

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Cannock Chase in Staffordshire

May 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
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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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Cannock Chase in Staffordshire.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Cannock Chase is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Cannock Chase on 28 September 1999.

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

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

- **in 10 of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and five wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in nine wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Cannock Chase District Council has recently undertaken a review of the parishing arrangements in the district, creating a new parish to represent Hednesford town. The Orders executing the changes were implemented on 1 April 2000. Therefore the draft recommendations are based on the new parish boundaries.

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 85-86) are that:

- **Cannock Chase District Council should have 41 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 11 of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average;**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Brindley Heath, Heath Hayes & Wimblebury, Hednesford and Rugeley.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 May 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 3 July 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Brereton & Ravenhill	3	Brereton and Ravenhill ward	Large Map and Map 2
2	Cannock East	3	Cannock South ward (part); Chadsmoor ward (part); Pye Green Valley ward (part - part of Pye Green Valley parish ward of Hednesford parish)	Large Map and Map 2
3	Cannock North	3	Broomhill ward; Chadsmoor ward (part); Parkside ward (part)	Large Map and Map 2
4	Cannock South	3	Cannock South ward (part); Longford ward (part)	Large Map and Map 2
5	Cannock West	3	Chadsmoor ward (part); Longford ward (part); Parkside ward (part)	Large Map and Map 2
6	Etching Hill & The Heath	3	Brindley Heath ward (part - part of Brindley Heath parish); Etching Hill ward (part - part of Etching Hill parish ward of Rugeley parish); Hagley ward (part - part of Hagley parish ward of Rugeley parish)	Large Map and Map 2
7	Hagley ward	2	Hagley ward (part - part of Hagley parish ward of Rugeley parish)	Large Map and Map 2
8	Hawks Green	3	Heath Hayes ward (part - part of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish)	Large Map and Map 2
9	Heath Hayes & Wimblebury	3	Heath Hayes ward (part - part of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish)	Large Map and Map 2
10	Hednesford Green Heath	2	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Pye Green Valley ward (part - part of Pye Green Valley parish ward of Hednesford parish)	Large Map and Map 2
11	Hednesford North	3	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Brindley Heath ward (part - part of Etching Hill parish ward of Rugeley parish); Pye Green ward (part - part of Pye Green Valley parish ward of Hednesford parish)	Large Map and Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
12	Hednesford South	2	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish)	Large Map and Map 2
13	Norton Canes	3	Norton Canes ward	Large Map and Map 2
14	Rawnsley	2	Rawnsley ward	Large Map and Map 2
15	Western Springs	3	Etching Hill ward (part -part of Etching Hill parish ward of Rugeley parish); Western Springs ward	Large Map and Map 2

*Notes: 1 Cannock is an unparished part of the district and comprises the four wards indicated above.
2 Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Cannock Chase

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Brereton & Ravenhill	3	5,007	1,669	-3	5,007	1,669	-9
2 Cannock East	3	5,672	1,891	9	5,672	1,891	3
3 Cannock North	3	5,598	1,866	8	5,665	1,888	3
4 Cannock South	3	5,549	1,850	7	5,724	1,908	4
5 Cannock West	3	5,489	1,830	6	5,579	1,860	1
6 Etching Hill & The Heath	3	5,608	1,869	8	5,397	1,799	-2
7 Hagley	2	2,596	1,298	-25	3,466	1,733	-5
8 Hawks Green	3	4,374	1,458	-16	5,262	1,754	-4
9 Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury	3	3,895	1,298	-25	5,180	1,727	-6
10 Hednesford Green Heath	2	3,566	1,783	3	3,760	1,880	3
11 Hednesford North	3	5,665	1,888	9	5,665	1,888	3
12 Hednesford South	2	4,028	2,014	17	3,895	1,948	6
13 Norton Canes	3	5,118	1,706	-1	5,938	1,979	8
14 Rawnsley	2	3,683	1,842	7	3,683	1,842	1
15 Western Springs	3	5,021	1,674	-3	5,232	1,744	-5
Totals	41	70,869	-	-	75,125	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,729	-	-	1,832	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Cannock Chase District 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 district. 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Cannock Chase in Staffordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Cannock Chase. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 100). The electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council were last reviewed in July 1980 (Report No. 386). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix B).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 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, i.e. 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.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Staffordshire 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 October 1999 *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. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Cannock Chase District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with

constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 and will end on 3 July 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 Cannock Chase contains within its boundaries the three towns of Cannock, Rugeley and Hednesford and large areas of forestry, especially in the Brindley Heath and Rowland Heath areas. The district is served by the A5, A34 and A460 and is within easy reach of the M6. The district has a population of approximately 91,000, covers 7,893 hectares and contains eight parishes. Cannock town itself is unparished and comprises 22 per cent of the district's total electorate.

