

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Bromsgrove in Worcestershire

March 2002

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

WHAT IS THE 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 on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission has set up a Boundary Committee which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Bromsgrove's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001.

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

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

- **in 10 of the 19 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;**
- **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 11 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main proposals for Bromsgrove's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 68-69) are that:

- **Bromsgrove District Council should have 39 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 23 wards, instead of 19 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of four, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 22 of the proposed 23 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in no wards expected to vary by more than 8 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Catshill & North Marlbrook, Lickey & Blackwell, Lickey End, Stoke Prior and Wythall.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 26 March 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 20 May 2002:

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Bromsgrove Review
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London WC1V 7JU**

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Website: www.lgce.gov.uk**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Alvechurch	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Alvechurch and Beoley	Map 2
2	Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey	2	the parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett; part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Lickey & Blackwell North parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
3	Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey	1	part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Lickey & Blackwell South parish ward); part of Norton ward	Map 2 and Large Map
4	Catshill	2	part of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish (the proposed Catshill & North Marlbrook West parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
5	Charford (in Bromsgrove)	2	part of Charford ward; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
6	Drakes Cross	2	part of Wythall parish (the Drakes Cross parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
7	Furlongs	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Clent; part of Belbroughton parish (the Belbroughton parish ward)	Map 2
8	Hagley	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Hagley	Map 2
9	Lickey End & Lowes Hill	2	part of Lickey End parish (the proposed Lickey End South parish ward); part of Norton ward; part of Sidemoor ward	Map 2 and Large Map
10	Majors Green	2	part of Wythall parish (the Hollywood parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
11	Marlbrook	2	part of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish (the proposed Catshill & North Marlbrook East parish ward and the proposed Catshill & North Marlbrook South parish ward); part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Lickey & Blackwell West parish ward); part of Lickey End parish (the proposed Lickey End North parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
12	Rubery North (in Rubery)	2	part of Beacon ward; part of Uffdown & Waseley ward	Map 2 and Large Map
13	Rubery South (in Rubery)	1	part of Beacon ward	Map 2 and Large Map
14	Sidemoor (in Bromsgrove)	2	part of Sidemoor ward	Map 2 and Large Map
15	South Wythall	1	part of Wythall parish (the South parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
16	Stoke Heath	1	part of Stoke Prior parish (the proposed Stoke Heath parish ward); part of Charford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
17	Stoke Prior	1	part of Stoke Prior parish (the proposed Stoke Prior parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18	Stoney Hill (in Bromsgrove)	2	part of Norton ward; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
19	Tardebigge	1	the parishes of Bentley Paucefoot, Fininstall and Tutnall & Cobley; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
20	Town Centre (in Bromsgrove)	2	part of Norton ward; part of Sidemoor ward; part of Stoney Hill ward; part of Whitford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
21	Uffdown & Waseley	1	the parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley	Map 2 and Large Map
22	Whitford (in Bromsgrove)	2	part of Whitford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
23	Woodvale	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Bournheath and Dodford with Grafton; part of Belbroughton parish (the Fairfield parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map

Notes: 1 The towns of Bromsgrove and Rubery are the only unparished parts of the district.

2 In addition to the amendments we have made to the District Council's proposals detailed in this report, we have also made a further two amendments to its proposals, affecting no electors.

3 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1 and A2 in Appendix A.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Bromsgrove

	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	Alvechurch	3	5,034	1,678	-5	4,888	1,692	-8
2	Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey	2	3,772	1,886	7	3,614	1,807	2
3	Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey	1	1,856	1,856	5	1,847	1,847	4
4	Catshill	2	3,271	1,636	-7	3,352	1,676	-5
5	Charford (in Bromsgrove)	2	3,860	1,930	9	3,738	1,869	6
6	Drakes Cross	2	3,690	1,845	4	3,587	1,794	1
7	Furlongs	2	3,328	1,664	-6	3,264	1,632	-8
8	Hagley	2	3,426	1,713	-3	3,594	1,797	1
9	Lickey End & Lowes Hill	2	3,378	1,689	-4	3,714	1,857	5
10	Majors Green	2	3,694	1,847	5	3,597	1,799	2
11	Marlbrook	2	3,443	1,722	-3	3,282	1,641	-7
12	Rubery North (in Rubery)	2	3,463	1,732	-2	3,347	1,674	-6
13	Rubery South (in Rubery)	1	1,736	1,736	-2	1,686	1,686	-5
14	Sidemoor (in Bromsgrove)	2	3,892	1,946	10	3,743	1,872	6
15	South Wythall	1	1,932	1,932	9	1,870	1,870	6
16	Stoke Heath	1	1,856	1,856	5	1,822	1,822	3
17	Stoke Prior	1	1,743	1,743	-1	1,668	1,668	-6
18	Stoney Hill (in Bromsgrove)	2	2,543	1,279	-28	3,656	1,828	3
19	Tardebigge	1	1,813	1,813	3	1,762	1,762	-1
20	Town Centre (in Bromsgrove)	2	3,600	1,800	2	3,648	1,824	3
21	Uffdown & Waseley	1	1,899	1,899	8	1,848	1,848	4

