

# Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire

*May 2003*

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



# 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<sup>st</sup> April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE  
Robin Gray  
Joan Jones CBE  
Anne 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.



# Summary

We began a review of Wiltshire County Council's electoral arrangements on 9 July 2002.

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

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

- **In 27 of the 47 divisions, each of which are currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors 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 31 divisions and by more than 20% in 17 divisions.**

Our main proposals for Wiltshire's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 112-113) are that:

- **Wiltshire should have 49 councillors, two more than at present, representing 43 divisions;**
- **as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves been changed as a result of recent district reviews, the boundaries of all but Bradford-on-Avon, Cricklade & Purton, Devizes, Durrington, Marlborough and Warminster West divisions will 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 30 of the proposed 43 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the average and in one division by more than 20% from the average.**
- **This improved electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 30 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average and in no division by more than 20% from the average.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 28 May 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, which will then be responsible for implementing change to the local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes will come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 21 July 2003:

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

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
<b>Kennet</b>	
1 Aldbourne & Ramsbury	Aldbourn ward; Ogbourn ward; Ramsbury ward; West Selkley ward
2 Avon & Pewsey	Netheravon ward; Pewsey ward; Pewsey Vale ward; Upavon ward
3 Bedwyn & Collingbourne	Bedwyn ward; Burbage ward; Collingbourne ward; Milton Lilbourne ward; Shalbourne ward
4 Bromham & Potterne	Bromham & Rowde ward; Cheverell ward; Pottterne ward; Seend ward
5 Devizes North	Unchanged Devizes East ward; Devizes North ward
6 Devizes South	Devizes South ward; Roundway ward
7 Lavington & Cannings	All Cannings ward; Bishops Cannings ward; Lavingtons ward; Urchfont ward
8 Marlborough	Unchanged Marlborough East ward; Marlborough West ward
9 Tidworth & Ludgershall	Ludgershall ward; Tidworth, Perham Down & Ludgershall South ward
<b>North Wiltshire</b>	
10 Box & Pickwick	Box ward; Corsham ward; Lacock with Neston & Gastard ward; Pickwick ward
11 Calne & Without	Calne Abberd ward; Calne Chilvester ward; Calne Lickhill ward; Calne Marden ward; Calne Priestley ward; Calne Quemerford ward; Calne Without ward.
12 Cepen Park & Without	Cepen Park ward; Colerne ward; part of Kington St Michael ward (Chippenham Without and Biddestone parishes); Nettleton ward
13 Chippenham Town	Chippenham Allington ward; Chippenham Avon ward; Chippenham Redland Ward; Chippenham Westcroft/Queens
14 Chippenham North	Chippenham Audley ward; Chippenham Hill Rise ward; Chippenham Park ward
15 Chippenham Pewsham	Chippenham London Road ward; Chippenham Monkton Park ward; Chippenham Pewsham ward
16 Cricklade & Purton	Unchanged Cricklade ward; Purton ward
17 Kington	Bremhill ward; Hilmarton ward; Kington Langley ward; part Kington St Michael ward (Kington St Michael & Yatton Keynell parishes)
18 Malmesbury	Malmesbury ward; St Paul Malmesbury Without & Sherston ward
19 Minety	Ashton Keynes & Minety ward; Brinkworth & The Somefords ward
20 Wootton Bassett	Lyneham ward; The Lydiards & Broad Town ward; Wootton Bassett North ward; Wootton Bassett South ward
<b>Salisbury</b>	
21 Alderbury	Alderbury & Whiteparish ward; Winterslow ward
22 Amesbury	Amesbury East ward; Amesbury West ward
23 Bourne & Woodford Valley	Laverstock ward; Upper Bourne, Idmiston & Winterbourne ward; part of Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward (Durnford, Wilsford cum Lake, Woodford parishes)
24 Downton	Downton & Redlynch ward; Ebble ward
25 Durrington & Bulford	Unchanged Bulford ward; Durrington ward
26 Fovant	Chalke Valley ward; Donhead ward; Fonthill & Nadder ward; part of Knoyle ward (Chicklade, Fonthill Gifford and Hindon parishes); part of Tisbury & Fovant ward (Ansty, Fovant, Sutton Mandeville and Swallowcliffe parishes); part of Wilton ward (Burcombe Without parish)
27 Mere & Tisbury	Part of Knoyle ward (East Knoyle, Sedgell & Semley and West Knoyle parishes); Western & Mere ward, part of Tisbury & Fovant ward (Tisbury and West Tisbury parishes)
28 Salisbury West	Bemerton ward; St Paul ward

	<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
29	Salisbury South	Fisherton & Bemerton Villiage ward; Harnham East ward; Harnham West ward; St Martin & Milford ward
30	Salisbury East	Bishopdown ward; St Edmund & Milford ward; St Mark & Stratford ward
31	Wilton & Wylde	Part Lower Wylde & Woodford Valley ward (Great Wishford and South Newton parishes); Till Valley & Wylde ward; part of Wilton ward (Quidhampton and Wilton parishes)
<b>West Wiltshire</b>		
32	Bradford-on-Avon	Unchanged Bradford-on-Avon North ward; Bradford-on-Avon South ward
33	Holt & Paxcroft	Holt ward; Paxcroft ward
34	Manor Vale	Atworth & Whitley ward; Manor Vale ward
35	Melksham Central	Melksham North ward; Melksham Woodrow ward
36	Melksham & Without	Melksham Spa ward; Melksham Without ward
37	Southwick	Part of Dilton Marsh ward (North Bradley parish) ; Ethandune ward; Southwick & Wingfield ward; Summerham ward
38	Trowbridge East	Trowbridge Adcroft ward; Trowbridge Drynham ward; Trowbridge Park ward
39	Trowbridge West	Trowbridge College ward; Trowbridge John of Gaunt ward
40	Warminster East	Mid Wylde Valley ward; part of Shearwater ward (Bishopstrow, Norton Bavant parishes); Warminster East ward
41	Warminster West	Unchanged Warminster West ward
42	Westbury Ham	Part Dilton Marsh ward (Dilton Marsh parish); Westbury Ham ward
43	Westbury Laverton	Part of Dilton Marsh ward (Chapmanslade, Corsley, Upton Scudamore parishes); part of Shearwater ward (Kingston Deverill, Brixton Deverill, Horningsham, Longbridge Deverill, Sutton Veny parishes); Westbury Laverton ward

