

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
SHREWSBURY &
ATCHAM
IN SHROPSHIRE

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

August 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Shrewsbury & Atcham in Shropshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Shrewsbury & Atcham in Shropshire.

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Local Government Commission for England

3 August 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 4 August 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Shrewsbury & Atcham under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some minor boundary modifications have been made (see paragraph 161), in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Shrewsbury & Atcham.

We recommend that Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council should be served by 40 councillors representing 24 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Shrewsbury & Atcham on 4 August 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 March 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Shrewsbury & Atcham because:

- **in 11 of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to continue to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 12 wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraph 161) are that:

- **Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council should have 40 councillors, eight fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 22 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified and three wards should retain their existing boundaries; and**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 22 of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003. Pimhill ward would vary by 11 per cent from the average.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 13 September 1999:

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

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)	Map reference
1	Bagley (Shrewsbury town)	2	Bagley ward (part); Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part)	Large map
2	Battlefield & Heathgates (Shrewsbury town)	2	Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part); Harlescott ward (part); Haughmond ward (part – the unparished Battlefield area)	Large map
3	Bayston Hill	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bayston Hill parish)	Map 2
4	Belle Vue (Shrewsbury town)	2	Belle-Vue ward (part); Quarry ward (part); Meole- Brace ward (part)	Large map
5	Bowbrook (Shrewsbury town)	2	Copthorne ward (part)	Large map
6	Castlefields & Quarry (Shrewsbury town)	2	Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part); Quarry ward (part)	Large map
7	Column (Shrewsbury town)	2	Sutton ward (part); Belle-Vue ward (part); Monkmoor ward (part)	Large map
8	Condover	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Church Pulverbatch and Condover)	Map 2
9	Copthorne (Shrewsbury town)	2	Copthorne ward (part); Meole-Brace ward (part); Quarry ward (part)	Large map
10	Hanwood & Longden	1	Rea Valley ward (part – the parishes of Great Hanwood and Longden)	Map 2
11	Harlescott (Shrewsbury town)	2	Harlescott ward (part); Bagley ward (part)	Large map
12	Haughmond & Attingham	1	Haughmond ward (part – the parishes of Astley, Uffington, Upton Magna and Withington); Attingham ward (part – the parishes of Atcham and Berrington)	Map 2
13	Lawley	1	Lawley ward (the parishes of Acton Burnell, All Stretton, Cardington, Church Preen, Frodesley, Hughley, Kenley, Leebotwood, Longnor, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley, Smethcott and Woolstaston); Severn Valley ward (part – Cound parish)	Map 2
14	Meole Brace (Shrewsbury town)	2	Meole-Brace ward (part)	Large map

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)	Map reference
15 Monkmoor (Shrewsbury town)	2	Monkmoor ward (part); Underdale ward (part)	Large map
16 Montford	1	Montford ward (part – the parishes of Great Ness, Little Ness and Montford); Onslow ward (part – Bicton parish)	Map 2
17 Pimhill	1	Pimhill ward (Albrighton, Bomere Heath, Leaton and Preston Gubbals parish wards of Pimhill parish); Montford ward (part – Fitz parish ward of Pimhill parish)	Map 2
18 Porthill (Shrewsbury town)	2	Quarry ward (part); Copthorne ward (part)	Large map
19 Rea Valley	2	Rea Valley ward (part – Minsterley and Pontesbury parishes); Rowton ward (part – Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish)	Maps 2 and A2
20 Rowton	1	Rowton ward (part – the parishes of Alberbury with Cardeston and Wollaston, and Westbury parish ward of Westbury parish); Onslow ward (part – Ford parish)	Maps 2 and A2
21 Severn Valley	1	Severn Valley ward (part – the parishes of Buildwas, Cressage, Harley, Leighton & Eaton Constantine and Sheinton); Attingham ward (part – Wroxeter & Uppington parish)	Map 2
22 Sundorne (Shrewsbury town)	2	Sundorne ward	Map 2
23 Sutton & Reabrook (Shrewsbury town)	2	Sutton ward (part); Belle-Vue ward (part)	Large map
24 Underdale (Shrewsbury town)	2	Underdale ward (part); Monkmoor ward (part); Sutton ward (part)	Large map

Notes: 1 Shrewsbury town is unparished and comprises the 14 wards indicated above.

2 Map 2, Appendix A and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

3 Under our proposals, the modified wards of Belle Vue and Meole Brace would not include hyphens in their names.

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bagley (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,684	1,842	-2	3,840	1,920	-1
2 Battlefield & Heathgates (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,552	1,776	-6	4,021	2,011	3
3 Bayston Hill	2	4,278	2,139	14	4,269	2,135	10
4 Belle Vue (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,650	1,825	-3	3,734	1,867	-4
5 Bowbrook (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,550	1,775	-6	4,166	2,083	7
6 Castlefields & Quarry (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,572	1,786	-5	3,974	1,987	2
7 Column (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,639	1,820	-3	3,712	1,856	-5
8 Condover	1	1,727	1,727	-8	1,788	1,788	-8
9 Copthorne (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,799	1,900	1	3,782	1,891	-3
10 Hanwood & Longden	1	1,907	1,907	1	1,923	1,923	-1
11 Harlescott (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,763	1,882	0	3,738	1,869	-4
12 Haughmond & Attingham	1	1,864	1,864	-1	1,907	1,907	-2
13 Lawley	1	1,884	1,884	0	1,966	1,966	1
14 Meole Brace (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,751	1,876	0	3,737	1,869	-4
15 Monkmoor (Shrewsbury town)	2	4,152	2,076	10	4,177	2,089	7
16 Montford	1	1,929	1,929	2	1,987	1,987	2
17 Pimhill	1	1,651	1,651	-12	1,738	1,738	-11
18 Porthill (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,842	1,921	2	3,858	1,929	-1

Figure 2 (continued):

The Commission's Final Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Rea Valley	2	4,016	2,008	7	4,058	2,029	4
20 Rowton	1	1,937	1,937	3	2,085	2,085	7
21 Severn Valley	1	1,746	1,746	-7	1,793	1,793	-8
22 Sundorne (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,901	1,951	4	3,876	1,938	0
23 Sutton & Reabrook (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,682	1,841	-2	3,687	1,844	-5
24 Underdale (Shrewsbury town)	2	3,803	1,902	1	3,973	1,987	2
Totals	40	75,279	—	—	77,789	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,882	—	—	1,945	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

¹ This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Shrewsbury & Atcham in Shropshire. We have now reviewed the districts in Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin Council) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all principal local authority areas in England. (At the direction of the Secretary of State we undertook an electoral review of Telford & Wrekin Council, formerly The Wrekin, in 1996; we will be undertaking a PER of Telford and Wrekin at a later date.)

² This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Shrewsbury & Atcham. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1975 (Report No. 47). The electoral arrangements of Shropshire County Council were last reviewed in May 1980 (Report No. 382). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

³ In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

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

⁴ We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (updated in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

⁵ In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected,

and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

⁶ Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the Shropshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. In view of these developments, we therefore agreed to the request for an extension of four weeks to Stage One in Shropshire to allow local authorities and other interested parties to prepare schemes for our consideration.

⁷ This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 August 1998, when we wrote to Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Shropshire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the local authority associations, Shropshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Member of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 7 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 2 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Shrewsbury & Atcham in Shropshire*, and ended on 26 April 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

⁹ The borough of Shrewsbury & Atcham covers some 230 square miles and has a population of just over 97,000. It comprises the historic county town of Shrewsbury (which accounts for 68 per cent of the borough's electorate) and a large surrounding rural area. The town centre is contained within a loop of the River Severn which bisects the borough from west to east. The borough contains 42 parishes, but Shrewsbury town itself is unparished. The parished area encircles the town and covers over 90 per cent of the borough's geographical area.

¹⁰ The borough is served by good transport links. The recently completed A5/A49 by-pass, linked to the M54 and the M6, has improved road access to the Midlands and beyond. The mainline railway from Shrewsbury town provides a direct link to London and has major links to Manchester and the North West, and to Mid and South Wales.

¹¹ To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

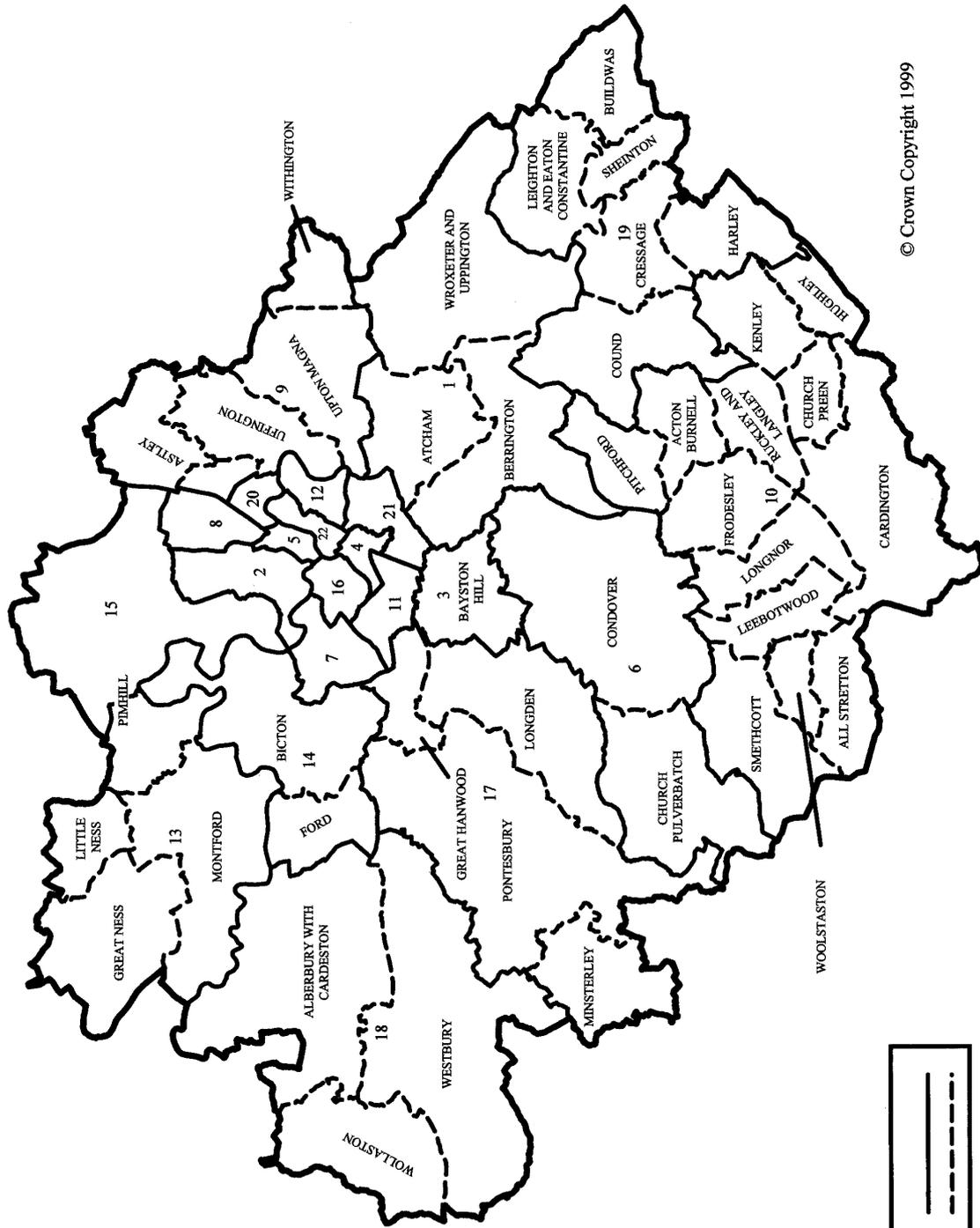
¹² The electorate of the borough is 75,279 (February 1998). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 22 wards, 11 of which are in the unparished town, the remainder being predominantly rural and parished. Thirteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors and the remaining nine are single-member wards. The single-member wards serve the more rural, parished parts of the borough. The Council is elected by thirds.

