
12	Calne & Without	1	7,377	7,377	8	7,435	7,435	5
13	Central	1	5,771	5,771	-15	6,063	6,063	-15
14	Chippenham North	1	6,767	6,767	-1	7,137	7,137	1
15	Chippenham Pewsham	1	5,838	5,838	-14	6,309	6,309	-11
16	Chippenham West	1	6,755	6,755	-1	6,847	6,847	-4
17	Corsham	1	6,857	6,857	1	7,025	7,025	-1
18	Cricklade & Purton	1	7,067	7,067	4	7,328	7,328	3
19	Kington	1	6,861	6,861	1	6,828	6,828	-4
20	Malmesbury	1	7,880	7,880	16	8,100	8,100	14
21	Minety	1	7,214	7,214	6	7,250	7,250	2
22	Wootton Bassett North	1	6,117	6,117	-10	6,198	6,198	-13
23	Wootton Bassett South	1	8,100	8,100	19	7,545	7,545	6
<b>Salisbury</b>								
24	Alderbury	1	7,658	7,658	13	7,702	7,702	9
25	Amesbury	1	6,838	6,838	0	7,509	7,509	6
26	Bourne & Woodford Valley	1	7,321	7,321	8	7,338	7,338	3
27	Chalke & Nadder	1	6,621	6,621	-3	6,729	6,729	-5
28	Downton & Ebble Valley	1	6,217	6,217	-9	6,440	6,440	-9
29	Durrington & Bulford	1	7,780	7,780	14	7,987	7,987	13
30	Mere & Tisbury	1	6,844	6,844	1	7,195	7,195	1

	Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31	Salisbury East	2	11,541	5,771	-15	12,235	6,118	-14
32	Salisbury South	2	12,787	6,394	-6	13,067	6,534	-8
33	Salisbury West	1	7,102	7,102	4	7,085	7,085	0
34	Wilton & Wylke	1	7,450	7,450	9	7,608	7,608	7
<b>West Wiltshire</b>								
35	Bradford-on-Avon	1	7,393	7,393	9	7,602	7,602	7
36	Holt & Paxcroft	1	6,237	6,237	-8	7,056	7,056	-1
37	Manor Vale	1	5,713	5,713	-16	5,726	5,726	-19
38	Melksham & Without	1	7,997	7,997	18	8,423	8,423	19
39	Melksham Central	1	6,220	6,220	-9	6,542	6,542	-8
40	Trowbridge East	2	12,827	6,414	-6	14,990	7,495	6
41	Trowbridge West	1	8,044	8,044	18	8,190	8,190	15
42	Warminster East & Wylke	1	8,057	8,057	18	8,315	8,315	17
43	Warminster West	1	6,362	6,362	-6	6,542	6,542	-8
44	Westbury Ham & Dilton	1	6,289	6,289	-8	7,287	7,287	3
45	Westbury Laverton & Shearwater	1	6,836	6,836	0	7,586	7,586	7
46	Whorwellsdown Hundred	1	7,114	7,114	5	7,100	7,100	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>333,377</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>347,815</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,804</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,098</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on those produced by Wiltshire County Council.

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

# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the county of Wiltshire. Our review of the county is part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972;
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
  - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
  - promote equality of opportunity; and
  - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

3 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (published by the EC in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and when the Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Wiltshire County Council in October 1999 and we are now embarking on our county review this area.

5 Prior to the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000 each county council division could only return one member. This restraint has now been removed by section 89 of the 2000 Act, and we may now recommend the creation of multi-member county divisions. However, we do not expect to recommend large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps, in the more urban areas of a county.

6 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements*. These statutory *Rules* state that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

7 In the *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission states that we should, wherever possible, build on schemes that have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and division configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

8 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the local authority as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that each district area within the county is allocated the correct number of county councillors with respect to the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The *Rules* provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. The term coterminosity is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say, where county divisions comprise one or more whole district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise that it is unlikely to be possible to achieve absolute coterminosity throughout a county area while also providing for the optimum level of electoral equality. In this respect, county reviews are different from those of districts. We will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions. The average level of coterminosity secured under our final recommendations for the first eleven counties that we have reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. Therefore, we recommend that in formulating schemes, interested parties should seek to secure a level of coterminosity of around 60% to 80%.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

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

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we must recognise that it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining rural and urban areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some of the existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations would continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 As a part of this review we may also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. We therefore expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews only on an

exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

## The review of Wiltshire

16 We completed the reviews of the four district council areas in Wiltshire in March 1999 and Orders for the new electoral arrangements have since been made. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wiltshire County Council. The last such review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1992 (Report No. 681).

17 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 9 July 2002, when we wrote to Wiltshire County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the four district councils in the county, Wiltshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the county, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Wiltshire County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 October 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

18 Stage Three began on 28 May 2003 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire County Council*, and ended on 21 July 2003. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties 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.

## Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Committee has had regard to the general duty under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 to promote racial equality and to the approach set out in BCFE (03) 35, *Race Relations Legislation*, which the Committee considered and agreed at its meeting on 9 April 2003.





## 2 Current electoral arrangements

20 The county of Wiltshire comprises four districts: Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire. It is bounded by the unitary authorities of Swindon and West Berkshire to the north-east and east respectively, by the counties of Hampshire, Dorset and Somerset to the south, the unitary authorities of Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire to the west and Gloucestershire to the north. It has a population of approximately 428,380 and covers 325,548 hectares. Although predominately rural, parts of Wiltshire are more urban in nature.

21 The electorate of the county is 333,377 (December 2001). The Council presently has 47 members, with one member elected from each division.

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

23 At present, each councillor represents an average of 7,093 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 7,400 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 27 of the 47 divisions varies by more than 10% from the county average, 11 divisions by more than 20% and four divisions by more than 30% from the average. The worst imbalance is in Trowbridge East division in West Wiltshire where the councillor represents 43% fewer electors than the county average. Since 1975 there has been a 31% increase in the electorate in Wiltshire, excluding Swindon borough, which became a unitary authority in 1997. The most significant growth has been in North Wiltshire, although both Kennet and West Wiltshire have seen notable growth.

24 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Wiltshire, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions; our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards, and changes in the electorate over the past twenty years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements in Wiltshire

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
<b>Kennet</b>					
1 Aldbourne & Ramsbury	1	7,246	2	7,317	-1
2 Avon & Cannings	1	7,146	1	7,142	-3
3 Bedwyn & Pewsey	1	8,315	17	8,581	16
4 Collingbourne	1	8,553	21	8,994	22
5 Devizes	1	6,737	-5	6,875	-7
6 Devizes South & Bromham	1	8,182	15	9,510	29
7 Lavington	1	7,110	0	7,082	-4
8 Marlborough	1	6,156	-13	6,445	-13
<b>North Wiltshire</b>					
9 Bremhill & Calne Without	1	9,063	28	9,449	28
10 Calne	1	8,126	15	8,821	19
11 Chippenham Park	1	7,522	6	8,172	10
12 Chippenham Sheldon	1	6,286	-11	6,294	-15
13 Chippenham Town	1	7,526	6	7,990	8
14 Corsham	1	5,495	-23	5,502	-26
15 Cricklade & Purton	1	7,067	0	7,328	-1
16 Kington	1	9,482	34	9,554	29
17 Malmesbury	1	7,734	9	7,952	7
18 Minety	1	7,360	4	7,398	0
19 Pickwick with Box	1	6,806	-4	7,412	0
20 Wootton Bassett North	1	5,632	-21	5,714	-23
21 Wootton Bassett South	1	8,585	21	8,029	9
<b>Salisbury</b>					
22 Alderbury	1	6,883	-3	6,925	-6
23 Amesbury	1	7,607	7	8,278	12
24 Bourne Valley	1	7,700	9	8,433	14
25 Downton	1	7,961	12	8,205	11
26 Durrington	1	7,780	10	7,987	8

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
27 Mere	1	5,752	-19	6,083	-18
28 Salisbury Bemerton	1	5,774	-19	5,745	-22
29 Salisbury Harnham	1	5,649	-20	5,682	-23
30 Salisbury St Mark	1	5,759	-19	5,730	-23
31 Salisbury St Martin	1	7,251	2	7,353	-1
32 Salisbury St Paul	1	6,156	-13	6,319	-15
33 Tisbury	1	6,314	-11	6,422	-13
34 Wilton & Wylde	1	7,573	7	7,733	5
<b>West Wiltshire</b>					
35 Bradford-on-Avon	1	7,393	4	7,602	3
36 Holt	1	7,647	8	7,701	4
37 Melksham	1	4,193	-41	4,414	-40
38 Melksham Without	1	10,024	41	10,551	43
39 Southwick	1	5,381	-24	5,415	-27
40 Trowbridge East	1	4,059	-43	4,105	-45
41 Trowbridge South	1	8,315	17	8,968	21
42 Trowbridge West	1	8,497	20	10,107	37
43 Upper Wylde Valley	1	5,288	-25	5,340	-28
44 Warminster East	1	5,903	-17	6,126	-17
45 Warminster West	1	6,362	-10	6,542	-12
46 Westbury	1	8,540	20	10,224	38
47 Whorwellsdown	1	7,487	6	8,264	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>333,377</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>347,815</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,093</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,400</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wiltshire County Council.*

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Trowbridge East division were relatively over-represented by 43%, while electors in Melksham Without division were significantly under-represented by 41%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*



### 3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One we received 27 representations, including two county-wide schemes, one from the County Council and one from the Liberal Democrat Group. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire County Council*.

**26 In Kennet district we adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for that district in their entirety. In Salisbury we adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the rural part the district, with two amendments. In the City of Salisbury, we proposed our own divisions. In North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire we formulated our own proposals, incorporating aspects of the various schemes put forward, including those of the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group. We proposed that:**

- Wiltshire County Council should be served by 49 councillors;
- there should be 43 electoral divisions, involving changes to the boundaries of all but six divisions.

*Draft recommendation*

Wiltshire County Council should comprise 49 councillors, serving 43 divisions.

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 30 of the 43 divisions varying by no more than 10% from the county average. By 2006, 13 divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average.



## 4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 51 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Wiltshire County Council.

### Wiltshire County Council

29 The County Council accepted our proposal for a council size of 49. It strongly opposed the concept of two-member divisions. It fully supported our proposals for Kennet district. In North Wiltshire, it put forward alternative proposals for Brokenborough parish, Chippenham town and the divisions of Calne, Box & Pickwick and Kington. The County Council stated that we should split our two-member Wootton Bassett division into two single-member divisions in light of the recent announcement of the progressive closure of RAF Lyneham. In Salisbury, the County Council put forward alternative proposals for Salisbury town consisting of five single-member divisions. In West Wiltshire, the County Council stated its opposition to the creation of a two-member division within Trowbridge, reiterating its Stage One scheme of three single-member divisions in the town and suggested a name change for the proposed Westbury Laverton division.