**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.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Wiltshire

	Division name (by district council name)	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	-3
2	Avon & Pewsey	1	7,224	7,244	6	7,478	7,478	5
3	Bedwyn & Collingbourne	1	7,003	7,033	3	7,021	7,021	-1
4	Bromham & Potterne	1	6,528	6,528	-4	6,502	6,502	-9
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 & Pickwick	2	12,301	6,150	-10	12,914	6,457	-9
11	Calne & Without	2	12,294	6,147	-10	13,405	6,703	-6
12	Cepen Park & Without	1	8,005	8,005	18	8,083	8,083	14
13	Chippenham Town	1	8,002	8,002	18	8,246	8,246	13
14	Chippenham North	1	5,806	5,806	-15	6,220	6,220	-13
15	Chippenham Pewsham	1	7,526	7,526	11	7,990	7,990	12
16	Cricklade & Purton	1	7,067	7,067	4	7,328	7,328	3
17	Kington	1	6,372	6,372	-6	6,336	6,336	-11
18	Malmesbury	1	7,880	7,880	16	8,100	8,100	14
19	Minety	1	7,214	7,214	6	7,250	7,250	2
20	Wotton Bassett	2	14,217	7,109	4	14,493	7,247	2
<b>Salisbury</b>								
21	Alderbury	1	7,658	7,658	13	7,702	7,702	8
22	Amesbury	1	6,838	6,838	0	7,509	7,509	6
23	Bourne & Woodford Valley	1	7,321	7,321	8	7,338	7,338	3
24	Downton	1	6,217	6,217	-9	6,440	6,440	-9
25	Durrington & Bulford	1	7,780	7,780	14	7,987	7,987	12
26	Fovant	1	6,621	6,621	-3	6,729	6,729	-5
27	Mere & Tisbury	1	6,844	6,844	1	7,195	7,195	1
28	Salisbury West	1	7,102	7,102	4	7,085	7,085	0
29	Salisbury South	2	12,787	6,394	-6	13,067	6,534	-8
30	Salisbury East	2	11,541	5,771	-15	12,235	6,118	-14
31	Wilton Wylde	1	7,450	7,450	9	7,608	7,608	7

Division name (by district council name)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
<b>West Wiltshire</b>							
32 Bradford-on-Avon	1	7,393	7,393	9	7,602	7,602	7
33 Holt & Paxcroft	1	6,237	6,237	-8	7,056	7,056	-1
34 Manor Vale	1	5,713	5,713	-16	5,726	5,726	-20
35 Melksham Central	1	6,220	6,220	-6	6,542	6,542	-8
36 Melksham & Without	1	7,997	7,997	18	8,423	8,423	18
37 Southwick	1	7,114	7,114	5	7,100	7,100	0
38 Trowbridge East	2	12,827	12,827	-6	14,990	7,495	5
39 Trowbridge West	1	8,044	8,044	18	8,190	8,190	15
40 Warminster East	1	8,057	8,057	18	8,315	8,315	17
41 Warminster West	1	6,362	6,362	-6	6,542	6,542	-8
42 Westbury Ham	1	6,289	6,289	-8	7,287	7,287	2
43 Westbury Laverton	1	6,836	6,836	0	7,586	7,586	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>333,377</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>348,565</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,804</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,114</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 proposals for the electoral arrangements for the county of Wiltshire on which we are now consulting. Our review of the county is part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. This programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 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, then to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Wiltshire in October 1999 and we are now embarking on our county review in this area.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - 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.

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions.

6 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.

7 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.

8 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as 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 either one or more whole district wards.

11 We recognise, however, 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 to 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 the final recommendations for the first 11 counties that have been reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. We would normally expect to recommend levels 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 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 electoral equality, 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 only expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews 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 November 1980 (Report No. 405).

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

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

18 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 Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the county, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the county, 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 submissions (the end of Stage One) was 28 October 2002.

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

20 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 28 May 2003 and will end on 21 July 2003, involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft recommendations.**

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



## 2 Current electoral arrangements

22 The county of Wiltshire comprises four districts: Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire. It is bounded by the unitary authority 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 expanding and the county is expected to continue to grow. The majority of this growth is taking place in West Wiltshire.

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

24 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'.

25 At present, each councillor represents an average of 7,093 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 7,416 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the last 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. Since 1975 there has been a 31% increase in the electorate in Wiltshire. The most significant growth has been in North Wiltshire, although both Kennet and West Wiltshire have seen notable growth. The worst imbalance is in Trowbridge East division in West Wiltshire where the councillor represents 43% fewer electors than the county average.

26 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 4: Existing electoral arrangements

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	-4
3 Bedwyn & Pewsey	1	8,315	17	8,581	16
4 Collingbourne	1	8,553	21	8,994	21
5 Devizes	1	6,737	-5	6,875	-7
6 Devizes South & Bromham	1	8,182	15	9,510	28
7 Lavington	1	7,110	0	7,082	-5
8 Marlborough	1	6,156	-13	6,445	-13
<b>North Wiltshire</b>					
9 Bremhill & Calne Without	1	9,063	28	9,449	27
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	8,779	18
<b>Salisbury</b>					
22 Alderbury	1	6,883	-3	6,925	-7
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
27 Mere	1	5,752	-19	6,083	-18
28 Salisbury Bemerton	1	5,774	-19	5,745	-23
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 & Wylve	1	7,573	7	7,733	4
<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	42
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	36
43 Upper Wylve Valley	1	5,288	-25	5,340	-28
44 Warminster East	1	5,903	-17	6,126	-17

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2001)</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2006)</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
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	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>333,377</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>348,565</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,093</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,416</b>	<b>-</b>

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

*Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, and the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The "variance from average" column shows how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each 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 Melksham Without division in West Wiltshire were relatively under-represented by 41%, while electors in Trowbridge East division in West Wiltshire were relatively over-represented by 43%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### 3 Submissions received

27 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire County Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

28 During this initial stage of the review, officers from The Boundary Committee visited the area and met officers and members of the County Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 27 submissions during Stage One, including two county-wide schemes, one from the County Council and one from the Liberal Democrat Group, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council.