¹³ Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Shrewsbury & Atcham borough, with around 22 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing

developments. The most notable increases have been in Copthorne and Meole-Brace wards in the town, with approximately 3,000 and 2,000 more electors respectively than 20 years ago.

¹⁴ At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,568 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,621 by the year 2003 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 22 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in four wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Copthorne ward where each of the three councillors represents 46 per cent more electors than the borough average. The degree of imbalance across the borough is also illustrated by the fact that each of the three councillors for Copthorne ward represents nearly twice as many electors as the councillor for Attingham ward.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Shrewsbury & Atcham



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- Key to Wards
- 1 Attingham
 - 2 Bagley
 - 3 Bayston Hill
 - 4 Belle-Vue
 - 5 Castlefields and Ditherington
 - 6 Condover
 - 7 Cophorne
 - 8 Harlescott
 - 9 Haughmond
 - 10 Lawley
 - 11 Meole-Brace
 - 12 Monkmoor
 - 13 Montford
 - 14 Onslow
 - 15 Pimhill
 - 16 Quarry
 - 17 Rea Valley
 - 18 Rowton
 - 19 Severn Valley
 - 20 Sundorne
 - 21 Sutton
 - 22 Underdale

KEY

EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY ———

EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY - - - - -

Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Attingham	1	1,169	1,169	-25	1,191	1,191	-27
2 Bagley (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,420	1,473	-6	4,570	1,523	-6
3 Bayston Hill	3	4,278	1,426	-9	4,269	1,423	-12
4 Belle-Vue (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,462	1,487	-5	4,486	1,495	-8
5 Castlefields & Ditherington (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,285	1,428	-9	4,417	1,472	-9
6 Condover	1	1,727	1,727	10	1,788	1,788	10
7 Cophorne (Shrewsbury town)	3	6,875	2,292	46	7,488	2,496	54
8 Harlescott (Shrewsbury town)	3	3,963	1,321	-16	3,985	1,328	-18
9 Haughmond	1	2,004	2,004	28	2,467	2,467	52
10 Lawley	1	1,577	1,577	1	1,634	1,634	1
11 Meole-Brace (Shrewsbury town)	3	5,903	1,968	25	5,878	1,959	21
12 Monkmoor (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,879	1,626	4	4,899	1,633	1
13 Montford	1	1,466	1,466	-7	1,533	1,533	-5
14 Onslow	1	1,318	1,318	-16	1,336	1,336	-18
15 Pimhill	1	1,425	1,425	-9	1,504	1,504	-7
16 Quarry (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,050	1,350	-14	4,376	1,459	-10
17 Rea Valley	3	5,561	1,854	18	5,596	1,865	15
18 Rowton	1	1,670	1,670	6	1,823	1,823	12

continued overleaf

Figure 3 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Severn Valley	1	1,737	1,737	11	1,803	1,803	11
20 Sundorne (Shrewsbury town)	3	3,901	1,300	-17	3,874	1,291	-20
21 Sutton (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,129	1,376	-12	4,226	1,409	-13
22 Underdale (Shrewsbury town)	3	4,480	1,493	-5	4,642	1,547	-5
Totals	48	75,279	—	—	77,785	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,568	—	—	1,621	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council's submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Attingham ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Cophorne ward were significantly under-represented by 46 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹⁵ During Stage One we received 21 representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council, and representations from the Conservative Group on the Council, Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party, eight parish councils, a local Labour party, four borough councillors and five local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Shrewsbury & Atcham in Shropshire*.

¹⁶ Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals for a 40-member council, and provided a pattern of two-member wards in Shrewsbury, and a mix of single- and two-member wards in the rest of the borough. However, our detailed proposals built on options prepared by Council officers at Stage One. We proposed that:

- (a) Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council should be served by 40 councillors, compared with the current 48, representing 24 wards, two more than at present;
- (b) there should be two-member wards in the town and predominantly single-member wards in the surrounding parished area;
- (c) the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in an increase of two, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (d) the new warding arrangements in Shrewsbury town would address the current level of unequal representation between the north and south areas of the town;
- (e) there should be a reconfiguration of parishes and parish wards to create new borough wards outside the town.

Draft Recommendation

Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council should comprise 40 councillors, serving 24 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

¹⁷ Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 24 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2003. Pimhill ward would vary by 11 per cent from the average.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 22 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council and the Commission.

Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council

19 In response to the draft recommendations Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council only submitted minor modifications to the proposed boundaries between the wards in the north of the town – Bagley, Battlefield & Heathgates, Castlefields & Quarry and Sundorne – in order to better reflect community identity. These modifications would improve upon the electoral variances achieved under the draft recommendations. The Borough Council added that “having based its electoral arrangements proposals on the likelihood that a two-year electoral cycle was to be introduced, [the Council] is seeking strong reassurance that, should legislation to change the electoral cycle in two tier areas not be enacted, its electoral arrangements will be re-reviewed in order that it can put forward proposals more in keeping with elections by thirds.”

The Conservatives

20 The Shrewsbury & Atcham Conservative Association was “in total support of the principles outlined in the recommendations document”. It considered that the Commission had “addressed the current issues ... in a manner we regard as broadly sympathetic to the cultural similarities of the various areas”. However, the Conservative Association submitted modifications to the proposed warding arrangements. It opposed the proposal to link the town centre with the Castlefields area, stating “it is our opinion that there is very little commonality between these areas and that the combination of the town centre with Bagley ward would make a great deal more sense”. However, it recognised that any proposal to change the warding arrangements would have consequential effects on other wards. It also opposed the draft recommendation for Yockleton

parish ward of Westbury parish and offered an alternative warding arrangement for the Broad Oak area of Bagley ward.

21 The Conservative Association considered that the issue of sparsity of population had not been taken into account in formulating the draft recommendations. Furthermore, it preferred whole council elections to the current cycle of annual elections.

22 Councillor Nutting made a representation on behalf on the Conservative Group on the Borough Council. The Conservative Group generally welcomed the draft recommendations for a 40-member council, serving a pattern of single- and two-member wards. However, it proposed elections by halves (which is not permissible under the current legislation) and that the town centre be paired with Bagley ward rather than with Castlefields & Quarry, as included in the draft recommendations.

Local Labour Parties

23 The Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party (CLP) opposed the draft recommendation for Castlefields & Quarry ward, alleging that it would break long established community ties. Its alternative proposal for this area was that the town centre be merged with the Coton Hill and Greenfields area (in Bagley ward). The CLP also opposed the proposals for Monkmoor, Sutton and Underdale wards on the principle of community identity, and stated that the proposal to merge the ‘back of the sheds’ area, currently part of Belle Vue ward, with a new Sutton & Reabrook ward would break “strong local ties and damage community identity”.

24 The Monkmoor, Underdale & Sutton Branch Labour Party opposed elements of the draft recommendations, stating that some of the proposals did not reflect local community identities. Consequently, the Branch Labour Party recommended specific changes to the boundaries of the proposed Underdale, Monkmoor, Column and Sutton & Reabrook wards.

Parish Councils

25 We received representations from five parish councils in the borough, including Astley, Bayston Hill and Condover parish councils which each supported the draft recommendations for warding arrangements in their areas. Astley Parish Council expressed surprise that one borough councillor would represent a ward as geographically large as the proposed Haughmond & Attingham ward, despite the number of electors in the ward being fewer than at present.

26 Minsterley Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation to remove Great Hanwood parish from the existing Rea Valley ward, and instead include Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish in the ward. It stated that Yockleton parish ward has no community links with the area. Great Hanwood Parish Council did not comment on the draft recommendations, but wrote concerning a pending parish review to be undertaken by the Borough Council. Under the current legislation the power to modify external parish boundaries is outside the remit of the Commission; we have suggested that the issues be brought to the attention of the Borough Council.

Other Representations

27 We received a further 11 representations in response to our draft recommendations, from four borough councillors, a local community centre and seven local residents.

28 Councillor Jones, member for Condover ward, supported the draft recommendations for Condover ward. Councillor Beddow, member for Castlefields & Ditherington ward, proposed amendments to the boundary between Castlefields & Quarry ward and Battlefields & Heathgates ward as proposed by the Commission, on the basis that they would be more coherent with local community identities and transport links. He also proposed a minor amendment to the proposed boundary of Bagley ward. Councillors Dunham, Mrs Dunham and Farmer, members for Bagley ward, generally welcomed the draft recommendations, but proposed a small change to the boundary of Bagley ward and suggested that boundaries be drawn to include whole roads in the same ward.

29 Councillor Mrs Woolland, member for Rea Valley ward, supported the proposal to reduce the council size from 48 to 40 and to retain Habberley in Rea Valley ward. However, she expressed concern about the electoral variance in the proposed Pimhill ward (11 per cent in 2003), and suggested that it be addressed by modifying its boundary with Bagley ward. She also objected to the inclusion of Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish in a modified Rea Valley ward and urged the Commission “to reconsider this proposal in the interests of natural local communities and geographical boundaries”.

30 The Springfield & Sutton Youth and Community Centre expressed concern that the recommendations for Sutton & Reabrook ward would separate Springfield Estate from the Sutton Farm Estate, which it stated have been linked for over 30 years.

31 Five of the seven residents who responded to our consultation document were from Belle Vue, and all objected to the proposed warding arrangements for this area. They stated that the ‘back of the sheds’ area, included in the new Sutton & Reabrook ward under the draft recommendations, is an integral part of Belle Vue ward and thus should remain within its boundaries. One of the Belle Vue residents also opposed the recommendation to include parts of the existing Quarry and Meole Brace wards in the revised Belle Vue ward, instead suggesting that the Borough Council’s Stage One proposals for this area be adopted.

