

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Redditch in Worcestershire

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?	5
SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	11
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	13
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	17
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	19
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	21
6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	33
APPENDIX	
Final Recommendations for Redditch: Detailed mapping	35

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Redditch is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of The Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Redditch in Worcestershire.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Redditch's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 February 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

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

- **in six of the 11 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 69-70) are that:

- **Redditch Borough Council should have 29 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 12 wards, instead of 11 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In ten of the proposed 12 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 continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards, expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 10 September 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Abbey	2	part of Abbey ward; part of Batchley ward; part of Central ward	Map 2 and Large Map
2	Astwood Bank & Feckenham	2	Feckenham parish; part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of Feckenham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
3	Batchley	3	part of Batchley ward	Map 2 and Large Map
4	Central	2	part of Batchley ward; part of Central ward; part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
5	Church Hill	3	part of Abbey ward; Church Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
6	Crabbs Cross	2	part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of Feckenham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
7	Greenlands	3	part of Greenlands ward; part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
8	Headless Cross & Oakenshaw	3	part of Central ward; part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of Greenlands ward; part of Lodge Park ward; part of West ward	Map 2 and Large Map
9	Lodge Park	2	part of Lodge Park ward	Map 2 and Large Map
10	Matchborough	2	part of Matchborough ward	Map 2 and Large Map
11	West	2	part of Crabbs Cross ward; part of West ward	Map 2 and Large Map
12	Winyates	3	part of Matchborough ward; Winyates ward	Map 2 and Large Map

Notes: 1 The parish of Feckenham is the only parish in Redditch and is contained within the proposed Astwood Bank & Feckenham ward.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Redditch

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Abbey	2	4,149	2,075	-1	4,149	2,075	-4
2	Astwood Bank & Feckenham	2	4,363	2,182	4	4,381	2,191	1
3	Batchley	3	4,693	1,564	-26	6,264	2,088	-4
4	Central	2	4,121	2,061	-2	4,298	2,149	-1
5	Church Hill	3	6,463	2,154	3	6,342	2,114	-3
6	Crabbs Cross	2	4,377	2,189	4	4,377	2,189	1
7	Greenlands	3	6,149	2,050	-2	6,094	2,031	-6
8	Headless Cross & Oakenshaw	3	6,945	2,315	10	6,975	2,325	7
9	Lodge Park	2	3,909	1,955	-7	4,059	2,030	-6
10	Matchborough	2	4,707	2,354	12	4,625	2,313	7
11	West	2	4,326	2,163	3	4,609	2,305	6
12	Winyates	3	6,724	2,241	7	6,736	2,245	4
	Totals	29	60,926	-	-	62,900	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,101	-	-	2,169	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Redditch 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 Redditch in Worcestershire. The six districts in Worcestershire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Redditch's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 356). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Redditch was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for the parish council in the borough.

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

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Redditch is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Redditch Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the local authority associations, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils, the parish council in the borough, the Member of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It 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 22 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 February 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Redditch in Worcestershire*, and ended on 22 April 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The borough of Redditch is situated in east Worcestershire and was designated a “New Town” in 1964. Redditch covers an area of 5,435 hectares and is bounded to the north by the district of Bromsgrove, in the east by the district of Stratford-on-Avon and in the south by the district of Wychavon. Redditch has a population of 77,023 and is predominantly urban in character. The borough contains one parish, Feckenham, in the south west.

11 The electorate of the borough is 60,926 (February 2001). The Council presently has 29 members who are elected from 11 wards, ten of which are urban in character, the other being rural. Four of the wards are each represented by two councillors and seven are each represented by three councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,101 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,169 by the year 2006 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 six of the 11 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Crabbs Cross ward where each of the two councillors represents 40 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Redditch