#### Wiltshire County Council

29 The County Council proposed a council of 48 members, one more than at present, serving 48 single-member divisions. The County Council stated that it had invited views and representations from interested groups and its draft submissions had been available for public consultation.

30 The Council proposed an increase of two county councillors representing North Wiltshire district area and a reduction of one county councillor in Salisbury district. There would be changes to 42 of the 47 divisions, with five divisions retaining their existing boundaries.

31 Under the County Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10% from the county average in 23 of the proposed 48 divisions and by more than 20% in one division. By 2006, this would only slightly improve with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the average in 22 of the divisions and one continuing to vary by more than 20% from the average. Under these proposals 26 divisions would be coterminous (54% of the total number of proposed divisions for the county).

#### The Liberal Democrat Group

32 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a council of 51 members, four more than at present, serving 43 divisions, comprising 35 single-member and eight two-member divisions. They proposed that the number of councillors representing Kennet and West Wiltshire districts be increased by one and the number of councillors representing North Wiltshire district be increased by two. There would be changes to 42 of the 47 divisions, with five divisions retaining their existing boundaries.

33 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10% from the county average in 13 of the proposed 51 divisions and by more than 20% in one division. This would improve by 2006, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the average in seven of the divisions and none varying more than 20% from the average. Under these proposals 26 divisions would be coterminous (60% of the total number of proposed divisions for the county).

#### The Independent Group

34 The Independent Group proposed a scheme for the district of West Wiltshire only, based on an overall council size of 49 members, two more than at present. It argued that the County Council's proposed council size of 48 would not provide for the correct allocation of councillors to each constituent district and that a 49-member council would secure a better

balance of representation. It proposed the retention of 13 councillors representing West Wiltshire but that changes be made to 12 of the proposed 13 divisions, with one division retaining its existing boundary. It also proposed that single-member divisions be maintained where possible. Under the Independent Group's proposals for West Wiltshire, based on the 2006 projected figures only, the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10% from the average in one of the 13 divisions with no division varying by more than 20% from the average. Under these proposals four of the 13 divisions would be coterminous (31% of the total proposed divisions for the district area).

## District and Borough Councils

35 One representation was received from Kennet District Council supporting the County Council's proposals for the district.

## Parish and Town councils

36 We received responses directly from 14 parish and town councils. In Kennet district, Collingbourne Ducis Parish Council object to the County Council's plans to remove them from the Tidworth seat and place them in an 'uncohesive rural division'. Collingbourne Kingston Parish Council supported the inclusion of its parish in a division with other rural parishes. 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 but that it could be linked with Savernake and the surrounding area. Pewsey Parish Council stated that it was happy with the existing arrangements. Savernake Parish Council supported a council size of 49, with an extra seat allocated to the Kennet district, in the Pewsey Vale area. It opposed being linked with Pewsey.

37 In North Wiltshire district, Wootton Bassett Town Council made no specific proposals and no other representations were received.

38 In Salisbury district, Berwick St John Parish Council expressed satisfaction with the existing arrangements. Fovant Parish Council commented on the parliamentary constituency review but stated that Fovant's links were eastwards towards Salisbury. Mere Parish Council proposed renaming the Tisbury division as Mere & Tisbury and also expressed concern that the rural area it covered would be too large for one councillor to manage.

39 In West Wiltshire district, Bradford-on-Avon Parish Council stated that it wished to see West Wiltshire fairly represented in comparison to other district areas. Chitterne Parish Council objected to the County Council's plans to include the parish in the Warminster division, preferring the current arrangements. Codford Parish Council supported the status quo. Holt Parish Council strongly opposed any proposals which would link Holt with Paxcroft, preferring Paxcroft to be part of Trowbridge ward with Holt being linked with surrounding villages. Steeple Ashton Parish Council would prefer to remain as part of Whorwellsdown, rather than be moved into the Westbury division.

## Other submissions

40 We received a further nine submissions from local residents, county councillors and a local community centre. County Councillor Connolly broadly supported the County Council's proposals but suggested two alternative divisions in the Tidworth/Bedwyn area. County Councillor Johnson proposed that Downton division be renamed Downton and Ebble Valley. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Sample, supported the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, contending that a 51-member council was justified, accusing

the County Council's scheme of 'gerrymandering'. He expressed specific support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in the Salisbury district.

41 A local resident of the Bowerhill area of West Wiltshire stated that the large Bowerhill parish should be split in two, using the river Avon as a boundary. Two local residents also supported the Liberal Democrat Group's 51-member proposals, with one of them specifically supporting the fact that it would keep Melksham together and would link Dilton Marsh with Westbury.

42 A local resident (Mr Morland) proposed four schemes for the district of West Wiltshire, two based on a decrease to 45 members, with 12 allocated to West Wiltshire and two schemes based on a council size of 49, with 13 members allocated to West Wiltshire. Under his proposals for both 12 and 13-member schemes he put forward a 'minimum adjustment' and a 'best practicable equality scheme'. Under all of his proposed schemes only one, the 13-member 'minimum adjustment' scheme, produced a variance of more than 10% from the county average. Under the 12-member schemes six of the 'minimum adjustment' and three of the 'best practicable equality' scheme's divisions would be coterminous (50% and 25% of the total proposed divisions for the district respectively). Under the 13-member schemes four of the 'minimum adjustment' and one of the 'best practicable equality' scheme's divisions are coterminous (31% and 8% of the total proposed divisions for the district respectively).

43 Lastly, Paxcroft Mead Community Centre suggested a new 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.

## 4 Analysis and draft recommendations

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

45 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) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and 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’.

46 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.

47 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 and in order 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.

48 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.

49 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an 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 identity. 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.