	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 %
22	Whitford (in Bromsgrove)	2	3,899	1,950	10	3,770	1,885	6
23	Woodvale	1	1,733	1,733	-2	1,701	1,701	-4
	Totals	39	68,861	-	-	68,998	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,766	-	-	1,773	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bromsgrove 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the six districts in Worcestershire 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 expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Bromsgrove. Bromsgrove's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1977 (Report no. 179). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. 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* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fifth edition published in October 2001). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as 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.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, 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 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.

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

Table 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *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 of 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 wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when we wrote to Bromsgrove District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the local authority associations, Worcestershire Local Councils Association, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, 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 Bromsgrove District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 22 October 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 26 March 2002 and will end on 20 May 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The district of Bromsgrove covers an area of 21,714 hectares and is situated in north-east Worcestershire, approximately 13 miles south of Birmingham and about the same distance north of Worcester. Bromsgrove has a population of 84,900, and has two principal urban settlements, Bromsgrove and Rubery, which are unparished. The remainder of the District is largely rural and contains 20 civil parishes.

16 The electorate of the district is 68,861 (February 2001). The Council presently has 39 members who are elected from 19 wards. The town of Bromsgrove is unparished and contains four wards. Norton ward, to the north-east of the town, combines the parished area of Lickey End with the unparished area of Norton. In the north-east of the district there is an additional urban, unparished area known as Rubery, part of which is currently in a rural, parished ward. The remainder of the wards are rural in nature. Seven wards are each represented by three councillors, six wards are each represented by two councillors and six are single-member wards. The Council is elected every four years.

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,766 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,773 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 10 of the 19 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, five wards by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Barnt Green ward where the councillor represents 34 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Bromsgrove

Table 4: 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	Alvechurch	3	5,034	1,678	-5	4,888	1,629	-8
2	Barnt Green	2	4,720	2,360	34	4,570	2,285	29
3	Beacon	2	3,203	1,602	-9	3,103	1,552	-12
4	Catshill	3	5,209	1,736	-2	5,129	1,710	-3
5	Charford	2	4,448	2,224	26	4,271	2,136	21
6	Cofton Hackett	1	1,437	1,437	-19	1,389	1,389	-21
7	Drakes Cross	3	5,802	1,934	10	5,658	1,886	7
8	Furlongs	2	3,328	1,664	-6	3,264	1,632	-8
9	Hagley	2	3,426	1,713	-3	3,594	1,797	2
10	Majors Green	1	1,678	1,678	-5	1,625	1,625	-8
11	Norton	3	5,905	1,968	11	7,599	2,533	43
12	Sidemoor	3	4,605	1,535	-13	4,426	1,475	-17
13	South Wythall	1	1,834	1,834	4	1,774	1,774	0
14	Stoke Prior	1	2,265	2,265	28	2,182	2,182	23
15	Stoney Hill	2	4,380	2,197	24	4,260	2,130	20
16	Tardebigge	1	1,405	1,405	-20	1,385	1,385	-22
17	Uffdown & Waseley	3	3,887	1,296	-27	3,775	1,258	-29
18	Whitford	3	4,540	1,513	-14	4,397	1,466	-17
19	Woodvale	1	1,741	1,741	-1	1,709	1,709	-3
	Totals	39	68,861	-	-	68,998	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,766	-	-	1,773	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bromsgrove 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 2001, electors in Uffdown & Waseley ward were relatively over-represented by 27 per cent, while electors in Barnt Green ward were relatively under-represented by 34 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

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

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received four submissions during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

Bromsgrove District Council

21 The District Council proposed a council of 39 members, as at present, representing 24 wards, five more than at present. The Council's scheme provided for a pattern of single and two-member wards. The District Council proposed new warding arrangements in all but four of the existing wards across the district to improve electoral equality. The District Council did not put forward any ward names for its proposed wards. The District Council undertook a consultation exercise, prior to the submission of its proposals, which attracted 18 representations, copies of which were included in its submission.

22 Under the District Council's proposals only one of the proposed 24 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average. By 2006 no ward is expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average.