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Abbey	2	4,273	2,137	2	4,218	2,109	-3
2	Batchley	3	5,681	1,894	-10	7,252	2,417	11
3	Central	3	5,366	1,789	-15	5,543	1,848	-15
4	Church Hill	2	5,284	2,642	26	5,217	2,609	20
5	Crabbs Cross	2	5,863	2,932	40	5,854	2,927	35
6	Feckenham	2	5,048	2,524	20	5,066	2,533	17
7	Greenlands	3	6,583	2,194	5	6,500	2,167	0
8	Lodge Park	3	5,120	1,707	-19	5,298	1,766	-19
9	Matchborough	3	6,486	2,162	3	6,404	2,135	-2
10	West	3	6,278	2,093	0	6,591	2,197	1
11	Winyates	3	4,944	1,648	-22	4,957	1,652	-24
	Totals	29	60,926	-	-	62,900	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,101	-	-	2,169	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Redditch 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. For example, in 2001, electors in Winyates ward were relatively over-represented by 22 per cent, while electors in Crabbs Cross ward were significantly under-represented by 40 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received 13 representations, including two borough-wide schemes from Redditch Borough Council and Redditch Conservative Association, and representations from 11 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Redditch in Worcestershire*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two- and three-member wards across the borough. However, it moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting four wards, combining elements of the Borough Council's proposals with its own proposals. It proposed that:

- Redditch Borough Council should be served by 29 councillors, as at present, representing 12 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Redditch Borough Council should comprise 29 councillors, serving 12 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in ten of the 12 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 7 per cent.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 81 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Redditch Borough Council.

Redditch Borough Council

18 The Borough Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations. It proposed one minor amendment in the centre of the borough and ward names based on the existing ward names.

Redditch Conservative Association

19 Redditch Conservative Association (hereafter referred to as the Conservatives) expressed “disappointment” at the draft recommendations and reiterated their Stage One proposals in the Church Hill, Matchborough and Winyates areas and for a council size of 30. They also proposed several amendments affecting four of the proposed wards.

The Liberal Democrats

20 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Borough Council put forward revised ward names in each of the proposed wards.

Worcestershire County Council

21 The County Council put forward three amendments affecting seven of the proposed wards. It argued that two of its amendments used “more natural boundaries”, while the other amendment would provide for an improved reflection of community identity.

Other Representations

22 A further 77 representations were received in response to the LGCE’s draft recommendations from local organisations and residents. Winyates Green Residents’ Association and 11 local residents each opposed the draft proposal to transfer the Winyates Green area from the existing Matchborough ward to the proposed East ward. Representations were received from 39 residents in the Paper Mill Drive and Hither Green Lane areas, each opposing the proposed Northern ward. Representations were received from 25 residents on the Wirehill Estate each opposing the proposed South Central ward. One local resident expressed support for the draft recommendations in the Ipsley area and commented on the draft recommendations in the north and in the centre of the borough.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

23 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Redditch is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

25 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

26 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

27 Since 1979 there has been a 44 per cent increase in the electorate of Redditch borough. At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3 per cent from 60,926 to 62,900 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the Batchley area due to significant development proposals in this area. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

28 The Conservatives submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4 per cent from 60,926 to 63,164 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. They stated that the variation between the Borough Council’s projected electorate and their projected electorate was due to the fact that while the “areas of projected growth in electorate may be identified from the Local Plan, the specific areas of a ward where the electorate is expected to reduce are not identified”. The LGCE therefore asked officers at the Borough Council to revisit their projections for the whole borough. They stated that they remained satisfied that their original projections represented the best estimates in electorate over the five-year period. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that the Borough Council’s figures represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

29 The LGCE received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

30 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

31 At Stage One, the LGCE received two borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Conservatives. Redditch Borough Council proposed retaining the current council size which, together with its proposals for new warding arrangements, would provide for an improved level of electoral equality. In preparing its proposals, it consulted locally, outlining its proposed council size. The Conservatives proposed an increase of one in council size from 29 to 30 and stated that an improvement in electoral equality could be achieved with a ratio of one councillor for every 2,100 electors.

32 The LGCE noted that the Borough Council had consulted locally on its proposed council size, evidence of which was included in its Stage One submission. The LGCE also noted that the Conservatives' scheme did not provide detailed evidence or argumentation in support of their proposed increase in council size, nor did it include evidence of local consultation on its proposal. Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, the LGCE concluded that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council size of 29 members.