### Political parties

30 The Wiltshire County Council Liberal Democrat Group (the 'Liberal Democrat Group') expressed its support for our proposals for Kennet district. In North Wiltshire, it stated that our draft recommendations for the Chippenham area required amending to better reflect the separate urban and rural areas and also proposed a small amendment to the boundary between our proposed Minety and Malmesbury divisions. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the County Council's view that our proposed two-member Box & Pickwick division could be split into two single-member divisions whilst retaining electoral equality, coterminosity and community identity. It fully supported our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division as it agreed that this best met the statutory criteria. In Salisbury, the Liberal Democrat Group expressed support for our draft recommendations for the rural area of the district and for the County Council's proposals for Salisbury town. In West Wiltshire, it supported our proposed two-member divisions in the Trowbridge area. In general, it accepted the concept of two-member divisions.

31 The North Wiltshire Conservative Association opposed the concept of two-member divisions and proposed divisions in North Wiltshire identical to those in the County Council's Stage Three submission. The Salisbury Liberal Democrat Party expressed their support for our draft recommendations. They accepted our proposals for two-member divisions but indicated a preference for single-member divisions.

### Parish and town councils

32 In Kennet, Devizes Town Council and Savernake Parish Council expressed their full support for our draft recommendations.

33 In North Wiltshire, Brokenborough Parish Council opposed placing Brokenborough with the town of Malmesbury as it argued that the latter is much larger and its interests would dominate. Calne Without Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for the area, stating a preference for a smaller single-member division rather than our proposed two-member Calne & Without division. Grittleton Parish Council stated its opposition to the inclusion of its parish with the Cepen Park area of Chippenham, suggesting that rural and urban areas should be kept separate. It also opposed the exclusion of Yatton Keynell parish from the surrounding rural areas as Yatton Keynell town provides local services and, it argued, is integral to the local grouping. Kington Langley Parish Council stated that Cepen Park North parish ward should be

included in a division with urban wards covering Chippenham town and that the Kington division should only include the rural wards of Bremhill, Kington Langley, Kingston St Michael and Nettleton. Stanton St Quinton Parish Council opposed our proposed Cepen Park & Without division, stating that our proposed division and the existing Kington division contain two entirely different demographic populations. Yatton Keynell Parish Council expressed opposition to our proposed divisions to the west of Chippenham, stating that these separate Yatton Keynell parish from others with which the parish has substantial community links and that Yatton Keynell has no common interest with the villages to the east of the A429.

34 In West Wiltshire, Bradford on Avon Town Council stated that it had no objections to our proposed Bradford-on-Avon division. Trowbridge Town Council stated that it 'does not have any real objection' to our proposals in Trowbridge town. Warminster Town Council opposed our proposals to include the village of Wylde Valley in a division with Warminster East ward, stating that the divisions in the area should remain unchanged. Codford Parish Council, Stockton Parish Council and Sutton Veny Parish Council opposed our Warminster East division, stating that the interests of the urban area would dominate, with the latter suggesting that the villages in the mid-Wylde Valley would be better suited with those in the north and the west of the Wylde Valley. Bishopstrow and Norton Bavant parish meetings opposed our Warminster East division, suggesting that the concerns of the rural parish would be 'subordinate' to those of the urban area. They each proposed a 'Longleat' division consisting of the rural wards of Dilton Marsh, Shearwater and Mid Wylde. Sherrington Village Meeting also expressed similar concerns and objected to its parish being included in a division with Warminster.

35 Steeple Ashton Parish Council supported our proposed Southwick division and proposed the name 'Whorwellsdown' for the area covered by the Southwick division, as this has historical relevance. Bratton Parish Council stated it 'has no objections to the proposed changes' but proposed the Southwick division be renamed 'Ethendune & Southwick'. Dilton Marsh Parish Council argued that Westbury Ham division should be renamed 'Dilton Marsh & Westbury Ham', as Dilton Marsh is the larger of the two. Heytesbury, Imber & Knook Parish Council stated that it wished to retain the villages of Heytesbury, Tetherington and Knook within the parish boundary and remain a rural parish. Hilperton Parish Council expressed support for our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division. Holt Parish Council opposed this proposed division as it includes rural Holt with urban Paxcroft. It argued that the communities have no common interests and suggested that Paxcroft be included with Trowbridge instead.

## Other representations

36 A further 23 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from councillors, local residents and Members of Parliament.

37 Dr A Murrison, MP for Westbury, expressed opposition to our Westbury Laverton division. He suggested that Deverills, Horingsham and Sutton Veny share greater affinity with Warminster than with Westbury. Mr J Gray, MP for North Wiltshire, expressed his support for North Wiltshire Conservative Association's submission.

38 Mr Francis Morland suggested alternative names for some of our proposed divisions in West Wiltshire. He opposed the concept of two-member divisions and suggested we adopt his alternative single-member divisions proposed at Stage One in the Melksham, Trowbridge and Warminster areas. These would, he argued, give primacy to electoral equality. Mr Morland pointed out a number of alleged errors in our draft recommendations report and commented on the importance of electoral equality in our *Guidance*.

39 A local resident supported our proposed Devizes North and Devizes South divisions. A resident of Chippenham expressed opposition to two-member divisions. The Mayor of Warminster, Joan Main, and a local resident expressed opposition to the inclusion of the villages of the Wylde Valley in a division with Warminster East ward. Councillor T Carbin,



representing Whorwellsdown, argued that our proposed Southwick division should be renamed 'Whorwellsdown & Southwick'. Councillor M Groom, representing Wootton Bassett North division, suggested splitting our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division into two single-member divisions in order to improve electoral equality and reduce voter confusion. Councillor N Phillips, representing Chippenham Redland ward, argued for a higher council size due to population growth and an ageing population. Councillor J Scott, representing Kingston St Michael ward, expressed opposition to our proposed Cepen Park & Without and Kington divisions. Councillor J Scott also argued that Cepen Park ward should be in a Chippenham division. Councillor E Clark, representing Paxcroft ward, supported our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division. Councillor P Sample, leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, representing Salisbury St Martin ward, expressed support for the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals for the county. Councillor Sample generally supported our proposals except in Salisbury city. A resident of Salisbury, Mr R W Steel, offered alternative proposals to our proposed Salisbury East, Salisbury North and Salisbury West divisions based on his local knowledge.

40 We received nine responses from residents in Malmesbury expressing opposition to our proposed Malmesbury division which includes Brokenborough village.



## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

41 As with our reviews of districts, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wiltshire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) which defines the need to secure effective and convenient local government, reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being as nearly as may be, the same in every division of the county.

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

43 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters which apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards to achieve coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that, having reached conclusions on the appropriate number of councillors to be elected to the county council, each district council area is allocated the number of county councillors to which it is entitled.

44 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every division of a county.

45 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. 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. Accordingly, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as the boundaries of district wards and community identities. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be taken into account and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

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

### Electorate forecasts

47 Since 1975 there has been a 31% increase in the electorate of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon borough which became a unitary authority in 1997). At Stage One, the County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5% from 333,377 to 348,565 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. The district with the most rapid growth is expected to be West Wiltshire, although a significant amount of growth is expected in all districts. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science, and having considered the forecast electorates, we stated

in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

48 Following the publication of our draft recommendations, the number of electors forecast to be in Lyneham ward in North Wiltshire by 2006 was revised by the County Council in light of the announcement of the progressive closure of the Royal Air Force base, RAF Lyneham. It stated that it had 'completed revised proformas ... showing an assumed reduction of 750' electors from Lyneham ward. The revised forecast for Lyneham ward is 2,596 electors by 2006, a reduction of 750 from the estimate quoted in our draft recommendations. This revision alters the forecast number of electors in the county for 2006 from 348,565, as quoted in our draft recommendations, to 347,815. Consequently, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio under a council size of 49 is reduced from 7,114 electors, as quoted in our draft recommendations, to 7,098.

49 At Stage Three, Mr Francis Morland stated that the County Council's electorate figures for the existing divisions in West Wiltshire, which we quoted in our draft recommendations, contained 'significant errors'. Mr Morland also wrote to us during Stage One, questioning those figures. We then requested the County Council to investigate this matter and to state whether they believed the electorate figures they submitted at Stage One represented the best estimates given the information available. In August and October 2002, the County Council confirmed that their electorate figures were indeed the 'best estimates'. Mr Morland did not provide any further evidence or argumentation regarding the electorate figures in his Stage Three submission. With the exception of Mr Morland's submission and the representations concerning the impact of the closure of RAF Lyneham, we did not receive any submissions regarding electorate figures during Stage Three.

50 In light of the evidence received at Stage Three, we are content to accept the County Council's revised electorate forecast for 2006, giving a total of 347,815 electors, as the best estimate given the information available.

## Council size

51 As explained earlier, we now require justification for any council size proposed whether it is an increase, decrease or retention of the existing council size.

52 Wiltshire County Council presently has 47 members. At Stage One, the County Council proposed an increase of one in council size, to 48 members. In considering its proposed council size, the County Council considered councillor workload, internal political arrangements and the need for the community leadership role to be properly fulfilled. It stated that 'to reduce the number of councillors would overburden members to the extent that both the management and representative roles are put at risk'. The County Council agreed that a 'slight increase' by one councillor would facilitate 'effective and convenient local government' for the county.

53 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed an increase in council size of four, to 51 members. The Liberal Democrat Group used similar arguments to the County Council's to justify an increase in council size, considering councillor workload, internal political management structures and the need for the community leadership role to be fulfilled. However, it further contended that a council size of 51 members would provide the 'best fit' in the allocation of councillors between the different districts.

54 The Independent Group proposed an increase in council size of two, to 49 members. It stated that the County Council's scheme was 'discredited' by its failure to allocate the correct number of councillors to the districts. It further contended that 'the size of the council should reflect a fair division between the four districts' and that this could be achieved under a 49-member council. The Independent Group also noted that 'there is clearly a consensus that the size of the council should slightly increase, reflecting the County's growing population' and that

49 members, rather than the County Council's or the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes, would merit the 'best fit'.