32 Two residents of Ryton jointly welcomed the draft recommendations to retain Ryton village in Condover ward, to include Cound parish in Lawley ward and Wroxeter & Uppington parish in Severn Valley ward. They felt that these proposals would improve electoral equality and provide an improved warding pattern.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

33 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Shrewsbury & Atcham is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

36 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any

ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

37 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 75,279 to 77,785 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expects most of the growth to be in Shrewsbury town, especially in Copthorne ward, although some is also expected in the unparished Battlefield area of the existing Haughmond ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

38 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

39 Our *Guidance* indicates that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough or district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

40 Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council is at present served by 48 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a significant reduction in council size from 48 to 40. It stated that the issue of council size had been raised during the early stages of the review process, when the proposal for a council of 40 members had received all-party support. The Council added that its proposal to reduce the size of the Council was made “following consideration of the

Government's White Paper ... and its implications for the electoral review". It considered that 40 members "would adequately manage Council business". Furthermore, it noted that with 48 members the Council is larger than Shropshire County Council (44 members) and the new Telford & Wrekin Unitary Council (33 members).

41 In its Stage One submission the Conservative Group had suggested that the decision on council size should be determined by what would achieve a good electoral scheme across the borough and that this may be anywhere between 36 and 48 members. A resident of Shrewsbury had supported no change to the current level of representation on the Council.

42 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 40 members.

43 At Stage Three there was general acceptance of the proposed council of 40 members and no proposals for an alternative council size were received. We therefore confirm as final our draft recommendation for a council size of 40.

Electoral Arrangements

44 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council and comments from Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council Conservative Group, Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party and a Branch Labour Party, eight parish councils, three borough councillors and six residents. We were also provided with schemes prepared by council officers at Stage One. From these representations some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

45 The Council's proposals were for a reduction in council size from 48 to 40, with two-member wards in the town and a predominance of single-member wards in the rural parished area. The proposals would have resulted in some improvement to electoral equality, with the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent reduced from 11 to five initially and to

two in 2003. The Council stated that the proposals allowed "for the retention of community ties and the protection of community identity within the town" and that some members "were strongly of the view that community identity should be cited as justification for exceeding the Commission's guidelines on electoral equality" in the rural area.

46 We recognised the improved electoral equality which would be achieved by the Borough Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we put forward changes to ward boundaries in order to improve the balance of representation between the north and south areas of Shrewsbury town.

47 We have had a generally positive response to our draft recommendations, with support for the proposed 40-member council, serving a pattern of two-member wards in the town and predominantly single-member wards in the more rural, parished area. We were also pleased to note that the Stage Three representations indicated local support for utilising the length of the River Severn as a boundary in the town, in order to address the electoral inequality that currently exists between the north and south of Shrewsbury. Although it is clear that the town centre needs to be included in a ward in the north of the town, in order to achieve the best balance of representation, there is a mixed opinion as to which ward it should form a part.

48 The majority of the 22 representations we received at Stage Three proposed only small iterations to ward boundaries in the town. Two areas of notable contention emerged, one in the town (the proposed Belle Vue ward) and the other in the surrounding rural area (the proposal affecting Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish); both are described in more detail in the relevant section later in this chapter.

49 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of the evidence and representations received at Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Shrewsbury town
 - Bagley and Harlescott wards;
 - Castlefields & Ditherington and Sundorne wards;

- Monkmoor, Sutton and Underdale wards;
- Belle-Vue and Meole-Brace wards;
- Copthorne and Quarry wards.

(b) The rural area

- Pimhill, Haughmond and Attingham wards;
- Severn Valley and Lawley wards;
- Bayston Hill, Condober and Rea Valley wards;
- Montford, Onslow and Rowton wards.

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

Shrewsbury town

51 Shrewsbury town comprises 68 per cent of the borough's total electorate and is divided north from south by the River Severn and intersected by the mainline railway. It comprises 11 three-member wards, eight of which are currently over-represented. Based on a council of 40 members, the size of the electorate in the whole of the unparished town area merits 28 councillors.

52 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the unparished town be re-warded, including that part of the existing Haughmond ward that is unparished and also subject to significant development, into 14 two-member wards, with changes to all of the existing ward boundaries. Its proposals retained the existing boundary of the River Severn, but moved away from the existing boundary of the railway line in the town centre area, thereby including part of the town centre in a modified Bagley ward. Under the Council's proposals 12 of the 14 wards in the town would have had an electoral variance of no more than 10 per cent, with Battlefield & Heathgates ward varying from the borough average by 19 per cent and Copthorne ward by 14 per cent. In 2003 none of its proposed wards in the town was forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average.

53 In its Stage One submission, the Council advised us that during its deliberations it had considered other proposals for the urban area which were prepared by Council officers; these were appended to the Council's submission. However, with the exception of three wards (Bowbrook, Castlefields & Ditherington and Harlescott), these proposals differed from the Borough Council's final proposals in all areas.

Under the officers' proposals the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in four wards, improving to none in 2003.

54 We received representations from a number of respondents during Stage One who pointed out that under both the Council's proposals and those prepared by officers, the wards in the north of the town would remain relatively over-represented, while those in the south would be under-represented. We calculated that under the Council's proposals the electorate in the north of the town would be over-represented by 23 per cent and the electorate in the south of the town under-represented by 13 per cent. The Conservative Group urged the Commission to put forward recommendations in which the number of electors per councillor in all the urban wards was as near as possible to the average for the borough. Another respondent, a resident of Shrewsbury town, favoured the retention of three-member wards in the town as he considered they "served people well".

55 Our broad objective is that electoral equality should be as near as possible to the borough average, having regard to local circumstances, and in the urban area there are no parish boundaries to restrict ward patterns or the achievement of electoral equality. In putting forward draft recommendations for consultation, we sought to build on the proposals received during the initial stage of the review. However, we concluded that the electoral inequality which would remain under these proposals could be improved. This would involve including more electors in the northern wards to address the relative over-representation in the north of the town, which would persist under some of the proposals received.

56 In our draft recommendations, we proposed five two-member wards north of the River Severn and nine two-member wards south of the river in the town.

57 At Stage Three the majority of representations received about this area commented on specific boundaries included in our draft recommendations, together with our conclusions on the proposed warding arrangements in the town; they are described in more detail below.

58 We would add that, while some comments related only to specific areas of the town, we cannot look at any one area in isolation, but have to consider the impact any changes would have on the

surrounding area and the ward pattern for the town as a whole. In Shrewsbury town, any changes to one ward would have a knock-on effect on other wards in the town.

59 Furthermore, in order to achieve a good electoral scheme while moving to a pattern of two-member wards, as preferred locally, there will inevitably need to be considerable change to the existing ward configuration. This is supported by calculating that the optimum number of electors in a three-member ward under the existing council size of 48 is 4,704, compared to the optimum number of 3,764 for a two-member ward under a council size of 40 (based on 1998 electorate figures). While there are 11 wards in the town under the existing arrangements, there would be 14 wards under a 40-member council. Wards are therefore likely to comprise smaller areas.

60 Our final recommendations for the town are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Bagley and Harlescott wards

61 Bagley and Harlescott wards are located in the north of Shrewsbury town and return three councillors each. The average number of electors represented by each councillor is 6 per cent and 16 per cent below the borough average respectively (6 per cent and 18 per cent in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

62 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that part of Heath Farm Estate (924 electors from polling district SC) should be transferred from Bagley to Harlescott ward, and that an area north-east of the town centre (379 electors from polling district SV) should be transferred from Quarry to Bagley ward. In addition, it proposed a modified Harlescott ward, comprising the major part of polling district SL and that part of Heath Farm Estate transferred from Bagley ward. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bagley and Harlescott wards would be 3 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (6 per cent above and 6 per cent below in 2003) based on a council size of 40. Each ward would return two councillors.

63 Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals for the two wards at Stage One, except for expressing concern over the proposal to split the

town centre between two borough wards. Councillors Mr and Mrs Dunham, members for Bagley ward, recognised the need to split Heath Farm Estate, but thought that it would be better to retain the section nearest Ellesmere Road in Bagley ward. Councillor Mrs Sandford, one of the three members for Harlescott ward, was concerned that the Harlescott and Lancaster Road industrial area would be included in the new Battlefield & Heathgates ward, as it is separated from the new ward by the railway line and no electors would be involved anyway. She also opposed the Council's proposal to transfer the integral part of the Grange from Harlescott to Battlefield & Heathgates ward. Battlefield & Heathgates ward is outlined in more detail later.

64 We carefully considered the Stage One representations. Although the Council's proposals for both wards would achieve better electoral equality than the current arrangements, we proposed slight modifications to both wards to improve electoral equality in the wider area. We proposed that the boundary between Bagley and Harlescott wards should follow Walnut Drive and Boscobel Drive (thereby transferring 163 electors from Bagley to Harlescott ward), as opposed to following the backs of houses, as proposed by the Council. We also proposed that 236 electors in the Stokesay area should be returned to Harlescott ward from Battlefield & Heathgates ward, and that the part of the town centre transferred to Bagley ward under the Council's proposals should be included instead in a new Castlefields & Quarry ward, in order to achieve reasonable electoral equality in the surrounding wards.

65 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Bagley ward (2 per cent below in 2003) and equal to the average in Harlescott ward (4 per cent below in 2003).

66 At Stage Three we received six submissions in response to our proposals for these two wards. The Borough Council proposed a minor modification to Bagley ward's boundary with Battlefield & Heathgates, proposing that the whole of Birchwood Drive be included in Bagley ward, rather than split between the two wards, as exists at present and as proposed under the draft recommendations. This proposal was supported by Councillor Beddow and Councillors Dunham, Mrs Dunham and Farmer.

67 Councillors Dunham, Mrs Dunham and Farmer, members for Bagley ward, suggested that the electors at Broad Oak (north of Bagley ward) would wish to remain part of Bagley ward and not be included in a ward to the north (Pimhill ward), as had been proposed by the Conservative Association. However, the Conservatives offered no detailed alternative arrangements to those included in the draft recommendations.

68 Shrewsbury & Atcham Conservative Association and Constituency Labour Party both favoured a warding arrangement that involved the town centre being included in Bagley ward rather than Castlefield & Quarry ward, as proposed under the draft recommendations. The Conservative Association also stated that the members for Harlescott ward were concerned about the proposal to include the Harlescott Industrial Estate in a new Battlefield & Heathgates ward. The Conservative Group on the Borough Council voiced similar concerns about warding arrangements for the town centre and Harlescott Industrial Estate.