### Electorate forecasts

50 Since 1975 there has been a 31% increase in the electorate of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon borough which became a unitary authority in 1997). 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. It expects the most growth to be in 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. Advice from the County Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been

obtained. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having carefully considered the County Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## 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. 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 scheme 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. The Independent Group stated that the County Council's scheme was 'discredited' by its failure to allocate the correct number of councillors to the districts. They 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 A local resident (Mr Morland) proposed two possible council sizes. One based on a decrease in council size, of two, to 45 members and one based on an increase in council size, by two, to 49 members. He stated that a council size of 45 would be his preferred choice of scheme because it was the most 'mathematically sound'. 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 their concern over 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 justifies 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 seat being allocated to the Kennet district, in the Pewsey Vale area.

57 We have considered the issue of council size carefully and in light of all the evidence and argumentation received have decided to adopt an increase in council size to 49-members. We agree that the majority of the evidence and argumentation put to us supports

a 'slight increase' in council size in light of management structures and we are 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, in order to give the correct entitlement of councillors per district, the council size should be a total of 49 members, rather than the proposed 48 members. The County Council also allocated the wrong amount of council members per district with North Wiltshire being over allocated a total of 15 councillors, leading to an under allocation in both Kennet (eight) and Salisbury (12). Therefore, the County Council's scheme could only be fairly and accurately redistributed within a 49-member scheme.

59 We are of the view that there was insufficient evidence and argumentation put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group to support an increase in council size of four councillors, to 51 members, and this would secure limited support locally. Similarly, we have not been persuaded that a 45-member council would provide for effective and convenient local government. However, we agree with the view that a 49-member scheme would be 'mathematically sound' 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 area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 49 members.

## Electoral arrangements

60 We acknowledge the difficulties faced in seeking to address the current electoral inequality in Wiltshire and are grateful for all the county-wide and district submissions that have been put to us. We have sought to build on all of these proposals, together with the other submissions received, in order to put forward electoral arrangements that would improve equality of representation throughout the county, better reflect the interests and identities of communities and result in a higher level of coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards.

61 As detailed above, we consider that the council size should be increased by two, to 49 members, in order to facilitate a better balance of representation across the county as a whole. We are of the view that the County Council's 48-member scheme could not be taken in its entirety, if we are to secure the correct allocation of councillors in each constituent district. However, we have incorporated as much of these schemes as possible, together with all other submissions, in order to create a scheme that would secure the broadest level of consensus across the county.

62 Under the proposed 49-member council size, we agree that the correct allocation of county councillors for each district would be: Kennet 9, North Wiltshire 14, Salisbury 13 and West Wiltshire 13. In opting for a 49-member council size we have noted that neither the County Council nor the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes could be adopted in their entirety if we are to secure the correct allocation of councillors in each constituent district. However, we noted that the Liberal Democrat Group does allocate the correct number of seats to both the Kennet (9) and Salisbury district (13) under their 51-member scheme as should also be allocated under our 49-member scheme proposals. Similarly, the County Council's, the Independent Group's and two of Mr Morland's proposals all allocate the correct number of councillors for West Wiltshire (13). Therefore, the schemes for these districts, since they produce good variances and reasonable levels of coterminosity, have been carefully considered in our proposals. Furthermore, we have tried to incorporate aspects of the locally derived schemes in formulating our draft recommendations overall. However, we have had to formulate our own proposals in North Wiltshire where none of the submissions provided the correct allocation of councillors under our proposed scheme of 49 members.

63 We propose that the 49-member council should comprise 43 divisions, consisting of 37 single-member and six two-member divisions. We propose two-member divisions in areas where it will improve electoral equality, facilitate coterminosity and better reflect local community identities and interests. However, we have proposed a limited number of two-member divisions in West Wiltshire where the geographical nature of much of the district makes it difficult to create two-member divisions without mixing urban and rural areas and/or creating large divisions.

64 We have carefully considered all the representations received and are of the view that our proposals would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity with only 13 of the 43 divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and one by more than 20% from the average in 2001 and 13 more divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and none by more than 20% from the average in 2006. The proposed scheme would also secure around 77% coterminosity compared to 54% coterminosity in the County Council's scheme and 60% in the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme. However, there would remain a relatively high degree of electoral imbalance in some areas, particularly in North Wiltshire, compared to other districts in the county. We concluded that these electoral inequalities were necessary in order to achieve better coterminosity and would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests.

65 For County division purposes, the four district areas in the county are considered in turn as follows:

- i) Kennet district;
- ii) North Wiltshire district;
- iii) Salisbury district;
- iv) West Wiltshire district.

66 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## Kennet district

67 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 the Collingbourne division.

68 The district has experienced an increase in electorate since the last review and this is expected to increase further by 2006. This is highlighted by the projected growth in the Devizes & South Bromham division which is currently under represented by 15% and which is projected to further increase to 28% by 2006.

69 Under the County Council's proposals the number of councillors representing Kennet would be eight councillors, rather than the nine councillors it would be entitled to under its proposed 48-member council or our proposed 49-member council. These eight councillors would represent eight single-member divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would only improve slightly with four divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. However, this would significantly improve by 2006 with only one division varying by more than 10% from the county average. Furthermore, the scheme would produce good levels of coterminosity of 75%. However, the scheme proposed the mixing of urban and rural divisions in order to improve electoral equality in the district. 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 & Rowde ward.

70 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals the number of councillors representing Kennet would be nine councillors, the correct allocation both under their proposed 51-member council and our proposed 49-member council. These nine councillors would represent nine single-member divisions. Under its proposals, electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the average in three divisions and one by more than 20% from the county 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.

71 We received a further seven submissions for Kennet district from town and parish councils, the District Council, a local councillor and a local resident. Collingbourne Ducis Parish Council objected to the County Council's plans to remove them from the Tidworth seat and place them in an 'uncohesive rural division'. Collingbourne Kingston Parish Council supported the inclusion of its parish in a division with other rural parishes. Kennet District Council supported the County Council's proposals for Kennet district and Councillor Connolly also 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 but that it could be linked with Savernake and the surrounding area. Pewsey Parish Council stated that it was happy with the existing arrangements. Savernake Parish Council opposed being linked with Pewsey.