The Liberal Democrats

23 The Liberal Democrats asked the Commission to put forward its own "independent proposals" to "rectify the current unsatisfactory arrangements" in the district of Bromsgrove.

Parish Councils

24 We received one response from Alvechurch Parish Council. It opposed the District Council's proposals in the Alvechurch area on the grounds of community interests and identities and put forward an alternative proposal in the area, which would result in an increase of one in council size from 39 to 40.

Other Submissions

25 We received one other submission during Stage One of this review. The Alvechurch Village Society expressed broad support for the District Council's 39-member scheme and the proposal to divide the current Alvechurch ward into two wards. The Society did oppose, however, the division of Hopwood Village which would result from the District Council's proposals in this area.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

27 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 of 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”.

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

29 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.

30 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an 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

31 Since 1975 there has been a 4 per cent increase in the electorate of Bromsgrove district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate from 68,861 to 69,072 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Norton ward. 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.

32 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

33 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

34 Bromsgrove District Council presently has 39 members. The District 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.

35 We note that the District Council consulted locally on its proposed council size and we also note the absence of opposition to 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, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 39 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 We have considered carefully the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the Council. From these representations some considerations have emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations.

37 We note that the Council's district-wide scheme would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality for the district as a whole. We also note Alvechurch Parish Council, and the Alvechurch Village Society's concerns regarding the District Council's proposals in this area, in particular, the District Council's proposal to divide Hopwood village between two wards. Alvechurch Parish Council put forward an alternative proposal in this area which would result in an increase of one in council size from 39 to 40. We also note that the District Council proposed a number of parish boundary amendments, affecting no or few electors, to reflect firm ground detail. Where the District Council has proposed amendments to parish boundaries which would result in insufficient electors to sustain a viable parish ward, we have retained the existing parish boundary as such amendments to the external boundaries of parishes cannot be dealt with under this review but can be considered by the District Council in a separate parish review, under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, following this PER.

38 In view of the support given to large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have based our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard for local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the District Council's proposals in six areas. We consider that the community of Hopwood should be retained in one ward rather than divided between two wards. We also consider that dividing Hopwood would not provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We propose retaining the three-member Alvechurch ward and propose a boundary modification in the south of the district to better reflect community interests and identities. In the centre of the district we propose a minor boundary amendment to better reflect community identity. In the

town wards we propose three minor boundary amendments to better reflect community identity and firm ground detail. In its submission the District Council did not propose any ward names for its proposed wards, instead choosing to number the wards 1-24. This proved problematic when referring to the proposed wards in this report and therefore for the purpose of this consultation we have put forward ward names for each of the proposed wards. However, we are not satisfied that these ward names adequately reflect community identity and interest and invite alternative suggestions at Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards;
- (b) Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards;
- (c) Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards;
- (d) Barnt Green, Beacon, Catshill and Cofton Hackett wards;
- (e) Charford, Norton, Sidemoor, Stoke Prior, Stoney Hill and Whitford wards.

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

Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards

40 The existing wards of Furlongs, Hagley and Uffdown & Waseley are situated in the north of the district, and Woodvale ward is situated in the west of the district. Furlongs ward contains the parish of Clent and Belbroughton parish ward of Belbroughton parish and is currently represented by two councillors. Hagley ward contains the parish of Hagley and is represented by two councillors. Uffdown & Waseley ward is a three-member ward and contains the parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley and part of the unparished area of Rubery. Woodvale ward is a single-member ward and contains Dodford with Grafton parish and Fairfield parish ward of Belbroughton parish. Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards currently contain 6 per cent, 3 per cent, 27 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer by 2006).

41 At Stage One the District Council proposed four wards based largely on the existing wards in this area. The District Council proposed retaining the current two-member Furlongs ward with a minor boundary modification to the south-eastern boundary. The District Council stated that this amendment, affecting no electors, would better reflect firm ground detail. In its submission the Council stated that “comments received from parish councils in this area indicate that they support the existing arrangements”. In the Hagley area the District Council proposed no change to the existing two-member Hagley ward and stated that Hagley Parish Council supported its proposals. In the Uffdown & Waseley area the District Council put forward a ward which retained the current grouping of parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley in a revised single-member ward. The District Council proposed transferring, from the existing Uffdown & Waseley ward, the unparished area in the south of the ward, to a new two-member Rubery North ward (discussed in more detail below). Finally, the District Council proposed two minor boundary modifications to the existing single-member Woodvale ward. In the north-east of the ward the Council proposed that the existing boundary follow the M5 Motorway, an amendment affecting eight electors, and an amendment to the north-western boundary (as previously discussed). The District Council stated that Dodford with Grafton Parish Council expressed a preference for retaining the existing warding

arrangements in this area. Under the District Council's proposals wards 1, 2, 3 and 4, which, for the purpose of this consultation we propose naming Hagley, Furlongs, Woodvale and Uffdown & Waseley wards respectively, would contain 3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2006).