69 We judge that the small amendment to Bagley ward's eastern boundary affecting 25 electors on Birchwood Drive should form part of our final recommendations in order to meet the request for the whole road to fall within one ward. This amendment would marginally improve electoral equality in the ward. In addition, we have reviewed the warding pattern for the town as a whole, in response to the recent submissions. In order to accommodate the view that the town centre should be included in Bagley ward, consequential changes would need to be made to Battlefield & Heathgates, Castlefields & Quarry and Sundorne wards, unnecessarily splitting established communities. We are not persuaded by the evidence received at Stage Three that this proposed change, with its consequential effects on neighbouring wards, would provide a better electoral scheme. We are therefore not moving away from our draft recommendations in this area.

70 In response to the proposals to include Harlescott Industrial Estate currently in Harlescott ward (involving no electors), we judge that this change would create a ward that may isolate electors in its south. We also note that the proposed boundary was adopted from the Borough Council's scheme at Stage One. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to the small boundary change in the Birchwood

Drive area, as proposed by the Borough Council. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bagley ward would be 2 per cent below the borough average (1 per cent above in 2003) and in Harlescott ward would be equal to the average (4 per cent below in 2003), based on a council size of 40.

Castlefields & Ditherington and Sundorne wards

71 Castlefields & Ditherington and Sundorne wards are also located in the north of Shrewsbury town and each return three members. The average number of electors per councillor is 9 per cent below and 17 per cent below the borough average respectively (9 per cent and 20 per cent below in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

72 To address the relative over-representation in the two existing wards, which would be accentuated under a council of 40 members, the Borough Council proposed at Stage One that the western boundary of Castlefields & Ditherington ward should follow the railway line (with a slight deviation to encompass The Meadows), thereby excluding the Mount Pleasant estate which would form part of a new Battlefield & Heathgates ward. It also proposed that Sundorne ward should remain broadly as it is, except for excluding a few properties on Featherbed Lane and Whitchurch Road "which are on the edge of the estate and face away from it". These properties would be included in the new Battlefield & Heathgates ward (as their only road access is from the new ward), together with the Battlefield area of the existing Haughmond ward (993 electors), the industrial estate and part of The Grange from Harlescott ward.

73 Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Battlefield & Heathgates, Castlefields & Ditherington and Sundorne wards would be 19 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (9 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent below in 2003), based on two-member wards and a council size of 40.

74 A local resident made a representation at Stage One supporting the Council's proposal for the Sundorne area, while another supported the proposal for the Castlefields & Ditherington area. No other representations were received regarding these wards at Stage One.

75 When formulating our draft recommendations, we recognised the Borough Council's attempts to address electoral equality in this area. We judged that the Council's proposal for Sundorne ward would follow well-defined boundaries and keep most of the Sundorne estate together, while achieving reasonable electoral equality, and therefore included it in our draft recommendations. However, we remained concerned at the persisting imbalance in the Council's proposed Battlefield & Heathgates ward. In order to address this imbalance, and the overall imbalance between the north and south of the town under the Council's proposals, we proposed boundary amendments to both Castlefields & Ditherington and Battlefield & Heathgates wards. We proposed that the part of the town centre (379 electors) transferred to Bagley ward under the Borough Council's scheme, together with the remainder of Quarry ward (polling district SV, 531 electors) up to the river, should instead be included in Castlefields & Ditherington ward, and that 776 electors in the Ditherington area should be transferred from Castlefields & Ditherington ward to Battlefield & Heathgates ward. Our proposals followed a clear boundary and included the whole of the town centre in one ward.

76 In view of our proposed boundary changes in this area, we also proposed that the suggested ward name of Castlefields & Ditherington should be modified to Castlefields & Quarry as a better reflection of the area covered by the ward. We particularly invited comments on this ward name at Stage Three.

77 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Battlefield & Heathgates ward (4 per cent above in 2003) and 1 per cent above the average in Castlefields & Quarry ward (8 per cent above in 2003). The variances in Sundorne ward would be unchanged from the Borough Council's proposals (2 per cent below the average initially and 6 per cent below in 2003).

78 In response to our draft recommendations, the Borough Council proposed changes to the boundaries of all three of these wards, which would improve electoral equality and provide better boundaries. The proposed boundary between Battlefield & Heathgates and Castlefields & Quarry

wards would be modified to include Spring Gardens and Wingfield Close in Battlefield & Heathgates ward, and Millers Green in Castlefields & Quarry ward. The Council also proposed that the boundary between Battlefield & Heathgates and Sundorne be adjusted to follow the centre of Whitchurch Road, as opposed to running to the east of properties, as was included under the draft recommendations. In addition, the Borough Council proposed that the whole of Birchwood Drive be included in Bagley ward, rather than split between wards, as it is at present and in our draft recommendations. Under the Borough Council's recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in Battlefield & Heathgates ward (3 per cent above in 2003), 5 per cent below in Castlefields & Quarry ward (2 per cent above in 2003) and 4 per cent above in Sundorne ward (equal to the average in 2003), under a 40-member council. These proposals were supported by Councillor Beddow, member for Castlefields & Ditherington ward.

79 Both the Shrewsbury & Atcham Conservative Association and Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party opposed our recommendation to link the town centre with Castlefields, instead proposing that it be combined with Bagley ward, arguing that this reflects its historic links. Both recognised that this proposal would have a knock-on effect on wards in the surrounding area.

80 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received at Stage Three, and conclude that the Borough Council's proposed boundary changes to Battlefield & Heathgates, Castlefields & Quarry and Sundorne wards should form part of our final recommendations, since they would improve electoral equality and provide good boundaries. We have also reviewed the warding arrangements involving the town centre. However, as recognised by some respondents, any proposals to link the town centre with Bagley ward would involve significant reconfiguration to the rest of the ward pattern in the north of the town affecting the proposed Bagley, Castlefield & Quarry, Battlefields & Heathgates and Sundorne wards, all of which received some support at Stage Three. We are not persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to warrant moving away from our proposed ward pattern in this area. Under our final recommendations the

electoral variances would be the same as those under the Borough Council's Stage Three proposals.

Monkmoor, Sutton and Underdale wards

81 The three wards of Monkmoor, Sutton and Underdale are situated in the south-east of Shrewsbury town, south of the River Severn and return three councillors each. The average number of electors represented by each councillor is 4 per cent above the borough average in Monkmoor ward (1 per cent above in 2003), 12 per cent below in Sutton ward (13 per cent below in 2003) and 5 per cent below in Underdale ward (unchanged in 2003), under a council size of 48.

82 The Council's Stage One proposals for these three wards were based on the officers' proposals but with some modifications. Monkmoor ward would continue to comprise polling districts SS and ST, with amendments to the boundary to follow the new road system in the west (Bage Way and Robertson Way) and the railway line in the south. The Abbey Foregate area in the south of Underdale ward would be included in a new Column ward, together with polling district SU of Monkmoor ward and part of the existing Sutton ward. The remainder of the existing Sutton ward, together with the Springfield estate (part of polling district SE of Belle-Vue ward) would comprise a new Sutton & Reabrook ward. The boundary between Column and Sutton & Reabrook wards would go north along Wenlock Road from the Weeping Cross roundabout, west along Sutton Way and north along Sutton Road to Laundry Lane. It would then continue west along Laundry Lane to Pritchard Way, turning north along Pritchard Way to Old Potts Way and Old Potts Road.

83 Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Monkmoor ward (10 per cent below in 2003), 3 per cent above in Underdale ward (unchanged in 2003), 4 per cent below in Column ward (5 per cent below in 2003) and 1 per cent below in Sutton & Reabrook ward (4 per cent below in 2003), based on a 40-member council size and two-member wards.

84 At Stage One Monkmoor, Underdale & Sutton Labour Party submitted proposals for the three existing wards which largely reflected the Borough Council's proposals for this area. However, it

proposed a slight modification to the southern boundary of Sutton ward to follow Otley Road.

85 The officers' proposals differed from the Council's Stage One proposals for these three wards. They proposed that the boundary between Monkmoor and Underdale wards in the north should be modified to transfer 694 electors from polling district TE in Monkmoor ward to Underdale ward, with no further changes to Underdale ward, thereby retaining the Abbey Foregate area in the latter ward. The remainder of Monkmoor ward south of the railway line (polling district SU), together with the existing Sutton ward and polling district SE of Belle-Vue ward, would form two new wards, Sutton and Reabrook. The boundary between these two wards would follow the disused railway line, then go north along Sutton Road and west along Laundry Lane to Pritchard Way and the existing boundary. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the borough average in Monkmoor ward (7 per cent above in 2003), 1 per cent above in Underdale ward (2 per cent above in 2003), 3 per cent below in Sutton ward (5 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent below in Reabrook ward (5 per cent below in 2003), also based on a 40-member council and two-member wards.

86 At Stage Two we gave careful consideration to the proposals received for this area. Although electoral equality would be similar under both the Council's and the officers' proposals, we judged that the officers' proposals would have the advantage of utilising more defined boundaries, and facilitate a better scheme elsewhere in the town, and therefore adopted them as our draft recommendations. We consulted on the ward names of Column and Sutton & Reabrook, as proposed by the Borough Council, instead of Sutton and Reabrook, as we judged that they would better reflect community identities.

87 During Stage Three, we received four representations regarding the proposed warding pattern in this area. The Constituency Labour Party opposed our recommendations for Monkmoor, Sutton and Underdale wards, arguing that they would split Sutton Farm from Springfield, an action that would result in the breaking of community ties. However, it did not propose detailed alternative warding arrangements, but suggested that the Commission accept the Borough Council's Stage One recommendations in this area.

88 The Monkmoor, Underdale and Sutton Branch Labour Party also opposed our recommendations for this area. They proposed that the area north of Monkmoor Road and east of Woodcote Way (approximately 700 electors) remain part of Underdale ward and not be transferred to Monkmoor ward as proposed in the draft recommendations. In order to address the electoral inequality that would result from such a proposal, the Branch Labour Party suggested that the area in the south of Underdale ward, along Abbey Foregate, be included in the new Column ward. In addition they proposed that the eastern boundary of the proposed Sutton & Reabrook ward be extended to follow Wenlock Road to the Weeping Cross Roundabout.

89 The Springfield & Sutton Youth and Community Centre also opposed our recommendations for Sutton & Reabrook ward, arguing that they are detrimental to the local community, and a resident of Belle Vue stated that the recommendations for Sutton & Reabrook ward “will be meaningless to the residents involved”.

90 We have appraised the various comments relating to this area. As mentioned earlier, we have reviewed our proposed warding for the town, in the light of the representation received at Stage Three and the ward pattern for the whole area. However, the proposal to retain 700 electors (in the area bounded by Woodcote Way and Monkmoor Road) in Underdale ward would result in a relatively high degree of over-representation in Underdale ward and under-representation in Monkmoor ward. Any further changes to either ward to address such imbalances are limited by the clear boundaries used in the draft recommendations, notably the railway line forming the southern boundary of Monkmoor ward, Bage Way and Robertson Way forming the boundary between the two wards, and the River Severn and the Rea Brook forming the western and southern boundaries respectively of Underdale ward. The Branch Labour Party’s proposal to include Abbey Foregate in Column ward would not compensate Monkmoor ward for the loss of 700 electors and address the electoral imbalance that would result from this proposal, and we have not therefore been persuaded to adopt it.