33 During Stage Three, the Borough Council expressed broad support for the proposed council size of 29. The Conservatives reiterated their Stage One proposal for a council size of 30 and stated that the "deficiencies" of the proposed council size of 29 could be demonstrated by the proposed, "anomalous" South East and North East wards. The Conservatives also stated that under the LGCE's draft proposals for a council size of 29 the proposed South East ward would become "under-represented".

34 We have carefully considered the representations received in response to the draft recommendations. We note the Borough Council's support for the proposed council size of 29. We also note the Conservatives' comments regarding "under-representation" in the proposed South East ward. In practice, the draft recommendations provide for an improved level of electoral equality, and we do not consider that the proposed South East ward would be significantly under-represented with 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006. In the light of the representations received we are confirming as final, the draft recommendation for a council size of 29.

Electoral Arrangements

35 At Stage One the LGCE received two borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Conservatives. The LGCE noted that both borough-wide schemes provided for a significant improvement in the level of electoral equality for the borough as a whole. The LGCE considered that, on balance, the Borough Council's proposals, combined with the evidence of local consultation included in its Stage One submission, provided the better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Conservatives' scheme which did not appear to have been consulted on. The LGCE also noted that the Borough Council proposed dividing the community of Ipsley between two borough wards, while the Conservatives proposed retaining the community in one ward. The LGCE considered that there was merit in the Conservatives' proposal to retain Ipsley in one ward. As a result of these considerations the LGCE based its draft recommendations largely on the Borough Council's scheme (which did reflect parts of the Conservatives' scheme in the south and west of the borough), and retained Ipsley in one ward as proposed by the Conservatives. The LGCE made three additional minor amendments to the Borough Council's

proposals to better reflect the statutory criteria. In its submission the Borough Council put forward several ward names for each of its proposed wards. For the purpose of the consultation the LGCE opted for the first name proposed for each ward. However, it was not persuaded that these ward names adequately reflected community identities and interests and invited alternative suggestions.

36 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations. There was, however, considerable opposition to the draft recommendations in the north and east of the borough. We note that the Conservatives issued an “urgent notice” to residents in the Church Hill area, living to the west of Paper Mill Drive. The notice explained the LGCE’s draft recommendations in this area and argued that the Paper Mill Drive area should be part of the proposed North East ward. It encouraged residents who shared the Conservatives’ view, to write to the Commission and oppose the draft recommendations in this area. We are also of the opinion that in the east of the borough respondents appear to have been misled as to the effects of the draft recommendations. The Conservatives stated that under the draft recommendations, the proposed South East ward would become “under-represented” with an electoral variance of 12 per cent. The subsequent representations, received from 11 local residents, stated that the proposed South East ward would be under-represented. In practice, however, the draft recommendations for the proposed South East ward provide for improved levels of electoral equality (7 per cent by 2006) and we do not consider that the ward would be significantly under-represented. As a result of these considerations we propose that the draft recommendations be substantially confirmed subject to a boundary amendment and several amendments to ward names. The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill wards;
- (b) Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates wards;
- (c) Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West wards.

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

Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill wards

38 The existing wards of Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill are situated in the north of the borough. Abbey and Church Hill wards are currently represented by two councillors and have 2 per cent and 26 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 20 per cent more by 2006). Batchley is a three-member ward and currently contains 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (11 per cent more by 2006).

39 At Stage One, the LGCE received two submissions in relation to this area. The Borough Council proposed a three-member North East ward based on the existing Church Hill ward. It stated that the large electorate in the Church Hill area forced a “subdivision” of the Church Hill estate, and while not an ideal solution to improve electoral equality, it would make what it termed as, “the least objectionable split” in the north west of the existing Church Hill ward. In the remainder of the area the Borough Council put forward two-member Northern and three-member North West wards based on the existing Abbey and Batchley wards respectively. The Borough Council proposed that electors from the existing Batchley and Central wards be transferred to the new Northern ward and the remainder of the existing Batchley ward form the new North East ward.

40 The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more

than 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. The Conservatives, however, did not provide any evidence or argumentations in support of their proposed increase of one in council size from 29 to 30 and did not provide any evidence of local consultation. As a result of these considerations the LGCE based its proposals on a council size of 29 and it was, therefore, unable to adopt the Conservatives' scheme as part of its draft recommendations.