42 We have considered the representations received during Stage One and note the apparent support of the parish councils in the area for the District Council's proposals during its own consultation. We also note that the District Council's proposals are based on existing wards and provide good electoral equality. We have therefore decided to adopt the District Council's scheme in its entirety in this area subject to our previous comments regarding ward names. For the purpose of this consultation we have decided to put forward the existing ward names. We propose retaining the Furlongs and Woodvale wards on their existing boundaries because we do not consider that the District Council's proposals would contain a sufficient amount of electors to sustain viable parish wards, as previously stated in paragraph 37.

43 Under our draft recommendations Furlongs and Hagley wards would each be represented by two councillors. Furlongs ward would contain the parish of Clent and the Belbroughton parish ward of Belbroughton parish. Hagley ward would contain the parish of Hagley. Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale ward would each be represented by one councillor. Uffdown & Waseley ward would contain the parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley and Woodvale would contain Dodford with Grafton parish and Fairfield parish ward of Belbroughton parish. Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards would contain 6 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards

44 Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards are located in the east of the district of Bromsgrove. Drakes Cross ward is currently a three-member ward and contains the Drakes Cross parish ward of Wythall parish. Majors Green and South Wythall wards are each represented by one councillor and contain the Hollywood parish ward of Wythall parish and the South parish ward of Wythall parish respectively. Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards currently contain 10 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

45 At Stage One the District Council proposed broadly retaining the existing warding arrangements in this area. It proposed a two-member ward based on the existing Majors Green ward, a two-member ward based on the existing Drakes Cross ward and a single-member ward based on the current South Wythall ward. The District Council proposed transferring from the existing Drakes Cross ward, some 2,000 electors to the revised two-member ward based on the existing Majors Green ward. The District Council stated that although the three wards in this area are entitled to five district councillors, it was "somewhat difficult finding a way to subdivide the area satisfactorily". However, the Council also stated that its proposals had received "a wide range of support from local councillors, Wythall Parish Council and Wythall Rate Payers' and Residents' Association" during its own

consultation. The District Council proposed a minor boundary amendment to the existing South Wythall ward, affecting 17 electors, to tie the boundary to firm ground detail. Under the District Council's proposed warding arrangements Majors Green, Drakes Cross and South Wythall wards would contain 2 per cent more, 8 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (equal to the average, 5 per cent more and 1 per cent more by 2006).

46 We have considered the representations received during Stage One and note the District Council's comments relating to the local support its proposals received. We also note that the District Council's proposals are based on existing wards and provide good electoral equality. We have therefore decided to adopt the District Council's scheme in its entirety in this area subject to our previous comments regarding ward names. For the purpose of this consultation we have decided to put forward the existing ward names for the three wards in this area and invite alternative suggestions at Stage Three.

47 Under our draft recommendations Drakes Cross and Majors Green wards would each be represented by two councillors, while South Wythall ward would be a single-member ward. Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards would comprise the Drakes Cross parish ward of Wythall parish, the Hollywood parish ward of Wythall parish and the South parish ward of Wythall parish respectively. Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards would contain 4 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent more, 2 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards

48 Alvechurch ward is situated in the east of the district and is currently represented by three councillors. It comprises the parishes of Alvechurch and Beoley and currently has 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (8 per cent fewer by 2006). Tardebigge ward is located in the south-east of the district and is a single-member ward. It contains the parishes of Bentley Pauncefoot, Finstall and Tutnall & Cobley and presently has 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (22 per cent fewer by 2006).

49 At Stage One the District Council proposed three new wards in this area. It proposed dividing the current Alvechurch ward into two new wards, a single-member ward and a two-member ward. The Council proposed using the A441 as the new boundary between the two wards. The single-member ward would include the parish of Beoley and all parts of Alvechurch parish to the west of the A441, but also including an area known as Bordesley, to the west of the A441. The two-member ward would contain all parts of Alvechurch parish to the west of the A441, except the Bordesley area. The District Council stated that this two-member ward would "encompass the more built-up parts of Alvechurch parish". The Council also proposed a minor boundary amendment to the existing single-member Tardebigge ward. It proposed transferring the Wagon Works Estate, which lies to the south-east of the railway line, from the current unparished Stoney Hill ward, to its proposed single-member Tardebigge ward. Under the District Council's proposed wards, which we have named for consultation purposes only, Alvechurch, Beoley and Tardebigge wards would contain 2 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent fewer, 9 per cent fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