17 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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

18 The electorate of the district is 70,869 (February 1999). The Council presently has 42 members who are elected from 15 wards, 11 of which are relatively urban with the remainder being predominantly rural. Thirteen wards are each represented by three councillors, one is represented by two councillors and one is a single-member ward. The Council is elected by thirds.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Cannock Chase district, with around 21 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Heath Hayes and Rawnsley wards, with approximately 5,264 and 1,220 more electors respectively than 24 years ago.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,687 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,789 by the year 2004 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 ten of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, of which five wards vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Heath Hayes ward where the councillor represents 68 per cent more electors than the district average.

21 Cannock Chase District Council has recently undertaken a review of the parishing arrangements in the district, creating a new parish to represent Hednesford town. Orders were put in place by the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and were implemented on 1 April 2000. The draft recommendations outlined in this report are based on the newly created parish boundaries.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Cannock Chase

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Anglesey	3	6,539	2,180	29	6,892	2,297	28
2 Brereton & Ravenhill	3	5,007	1,669	-1	5,280	1,760	-2
3 Brindley Heath	1	665	665	-61	650	650	-64
4 Broomhill	3	4,339	1,466	-13	4,411	1,470	-18
5 Cannock South	3	4,472	1,491	-12	4,812	1,604	-10
6 Chadsmoor	3	4,455	1,485	-12	4,571	1,524	-15
7 Etching Hill	3	5,113	1,704	1	5,259	1,753	-2
8 Hagley	3	2,855	952	-44	3,497	1,166	-35
9 Heath Hayes	3	8,504	2,835	68	9,674	3,225	80
10 Longford	3	4,394	1,465	-13	4,412	1,471	-18
11 Norton Canes	3	5,118	1,706	1	5,673	1,891	6
12 Parkside	3	4,428	1,476	-13	4,725	1,575	-12
13 Pye Green Valley	3	6,215	2,072	23	6,381	2,127	19
14 Rawnsley	2	3,684	1,842	9	3,821	1,911	7
15 Western Springs	3	5,021	1,674	-1	5,067	1,689	-6
Totals	42	70,869	–	–	75,125	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,687	–	–	1,789	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Cannock Chase District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Brindley Heath ward were over-represented by 61 per cent, while electors in Heath Hayes ward were under-represented by 68 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Cannock Chase District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received eight representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, Cannock Chase Conservative Association and Cannock Chase Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission by appointment.

Cannock Chase District Council

24 The District Council proposed a council of 41 members, one less than at present, serving 15 wards, as at present. The Council proposed retaining a mix of two- and three-member wards. It stated that a 41-member council would facilitate good electoral equality and best reflect community identities. It would also be commensurate with the Government's proposals for local government management structures.

25 The Council proposed that all but three wards should be modified. It also proposed the substantial re-warding of Cannock town and significant modifications to the surrounding urban areas of Heath Hayes, Hednesford and Rugeley. Its proposals would result in five wards having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average initially, with all wards having variances below 10 per cent by 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised in Appendix A.

Cannock Chase Conservative Association

26 Cannock Chase Conservative Association ("the Conservatives") proposed a council of 41 members, one less than at present, serving 16 wards, one more than at present, with a mix of two- and three-member wards.

27 The Conservatives supported Cannock Chase District Council's recommendations for the proposed wards of Brereton & Ravenhill, Heath Hayes East, Heath Hayes West, Norton Canes and Rawnsley. However, it proposed major alterations to the Council's proposals for Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley. Under its proposals five wards would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average, although all wards would vary by less than 10 per cent from the average by 2004.

Cannock Chase Liberal Democrats

28 Cannock Chase Liberal Democrats ("the Liberal Democrats") proposed a council of 46 members, an increase of four, serving 17 wards, two more than at present, with a mix of two- and three-member wards. It stated that an increase in members was justified on the basis that an

increase in population had led to a significant increase in workload for councillors, especially in rural areas, adding that the increase would improve the effectiveness of representation.

29 The Liberal Democrats supported the District Council's proposals for the ward of Brereton & Ravenhill. It made its own recommendations for all other ward boundaries and proposed the creation of two additional wards; Hawks Green and Norton Canes East. Under its proposals eight wards would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the average, with one ward being above 10 per cent by 2004.