55 Mr Morland proposed two possible council sizes, 45 and 49. He stated that a council size of 45 would be his preferred choice of scheme because it provided the 'best practicable equality'. He did not provide any evidence or argumentation to support a decrease in council size other than it providing the best possible 'practicable equality'. He further contended that the County Council's proposed 48-member scheme 'does not round successfully' and a council size of 49 would yield much more 'consistent results'.

56 A parish council, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and a further two local residents commented on council size. Two local residents supported the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for a 51-member council and one stated concern about the over-representation of North Wiltshire under the County Council's 48-member scheme. Councillor Sample, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, argued that the increase in councillor workload in recent years justified the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for an increase in council size to 51 members, as well as providing for better electoral equality and coterminosity. Savernake Parish Council opposed the County Council's plans for a 48-member council and proposed an increase in council size to 49 members, with an extra councillor being allocated to the Kennet district, in the Pewsey Vale area.

57 When formulating our draft recommendations, we considered the issue of council size carefully and, in light of all the evidence and argumentation received at Stage One, decided to adopt a council size to 49. We agreed that the majority of the evidence and argumentation put to us supported a 'slight increase' in council size and we were of the view that a 49-member council would secure the broadest level of consensus.

58 We noted that under the County Council's proposed scheme. However, in order to give the correct entitlement of councillors to each district, the council size should be 49 members, rather than its proposed 48. The County Council allocated the incorrect number of councillors in Kennet, North Wiltshire and Salisbury districts. Therefore, the County Council's scheme could only be fairly and accurately redistributed within a 49-member scheme.

59 We considered that there was insufficient evidence and argumentation put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group to support an increase in council size to 51 and that this proposal would secure limited support locally. Similarly, we were not persuaded that a 45-member council would provide for effective and convenient local government. However, we considered that a 49-member scheme would provide a good fit and would enable us to allocate the correct number of councillors to each district in accordance to their entitlement. Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the county, together with the responses received, we concluded that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 49 members.

60 At Stage Three, we received two representations regarding council size. The County Council expressed support for our proposed council size of 49. Councillor Nina Phillips, representing Chippenham Redland ward, argued that the council size ought to be increased due to population growth and an ageing population in the county. Councillor Phillips did not propose a specific council size. We do not consider population and the relative number of dependants as determinants of council size. We only base our recommendations regarding council size on argumentation relating to the County Council's internal political management structures. No such argumentation was received.

61 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three regarding council size, we have not received sufficient evidence or argumentation to move away from our proposal, outlined in our draft recommendations, for a council size of 49. Consequently, we have decided to confirm our proposed council size of 49 as final.

## Electoral arrangements

62 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of representations received during Stage Three. After considering those representations, we are making a number of amendments to our proposed boundaries in North Wiltshire. We received satisfactory alternative proposals for the south of the district and good supportive argumentation. In the remainder of the county, despite receiving opposition to our proposals, we did not receive satisfactory evidence, argumentation or alternative proposals to encourage us to move away from our draft recommendations. Consequently, we are broadly confirming our draft recommendations for Wiltshire County Council as final, subject to the renaming of five proposed divisions.

63 The County Council, the North Wiltshire Conservative Association (NWCA) and Mr Francis Morland expressed opposition to the concept of two-member divisions. Both the County Council and the NWCA stated that two-member divisions would confuse electors, hinder the building of relationships between councillors and electors, create duplication of work and create confusion between the two members regarding their respective responsibilities. There would be, they argued, competing agendas if the two councillors of a particular division were of different parties. The County Council stated that two-member divisions, compared with two-member district wards, 'are much bigger, both geographically and in population'.

64 We acknowledge the criticisms of two-member divisions received at Stage Three. However, we consider these arguments against the concept of two-member divisions to be unjustified. Multi-member district wards have been in existence for some time and there is no evidence to suggest that two-member wards/divisions confuse electors, hinder the building of relationships between councillors and electors, create duplication, create confusion or tension between the two members or hinder the relationships between members and the community.

65 We note the County Council's opposition to the concept of two-member divisions on the basis of their alleged large size 'both geographically and in population'. In terms of their geographic size, we have proposed two-member divisions only in sizeable towns, which have relatively high population densities, where we could not identify single-member divisions that combined coterminosity with good electoral equality. When considering our proposed divisions, we have followed The Electoral Commission's *Guidance*, which states that 'we do not envisage the BCFE recommending large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps in the more urban areas of a county'. In terms of the size of the electorate in two-member divisions, the average number of electors represented by each councillor in a two-member division is the same for that of the average single-member division. In our final recommendations, we are no longer adopting two-member divisions in the district of North Wiltshire. We have moved away from such divisions in this area as we have received alternative proposals and supportive evidence at Stage Three which allow the statutory criteria to be met satisfactorily with single-member divisions. However, we are proposing two two-member divisions in Salisbury and a single two-member division in West Wiltshire which we proposed as part of our draft recommendations. In these districts we did not consider proposals put forward for single-member alternatives to our proposed two-member divisions provide an improvement in terms of the statutory criteria.

66 Mr Francis Morland stated that our *Guidance* suggests we ought to give primacy to electoral equality when considering division boundaries and give 'lesser importance' to coterminosity. He stated that 'unwarranted weight has been given to coterminosity' in our draft recommendations. Although we consider electoral equality to be our primary goal, our *Guidance* stipulates that the 'we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions'. We consider coterminosity to facilitate 'effective and convenient local government', one of the statutory criteria outlined in the Local Government Act 1992. As our *Guidance* states, coterminosity is 'conducive to effective liaison and co-operative working between the two tiers of local government in addressing matters of common concern'. We consider that our proposals in Wiltshire provide the balance in terms of the statutory criteria. Our proposals outlined in our final

recommendations provide both a high level of coterminosity, at 78%, and substantial improvements in electoral equality.

67 We acknowledge that some of our proposed divisions in North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire combine predominantly rural areas and predominantly urban divisions. We have sought, where possible, to limit such proposals. In North Wiltshire, following alternative proposals and supportive evidence received at Stage Three, we have decided to move away from our draft proposals for a division which would combine highly urban areas on the edge of the large town of Chippenham with sparsely-populated rural areas to the west of the town. We are proposing divisions combining parts of the towns of Calne and Wootton Bassett with their respective surrounding rural areas. However, in Calne, we have been limited in options for proposed divisions due to our proposals in Chippenham and its immediate surrounds, which we consider to provide a good balance between the statutory criteria. In the vicinity of Wootton Bassett, we are combining urban wards with surrounding rural wards as these latter wards contain insufficient electors to form divisions on their own. Additionally, we received only one set of proposals for each of these towns at Stage Three. In West Wiltshire, the sparseness of the population, especially to the south and east of Warminster, have constrained our ability to form divisions combining rural areas only. We have not received adequate alternative divisions or evidence to move away from our draft recommendations for West Wiltshire.

68 We note Mr Francis Morland's claims of errors in our draft recommendations report. We acknowledge that some of the electorate figures quoted in Table 2 in our draft recommendations were mistyped. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed divisions of Avon & Pewsey, Bedwyn & Collingbourne and Trowbridge East ought to be 7,224, 7,003 and 6,414 respectively. We acknowledge that our statement, in paragraph 22, that the 'majority' of the growth of the electorate in Wiltshire is taking place in West Wiltshire, is incorrect. This sentence ought to have stated that the district predicted to have the most rapid growth in the county is West Wiltshire. In paragraph 107 of our draft recommendations we wrongly implied that the parish of Melksham & Without is not split between our proposed Manor Vale and Melksham & Without divisions. We acknowledge that the parish of Melksham & Without is divided between Atworth & Whitley and Melksham Without wards, which are each components of our Manor Vale and Melksham & Without divisions respectively. We acknowledge that in paragraph 109 we misquoted a sentence from the Independent Group's Stage One submission. It ought to state: 'the size of the towns of Warminster (underweight for two members) and Westbury (overweight for one) makes the mixing of some urban and rural areas inevitable'. We acknowledge that we misquoted Mr Morland by implying that he used the phrase "mathematically sound" in support of his preferences for council sizes. We apologise for any confusions these errors in our draft recommendations report may have caused. We have endeavoured to avoid any such errors in our final recommendations report.

69 We stated in our draft recommendations report that six divisions would retain their existing boundaries: Bradford-on-Avon, Cricklade & Purton, Devizes, Durrington, Marlborough and Warminster West divisions. However, the constituent wards of four of these divisions were amended following the 1999 district PERs. Therefore, it is actually the case that, under our final recommendations, only Cricklade & Purton and Durrington divisions would remain unaltered.

70 We note that the spelling of a ward, Kingston St Michael, is not the same as one of the parishes it covers, Kington St Michael. We can confirm from the electoral order that the spellings of these two areas, as quoted in the text, are indeed correct.

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

- i. Kennet district (pages 32-34)
- ii. North Wiltshire district (pages 34-39)
- iii. Salisbury district (pages 39-43)
- iv. West Wiltshire district (pages 43-48)

72 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## Kennet district

73 Under the current arrangements, Kennet district is represented by eight county councillors serving eight single-member divisions: Aldbourne & Ramsbury, Avon & Cannings, Bedwyn & Pewsey, Collingbourne, Devizes, Devizes South & Bromham, Lavington and Marlborough. There is a fairly high degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in four of the divisions and by more than 20% from the county average in Collingbourne division.

74 At Stage One, the County Council proposed eight single-member divisions representing Kennet. Under these proposals electoral equality would only have improved slightly with four divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. However, this would have improved significantly by 2006 with only one division varying by more than 10% from the county average. The scheme produced a good level of coterminosity, at 75%. In a number of areas, the scheme proposed divisions containing both urban and rural areas in order to improve electoral equality. The relatively urban area of Marlborough would be linked with the parishes of Mildenhall to the east and Savernake, Wootton Rivers, Milton Lilbourne and Easton to the south and the urban area of Devizes would be linked with the rural Bromham and Rowde ward.

75 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed nine councillors which would represent nine single-member divisions. Under its proposals electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor varying initially by more than 10% from the county average in three divisions and one by more than 20% from the average. This would improve further by 2006, with two divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and none by more than 20% from the average. Furthermore, the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme would secure 100% coterminosity in the district and the urban areas of both Marlborough and Devizes would remain separate from the surrounding rural areas.

76 Kennet District Council supported the County Council's proposals for Kennet district. Collingbourne Ducis Parish Council objected to the County Council's plans to remove its parish from the Tidworth 'seat'. Collingbourne Kingston Parish Council supported the inclusion of its parish in a division with other rural parishes. Councillor Connolly, representing Collingbourne division, broadly supported the County Council's proposals but suggested two alternative divisions in the Tidworth/Bedwyn area. Marlborough Town Council and Savernake Parish Council objected to being connected to the Pewsey division. Marlborough Town Council stated that it should not be linked with Milton Lilbourne parish, which shares greater links with Pewsey. It stated that its parish could be linked with Savernake and the surrounding area. Pewsey Parish Council stated that it was happy with the existing arrangements.