50 We received a further two submissions in relation to this area at Stage One. Alvechurch Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposals in its area and stated that the use of the A441 road as a boundary between the District Council's proposed Alvechurch and Beoley wards would "divide the village of Hopwood whilst the physical presence of the A441 through Hopwood could be seen as a dividing line, in practice the village of Hopwood is a thriving community". The Parish Council put forward an alternative suggestion for warding arrangements in its area for two two-member wards. It proposed a two-member Alvechurch East ward and a two-member Alvechurch West ward, with the village of Hopwood contained in Alvechurch West ward. The Alvechurch Village Society also expressed its opposition to the District Council's proposals to divide the village of Hopwood between two district wards.

51 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One in relation to this area. We note that the District Council's proposals in the Tardebigge area provide for an improved level of electoral equality and are generally based on the existing ward. We have therefore decided to adopt the District Council's proposed ward as part of our draft recommendations subject to our comments regarding ward names. For the purpose of this consultation we have decided to retain the existing Tardebigge ward name and invite alternative suggestions. While we note the reasonable levels of electoral equality in the District Council's proposed Alvechurch and Beoley wards, we also note the local opposition to its proposals in this area. We have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that dividing the community of Hopwood provides the best reflection of the statutory criteria. We also note Alvechurch Parish Council's alternative proposal in this area for two, two-member wards. However, under our proposed council size of 39, Alvechurch Parish Council's proposal would mean that the area would be over-represented, with four councillors instead of the three to which it is entitled. While we have been unable to adopt Alvechurch Parish Council's alternative proposal, we find merit in their proposal to retain Hopwood village within one ward. Furthermore, having visited the area we consider that the Hopwood village should be retained in one district ward. We therefore propose retaining the existing three-member Alvechurch ward as we consider this to be a better reflection of the statutory criteria than both the District Council, and Alvechurch Parish Council's proposals. For the purpose of this consultation we also propose retaining the existing Alvechurch ward name and invite alternative suggestions.

52 Under our draft recommendations Alvechurch ward would be represented by three councillors and would comprise the parishes of Alvechurch and Beoley. Tardebigge ward would be represented by one councillor and would contain the parishes of Bentley Paucefoot, Finstall and Tutnall & Cobley. Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards would contain 5 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Barnt Green, Beacon, Catshill and Cofton Hackett wards

53 Barnt Green, Beacon, Catshill and Cofton Hackett wards are each situated to the north of Bromsgrove town centre. Barnt Green ward is currently represented by two councillors and contains the parishes of Barnt Green and Lickey & Blackwell. Catshill ward is a three-member ward and contains the parish of Catshill & North Marlbrook. Cofton Hackett ward is represented by one councillor and contains the parish of Cofton Hackett. Beacon ward is a two-member ward and is part of the unparished Rubery area. Barnt Green, Beacon, Catshill

and Cofton Hackett wards currently contain 34 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 19 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (29 per cent more, 12 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, and 21 per cent fewer by 2006).

54 At Stage One the District Council proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area. It proposed a single- and two-member ward for the unparished area of Rubery, two new two-member wards based on the existing Catshill ward, and a new two-member ward and a single-member ward based on the Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett wards. For consultation purposes only, we have named these wards as Rubery North, Rubery South, Catshill, Marlbrook, Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey and Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey wards respectively. As previously discussed, the District Council proposed transferring some 2,000 electors from the existing Uffdown & Waseley ward to its proposed Rubery North ward. The District Council also proposed transferring 1,467 electors from the existing Beacon ward to the new two-member Rubery North ward. The proposed boundary between Rubery North and Rubery South wards would follow Whetty Lane and Leach Heath Lane eastwards to the district boundary. The District Council argued that, although it had included “small areas of semi-rural hinterland” in these urban wards (Gannow Green and Redhill in Rubery North ward and Lydiate Ash in Rubery South ward), it had done so to secure convenient and effective local government. It stated that these three areas are unparished and that “their local government links are traditionally with Rubery” and not with the surrounding rural and parished areas.