Parish and Town Councils

30 We received representations from two parish councils, one town council and the Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association. Brindley Heath Parish Council expressed concern that it may lose control of its "major attribute - Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" if the existing ward were to be merged with a ward that has "a majority of town voters". It stated that the residents of Brindley village would prefer to be linked with Hednesford, and also stated that Slitting Mill should be included within the new Etching Hill ward.

31 Rugeley Town Council proposed that the town of Rugeley continue to be represented by nine councillors. It also proposed a new configuration of wards in the town. As a result of Rugeley maintaining its current level of representation, it recommended an increase in total council size, from 42 to 46.

32 Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council proposed new warding arrangements for the parish council. Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association stated that it would object to any proposals which "might result in a reduction in the parished area of the district".

Other Representations

33 We received one further representation from the District Councillor for Brindley Heath ward. She objected to any plans to transfer the village of Brindley Heath into a ward with Etching Hill, stating that the people of Brindley Heath village had a "common bond with Hednesford".

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

34 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Cannock Chase 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 per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

35 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.

36 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.

37 Our *Guidance* states that 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, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance 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

38 Different views have been expressed on likely five-year electorate forecasts in Cannock Chase. The District Council submitted an electorate forecast, projecting an increase in the electorate of around 6 per cent from 70,869 to 75,125 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Heath Hayes, although a significant amount is also expected in Hagley, Hednesford and Norton Canes wards. The Council has 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.

39 The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats forecast an increase in the electorate of approximately 7 per cent, over the same five-year period. The Conservatives electorate forecasts differed from the Council’s in the Heath Hayes area. The Liberal Democrats forecast an additional 260 electors in Western Springs ward and an additional 360 electors in Pye Green ward. It argued that the District Council had under-estimated likely housing development in this area.

40 We carefully considered the alternative electorate projections, together with the supporting argumentation put forward, and sought further clarification from the District Council. Consequently, we have not been persuaded by the evidence presently available that the housing development included in the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' forecasts will be completed and occupied by electors by 2004.

41 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to both sets of electoral forecasts, are content that the District Council's figures represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. However, we would welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

42 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government, although we are willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

43 Cannock Chase District Council presently has 42 members. The District Council proposed a council of 41 members, upon which it undertook extensive local consultation. It expressed the view that, not only would a 41-member scheme facilitate improved electoral equality and reflect community identities across the district, but would also be appropriate when considering the Government's proposals for new local political management structures. "The Council has given considerable thought to the new style of political management and the current experiment has indicated clearly there will be a reduction in Committee meetings and pre-meetings for members who serve on Committees." The Liberal Democrats proposed an increase in council size of four, from 42 to 46 members. It argued that the recent increase in population, and forecast increase, coupled with the introduction of "cabinet-style" administration, had led to an increased workload for councillors. It added that such an increase is necessary to achieve effective local representation, particularly in an area such as Cannock Chase.

44 We considered the arguments put forward both for a 41-member and a 46-member council. We concluded that the arguments from the Liberal Democrats, for a council size of 46, were not specific to the district of Cannock Chase, but were broader arguments based on the problems they felt councillors faced in carrying out their roles. We were pleased to note that the District Council had conducted widespread public consultation on its 41-member scheme, and that it would command the support of the Cannock Chase Conservative Association. It also provided strong justification for the proposed decrease in council size, from 42 to 41 members. The Commission is not convinced that an increase in council size to 46 members is justified within the remit of this review, and therefore recommend that the District Council's proposal for a 41-member scheme be adopted.

45 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 41 members.

Electoral Arrangements

46 We have considered carefully all the representations received, including the district-wide schemes from Cannock Chase District Council, Cannock Chase Conservative Association and Cannock Chase Liberal Democrats.

47 We have decided to recommend a council size of 41, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Although the Conservative Association's proposals are based on a 41-member scheme we are concerned that its scheme, although based on the same council size as the District Council's proposals and achieving similar improvements in electoral equality across the district, would be based on boundaries that are less identifiable than the District Council's. Having concluded that our draft recommendations should be based on a 41-member council for the reasons outlined above, and that the scheme should be broadly based upon the District Council's proposed ward configuration, we have been unable to make detailed comparisons with the boundaries proposed under the Liberal Democrat's 46-member scheme, as the different elector:councillor ratio means that the size and configuration of wards vary substantially. It is important to note that (based on the 1999 electorate) under a council size of 41 the number of electors per councillor would be 1,729, while under a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor would be 1,541, a difference of nearly 200 electors per ward.