91 Similarly, the proposal to extend the boundary of the proposed Sutton & Reabrook ward to Wenlock Road, thereby incorporating a substantial part of the proposed Column ward, would affect some 600 additional electors, thus resulting in an

under-represented Sutton & Reabrook ward and an over-represented Column ward. We note that the existing Column ward already straddles Wenlock Road, and further changes to the boundaries of Column and Sutton & Reabrook wards are limited by the boundaries of the town and the use of railway lines as good ward boundaries.

92 We have not been persuaded that, based on a pattern of two-member wards, an alternative configuration is available that would meet the objective of electoral equality as satisfactorily as our draft recommendations, while using good boundaries. Consequently, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. The electoral equality under our final recommendations would be the same as that under the draft recommendations, as detailed in paragraph 85.

Belle-Vue and Meole-Brace wards

93 Belle-Vue and Meole-Brace wards are located in the south of Shrewsbury town and return three councillors each. Under the current arrangements Belle-Vue ward is over-represented by 5 per cent (8 per cent in 2003), while Meole-Brace ward is under-represented by 25 per cent (21 per cent in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

94 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifications to both wards. Belle-Vue ward would comprise polling district SD and 624 electors from polling district SE, together with the Kemps Eye area of Meole-Brace ward (227 electors in polling district SN) and the western part of the Longden Road area (polling district SY of Quarry ward). Meole-Brace ward would comprise the existing polling districts SP and SR, 418 electors from polling district SN and 1,135 electors from the Bank Farm area (polling district SQ). Under the Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Belle Vue and Meole Brace wards (without the hyphens) would be 2 per cent above and 10 per cent above the borough average respectively (1 per cent and 6 per cent in 2003), based on a council size of 40 and two-member wards.

95 The Constituency Labour Party also proposed slight modifications to both wards at Stage One. It proposed that a further 260 electors from polling district SN of Meole-Brace ward should be transferred to Belle-Vue ward, and that the Roman Road and Grange Road area (of polling district SQ) should be retained in Meole-Brace ward and not transferred to Copthorne ward as proposed by

the Council. Copthorne ward is detailed later. Under the Constituency Labour Party's proposals the electoral variances would be 9 per cent in Belle Vue ward and 12 per cent in Meole Brace ward (8 per cent in both wards in 2003).

96 The officers' proposals differed from the Council's Stage One proposals for the two wards. Under the officers' proposals, Belle-Vue ward would comprise the existing polling districts SD, SN and SY, and would follow natural boundaries (railway lines and the River Severn), with the inclusion of a small part of Quarry ward (43 electors from the St Julian's Friars area). Meole-Brace ward would be based on existing polling districts SP, SR and part of SQ, and would follow an existing footpath which runs through the Radbrook Green estate. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Belle-Vue ward (1 per cent above in 2003) and 8 per cent above the average in Meole-Brace ward (4 per cent above in 2003).

97 After due consideration of the Stage One representations and evidence, we concluded that the officers' proposals for these two wards would achieve better electoral equality and utilise more clearly defined boundaries. We therefore used the officers' proposals as the basis for our draft recommendations, subject to several minor boundary amendments. Under our proposals, Belle Vue ward would continue to comprise polling district SD, together with polling district SN from Meole-Brace and polling district SY from Quarry. The St Julian's Friars area (43 electors in polling district SV) would, however, be retained in Quarry ward, allowing the boundary in this area to follow the River Severn. Meole Brace ward would comprise polling districts SP and SR and 1,153 electors from polling district SQ. The boundary between the two wards would follow Roman Road and Oteley Road, and the western boundary of Meole Brace ward would follow Pembroke Way and Bank Farm Road, then go in a south-westerly direction adjacent to Bank Farm Cottages and Melton Way as far as the town boundary.

98 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Belle Vue ward and equal to the average in Meole Brace ward (4 per cent below in 2003 in both wards, with names which would exclude the hyphens), based on a 40-member council and two-member wards.

99 At Stage Three six respondents expressed opposition to the boundaries of Belle Vue ward included under our draft recommendations. Shrewsbury & Atcham Constituency Labour Party did not agree with the proposal to include the 'back of the sheds' area (currently in Belle Vue ward) in a ward with Sutton Farm, arguing that this could result in a "breaking of very strong local ties and damage to the community identity". Five residents of Belle Vue argued that the 'back of the sheds' area was an integral part of Belle Vue community and should remain as such, and that our draft recommendation to remove it from Belle Vue ward would undermine an old and established community.

100 The Constituency Labour Party also stated that the proposed boundaries of Meole Brace ward would threaten established communities ties.

101 Of those who have expressed a view during the review, there has been support for a pattern of two-member wards in the town. In order to accommodate this and a smaller council size, the current warding pattern must undergo significant reconfiguration and, in general, the wards will be smaller, as detailed earlier. The 'back of the sheds' area comprises some 600 electors and to retain this area in Belle Vue ward under the new warding arrangements would result in it being substantially under-represented, and would have a significant knock-on effect on neighbouring wards. We judge that our draft recommendations would provide a good electoral scheme for the town as a whole, including the proposals for the modified wards of Belle Vue and Meole Brace. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for these two wards as final, and thus the electoral variances would be the same as in paragraph 98 and would be unchanged from the draft recommendations.

Copthorne and Quarry wards

102 Copthorne and Quarry wards are situated in the south-west of Shrewsbury town and return three councillors each. The average number of electors represented by each councillor is 46 per cent above and 14 per cent below the borough average respectively (54 per cent above and 10 per cent below in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

103 In its Stage One submission the Borough Council proposed that Copthorne ward should be divided into two new two-member wards, Bowbrook and Copthorne, to address the very

significant imbalances that exist at present in this area. Bowbrook would be situated to the western edge of the town, comprising the Bicton Heath, Shelton hospital and Bowbrook areas (polling district SK and 351 electors from polling district SJ), much of which would be new residential development by 2003. Copthorne ward would comprise part of the area around the barracks (592 electors from polling district SH), 2,003 electors from polling district SJ, the Grange Road area (1,525 electors from polling district SQ of Meole-Brace ward) and 181 electors from polling district SX of Quarry ward. It also proposed that the north-east part of the town centre (379 electors from polling district SV) should be transferred from Quarry to Bagley ward, and that the remainder of Quarry ward (less that transferred to Belle-Vue and Copthorne wards), together with the remainder of the area around the barracks (part of polling district SH of Copthorne), should form a modified Quarry ward.

104 Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bowbrook ward would be 6 per cent below the borough average (7 per cent above in 2003 due to forecast development), 14 per cent above in Copthorne ward (10 per cent above in 2003) and 3 per cent above in Quarry ward (5 per cent above in 2003), based on a council size of 40.

105 The Constituency Labour Party supported the Council's Stage One proposal for Bowbrook ward, but proposed that the whole of the town centre should remain in Quarry ward, that the barracks area (part of polling district SH) should be returned to Copthorne ward and that the Grange Road area (part of polling district SQ) should be returned to Meole-Brace ward. These proposals were identical to the officers' proposals for the three wards, except that the officers' proposals transferred 43 electors in the St Julian's Friars area (polling district SV) from Quarry to Belle-Vue ward; the area is linked to Belle-Vue ward only by a footpath across the River Severn.

106 Having considered all the Stage One representations, we concluded that the Council's proposal for a new Bowbrook ward would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have some local support, but we proposed modifications to its proposed Quarry ward. As proposed by the Constituency Labour Party and included in the officers' proposals, in our draft recommendations

we proposed retaining the Grange Road area (part of polling district SQ) in Meole-Brace ward and not transferring it to Copthorne ward. We recognised the Council's attempt to achieve a better balance of representation north and south of the River Severn by proposing the inclusion of part of the town centre in a ward to its north. However, under their proposals, some imbalance would continue between the northern and southern parts of the town and, therefore, we proposed that the whole of the town centre (ie. the area within the loop of the River Severn – polling district SV) should be included in a new Castlefields & Quarry ward, as detailed earlier.

107 At Stage One we understood that our proposals to link the town centre with the Castlefields area would be similar to the warding pattern prior to reorganisation in 1974. However, at Stage Three we have been informed by the Constituency Labour Party that the town centre's historical link with borough wards in the north of the town is in fact with the current Bagley ward.

108 With the proposed inclusion of the town centre in Castlefields & Quarry ward, Copthorne ward needed to gain some electors in order to achieve an electoral variance closer to the borough average. We therefore proposed that the boundary between the Council's proposed Copthorne and Quarry wards in the north-west should be modified to follow Shelton Road, thereby transferring 484 electors from the former to the latter ward. In the light of our boundary changes, we also proposed renaming Quarry ward as Porthill, since the quarry would no longer form part of that ward, and we noted that Porthill is a commonly used road name in that area.

109 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Copthorne ward (3 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Porthill ward (1 per cent below in 2003), based on a council size of 40 and two-member wards.

110 In response to our draft recommendations we received only one submission regarding the proposed warding arrangements for the existing Copthorne and Quarry wards. A resident of Belle Vue was concerned that the part of the existing Quarry ward, included in a modified Belle Vue ward under our draft recommendations, would have "little relation or sympathy" to the rest of the ward.

111 In formulating our final recommendations for this area we have carefully considered all the evidence available. We have reassessed the warding arrangements for the south of Shrewsbury town and have been unable to find a satisfactory alternative to our draft recommendations. We also judge that our proposed Cophorne and Porthill wards would achieve a good level of electoral equality, utilise identifiable boundaries and facilitate a coherent warding pattern in the south of the town. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final.

112 Overall, we conclude that our proposals for Shrewsbury town would address the relative over- and under-representation in the north and south of the town, while following well-defined boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria.

113 The overall balance of representation between the north and south of the town is much improved under our final recommendations as it was under our draft recommendations: the electorate to the north of the River Severn would be over-represented by 9 per cent (improving to zero in 2003), and the electorate south of the river would initially have the correct level of representation (over-represented by 6 per cent in 2003). On balance, we conclude that our boundaries would provide a fairer level of representation across the town, without adversely affecting the statutory criteria.

The Rural Area

114 The rural area covers some 210 square miles (over 90 per cent of the whole borough area) and is made up of 11 wards, comprising 42 parishes, together with the unparished Battlefield area to the north-east of Shrewsbury town. Two of these wards, Bayston Hill and Rea Valley, elect three councillors each, while the remaining nine wards are each served by a single councillor. The number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in five of the 11 wards, two of which, Attingham and Haughmond, vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.