55 Under the District Council’s proposed warding arrangements in this area, Lickey & Blackwell parish would be divided between three district wards. The District Council’s proposed Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward would contain the parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett and part of Lickey & Blackwell parish to the north of the Alvechurch Highway and the area to the east of Twatling Road. In its submission, the District Council stated that Cofton Hackett and Lickey & Blackwell parish councils had indicated broad support for its proposals in their areas. The District Council’s proposed Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey ward would contain the southern part of Lickey & Blackwell parish, the area to the west of Twatling Road and the Burcot area which is currently in Norton ward. The District Council stated that, although Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey ward is divided by the M42 Motorway, the ward is linked in two places. The District Council also stated that the proposed ward includes the Burcot area, which “is more closely aligned with Blackwell than either Bromsgrove or Lickey End”. The District Council argued that although it would essentially be putting Burcot, an unparished area, with a parished area, it considered Burcot rural in character and less suited to the “built-up areas” of Lickey End and Bromsgrove.

56 The District Council proposed that the remaining western area of Lickey & Blackwell parish form part of its proposed two-member Marlbrook ward. It also proposed transferring an area to the east of the Birmingham Road and an area to the south of Golden Cross Lane from the existing Catshill ward to its proposed Marlbrook ward. Marlbrook ward would also contain part of the existing Norton ward, the northern part of Lickey End parish. The District Council argued that these new warding arrangements would “provide a ward for the community of Marlbrook which is presently divided between three district wards”. The District Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Catshill ward form a revised two-member ward. The District Council’s proposed Rubery North, Rubery South, Catshill, Marlbrook, Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey and Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey wards would contain 2 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer, 9 per cent fewer, 2 per cent

fewer, 6 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and 4 per cent more by 2006).

57 We have carefully considered the representations received in relation to this area at Stage One. We note that the District Council's proposals do provide for an improved level of electoral equality. We also note the lack of opposition to the District Council's proposals in this area. We have, therefore, decided to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to our previous comments regarding ward names and three minor boundary amendments. We propose transferring from the District Council's proposed Marlbrook ward, an area containing 33 electors to its proposed Catshill ward as we believe this to be a better reflection of the statutory criteria. We also propose a minor boundary amendment, affecting no electors, to the District Council's proposed western boundary of Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey ward to better reflect firm ground detail. We propose retaining the existing southern boundary of the proposed Catshill ward as we do not consider that the District Council's proposals would result in a sufficient number of electors to sustain a viable parish ward, as previously stated in paragraph 37. For the purpose of this consultation we also propose the ward names detailed below, and invite alternative suggestions.

58 Under our draft recommendations Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey, Catshill, Marlbrook and Rubery North wards would each be represented by two councillors. Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey and Rubery South wards would be single-member wards. Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward would contain the parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett and the Lickey & Blackwell North parish ward of Lickey & Blackwell parish. Catshill ward would comprise the Catshill & North Marlbrook West parish ward of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish. Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey ward would contain the Lickey & Blackwell South parish ward of Lickey & Blackwell parish and part of the existing Norton ward. Marlbrook ward would contain the Catshill & North Marlbrook East parish ward and the Catshill & North Marlbrook South parish ward of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish, the Lickey & Blackwell West parish ward of Lickey & Blackwell parish and the Lickey End North parish ward of Lickey End parish. Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey, Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey, Catshill, Marlbrook, Rubery North and Rubery South wards would contain 7 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Charford, Norton, Sidemoor, Stoke Prior, Stoney Hill and Whitford wards

59 The wards of Charford, Norton, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill and Whitford are located in the centre of the district, and Stoke Prior ward is situated in the south of the district. Charford and Stoney Hill wards are part of the unparished area of Bromsgrove and are each represented by two councillors, while Sidemoor and Whitford wards, also part of the unparished area of Bromsgrove, are each represented by three councillors. Norton ward is currently represented by three councillors and contains Lickey End parish. Stoke Prior is a single-member ward and contains the parish of Stoke Prior. Charford, Norton, Sidemoor, Stoke Prior, Stoney Hill and Whitford wards currently contain 26 per cent more, 11 per cent more 13 per cent fewer, 28

per cent more, 24 per cent more and 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21 per cent more, 43 per cent more, 17 per cent fewer, 23 per cent more, 20 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer by 2006).