48 In view of the degree of consensus behind elements of the Council's proposals, the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, and our proposed 41-member council, we have concluded that our draft recommendations should be based on the District Council's scheme. We conclude that the boundaries put forward by the Council provide strong and clear boundaries whilst having regard for community identities and resulting in good electoral equality across the district.

49 We consider that the scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the other schemes submitted at Stage One by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

50 We have, however, moved away from the proposals put forward by the District Council in order to improve electoral equality and to have regard to the statutory criteria. Where appropriate we have made comparisons between the proposed boundaries under each scheme, comparing them to those of the District Council and have attempted to draw on the local knowledge that each scheme provides.

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

- (a) Broomhill, Cannock South, Chadsmoor, Longford and Parkside wards;
- (b) Anglesey, Heath Hayes and Pye Green Valley wards;
- (c) Etching Hill, Hagley and Western Springs wards;
- (d) Brereton & Ravenhill and Brindley Heath wards;
- (e) Norton Canes and Rawnsley wards.

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

Broomhill, Cannock South, Chadsmoor, Longford and Parkside wards

53 These five wards cover the town of Cannock, situated in the south-west of the district. Under the existing arrangements all five wards are each represented by three councillors and are over-represented. Cannock South ward and Chadsmoor ward have electoral variances of 12 per cent each (10 per cent and 15 per cent respectively by 2004), the wards of Broomhill, Longford and Parkside have electoral variances of 13 per cent each (18 per cent, 18 per cent and 12 per cent respectively by 2004).

54 The District Council proposed reducing the number of wards in Cannock town from five to four, with each new ward being represented by three councillors. It proposed a new Cannock East ward to include the majority of electors in Chadsmoor ward, the electors north of Lichfield Road from the existing Cannock South ward and Blake Close, currently in Pye Green Valley ward part of Hednesford parish. The Council proposed that the electors from the Calving Hill area of Parkside ward be included in a new Cannock North ward with the existing Broomhill ward and a small part of Chadsmoor ward on Old Fallow Road. It also proposed a revised Cannock South ward to include that part of the existing Cannock South ward south of Lichfield Road with the electors south of Longford Road and east of Poplar Lane, currently in Longford ward. Finally, the Council proposed a new Cannock West ward comprising the remainder of Longford and Parkside wards. These proposals would improve electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor would be above the district average in the four wards of Cannock East, Cannock North, Cannock South and Cannock West by 9 per cent, 13 per cent, 2 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (improving to 3 per cent, 8 per cent, equal to the district average and 1 per cent by 2004).

55 The Conservatives proposed significant boundary modifications to the wards covering Cannock town. They suggested the creation of a Cannock Central ward, including electors from between Lichfield Road and the Goldthorne Avenue area in the existing Cannock South ward and from Longford and Parkside wards between Avon Road and Dartmouth Road. A revised Cannock South ward would then comprise the remainder of the existing Cannock South ward. It proposed a Cannock West ward, including the remainder of Longford ward and the electors south of the golf course in the existing Parkside ward. They proposed a Cannock North ward comprising Broomhill ward and the electors to the east of Pye Green Road and north of the golf course, currently in Parkside ward. Finally, they proposed a Cannock East ward comprising Chadsmoor ward and the remainder of Parkside ward and the electors in Blake Close currently in Pye Green

Valley ward. They proposed that the wards of Cannock East and Cannock North should be represented by three councillors whilst Cannock Central, Cannock South and Cannock West wards should return two councillors.

56 Having considered carefully all the representations received, we propose that the town of Cannock should be represented by four three-member wards as suggested by the District Council. However, we are proposing modifications to the boundaries put forward by the District Council to further improve electoral equality and provide better boundaries. We propose adopting the District Council's proposed Cannock East ward without modification. We propose extending the proposed Cannock South ward to include the electors west of Poplar Lane (part of the proposed Cannock West ward). We also propose modifying the boundary between Cannock North and Cannock West wards, to run west along the middle of Old Fallow Road and north to include electors on Stafford Road in Cannock North ward.

57 We propose adopting the District Council's proposed ward names of Cannock East, North, South and West. However, officers at the council have indicated that these ward names may not be ideal and we would therefore welcome further suggestions for ward names in Cannock town at Stage Three. Under our proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the average in Cannock East ward (3 per cent by 2004), 8 per cent above the average in Cannock North ward (3 per cent by 2004), 7 per cent above the average in Cannock South ward (4 per cent by 2004) and 6 per cent above the average in Cannock West ward (1 per cent by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

58 We are aware that our draft recommendations would have consequential effects on the parish warding of Hednesford and in order to assess the impact of this on the parish, we have visited the area. We concur with views that this area looks towards Cannock town, rather than Hednesford town, and agree that a new Hednesford parish ward of 51 electors would be created, in order that an identifiable boundary between the two towns could be drawn. However, the District Council have indicated that they intend addressing the issue of this boundary anomaly in a parish review, following the completion of this PER.