77 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage One, we based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme. We noted the County Council's proposals for the district. However, it allocated eight councillors to the district instead of nine, the correct number under a council size of 49. The Liberal Democrat Group allocated nine councillors to this district and we considered its proposals for Kennet best reflected the statutory criteria. The Liberal Democrat Group's scheme for the district proposed the same



Tidworth & Ludgershall division as the County Council and, similarly, it did not comprise any two-member divisions. It also broadly reflected many of the submissions received.

78 In the north of the district, we decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's revised Aldbourne & Ramsbury division, comprising the wards of Aldbourne, Ogbourne, Ramsbury and West Selkley, and an unchanged Marlborough division, comprising the district wards of Marlborough East and Marlborough West. We agreed that the two proposed divisions are the best reflection of the statutory criteria as both are coterminous and both provide good electoral equality by 2006. Furthermore, these divisions reflected some of the submissions received. At Stage One, neither Marlborough nor Savernake would be linked with the Pewsey division and, although Marlborough is not linked with Milton Lilbourne, Marlborough does remain coterminous and separated from the surrounding rural area.

79 In central and southern parts of the district, we decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's Pewsey & Avon division, comprising the district wards of Netheravon, Pewsey, Pewsey Vale and Upavon; its Bedwyn & Collingbourne division, comprising the district wards of Bedwyn, Burbage, Collingbourne, Milton Lilbourne and Shalbourne; and its Tidworth & Ludgershall division, comprising the district wards of Ludgershall, Tidworth and Perham Down & Ludgershall South. All three divisions would be coterminous and would provide good electoral equality, with the number of electors in each division initially varying from the county average by 5%, 1% and 8% by 2006. Under these proposals, Collingbourne ward would not be contained in the Tidworth & Ludgershall division. We further noted that this proposed Tidworth & Ludgershall division received support from the County Council.

80 In the western part of the district, we decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's Bromham & Potterne division, comprising the district wards of Bromham & Rowde, Cheverell, Potterne and Seend; its Lavington & Cannings division, comprising the district wards of All Cannings, Bishops Cannings, Lavingtons and Urchfont; its Devizes North division, comprising the district wards of Devizes East and Devizes North; and its Devizes South division, comprising the district wards of Devizes South and Roundway. Electors in the proposed Devizes South division would be over-represented by 31% initially. However, due to housing development, this variance would greatly improve with a forecast variance of 15% by 2006. We agree that a variance of 15% is justified in order to allow for 100% coterminosity in the area and to prevent combining the urban area of Devizes with larger parts of the surrounding rural hinterland.

81 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Aldbourne & Ramsbury, Avon & Pewsey, Bedwyn & Collingbourne and Bromham & Potterne divisions would vary from the county average by 1%, 6%, 3%, and 4% respectively (3%, 5%, 1% and 9% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Devizes North, Devizes South, Lavington & Cannings, Marlborough and Tidworth & Ludgershall divisions would vary from the county average by 1%, 31%, 3%, 10% and 6% respectively (3%, 15%, 1%, 9% and 8% by 2006).

82 At Stage Three, we received four representations regarding Kennet district. The County Council, Liberal Democrat Group and Devizes Town Council supported our proposals for the district. Savernake Parish Council supported our proposals for Savernake parish. Given the full support for our draft recommendations for Kennet, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for new county council electoral arrangements in Kennet district as final.

83 Under our final recommendations, the levels of electoral equality in Kennet would be identical to those provided in our draft recommendations, as detailed in paragraph 81, with the exceptions of our proposed Aldbourne & Ramsbury and Bromham & Potterne divisions. The number of electors per councillor in each of these proposed divisions is now estimated to vary by 2% and 8% respectively by 2006. The initial variances for all of our proposed divisions would remain unchanged. These revised 2006 variances are due to the revision of the 2006 electorate forecast for Lyneham ward which, in turn, resulted in changes in the county-wide average

councillor:elector ratio. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## North Wiltshire district

84 Under the current arrangements, North Wiltshire is represented by 13 county councillors, each serving single-member divisions; Bremhill & Calne Without, Calne, Chippenham Park, Chippenham Sheldon, Chippenham Town, Corsham, Cricklade & Purton, Kington, Malmesbury, Minety, Pickwick with Box, Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South. There is a high degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in seven divisions and by more than 20% from the average in five of the divisions. This level of electoral imbalance is not forecast to improve by 2006. The highest electoral imbalance is in the Kington division which is currently under-represented by 34% (29% by 2006).

85 We note the apparent discrepancy in the name of our proposed division, Kington, and the name of one of its component wards, Kingston St Michael. We have decided to name the division Kington, as opposed to Kingston, due the name Kington being used in the names of Kington St Michael parish and Kington Langley ward.

86 At Stage One, the County Council proposed 15 single-member divisions representing North Wiltshire. Under these proposals, electoral equality would slightly improve, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in seven divisions but none by more than 20% from the average. This would worsen by 2006, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in seven divisions and by more than 20% in one division. The Council's scheme would provide a level of coterminosity of 67%.

87 The Liberal Democrat Group also proposed 15 members for North Wiltshire. These 15 members would represent 12 divisions, three of which would be its proposed two-member divisions of Calne, Corsham & Box, and Wootton Bassett. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that these three two-member divisions would secure better electoral equality and coterminosity, as well as providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests. Under its proposals, electoral equality would significantly improve, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in only three divisions and by more than 20% from the average in none of the divisions. This would improve further by 2006, where the number of electors represented by each councillor would vary by more than 10% from the average in only one division and by more than 20% from the average in none of the divisions. The Liberal Democrat Group's scheme would secure levels of coterminosity of 50%.

88 When formulating our draft recommendations, we noted that, under a council size of 49, North Wiltshire is entitled to 14 councillors. Since neither the County Council nor the Liberal Democrat Group allocated the correct number of councillors to North Wiltshire as would be required under our 49-member proposals, we concluded it was not possible to adopt either scheme in its entirety. We therefore incorporated some aspects of the two schemes in formulating our own draft recommendations for the area. We adopted divisions which had consensus over boundaries in both the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes. Furthermore, we adopted all three of the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed two-member divisions. However, we propose the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Corsham & Box division be renamed Box & Pickwick. We considered that, given the proposals received for North Wiltshire at Stage One, these would provide for better electoral equality and coterminosity as well as providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests.

89 In the north of the district we proposed retaining the existing single-member Cricklade & Purton division since it would have an electoral variance of only 4% initially (3% by 2006) and

there is consensus between the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group that the division should be retained. We also proposed a revised single-member Minety division and a revised single-member Malmesbury division as there is a degree of consensus between both the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes regarding both the Minety and Malmesbury divisions. The Minety division would vary by 6% from the county average initially (2% by 2006). However, the Malmesbury division would vary by 16% from the county average initially (14% by 2006). We agreed that these variances would be acceptable in order to facilitate higher coterminosity and would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests.

90 In the southern and eastern part of the district, we adopted the three two-member divisions proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group. We proposed a Box & Pickwick division, identical to the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Corsham & Box division. We also proposed a Calne & Without division and a Wootton Bassett division. We concluded that these two-member divisions would secure the best balance between the statutory criteria by improving electoral equality and coterminosity, as well as providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests. All of these divisions would be coterminous and provide good electoral equality.

91 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Box & Pickwick, Calne & Without, Cepen Park & Without, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham and Chippenham Town would initially vary from the county average by 10%, 10%, 18%, 15%, 11% and 18% respectively (9%, 6%, 14%, 13%, 12% and 13% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Cricklade & Purton, Kington, Malmesbury, Minety and Wootton Bassett divisions would initially vary from the county average by 4%, 6%, 16%, 6% and 4% respectively (3%, 11%, 14%, 2% and 2% by 2006). Our proposals would have secured 82% coterminosity.

92 During Stage Three, we received 21 representations in response to our draft recommendations in North Wiltshire. The County Council put forward alternative proposals for the south of the district, including in the towns of Chippenham and Calne. The proposals are outlined in Table 4. It opposed our proposal to include the 'urban' Cepen Park ward in a division with surrounding rural areas. It stated that Cepen Park ward 'should be included with other urban wards of Chippenham to create four single-member divisions for the town'. It supported the splitting of our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division into two single-member divisions. It stated that, in light of the announcement of the progressive closure of RAF Lyneham, the electoral variance in its proposed Wootton Bassett South division would be less than originally estimated. It proposed that the parish of Brokenborough, part of Malmesbury ward, be included in Minety division as, it claims, the parish's 'traditional links have always been with Crudwell and it is very much the wish of the local people that these links continue'. It stated that such a transfer 'would also improve the balance of electors between the two [divisions] of Malmesbury and Minety'.

*Table 4: County Council's proposed amendments for North Wiltshire*

<b>Proposed division name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Proposed constituent district wards</b>
1 Box, Colerne & Lacock	1	Box ward; Colerne ward; Lacock with Neston & Gastard ward
2 Calne	1	Calne Abberd ward; Calne Chilvester ward; Calne Lickhill ward; Calne Priestley ward
3 Calne Without	1	Calne Marden ward; Calne Quemerford ward; Calne Without ward; Hilmarton ward
4 Central	1	Chippenham Audley ward; Chippenham Avon ward; Chippenham Redland ward

Proposed division name	Number of councillors	Proposed constituent district wards
5 Chippenham North	1	Chippenham Hill Rise ward; Chippenham Monkton Park ward; Chippenham Park ward; part of Cepen Park ward (the Cepen Park North parish ward of Chippenham Without parish)
6 Chippenham Pewsham	1	Chippenham London Road ward; Chippenham Pewsham ward
7 Chippenham West	1	Chippenham Allington ward; Chippenham Westcroft/Queens ward; part of Cepen Park ward (the Cepen Park South parish ward of Chippenham Without parish)
8 Corsham	1	Corsham ward; Pickwick ward
9 Kington	1	Bremhill ward; Kington Langley ward; Kingston St Michael ward; Nettleton ward
10 Malmesbury	1	St Paul Malmesbury Without & Sherston ward; part of Malmesbury ward (excluding Brokenborough parish)
11 Minety	1	Ashton Keynes & Minety ward; Brinkworth & The Somerfords ward; part of Malmesbury ward (the parish of Brokenborough)
12 Wootton Bassett North	1	The Lydiards & Broad Town ward; Wootton Bassett North ward
13 Wootton Bassett South	1	Lyneham ward; Wootton Bassett South ward

93 The County Council's proposals would provide 69% coterminosity. The number of electors per councillor in their proposed Box, Colerne & Lacock, Calne, Calne Without, Central, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham and Chippenham West would vary from the county average by 9%, 11%, 5%, 15%, 1%, 11% and 4% respectively by 2006. The number of electors per councillor in their proposed Corsham, Kington, Malmesbury, Minety, Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South divisions would vary from the county average by 1%, 4%, 12%, 4%, 13% and 6% respectively by 2006.