72 After careful consideration of all the schemes and submissions we have decided that the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme for Kennet should be accepted in its entirety since it allocated the correct number of councillors to the district (9) and, in our view, provided for the best reflection of the statutory criteria, under our proposed council size of 49-members. Only one division would vary by more than 10% from the county average and one by more than 20% from the average. This would improve by 2006, with only one division varying by more than 10% and none by more than 20% from the county average. In addition, the proposed scheme would secure 100% coterminosity in the district. Although we have not adopted the County Council's scheme for the district the proposed Liberal Democrat Group scheme does have the same Tidworth & Ludgershall division as under the County Council's proposals, similarly it does not comprise any two-member divisions. Furthermore, its proposed scheme broadly reflects many of the submissions received.

73 In the north of the district we have decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's revised Aldbourne & Ramsbury division (comprising the district wards of Aldbourne, Ogbourne, Ramsbury and West Selkley) and an unchanged Marlborough division (comprising the district wards of Marlborough East and Marlborough West). We agree that the two proposed divisions are the best reflection of the statutory criteria as both are coterminous with existing ward boundaries and would vary from the county average by 1% and 10% respectively (3% and 9% in 2006). Furthermore, these divisions reflect 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 the town does remain coterminous and separated from the surrounding rural area.

74 In central and southern parts of the district we have decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's revised Avon & Pewsey division (comprising the district wards of Netheravon, Pewsey, Pewsey Vale and Upavon), new Bedwyn & Collingbourne division (comprising the district wards of Bedwyn, Burbage, Collingbourne, Milton Lilbourne and Shalbourne) and new Tidworth & Ludgershall division (comprising the district wards of

Ludgershall, Tidworth, Perham Down & Ludgershall South). All three divisions would be coterminous with existing district ward boundaries and would initially vary from the county average by 6%, 3% and 6% respectively (5%, 1% and 8% by 2006). Under these proposals Collingbourne ward would be removed from the Tidworth & Ludgershall division, which was necessary to secure good electoral equality. We further noted that this proposed Tidworth & Ludgershall division received support from both the Liberal Democrat Group and the County Council.

75 In the western part of the district we have decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's new Bromham & Potterne division (comprising the district wards of Bromham & Rowde, Cheverell, Potterne and Seend), new Lavington & Cannings division (comprising the district wards of All Cannings, Bishops Cannings, Lavingtons and Urchfont), unchanged Devizes North division (comprising the district wards of Devizes East and Devizes North) and new Devizes South division (comprising the district wards of Devizes South and Roundway). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Bromham & Potterne, Lavington & Cannings and Devizes North divisions would initially vary from the county average by just 4%, 3% and 1% (9%, 1% and 3% by 2006). 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 mixing the urban area of Devizes with larger parts of the surrounding rural hinterland.

76 We are putting forward these proposals for consultation as providing a much better balance of representation whilst providing 100% coterminosity and reflecting local community identities and interests. We would welcome views from all interested parties during Stage Three. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## North Wiltshire district

77 Under the current arrangements North Wiltshire is represented by 13 county councillors serving 13 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). Overall, relative to the size of the electorate in the rest of the county, North Wiltshire is presently under-represented and should be allocated a total of 14 councillors under the current council size of 47.

78 Under the County Council's proposals the number of councillors representing North Wiltshire would be 15 councillors, rather than the 14 councillors it would be entitled to under the Council's proposed 48-member council. Under the County Council's proposals 15 councillors would represent 15 single-member divisions. 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. Moreover, the district as a whole would be over-represented by one councillor. The Council's scheme would provide for 66% coterminosity in this district

79 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals the number of councillors representing North Wiltshire would be 15, which is the correct allocation of councillors under their proposed 51-member scheme. However, it would not provide the correct allocation under our proposed 49-member scheme. The 15 members would represent 12 divisions, allowing for the creation of three two-member divisions. The three proposed two-member divisions would be Calne, Corsham & Box, and Wootton Bassett. The Liberal Democrat Group provided significant evidence and argumentation to support each of these proposed two-member divisions arguing that the creation of 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. Overall, 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. However, under a council size of 49, the district would be over-represented. Furthermore, the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme would only secure around 50% levels of coterminosity .

80 We received one submission from Wootton Bassett Town Council which made no specific proposals and no other representations for the district were received.

81 Since neither the County Council nor the Liberal Democrat Group allocated the correct amount number of councillors to North Wiltshire, as would be required under our 49-member proposals it was not possible to adopt either of the proposed schemes in their entirety. However, we have incorporated some aspects of the two schemes, where it was possible, in formulating our proposals for this area. We have incorporated divisions where there was consensus over boundaries in both the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes. Furthermore, we have adopted all three of the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed two-member divisions. In our view, the Liberal Democrat Group provided sufficient evidence and argumentation to support each of the proposed two-member divisions and we agree that these would provide for better electoral equality and coterminosity as well as providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests. We noted that the alternative option to the creation of the two-member divisions would result in the splitting of two natural communities in Box & Pickwick and Wootton Bassett and the creation of oversized and under-sized divisions in Box & Pickwick, Calne and Wootton Bassett.

82 In the north of the district we propose retaining the existing single-member Cricklade & Purton division (comprising the district wards of Cricklade and Purton) since the division would vary by 4% from the county average (3% by 2006) and there is consensus between the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group that the division should be retained. We also propose a revised single-member Minety division (comprising the district wards of Ashton Keynes & Minety and Brinkworth & The Sommerfords), and a revised single-member Malmesbury division (comprising the district wards of Malmesbury and St Paul Malmesbury Without & Sherston) as there is a degree of consensus between both the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes over 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 agree that these variances are acceptable in order to facilitate higher coterminosity and would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests.

83 In the southern and eastern part of the district we have decided to adopt the three two-member wards as proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group. We propose a new Box & Pickwick division (comprising the district wards of Box, Corsham, Lacock with Neston & Gastard and Pickwick), a new Calne & Without division (comprising the district wards of Calne Abberd, Calne Chilvester, Calne Lickhill, Calne Marden, Calne Priestley, Calne Quemerford and Calne Without,) and a new Wootton Bassett division (comprising the district

wards of The Lydiards & Broad Town, Lyneham, Wootton Bassett North and Wootton Bassett South). We are of the view that the creation of these two-member wards 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 interests. All the divisions would be coterminous with existing ward boundaries and the number of electors per councillor in the Box & Pickwick , Calne & Without and Wootton Bassett divisions would initially vary from the county average by 10%, 10% and 4% respectively (improving by 2006 to 9%, 6% and 2% respectively).