60 At Stage One the District Council proposed a reconfiguration of the six wards in this area, resulting in a net increase of two wards. It proposed two single-member wards based on the existing Stoke Prior ward, one urban and one rural ward, which for the purpose of this consultation we have named Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior respectively. It also proposed a further six two-member wards covering the town of Bromsgrove and the parish of Lickey End. For the purpose of this consultation we have named these wards Charford, Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill, Whitford and Town Centre wards. The District Council proposed transferring from the existing Stoke Prior ward the “areas of modern housing” to a new single-member Stoke Heath ward. It argued that this new housing has “obliterated the northern boundary” of the present Stoke Prior ward. Its proposed boundary would run to the rear of properties on the Redditch and Worcester Roads. The District Council also proposed including part of the existing Charford ward, up to the Forelands Estate Austin Road areas in the new Stoke Heath ward. It stated that the new ward would contain “virtually all of the modern housing on the south side of the town of Bromsgrove”. In the remainder of the Charford ward area, the District Council proposed extending the eastern boundary to take in part of the current Stoney Hill ward to form a revised two-member Charford ward. Under the new warding arrangements the eastern boundary would extend around the Aston Fields Industrial Estate and along the railway line. The District Council commented that this ward would include “the pre-1980s Charford Estate and a further area of housing in the Aston Fields area”. It also stated that the playing fields to the north of this ward “form a series of natural breaks between the town centre area” and the proposed Charford ward.

61 In the Stoney Hill area the District Council proposed a revised two-member Stoney Hill ward. It proposed transferring an area to the east of the A38 from the existing Stoney Hill ward into a new two-member Town Centre ward. It also proposed transferring the Wagon Works Estate from the current Stoney Hill ward to a revised Tardebigge ward, as previously discussed. The District Council also proposed extending the northern boundary to take in part of the existing Norton ward. This amendment would result in the transfer from Norton ward to the revised Stoney Hill ward of the Parklands/Oakalls Estate, an area where the District Council has projected a substantial increase in the electorate over the next five years due to planned development. The District Council considered that, in using the A38 as the proposed eastern boundary of the new Stoney Hill ward, it was a “natural divide” between the new ward and its proposed Town Centre ward.

62 In the existing Sidemoor and Whitford wards the District Council proposed two revised wards, based largely on existing ward boundaries. The District Council put forward one change to the current Whitford ward, transferring an area to the west of the current eastern boundary to its proposed Town Centre ward. The new eastern boundary would follow Willow Road south towards Sanders Park and the Spadesbourne Brook. The District Council stated that this ward forms a “logical amalgamation” of the housing on the western side of Bromsgrove and that Sanders Park forms “a natural break between the centre of Bromsgrove town and the outer areas of the town”. In the Sidemoor area the District Council proposed transferring an area to the north of the Princess of Wales Hospital from the existing Sidemoor ward, to a new two-member Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward. It also proposed an amendment to the south-eastern boundary of the current Sidemoor ward. This would result in the transfer

63 of an area south of the school playing fields from Sidemoor ward, to the new Town Centre ward. The District Council proposed a new Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward comprising an area of Lickey End parish south of the M42 Motorway, currently in Norton ward, and an unparished area to the east of Lickey End parish, also in Norton ward. Finally in this area, the District Council proposed a new Town Centre ward comprising part of the existing Norton, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill and Whitford wards as previously discussed. Under the District Council's proposals Charford, Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Sidemoor, Stoke Heath, Stoke Prior, Stoney Hill, Town Centre and Whitford wards would contain 7 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 2 per cent more, 26 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 3 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006).

64 We have carefully considered the representation received in relation to this area at Stage One. We note that the District Council's proposals do provide for an improved level of electoral equality. We also note the lack of opposition to the District Council's proposals in this area. We have, therefore, decided to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to our previous comments regarding ward names and the creation of non-viable parish wards. We are also proposing some minor boundary amendments to further improve electoral equality and better reflect the statutory criteria. We propose two amendments to the District Council's proposed Stoke Heath ward. We propose that the southern boundary of the proposed Stoke Heath ward should follow Redditch Road and Worcester Road. Having visited the area we consider that these two main roads provide a better boundary between the proposed Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards than the District Council's proposals. We also propose transferring an area in the north-east of the ward, from the District Council's proposed Stoke Prior ward, to the proposed Stoke Heath ward.

65 In the Bromsgrove town wards we are also putting forward some boundary amendments. We propose transferring an area containing 81 electors from Stoney Hill ward, to the proposed Charford ward to better reflect community identity. We also propose transferring an area containing 25 electors on Stourbridge Road from the District Council's proposed Town Centre ward, to the proposed Sidemoor ward, as we consider this to be a better reflection of local community interests and identities. We also propose a minor modification to the southern boundary of Sidemoor ward affecting six electors, in order to retain the whole of Lyndon Close in the proposed Whitford ward. We propose a further boundary amendment to the Sidemoor ward, affecting no electors, to reflect ground detail. We also propose transferring 58 electors from Town Centre ward to the proposed Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward to better reflect community identity and interests.