94 The North Wiltshire Conservative Association (NWCA) proposed identical divisions to the County Council's in this district. It opposed our proposed Cepen Park & Without division and stated that 'the Cepen Park ward of Chippenham is urban and should be included with other urban wards to create four single-member [divisions] for the town'. It stated that our proposed Cricklade, Malmesbury and Minety divisions 'are accepted' with the exception that Brokenborough village, part of Malmesbury ward, be included in Minety division. It stated that Brokenborough 'is a rural village and not a town and the electors wish to remain within a rural ward'. It supported the splitting of our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division into two single-member divisions. It stated that, in light of the announcement of the progressive closure of RAF Lyneham, the electoral variance in its proposed Wootton Bassett South division would be less than originally estimated. James Gray MP, member for North Wiltshire, expressed support for the North Wiltshire Conservative Association's Stage Three submission.

95 The Liberal Democrat Group stated that our 'proposals for Chippenham need amending so that there is a better separation of rural and urban areas'. They stated that 'it is possible to break-up' the two-member Box & Pickwick division, which was identical to their Corsham & Box division proposed at Stage One and which we adopted as part of our draft recommendations. They stated that, despite splitting this proposed division into two single-member divisions, it is possible to 'maintain a good balance of electoral equality, coterminosity and community coherence'. They supported the County Council's proposal 'to make a minor adjustment to the [BCFE's] proposals for Malmesbury and Minety'. They supported our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division as it provides the 'best answer to the conflicting needs of electoral equality, coterminosity and community coherence'.

96 Councillor Mollie Groom, representing Wootton Bassett North division, suggested that our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division be split into two single-member divisions. These are identical to Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South divisions proposed by the County Council and the NWCA. She stated that these proposed divisions 'would facilitate the parish of Broad Town being in the same ward at District and the same division at County levels. It would also alleviate the anomaly in the number of voters per division'.

97 Councillor Nina Phillips, representing the Chippenham Redland district ward, argued that 'Chippenham ought to have one more ... County Councillor' given population growth and the relatively high number of dependent people in the town.

98 Calne Without Parish Council stated its preference to be included in a 'smaller', single-member division covering its parish instead of our proposed two-member Calne & Without division. Kington Langley Parish Council stated that 'Cepen Park North [parish] ward should be included with the urban wards of Chippenham and that the Kington division should only include the rural wards of Kington Langley, Kington St Michael, Nettleton and Bremhill'. Stanton St Quinton Parish Council opposed our proposed Cepen Park & Without ward as 'small rural communities ... would be dominated by a large urban complex'. Yatton Keynell Parish Council opposed our proposed divisions relating to its area and stated that it shares 'long established interests' with the adjacent parishes of Biddestone, Castle Combe, Grittleton, Nettleton and North Wraxall. Under our draft recommendations, some of these parishes are contained in a division which does not include Yatton Keynell parish. Grittleton Parish Council and Councillor Jane Scott, representing Kingston St Michael district ward, stated that the parish of Yatton Keynell is closely linked to the villages immediately to its north, south and west. They opposed our Cepen Park & Without division as it combines predominantly urban areas with predominantly rural areas.

99 Brokenborough Parish Council and 11 local residents expressed opposition to our proposal to include Brokenborough parish in a division with Malmesbury parish. They stated that Brokenborough parish does not have similar interests to that of Malmesbury parish, which contains the relatively large town of Malmesbury. Brokenborough Parish Council argued that, by including Brokenborough parish in Minety division, 'the numerical balance [between our proposed Malmesbury and Minety divisions] would be improved'.

100 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three regarding this district, we intend to move away from our draft recommendations in the south of the district and adopt the County Council's and the NWCA's proposed single-member divisions of Box, Colerne & Lacock; Calne, Calne Without; Central, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham, Chippenham West, Corsham, Kington, Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South. We are adopting these revised divisions principally to avoid parts of Chippenham being combined in a division with the rural areas to the town's west and north-west. We note that all except two of the 11 divisions proposed in this area are coterminous. Additionally, these divisions provide a slight improvement in electoral equality on our draft recommendations, with four out of these 11 divisions forecast to have electoral variances greater than 10% by 2006, with the highest variance being 15%. In light of the representations received at Stage Three regarding this area, we consider the proposals put forward by the County Council and the NWCA provide an improved reflection of community interests and identities than our draft recommendations.

101 In Chippenham town, we are adopting the County Council's and NWCA's proposed Central, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham and Chippenham West divisions. We have been persuaded by the County Council and other respondents that Cepen Park ward is predominantly urban and ought to be included in a division which covers parts of Chippenham only. Consequently, having received alternative proposals for Chippenham town, we are moving away from our draft recommendations in this area. We consider the County Council's proposals for the town to provide the best proposals for the Chippenham area. In terms of electoral equality, only two of the four divisions proposed by the County Council to cover the town would

vary by more the 10% of the county average by 2006. The highest electoral variance would be 15% by 2006. However, all four of the divisions we proposed in our draft recommendations to cover Chippenham town have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2006. We note that only two of the divisions the County Council proposed to cover the town are coterminous compared with three in our proposed divisions in this area. However, the County Council's proposed divisions in Chippenham town combine areas that are well-linked, they avoid including areas of the town in divisions with surrounding rural areas and they utilise existing parish boundaries. Its proposals allow us to modify the rural divisions surrounding the town in order to reflect community interests raised at Stage Three.

102 In the rural area surrounding Chippenham, we are adopting the County Council's and the NWCA's proposed Kington division. This division combines the predominantly rural area to the east, north and west of Chippenham. We are adopting this division as it provides good electoral equality and avoids the creation of a division combining urban areas of Chippenham with surrounding rural parishes. Additionally, this division provides an improvement on our draft recommendations in this area in terms of community identity. We have been persuaded by Stage Three representations that this area has substantial community links. We note the arguments put forward by parish councils in our proposed Kington division, which are in the vicinity of Yatton Keynell village, that they ought to be included in a division with this village due to it being a centre for local services. In the south-west of the district, in light of our adoption of the County Council's and the NWCA's Kington division, we are moving away from our draft recommendations in this area. We are adopting the County Council's and the NWCA's proposed single-member Box, Colerne & Lacock and Corsham divisions. The component wards of each of the divisions are adequately linked and both divisions provide good electoral equality. The County Council's proposed Kington division facilitates the inclusion of Colerne ward in a division, or divisions, in the south-west corner of the district. In our draft recommendations, Colerne ward was contained in our Kington division. Consequently, the remaining wards in the south-west of the district, Box, Corsham, Lacock with Neston & Gastard and Pickwick, in total, contained insufficient electors to allow the creation of two coterminous single-member divisions with adequate electoral equality, under our draft recommendations. However, following our decision to adopt the County Council's proposed Kington division, we are able to include Colerne ward in our proposed Box, Colerne & Lacock division. Additionally, we consider that our proposed Box, Colerne & Lacock division reflects community identity.

103 In the town of Calne and its immediate surrounds, we are adopting the County Council's and the NWCA's proposed Calne and Calne & Without divisions. Given the decision to move away from our draft recommendations in the south-west of the district on the basis of community identity and avoidance of combining rural areas in divisions with parts of Chippenham, we are unable to endorse our draft proposals in the south-east of the district. However, we consider the County Council's proposed Calne and Calne & Without divisions provide adequate electoral equality and, in our opinion, adequately reflect community identities. The proposed Calne division comprises the well-linked wards which cover the most urbanised part of the town. The proposed Calne & Without division comprises the less urbanised wards in the south-west of the town and includes the surrounding rural area, which can be accessed from the town by the A4 and the A3102. Although the evidence in favour of these two divisions is not strong, to achieve the best electoral arrangements across the district we consider the County Council's and the NWCA's proposed modifications in Calne to be acceptable.

104 In the east of the district, we propose splitting our proposed two-member Wootton Bassett division into two single-member divisions, as proposed by the County Council, NWCA and Councillor Groom. We consider both single-member divisions would provide adequate electoral equality in light of the revision of electorate forecasts for Lyneham ward. Prior to revision of the forecasts for Lyneham, the electors in the County Council's, the NWCA's and Councillor Groom's proposed Wootton Bassett South division would be under-represented by 17% by 2006. However, the revised electorate forecasts for Lyneham ward result in a reduction in electoral variance to only 6% by 2006. We consider that two single-member divisions in this

area provide a good reflection of community identities and, given the improvements in electoral equality, we are now content to adopt these proposed divisions.

105 In the remainder of the district, we intend to endorse our draft recommendations as final. We have not been persuaded by the arguments to include Brokenborough parish in Minety division as this would result in both Malmesbury and Minety divisions becoming non-coterminous without any substantial improvement in electoral equality. The inclusion of Brokenborough parish in Minety division would reduce the electoral variance in Malmesbury division from 14% to 12% by 2006 and electoral variance in Malmesbury division would increase from 2% to 4% by 2006. We consider the establishment of coterminosity is important in order to secure one of the statutory criteria, effective and convenient local government.

106 The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Box, Colerne & Lacock, Calne, Calne & Without, Central, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham and Chippenham West divisions would vary initially from the county average by 7%, less than 1%, 8%, 15%, 1%, 14% and 1% respectively (9%, 11%, 5%, 15%, 1%, 11% and 4% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Corsham, Cricklade & Purton, Kington, Malmesbury, Minety, Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South divisions would vary initially from the county average by 1%, 4%, 1%, 16%, 6%, 10% and 19% respectively (1%, 3%, 4%, 14%, 2%, 13% and 6% by 2006). Our proposals provide 86% coterminosity.