41 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted the absence of local opposition to the Borough Council's proposals. It also noted that the proposed wards would provide for an improved level of electoral equality. The LGCE decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area in its entirety subject to its comments regarding proposed ward names. Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Northern ward would be represented by two councillors and would contain 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent fewer by 2006). North East and North West wards would each be represented by three councillors and would contain 3 per cent more and 26 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2006).

42 At Stage Three 44 representations were received in response to the draft recommendations. The Borough Council proposed renaming the proposed North East, Northern and North West wards as Church Hill, Abbey and Batchley wards respectively. The Liberal Democrats also proposed renaming North East, Northern and North West wards as Church Hill, Abbey and Birchensale wards respectively.

43 The Conservatives opposed the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area. They proposed transferring Hither Green Lane and the area to the west of Paper Mill Drive from the proposed Northern ward to the proposed North East ward, stating that the resulting ward would have "no major natural divisions and minimal variances". They also proposed that the "shortfall" in Northern ward could be addressed by transferring the St Georges and Smallwood areas from the proposed Centre and Crest wards respectively. The Conservatives also issued an "urgent notice" to those residents in Church Hill living to the west of Paper Mill Drive. The notice set out the LGCE's proposal to include the area to the west of Paper Mill Drive in Northern ward. It stated that the area would be included in "part of the town centre" and continued, "we believe that your interests are best served by councillors representing the interests of the wholly residential Church Hill and not the different interests...of the town centre". It encouraged residents who held the same views as the Conservatives, to contact the LGCE and oppose the draft recommendations in their area. Worcestershire County Council put forward amendments to the proposed Northern and North East wards. It proposed transferring the area to the west of Paper Mill Drive from Northern ward to the proposed North East ward. The County Council argued that the LGCE's boundary in this area was "inappropriate" because it divided the community of Church Hill. It considered that the area is "very difficult to deal with" because it is a "large natural neighbourhood". It then proposed transferring the Moons Moat area from Northern ward to East ward arguing that this amendment would "maintain the industrial areas in one ward".

44 Representations were also received from 40 local residents, 13 of which opposed the proposal to include Hither Green Lane in the proposed Northern ward and 27 of which opposed the proposal to include the area to the west of Paper Mill Drive in the proposed Northern ward. Each of the residents argued that their community of interest and identity lay with the Church Hill area and not the Batchley area.

45 We have carefully considered the large number of representations received in response to the draft recommendations and we have decided to substantially adopt the LGCE's draft recommendations. While we note the Conservatives' alternative proposals in Northern and North East ward we have not been persuaded that the resulting imbalances created of 28 per cent and 13 per cent respectively, under the draft recommendation for a council size of 29, by the proposed division of Church Hill in the Roman Road area, offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We also note Worcestershire County

Council's proposed amendments to Northern and North East wards and we have not been persuaded that the resulting electoral imbalances provide an improved reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We also note the County Council's proposed boundary in the Moons Moat area. However, we do not consider that the County Council's amendment improves upon the LGCE's boundary, which follows the Coventry Highway, which we still consider to be a firm and easily identifiable boundary.

46 We have carefully considered the representations received from local residents in the proposed Northern ward. While we note the concerns of residents in Hither Green Lane we have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received to amend the draft recommendations. We do not consider that transferring Hither Green Lane from the proposed Northern ward to the proposed North East ward offers a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We also note the representations received from 27 local residents in the area to the west of Paper Mill Drive. We have not been persuaded that the resulting electoral imbalances, in excess of 10 per cent from the borough average, offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We have therefore, decided to substantially adopt the draft recommendations in this area as part of our final recommendations, subject to the minor amendments detailed below.

47 We have decided to move away from the draft recommendations and amend the proposed ward names in this area in the light of Stage Three representations. We propose renaming the proposed North East, Northern and North West wards as Church Hill, Abbey and Batchley wards respectively, which we consider to adequately reflect the community identities and interests in each of the wards.