Anglesey, Heath Hayes and Pye Green Valley wards

59 These three wards are predominantly urban in character covering the settlement of Heath Hayes and the town of Hednesford and are situated in the west of the district. The boundaries of the existing Heath Hayes ward is coterminous with Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish, and the wards of Anglesey and Pye Green Valley cover the parish of Hednesford, established on 1 April 2000. At present, all three wards are each represented by three councillors and are under-represented: Anglesey ward by 29 per cent (28 per cent by 2004), Heath Hayes ward by 68 per cent (80 per cent by 2004) and Pye Green Valley ward by 23 per cent (19 per cent by 2004).

60 Cannock Chase District Council proposed two district wards to cover the existing Heath Hayes ward and three wards to replace the existing Hednesford wards of Anglesey and Pye Green Valley. It proposed that the wards of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury should comprise the electors from the existing Heath Hayes ward, with the boundary dividing them along Hednesford Road and Gorsemoor Road. It suggested that the area north of Hemlock Way in the

proposed Hawks Green ward should be transferred into Hednesford South ward. It also proposed transferring 273 electors of Hill Street from Hednesford South ward to Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward.

61 The District Council proposed major boundary realignment in Hednesford. It proposed a Hednesford Green Heath ward, including the electors south of Green Heath Road, east of the railway line and north of Belt Road, to be represented by two councillors. It proposed a three-member Hednesford North ward comprising the southern half of the existing Brindley Heath ward (south of Marquis Drive), the electors north of Green Heath Road, east of the railway except where the boundary takes in the electors of Valley Road and Stringers Hill estate. The proposed Hednesford South ward would then comprise the remaining area of the existing Anglesey ward and the 38 electors north of Hemlock Way currently in Heath Hayes ward and would return two councillors. These proposals would significantly improve electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor would be below the district average in the two wards of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury by 13 per cent and 23 per cent respectively (improving to 2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004). The wards of Hednesford Green Heath, Hednesford North and Hednesford South would have an average number of electors per councillor above the average of 1 per cent, 7 per cent and 15 per cent respectively (equal to the borough average, 1 per cent and 1 per cent above by 2004).

62 The Conservatives supported the District Council's proposals for Hawks Green ward and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward, however they proposed the alternative ward names of Heath Hayes West and Heath Hayes East respectively. Their proposals for Hednesford town were similar to those put forward by the District Council, however they differed in two areas. The Conservatives proposed that the Hednesford Hills area, up to and including the Stadium, should be included in Hednesford North East ward rather than Hednesford Town ward. They also proposed that the electors directly east of Cannock Road and south of Green Heath Road should be included in Hednesford North East ward rather than Pye Green ward. The names put forward by the Conservatives were different from those proposed by the District Council, with Pye Green ward rather than Hednesford Green Heath, Hednesford North East ward rather than Hednesford North and Hednesford Town rather than Hednesford South.

63 Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council proposed modification to its parish warding arrangements, which are detailed later in the chapter.

64 Our proposals for the wards of Anglesey, Heath Hayes and Pye Green Valley broadly reflect those proposed by Cannock Chase District Council as we consider that these proposals best reflect existing communities ties. However, we propose further modifications to the boundaries of all five wards.

65 The existing boundary between the wards of Anglesey and Heath Hayes is coterminous with the boundary between the parishes of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury and Hednesford. The District Council proposed moving away from this boundary, as outlined earlier. We can only propose dividing a parish between different district council wards if we divide that parish into parish wards, so that, for example, one parish ward would form part of one district council ward while another parish ward would form part of a different district council ward. Moving the existing

boundary would result in the creation of a Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish ward (to include 38 electors) and a Hednesford parish ward (to include 273 electors). We do not consider that such a proposal would provide convenient, effective local government at parish level. We note that this may appear contradictory to our proposals for the boundary between Cannock East ward and Hednesford Green Heath ward, which has led to the creation of a Hednesford parish ward of 51. However, we note that the existing boundary between Heath Hayes and Hednesford is clearly identifiable and reflects the existing communities, unlike the existing boundary between Cannock town and Hednesford town.