## Salisbury district

107 Under the current arrangements Salisbury is represented by 13 county councillors serving 13 single-member divisions: Alderbury, Amesbury, Bourne Valley, Downton, Durrington, Mere, Salisbury Bemerton, Salisbury Harnham, Salisbury St Mark, Salisbury St Martin, Salisbury St Paul, Tisbury and Wilton & Wylde. There is a high degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in seven divisions and by more than 20% from the average. This is forecast to worsen by 2006 when nine divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average and three by more than 20% from the average. The worst imbalance is in the Salisbury Harnham division, which is currently over represented by 20% (23% by 2006).

108 At Stage One, the County Council proposed that Salisbury be represented by 12-single member divisions. Under these proposals, electoral imbalances would only improve slightly with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in six divisions and none by more than 20% from the average both initially and by 2006. The County Council's scheme would secure 50% coterminosity throughout the district.

109 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a scheme in which Salisbury would be allocated 13 councillors, representing 11 divisions, including two two-member divisions. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that the establishment of these two-member divisions in Salisbury would 'give good electoral equality without splitting district wards in the city of Salisbury'. Furthermore, it would allow the urban area of Salisbury to remain separate from the surrounding rural area, thereby better reflecting local community identities and interests. Overall, electoral imbalances would improve significantly, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in only three divisions and by more than 20% from the average in none of the divisions, both initially and by 2006. The Liberal Democrat Group's scheme would secure 45% coterminosity throughout the district.

110 We received a further five submissions for the Salisbury district at Stage One, two from local councillors and three from parish councils. Councillor Sample, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, supported the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Salisbury, suspecting the County Council's of 'gerrymandering'. Councillor Johnson proposed that Downton division be renamed Downton & Ebble Valley. Berwick St John Parish Council expressed satisfaction with the existing arrangements. Fovant Parish Council stated that Fovant's links were eastwards

along the A30 towards Wilton and Salisbury. Mere Parish Council proposed that Tisbury division be renamed Mere & Tisbury and also expressed concern that the rural area it covered was too large for one councillor to manage.

111 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage One, we broadly based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme as it allocated the correct number of councillors to the district under our proposed 49-member council and provided good electoral equality. However, in light of the representations received, we made two amendments to the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme. We proposed a small amendment affecting Nomansland parish and an amendment in the city of Salisbury in order to improve coterminosity and better reflect local community identities and interests respectively.

112 In the northern part of the district, we proposed a revised single-member Amesbury division, comprising the district wards of Amesbury East and Amesbury West; and proposed retaining the existing single-member Durrington division, comprising the district wards of Durrington and Bulford. However, we proposed renaming the division Durrington & Bulford. The number of electors per councillor in Amesbury would be equal to the average initially and Durrington & Bulford division would vary by 14% initially (6% and 12% respectively by 2006). There was consensus between the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group over these proposed divisions and we agreed that they would secure coterminosity and better reflect local community interests and identities. In the case of Durrington & Bulford division, there was strong consensus that these two wards ought to be kept together, despite the relatively high electoral variances, because they both contain army garrisons which have strong community ties. We agreed with the Liberal Democrat Group that the division be renamed Durrington & Bulford in order to provide a better reflection of both of these communities.

113 We also proposed adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for a single-member Bourne & Woodford Valley division, comprising the district wards of Laverstock, Upper Bourne, Idmiston & Winterbourne, and the parishes of Durnford, Wilsford cum Lake and Woodford from the Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward; and a single-member Wilton & Wylde division, comprising the district ward of Till Valley & Wylde and the parishes of Great Wishford and South Newton from Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward and the parishes of Quidhampton and Wilton from Wilton ward. In relation to these two proposed divisions, we agreed with the evidence and argumentation put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group that the two valleys of Lower Wylde and Woodford can be logically split into two communities. It proposed that the 'split allows the Wylde Valley communities to be kept together with "their" town Wilton, while linking the Woodford Valley communities with the Bourne Valley communities, all of which relate more strongly to Salisbury'. It further stated that 'the Woodford Valley parishes "have" to leave the current Amesbury division due to the rapid increase in Amesbury's electorate, and this proposal provides them with the most appropriate home'.

114 In the city of Salisbury, we proposed the creation of two two-member divisions and a single-member division. We agreed with the Liberal Democrat Group that the establishment of two two-member divisions would provide good electoral equality and coterminosity in Salisbury city and avoid either the splitting of district wards or the mixing of city wards with the surrounding rural hinterland. However, we considered that the divisions proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group could be improved upon. We proposed an amendment to include St Mark & Stratford ward with Bishopdown and St Edmund & Milford wards, to create a two-member Salisbury East division, resulting in Bemerton ward being linked with St Paul ward to form a single-member Salisbury West division, and a revised two-member Salisbury South division, comprising the district wards of Fisherton & Bemerton Village, Harnham East, Harnham West and St Martin & Milford. We are of the view that our draft recommendations provided a better reflection of local links and community identities whilst still maintaining good electoral equality and coterminosity.



115 In the south-eastern part of the district, we proposed a revised single-member Alderbury division, comprising the district wards of Alderbury & Whiteparish and Winterslow; and a revised Downton division, comprising the district wards of Downton & Redlynch and Ebble. There was a degree of consensus between both the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes over the boundaries of these two divisions, except for the small area of Nomansland. We agreed with the County Council that Nomansland should be retained within the remainder of the Alderbury & Whiteparish ward, rather than being moved to the Downton division, so that the area can remain coterminous.

116 In the western part of the district we proposed a new single-member Fovant division, comprising the district wards of Chalke Valley, Donhead, Fonthill & Nadder, the parishes of Chicklade, Fonthill Gifford and Hindon from Knoyle ward, the parishes of Ansty, Fovant, Swallowcliffe and Sutton Mandeville from Tisbury & Fovant ward and the parish of Burcombe Without from Wilton ward, and a new single-member Mere & Tisbury division, comprising the parishes of East Knoyle, Sedgehill & Semley and West Knoyle from Knoyle ward and the parishes of Tisbury and West Tisbury from Tisbury & Fovant ward and the district ward of Western & Mere. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Fovant and Mere & Tisbury divisions would initially vary from the county average by 3% and 1% respectively (5% and 1% by 2006). However, both of these divisions would be non-coterminous. It was necessary to split these rural wards in order to achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality. Furthermore, there was consensus among both the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals that Tisbury and Fovant ward should be divided. The Liberal Democrat Group provided further argumentation to support this, stating that 'due to the current under-sized divisions, the towns of Mere and Tisbury need to be linked in one division and the corner effect almost demands this'. We were persuaded that this would provide for the best balance between the statutory criteria and we recognised that the restrictive nature of the district boundary and the configuration of wards and parishes in this area have made it difficult to achieve coterminous divisions which would secure good levels of electoral equality.

117 The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Alderbury, Bourne & Woodford Valley, Downton, Durrington & Bulford and Fovant divisions would vary initially from the county average by 13%, 8%, 9%, 14% and 3% respectively (8%, 3%, 9%, 12% and 5% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Amesbury division would initially be equal to the county average and would vary from the county average by 6% by 2006. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Mere & Tisbury, Salisbury East, Salisbury South, Salisbury West and Wilton & Wylde divisions would vary from the county average by 1%, 15%, 6%, 4% and 9% respectively (1%, 14%, 8%, less than 1% and 7% by 2006). Our proposals would have also secured reasonable levels of coterminosity at 64%.

118 At Stage Three, we received five representations regarding Salisbury district. The County Council accepted our proposed boundaries for the rural area of Salisbury, although it proposed that Fovant division be renamed Chalke & Nadder and that Downton division be renamed Downton & Ebble Valley. The County Council 'accepts fully' our proposals in which 'the nine City wards of Salisbury should be considered separate from the rural hinterland'. However, it proposed five alternative divisions, all single-member, to cover Salisbury city, as detailed in Table 5. It stated that it considers that its proposals for the city 'achieve electoral balance and a high degree of coterminosity'. The number of electors represented by each councillor in its proposed Harnham West & Fisherton, St Edmund, St Mark & Stratford and St Martin & Harnham East divisions are forecast to vary from the county average by 11%, 19%, 9% and 5% respectively by 2006. The number of electors in its proposed Bemerton & St Paul division would be equal to the county average by 2006.

Table 5: County Council's proposed amendments for the City of Salisbury

	<b>Proposed division name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Proposed constituent district wards</b>
1	Bemerton & St Paul	1	Bemerton ward; St Paul ward
2	Harnham West & Fisherton	1	Fisherton & Bemerton Village ward; Harnham West ward
3	St Martin & Harnham East	1	Harnham East ward; St Martin & Milford ward
4	St Mark & Stratford	1	St Mark & Stratford ward; part of Bishopdown ward (the Bishopdown North parish ward of Laverstock parish)
5	St Edmund	1	St Edmund & Milford ward; part of Bishopdown ward (the remainder of Bishopdown ward)

119 The Liberal Democrat Group stated that our proposals for rural Salisbury, outlined in our draft recommendations, 'are the best available'. It expressed support for the County Council's proposals for Salisbury city as they consider its proposals 'are better than the original [BCFE] proposals'. The Salisbury Liberal Democrat Party expressed 'support for the draft proposals ... for the revision of the Wiltshire County Council divisions'.

120 Councillor Paul Sample, representing Salisbury St Martin division, expressed support for our proposals in most areas of the county. However, he considers that 'they are deficient in respect to the City of Salisbury'. He stated that our proposed boundaries in the city 'cross and bisect local communities in a way which would be detrimental to local government in Wiltshire'. He supported the County Council's Stage Three proposals as they 'enjoy cross party support' and 'fairly reflect the local communities in Salisbury and link like-for-like neighbourhoods to create divisions which local residents can identify with'.

121 A local resident, Robert Steel, put forward alternative divisions to cover Salisbury city which take note of 'the geographical nature of the boundaries' and his local knowledge. His proposals are outlined in Table 6. He noted that one of the 'flaws' in his proposals was his Salisbury Old Sarum division in which the boundary between Bemerton and St Mark & Stratford wards 'follows a river crossed only by footpaths and bridle ways, and is sparsely populated'. He also noted that this boundary is 'relatively short, thus making the division narrow'. However, he stated that this boundary 'is not as significant' as the boundary between the wards of Fisherton & Bemerton Village and Harnham West wards, which are contained in our proposed Salisbury South division. He stated that this boundary 'follows the River Nadder, and there is only one mile-long footpath connecting the nearest house on either side'. The number of electors represented by each councillor in his proposed Salisbury Fisherton, Salisbury Cathedral and Salisbury Old Sarum are forecast to vary from the county average by 11%, 8% and 8% respectively by 2006.