84 The alternatives to these two-member divisions would be the creation of a number of over-sized and under-sized divisions with poor electoral equality or a number of non-coterminous divisions. We have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that the creation of two-member divisions would facilitate and reflect local community identities and interests. We noted that the Liberal Democrat Group argued that the creation of two-member divisions would unite the urban area of Calne, which is currently split between four divisions, allowing it to remain relatively separate from the surrounding Bremhill Calne area which is more rural and we agree with this view. In the case of Box & Corsham division the Liberal Democrat Group argued that its proposals would unite the large town of Corsham, which has previously been divided between two divisions, and would maintain its link with the large village of Box in the existing Pickwick with Box divisions. It also goes on to add that 'the existing Corsham division is too small to continue and the 'corner effect' gives few alternatives'. We have considered this argument and agree that the county and district boundaries in this area are restrictive. We further noted that the settlement of Box and Corsham are closely linked and agreed that local community identity and interests would be better reflected if this area was united within one division. Similarly in the Wootton Bassett area we have been persuaded that uniting the two divisions cures the current imbalance of one very over-sized and one very under-sized division and agree with the Liberal Democrat group that this would secure 'much better electoral equality than two very under-sized divisions as in the County Council's proposals'.

85 In the central part of the district we propose a new single-member Cepen Park & Without division (comprising the district wards of Cepen Park, Colerne, and the parishes of Chippenham Without and Biddestone from Kington St Michael ward and Nettleton ward), a new single-member Chippenham North division (comprising the district wards of Chippenham Audley, Chippenham Hill Rise and Chippenham Park), a single-member Chippenham Pewsham division (comprising the district wards of Chippenham London Road, Chippenham Monkton Park and Chippenham Pewsham) and a new single-member Chippenham Town division (comprising the district wards of Chippenham Allington, Chippenham Avon, Chippenham Redland and Chippenham Westcroft/Queens). Finally we propose a revised single-member Kington division (comprising the district wards of Bremhill, Hilmarton, Kington Langley and the parishes of Kington St Michael and Yatton Keynell from Kington St Michael ward). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed divisions of Cepen Park & Without, Chippenham North, Chippenham Pewsham, Chippenham Town and Kington would initially vary from the county average by 18%, 15%, 11%, 18% and 6% respectively (14%, 13%, 12%, 13% and 11% by 2006).

86 We noted that it was difficult to allocate the correct number of seats to the district and maintain coterminosity without creating some higher variances. Four of the six divisions above 10% are in the urban area of Chippenham and are, in our view, acceptable in order to keep the area coterminous and prevent mixing too much of the town area with the surrounding rural area. The higher variances in the Kington and Malmesbury area were necessary in order to facilitate a higher level of coterminosity and prevent mixing the town area with the surrounding rural areas. Overall, we are of the view that some slightly higher electoral imbalances were necessary in North Wiltshire in order allow for better coterminosity and a better reflection of local community identities and interests. Furthermore, we propose that two of these proposed divisions be non-coterminous. In the case of Cepen Park ward, it is too large to be included with Chippenham as this would result

in the town being notably under-represented and, therefore, must be linked with the surrounding area. This has the consequent effect of needing to split the Kington St Michael ward in order to secure reasonable levels of electoral equality. We consider that the Chippenham Without parish of Kington St Michael has a closer association with Cepen Park than other surrounding areas.

87 Overall, our proposals for North Wiltshire would improve electoral equality with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in five divisions with no divisions varying by more than 20% from the average. This would worsen slightly by 2006, when the number of electors represented by each councillor would vary by more than 10% from the county average in six divisions and none by more than 20% from the average. We agree that the slight electoral imbalances were necessary in order to allocate the correct number of seats to the district, better reflect local community identities and interests and to facilitate higher levels of coterminosity. Our proposals would secure 82% coterminosity, substantially higher than both the County Council's and Liberal Democrat Group's schemes for this area. We are, therefore, of the view that our proposals would create the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, as well as providing the best reflection of community identities and interests. We welcome views from all interested parties in Stage Three. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## Salisbury district

88 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 & Wyllye. 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 no division 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).

89 Under the County Council's proposals the number of councillors representing Salisbury district would be 12, rather than the 13 councillors it would be entitled to under its proposed 48-member scheme or under our proposed 49-member scheme. The 12 councillors would represent 12 single-member divisions. Under these proposals electoral imbalances would only improve slightly with the number of electors representing each 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 around 50% coterminosity throughout the district.

90 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals the number of councillors representing Salisbury district would be 13, the correct allocation under its proposed 51-member council and under our proposed 49-member council. The 13 councillors would represent 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.

91 We received a further five submissions for the Salisbury district, two from local councillors and three from Parish councils. Councillor Sample, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, supported the Liberal Democratic Group's proposals for Salisbury, suspecting the County Council's scheme of 'gerrymandering'. Councillor Johnson proposed that Downton division be renamed Downton and Ebble Valley. Berwick St John Parish Council expressed satisfaction with the existing arrangements. Fovant Parish Council commented on the parliamentary constituency review but stated that Fovant's links were eastwards along the A30 towards Wilton and Salisbury. Mere Parish Council proposed renaming the Tisbury division as Mere and Tisbury and also expressed concern that the rural area it covered is too large for one councillor to manage.

92 After careful consideration of all the submissions received we propose that our draft recommendations should be broadly based on the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme as it allocates the correct number of councillors to the district as under our proposed 49-member council and provides good electoral equality. However, in light of the representations received we have made two amendments to the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme. We propose 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.

93 In the northern part of the district we propose a revised single-member Amesbury division (comprising the district wards of Amesbury East and Amesbury West) and propose retaining the existing single-member Durrington division (comprising the district wards of Durrington and Bulford) but propose 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 more than 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 agree 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 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.