66 Consequently, we do not propose adopting the District Council's boundary (broadly following Hemlock Way and Hill Street) between the wards of Hednesford South, Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury. Instead, we propose retaining the existing boundary in this area. Such a proposal would have an adverse impact on electoral equality in neighbouring wards, therefore we propose slight modifications to the District Council's proposed boundaries for the wards of Hawks Green, Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury, Hednesford Green Heath, Hednesford North and Hednesford South, to improve electoral equality in the area as a whole.

67 We recommend an adjustment to the Council's proposed boundary between Hawks Green ward and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward to include the electors of Hednesford Road, Gorsemoor Road and additionally Kensington Place (from Hawks Green ward), in Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury ward. We also propose extending the District Council's proposed boundary between Hednesford South and Hednesford North wards, to include the electors north of Eskrett Street and Cheviot Rise, all the electors in Market Street and those east of Rugeley Road in Hednesford North ward. This proposal is similar to the suggested boundary put forward by the Liberal Democrats. Finally, we propose modifying the District Council's proposals for Hednesford Green Heath, to take the boundary along Spruce Road and along the middle of Tower Road to include the electors of Brindley Road and numbers 70 to 102 Broadhurst Green. Although the boundary proposed by the Council is clear and easily identifiable, we have suggested this modification in order to improve the electoral equality across the whole of Hednesford town, consequent upon the change above.

68 Officers at the District Council expressed concern over the similarity between the names of the district ward of Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury and the parish of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury. We have been unable to readily identify any alternative names for the district ward and would therefore welcome suggestions from the local community during Stage Three.

69 These proposals would provide good electoral equality across the area as a whole, whilst, in our opinion, continuing to reflect existing communities ties. We note that the electoral variances in the wards of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury would be high initially, however they are expected to improve by 2004 due to the completion of proposed housing developments. Under our proposals the wards of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury would be 16 per cent and 25 per cent below the district average respectively (4 per cent and 6 per cent by 2004). Hednesford Green Heath, Hednesford North and Hednesford South wards would be 3 per cent, 9 per cent and 17 per cent above the average respectively (3 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent by 2004).

Etching Hill, Hagley and Western Springs wards

70 These three-member wards cover Rugeley parish, situated in the north of the district. The number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent above the district average in Etching Hill ward (2 per cent below by 2004), 44 per cent below the average in Hagley ward (35 per cent by 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Western Springs ward (6 per cent by 2004).

71 Cannock Chase District Council proposed minor boundary modifications to the wards of Etching Hill and Western Springs, it also suggested that Hagley ward should retain its existing boundaries, whilst being represented by two councillors, rather than three, as at present. It proposed that Etching Hill ward should include the electors north of Marquis Drive, currently in Brindley Heath ward. It also proposed that the electors of Green Lane and neighbouring cul-de-sacs, should be transferred from Etching Hill ward into Western Springs ward.

72 The Conservatives proposed major boundary realignments in Rugeley. They proposed that the existing Etching Hill ward should be renamed Etching Hill & The Heath and should include the electors of Slitting Mill village currently in Hagley ward. They also proposed that the electors currently in Etching Hill ward, polling districts UY1 and VY1, should be transferred into Western Springs ward. They proposed a modified Hagley ward, suggesting the electors south of Swallow Close and east of Western Springs Road, currently in Western Springs ward, should be transferred into a ward with the remainder of the existing Hagley ward. The Conservatives suggested that Etching Hill & The Heath ward should be represented by two councillors, whilst the wards of Hagley and Western Springs should each return three councillors.

73 Brindley Heath Parish Council stated that it was “convinced that Slitting Mill should be included within the new Etching Hill ward”. It put forward suggestions for the transfer of approximately 300 electors from Etching Hill ward into Western Springs ward, in order to improve electoral equality. It also suggested that Hagley ward should be represented by two councillors, whilst Etching Hill ward and Western Springs ward should each be represented by three councillors.

74 Having carefully considered all representations received we propose adopting the District Council’s proposed Western Springs ward as part of our draft recommendations. In the wards of Etching Hill & The Heath and Hagley we propose adopting the suggestion put forward by Brindley Heath Parish Council and the Conservatives, to transfer the electors of Slitting Mill village from Hagley ward into Etching Hill & The Heath ward, as this will create a relatively urban ward of Hagley and a relatively rural ward of Etching Hill & The Heath. We consider that this reflects community interests whilst providing clear boundaries and good levels of electoral equality. We recommend that Hagley ward should be represented by two councillors whilst Etching Hill & The Heath and Western Springs wards should each be represented by three councillors. When the proposed housing development is completed in Hagley ward, this will create clearly definable urban and rural wards and will also result in good electoral equality across Rugeley town by 2004. We propose adopting the name Etching Hill & The Heath, as suggested by the Conservatives, for the existing Etching Hill ward, as we consider that this ward name would best reflect the communities within the proposed ward.