115 During the Council's deliberations at Stage One there was consensus to include the unparished part of Haughmond ward (the Battlefield area which borders the town) in the town for borough warding purposes. The Borough Council had considered a number of options for the rural area, two options based on two-member wards

throughout and two based on a combination of single- and two-member wards. There was overwhelming support for single-member wards in the rural area from both members and parish councils, and the Borough Council therefore proposed such a pattern. Under the Council's proposals, however, significant electoral imbalances would continue in a number of wards. Our conclusions on the proposed warding arrangement for the rural area are detailed below.

116 Under our draft recommendations, we therefore proposed some reconfiguration of parishes and parish wards in drawing up borough wards, in order to achieve a more balanced representation.

117 In responding to our draft recommendations, the Borough Council made no specific comments on the proposals for the rural, parished area. A number of other Stage Three respondents commented on the proposals for the rural area, notably those affecting Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish. These, together with our conclusions, are referred to under the relevant headings in the following sections.

Pimhill, Haughmond and Attingham wards

118 These three wards are situated in the north and east of the borough and return one councillor each. Pimhill ward currently comprises Albrighton, Bomere Heath, Leaton and Preston Gubbals parish wards of Pimhill parish and comprises 9 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (7 per cent fewer in 2003). Haughmond ward, to the north-east of Shrewsbury town, comprises the parishes of Astley, Uffington, Upton Magna and Withington, plus the Battlefield area which is unparished. The number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 28 per cent above the borough average. Due to substantial development in the ward, under the current ward pattern the electoral variance in Haughmond ward is expected to worsen significantly to 52 per cent above the average in 2003. Attingham ward comprises the parishes of Atcham, Berrington and Wroxeter & Uppington, and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 25 per cent below the average (27 per cent below in 2003). All the above variances are based on a council size of 48.

119 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Pimhill ward should be extended westwards to include Fitz parish ward of Pimhill parish

(currently in Montford ward), thereby incorporating the whole parish, and eastwards to include Astley parish (currently in Haughmond ward). The unparished area of Battlefield would be included with the rest of Shrewsbury town, which is also unparished, for borough warding purposes (detailed earlier). The Council further proposed that the remainder of Haughmond ward should be combined with Attingham ward to form a new single-member Haughmond & Attingham ward. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Pimhill and Haughmond & Attingham wards would be 9 per cent above and 5 per cent below the borough average respectively (10 per cent above and 6 per cent below in 2003), based on single-member wards and a council size of 40.

¹²⁰ In formulating our draft recommendations we recognised the Council's attempts to address the imbalances in this area. However, we remained concerned at the relative over-representation (16 per cent) which would persist in the south-eastern ward of Lawley (detailed later). Therefore, in order to achieve a better balance of representation across the wider area, we decided to make some minor modifications to the Council's proposals. We proposed that Astley parish should remain in the new Haughmond & Attingham ward, and that Wroxeter & Uppington parish be included in a modified Severn Valley ward (detailed below). We noted that these proposals formed part of one of the Council officers' draft proposals for the rural area, but did not feature in the Council's final Stage One submission. The Council did not provide any specific reasons why these proposals were rejected.

¹²¹ Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Pimhill and Haughmond & Attingham wards would be 12 per cent below and 1 per cent below the borough average respectively (11 per cent and 2 per cent below in 2003). Although a degree of electoral imbalance would continue in Pimhill ward, we concluded that these proposals, as put forward by the Borough Council, would facilitate better electoral equality in the neighbouring wards. Any further improvement to electoral equality in these wards would have an adverse consequential effect on the rest of the borough.

¹²² The Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations for Pimhill ward, stating that the inclusion of Grafton parish ward of Pimhill parish in Pimhill borough ward would be "a logical positioning which was not presently recognised".

¹²³ Councillor Mrs Woolland, member for Rea Valley ward, proposed that part of Pimhill ward be merged with Bagley ward in order to reduce the electoral inequality in Pimhill ward under our draft recommendations (11 per cent in 2003).

¹²⁴ Astley Parish Council supported the new Haughmond & Attingham ward, stating that "Astley would remain part of the rural area and had much in common with the parishes in the proposed new ward".

¹²⁵ We have considered all Stage Three representations in reaching our final recommendations. In response to the proposal from Councillor Mrs Woolland, we note that Pimhill ward would be relatively over-represented under our draft recommendations (11 per cent in 2003) and in order to address this, electors would need to be added to Pimhill ward. It is therefore not appropriate that part of Pimhill ward be merged with Bagley ward, as proposed by Councillor Mrs Woolland, since it would only serve to worsen the electoral equality. Conversely, including part of Bagley ward (unparished area), which is also marginally over-represented, in Pimhill ward (parished) was considered, but would provide only a marginal improvement in electoral equality. In recommending warding arrangements we have attempted to respect boundaries between unparished town and parished rural areas, as preferred locally, as it would achieve an appropriate electoral balance.

¹²⁶ In the light of the general support for our proposals in this area and in the absence of alternative suggestions which would better meet the statutory criteria, we are endorsing our draft recommendations as final for the two single-member wards of Pimhill and Haughmond & Attingham. Under our final recommendations for a 40-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Pimhill ward (11 per cent below in 2003) and 1 per cent below the average in Haughmond & Attingham ward (2 per cent below in 2003).

Severn Valley and Lawley wards

¹²⁷ Located in the south-east of the borough, Severn Valley ward currently elects a single councillor and comprises the parishes of Buildwas, Cound, Cressage, Harley, Leighton & Eaton Constantine and Sheinton. The number of electors represented by the councillor is 11 per cent above

the borough average. Lawley ward covers a large geographic area and comprises the 13 parishes of Acton Burnell, All Stretton, Cardington, Church Preen, Frodesley, Hughley, Kenley, Leebotwood, Longnor, Pitchford, Ruckley & Langley, Smethcott and Woolstaston. The number of electors represented by the single councillor for the ward is 1 per cent above the average. No change in electoral variance is expected in the two wards over the five-year period, based on a 48-member council.

¹²⁸ The Borough Council proposed no change to either ward in its Stage One submission although, under its proposed 40-member council, the overall electoral balance would worsen: the number of electors per councillor would be 16 per cent below the borough average in Lawley ward (unchanged in 2003) and 8 per cent below the average in Severn Valley ward (7 per cent below in 2003). A resident of Conover stated that Lawley ward should be over-represented as it covers a large geographic area. However, the legislation governing electoral reviews does not provide for any rural weighting in electoral equality terms. We seek an even balance of representation across the whole borough.

¹²⁹ We carefully considered the Borough Council's proposal for no change in this area, but remained concerned at the relative over-representation that would occur in Lawley ward under a 40-member council. Therefore, in order to improve the electoral imbalance, we proposed in our draft recommendations that the boundary of Lawley ward should be extended to include Cound parish (currently in Severn Valley ward). As stated earlier, Wroxeter & Uppington parish (currently in Attingham ward) would form part of a modified Severn Valley ward. These proposals featured in one of the Council officers' draft proposals, although we were unclear as to why they were rejected. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Lawley and Severn Valley wards would be equal to the borough average and 7 per cent below the average respectively (1 per cent above and 8 per cent below in 2003).

¹³⁰ At Stage Three, two residents of Ryton supported the draft recommendations for their area, stating that the proposals would "annexe Cound into Lawley ward and Wroxeter & Uppington into Severn Valley ward thereby addressing to some extent the variation from average electorate factor and at the same time achieving a more symmetrical ward boundary layout".

¹³¹ In the light of this support and the absence of any other representations, we remain satisfied that the boundaries included in our draft recommendations for this area would strike the best balance achievable between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm them as final.

Bayston Hill, Conover and Rea Valley wards

¹³² Located to the south of Shrewsbury town is Bayston Hill ward (and parish) which currently elects three councillors, each of whom represents on average 9 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (12 per cent fewer in 2003), under a council size of 48.

¹³³ With the exception of reducing the ward's representation from three to two councillors, the Borough Council proposed no change to Bayston Hill ward in its Stage One submission, as the ward reflects a coherent community, with the settlement located in the urban core, and is coterminous with the parish. The Council ruled out warding the parish, stating that "it would make little sense to create a parish ward of, say, 400 to 500 electors which could be hived off to another borough ward for the sake of electoral equality". Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bayston Hill ward would be 14 per cent above the borough average (improving to 10 per cent above in 2003). Bayston Hill Parish Council also supported no change to the ward.

¹³⁴ In formulating our draft recommendations we considered the representations received and recognised the limited options available for this area. The ward would be served by two councillors and the main body of electors is in the centre of the ward, with large open spaces between the settlement and neighbouring wards. Although a degree of under-representation would exist, we concluded that any improvement to the electoral imbalance in this ward would be at the cost of community identity, effective and convenient local government and electoral equality in the surrounding area. We therefore included the Borough Council's proposal for no change to Bayston Hill ward as part of our draft recommendations.

¹³⁵ At Stage Three, Bayston Hill Parish Council supported our proposal retaining the existing boundaries of Bayston Hill ward. The Borough Council made no specific comments. We have decided to confirm our draft recommendation for Bayston Hill ward as final.

136 Under the current arrangements the single-member Condoover ward comprises the parishes of Church Pulverbatch and Condoover, and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 10 per cent above the average (unchanged in 2003). Rea Valley ward comprises the parishes of Great Hanwood, Longden, Minsterley and Pontesbury. The ward currently elects three councillors, each of whom represents on average 18 per cent more electors than the borough average (15 per cent in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

137 At Stage One the Council proposed that Condoover ward should remain on its existing boundaries and that Rea Valley ward should be divided into two wards: a new single-member Hanwood & Longden ward, comprising the parishes of Great Hanwood and Longden; and a modified two-member Rea Valley ward, comprising the remaining parishes of Minsterley and Pontesbury. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Condoover ward (unchanged in 2003), 1 per cent above in Hanwood & Longden ward (1 per cent below in 2003) and 3 per cent below in Rea Valley ward (6 per cent below in 2003), based on a 40-member council.

138 Condoover Parish Council and three local residents supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal to retain Ryton village in Condoover ward and not include the village in neighbouring Lawley ward, as was proposed under one of the officers' proposals. Great Hanwood Parish Council favoured no change to Rea Valley ward but, if change was necessary, had no objection to the new Hanwood & Longden ward, but proposed that Great Hanwood parish boundary should be extended to include part of Pontesbury parish. However, on the latter point, the Commission is unable to review the external boundaries of parishes as part of this review. The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 returned such powers to the Borough Council.

139 Minsterley Parish Council supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposal to exclude Longden parish from Rea Valley ward, but did not agree with the proposal to remove Great Hanwood parish, as the parish has more in common with the remaining parishes in Rea Valley ward. Pontesbury Parish Council and a local resident wanted Habberley parish ward of Pontesbury parish to remain in Rea Valley ward.