48 Under our final recommendations, Abbey, Batchley and Church Hill wards would contain 1 per cent fewer, 26 per cent fewer, and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates wards

49 The existing wards of Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates are situated in the east of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. The wards of Greenlands and Matchborough currently contain 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average and 2 per cent fewer by 2006). Lodge Park and Winyates wards currently contain 19 per cent and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (19 per cent and 24 per cent fewer by 2006).

50 At Stage One, the LGCE received 13 representations in relation to this area. The Borough Council proposed retaining four wards in this area based on revised boundaries. The Borough Council put forward a new three-member East ward in the Winyates area which included Winyates Green. In the Matchborough area the Borough Council proposed a new two-member South East ward which involved dividing the community of Ipsley between two wards and commented that its proposal to divide Ipsley was done for electoral equality purposes only, and that it considered that Ipsley's community of interest and identity lay within the Matchborough area. The Borough Council also proposed a new two-member Centre ward based on the existing Lodge Park ward and a new three-member South Central ward based on the existing Greenlands ward.

51 The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. The Conservatives, however, did not provide any evidence or argumentations in support of their proposed increase of one in council size from 29 to 30 and did not provide any evidence of local consultation. As a result of these

considerations the LGCE based its draft proposals on a council size of 29 and it was, therefore, unable to adopt the Conservatives' scheme as part of its draft recommendations.

52 The LGCE received a further 11 submissions in relation to this area at Stage One. Eleven local residents opposed the Borough Council's proposal to divide the community of Ipsley between its proposed Centre and South East wards.

53 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted that the Borough Council's proposals provided for an improved level of electoral equality and decided to adopt its proposals subject to three amendments. The LGCE noted the good electoral equality in the Borough Council's proposed Centre and South East wards. It also noted the Borough Council's own comments regarding Ipsley and the level of local opposition to the proposals in this area. The LGCE was not persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that dividing Ipsley provided the best reflection of the statutory criteria. The LGCE stated that while it had been unable to adopt the Conservatives' 30-member scheme, it did find merit in their proposals to retain Ipsley in one ward. It therefore proposed that Ipsley should be retained in one ward, the Borough Council's proposed South East ward. It also proposed two minor amendments, affecting no electors, in the Borough Council's proposed Centre and South Central ward to better reflect ground detail. Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Centre, East, South Central and South East wards would contain 7 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more by 2006).

54 At Stage Three 41 representations were received in response to the draft recommendations in this area. The Borough Council expressed broad support for the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area, in particular the proposal to retain Ipsley in the proposed South East ward. The Borough Council proposed one minor amendment, affecting no electors, to the proposed Centre ward for "administrative purposes". It stated that it would prefer the Sailing Club to be within the proposed Centre ward because it is accessed via Proctor's Barn Lane which is situated in Centre ward and there is no access from the proposed East ward. The Borough Council also proposed renaming the proposed Centre, East, South Central and South East wards as Lodge Park, Winyates, Greenlands and Matchborough wards respectively. The Conservatives, supported by the Winyates Green Residents' Association and 11 local residents, opposed the proposed East and South East wards and stated that the existing Matchborough ward is "very close to the ideal size" for a three-member ward. The Conservatives and the 11 local residents each argued that under the draft recommendations the proposed South East ward would become "the most under-represented" area of the two wards with a 12 per cent variance. The Conservatives therefore proposed transferring the Winyates Green area from East ward, to the proposed South East ward. The Conservatives also proposed transferring an area containing 1,440 electors from North East ward to the proposed East ward to rectify the electoral imbalance created by transferring Winyates Green to the proposed South East ward.

55 The Conservatives also opposed the proposed Centre and South Central wards and put forward alternative warding arrangements. They proposed an amendment to the southern boundary of the proposed Centre ward to follow the existing boundary which runs broadly to the north of Greenlands Avenue and Throckmorton Road. The Conservatives argued that if this boundary were retained, the Wirehill Estate could be transferred from the proposed South Central ward to the proposed Ridge ward and South Central ward would become a two-member ward. A further 25 local residents supported the proposal to include the Wirehill Estate in the proposed Ridge ward, each arguing that their community of interest and identity lies with Okenshaw South which is part of the proposed Ridge ward.