75 Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Etching Hill & The Heath ward would be 8 per cent above the average (2 per cent below by 2004) and 25 per cent and 3 per cent below the average in Hagley and Western Springs wards respectively (5 per cent below the average in both wards by 2004).

Brereton & Ravenhill and Brindley Heath wards

76 Brereton & Ravenhill and Brindley Heath wards are situated in the north of the district. The single-member ward of Brindley Heath and three-member ward of Brereton & Ravenhill are coterminous with the parishes of the same name. The number of electors per councillor is 61 per cent below the district average in Brindley Heath ward (64 per cent by 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Brereton & Ravenhill ward (2 per cent by 2004).

77 All submissions received from Brindley Heath Parish Council, the District Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Rugeley Town Council proposed that the electoral arrangements of Brereton & Ravenhill ward should remain unchanged.

78 All submissions received similarly stated that the electors of Brindley Heath ward should be transferred into neighbouring wards, with the electors of Brindley village and the surrounding area, in the south of the existing ward, being included in a Hednesford ward and the electors in the north of the ward being included in a revised Etching Hill ward.

79 Having carefully considered all representations received, we have decided to adopt the District Council's proposals for this area, including its suggested boundary between the proposed wards of Etching Hill & The Heath and Hednesford North. We conclude that these arrangements reflect the existing communities whilst providing a good level of electoral equality and command a significant degree of local support. Under our proposals the district ward of Brindley Heath will cease to exist, with the electors being included in the wards of Etching Hill & The Heath and Hednesford North. Brereton & Ravenhill ward, under our proposals, will have an electoral variance of 3 per cent below the district average (9 per cent below by 2004).

Norton Canes and Rawnsley wards

80 These two wards are situated in the south of the district. The three-member ward of Norton Canes is coterminous with the parish of the same name. Rawnsley ward is currently represented by two councillors and contains the parish of Cannock Wood. The number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent above the district average in Norton Canes ward (6 per cent by 2004) and 9 per cent above the average in Rawnsley ward (7 per cent by 2004).

81 Cannock Chase District Council proposed no change to the wards of Norton Canes and Rawnsley. It stated that due to the location of these two wards and the fact that Norton Canes ward is coterminous with Norton Canes parish, it was not in the interests of convenient and effective local government to modify the boundary and that the existing arrangements best reflect community interests. Cannock Chase Conservative Association and Norton Canes Parish Council supported the Council's proposals.

82 Given the good levels of electoral equality achieved and the local support expressed for the retention of the existing arrangements we are recommending that the electoral arrangements of Norton Canes ward and Rawnsley ward should remain unchanged. Under our proposals Norton Canes ward would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent below the district average (8 per cent above by 2004) and Rawnsley ward would be 7 per cent above the district average (1 per cent by 2004).

Electoral Cycle

83 We received one representation regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. Cannock Chase Conservative Association proposed that the whole council be elected every four years. However, it submitted no argumentation in support of its proposal.

84 We have considered carefully the proposal for change. However, in the absence of cross-party support we are not persuaded to adopt the proposal as part of our draft recommendations. It is, of course, open to the Council, subject to a resolution supported by a two-thirds majority of members, to apply to the Secretary of State for a change in electoral cycle.

Conclusions

85 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 42 to 41;
- (b) there should be 15 wards, as at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to be held by thirds.

86 Our draft recommendations would involve modifications to all but three of the existing wards in Cannock Chase district, as summarised below:

- (a) we propose adopting the District Council's proposal for the wards of Cannock East and Western Springs.
- (b) we propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Cannock town, with minor alterations for the wards of Cannock North, Cannock South and Cannock West.
- (c) we propose the retention of the existing boundary between Hednesford South and the wards of Hawks Green and Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury, with consequential modifications to the District Council's proposed wards of Hawks Green, Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury, Hednesford Green Heath, Hednesford North and Hednesford South to provide better electoral equality.

- (d) in Rugeley we propose adopting Brindley Heath Parish Council's and the Conservative's proposal to include Slitting Mill in Etching Hill & The Heath ward, whilst putting forward our own proposals for Hagley ward.
- (e) there should be no change to the wards of Brereton & Ravenhill, Norton Canes and Rawnsley.