140 In considering the representations received at Stage One, we concluded that the Borough Council's proposals for Condoover and Hanwood & Longden wards would achieve improved electoral equality, with no consequential effect on the surrounding wards and therefore included them as part of our draft recommendations. We noted the opposition to excluding Great Hanwood parish from Rea Valley ward, but to keep it in the ward would result in poor electoral equality (19 per cent) and adversely affect electoral equality in neighbouring wards, notably Hanwood & Longden ward. To address the considerable under-representation which would exist in the neighbouring Rowton ward under the Borough Council's proposals, we proposed modifying the boundary between the Council's proposed Rea Valley and Rowton wards. We proposed that Rea Valley ward should be extended to include Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish (currently in Rowton ward), which would provide a more balanced representation.

141 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in the two-member Rea Valley ward (4 per cent above in 2003). Rowton ward is described in the next section.

142 Although this draft proposal had been considered as part of one of the Council officers' draft schemes, we were aware that it has been opposed by councillors and parish councils because wards of the same parish would form part of different borough wards. However, it is permissible for wards of a parish to be included in different borough wards under Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972. Furthermore, in seeking to address the electoral imbalances in any district or borough, we cannot look at any one area in isolation, but have to consider the consequential effect that proposals for one area would have on surrounding areas. We therefore concluded that, in this area, a more equitable level of representation could be achieved by using existing parish wards as building blocks, and included this proposal in our draft recommendations.

143 In response to our draft recommendations we received seven representations commenting on various elements of our proposals for the three wards of Condoover, Hanwood & Longden and Rea Valley.

144 Condoover Parish Council stated that it "approves the report, particularly the decision to allow Ryton village to remain in Condoover ward",

which was also supported by Councillor Jones, member for Condober ward and two local residents.

145 In its Stage Three submission Minsterley Parish Council stated that it “regrets that Great Hanwood could not be kept within the Rea Valley ward”. Councillor Mrs Woolland, member for Rea Valley ward, stated that “although I appreciate the views of those who wish to see Hanwood remain in the same ward as Pontesbury and Minsterley, I accept that this would not provide the required electoral equality, and therefore support the formation of the new Hanwood & Longden ward”. She also supported the retention of Habberley in the modified Rea Valley ward.

146 The Shrewsbury & Atcham Conservative Association, Councillor Mrs Woolland and Minsterley Parish Council all opposed our proposal to include Yockleton parish ward of Westbury Parish in a modified Rea Valley ward. The Conservative Association stated that “the separation of the area of Yockleton from the Parish of Westbury is raising local concern. Residents wish you to reconsider the transfer of this area to the Rea Valley ward, though they realise this may cause a problem with the numbers of voters in these wards.” All three respondents argued that Yockleton parish ward has no natural links with the other parishes in the proposed Rea Valley ward, and indicated that it is served by a different arterial road. Councillor Mrs Woolland proposed that the Commission “reconsider this proposal in the interests of natural local communities and geographical boundaries”.

147 In the light of the support for the proposed Condober ward, we confirm our draft recommendation as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the single-member Condober ward would be 8 per cent below the borough average (unchanged in 2003), based on a council size of 40. We are also confirming our draft recommendation for a single-member Hanwood & Longden ward, where the councillor would represent 1 per cent more electors than the borough average (1 per cent fewer in 2003), based on a 40-member council.

148 We have carefully considered the representations and evidence received at Stage Three regarding the proposed boundaries of Rea Valley ward. In seeking to address these concerns, we must have regard to the need for electoral equality and in considering moving ward boundaries in one area

we must examine any effects on neighbouring wards. The result of retaining the whole of Westbury parish in Rowton ward would be an electoral variance of 27 per cent in that ward. In an attempt to find an alternative warding arrangement, we have carefully reconsidered the warding arrangements for the rural area as a whole. However, we have been unable to find a satisfactory alternative to our draft recommendations that also meets the statutory criteria. We have not been persuaded therefore that there is sufficient reason to depart from our draft recommendations in this area.

149 We conclude that the best balance between all the statutory criteria would be achieved under the draft recommendations for a two-member Rea Valley ward, which we are confirming as final. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average (4 per cent above in 2003).

Montford, Onslow and Rowton wards

150 These three single-member wards are located in the north-west of the borough. At present, Montford ward comprises the parishes of Great Ness, Little Ness and Montford, and Fitz parish ward of Pimhill parish. The number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 7 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent below in 2003). Onslow ward comprises the parishes of Bicton and Ford, and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 16 per cent below the average (18 per cent below in 2003). Rowton ward comprises the parishes of Alberbury with Cardeston, Westbury and Wollaston; the number of electors represented by the single councillor is 6 per cent above the borough average (12 per cent above in 2003), based on a council size of 48.

151 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Fitz parish ward of Pimhill parish should be included in a modified Pimhill ward and that Bicton parish (currently in Onslow ward) should be included in a modified Montford ward. It also proposed that Ford parish (also currently in Onslow ward) should form part of a modified Rowton ward. Onslow ward would therefore cease to exist. No further changes were proposed for Rowton ward. Under the Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Montford ward (unchanged in 2003) and 22 per cent above the average in Rowton ward (27 per cent above in 2003), based on a 40-member council.

152 The Conservative Group did not support the Council's Stage One decision to retain Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish in Rowton ward, as the ward would be considerably under-represented (27 per cent). The proposal to exclude Yockleton parish ward from Rowton ward had featured in one of the Council officers' draft proposals, although it was opposed by parish councils which did not favour using parish wards as building blocks for borough wards, and did not therefore form part of the Council's final Stage One submission. Great Ness & Little Ness Parish Council proposed that only minimal changes should be made to Montford ward, without submitting any further details. Councillor Roberts, the member for Rowton ward, proposed that Ford parish should be included in Montford ward, and that Yockleton parish ward be included in Rea Valley ward, to achieve a better balance of representation in those wards.

153 We gave careful consideration to the representations received in formulating our draft recommendations. We concluded that the Borough Council's proposal for Montford ward would achieve good electoral equality, while broadly reflecting the current ward pattern: the ward would retain the existing three constituent parishes with the addition of Bicton parish. This proposal formed part of our draft recommendations. However, we were concerned at the under-representation which would persist in Rowton ward under the Council's proposals. We therefore proposed that Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish should be included in Rea Valley ward for borough warding purposes, as it had some local support, including the member for Rowton ward. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Rowton ward would be 3 per cent above the borough average (7 per cent above in 2003).

154 At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding our proposal for Montford ward and confirm our draft recommendation as final.

155 Although we had no direct representations regarding Rowton ward itself, the comments received regarding the proposed Rea Valley ward and Yockleton parish ward of Westbury parish would have consequences on the neighbouring Rowton ward which currently includes Westbury parish. As detailed earlier, if the whole of Westbury parish was to remain in Rowton ward, the electoral variance for Rowton ward would be 27 per cent.

We have not been persuaded that such a substantial variance is justified or that this area should be considered as an exceptional circumstance and therefore be treated differently to the rest of the borough in terms of representation. We therefore confirm our draft recommendation for Rowton ward as final. Our proposal is illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

156 In the initial stage of the review the Borough Council proposed that one half of the Council should retire every other year "in anticipation that legislation will be enacted to bring into force the Government's plans, outlined in the White Paper". However, as detailed in our draft recommendations report, we are guided by the current legislation and, therefore, our draft recommendations included no change to the Council's present system of elections by thirds.

157 At Stage Three we received several submissions that made reference to Shrewsbury & Atcham's electoral cycle. The Borough Council stated that "having based its electoral arrangements proposals on the likelihood that a two year electoral cycle was to be introduced, [the Council] is seeking strong reassurance that, should legislation to change the electoral cycle in two-tier areas not be enacted, its electoral arrangements will be re-reviewed in order that it can put forward proposals more in keeping with elections by thirds."

158 Shrewsbury & Atcham Conservative Association proposed that the electoral cycle be altered to facilitate whole council elections, arguing that this system could provide a "real opportunity for change, generating a much higher turnout on election day". Councillor Mrs Woolland proposed that, since many of the wards will be represented by two councillors, "it seems logical to elect the Council by halves, not thirds".

159 In undertaking electoral reviews the Commission can only make recommendations that are consistent with existing legislation. On electoral cycles, the existing legislation provides for either whole-council elections or elections by thirds for shire district councils. As recognised by the Borough Council, a system of elections by halves would require changes to the legislation. Consequently, we are confirming as final our draft recommendation for no change to the current system of election by thirds for Shrewsbury & Atcham.

160 In response to the Borough Council's comments regarding reassessment of Shrewsbury & Atcham's electoral arrangements in the event of no legislative change, the 1992 Act provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, there should be intervals of not less than 10 years and not more than 15 years between periodic electoral reviews. In view of this, we would not expect to undertake another periodic electoral review of ward boundaries in Shrewsbury & Atcham for some years. An earlier review would require a direction from the Secretary of State.

Conclusions

161 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse substantially our draft recommendations, subject to modifying the boundaries between the proposed Bagley and Battlefield & Heathgates wards, Battlefield & Heathgates and Castlefields & Quarry wards and Battlefield & Heathgates and Sundorne wards, as proposed by the Borough Council.

162 We conclude that, in Shrewsbury & Atcham:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 48 to 40;
- (b) there should be 24 wards, two more than at present;

- (c) the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified; and
- (d) the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

163 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

164 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 11 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2003, with only one ward, Pimhill, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council should comprise 40 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Figure 4 : Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	48	40	48	40
Number of wards	22	24	22	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,568	1,882	1,621	1,945
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	2	11	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	4	0

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

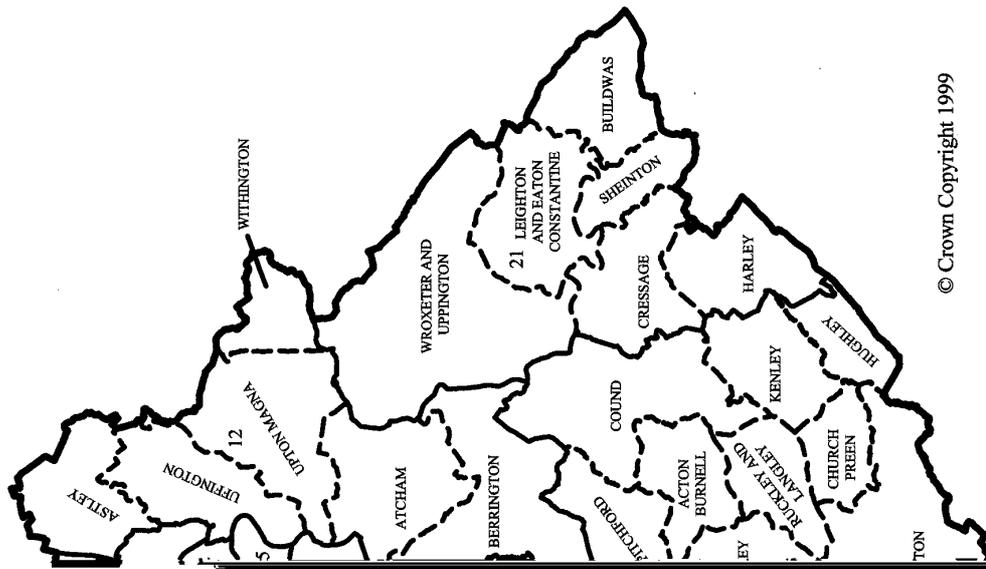
165 At Stage One we did not receive any proposals for change to the electoral arrangements of parish councils in the borough, and in our draft recommendations we proposed no changes to them as a consequence of the proposed borough warding arrangements. Furthermore, we did not propose any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough.