Table 6: Robert Steel's proposed amendments for the City of Salisbury

	<b>Proposed division name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Proposed constituent district wards</b>
1	Salisbury Fisherton	1	Fisherton & Bemerton Village ward; St Paul ward
2	Salisbury Old Sarum	2	Bemerton ward; Bishopdown ward; St Mark & Stratford ward
3	Salisbury Cathedral	2	Harnham East ward; Harnham West ward; St Edmund & Milford ward; St Martin & Milford ward

122 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three regarding this district, we intend to broadly confirm our draft recommendations as final. We considered the County Council's proposals for divisions covering Salisbury city and we noted the cross-party support offered for those proposals. However, its proposed St Edmund division is non-coterminous and its electors would be over-represented by 19% by 2006. We consider this could be improved upon. Additionally, its proposed St Mark & Stratford division is non-coterminous and its component district and parish wards are not directly linked: there is no road link between the respective residential areas of Bishopdown North parish ward, of Laverstock parish, and St Mark & Stratford ward. Travelling between the different components of this proposed division would necessitate passing through the unparished section of Bishopdown ward. We do not consider this to be conducive to effective and convenient local government or to be reflective of community identities. We considered Robert Steel's proposals for Salisbury city. Although we noted that his proposed Salisbury Cathedral and Salisbury Fisherton divisions contain wards which are well linked, his proposed Salisbury Old Sarum comprises wards which, as he stated, are not directly linked. The most westerly ward of this division, Bemerton, has poor links to the adjacent St Mark & Stratford ward, as noted by Mr Steel. We note that our proposed Salisbury South division contains adjacent wards, Fisherton & Bemerton Village and Harnham West, which are poorly linked. However, both Fisherton & Bemerton Village and Harnham West wards have adequate road links to their other respective adjacent wards in our proposed Salisbury South division, Harnham East and St Martin & Milford. Having considered the alternative proposals for Salisbury city put forward at Stage Three, we noted that none of these alternatives was supported by sufficiently strong argument or evidence to convince us to move away from our draft recommendations. Consequently, we are confirming our draft recommendations, as they apply to Salisbury city, as final.

123 In rural Salisbury, we noted the support of the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group for our proposals outlined in our draft recommendations. Having received support for our proposed divisions covering the rural area of Salisbury, we are confirming our draft recommendations in this area as final with the exception of renaming two divisions, as proposed by the County Council. We are adopting the names of Chalke & Nadder and Downton & Ebble Valley in place of the draft recommendations division names of Fovant and Downton respectively. We are adopting these division names as they are locally proposed and appear to reflect the areas covered by these divisions.

124 Under our final recommendations the levels of electoral equality in Salisbury would be identical to those provided in our draft recommendations, as detailed in paragraph 117, with the exception of Alderbury and Durrington & Bulford divisions. The number of electors per councillor in each of those proposed divisions is now estimated to vary by 9% and 13% respectively by 2006. The initial variances for all of our proposed divisions would remain unchanged. These revised 2006 variances are due to the revision of the 2006 electorate forecast for Lyneham ward which, in turn, resulted in changes in the county-wide average councillor:elector ratio. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## West Wiltshire district

125 Under the current arrangements, West Wiltshire district is represented by 13 county councillors, each serving single-member divisions; Bradford-on-Avon, Holt, Melksham, Melksham Without, Southwick, Trowbridge East, Trowbridge South, Trowbridge West, Upper Wylye Valley, Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury and Whorwellsdown. Compared with other districts in the county, there is a very high degree of electoral imbalance in West Wiltshire, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying initially by more than 10% from the average in nine divisions, by more than 20% from the average in five divisions and by more than 30% in three divisions. The highest electoral imbalance is in the

Trowbridge East division where electors are currently over-represented by 43% and are forecast to be over-represented by 45% by 2006.

126 At Stage One, the County Council proposed a district-wide scheme comprising 13 single-member divisions. Under these proposals, electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor varying initially by more than 10% from the county average in six divisions and by more than 20% from the average in one division. However, this is forecast to worsen by 2006, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the average in eight divisions, although no division would vary by more than 20%. Furthermore, the County Council's scheme would only secure 31% coterminosity.

127 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed that West Wiltshire be represented by 14 councillors, representing 11 divisions, including three two-member divisions in Melksham, Trowbridge East & Ashton and Trowbridge West & Southwick. It argued that these two-member divisions would allow for much better electoral equality and would facilitate better reflections of community interests in their respective areas. Under these proposals electoral equality would significantly improve with the number of electors per councillor initially varying by more than 10% from the county average in four divisions and by more than 20% in none of the divisions. This would greatly improve by 2006 when the number of electors represented by each councillor would vary by more than 10% from the average in only one of the divisions with no division varying by more than 20%. The Liberal Democrat Group's scheme would secure higher levels of coterminosity, at 55%, than the County Council's proposals.

128 The Independent Group proposed 13 single-member divisions to cover the district. Under its scheme, electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor initially varying by more than 10% from the county average in one division with no division varying by more than 20% by 2006. The Independent Group's proposed scheme for West Wiltshire secured 31% coterminosity.

129 Mr Morland proposed four schemes for the district, two based on a decrease in council size to 45 members, with 12 councillors allocated to West Wiltshire, and two based on an increase in council size to 49, with 13 members allocated to West Wiltshire. Under his 12- and 13-member proposals, he put forward a 'minimum adjustment scheme' and a 'best practicable equality' scheme. The former broadly allowed for higher levels of coterminosity and the latter allowed for better levels of electoral equality. He stated that a 45-member county-wide scheme, providing the 'best practicable equality', would be his preferred choice of scheme. However, he submitted no evidence or argumentation to support the reduction of council size by two, from 47 to 45. Although all of Mr Morland's schemes produced good electoral variances none of them would secure more than 27% coterminosity for the district.

130 In addition to the district-wide schemes, we received a further nine submissions, six from parish councils, two from local residents and one from a local community centre. Bradford on Avon Town Council stated that it wished to see West Wiltshire fairly represented in comparison to other districts in the county. Chitterne Parish Council objected to the County Council's plans to move the parish into the Warminster division, preferring the current arrangements. Codford Parish Council supported the status quo. Holt Parish Council strongly opposed both the County Council's and Liberal Democrat Group's plans to link Holt with Paxcroft, preferring Paxcroft to be linked to a Trowbridge division and for Holt to be linked with surrounding rural villages. Steeple Ashton Parish Council stated its preference to remain as part of Whorwellsdown, rather than the to move it into the Westbury division, as proposed by the County Council. Paxcroft Mead Community Centre suggested a new parish or parish ward to serve the estate of Paxcroft Mead and an amendment to the Trowbridge Town Council boundary, which was also supported by a local resident of Paxcroft Mead. A resident of the Bowerhill area stated that the large Bowerhill parish should be split in two, the River Avon being the boundary. Another local resident supported the Liberal Democrat Group's 51-member scheme, particularly as it kept Melksham together and would link Dilton Marsh with Westbury.

131 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage One, we noted that, out of the four proposed schemes for West Wiltshire, all proposals except for the Liberal Democrat Group's had allocated the district 13 councillors, the correct number under a council size of 49. We did not consider that any of the schemes achieved a good balance between coterminosity and electoral equality. Therefore, we decided to adopt our own scheme for the district whilst incorporating, where possible, the best parts of each scheme and any areas of consensus.

132 In the northern part of the district, we incorporated aspects of all the schemes proposed at Stage One. We proposed a revised single-member Bradford-on-Avon division, a new single-member Holt & Paxcroft division, a new single-member Manor Vale division, a new single-member Melksham Central division and a new Melksham & Without division. We noted the consensus between all of the proposed schemes over Bradford-on-Avon division, between the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group over the proposed Manor Vale division and between the Independent Group and the County Council over the Melksham Central division. Furthermore, there was consensus between the County Council, the Independent Group and Mr Morland's schemes that the urban area of Melksham should be covered by two single-member divisions rather than a two-member division. Therefore, we adopted the County Council's proposals for Melksham, with a Melksham Central division and a Melksham & Without division, allowing the area to remain coterminous.

133 However, we concluded that our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division may not receive support locally but we were unable to secure a viable alternative in this area, which would provide a good balance between the statutory criteria, given the configuration of parishes and the more urban settlements of Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham and Trowbridge.

134 In the central part of the district, we proposed a single-member Southwick division, a new two-member Trowbridge East division and a revised single-member Trowbridge West division. We adopted the Independent Group's proposed Southwick division as we felt it achieved good levels of electoral equality. We noted consensus between the Liberal Democrat Group, the Independent Group and Mr Morland's schemes that Dilton Marsh ward should be split and concluded that this was necessary to improve electoral equality in the district overall. In Trowbridge, we agreed that the combination of a two-member and a single-member division would allow the town of Trowbridge to remain coterminous without incorporating any of the more rural surrounding area. We noted that there was a degree of consensus between both the Liberal Democrat Group and the Independent Group that at least one two-member division would be inevitable in order to enable the town's divisions to remain coterminous without incorporating the rural area. The Independent Group stated that 'it is very hard to achieve electoral equality [in Trowbridge] without major re-warding or at least one multi-member division'.

135 In the southern part of the district, our proposals were broadly based on the Independent Group's scheme, as we considered it provided the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity. We therefore proposed a revised single-member Warminster East division, comprising the district wards of Mid Wylde Valley ward and Warminster East and the parishes of Bishopstrow and Norton Bavant from Shearwater ward; a single-member Warminster West division, comprising of the district ward of Warminster West, a new single-member Westbury Ham division, comprising district ward of Westbury Ham and the parish of Dilton Marsh from Dilton Marsh ward; and a new single-member Westbury Laverton division, comprising the parishes of Chapmanslade, Corsley and Upton Scudmore from Dilton Marsh ward, the parishes of Brixton Deverill, Horningsham, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill and Sutton Veny from Shearwater ward and Westbury Laverton ward. The Independent Group provided significant evidence and argumentation to support these proposed divisions. It argued that 'the size of the towns of Warminster (underweight for two members) and Westbury (overweight for one) makes the mixing of urban and rural votes inevitable'. However, its proposed single-member divisions

would require only a minimum adjustment of mixing urban and rural areas and would avoid the creation of larger and more diverse divisions. We proposed single-member divisions in Warminster and Westbury since there was consensus between the Independent Group, Mr Morland and the County Council that these areas should remain as single-member divisions. Furthermore, the geographical location of Warminster and Westbury makes it very difficult to create two-member divisions without combining rural with urban areas and creating large divisions.