94 We also propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for a new 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 Wylye & Woodford Valley ward) and a new single-member Wilton & Wylye division (comprising the district ward of Till Valley & Wylye and parishes of Great Wishford and South Newton from Lower Wylye and Woodford Valley ward and the parishes of Quidhampton & Wilton from Wilton ward). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Bourne & Woodford Valley and Wilton & Wylye divisions would initially vary from the county average by 8% and 9% respectively (3% and 7% by 2006). In relation to these two proposed divisions we agree with the evidence and argumentation put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group that the two valleys of Lower Wylye and Woodford can be logically split into two communities. It proposed that the 'split allows the Wylye Valley communities to be kept together with 'their' town Wilton, while the Woodford Valley communities can be linked 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'.

95 In the city of Salisbury we propose the creation of two two-member divisions and a single-member division. We agree with the Liberal Democrat Group that the establishment of two two-member divisions would provide for good electoral equality and coterminosity in Salisbury and avoid either the splitting of district wards or the mixing of city wards with the

surrounding rural hinterland. However, we are of the view that the divisions proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group could be improved upon in order to provide for a better reflection of communities and more identifiable boundaries. We propose 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 Villiage, Harnham East, Harnham West and St Martin & Milford). The number of electors per councillor in Salisbury East, Salisbury South and Salisbury West would initially vary from the county average by 15%, 6% and 4% respectively (14%, 8% and equal to the average respectively by 2006). We are of the view that our proposals would better reflect local links and community identities whilst still maintaining good electoral equality and coterminosity.

96 In the south-eastern part of the district we propose 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). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Alderbury and Downton divisions would initially vary from the county average by 13% and 9% respectively (8% and 9% by 2006). There is 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 agree 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, therefore, improving overall coterminosity for the district as a whole.

97 In the western part of the district we propose 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 parishes 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 has been necessary to split these rural wards in order to achieve improved 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 have been persuaded that this would provide for the best balance between the statutory criteria and recognise 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.

98 Overall, electoral imbalances would improve significantly in Salisbury, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in three divisions and by more than 20% from the county average in none of the divisions. This would improve by 2006, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in only two divisions and by more than 20% from the average in none of the divisions. Our proposals would also secure reasonable levels of coterminosity at around 64%. We welcome views from any interested parties in Stage Three. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## West Wiltshire district

99 Under the current arrangements, West Wiltshire district is represented by 13 county councillors serving 13 single-member divisions; Bradford-on-Avon, Holt, Melksham, Melksham Without, Southwick, Trowbridge East, Trowbridge South, Trowbridge West, Upper Wylde Valley, Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury and Whorwellsdown. Compared to 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 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 which is currently over represented by 43% and this is expected to worsen by 2006 when the division will be over represented by 45%. During Stage One a total of seven district wide schemes were proposed for West Wiltshire. One scheme each from the County Council, the Liberal Democrat Group and the Independent Group and four from a local resident (Mr Morland).

100 Under the County Council's proposals the number of councillors representing West Wiltshire would be 13, the correct allocation for both the County Council's 48-member council and our proposed 49-member council. The 13 councillors would represent 13 single-member divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor varying 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 30% coterminosity for the district.

101 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals the number of councillors representing West Wiltshire would be 14, the correct allocation under its proposed 51-member council but one more than should be allocated under our proposed 49-member council. These 14 councillors would represent 11 divisions, allowing for the creation of three two-member divisions in Melksham, Trowbridge East & Ashton and Trowbridge West & Southwick. The Liberal Democrat Group argued that the establishment of a two-member ward in Melksham was 'inevitable' in order to allow for 'much better electoral equality'. In Trowbridge it argued that 'electoral equality [would be] achieved without splitting district wards' and argued that joining the urban area of Trowbridge with the surrounding Southwick and Summerham wards would better reflect community interest as the two wards 'relate strongly to Trowbridge in terms of facilities and commuting'. Under these proposals electoral equality would significantly improve with the number of electors per councillor 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 representing 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 than the County Council's proposals, at around 55% but the district would be over-represented by one councillor under our proposed 49-member scheme.

102 Under the Independent Group's proposals the number of councillors representing West Wiltshire would be 13, the correct allocation under the proposed 49-member council. These 13 councillors would represent 13 single-member divisions. The Independent Group largely opposed the establishment of two-member divisions and argued that 'single-member divisions give more of a level playing field for candidates of all kinds'. The Independent Group also rejected the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for eight two-member divisions, claiming that it gives 'unfair political advantage to the major political parties'. Under its scheme for West Wiltshire, based on the 2006 projected figures, electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in one division with no division varying by more than 20%. However, the

Independent Group's proposed scheme for West Wiltshire would only secure 31% coterminosity.

103 A local resident (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 schemes based on an increase in council size to 49, with 13 members allocated to West Wiltshire. Under his proposals for both 12 and 13 members he put forward a 'minimum adjustment scheme' and a 'best practicable equality' scheme. The former, broadly allowing for higher levels of coterminosity and the latter allowing for better levels of electoral equality. He argued that a 45-member scheme would be the most 'mathematically sound', with all variances 10% below the county average, leading to the best possible 'practicable equality' and 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, other than being 'mathematically sound'. Although all of Mr Morland's schemes produced good electoral variances none of them would secure more than 27% coterminosity for the district.

104 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 Parish 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 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 would prefer to remain as part of Whorwellsdon, rather than the proposed County Council plans to move it into the Westbury division. 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, 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, using the river Avon as a 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.

105 After careful analysis of all of the proposed schemes and submissions we have decided to put forward our own scheme for West Wiltshire, incorporating the best parts of all of the proposed schemes and any areas of consensus. We noted that the County Council, the Independent Group and two of Mr Morlands schemes allocated the correct number of councillors to the district. However, it was difficult to take any of these schemes in their entirety since, in our view, none of them created a satisfactory balance between electoral equality and coterminosity. We were, therefore, of the view that a scheme incorporating aspects of all the proposals would allow us to create a scheme that secures the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, as well as reflecting the broadest level of consensus.