166 In response to our consultation report we received no comments on the electoral arrangements of parish councils. We confirm as final our recommendation that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough.

Final Recommendation

For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham



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6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham: Detailed Mapping

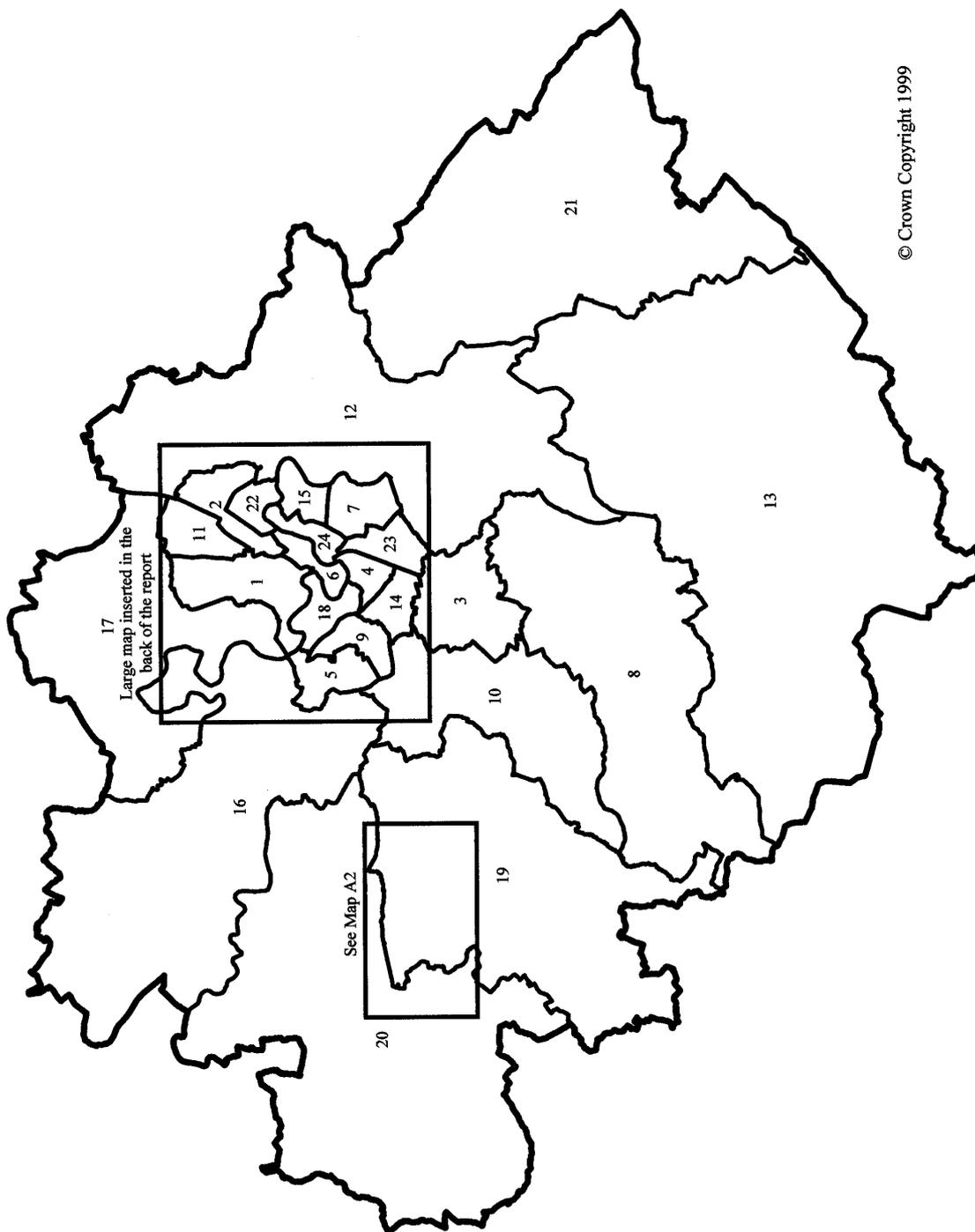
The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Shrewsbury & Atcham area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Map A2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the existing warding of Westbury parish and proposed boundary between Rea Valley and Rowton borough wards.

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

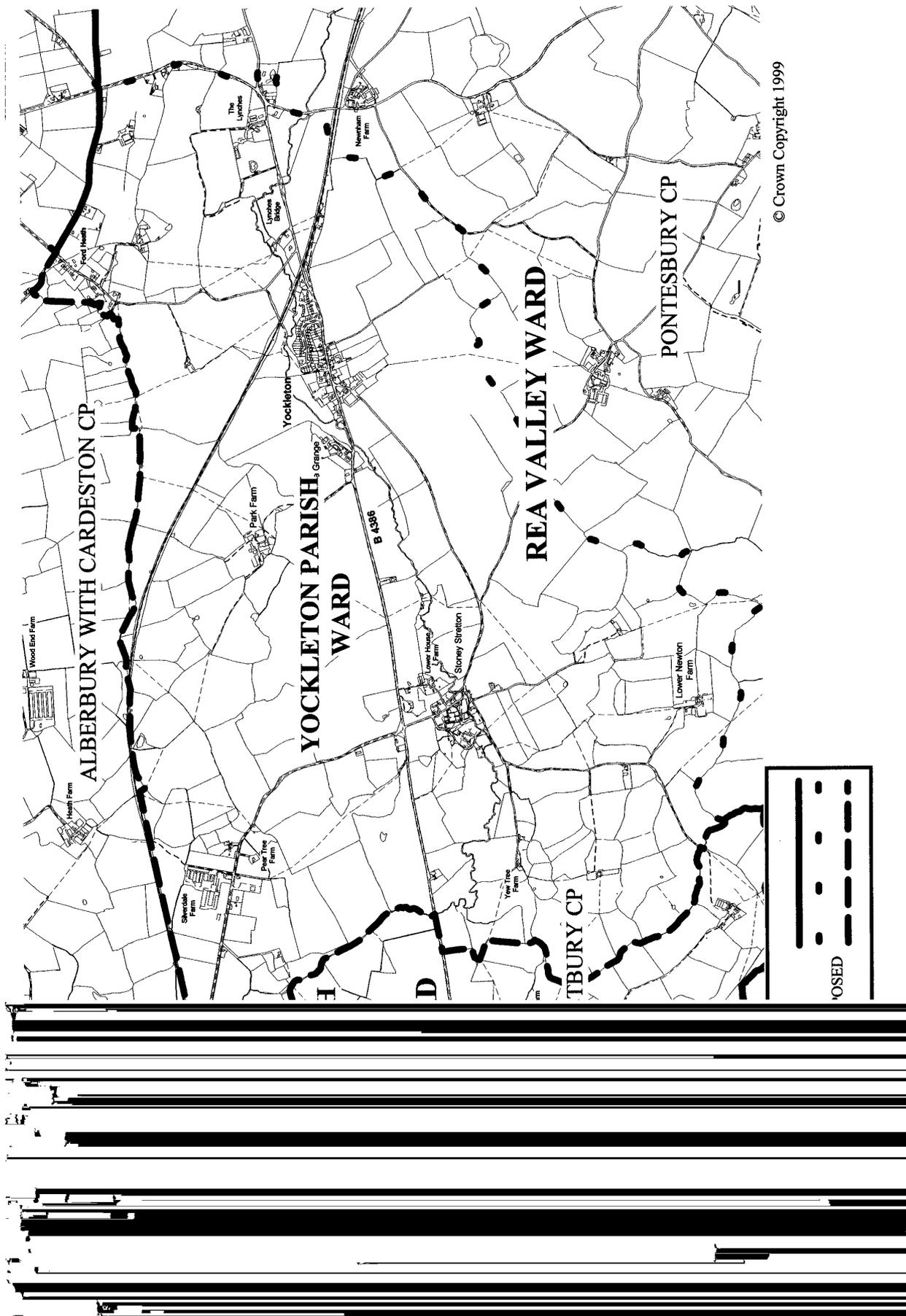
Map A1:
Final Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham: Key Map



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- Key to Wards
- 1 Bagley
 - 2 Battlefield and Heathgates
 - 3 Bayston Hill
 - 4 Belle Vue
 - 5 Bowbrook
 - 6 Castlefields and Quarry
 - 7 Column
 - 8 Conover
 - 9 Copthorne
 - 10 Hanwood and Longden
 - 11 Harlescott
 - 12 Haughtmond and Attingham
 - 13 Lawley
 - 14 Meole Brace
 - 15 Monkmoor
 - 16 Montford
 - 17 Pimhill
 - 18 Porthill
 - 19 Rea Valley
 - 20 Rowton
 - 21 Severn Valley
 - 22 Sundorne
 - 23 Sutton and Reabrook
 - 24 Underdale

Map A2:
 Existing Warding of Westbury Parish and Proposed Boundary between Rea Valley and Rowton
 Borough Wards



APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Shrewsbury & Atcham

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only four wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Bagley	Bagley ward (part); Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part)*
Battlefield & Heathgates	Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part); Harlescott ward (part); Haughmond ward (part – the unparished Battlefield area); Sundorne ward (part)
Castlefields & Quarry	Castlefields & Ditherington ward (part)*; Quarry ward (part)
Sundorne	Sundorne ward (part)

Note: Although the constituent areas appear the same as in Figure 1, the parts of Castlefields & Ditherington ward included in the proposed Bagley and Castlefield & Quarry wards are marginally different than under our final recommendations.

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bagley	2	3,659	1,830	-3	3,815	1,908	-2
Battlefield & Heathgates	2	3,592	1,796	-5	4,061	2,031	4
Castlefields & Quarry	2	3,786	1,893	1	4,188	2,094	8
Sundorne	2	3,672	1,836	-2	3,647	1,824	-6

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council.

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