56 The Liberal Democrats proposed renaming the proposed Centre, East, South Central and South East wards as Lodge Park, Winyates, Greenlands and Matchborough wards respectively. Worcestershire County Council put forward an amendment to the proposed Centre and South Central wards. It proposed that the boundary between the two wards follows the Warwick

Highway, thus transferring the Watery Lane area from Centre ward to South Central ward. The County Council argued that the Warwick Highway is a strong, natural boundary and stated that the Watery Lane area is a residential area and should remain separate from the industrial area on the other side of the Warwick Highway.

57 We note the Borough Council's amendment to the proposed Centre ward. We have decided to adopt it as part of our final recommendations as we consider it to be a better boundary than the existing boundary as proposed under the draft recommendations. We also note the ward names proposed by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats are based on existing ward names and have decided to adopt them as part of our final recommendations. We therefore propose renaming Centre, East, South Central and South East wards as Lodge Park, Winyates, Greenlands and Matchborough wards respectively.

58 We note the Conservatives, Winyates Green Residents' Association and 11 local residents' comments in relation to the Winyates Green area and the proposed South East ward and we do not consider that they exhibit a full understanding of the draft recommendations. In practice, the draft recommendations provide for good electoral equality and we do not consider that the proposed South East ward would be significantly under-represented. South East ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006 which we consider to be a reasonable level of electoral equality. We also consider that the Warwick Highway provides a better boundary than the existing boundary, as proposed by the Conservatives in their Stage Three submission. The Borough Council, since the start of this review, maintained that it would use this opportunity to rectify what it considered to be an existing anomalous boundary between the existing Matchborough and Winyates wards by using the Warwick Highway. We also note that the effect of the Conservatives' proposal to rectify the imbalance created by transferring Winyates Green to the proposed South East ward cannot be contained within one ward and would require further amendments to the proposed neighbouring wards.

59 We also note the Conservatives' alternative proposals to Centre and South Central wards, affecting the Wirehill Estate, and the comments of 25 local residents on the estate. We have not been persuaded that the resulting imbalance created in South Central and Ridge wards (13 per cent fewer and 14 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006), under the draft recommendation for a council size of 29, provides an improved reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We note that the Wirehill and Woodrow estates are currently in Greenlands ward and we do not consider that retaining them in the proposed South Central ward would result in any loss of community identity and interest. We are also constrained by the fact that the Wirehill Estate is on the edge of the borough, and are therefore limited by the number of alternatives available. We have, therefore, decided not to adopt the Conservatives' amendments as part of the final recommendations.

60 We also note Worcestershire County Council's proposed amendment in the Watery Lane area. However, we have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that the resulting electoral imbalance in the proposed Centre ward (11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006) provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations and have not decided to adopt it as part of the final recommendations. We have, therefore, decided to substantially adopt the draft recommendations as part of our final recommendations, subject to the amendments detailed above.

61 Under our final recommendations Greenlands, Lodge Park, Matchborough and Winyates wards would currently contain 2 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer 12 per cent more and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (6 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more and 4 per cent more by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West wards

62 The four wards of Central, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham and West are situated in the west and south-west of the borough. Crabbs Cross and Feckenham are each represented by two councillors and currently contain 40 per cent and 20 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (35 per cent and 17 per cent more by 2006). Central and West wards are each represented by three councillors and currently contain 15 per cent fewer and equal to the average electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (15 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2006).

63 At Stage One, the LGCE received two representations in relation to this area. The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area resulting in an increase of one ward from four to five. It proposed revised two-member Crabbs Cross and West wards, new two-member Crest and South West wards based on the existing Central and Feckenham wards respectively, and a new three-member Ridge ward. The Borough Council proposed that the new Ridge ward contain part of the existing Central, Crabbs Cross, Greenlands, Lodge Park and West wards. The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. The Conservatives' proposed Feckenham & Astwood Bank and Webheath wards were broadly similar to the Borough Council's proposed South West and West wards.