106 In the northern part of the district we have incorporated aspects of all the proposed schemes. We propose retaining the single-member Bradford-on-Avon division (comprising the district wards of Bradford-on-Avon North and Bradford-on-Avon South), we propose a new single-member Holt & Paxcroft division (comprising the district wards of Holt and Paxcroft), a new single-member Manor Vale division (comprising the district wards of Atworth & Whitley and Manor Vale) a new single-member Melksham Central division (comprising the district wards of Melksham North and Melksham Woodrow), and a new Melksham & Without division (comprising the district wards of Melksham Spa and Melksham Without). The number of electors in the proposed Bradford-on-Avon, Holt & Paxcroft, Manor Vale, Melksham Central and Melksham & Without divisions would initially vary from the county average by 9%, 8%, 16%, 6% and 18% respectively (7%, 1%, 20%, 8% and 18% by 2006). We noted that there was consensus between all of the proposed schemes over

Bradford-on-Avon division. There was also consensus among the County Council and the Liberal Democrat Group over the proposed Manor Vale division and consensus 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 remain as two single-member divisions rather than as a two-member division. Therefore, we have decided to adopt the County Council's proposals for Melksham, with a central Melksham division and a Melksham & Without division, allowing the area to remain coterminous, without creating a two-member division as we are of the view that this would secure local support.

107 However, we have noted that our proposed Holt & Paxcroft division may not receive support locally but we are unable to secure a viable alternative in this area, which would secure a good balance between the statutory criteria, given the configuration of parishes and the more urban settlements of Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham and Trowbridge. We have also considered the proposal to divide the parish of Melksham Without. However, we do not propose splitting this parish between divisions as this would reduce coterminosity.

108 In the central part of the district we propose a revised single-member Southwick division (comprising the district wards of Ethandune, Southwick & Wingfield and Summerham and the parish of North Bradley from Dilton Marsh ward), a new two-member Trowbridge East division (comprising the district wards of Trowbridge Adcroft, Trowbridge Drynham and Trowbridge Park), and a revised single-member Trowbridge West division (comprising the district wards of Trowbridge College and Trowbridge John of Gaunt). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Southwick, Trowbridge East and Trowbridge West divisions would vary from the county average by 5%, 6% and 18% respectively, improving by 2006 with the divisions being equal to the average and varying by 5% and 15% respectively. We have adopted the Independent Group's proposals in the Southwick division as we feel that it achieves very good electoral equality. We agree that it was necessary to split the Dilton Marsh ward in order to achieve electoral equality for the district overall. Furthermore, there was a large degree of consensus between the Liberal Democrat Group, the Independent Group and Mr Morland's schemes that Dilton Marsh ward should be split. In Trowbridge we agree that the combination of a two-member and single-member ward 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 among 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'.

109 In the southern part of the district our proposals would be broadly based on the Independent Group's scheme, as we consider that it strikes the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity. We therefore propose a revised single-member Warminster East division (comprising the district wards of Mid Wylve Valley ward and Warminster East and the parishes of Bishoptrow 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 the Westbury Laverton ward). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Warminster East, Warminster West, Westbury Ham and Westbury Laverton divisions would initially vary from the county average by 18%, 6%, 8% and equal to the average, respectively (17%, 8%, 3% and 7% by 2006) The Independent Group provided significant evidence and argumentation to support these proposed divisions. It argued that 'the size of the towns of Warminster (currently underweight by two members) and Westbury (currently overweight by one member) makes the mixing of some urban and rural areas 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 propose single-member divisions in Warminster and Westbury since there is 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 mixing rural and urban areas and creating large divisions.

110 Under our draft recommendations electoral equality would significantly improve with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in four divisions and with no division varying by more than 20% both initially and by 2006. We noted that greater electoral equality and coterminosity could have been achieved through the creation of two-member divisions. However, we are of the view that in West Wiltshire the consensus between the proposed schemes was for the establishment of single-member divisions in order to prevent the creation of a number of very over-sized divisions and to provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests. We, therefore, agree that some higher variances are acceptable in order to facilitate higher coterminosity and would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests. In addition to this, our proposals for West Wiltshire would provide for 67% coterminosity, compared to around 30% under the other schemes submitted at Stage One. We are, therefore, of the view that our proposals create the best balance between electoral equality and coterminosity as well as reflecting local community identities and interests. We welcome views from any interested parties during Stage Three. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## Conclusions

111 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 47 to 49 members;
- the boundaries of all divisions, except Bradford-on-Avon, Cricklade & Purton, Devizes, Durrington, Marlborough and Warminster West will be subject to change as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the district reviews.

112 As indicated we have based our draft recommendations on aspects of all the county and district-wide schemes we received during Stage One, in addition to some of our own proposals;

- In Kennet we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme in its entirety;
- In North Wiltshire we have formulated our own proposals based on any areas of consensus between the County Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's schemes but have adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's two-member Box & Pickwick, Calne & Without and Wotton Bassett divisions;
- In Salisbury we have adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals with the exception of two amendments to the boundary between Alderbury and Downton divisions and within Salisbury;
- In West Wiltshire we have formulated our own proposals incorporating aspects of all of the proposed schemes and any areas of consensus.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	47	49	47	49
Number of divisions	47	43	47	43
Average number of electors per councillor	7,093	6,804	7,416	7,114
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	27	13	31	13
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	11	1	17	0

113 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Wiltshire would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 27 to 13. By 2006, 13 divisions are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10% with no division forecast to vary by more than 20%.

*Draft recommendation*

Wiltshire County Council should comprise 49 councillors serving 43 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and on the large map inside the back cover.

## Parish and town council electoral arrangements

114 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different county divisions it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. While none of our draft recommendations propose the consequential re-warding of parish and town councils we noted that there were requests at Stage One for the re-warding of parish and town councils in West Wiltshire. These were as follows:

- Bowerhill Parish should be divided in two, using the river Avon as a boundary;
- A new parish ward be created in Hilperton Parish Council to cover the Paxcroft Mead area and that the boundary between the parish of Trowbridge and Hilperton be amended accordingly;

115 We have no powers as part of this review to recommend changes to parish administrative boundaries. However, West Wiltshire District Council has powers under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 to conduct a review of parish boundaries in its area and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Similarly, the District Council also has powers under the 1997 Act to review and change parish electoral arrangements. We , therefore, do not consider it appropriate to recommend changes to these parish wards.

## 5 What happens next?

116 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Wiltshire County Council contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 21 July 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

117 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

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



# Appendix A

## Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

*Table A1: Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria*

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