87 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	42	41	42	41
Number of wards	15	15	15	15
Average number of electors per councillor	1,687	1,729	1,789	1,832
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	10	4	9	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	2	4	0

88 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Cannock Chase District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from ten to four. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

Cannock Chase District Council should comprise 41 councillors serving 15 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

89 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Brindley Heath, Heath Hayes & Wimblebury, Hednesford and the town council of Rugeley to reflect the proposed district wards.

90 The parish of Brindley Heath is currently served by seven councillors serving two wards, with four councillors representing Brindley village and three councillors representing the surrounding rural area. Brindley Heath Parish Council supported the District Council’s proposals for modifications to ward boundaries in its area and were aware that it would lead to the subsequent re-warding of the parish.

Draft Recommendation
Brindley Heath Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Brindley Village ward (returning five councillors) and Chase Side ward (returning two councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

91 The parish of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. The parish council submitted proposals to divide the parish into four wards as “the council believes representation would be more equitable if there were four wards, returning the councillors.”

Draft Recommendation
Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Old Heath Hayes ward (returning four councillors) and Hawks Green, New Heath Hayes and Wimblebury wards (each returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

92 The parish of Hednesford is currently served by eleven councillors representing two wards, a five-member Anglesey ward and a six-member Pye Green Valley ward. As outlined earlier in the chapter we are proposing the creation of a new Blake Close parish ward of Hednesford parish, in order to provide an identifiable boundary between Cannock town and Hednesford parish. The District Council have indicated that they intend to address this boundary anomaly in a later parish review.

Draft Recommendation

Hednesford Parish Council should comprise eleven councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Anglesey ward (returning three councillors), Blake Close ward (returning one councillor), Pye Green ward (returning three councillors) and West Hill ward (returning four councillors). The boundary between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

93 Rugeley Town Council currently has 19 members, representing three town wards, Etching Hill ward (returning seven councillors), Hagley ward (returning five councillors) and Western Springs ward (returning seven councillors). Rugeley Town Council submitted proposals for nine district councillors in Rugeley and modifications to the district wards, and subsequently the parish wards (Etching Hill, Hagley and Western Springs). However, we propose that Rugeley should be represented by eight district councillors. Therefore, the parish ward boundaries we propose for Rugeley are coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries for the same area, outlined earlier in the Chapter.

Draft Recommendation

Rugeley Town Council should comprise 19 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Etching Hill ward (returning seven councillors), Hagley ward (returning five councillors) and Western Springs wards (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

94 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the District Council.

95 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Cannock Chase and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Cannock Chase

5 NEXT STEPS

96 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Cannock Chase. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 3 July 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

97 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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Cannock Chase Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

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98 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Cannock Chase District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council in ten wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure A1: Cannock Chase District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Cannock North	Broomhill ward; Chadsmoor ward (part); Parkside ward (part)
Cannock South	Cannock South ward (part); Longford ward (part)
Cannock West	Longford ward (part); Parkside ward (part)
Etching Hill	Brindley Heath (part - part of Brindley Heath parish); Etching Hill ward (part - part of Etching Hill parish ward of Rugeley parish)
Hagley	Hagley ward
Hawks Green	Heath Hayes ward (part - part of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish)
Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Heath Hayes ward (part - part of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish)
Hednesford Green Heath	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Pye Green Valley ward (part - part of Pye Green Valley parish ward of Hednesford parish)
Hednesford North	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Brindley Heath ward (part - part of Brindley Heath parish); Pye Green Valley ward (part - part of Pye Green Valley parish ward of Hednesford parish)
Hednesford South	Anglesey ward (part - part of Anglesey parish ward of Hednesford parish); Heath Hayes ward (part - part of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury parish)

Figure A2: Cannock Chase District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Cannock North	3	5866	1955	13	5933	1978	8
Cannock South	3	5315	1772	2	5493	1831	0
Cannock West	3	5455	1818	5	5542	1847	1
Etching Hill	3	5349	1783	3	5138	1713	-7
Hagley	2	2855	1428	-17	3725	1863	2
Hawks Green	3	4508	1503	-13	5396	1799	-2
Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury	3	3996	1332	-23	5421	1807	-1
Hednesford Green Heath	2	3486	1743	1	3680	1840	0
Hednesford North	3	5570	1857	7	5570	1857	1
Hednesford South	2	3968	1984	15	3695	1848	1

Source: Electorate figures are based on Cannock Chase District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.