136 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed divisions of Bradford-on-Avon, Holt & Paxcroft, Manor Vale, Melksham Central, Melksham & Without and Southwick would vary initially from the county average by 9%, 8%, 16%, 6%, 18%, and 5% (7%, 1%, 20%, 8%, 18% and less than 1% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed divisions of Trowbridge East, Trowbridge West, Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton would vary initially from the county average by 6%, 18%, 18%, 6%, 8% and less than 1% (5%, 15%, 17%, 8%, 2% and 7% by 2006). The level of coterminosity provided by proposals for this district would be 67%.

137 At Stage Three, we received 23 representations for West Wiltshire. The County Council broadly accepted our proposals for West Wiltshire. However, it suggested Westbury Laverton division be renamed Westbury East & Upper Wylde. The County Council strongly opposed our proposal to create a two-member division within Trowbridge, suggesting we adopt the three single-member divisions it outlined at Stage One. The Liberal Democrat Group supported our proposals for the district in their 'entirety' and it opposed the County Council's proposal 'that the two-member division proposals for Trowbridge should be broken up'.

138 Trowbridge Town Council stated that it 'does not have any real objection to the solution for Trowbridge' outlined in our draft recommendations. It stated that our proposed Trowbridge East and Trowbridge West divisions 'allow the town's divisions to remain coterminous without incorporating the rural area'. Bradford on Avon Town Council 'has no objections to the Bradford-on-Avon boundaries as proposed [in our draft recommendations] and supports the maintenance of the division based broadly on the urban area of Bradford on Avon'. Codford Parish Council expressed its strong opposition to our proposals to include sparsely populated rural areas of the Mid Wylde Valley in a division with Warminster East ward, stating that the urban area would dominate. Bishopstrow parish meeting, Warminster Town Council, Sherrington village meeting, Norton Bavant Parish Meeting, Sutton Veny Parish Council, Stockton Parish Council and a local resident, strongly opposed our proposals for the inclusion of Bishopstrow in the Warminster East division, expressing concerns that the urban area would dominate. Bishopstrow Parish Meeting proposed a division containing Dilton Marsh, Mid Wylde Valley and Shearwater wards, which would 'provide a single focus for the rural parishes'. It noted, however, that this division would necessitate 'restructuring' of our proposed divisions in the vicinity of Westbury. The Mayor of Warminster expressed opposition to our proposed Warminster East division and stated that urban and rural areas have different needs and demands. She added that the area covered by our proposed Warminster East division would be too large for a single councillor to manage successfully.

139 Councillor Ernie Clarke, representing Paxcroft district ward, supported our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division. He stated that most of Paxcroft ward is similar to Holt ward, being rural in nature. Holt Parish Council opposed linking Holt with Paxcroft, stating that these two areas are predominantly rural and predominantly urban respectively and share no common identity. It proposed that Paxcroft be included with Trowbridge. Hilperton Parish Council expressed their full support for our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division as Hilperton parish is included in a division together with the neighbouring parishes of Semington and Staverton. Heytesbury, Imber & Knook Parish Council stated that, regardless of any boundary revisions, it wishes to retain the villages of Heytesbury, Tytherington and Knook 'within the parish boundary'. Dilton Marsh Parish Council supported our proposals for its area and suggested that, as Dilton Marsh is larger than Westbury Ham, the division be renamed Dilton Marsh & Westbury Ham to reflect

this. Dr Andrew Murrison MP expressed his opposition to our proposed Westbury Laverton division and stated that the parts of Shearwater ward included in this division relate strongly to Warminster, not to Westbury. Councillor Carbin, representing Whorwellsdown division, and Steeple Ashton Parish Council suggested retaining the current name, Whorwellsdown, for the division. Bratton Parish Council accepted our proposals for Southwick division but suggested the name be changed to Ethendune & Southwick to reflect the community's historical identity.

140 Mr Morland stated that 'the electoral equality in Melksham and Warminster [divisions] of the draft recommendations is inadequate, and unnecessarily so, contrary to the statutory criteria'. Mr Morland stated that we should revert to his Stage One proposals in these areas. He proposed that our divisions of Southwick, Warminster East, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton, ought to be renamed Whorwellsdown Hundred, Warminster East & Wylde, Westbury Ham & Dilton and Westbury Laverton & Shearwater respectively. He stated that the name Whorwellsdown Hundred is the historical name for the area covered by our Southwick division. He stated his other proposed name changes 'reflect' these divisions' 'large rural components'.

141 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three regarding this district, we intend to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to four division name changes. In the north of the district, we note the opposition to our two-member Trowbridge East division from the County Council and Mr Morland. However, no new proposals or arguments were put forward at Stage Three against this division. Additionally, we received support for this division from the Liberal Democrat Group and Trowbridge Town Council. We also note Holt Parish Council's opposition to our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division and its proposal for Paxcroft ward to be included in a division containing part of Trowbridge. However, our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division facilitates coterminosity across the north of the district and it avoids the creation of divisions which combine sections of the large towns of Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge with surrounding rural areas. Additionally, we received support for this division from Councillor Ernie Clark and from Hilperton Parish Council. We note Mr Morland's opposition to our proposed Melksham division due to 'inadequate' electoral equality. We acknowledge that electors in our proposed Melksham & Without would be under-represented by 19% by 2006. We also recognise that electors in the adjacent Manor Vale division would be over-represented by 19% by 2006. We considered transferring part of Melksham Without ward from our proposed Melksham & Without division to our proposed Manor Vale division. However, the majority of electors in Melksham Without ward reside in the towns of Berryfield and Bowerhill, which are located to the south of Melksham town, and have very poor links to the remainder of our proposed Manor Vale division. We are constrained when proposing divisions in the Melksham area by the town being in the far north-east of the district and by our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division to its south and south-west. We note that no new evidence was provided by Mr Morland at Stage Three on behalf of his Stage One proposals for divisions in the Melksham area.

142 In the centre and south of the district, we intend to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to some changes of division names. We note the opposition to our proposed Warminster East division due to its inclusion of rural areas of the Wylde Valley with the predominantly urban ward of Warminster East. We recognise that this situation is not ideal as we seek to avoid creating divisions combining urban and rural areas. We also note Bishopstrow parish meeting's proposal for a division combining the predominantly rural wards in the south of the district, Dilton Marsh, Mid Wylde Valley and Shearwater. We note that such a division would combine predominantly rural divisions. However, such a proposal would necessitate us moving away from our draft recommendations in most areas of the district. We have received no argument or evidence at Stage Three to warrant such substantial alterations to our draft recommendations. Consequently, it is necessary to include the rural parishes in the south of the district in divisions with wards covering the large towns in the south of the district, Warminster and Westbury. We note Andrew Murrison MP's opposition to our proposed Westbury Laverton division, stating that the parishes in the south of the division relate to Warminster instead of Westbury. However, we are constrained by the insufficient electors in Westbury Laverton ward to form a division from that ward alone. Additionally, electors in a division comprising both wards

covering Westbury town, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton would be under-represented by 44% by 2006. As our proposed Southwick division covers the rural area between Trowbridge and Westbury towns, a division containing Westbury Laverton would have to be combined with parishes to the south of Westbury. We note that Mr Morland stated that electoral equality in 'Warminster' is 'inadequate'. We recognised that the electoral variance in our proposed Warminster East division is forecast to be 17% by 2006. However, the parishes covered by Mid Wylde Valley ward need to be included in a division with an urban ward to avoid over-representation of electors. The urban ward which these parishes are in closest proximity to is Warminster East. In the Mid Wylde Valley we are constrained by the small number of electors in the area, which is insufficient to form a division on its own. We are also constrained by the district boundary lying to the area's east, north and south.

143 We are adopting Mr Morland's suggested names of Whorwellsdown Hundred, Warminster East & Wylde, Westbury Ham & Dilton and Westbury Laverton & Shearwater for our Southwick, Warminster East, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton divisions respectively. As these names were proposed locally, reflect historical connections and the areas covered by the divisions, we propose adopting them. We have not proposed Southwick division to be renamed Ethendune & Southwick as the inclusion of 'Whorwellsdown' in the division name was supported by Steeple Ashton Parish Council and Councillor Carbin, in addition to Mr Morland. We are not adopting the name of Dilton Marsh & Westbury Ham for our proposed Westbury Ham & Dilton division as 'Westbury Ham' represents an entire ward and 'Dilton' represents a parish only in this division.

144 Under our final recommendations the levels of electoral equality in West Wiltshire would be identical to those provided in our draft recommendations, as detailed in paragraph 136, with the exception of Manor Vale, Melksham & Without, Trowbridge East and Westbury Ham & Dilton divisions. The number of electors per councillor in each of those proposed divisions is now estimated to vary by 19%, 19%, 6% and 3% respectively by 2006. The initial variances for all of our proposed divisions would remain unchanged. These revised 2006 variances are due to the revision of the 2006 electorate forecast for Lyneham ward which, in turn, resulted in changes in the county-wide average councillor:elector ratio. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## Conclusions

145 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we propose:

- there should be 49 councillors, an increase in two, representing 46 divisions, a decrease of one;
- changes should be made to 44 of the existing 46 divisions.

146 We have decided to substantially confirm our draft recommendations subject to the following amendments in the following areas:

- In North Wiltshire district we are adopting the County Council's and the NWCA's proposals across the south of the district. We consider they are an improvement upon our draft recommendations in terms of community identity, while maintaining satisfactory levels of electoral equality and coterminosity.
- In Salisbury we are proposing two new division names and, in West Wiltshire we are proposing four new division names. We consider these new names reflect the identities of their respective communities.

147 Table 7 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.



Table 7: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	47	49	47	49
Number of divisions	47	46	47	46
Average number of electors per councillor	7,093	6,804	7,400	7,098
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	27	12	30	12
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	11	1	17	0
Number of coterminous divisions (and %)	45 (96%)*	36 (78%)	45 (96%)*	36 (78%)

\*On completion of LGBC's review

148 As Table 7 shows, our final recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 27 to 12, with a single division varying by more than 20% from the county average. By 2006, 12 divisions are forecast to vary by more than 10%. However, in no division would the variance exceed 20%. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

***Final recommendation***

Wiltshire County Council should comprise 49 councillors, serving 46 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover.



## 5 What happens next?

149 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wiltshire and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 3692).

150 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 13 April 2004, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667  
Email: [implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)  
(This address should only be used for this purpose.)**



# Appendix A

## Final recommendations for Wiltshire County Council: detailed mapping

The following map illustrates our proposed division boundaries for the Wiltshire County Council area.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates in outline form the proposed divisions for Wiltshire, including constituent district wards and parishes.