66 Under our draft recommendations Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards would each be represented by a single councillor. Stoke Heath ward would contain the Stoke Heath parish ward of Stoke Prior parish and part of the existing Charford ward, while Stoke Prior ward would contain the Stoke Prior parish ward of Stoke Prior parish. Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards would contain 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer by 2006). Charford, Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill, Town Centre and Whitford wards would each be represented by two councillors and would contain 9 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 28 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per

cent more, 3 per cent more and 6 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

67 At Stage One we did not receive any comments relating to the electoral cycle of the district. We therefore make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 39 members should be retained;
- there should be 23 wards;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of four, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

69 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose retaining the three-member Alvechurch ward;
- in the south of the district we propose a boundary modification on the grounds of community identity and to better reflect ground detail;
- in the centre of the district we propose a minor boundary amendment on the grounds of community identity;
- in the town wards we propose three minor boundary modifications to better reflect community identities and interests and firm ground detail;
- there should be no change to the wards of Alvechurch, Furlongs, Hagley and Woodvale;
- where the District Council has proposed parish wards containing very small numbers of electors, we are retaining the existing parish boundary;
- for the purpose of this consultation we have put forward ward names for each of the proposed wards. However, we are not satisfied that these ward names adequately reflect community identity and have, therefore, invited further comment at Stage Three.

70 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	39	39	39	39
Number of wards	19	23	19	23
Average number of electors per councillor	1,766	1,776	1,773	1,773
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	10	1	11	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	1	7	0

71 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 10 to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Bromsgrove District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 23 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

72 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different 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 Catshill & North Marlbrook, Lickey & Blackwell, Lickey End, Stoke Prior and Wythall to reflect the proposed district wards.

73 The parish of Catshill & North Marlbrook is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations for district wards in this area we are proposing to create three parish wards, Catshill & North Marlbrook East, Catshill & North Marlbrook South and Catshill & North Marlbrook West, to reflect district ward boundaries. We propose that Catshill & North Marlbrook East parish ward should be represented by two

councillors, Catshill & North Marlbrook South parish ward should be represented by three councillors and Catshill & North Marlbrook West parish ward should be represented by eight councillors. We would, however, welcome further comment at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Catshill & North Marlbrook East (returning two councillors), Catshill & North Marlbrook South (three) and Catshill & North Marlbrook West (eight). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

74 The parish of Lickey & Blackwell is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations for district wards in this area we are proposing to create three parish wards, Lickey & Blackwell North, Lickey & Blackwell South and Lickey & Blackwell West, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. We note that the District Council proposed four parish wards in this area, three to the north of the M42 Motorway and one to the south of the M42 Motorway. We also note that, in its submission, the District Council stated that although divided by the M42 Motorway the areas to the north and south of the motorway are linked in two places. In the light of this we propose that Lickey & Blackwell North should be represented by three councillors, Lickey & Blackwell South should be represented by six councillors and Lickey & Blackwell West should be represented by two councillors. We would welcome further comment at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Lickey & Blackwell North (returning three councillors), Lickey & Blackwell South (six) and Lickey & Blackwell West (two). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

75 The parish of Lickey End is currently represented by 10 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations for district wards in this area we are proposing to create two parish wards, Lickey End North and Lickey End South, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. We propose that Lickey End North should be represented by four councillors and Lickey End South should be represented by six councillors. We would welcome further comment at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Lickey End Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Lickey End North (returning four councillors), Lickey End South (six). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

76 The parish of Stoke Prior is currently represented by nine councillors representing two wards: Stoke Prior, returning five councillors, and Stoke Works, returning four councillors. In the light of our draft recommendations for district wards in this area we are proposing two parish wards, Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. We propose that Stoke Heath should be represented by two councillors and Stoke Prior should be represented by seven councillors. We would welcome further comment at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Stoke Prior Parish Council should comprise nine parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stoke Heath (returning two councillors) and Stoke Prior (seven). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

77 The parish of Wythall is currently served by 15 councillors representing three parish wards, Drakes Cross, Hollywood, and South, each represented by five councillors. In the light of our draft recommendations for district wards in this area we are proposing to retain the existing parish wards, but to reallocate the number of councillors. The proposed Drakes Cross, Hollywood, and South wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. We propose that Drakes Cross and Hollywood wards should each be represented by six councillors and South ward should be represented by three councillors. We would welcome further comment at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Wythall Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Drakes Cross (returning six councillors), Hollywood (six) and South (three). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2.

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

Draft Recommendation

Parish council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Bromsgrove

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

79 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 20 May 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

80 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

www.lgce.gov.uk

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Bromsgrove: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Bromsgrove area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Wythall parish.

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

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Bromsgrove: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Wythall Parish

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

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