64 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. The LGCE noted that the Borough Council's proposals provided for an improved reflection of the statutory criteria. It also noted evidence of local consultation included in the Borough Council's submission and the absence of local opposition to its proposals. The Conservatives, under their 30-member scheme, proposed an alternative configuration of wards in this area. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 5 per cent from the borough average by 2006. The Conservatives, however, did not provide any evidence or argumentation in support of their proposed increase of one in council size from 29 to 30 and did not provide any evidence of local consultation. As a result of these considerations the LGCE based its draft proposals on a council size of 29 and it was, therefore, unable to adopt the Conservatives' scheme as part of its draft recommendations. The LGCE therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals, which reflected parts of the Conservatives' scheme in this area, subject to a minor amendment in the proposed West ward to better reflect the statutory criteria. The LGCE also invited further comment at Stage Three regarding ward names. Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Crabbs Cross, Crest, Ridge, South West and West wards would currently contain 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more, 1 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006).

65 At Stage Three, four representations were received in response to the draft recommendations. The Borough Council expressed broad support for the LGCE's proposed amendment to West ward. It also proposed retaining Crabbs Cross, Ridge and West ward names and renaming Crest and South West wards as Central and Feckenham wards respectively. The Conservatives proposed an amendment to the boundary between Crest and Ridge wards which would reduce the "significant under-representation" in the proposed Ridge ward. The Conservatives also expressed support for a three-member Crest ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the Crabbs Cross ward name and proposed renaming Crest, Ridge, South West and West wards as South Crest, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw or Jubilee, Astwood Bank & Feckenham and Webheath wards respectively. Worcestershire County Council proposed three amendments to the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area. The County Council stated that it would be more appropriate for the proposed boundary between Ridge and West wards to follow Windmill Drive because it considered it was a more "natural division". It also proposed transferring electors in the west Walkwood area from the proposed Crabbs Cross ward to the proposed West ward. Finally, it proposed amending the northern boundary of the proposed Crabbs Cross ward to follow the existing boundary along Swineburn Road.

66 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and we note the Borough Council's broad support in the west of the borough. We have decided to substantially adopt the LGCE's draft recommendations as part of our final recommendations, subject to four minor amendments. We note the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats' proposed ward names and have decided to rename Crest, Ridge and South West wards as Central, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw and Astwood Bank & Feckenham wards as we consider that they are a better reflection of the community interests and identities in the wards. We note the Conservatives' proposals, but we do not consider that the proposed Ridge ward is significantly under-represented and have not therefore adopted their proposals as part of our final recommendations. We also note the County Council's Stage Three proposals in this area. However, we do not consider that the electoral imbalances created by amending the boundary between the proposed Ridge and West wards (9 per cent and 20 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006 respectively) to follow Windmill Drive, provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations and have decided not to adopt its proposal as part of our final recommendations. Consequently, we have been unable to adopt the County Council's other proposals in this area. We have, therefore, decided to substantially adopt the draft recommendations as part of our final recommendations, subject to the amendments detailed above.

67 Under our final recommendations Astwood Bank & Feckenham, (containing Feckenham parish), Central, Crabbs Cross, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw and West wards would currently contain 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, 10 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

68 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

69 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in the east of the borough we propose a minor amendment to better reflect ground detail. We also propose renaming Centre, East, South Central and South East wards as Lodge Park, Winyates, Greenlands and Matchborough wards respectively to better reflect community interests and identities;
- in the north of the borough we propose renaming North East, Northern and North West wards as Church Hill, Abbey and Batchley wards respectively;
- in the south of the borough we propose renaming South West ward as Astwood Bank & Feckenham ward;
- in the west of the borough we propose renaming Crest and Ridge wards as Central and Headless Cross & Oakenshaw respectively.

70 We conclude that, in Redditch:

- a council size of 29 should be retained;
- there should be 12 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified.

71 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	29	29	29	29
Number of wards	11	12	11	12
Average number of electors per councillor	2,101	2,101	2,169	2,169
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	2	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	1	2	0

72 As Table 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 six to two. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with no wards forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 7 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Redditch Borough Council should comprise 29 councillors serving 12 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Redditch

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

73 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Redditch and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

74 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 10 September 2002.

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

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

APPENDIX

Final Recommendations for Redditch: Detailed Mapping

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Redditch.